

# Anniversary recalls persistent challenges

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Yesterday — April 29, the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena — marked the ninth anniversary of the publication of *Fire in the Thornbush*, our diocesan pastoral letter on women in our church. Shortly after its publication here it was published in *Origins*, a documentary service of Catholic News Service, under the title "American Catholic Women: Strong Faith, Persistent Questions."

During the nine years of its life, the letter has enjoyed a wide circulation, and even now we get an occasional letter requesting a copy of it. Most recently, a teacher at a Midwestern college wanted a copy for use in her classes.

For most of the years since then, I have

been working on a committee that is drafting a similar kind of letter for our National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Because that project is for a national group, the effort has taken a much longer time to prepare than did our diocesan letter. We are coming toward the end, but between now and then there is considerable work to be done. I'll keep you informed on it as the work progresses.

In the meantime, please let me encourage you to reread *Fire in the Thornbush*, if you still have a copy. I did so recently and was left with the strong impression that there are some challenges in it that we, as a church, have not yet fully met. Among those challenges are some that will require a commitment to change on the part of the

wider church. I refer to such matters as jurisdiction, preaching, ordination, etc.

But in other areas change is possible but elusive. I refer to changes in attitudes and habits that tend to exclude women from full participation in the daily life and activities of our church, especially those that set directions or are influential in other ways.

Most of the wonderful women and men who contributed to the development of *Fire in the Thornbush* are still very much active in our local church. I never remember the anniversary without remembering them with great gratitude. Thanks, dear friends, for your work then and now.

In addition to those words of gratitude, I wish to add my congratulations to the 17 men and women who will receive their degrees during the commencement exercises at St. Bernard's Institute on Friday night of this week. It is always a pleasure to celebrate the achievement of students who have struggled with the demands of graduate-



level theology. It is also a joy on such occasions to recognize the service of administration, faculty, staff, board members and of all who support St. Bernard's Institute.

This year two factors highlight the importance of this event for the life of our church. One is our commitment — contained in our recently adopted Statement of Diocesan Mission and Goals for 1991-1993 — to the formation of excellent pastoral ministers. The second is the fact that two candidates from St. Bernard's program in Albany will receive their degrees this year. They are the first since we began this initiative with the Diocese of Albany.

We are blessed to have such a powerful theological resource in our diocese. I believe its importance to the life of our local church will only increase as time goes by. But more about that later. In the meantime...

Peace to all.

## Exchange program seeks families to host students

Families are being sought to host high school exchange students for the school year 1991-1992 through a program sponsored by the American Intercultural Student Exchange.

## Wadhams Hall to host retreat for priests May 27

Wadhams Hall, a seminary and college located in Ogdensburg, N.Y., will offer its annual retreat for priests May 27-31.

Bishop Thomas Lobsinger, OMI, of the Diocese of Whitehorse in Canada's Yukon Territory, will lead the retreat. The bishop will focus on "Themes from the Psalms." The retreat is open to all priests in the Ogdensburg and surrounding dioceses.

For information, contact Father Don Robinson, special programs director, at 315/393-4231.

Exchange students come from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Brazil, Ecuador, Japan and Australia.

The students, ages 15 through 17, will arrive in the United States in August, 1991, attend a local high school, and return to their home countries in June, 1992. Students are fluent in English, have been screened by representatives in their home countries. They have spending money and medical insurance.

Host families may deduct \$50 a month for income-tax purposes.

Families interested in hosting exchange students may obtain information by calling toll free 1/800/SIB-LING (1/800/742-5464).

## Institute seeks members

ROCHESTER — Caritas Christi, a canonically approved international secular institute, is open to lay single or widowed women seeking to dedicate their lives to God without leaving the world.

Members of the institute commit to daily prayer, the Eucharist and an annual retreat. Each member has a spiritual companion or sponsor, and members in some areas meet periodically to celebrate the Eucharist.

For information on the Caritas Christi group in the Rochester diocese, call Father John C. Murray, CSB, 716/586-6750, or write 3497 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14618.

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