

Bishop, priests celebrate ordination jubilees

St. Michael's Parish in Penn Yan will be the host of a May 21 celebration marking the 50th and 25th ordination jubilees of a bishop, 18 diocesan priests and two religious priests serving in the Diocese of Rochester.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be the principal celebrant for the anniversary Mass, which will take place at St. Michael's at 11 a.m. The Mass will be followed by a luncheon for the clergy at Hilltop Harbor Restaurant on Lake Street in Penn Yan.

Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, and Fathers John J. Nacca, Lawrence W. Sansom, James F. Slattery, and Paul G. Wohlrab were all ordained June 7, 1941, by Bishop James E. Kearney in Sacred Heart Church — later to be designated the diocesan cathedral. Fathers — and identical twin brothers — Gerard J. and Joseph G. Gefell, also were ordained for the Diocese of Rochester that day.

Speaking of his work as general manager of the *Catholic Courier*, Bishop Dennis W. Hickey noted that he enjoys being around the group of young adults who constitute the newspaper's staff.

"I feel I'm kept young by my association with so many young people," he said with a smile.

The 76-year-old auxiliary bishop, one of two diocesan vicar generals, remarked that he has only "kind of retired," since his official retirement in December, 1989.

"My main interest is obviously the paper," Bishop Hickey said. "I see myself as explaining the philosophy of the paper to priests and others in the diocese." The bishop said he views the paper as the "means of people in the pew to be heard."

The son of Walter and Aloisia Sullivan Hickey, he attended Colgate University and St. Bernard's Seminary prior to his ordination. He served as assistant pastor of St. Mary's in Auburn for five years before being named secretary general of the Diocesan Tribunal.

He was designated a Papal Chamberlain in 1952, a title upgraded to Domestic Prelate in 1959. In 1961, Monsignor Hickey was named pastor of St. Theodore's Church.

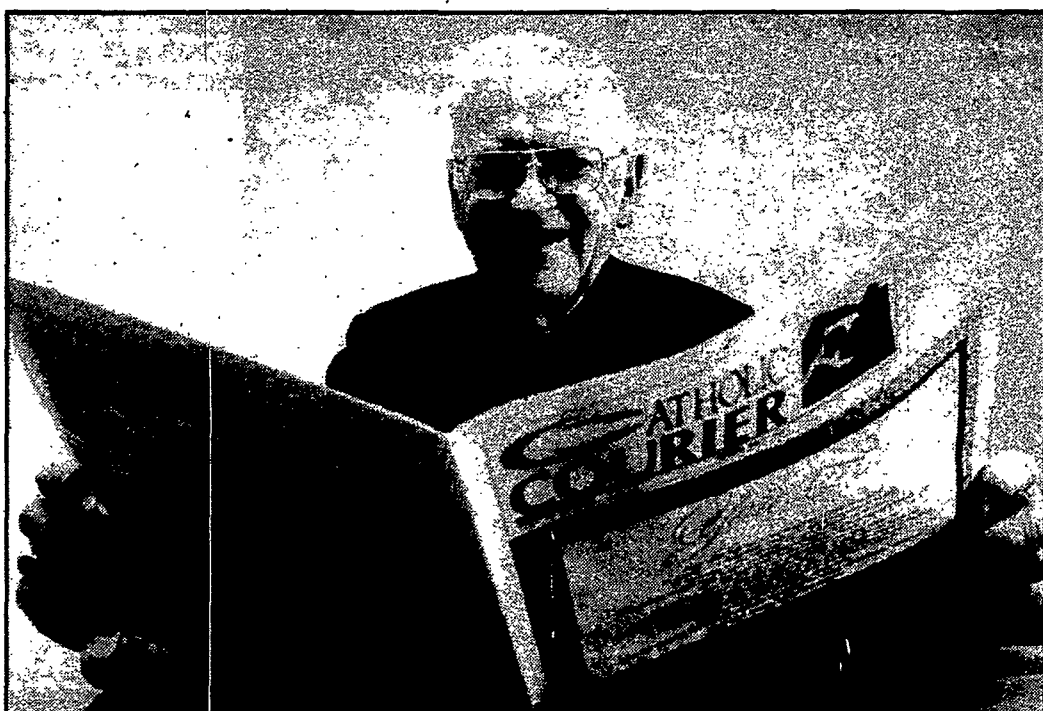
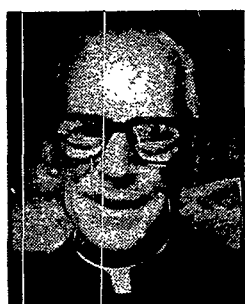
He was appointed vicar general in 1967, and consecrated auxiliary bishop of Rochester and titular bishop of Rusuccuru (an ancient diocese of northern Africa) on March 14 of the following year. He served as diocesan director of personnel from 1968-82.

In 1982, he was appointed pastor of St. Thomas More Parish, which he served until he retired as pastor in June of 1985. Bishop Matthew H. Clark appointed him general manager of the diocesan newspaper in May of that year.

Father John J. Nacca, 75, currently serves as an associate pastor at Immaculate Conception Parish in Jacksonville, Fla., where a June 9 Mass will mark his 50 years in the priesthood.

Father Nacca told the *Catholic Courier* that he missed his "old friends" in the diocese since his move to Florida in 1989, but was enjoying the state's constant sunshine.

When he left his pastorate at St. Francis of Assisi in Auburn in 1985, Father Nacca took

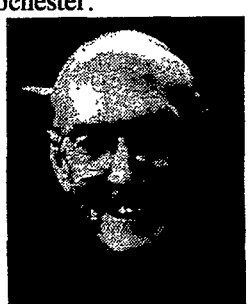


Bishop Dennis W. Hickey is celebrating his 50th jubilee.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

with him the diocesan record for the longest number of years — 36 — as pastor of a single parish. Before becoming pastor of St. Francis in 1949, Father Nacca served as pastor of Church of the Assumption in Fairport, at which he was previously assistant pastor. He also served as assistant pastor at St. Francis Xavier Church in Rochester.

Father Lawrence W. Sansom, 72, said he spends much of his time these days visiting with his 91-year-old sister Gertrude Fulreader, who resides at the Brightonian Nursing Home in Brighton. The retired priest also concelebrates daily Mass and "helps around" at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, where he resides.



During his years of service with the Diocese of Rochester, he served the parishes of St. Joseph's, Wayland; St. Anthony's, Elmira; St. Agnes, Avon; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Rochester; St. Theodore's in Gates; St. Mary's in Corning; St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport; and Holy Family, Auburn.

In 1966, Father Sansom was named pastor of St. James the Apostle in Trumansburg. In 1970, he was appointed pastor of the dual parishes of St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen/St. Benedict, Odessa. Following that assignment, Father Sansom worked in another diocese, before returning in 1975 to serve as associate pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Rochester.

Father Sansom also served in a couple of Florida parishes during the mid-1980s, before returning to the North to take care of his sister in 1989.

Father James F. Slattery — a noted golfing enthusiast, according to his friend and classmate Bishop Hickey — served assistant pastorates at Our Lady of Lourdes in Brighton, St. Ignatius in Hornell, and St. Vincent de Paul in Corning before founding



Our Lady Queen of Peace parish in Brighton in 1960. Father Slattery retired from the pastorate at Queen of Peace in 1986, and currently resides at St. Louis in Pittsford.

Father Slattery said all his friends and former parishioners are invited to a celebration Mass at St. Louis on June 16 at 2:30 p.m.

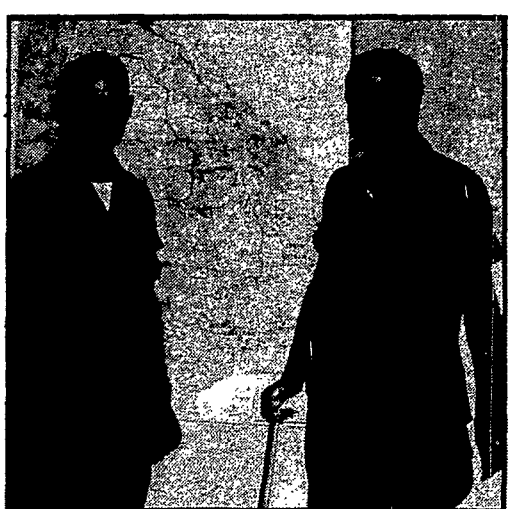
"I'd still really rather be working as a pastor," commented Father Paul G. Wohlrab, 75, who retired from the pastorate of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Rochester in 1985.



Nonetheless, Father Wohlrab keeps busy by saying daily Mass and preaching every other Sunday at St. John's Parish in Spencerport where he resides. He also serves as relief chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, and as spiritual director of the Legion of Mercy and the Knights of Columbus, Council 178.

Prior to his appointment as pastor at Good Counsel, Father Wohlrab served as assistant pastor at St. Michael's, Rochester; Holy Trinity, Webster; Holy Rosary, Rochester; St. Andrew's, Rochester; and as chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital.

He also held the dual pastorate of St. Michael's, Livonia/St. Mary's, Honeyoye, from 1965-1967.



Monsignors Joseph G. and Gerard J. Gefell served as chaplains in Vietnam.

File photo

The Persian Gulf War nearly put identical twin brothers — and former U.S. Army chaplains — Monsignors Gerard J. and Joseph G. Gefell, back into uniform.

Monsignor Gerard, who lives with his brother in Cape Vincent in the Odgensburg diocese, explained that the army wanted the brothers to re-enter to help alleviate a state-side need for chaplains. But the war ended before the 75-year-old brothers could take up chaplains' duties, he added.

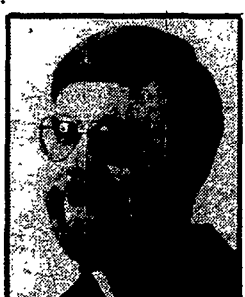
Monsignor Gerard began his military career in 1948, and his brother, Monsignor

Joseph, enlisted in 1945. After serving separately in this country and abroad, the brothers served in Alaska and at Fort Bragg, N.C., before Monsignor Gerard was stationed in Suwon, Korea in 1963. Other stints in the service included a tour of duty in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. Following his retirement, Monsignor Gerard served parishes in Ontario and Greece.

Monsignor Joseph spent time in the Philippine Islands, Japan, Germany Vietnam, and the United States during his years in the service. He also served as assistant pastor of St. Theodore's in Gates from 1947-51. He retired from the military in 1973, and was named pastor of St. Alphonsus in Auburn. He was appointed temporary administrator of Holy Cross in Rochester in 1976.

The 12 diocesan priests marking their 25th jubilees were the last class of seminarians to be ordained by Bishop James E. Kearney. The ceremony took place June 4, 1966, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Father Philip J. Billotte, parochial vicar for the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, was born June 17, 1939, to Anna E. (Mignot) Billotte of Corning and the late Hilary F. Billotte. He attended St. Vincent DePaul and Northside High School in Corning, and later graduated from St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries.



Father Billotte's first assignment was as associate pastor at Sacred Heart Cathedral from 1966-70. He subsequently served as associate pastor at Sacred Heart Church, Auburn (1970-74); Holy Family, Rochester (1974-78); St. Patrick's, Corning (1978-85); and Holy Trinity, Webster (1985-90).

Father James E. Boyle, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Elmira since 1981, was born Aug. 6, 1940, to Sara Jane (Beagan) Boyle, now of New Jersey, and the late James E. Boyle.



The Rochester native attended Holy Rosary School before graduating from St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. Father Boyle also obtained a graduate degree in counseling from the University of Rochester in 1971.

Bishop Kearney appointed Father Boyle as associate pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Rochester, in 1966. Four years later, the priest became associate pastor of St. John of Rochester, Fairport, where he served until he was named co-pastor with Father John M. Mulligan of St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street in Rochester in 1973.

Father Robert L. Collins, pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Rochester since 1985, is a native Rochesterian. Son of the late John L. and Agnes (Rumble) Collins, he attended Sacred Heart School before moving



on to St. Bernard's and St. Andrew's.

Father Collins was named associate pastor of St. Monica's Church, Rochester, in 1966. He served at St. Monica's until 1970, when he was appointed full-time diocesan director of the Family Life Office. Father Collins was then appointed campus minister at Monroe Community College, where he served from 1977 to 1984. He was also rector at Becket Hall from 1980-84.

Father David N. Gramkee, pastor of the Eastside Catholic Parishes in Elmira since 1990, was born May 13, 1940, to the late Bruce E. and Frances (Newman) Gramkee.

The Rochester native attended Blessed Sacrament School, St. Andrew's and St. Ber-

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