

Assemblyman remembered for service

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark was the principal celebrant Thursday, Oct. 3, of the Mass of Christian Burial for Roger J. Robach.

Father Thomas Wheeland, pastor, was homilist for the Mass, which took place at Holy Cross Church.

Assemblyman Robach, a 17-year veteran of the New York state Assembly, died of a heart attack Sunday, Sept. 29, 1991. He was 57.

Born June 21, 1934, in Rochester, Assemblyman Robach attended Holy Apostles School. An interest in the priesthood led him to the Sacred Heart Seminary, the Society of the Divine Word's high school program in Girard, Pa. He then spent two years studying at the society's minor seminary, St. Michael's, located on Conesus Lake.

Assemblyman Robach's widow, Teresa, said her husband had left the seminary when he realized he had no vocation to the priesthood. But the six years of seminary training left their mark.

"Roger had a terrific command of the language and human nature," Teresa Robach said. "I credit the seminary for that. He always said that in the seminary all he did was read. People were always astounded at his breadth of knowledge."

After leaving the seminary, Assemblyman Robach studied for a time at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind. He then began working at Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester. He married Teresa Fallocco on Sept. 1, 1956, at Holy Cross Church. After two years' service in the Army, in 1958 he returned to Kodak, where he continued to work until his retirement in 1986.

Assemblyman Robach earned a degree in business administration from the University of Rochester in 1966.

In 1972, he was elected to the Monroe County Legislature, then won a seat in the state Assembly in 1974. He successfully won re-election eight times, most recently in 1990. A Democrat/Conservative, he represented the 134th Assembly District — which includes Greece and northwestern Rochester.

Assemblyman Robach rose to become deputy majority leader of the state Assembly. He focused his legislative attention on issues of education and human services.

Assemblyman Robach also was a strong opponent of abortion. He sponsored legislation calling for an end to Medicaid funding of abortions, requiring parental consent for teenagers seeking abortions, and requiring parental notification of teenagers seeking abortions.

In addition, the assemblyman sponsored legislation requiring New York state to sign promptly all approved contracts with not-for-profit organizations. This past spring, he gained approval of a bill requiring the state to make prompt payments to organizations after contracts are signed.

Those bills ended state practices of delaying contracts and payments to these organizations, causing financial problems for the not-for-profits, noted Robert Byrnes, Assemblyman Robach's chief of staff. The prompt-payment bill "was probably the single biggest piece of legislation to help not-for-profit service providers in the state," Byrnes said.

"It's going to be very beneficial," noted Jama Dodson, associate director for programs at the Catholic Family Center. "It's just so critical that we get, in a timely way, funds to help the community."

Assemblyman Robach had helped the

agency and its programs — especially the Action Center for the Disabled — on a number of occasions, Dodson continued.

"He always was very responsive when we called for help," Dodson said. "He took action immediately to help us."

In addition to his political duties, the assemblyman remained active in Holy Cross Parish. He served as a lector, usher and festival worker, as well as belonging to the parish men's club, Teresa Robach said.

During his career, Assemblyman Robach won numerous awards. He was named the New York State Intercollegiate Association Assemblyman of the Year in 1984, and received the State Humane Association Special Award the same year.

On the day he died, Assemblyman Robach was returning to Rochester from the Concord Hotel in the Catskills, where on Sept. 28 he had received the Legislator of the Year Award from the Association of Candy and Tobacco Distributors.

In addition to his wife, Assemblyman Robach is survived by his son, Joseph Robach, of Greece; two daughters, Kathryn



Robach Coughenour and Patty Robach, both of Rochester; two brothers, Norbert and Donald Robach; several grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

Interment was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Donations in memory of Roger Robach should be made to the Association for Retarded Citizens, 1000 Elmwood Ave., Rochester, N.Y., 14620.

Deacon James H. Gillette; educator, family advocate

BROCKPORT — James H. Gillette, deacon at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, died of a heart attack at his home early Saturday morning, Oct. 5, 1991. He was 61.

The son of Samuel B. Gillette and Grace McCullough Gillette, Deacon Gillette grew up in Rochester and was baptized a member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

Ordained to the permanent diaconate in June, 1988, he had spent most of his life working in education. In 1971, he earned a doctorate in education from the University of Colorado.

Throughout a varied career, Deacon Gillette held several positions. He started out as an admissions counselor and professor at the State University of New York College at Alfred from 1958-63. During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, Deacon Gillette taught and lectured on field biology, environmental studies, learning disabilities and other topics at a number of colleges in the SUNY system. He also coordinated campus recreation, intramural and club sports programs at SUNY Brockport in the '70s and '80s.

In addition to his educational accomplishments, Deacon Gillette served the church in numerous capacities. In the parishes to which he belonged, the deacon and his wife, Dolores Juanita "Lita" Covas Gillette, served as lecturers, readers and choir members. They also organized and led marriage preparation sessions.

The Gillettes' service to the church's marriage ministry culminated in their selection by the executive board of Marriage Encounter to represent the program in a speaking tour of the Canadian cities of Toronto, Sudbury and Chatham in the late 1970s.

The New York State Catholic Conference — with diocesan approval — also chose the Gillettes to be voting delegates to the White House Conference on Families convened during the term of former President Jimmy Carter.

Deacon Stephen J. Graff, director of the diocesan Permanent Diaconate program, characterized Deacon Gillette as a "life-long educator," with a deep love for his family, his faith and the outdoors.

Deacon Gillette is survived by his wife, Lita; two daughters, Karen Elizabeth Turner of Albion and Bernadine Gillette of Brockport; one son, James A. Gillette also of Brockport; one granddaughter, Kelly Turner; his sister, Shirley McMahon of Homer; and his brother, S. Frank Gillette of Connecticut.

A Mass of Christian Resurrection was held at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 8, at Nativity Parish. Interment was at Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Nativity Parish Organ Restoration Fund, or to Lifetime Assistance, Inc.

— Rob Cullivan

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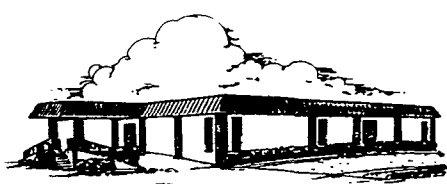
The Diocese of Rochester has announced that parishes have hired the following individuals to serve as pas-

toral ministers:

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Barbara Swiecki as pastoral assistant at Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford.

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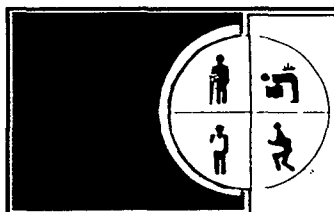


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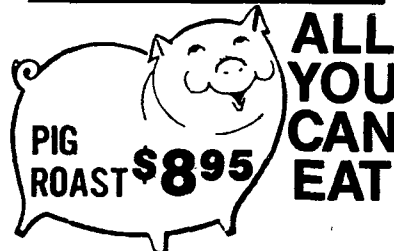
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