

# CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 103 No. 6

Thursday, November 7, 1991

75¢

16 pages

## Irish triumph

With the City-Catholic League title capping their undefeated season, the Little Irish of Aquinas also earned top seed in the Section 5 Class BB sectionals. Page 8.



**N**ever in her wildest dreams did Priscilla Graham imagine herself a Catholic. "I thought (the Catholic Church) was just for whites," Graham said. "When I saw things on television, the people were just white. I didn't think blacks went to a Catholic Church."

But on Holy Saturday of 1990, Graham became a Catholic at Rochester's St. Bridget's Parish. There, she said, she found acceptance as a black.

"I feel welcome now because there are more blacks in Catholic churches," Graham observed.

Indeed, blacks in the Catholic Church today number approximately three million, according to Walter Hubbard of the National Office for Black Catholics.

And they are not the only people of color to be found in Catholic churches.

According to the 1991 edition of the Catholic Almanac, approximately 16 million Hispanics currently living in the United States are baptized Catholics.

Thus black and Hispanic Catholics together total 19 million — some 35 percent of the 55 million Catholics in the United States.

# C H U R C H

Within the next few years, blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans will make up 50 percent of the U.S. Catholic population, reports the Washington, D.C.-based National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.

But while the non-white Catholics become less and less of a minority each year, that trend has not yet been reflected in the institutional church.

The U.S. Catholic Church counts only 1,800 Hispanic and 250 black priests among its more than 53,000 clerics. Of 392 bishops and archbishops, just 12 are black, 21 Hispanic and two Native American.

This pattern also holds true among the personnel of diocesan chanceries and pastoral centers, noted Hermalinda Pompa of the conference for interracial justice.

Pompa said her organization surveyed 40 randomly selected dioceses in 1988. Among other topics, the survey dealt with the question of minority hiring. She said the results revealed that the number of minority employees were "infinitesimally small in comparison with the general population."

diocese's Office of Black Ministry. "When you look at the governing structures, where's the universality there?"

Pompa said the U.S. church simply is insensitive about the need for minorities in leadership positions. In part, she said, this insensitivity stems from a lack of awareness.

But, she acknowledged, another aspect of the problem is that the church reflects the racism in U.S. society.

Pompa isn't the only observer to point out racism at work in the church — both nationally and locally.

"The church follows the racism in society," declared Sister Grace Miller, RSM, director of Rochester's House of Mercy. "It's very systemic."

That assessment was echoed by an article Father Daniel O'Shea wrote for the October, 1991, issue of *Metro-Act News*.

In the article, entitled "Racism in the Catholic Church in Rochester," Father O'Shea and co-author Mary Haffey remarked: "Although contrary to the most basic and cherished principles of Christianity,

## Catholic Church judged deficient in challenging deep-rooted racism

This tendency extends to consultative bodies and advisory boards as well, Pompa observed, denying minority Catholics any significant input on decisions concerning diocesan policies and spending.

Pompa said the overall conclusion to be drawn from the study is that the church is not being inclusive. The church, she noted, is not adequately including the minority communities in decision-making processes, and is failing to be sensitive to the cultural differences and the needs of those communities.

Minority persons in the Diocese of Rochester represent a significant trend. Currently, the diocese has 12 black priests, and just one Hispanic priest. It also has the head of a Vietnamese priest with two other priests.

At the Diocesan Pastoral Center currently employs two black, one Vietnamese, and four Hispanic priests. Minority Catholics sit on such top advisory bodies as the Administrative Council and the Pastoral Council.

The diocese also has several minority churches, but when it comes to the governing structures, where's the universality there?"

racism is endemic and systematic in the Catholic Church in Rochester."

That racism, Father O'Shea continued, is reflected not only in the lack of minority employees and representation on key boards, but also in the way the church approaches ministry to the minority community.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Father O'Shea observed that the diocese tends to minister to minorities largely in terms of social ministry.

"Much of our ministry is ministry of charity and human services — which is important — but when it comes to ministries of empowerment, of training, and of social justice, we're lacking," he said.

Father John Mulligan, diocesan vicar general and head of the Pastoral Center, acknowledged that the local church has fallen short in terms of minority hiring and minority representation on diocesan boards and committees.

"I don't want to say," Father Mulligan said, "I don't know where we're going."

The diocese's success is probably about average in terms of its representation of and its success — or

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