

# Bishops meet to reflect on diocese

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Tuesday, December 10  
Sunday evening at St. Bernard's Institute about 200 people gathered to celebrate "An Evening With Three Bishops." The three bishops in question were Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, the founding bishop of the Diocese of Rochester; Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, our seventh bishop; and yours truly.

Following a lovely dinner, we gathered in the auditorium where Bishops "McQuaid," Hogan and I reflected on the church's life, episcopal ministry, and the changing cultural and civic circumstances in which the life of our diocese has unfolded over the past 123 years.

"McQuaid" was wonderfully portrayed on this occasion by Father Al Delmonte, pastor of St. Salome's Church in Irondequoit. He commented on some of the major issues he dealt with in his 41 years as our bishop, and in each instance he related his experience to a parallel issue in our day.

For example he commented on questions raised about the war in the Persian Gulf, relating them to questions he had faced about the Spanish American War. He spoke about the Vatican Council I and of his pleasure that the work of Vatican Council II complemented the work done at the earlier council. "McQuaid" also spoke about his care of new immigrants to our country, his promotion of Catholic school education for them, and the establishment of St. Bernard's Seminary.

Bishop Hogan presented a rich reflection on



## A LONG THE WAY

his years as our bishop — centering, in large measure, on leading our diocese through the early years of transition following Vatican Council II. With the wit and keen insight so characteristic of him, he illustrated the change to which the church was called in those years by contrasting the ways in which he taught theology before and after the council.

I found his comments very stimulating because they allowed me to revisit years in the church that were very important to me as a young priest. His observations also enabled me to do so through the eyes of a person who was an

important leader in the church at the time. I find that such experiences are helpful in achieving better perspective not only about the past, but about the present as well.

In my own comments, I expressed aloud a fantasy with which I've had a lot of fun over the years: that is, the desire to talk with all of the bishops who have served this diocese. I would just love to sit with each of them to ask such questions as: "What was the most difficult issue you dealt with?" and "How would you handle this?" and "If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?"

Some examples: I'd love to ask Bernard McQuaid what he would do about Catholic education today. I'd ask Thomas Hickey about how he and the people he served coped with the pain and loss they suffered in both the Great War and the Great Depression. I'd ask John O'Hern if his concern for the suffering of his people during the depression years caused the health problems that took him from us so early in life. I'd ask James E. Kearney — who was a New York City priest — what impact his years as bishop of Salt Lake City had on his subsequent life and ministry. I'd ask Fulton Sheen what it was like at 71 years of age to leave a world stage to become a residential bishop during a fairly volatile time in the church's life.

It would be wonderful to talk with those good bishops — not only because it would be fun to get to know them, but because that acquaintance would be an opening to a rich understanding of the church's dynamic, ever-changing life.

Peace to you.

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**Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)**  
Vol. 103 No. 11 December 12, 1991  
Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.  
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$19.50; Canada and foreign \$19.50 plus postage.  
Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340.  
Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.  
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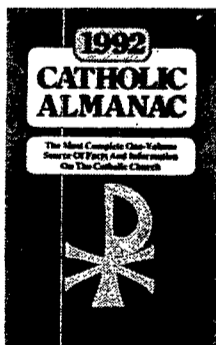
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