



# CATHOLIC COURIER

DIocese of Rochester, NY  
Vol. 103 No. 24 Thursday, March 19, 1992 75¢ 20 pages

## Council elevated action above Lenten self-denial

On the surface, today's Lenten requirements appear much less demanding than those of yesteryear.

And it is true that dietary regulations — fasting and abstinence from meat on certain Lenten days — are not as rigid as they were prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Yet the emphasis Vatican II placed on what *can* be done — as opposed to the pre-conciliar focus on what *could not* be done — calls the faithful to stretch their spirituality in other ways.

And that, of course, is exactly what the world's bishops hoped to accomplish when they convened in Rome in the early 1960s.

"Before Vatican II people were held very strictly to fast and abstinence rules, and therefore could easily become satisfied with the black-and-white observance of the 'law,'" remarked Father John T. Reif. "The fathers of Vatican II were convinced that Lenten rules should be brought into line with contemporary life.

## Lent Since Vatican II

"Hence, since society in general focuses on greater social awareness, so too should the church focus on those same needs," continued Father Reif, pastor of St. Rita's Church in Webster.

The Revised Code of Canon Law requires healthy Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, meaning that they should abstain from meat and from eating between meals. The code further requires these Catholics to abstain from eating meat on all the Fridays of Lent.

Those between the ages of 14 and 17 are obligated to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all other Fridays of Lent, but are not required to fast.

Exceptions are made for those who are ill. "It takes on a whole different perspective when a person is in a hospital," said Father Richard T. Farrell, chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. "I tell patients in unique situations that they don't have to fast."

Continued on page 18

*By Mike Latona*

