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On 10th anniversary, letter remains current

Sister Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, clearly remembers her first reaction to reading Bishop Matthew H. Clark's 1982 pastoral letter on women in the church, *The Fire in the Thornbush*.

"Much of it touched a chord in my heart," said Sister Hughes, a professor of theology at Chicago's Catholic Theological Union.

And in looking at the document 10 years later, Sister Hughes noted during a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, "My strongest sense is that so much of the document remains current. And isn't that too bad? So much of it could have been written yesterday."

¶ In this Church I appear to you as once I appeared in a thornbush. You are the thornbush, I am the fire. ¶

St. Ambrose, Epistle 63

Hughes visited Rochester May 2 to participate in "The Bush is Still Burning," the 10th-anniversary celebration of Bishop Clark's pastoral. She delivered the keynote address for one part of the celebration, a conference at St. Thomas More School, 2617 East Ave.

That event also included a panel discussion among Sister Hughes; Bishop Clark; Sister Barbara Moore, RSM; Father Daniel Tormey; and Joan Hensler, a former member of the Rochester City Council.

Another anniversary celebration took place April 29 — the feast of St. Catherine of Siena and the official date of the document's release — at the Ithaca Music Hall, 413 W. State St., Ithaca.

That event featured a one-woman play entitled "All That I Am." Performed by Roberta Noblemen, the play encompasses the life and faith experiences of several women in history.

These festivities coincide with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' consideration of the third draft of its own pastoral letter on women. That pastoral has been developed by a writing committee of which Bishop Clark has been a member since it was formed in 1983.

Continued on page 21

Story by Lee Strong, Staff writer

The Fire in the Thornbush

Joan Hensler '92

