

Bishop Clark says pastoral lost 'immediacy'

Decided to vote against intended letter on women

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark acknowledged mixed feelings about voting Nov. 18 to reject the U.S. bishops' intended pastoral letter on the concerns of women — a document he had helped to write over the past nine years.

"I decided to vote against the final version of it because I felt in the last analysis it was not the kind of pastoral document that indicated a real, deep hearing of women's concerns," Bishop Clark said in a Nov. 20 press conference at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road.

"I would have liked to have cast an affirmative vote for a document that I could enthusiastically promote," the bishop acknowledged during a Nov. 23 interview with the *Catholic Courier*. "But my concern was that if we passed that letter, we would have paralyzed discussion."

In spite of the letter's rejection, Bishop Clark said, "I very much believe that the nine years that so many people have devoted to the project are certainly not wasted."

The bishop conducted the press conference and interview following his return to Rochester from the Nov. 16-19 meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

The pastoral letter's fourth draft, entitled *One in Christ Jesus*, passed 137 to 110, but failed to receive the two-thirds vote needed for approval.

Instead, the bishops voted to send the document to the NCCB's Executive



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Bishop Matthew H. Clark answers questions about his decision to reject the fourth draft of the U.S. bishops' intended pastoral letter on the concerns of women — which he helped to draft over the last nine years — during a Nov. 20 press conference at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester.

Committee, which ask various committees to take actions on certain components of the letter.

Bishop Clark acknowledged that in deciding to vote against the letter, he found it difficult to help defeat an effort on which he had worked for so many years.

But through the nine years and four drafts, the letter had lost some of its "immediacy," he said.

This immediacy especially was lost when the committee eliminated the quotations of women from the letter, Bishop Clark explained.

Those quotations — culled from women's testimony during listening sessions conducted early the pastoral letter's development — had been contained in the document's first draft.

"I think those direct quotations brought a sense of urgency and significance to what we were doing," Bishop

Clark said. The concerns raised in those quotations helped shape the committee's discussions, he explained.

"Those quotations were dropped, and though they were represented rather abstractly in subsequent drafts, that representation never really restored the liveliness of the earlier expression," Bishop Clark said.

Bishop Clark said a second reason he chose to vote against the letter was that "the letter gradually took on the tone of a lecture rather than the tone of a dialogue."

Although both lectures and dialogues have value, in this case, he noted, "the shift was not helpful, not a fruitful pastoral response."

Of major concern in his decision-making process was the fact that the question of women's ordination had begun to overshadow other issues raised in the document, the bishop

More coverage

For additional coverage on the bishops' meeting, see pages 4-5.

noted.

Among those other issues, Bishop Clark noted, are the need for day care, eliminating sexist attitudes, and guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work.

The letter had become too politically weighted because of the ordination issue, Bishop Clark acknowledged.

"I think a lot of people saw the document as a doctrinal statement on ordination," he explained. "That's not what it was, but that's what it became in the eyes of many people."

During his press conference, Bishop Clark cautioned that the vote to reject the pastoral should not be seen as a rejection of church teachings on the ordination of women.

"The point was strongly made in the debate that those who opposed passage of the letter ... (were) not making a statement against the official teachings of the church on ordination," Bishop Clark said.

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the Catholic Church's stance against the ordination of women to the priesthood "does not find a peaceful place in the hearts of many very loving and loyal Catholic people."

During the *Courier* interview, Bishop Clark noted that while working on the letter, "We tended to repeat old arguments (against the ordination of women) ... rather than challenging us to engage in a search for more satisfying responses."

"It's just not going to be effective for us to keep saying what we've been saying," he added.

Continued on page 5

Patriarch of Jerusalem to visit Rochester

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, is scheduled to visit Rochester Dec. 9-11, as part of a 10-day trip to Canada and the United States.

The patriarch's visit to North America is scheduled for Dec. 4-14.

Patriarch Sabbah's itinerary in Rochester will include visits and public speeches at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park; St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., Pittsford; the Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave.; St. John the Evangelist School, 545 Humboldt St.; the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Pittsford; and the Islamic Center of Rochester, 727 Westfall Road.

The patriarch — whose title is comparable to that of an archbishop — will also meet with Bishop Matthew H. Clark at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Gates.

His visit was initially sponsored by the Christian Culture Series and the Basilian Fathers of Assumption University in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Several other groups and organizations have subsequently become sponsors, including the diocesan Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and St. John Fisher College's International Studies Department.

A number of stops in Canada, Buffalo and Rochester were arranged through Rochester native Father Tho-



Patriarch Michel Sabbah

mas Rosica, CSB, who is currently seeking his doctorate at the Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise de Jerusalem.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Father Rosica said it "is extremely significant" that Patriarch Sabbah is the first Palestinian chosen to hold the see of Jerusalem.

Father Rosica said Patriarch Sabbah's appointment on Jan. 6, 1988, was a "milestone in the Vatican's efforts to strengthen the Latin Church in the Holy Land."

During his visits to North America, the patriarch will address issues concerning Middle East peace, the creation of a Palestinian state, and Jerusalem's role as a Holy City.

Since assuming his office nearly five years ago, Patriarch Sabbah has addressed those themes through pastoral letters and public statements. He has frequently said that he will speak for the oppressed — whether they are Israelis or Palestinians.

In a pastoral letter published on the feast of Pentecost in 1990, he declared, "The choice of the church is for a dialogue of peace."

Father Rosica noted that in addition to his public speeches, the patriarch will use his visit to meet with Palestinian students studying in Canada and the United States. Two of those students go to school in Rochester: Youssef Salman attends St. John Fisher College, and Fadi Khoury is currently enrolled at Monroe Community College. Khoury will begin attending Nazareth College in January, 1993.

Born in Nazareth on March 19, 1933, the 59-year old patriarch is the spiritual leader of 54,000 Latin-Rite Catholics in Israel, the West Bank and occupied territories, the Gaza Strip, Jordan and Cyprus.

Prior to his appointment as patriarch, he served pastorally in Jordan and Israel. Patriarch Sabbah also served as president of Bethlehem University, the Holy Land's only Catholic University.

Board OKs plan for 1 junior high in southeast quad

BRIGHTON — The Southeast Quadrant Governance Board approved a proposal Monday, Nov. 23, that would establish a single junior high for the quadrant at St. Thomas More School, 2617 East Ave. The plan would be phased in beginning in the fall of 1993, with full implementation by the fall of 1994.

The plan, which has been submitted to the diocese and still awaits approval, was announced Tuesday, Nov. 24, in a press release from the board.

The junior high school, which would be known as Southeastern Catholic Junior High, would open in the fall of 1993. St. Joseph's in Penfield would continue to operate its own junior high until the end of that school year. By September, 1994, Southeastern would expand by eight classrooms and become the quadrant's single junior high.

The board's proposal also calls for the expansion of pre-kindergarten and day-care programs for children ages 3-5 over the same two-year period.

The *Catholic Courier* will publish an article detailing reactions to the plan in next week's paper.

— Rob Cullivan