

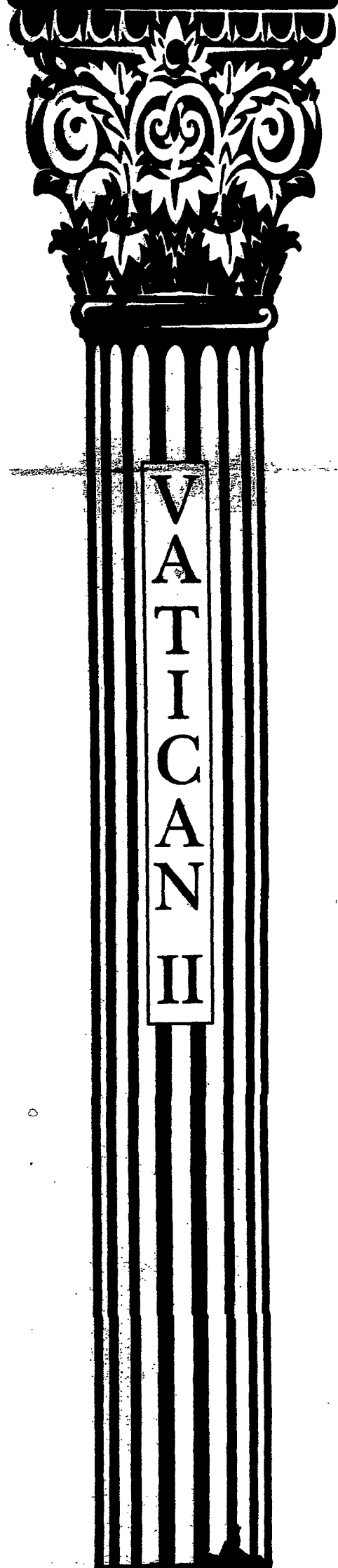
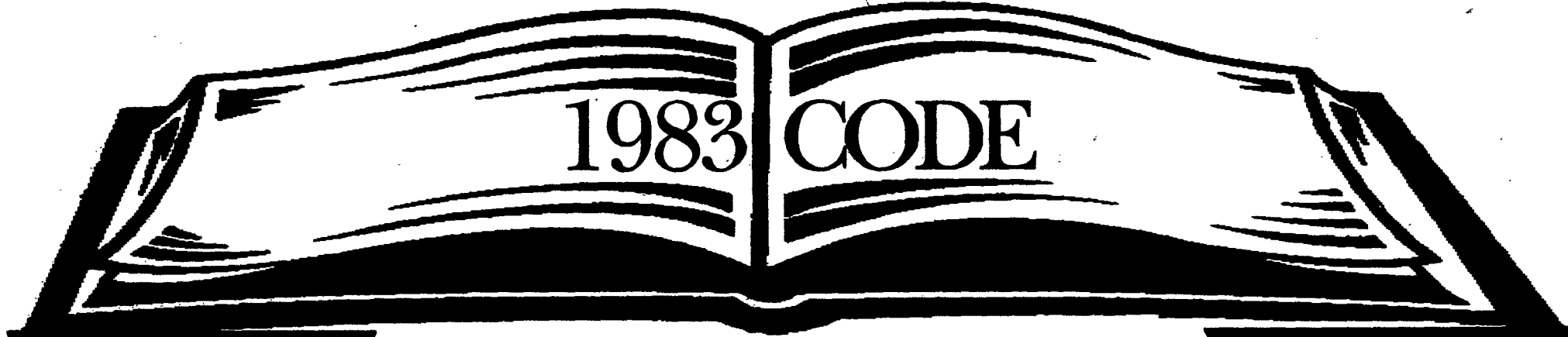
CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 104 No. 50 Thursday, September 16, 1993 75¢ 16 pages

Peace at last

PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands at the White House on Monday after their associates signed a peace accord. Pope John Paul II and other church officials welcomed the historic breakthrough as the first step toward lasting peace in the region. Page 5.



CANON LAW

Revision codifies council's changes

In a scene from the classic horror movie, *The Island of Lost Souls*, the demented Dr. Moreau stands on a rise above the village of man-creatures he has surgically created out of animals. Armed with a whip — which he snaps in the air — he demands of his creatures, "What is the law?"

Some of the Catholic Church's critics might like to envision a similar scene with a church official standing above the faithful armed with a theological whip — say, excommunication — and demanding that the faithful slavishly adhere to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the official body of laws for the Roman Catholic Church.

Students of the church and of canon law would, of course, be quick to note that among the many problems with such a scene is that it is not an accurate depiction of what the Code of Canon Law is, or how it is applied in the church.

Simply put, canon law is a collection of laws designed to "assure public order and decorum in the church," noted James Likoudis, president of the lay organization, Catholics United for the Faith.

"One of the purposes (of canon law) is to assure fidelity to the church in terms of doctrine and the discipline of the church," Likoudis told the *Catholic Courier* during a telephone interview from his Williamson home.

But while he acknowledged that canon law is intended to help foster order in the church, Pope Paul VI was clear in his statements that the

1983 Code of Canon Law — which was being prepared during his pontificate to replace the 1917 code — would be more than just a series of rules ("canon" is the Greek word for measure or rule).

Rather, Pope Paul said on numerous occasions that unlike the 1917 code, the revised canon was an attempt to offer "a new way of thinking."

That "new way," Pope Paul explained, was embodied in the Second Vatican Council. The revised code, he said, would "express more clearly the doctrinal and disciplinary thrust of the council" and would "bring the Church's legislation into harmony with the broadened understanding of the Church as found in the Vatican Council."

When he promulgated the revised code 10 years ago on Jan. 25, 1983, Pope John Paul II restated many of Pope Paul VI's observations about the revision process and the final document. He noted that in "a certain analogy with the council," the new code was "the fruit of a collegial collaboration."

Further, Pope John Paul declared that canon law, while intended to create order and discipline in the church, was never "intended as a substitute for faith, grace, charisms, and especially charity in the life of the Church and of the faithful."

Revising the Code of Canon Law in many ways served to codify the changes made in church law as a result of Vatican II, noted Father Patrick Cogan, SA, executive coordinator.

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