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# Synod priorities to guide diocesan planning

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced the convening of the Rochester diocese's Seventh Synod on June 17, 1990.

The Synod — the diocese's first since 1954 — was the first involving lay people as well as priests.

"My hope for this our Seventh Synod is that it will build from the grass-roots, that it will involve as many people as possible in the discussions, that it will address some of the outstanding issues which face us as a local church, and that it will arrive at specific and measurable recommendations for action to which we will commit our energies and our resources," Bishop Clark wrote in his pastoral letter announcing the Synod.

Thus began a three-year process of meetings in local communities, and regional meetings that involved nearly 30,000 people. That process culminated Oct. 1-3, 1993, with the General Synod at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. The gathering was held in conjunction with the celebration of the diocese's 125th anniversary.

During the Synod, some 1,300 delegates considered the 48 recommendations developed around six general themes during the local and regional sessions.



Delegates then voted five priorities to guide the diocese into the 21st century.

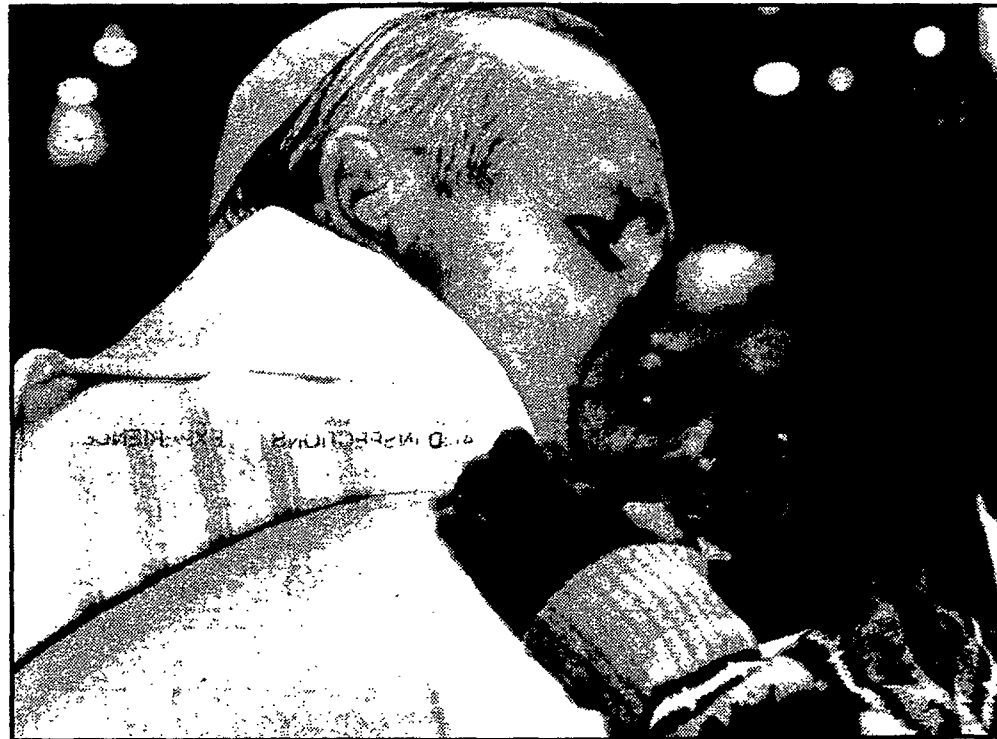
Those priorities are: lifelong religious education; consistent ethic of life; Catholic moral education; the role of women in the church; and small Christian communities.

But even though the process of deciding priorities for the diocese is complete, the Synod is by no means over, noted Synod Implementation Director Deacon Thomas Cass.

"For those who think the Synod is over, really, the work is ahead of us,"



Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided over the Synod's concluding Mass on Oct. 3, 1993. The liturgy was concelebrated by Bishops Joseph L. Hogan and Dennis W. Hickey, along with bishops of the New York Province and Rochester diocesan priests.



(Above) Justin Danzy receives a hug from Bishop Clark at the conclusion of the Synod Mass. (Left) Banner bearers process down Main Street for the Mass at the Rochester Community War Memorial.



the process started.

The Synod Implementation Commission asked for information from parishes about some of the ways they planned to implement the priorities. The commission also convened five analysis teams, one for each of the priorities. The teams met in January and February of this year to consider the input from parishes, and to develop reports about possible ways to implement the priorities.

On March 5, team members presented their reports to the Synod Implementation Commission, which reviewed the reports. The commission will send the reports out for review to parishes at Eastertime, Deacon Cass said. Those reports will be part of a package that includes questions about the reports for the parishes to consider.

Once the parishes have reviewed the reports, comments and responses to the questions will be taken into account in developing a diocesan pastoral plan, Deacon Cass observed.

"The locus of where the implementation is going to take place is in the parishes," Deacon Cass remarked. "We need to make sure that the (pastoral) plan meets the needs of the parishes and the parish communities."

At the same time, Deacon Cass said, the plan must also take into account the parishes' resources in terms of staff, finances, size and history. Thus, the final plan will include options for parishes.

"There will be flexibility in how to implement," the deacon observed, "but there will also be expectations that everybody will be doing something to meet these implementation expectations."

Deacon Cass predicted that the pastoral plan will be ready by the fall of 1994.

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