

Vatican II auditor sees signs of council's fruits

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

PITTSFORD — Sister Mary Luke Tobin, SL, saw some of the fruits of Vatican II a few weeks ago at a church in Seattle.

A woman was serving as the Washington church's "parish minister" — a position similar to that of the pastoral administrator in the Rochester diocese in which a non-priest oversees the parish's day-to-day operations.

"She does everything," Sister Tobin commented in a strong and lively voice that belies her 87 years. "You could think, 'This is the future.'"

"I see effects of Vatican II where I didn't see them five, 10 years ago," Sister Tobin added.

The pace of change has been slow for some, Sister Tobin observed, noting, "It doesn't surprise me that it's been two steps forward, one step back."

Nevertheless, she continued, "I'm hopeful, because I know that 30 years is nothing in the history of the church."

Sister Tobin is in a unique position to judge the church's recent history and the effects of the Second Vatican Council, which concluded 30 years ago. The Sister of Loreto was one of only 15 women auditors (observers) at the council and she helped to develop one of the conciliar documents: the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World."

Moreover, Sister Tobin was an acquaintance of Thomas Merton, eventually creating the Denver, Colo.-based Thomas Merton Center for Creative Exchange; served as the president of her congregation from 1958-70 and of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious from 1964-66; was one of the founders of the International Union of Religious Superiors; and has been a longtime peace activist.

Sister Tobin visited Rochester May 12 to deliver the commencement address for St. Bernard's In-

stitute's 1995 graduation ceremony and to receive an honorary degree.

In an interview earlier that day at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse on East Avenue, Sister Tobin said she chose Vatican II as the theme for her commencement address, noting with a smile, "I'm one of the few people still around who was there."

That the council produced so many changes was not a surprise to Sister Tobin or to many other people.

"My community was very active, and we had begun to deal with some of the issues," she explained. Meanwhile, a priest writing in *The New Yorker* magazine under the pseudonym "Xavier Rynne" had kept people in the United States up to date on some of the issues being addressed at the council, she added.

Moreover, Sister Tobin said, some of the theologians who helped design the

council, such as Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac, "were well aware of what the church was and what it needed. I think they are the ones who had a powerful influence behind the scenes. They had a certain vision and they brought the bishops with them."

One of the council's highlights was an emphasis on the laity's involvement in the church. "Everybody thought," Sister Tobin observed, "who is the church? The men and women, not the structure."

The council also made important strides in such areas as revising the liturgy, speaking out for social justice, fostering ecumenism and condemning discrimination in all forms.

For Sister Tobin, the council's key statement was contained in the "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World."

"Every form of social or cultural discrimination on the grounds of sex —

they said sex, but their meaning was gender — race, color, social conditions, language or religion is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent," Sister Tobin paraphrased. "That's a great statement."

The Council also signaled greater roles for women.

"I think it was Bernard Haring who said if women were invited to be auditors, then they should have some role besides just listening," Sister Tobin recalled. "He suggested some of them be appointed to commissions. It was at least a beginning."

Today, Sister Tobin said, you see women serving in a variety of ministerial positions.

At the same time, however, roles have not extended far enough under Pope John Paul II despite his strong stances on social justice issues.

"He's a conservative in regard to women — as all European churchmen are," Sister Tobin said. "They have not been brought along. They are scared by it."

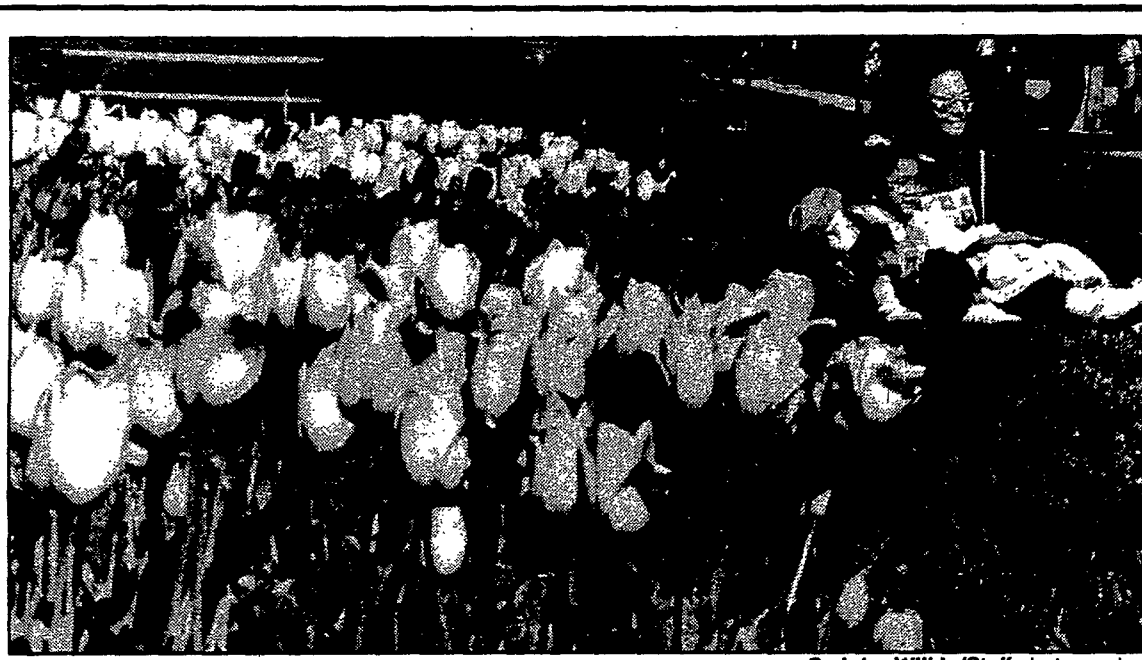
Still, Sister Tobin observed, "I don't have any doubts that women will be recognized as full human beings in the church."

One criticism she had of the council was that no provisions were made to spread its teaching to people, Sister Tobin said.

"I think one of the failings of Vatican II was there were not vehicles put in place for teaching the people the documents of Vatican II," Sister Tobin said. "It would have been better if the bishops had set up teaching instruments so the people would have been aware of what was going on."

Nevertheless, Sister Tobin had praise for the council and the work accomplished there.

"Vatican II," Sister Tobin concluded, "was a courageous step forward by the church trying to begin moving, as Pope John XXIII said, into alignment with the 20th century."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Picture perfect

Sitting among the tulips near the Lambert Conservatory on the corner of South and Reservoir Avenues in Rochester's Highland Park, Regina Kao and her daughter Elizabeth pose May 15 for a picture taken by Chung Kao. The Brighton family was out enjoying the sun and the city's Lilac Festival, which began May 12 and runs through May 21.

Obituaries

Deacon Robert Solan, member of first permanent deacon class, at 74

Deacon Robert O. Solan, a member of the first class of permanent deacons to be ordained in the Rochester diocese who served at Greece's Our Lady of Mercy Church, died of cancer on Friday, April 28, 1995, at Rochester General Hospital. He was 74 years old.

A native of Auburn, Deacon Solan was born Sept. 7, 1920. He and his family moved to Rochester when he was 5. He served in the U.S. Navy as a radar man during World War II. After leaving the service in 1945, he secured a job with Eastman Kodak Company, remaining there until he retired in 1981.

On Nov. 16, 1946, he married Clara Helen Albert. Deacon Solan was ordained April 17, 1982.

Although the Solans were members

of Our Lady of Mercy Parish Deacon Solan was initially assigned as parish deacon at Hamlin's St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. He was assigned to Our Lady of Mercy in 1984.

"He was a strong ministerial presence at Our Lady of Mercy," noted Father William D. Lum, the Greece parish's pastor. "I think he was very much involved in the life of people. He had a sense of what was going on in people's lives and he was there for him."

After suffering a stroke in February — at which time his cancer was discov-

ered — Deacon Solan received more than 400 get-well cards from parishioners and friends, his wife, Clara, recalled.

"He did everything," she said. "He was involved in everything that went on."

A Mass of Christian Burial for Deacon Solan was celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark at Our Lady of Mercy Church on May 1. Father Charles J. Latus, pastor of Mendon's St. Catherine of Siena Church, was the homilist. Interment was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

In addition to his wife, Deacon Solan is survived by his son and daughter-in-

law, George and June Sloan of Allegheny, N.Y.; his daughters and sons-in-law Jeanne and Charles Helberg of Rochester, Mary Ann Solan of Palestine, Texas, Barbara and David Buckout of Rochester, Teresa and Mark Norris of Mt. Vernon, Wash.; six grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

The family requests that friends who wish to do so may make a contribution in Deacon Solan's memory to the Our Lady of Mercy Church Building Fund, 36 Armstrong Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14616.

— Lee Strong

Deacon John M. Boburka; served at St. Patrick's Church in Owego

Deacon John M. Boburka was a man who refused to let physical difficulties interfere with his ministry, the deacon's pastor said.

"He never wanted his health to be a problem in showing the people his love. 'Love one another as I have loved you' — he lived that to the best of his ability," said Father Eugene R. Weis, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, where Deacon Boburka had served since 1984.

Deacon Boburka died Friday, April 21, 1995, at the age of 57. He had been battling a variety of heart ailments for more than a decade.

Deacon Boburka was a native of Johnson City, Broome County. In 1960 he began working for the Owego-based IBM Federal Systems Division, where he was employed for 30 years. He was also a member of the U.S. Navy, serving aboard the aircraft carrier *Saratoga*.

Deacon Boburka was ordained a deacon at St. Patrick's Church in 1984. Of his many activities in Tioga County, the deacon was perhaps best-known for his efforts in Southern Tier Marriage Encounter along with his wife, Yvonne.

"John was thrilled to know that Marriage Encounter was on a resurgence in

the Southern Tier. I gave one in Bath in March and we had 40 couples, the highest number ever," Father Weis noted.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated April 24 at St. Patrick's Church, with Father Weis serving as celebrant.

Donations may be sent in Deacon Boburka's memory to St. Patrick's Church, 300 Main St., Owego, 13827.

In addition to his wife, Deacon Boburka is survived by his sons, John and Paul; daughter, Karen; mother, Mary; brother, Thomas; and several aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

— Mike Latona

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