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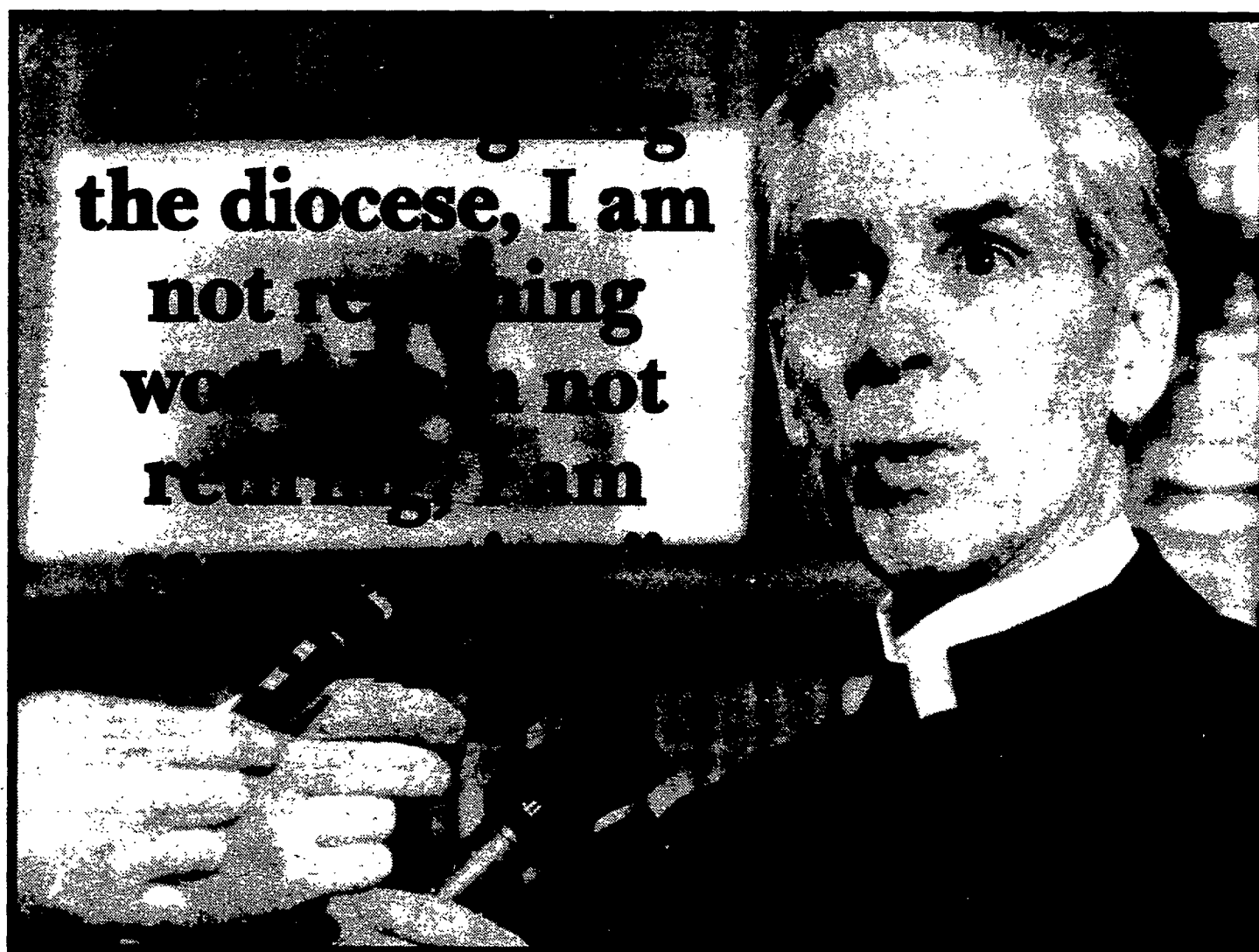


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Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 109 NO. 9 ■ THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1997 ■ 75¢ ■ 20 PAGES



File photo

Bishop offers final surprises

Nov. 27, 1969, was supposed to be Bishop Joseph L. Hogan's day.

At ceremonies at Sacred Heart Cathedral that day, he was officially consecrated a bishop and installed as the seventh bishop of Rochester.

But then came the installation luncheon at Cardinal Mooney High School.

Bishop Hogan's predecessor, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, who had made a surprise announcement Oct. 15 of his retirement and who had been designated archbishop of the titular see of Newport (Wales), rose to speak.

He urged the people of Rochester to support Bishop Hogan, declaring, "He's a great man, a good man, the Lord has put him here."

But he cautioned that a modern bishop's role is "to be a victim who wins over his executioners."

Bishop Sheen then also asked forgiveness for himself for the things he had said — and failed to say — and for the times he "monologued when you felt I should have dialogued."

"The Lord forgives me," he declared. "Forgive me my brother priests. I love you."

Shortly after that dramatic plea for forgiveness, Father Michael Hogan, brother of Rochester's new bishop, performed his last duty as Bishop Sheen's secretary: He drove the bishop to the airport to fly to New York City, where the bishop was to live the last decade of his life.

"Some of the priests of the diocese had come to the airport," Father Hogan recalled, then with a characteristic laugh added, "I didn't know if they came to say goodbye, or to make sure he got on the plane."

The long goodbye

Although he was to return to Rochester a few times during the last decade of his life, that luncheon marked the for-

This is the last article in an occasional series about Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's years as bishop of Rochester.

mal end of Bishop Sheen's three years in Rochester. Inspired by the Second Vatican Council, he had begun his tenure in

1966 by making sweeping changes in the way the diocese was run, in promoting lay involvement and ecumenism, and in reaching out to the poor — as noted in earlier articles in this series.

But the last half of his time in Rochester was overshadowed by what he had himself described in his 1980 autobiography, *Treasure in Clay*, as "a monument to my failure."

That monument was St. Bridget's Church. On Feb. 28, 1968, he had announced that he was giving the parish's buildings and grounds to the federal government for low-income housing. But he had failed to consult with St. Bridget's staff and parishioners. The announcement was greeted by

protests, including a letter signed by a number of the diocese's priests. The offer was withdrawn March 3.

After that, Bishop Sheen backed away from controversial issues, Father Hogan acknowledged.

"I thought the fact that he was backing off these big issues was a good thing," he added.

But the bishop was not inactive. In fact, he even achieved a first for the diocese, ordaining the first permanent deacon in the United States, Deacon Michael Cole, June 1, 1969.

Moreover, he continued to pursue a number of initiatives that he'd already launched. Thus, for example, he remained involved with housing issues: His efforts led eventually to the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation. He also maintained his steady rounds of parish visits.

"He kept on with a positive attitude toward things," Father Hogan said. "He didn't just sit in his chair."

Still, other observers did notice a change.

"Several people told me he was just going through the

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STORY BY LEE STRONG