

Bill Hawken
Father Robert McNamara, left, and Father Robert Bradler bless the body of Bishop Hickey, Oct. 10.

When the newly ordained Father Dennis Hickey began his priestly ministry in 1941, it was at St. Mary's Church in Auburn, under the direction of the magisterial Dr. William E. Cowen, pastor.

There, besides the regular duties of an assistant pastor, he was introduced, by the pastor, to a wide range of civic and incipiently ecumenical assignments, some pleasant and some not so. All of it helped to build a camaraderie, or a kind of sub-cult, of those who had served under Dr. Cowen, known affectionately by the priests as "Buck," for his perceived tendency to reject initially a proffered suggestion.

Certainly it prepared him well for some of the difficult assignments he would face, after 1946, in Rochester ...

Whether he was a simple assistant pastor in Auburn or a pastor in Rochester (and he was twice that), a parish priest or a chancery official, a monsignor or a bishop, he was always priestly, approachable, unassuming, and unpretentious — with a delightfully whimsical sense of humor.

Last July, after my letter to Bishop Hickey about Auburn days had gone unanswered, I learned from his classmate, Father Paul Wohlrab, that the bishop was in the hospital. I made so bold as to send him a letter: "If it is God's will, hold off for a while longer on seeing Dr. Cowen."

But, it was not to be. Like Father Richard Tormey, another of Dr. Cowen's assistants, Bishop Hickey died in the tender care of the Sisters of Mercy.

Longtime friend E. Leo McMannus, now of Venice, Fla.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern
Father Dan McMullin leads mourners in song during the prayer vigil. Ginny Miller, associate director of liturgy, led a combined choir for both services.

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Henry J. Mansell, bishop of Buffalo; John R. McGann, bishop of Rockville Centre; James M. Moynihan, bishop of Syracuse; Frank J. Harrison, retired bishop of Syracuse; Thomas J. Costello, auxiliary bishop of Syracuse; and Edward D. Head, retired bishop of Buffalo.

Bishop Clark later announced that Cardinal John J. O'Connor, archbishop of New York, had sent his regrets that he was unable to attend because of health problems.

The Oct. 11 liturgy began with a procession of deacons, priests, bishops and Bishop Hickey's family members and friends, with Knights of Columbus serving as pallbearers. Most of the priests wore white albs, a symbol of the Resurrection.

Both the Diocesan Festival Choir and the Sacred Heart Cathedral Choir sang for the Mass, with Father Daniel McMullin, pastor of Corpus Christi Church, Rochester, serving as cantor. The choirs were joined by Jenny Pascual, organist; Sue Kiernan, oboist; and trumpeters Sue Brown and Dave Mears. Patrick Caldwell, husband of Bishop Hickey's niece, and Karen M. Franz, general manager of the *Catholic Courier*, were readers.

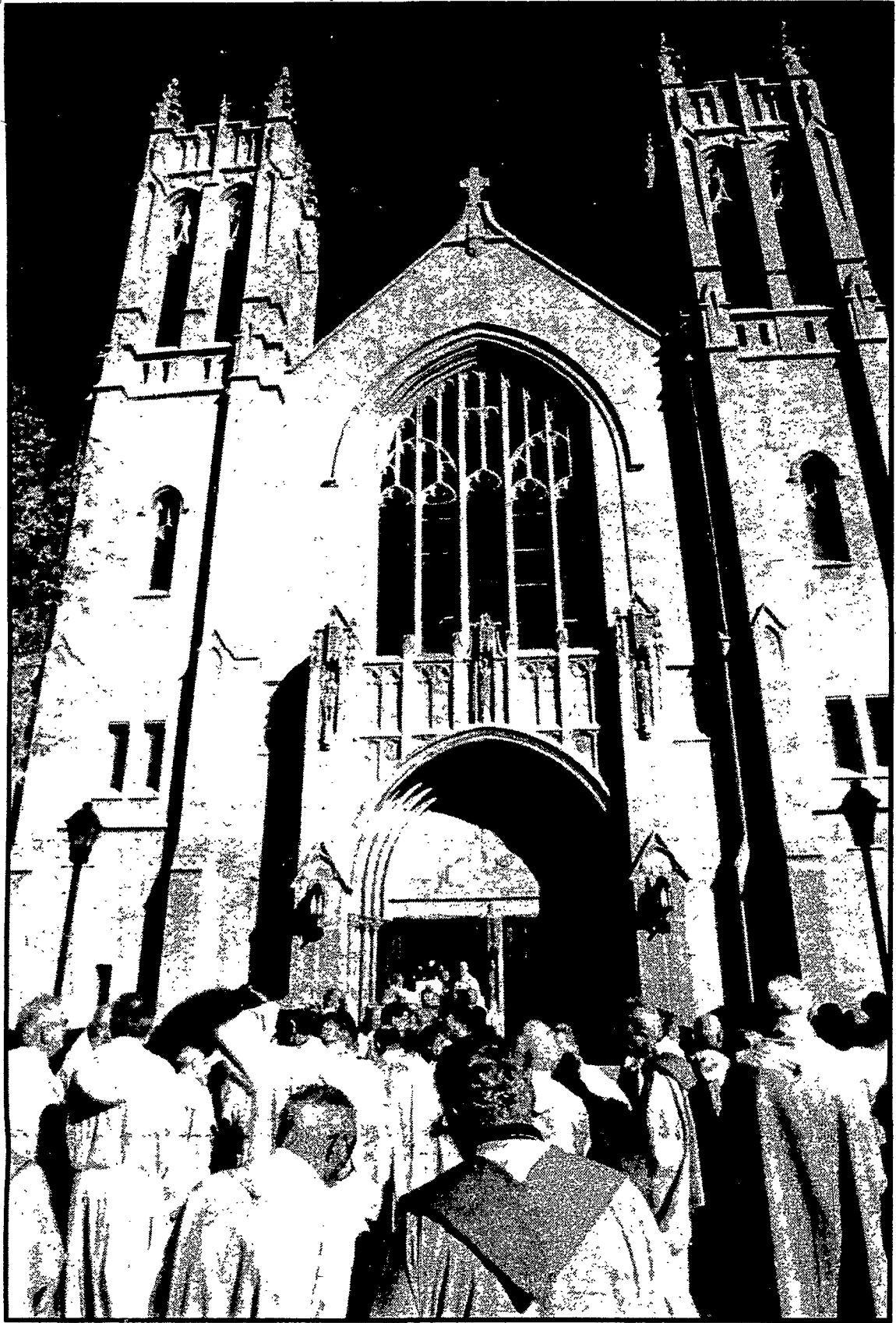
Assembled in the front pews, the priests spoke the words of consecration with Bishop Clark and raised their arms as the bishop lifted the cup.

A loving intercessor

In his homily, Bishop Clark said he had expressed his gratitude to Bishop Hickey during his last visit with him at McAuley Residence.

Since the bishop's death, Bishop Clark said, "we can be sure that we have a loving intercessor in our brother, Dennis."

In sketching Bishop Hickey's character, Bishop Clark referred to the Mass' Gospel reading from Matthew 11:25-30, in which Jesus prays: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern
About 140 priests and deacons file into Sacred Heart Cathedral before the funeral.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern
Father Michael Conboy (from left), Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Father Thomas Mull listen to Bishop Clark's homily during the funeral Mass.

"From his beginnings in Dansville, of which he was always proud, to his embrace of mercy at the end of life ... he could make with deep integrity the same prayer that Christ made," Bishop Clark said.

"We deeply will grieve his passing," Bishop Clark concluded, "but we celebrate all that he has been and will continue to be ..."

The Mass had taken on a more triumphant, almost jubilant tone, and the clergy recessed to a hymn, "Te Deum," composed by the liturgy's other organist, Ricardo Ramirez, winner of the Diocese of Rochester's Jubilee Hymn Competition.

The bishops, priests and deacons gathered outside the church in the warm sun. Bishop Clark turned to them and said: "Dennis would be thrilled with this array."

The bishop then added with a smile: "We need to pray that there are other Dennises out there."