

Retirement (?)

In 1995 Bishop Hickey announced his third retirement — as general manager of the Catholic Courier. In 1990 he had retired as auxiliary bishop, five years after his retirement from the pastorate at St. Thomas More.

Still he drove around the diocese, presiding at Masses, attending and presiding at funerals, graduations and confirmations.

He continued to make a lasting impression on old and young alike.

Alex DeLucenay was confirmed by Bishop Hickey in January at Holy Cross Church, Rochester. Alex, 14, had an opportunity to meet the bishop before the celebration and said he remembered his homily as well.

"He was a person that could relate to younger people," Alex said. "He understood what kind of things we went through. He knew the challenges we faced and how hard it was to overcome them — drugs, alcohol, sex. He said, basically, to follow our church teachings on what to do, to follow what we think God would want us to do and follow what the Gospels say."

Shawn K. McCorry, a parishioner at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Brockport, had dinner with Bishop Hickey before the bishop confirmed him at Nativity in 1997.

"He was very talkative," said Shawn, 17. "He (got) a joke in here or there. He's a really nice guy to be around."

Like so many people, Shawn commented on Bishop Hickey's humility, and the fact that he was never bossy.

"He didn't act like, 'Do this' and 'Do that,'" Shawn said. "He was very casual."

Just some six months ago, recalled Judy Russell, pastoral assistant at St. Jude's, Gates, Bishop Hickey celebrated a funeral there. "He said, 'Have I got a deal for you! Will you come out and assist at the cemetery and then go with me to the Mobil station and show me how to pump gas? Then I'll take you out to lunch.' Here he was, a bishop, at 84, learning to pump his own gas," Russell recalled.

He had a "nonhierarchical" way about him, several people noted.

When Bishop Hickey attended funerals, it was quietly. John F. Rauber of Dansville said, "At my father's funeral he came in quietly and paid his respects to my mother and the family. If I had known the bishop was in line I'd have gone and pulled him out. A couple of years ago when my brother died, Dennis did the same thing. He stayed in line with everybody else. He certainly didn't expect any privileges."

Except, perhaps, as a senior priest around the meeting table.

"We were the two elders at the Priests' Council and we always sat together," Msgr. William H. Shannon said, acknowledging the two carried on their own conversations during council deliberations. "People wondered just what we were thinking and saying to one another, 'These two elders.'"

"Those are secrets! Sometimes we were commenting on the agenda in ways we were not ready to speak necessarily publicly. Not in any unkind way. But we had our own ideas and sometimes shared them."

Last fall, Patrick Van Durme of Dansville spoke with Bishop Hickey at a Priests' Council meeting.

The bishop believed Van Durme, who will be ordained to the diaconate Dec. 4, was the next diocesan priest vocation from Dansville after himself.

"Those times I spent talking with him I got the real sense that first, he was truly interested in what I had to say, and the opinions and ideas that I had. I was also touched by his interest in my



vocation and my development as a seminarian," Van Durme wrote to the Courier by e-mail. He said the bishop had known his grandmother Clara Van Durme well, and some of his uncles also.

"We all have lost a great worker in the vineyard," Van Durme wrote from the American College in Belgium, where his co-seminarians Mark Brewer and Joe Marcoux had a Mass said for Bishop Hickey shortly after his death.

"Retirement" hardly slowed the bishop down, until he was diagnosed in mid-May with lymphoma of the spleen, a rare type of the disease that featured "villous lymphocytes" circulating in the blood. The lymphocytes in the bloodstream mimicked leukemia, explained Dr. Tim Woodlock, a hematologist and medical oncologist at Unity Health System who diagnosed and treated the bishop. It was an unusually rare form of lymphoma, he stressed.

"We kept it under control, but could not get it in remission, due to the nature of it," Dr. Woodlock said. The bishop was treated with mild chemotherapy and was hospitalized twice this summer.

Despite this serious form of cancer, the doctor said, the bishop never showed a lack of faith.

"I didn't see anything that ever shook his faith," he emphasized.

Friends said the realization set in only slowly that Bishop Hickey was quite ill.

Sister Janice Morgan, SSJ, president of Sisters of St. Joseph Congregation, and several other sisters had often invited Bishop Hickey to visit with them and served as a support group throughout many years.

He was fundamentally a simple person — simple in the best biblical sense of that word. Simple in the Gospel means a person who is single minded, whose life is directed toward one fundamental direction or goal. I think his whole life was dedicated to the kingdom of God.

He was a bishop. But he never had any thought that someday he would become a diocesan bishop or anything of that kind. He was quite content that he was named auxiliary bishop and to serve in that capacity.

Once a Sister of St. Joseph was introducing the bishop to a Tanzanian sister who was studying here; she immediately got down on her knees to kiss his ring. He was very startled, very gracious in meeting her. He recovered

He always tried to bring the best out of people he met.

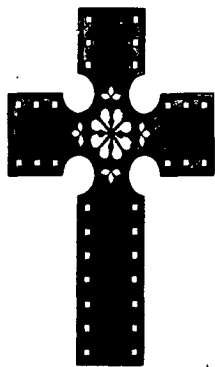
One evening Bishop Hickey went to a concert at St. Anne's Church on Mt. Hope Avenue. After the concert some woman came up to him and said, 'Oh Father Ehmman, it's so nice to see you here this evening.' Bishop Hickey smiled graciously and said to her, 'Thank you very much.'

That was so typical of him. He didn't want to offend.

Msgr. William H. Shannon

Continued on next page

With the Church of Rochester
we celebrate the new life
of our beloved friend,
Bishop Dennis Hickey.



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a wise advocate,
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