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turned out to be the best thing that ever happened," Nona Maginn said. "We got to know a lot of young families raising children at Our Lady of Mercy, and made many friends who are still there."

The Maginns, who raised six children, remain in the same house and parish today.

In the town of Chili, St. Pius X Parish opened a new campus on Chili Avenue in the late 1950s. Carolyn Gommel, parish secretary, recalled that the parish wasn't large at the time but the town quickly filled up. Today, St. Pius X, at 2,400 families, is one of the diocese's largest parishes.

"I think Father (Donald) Murphy envisioned that would happen," Gommel said. "The campus is almost 20 acres."

ALSO: Pope Pius XII released *Munificentissimus Deus*, which proclaimed the dogma of Mary's assumption into heaven, in 1950.

St. John Fisher College opened in 1951 ... Msgr. Joseph Cirincione began the Family Rosary for Peace radio show in 1950.

Pope Pius XII died in 1958 and was succeeded by Pope John XXIII.

The Holy See designated Sacred Heart Pro-Cathedral as the official diocesan cathedral church in 1952 ... St. Andrew's Junior Seminary (now the Pastoral Center) opened a new facility on Buffalo Road in 1950 ... Elmira Notre Dame High School opened in 1955.

1960s to 1990s

The next decade began with the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic to attain the office of U.S. president. Two years later in Rome, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, which would introduce such changes as a liturgy in the vernacular and, an increased role for the laity.

Here in the Diocese of Rochester, Bishop Kearney left office in 1966 and was replaced by the charismatic radio and TV star, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Inspired by Vatican II, Bishop Sheen brought lay people into the administrative operations of the diocese; founded a priests' council; established a housing fund for the poor; established offices devoted to Hispanic, urban and rural outreach; and advanced ecumenism and interfaith relations.

But the post-conciliar hope of a golden new age for a unified church was dealt a blow in 1968 by the reaction to Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reinforced the church's condemnation of artificial birth control. Father Charles Curran, a Rochester diocesan priest then teaching at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., was the leading signatory of the "Washington Statement," which argued that *Humanae Vitae* was not infallible teaching and that Catholics could dissent from the church's position on birth control.

Msgr. William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of theology at Nazareth College, Rochester, wrote a book in 1970 called *The Lively Debate*, which explored both support and opposition to *Humanae Vitae*. The priest said the encyclical had two major effects on the church.

"I think it did something to help mature the laity in the church," he said, noting that the encyclical forced Catholics to study church teachings in order to form their own consciences on birth control.



File photo
The Hosanna Sacred Dance Group carried incense through the congregation at the Oct. 3, 1993, Diocesan Synod Mass.

He added that the encyclical "weakened irrevocably the central authority of the papacy."

"In spite of the way people admire (Pope) John Paul II, there's a great deal of dissent in the way the papal office is exercised," he said.

Changing church

In the 1970s, abortion took center stage when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized the procedure across the country in its 1973 decision in *Roe vs. Wade*. To this day, Catholics upholding the church's stance against it are still among the strongest opponents of legalized abortion and leaders in the movement to end the practice. Yet Catholics are not unanimous in their opposition to abortion, and a number of Catholics — most notably politicians — have taken pro-choice positions.

Meanwhile, the U.S. church experienced a decline in the numbers of religious, clergy and schools. In the Diocese of Rochester, for example, the number of priests declined from 569 in 1969 to 513 in 1979. The number of women religious in the diocese decreased from 1,502 to 1,095 in the same time period, which also saw parish schools winnowed from 99 to 75.

Vatican II continued to make its mark in the diocese during the 1970s, especially because Bishop Sheen's successor, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, was a proponent of the council. Bishop Hogan's administration formed a Diocesan Pastoral Council, a development called for by Vatican II. Among other developments were increased efforts to minister to rural migrant workers; the establishment of offices for family life and black Catholics; growing interest in the charismatic Catholic movement; and the training of a number of permanent deacons.

In 1978, Pope John Paul II, the church's first non-Italian pope in more than 400 years, was elected. Kathy Urbanic, a parishioner at Rochester's St.

Stanislaus Church and a Polish-American historian, recalled the excitement that swept through the Polish Catholic community when it learned a countryman was now the bishop of Rome.

"I think it's a moment when everyone of Polish descent could tell you where they were," she said, adding that 1,000 people filled St. Stanislaus for a Mass of Thanksgiving the day the pope was elected.

In 1979, the new pope named a new leader for the Diocese of Rochester — Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

New directions

Bishop Matthew H. Clark made his mark on the national and international church scene in 1982 when he issued his first formal pastoral letter, "Fire in the Thorn-

bush." It called the church to expand the role of women. In particular, the bishop asked parishes to explore using "inclusive" or non-sexist language in their liturgies and to employ as many women as possible in administrative roles, as well as in liturgical roles that did not require holy orders.

Gloria Ulterino, former director of the Diocesan Office on Women in Church and Society, which closed last spring, recalled that "Fire in the Thornbush" was significant because a Catholic bishop was willing to take women's concerns seriously.

"He knew that there were indeed some women in real pain over church positions on women, and rather than turn that away or turn a deaf ear, he listened ...," she said.

However, Ulterino pointed out that the hope engendered by Bishop Clark's efforts — and those of other church leaders — has been squelched in recent years by Vatican pronouncements forestalling discussion on women's priestly ordination.

The 1980s also saw such events as the beginning of another phase of school closings in this diocese and others throughout the United States; an unsuccessful assassination attempt on May 13, 1981, on the pope; and growing conflict between the U.S. government and Catholic activists over U.S. support of various regimes in Latin America.

Rochester became a center of the mid-80s "sanctuary" movement, which gave refuge to people fleeing U.S.-supported governments' repression in such places as El Salvador. Corpus Christi Church in

Rochester was even featured in national news reports for its efforts to shelter a Salvadoran family.

As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, several significant events took place that would shape the diocese for years to come. The 1993 Diocesan Synod committed diocesan offices and parishes to the implementation of four goals: lifelong catechetical formation of Catholics; support for the consistent life ethic, which opposes abortion, war, euthanasia, poverty and the death penalty; the promotion of women's dignity in church and society; and the establishment of small Christian communities in parishes.

The diocesan school system — which had suffered several closings in the early-90s — eventually stabilized its enrollment by mid-decade. Vocations continued to decline for both priesthood and religious life, but lay activity increased on all levels. Meanwhile, the growing priest shortage forced some parishes to cluster, sharing staff and resources. All diocesan parishes began to plan for the next millennium with varying levels of cooperation in mind.

The last three years of the decade may have been some of the most interesting — and tumultuous — in diocesan history.

In March 1997, Bishop Clark celebrated a Mass for gay and lesbian Catholics and their families. The liturgy — which drew more than 1,000 people to Sacred Heart Cathedral — drew praise from those who saw it as a sign of a much-needed outreach to a group long alienated from the church, and criticism from those who saw it as a sign of tolerance toward behavior antithetical to traditional church teaching.

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata, co-directors of the Catholic Gay and Lesbian Ministry that operates on the diocese's behalf, recalled the Mass.

"We ... never felt more deeply the presence of the Holy Spirit and God's all-embracing love shown by Bishop Clark's courageous presence and caring words," Casey Lopata said.

The following year, the diocese hosted a national conference on Catholic gay and lesbian ministry. It took place just as the diocese became embroiled in another controversy — the removal in August 1998 of Father James B. Callan as administrator of Corpus Christi Church. Bishop Clark took the action because Father Callan had publicly defied church teachings on homosexuality, women's liturgical roles and intercommunion with non-Catholics. Eventually, most of Father Callan's staff was removed or resigned, and hundreds who left the parish formed a new church not in communion with the Catholic Church.

As the decade ends, Bishop Clark continues as shepherd of the diocese, and the universal church is preparing to celebrate Jubilee Year 2000. No one knows what the future holds. But if the past is any indication, it will be filled with plenty of interesting stories.

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