

Chicago Cardinal Francis George answers questions prior to the American Cardinals Dinner in Chicago May 5. (CNS photo)

# Cardinal challenges AMA delegates

CHICAGO (CNS) — Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago is leading the charge against a proposal before the American Medical Association aimed at forcing Catholic hospitals to provide "a full range of reproductive services," including birth control and sterilizations.

The cardinal testified on behalf of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops June 12 before a committee of the AMA's House of Delegates.

"Effectively, the American Medical Association is being asked to help abolish Catholic health care in this country," he said.

Also testifying before the AMA committee was Dr. Michael F. Collins, an AMA member who is president and CEO of Caritas Christi Health Care System in Boston.

Speaking on behalf of the Catholic Health Association, Collins called the pro-

posed Resolution 218 "an unprecedented and unwarranted intrusion into the delivery of health care" that could cause Catholic hospitals to end all obstetric services or even to close their doors.

Collins said the resolution — titled "Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Care" — "is misnamed and misguided and if passed would lead to a decrease in access to health care services for women throughout the country."

It was believed to be the first time that a Catholic leader has actively lobbied the AMA about an internal resolution, although Cardinal George's predecessor, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, addressed the AMA in 1995 about the need for moral renewal of the medical profession.

In another indication of how seriously the CHA was taking the resolution, Father

Michael D. Place, CHA president and CEO, flew to Chicago from his association's own convention taking place in San Francisco June 11-14, the same dates as the AMA gathering.

Proposed by the AMA's California delegation, the resolution would express the 300,000-member organization's support for legislation requiring "any hospital providing perinatal services which receives public or taxpayer funds, including Medicare and/or Medicaid, ... to provide a full range of reproductive services."

Although the resolution does not specifically mention abortion, which is most often performed not in hospitals but in clinics or doctors' offices, it calls on all hospitals to provide birth control, tubal ligations and vasectomies — all of which are

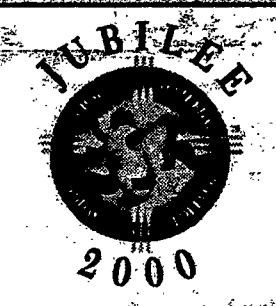
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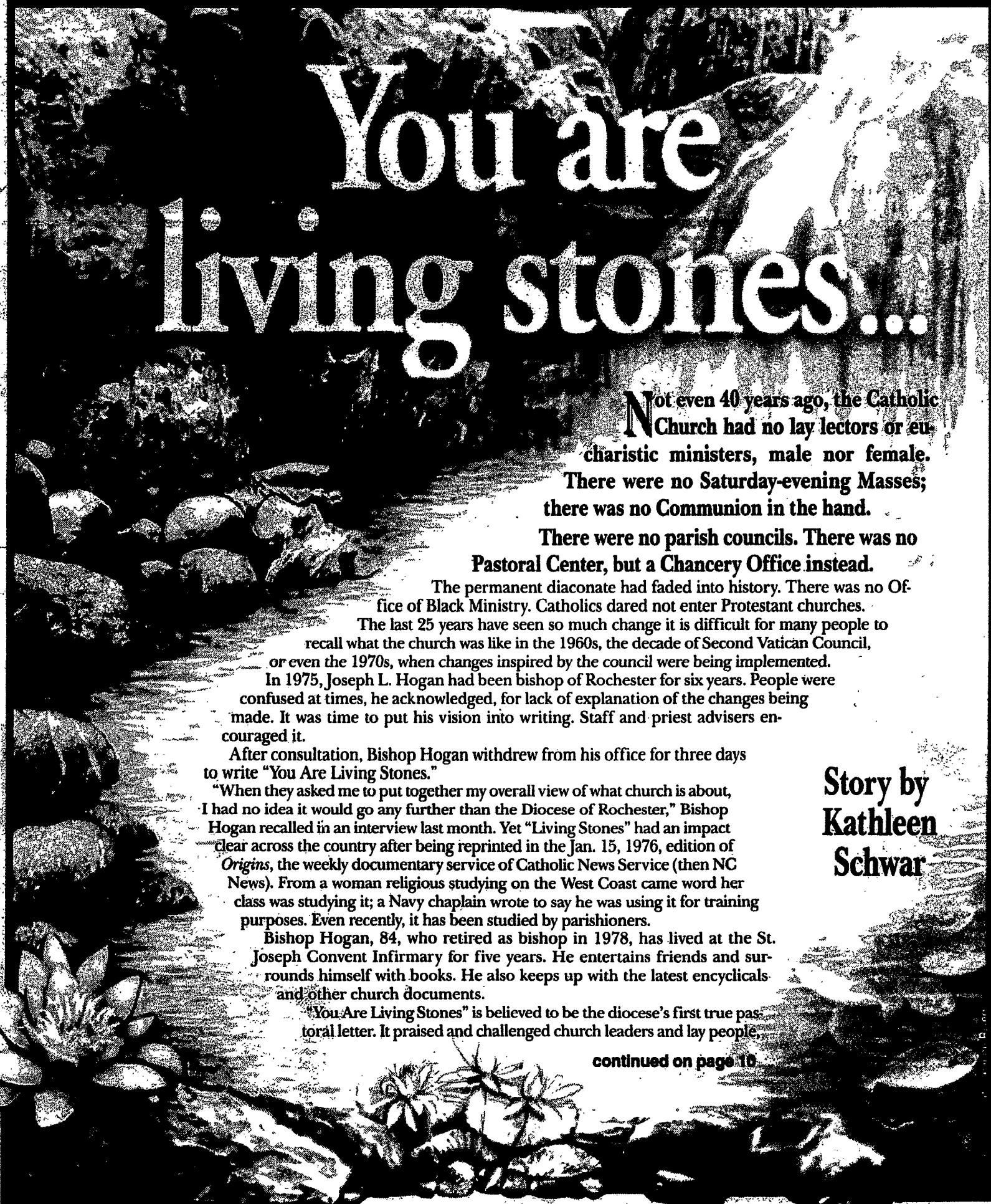
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## You are living stones...

Not even 40 years ago, the Catholic Church had no lay lectors or eucharistic ministers, male nor female. There were no Saturday-evening Masses; there was no Communion in the hand. There were no parish councils. There was no Pastoral Center, but a Chancery Office instead.

The permanent diaconate had faded into history. There was no Office of Black Ministry. Catholics dared not enter Protestant churches. The last 25 years have seen so much change it is difficult for many people to recall what the church was like in the 1960s, the decade of Second Vatican Council, or even the 1970s, when changes inspired by the council were being implemented. In 1975, Joseph L. Hogan had been bishop of Rochester for six years. People were confused at times, he acknowledged, for lack of explanation of the changes being made. It was time to put his vision into writing. Staff and priest advisers encouraged it.

After consultation, Bishop Hogan withdrew from his office for three days to write "You Are Living Stones."

"When they asked me to put together my overall view of what church is about, I had no idea it would go any further than the Diocese of Rochester," Bishop Hogan recalled in an interview last month. Yet "Living Stones" had an impact clear across the country after being reprinted in the Jan. 15, 1976, edition of *Origins*, the weekly documentary service of Catholic News Service (then NC News). From a woman religious studying on the West Coast came word her class was studying it; a Navy chaplain wrote to say he was using it for training purposes. Even recently, it has been studied by parishioners.

Bishop Hogan, 84, who retired as bishop in 1978, has lived at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary for five years. He entertains friends and surrounds himself with books. He also keeps up with the latest encyclicals and other church documents.

"You Are Living Stones" is believed to be the diocese's first true pastoral letter. It praised and challenged church leaders and lay people.

Story by Kathleen Schwar

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