

Bishop-teacher lived out his lessons

EDITORS' NOTE: The following is the text of the eulogy Father Joseph A. Hart, V.G., delivered at the funeral Mass for Bishop Joseph L. Hogan.

Many people, more articulate than I, could stand before you today to talk about Bishop Hogan's unusually rich contribution to ecumenism, to the works of social justice, or to the renewal of the institutions of the local Church following the Second Vatican Council. Instead I will talk to you about Becket Hall — because that's what Bishop Hogan wanted me to do. I think he considered Becket Hall his finest achievement.

My class was the first to graduate from Becket Hall — the college seminary program which he invented. Becket was more than a physical place. It was a concept of priestly formation rooted in the Vatican II principles of freedom and responsibility. Overnight, it seems now, we went from a seminary program where suspicion reigned, where even the slightest infraction of the law was punishable by expulsion, where even the most mature student was treated like a child, to Becket Hall where trust, maturity, good humor, spirituality and virtue reigned. And Joseph Hogan was the personal embodiment of it all.

He stressed what he called "the home virtues" — courtesy, honesty, civility. With high hopes he'd tell us: "I want to make you gentlemen to your fingertips." He hated all forms of selfish behavior. "Better never than late," he'd say. He wanted to form us into a community of faith and charity — with internal motivation the only rule and fraternal correction the only discipline.

He disliked the image seminarians of the past projected — so-called "hot-house tomatoes" — who did not know how to socialize with their lay peers or how to interact with women. On a Friday night, he might make the rounds of the dorm rooms inquiring why we were not out socializing, why we were not at a campus mixer. While dating was forbidden, mature relationships were encouraged. Nevertheless, we were warned in characteristic good humor, "Be cautious, gentlemen. Put a collar on a broomstick and some woman will chase it to hell!"

He was an absolutely transparent person. He lived the virtues which he encouraged: prudence, kindness, justice, forbearance, humility, patience ...

Let me illustrate this with a bit of history:

On the afternoon of January 5, 1968, I entered the Becket Hall chapel to find Msgr. Hogan at prayer. I asked if he was OK since he did not look well at all. Next to him in the pew was a copy of his doctoral dissertation on the sin of pride in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Slowly the story tumbled out. That day, Rome had announced two new auxiliary bishops for Rochester: Dennis Hickey and John McCafferty. It was a bitter blow for Joseph Hogan. Bishop Sheen had been telling him since December 1966 that soon he would be named auxiliary bishop of Rochester — everything had been arranged in



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Father Joseph A. Hart (center) walks with Father Michael Conboy (left) and fellow priests to process into Sacred Heart Cathedral before Bishop Joseph Hogan's funeral on August 31.



File photo

(From left) Tim Dirkin, Jerry McNerney and Peter Schuster with Becket the Dog and Msgr. Joseph L. Hogan, rector. Dirkin and Schuster were from the Diocese of St. Augustine, Fla.

Rome. Sheen even told his mother, Mary Shaw Hogan, that soon her son would be ordained a bishop. Sheen would not let him unpack at the new Becket Hall: "It will only be a couple more weeks." So Msgr. Hogan secretly lived out of cartons. And now his hopes were dashed. Moreover, Bishop Sheen would not answer his phone calls.

This would be a cause for anger in a lesser man. It could be cause for resentment and bitterness. But there instead was Joseph Hogan, before the Blessed Sacrament, examining his conscience, finding in his heart traces of pride which must be excised, traces of ambition which must be removed.

From hindsight, Joseph Hogan found in this incident the providential grace of God which led him from the seminary to the parish of St. Margaret Mary to complete his education before becoming a Vatican II bishop ... after Bishop Sheen per-

sonally intervened with Pope Paul VI to ensure that Msgr. Hogan was his successor.

From hindsight, I have always found this incident indicative of the man and his spirituality: Prayer was a natural part of his life. It was before the Blessed Sacrament he came to praise God for a day gone right, to sort things out in times of confusion, to find healing in times of hurt, to learn to laugh again at the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

And laugh he did. While he could be deadly serious and had a temper that could blow like Mount St. Helen's, who here can remember a day when he was not laughing? In the winter of 1966, when a snowstorm closed all of Rochester for three days, off we went to Durand Eastman Park to toboggan — with 50-year-old Msgr. Hogan in tow. He loved it. He could scarcely walk for weeks to come, but he laughed every time he remem-

bered this student or that flying through the air, having left earth and toboggan behind.

In his time as Rochester's seventh bishop, there were many days when, like that famous toboggan run, the internal pain was intense — the pain of being misunderstood, unfairly criticized, abandoned by friends, marked out by enemies, accused of disloyalty — but he just laughed. He laughed at the past and the future. He laughed at himself and at us. He laughed at the Major Hoopels and the prophets of doom. He laughed at his own foibles and at the flat earth society and at Lil who swallowed the atomic pill.

While seminary students, Msgr. Hogan taught us fierce loyalty to the Gospels and the Church, to the Pope and to the bishop ... no matter what difficult thing they might ask of us. He walked what he talked. For example, Bishop Sheen would often call up Msgr. Hogan with unusual requests. Clare Booth Luce was in town ... or Loretta Young ... would he please drive by and take them off his hands. He always complied.

Did the timing of Joseph Hogan's death this week cause you to stop and think? Loretta Young died just a week before. After a reunion of a whole week, I wonder whether Archbishop Sheen had had enough of the clinging Loretta Young and simply asked that Bishop Hogan be summoned once again to take her off his hands for a while!

Whatever the case, with sadness we gather today to say goodbye to a loyal friend, a great teacher, a worthy mentor, a loyal churchman, a marvelous human being, a steady captain who steered this local church through the treacherous shoals of church reform. He took as his episcopal motto the one he had given first to Becket Hall and to us his students: "Libentissime impendam et super impendar." In the context of 2 Corinthians 12 it reads: "I have not been a burden to you, for I sought not what is yours but you ... I most gladly spent and was spent for your souls."

Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter now the joy of your Lord.

I always enjoyed Bishop Hogan's company. He was a marvelous conversationalist and a great wordsmith. He was called "Ack" for all his academic talents. And he was a very wonderful human being. He had a very infectious smile — a smile that would light up a room.

The 1960s were tough years, crazy years. The Vietnam War was going on, cities were being burned down, and he went into uncharted waters after the Second Vatican Council. He was not dealt an easy hand to play with, but he dealt with the tremendous turmoil as best as anyone could.

Whenever he gave a person a job to do, he never looked over their shoulder. He didn't micro-manage.

When I became bishop he sent me a very lovely note. I enjoyed the opportunities I had to be with him after that, when I would visit him at the infirmary.

— Bishop James Moynihan of Syracuse, former Rochester diocesan chancellor under Bishop Hogan

He was a year ahead of me in seminary. We went to Canisius together for our master's degrees. Every Friday we would go to dinner and on to classes, then back to Rochester to hear confessions on Saturday.

When he became bishop, I was chairperson of the Liturgy Commission. He really brought the church of Rochester in the contemporary church of Vatican II, which was no easy task. I think his physical struggles were accentuated by the way in which his forward-looking thinking was simply found not acceptable by some people.

He handed over to Bishop Clark a very good church that was alive with the spirit of Vatican II. He understood very clearly that the church was first and foremost God's people, which is to say he regarded baptism as the fundamental sacrament which makes us all Christians.

(In retirement) he wanted to keep up with the church. He did a lot of reading and kept in touch with the priests; he knew what was going on in the diocese. He still did confirmations and I'm sure he would've been happy to do what he could.

— Msgr. William Shannon