

FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

June 27, 2005

Bishop Joseph V. Adamec

THE PASSING OF A BISHOP

As I write, this Diocesan Church is preparing for the Funeral Mass and burial of Bishop James J. Hogan, its sixth shepherd. Burying a bishop is a bit more complicated than most funerals. When a bishop dies, the Apostolic Nuncio needs to be notified so that he, in turn, can notify the Holy Father. The fact is also made known to the metropolitan archbishop. Then, all of the bishops of the nation are notified and invited to the funeral. While this is going on, the news is, of course, conveyed to our own clergy and to the faithful throughout the Diocese.

The preparations, themselves, are multi-faceted. The greatest amount of preparation involves the funeral liturgy itself. The schedule for viewing is set. The crypt in the basement of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is made ready for the body. Transportation and lodging are arranged for those expected to attend from outside the Diocese. A special edition of the diocesan newspaper is issued. The communications office is in regular contact with the mass media about arrangements as they develop.

Amid all of the preparations, there is an emotional involvement for a good many of our priests and a few of our deacons. They are the ones who would have been ordained by Bishop Hogan and would, therefore, have had a special relationship to him. In some respects, it is like a father leaving them.

Bishop Hogan's passing from our midst holds a deep significance for all of us in the Church. Another successor to the Apostles has been called home by the Lord, one on the apostolic chain of succession who had hands laid on him earlier than most current bishops in this nation. The Bishop was our connection to a great deal of our diocesan history, as well as that of the Universal Church. He was one of only several bishop survivors of the Second Vatican Council.

Even though I have been the Diocesan Bishop for the past eighteen years, it is these days of mourning that are the real closing of another diocesan chapter for us. We need to remember with gratitude the 21-plus years that Bishop Hogan guided this Diocesan Church. They were times of transition and challenge; - perhaps, much more difficult than those of today. He met them all with faith, gentleness, humility, and hope. This is a time of recalling the memory of a kind shepherd, often taken advantage of due to that kindness.

There is a Native American saying, which reminds us that we do not authentically know a person unless we first walk in his or her moccasins. None of us can actually do that. Nor can we thoroughly appreciate Bishop Hogan's contribution of self to this Diocesan Church. What we do know is that, for almost two decades, we have been building upon the foundations that he had laid. Only God starts from scratch. The rest of us function on

the shoulders of those who precede us. That is the way it is with the succession of bishops.

I had some sense of that when I visited Bishop Hogan the afternoon before he died. Sister Joachim of Garvey Manor and I prayed with him. He could not pronounce the words (or even move his lips) but did make faint sounds, attempting to join us. Then, Sister placed his hand into mine. With more strength than I thought he had, the Bishop squeezed my fingers several times. That gesture has left a profound impression upon me. I think that I shall remember that final handshake of his for a long, long time. It will encourage me, as I walk in my own moccasins.