

JOHN R. ROACH, ARCHBISHOP

HE TAUGHT BY EXAMPLE THAT JUSTICE WAS CATHOLIC WORK

Archbishop John R. Roach has left a lasting imprint on this archdiocese. He has helped to shape this local church in many important ways, but I suggest that among his most important contributions has been his leadership in making the church a respected voice and an active participant in the public arena.

He has taught us how to practice our faith in the public realm.

For Archbishop Roach, there has been a fundamental connection between the church's internal life and its public life, between the more explicitly religious ministries on the one hand and the more social and public ministries on the other.

Through his example, we have seen that these are not completely separate and unrelated parts of the church's work. Rather, they are essential and interrelated elements of practicing our Catholic faith in the modern world.

This close integration of internal and public ministries is rooted in the theology of the Second Vatican Council. It is the theological vision that seems to have shaped the style and content of Archbishop Roach's ministry. In 1981, as president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, he spoke to the full body of bishops at their annual meeting. In referring to the Vatican II document on the Church and Modern World, he said:

The decisive contribution of the Pastoral Constitution is the way it defined the protection of human dignity and the promotion of human rights as properly ecclesial tasks, an integral part of the church's ministry.

Elsewhere in that same address, Archbishop Roach pointed out that:

Our own faith community is an example of how the social vision of faith increasingly calls the church to a public theology and public witness on political questions.

When the U.S. Catholic Conference addresses the impact of budget cuts on the poor, when bishops speak on the arms race, when Catholics individually or collectively oppose abortion and capital punishment on defending the sanctity of life, then it must be clear that these actions are rooted in, directed by and in fulfillment of a theologically grounded conception of the church's ministry.

More recently, in a pastoral letter that he issued on the 100th anniversary of Catholic School Teaching, he wrote:

Since becoming archbishop 15 years ago, I have been asked many times about the church's involvement in the public debate about social and political issues. People ask 'Why doesn't the church stay with activities which are truly religious, such as the sacraments and religious education? Why deal with issues in the secular world? Why deal with issues that are political? ...'

It is not only appropriate, but essential that Catholics be involved in working for social, political and economic justice. This is not an optional or peripheral part of our faith. Nor is it new. It is at the heart of our faith, and it is deeply rooted in the Gospel. ... The faith that we profess is a profoundly social faith. It requires us to show love to others not only in an individual sense, but also socially, by working to make social structures and social institutions more just. To work for this kind of goal is itself a religious act. It is an essential part of our search for holiness.

This is Archbishop Roach's legacy. May we continue to build on the solid foundation he has laid.

Ron Krietemeyer
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

CARDINAL BERNARDIN LABELS HIS FRIEND AS A MAN WHO 'MADE A DIFFERENCE'

The presence and voice of Archbishop John R. Roach "made a difference" in the church in Minnesota, in the United States and around the globe, said Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

The Chicago cardinal, a close friend of Archbishop Roach, described him as "an outstanding leader, both within our church and ecumenically. The way he has administered the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is a model for all dioceses."

The cardinal said Archbishop Roach was acclaimed widely for his leadership abilities in the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference.

"Both as president of the NCCB/USCC and as chairman of the USCC Committee on International Policy, he addressed in a thoughtful and effective way many

significant issues affecting the well-being of the church and society,” the cardinal said.

“His presence and voice made a difference.”

From a personal point of view, the cardinal termed Archbishop Roach “a man of great integrity,” as he put it.

“He is straightforward, honest. He does not engage in double-talk or look for others to blame when things go wrong. Yet, he is always respectful of persons, no matter how much he might disagree with them”

Cardinal Bernardin said he was able to see several sides of the archbishop over the years.

“I have worked closely with Archbishop Roach on a number of projects both in this country and in Rome,” he said.

“While he can be—and usually is—very serious when he deals with a particular issue, he never loses his sense of humor.”

“There have been times when we would have been somewhat discouraged were it not for his humor and his ability to see crises as challenges and opportunities for creative thinking and actions.”

The cardinal said he expects Archbishop Roach to be fairly active in retirement. “I trust that he will continue to be a forceful and effective spokesperson for the church,” Cardinal Bernardin said. “His wisdom and experience are needed today more than ever.

“As a matter of fact, now that he has been relieved of administrative responsibilities, I expect him to continue being a significant voice to which people will listen.”

Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

FROM PRIOR LAKE TO PRIESTHOOD

Here’s the life story of the man who came to be our archbishop
and the president of the U.S. bishops.

Who’s the man who spent 20 years as the ordinary of the archdiocese that was his home?

John Robert Roach was born in Prior Lake, MN, on July 31, 1921, the oldest of three children of Simon and Mary V. Roach. As a teenager, he worked in the family's general store on the main street of the small town southwest of Minneapolis.

He attended Shakopee High School before beginning his preparation for the priesthood at Nazareth Hall, the former archdiocesan college seminary. He went on to graduate from the St. Paul Seminary, and also earned a master's degree in education from the University of Minnesota.

He was ordained on June 8, 1946, and assigned to St. Stephen on the near south side of Minneapolis for the summer. When fall came the then Father Roach taught Latin and religion at St. Thomas Academy. He was appointed headmaster of the school in 1951, a position he was to hold for 17 years.

During that time the school moved from the campus of the then College of St. Thomas to its current location in Mendota Heights.

Named a monsignor in 1966, he was asked to begin a new college-level seminary two years later, and as the rector of St. John Vianney Seminary he put together a team to form, educate and prepare men for the priesthood.

He had earned a reputation at St. Thomas as a stern disciplinarian—a hard nose—but later he credited his time at the college-level seminary as a moderating force in his life.

That he was respected by his peers was evident; he was chosen to be a member of the Priests Senate in the archdiocese in 1968, and later elected that body's president.

He served three years at St. John Vianney before being named an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese in 1971. That year he was also named vicar for parishes and became pastor of St. Charles Borromeo parish in the Minneapolis suburb of St. Anthony, where he served for two years.

He was appointed vicar for clergy in 1972 and the next year was named pastor of St. Cecelia parish, St. Paul, where he was serving when news came of his appointment to head the 12-county archdiocese of more than half a million Catholics.

Archbishop Roach succeeded Archbishop Leo Binz, who personally smoothed the way for the appointment by resigning five months short of his 75th birthday. Archbishop Binz cited his own poor health and the unexpected death in October 1974 of Archbishop Leo C. Byrne, his co-adjutor bishop during that illness, who was scheduled to succeed him.

In a letter to the Vatican, Archbishop Binz further stated his belief that an early retirement would give Pope Paul VI more freedom in selecting a new archbishop.

Coinciding with the 125th anniversary of the founding of the diocese, the colorful installation ceremony was held on July 16, 1975, for the sixth archbishop and the first Minnesotan to head the see.

In his installation homily, Archbishop Roach voiced what became a major concern of his era: that the church exists “in the midst of too much hate, too much suffering, too much injustice.”

Even before his installation, Archbishop Roach began reaching out to the community in new ways. He donned a Sioux Indian ceremonial headdress and beaded gown for a Native American hearing at St. Stephen Church, Minneapolis.

In subsequent years, he broadened efforts to reach out to Black Catholics and welcomed Southeast Asians, Koreans, Hispanics and other refugees who moved to the area.

His concern extended to troubled marriages and early on he established an office to aid separated and divorced Catholics.

He supported the J.P. Stevens and Nestle boycotts of the late 1970’s—both controversial social justice issues of the day—and took a strong stand on other justice topics.

In 1978, in response to a St. Paul political hot potato, he pleaded for compassion for homosexuals and said they should be accorded “human dignity and worth” even while the church cannot sanction the gay lifestyle “as a morally acceptable alternative to heterosexual marriage.”

It was an issue that he would continue to address at other times during his tenure in the archbishop’s chair.

In that initial controversy, both sides used his statement and eventually voters repealed the city’s homosexual rights ordinance.

But the volatile issue was believed responsible for an incident that brought Archbishop Roach to the front pages of newspapers across the country. A Minneapolis man who acknowledged that he was homosexual threw a pie in the archbishop’s face as Archbishop Roach was receiving a brotherhood award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

In other high-profile actions, Archbishop Roach established the Westminster Corporation, an agency now known as CommonBond, to obtain funds, build and

manage housing for the poor, elderly and disabled people. It served as a model for similar programs in other dioceses.

He tried to get the state of Minnesota to end abortion funding, he argued in favor of government aid for non-public schools, even presenting arguments in person to President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and 1978.

In the mid- and late-1980's, with farmers caught in an economic bind, he joined with other church and civic leaders to protest legislative measures that were costing family farmers their way of life. And he went on to chair and agriculture committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops that investigated the farmers' plight.

In the vanguard of church leaders who recognized the talents of women, Archbishop Roach established a Commission on Women in 1979 and appointed women to positions of leadership in his administration.

One of those, Renee McGivern, was promoted to director of the Annual Catholic Appeal, a fund-raising effort that previously had been coordinated by men.

"I liked working with Archbishop Roach. He was open to the talents of others and was willing to delegate authority. I never felt he treated me any differently because I am a woman," McGivern said. "I felt I was respected for the job I could do."

Other women in leadership roles included Joan Bernet, director of communications; Patricia S. Gries, former director of the Division of Ministry Personnel, a cabinet-level post; Vicki Klima, director of the Worship Center, and Blessed Virgin Mary Sister Fran Donnelly, director of the Center for Ministry.

While Archbishop Roach frequently tackled controversial public issues head on, he displayed moderation in matters of the faith.

He occasionally reminded groups that wanted to debate the ordination of women that the issues was closed—the Vatican had made that clear. And he publicly rebuked a parish pastor who turned over his pulpit to feminist Gloria Steinem in 1978. The archbishop said the ensuing scandal left him no alternative.

Not long after that he became head of the three-state province, he evidenced his interest in ecumenism. He met with Minnesota rabbis and the Jewish community in 1976 to discuss the U.S. bishops' "Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations" and preached to 1,500 at a synagogue service.

In 1979, he was the first Catholic to preach at a traditional Lutheran Reformation festival in the state. He told the 4,000 guests, "We have gone too long as a

people separated. When we look at the plea of Jesus Christ for unity, it is hard to regard our division as anything but sinful.”

Later he tried to heal wounds inflicted by a predecessor when he invited orthodox clergy to his rectory for a social occasion.

Archbishop Roach was honored by his peers in 1980 when he was elected president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

He worked hard and long, traveling often to the Vatican and overseeing national committees and issues. As his three-year term was drawing to a close, he said he was grateful to his auxiliary bishops and others in the archdiocese for working so diligently at a time when his time and energies were divided between St. Paul and Washington.

Church leaders agreed that he was well suited to the national post, however. His square, solidly built figure and keen glance became familiar to many as he was pictured listening attentively to his peers on issues ranging from individual problems to the questions of international peace. The bishops’ pastoral on the economy was issued during his time as president.

Work on the U.S. Bishops’ historic 1985 pastoral on war and peace was initiated during his term.

Yet there were disappointments. In an interview on his 10th anniversary as head of the see, Archbishop Roach spoke of his dismay about disunity among Catholics.

“The inability of people to be respectful in their disagreement with other people is my major disappointment,” he said at that time. “I don’t know how you lick that because I’m talking about people who are members of the one body of Christ, people who are formed by the one holy word of God, people who profess at least to be Eucharistic people and who should see the Eucharist as a sign of unity. Yet those people cut of one another and hurt each other badly. That very seriously bothers me.”

A personal trauma occurred in early in 1985 when Archbishop Roach was charged with driving while intoxicated after a minor accident as he was driving near his cabin in Chisago County.

Ultimately, he was fined, spent 48 hours in jail and received counseling.

A proud man, he said it was difficult to face “my own flawedness” but he was grateful for the outpouring of support from priests, church leaders and the laity.

And in his Easter "Peace" column in the Catholic Bulletin that year, he wrote of how he had been changed during Lent, of how his "prayer life took on new meaning."

He wrote, "I felt the loving embrace of the Lord's mercy, gentleness, love, and finally, peace. ... This is an extraordinary Holy Week for me. I will know a special joy in celebrating Christ's resurrection because you have sustained me as I tasted the agony."

By 1987, the church encountered yet another difficult situation as charges of pedophilia were brought against several priests. Receiving the most notoriety as charges unfolded was a case involving a priest of the Winona diocese who served several archdiocesan parishes over a number of years and ultimately was accused in a number of incidents.

In response, Archbishop Roach directed archdiocesan officials to prepare a policy that covers the pastoral response to sexual misbehavior by ministry personnel, a document which has served as a guideline for other dioceses.

He also directed that all archdiocesan employees receive sexual awareness training.

His genuine interest in ecumenism and his personal friendships with leaders of the local Lutheran communities in both St. Paul and Minneapolis led to the signing of a covenant between the Catholic archdiocese and the Lutheran synods in the Twin Cities in 1990.

The covenant pledged the two traditions to work together to meet common needs. One of the first fruits of the covenant is a set of guidelines issued just this June that is intended to assist couples entering into two-tradition marriages as well as to assist those Catholics and Lutherans who are already married to live their lives of faith.

In the last five years of his administration Archbishop Roach has attempted to help parishes prepare for the future by instituting a decentralized parish planning process that calls for the people in the pews and parish staffs to plan for the ministries that will meet their needs.

Vowing not to close parishes, as many other U.S. dioceses have done, he set in motion a process that encourages interparish cooperative efforts and clustering to maintain the church's presence in even the poorest areas of the archdiocese.

When Archbishop Harry J. Flynn was appointed his coadjutor on February 22, 1994, Archbishop Roach invited the New York native and former Louisiana bishop to share fully in the decision-making and responsibility for the archdiocese.

During the 18-month period before his official retirement, Archbishop Roach put much of his energy into a final major project, the Family of Faith Endowment. The endowment aims to provide funding for a number of educational and social programs, but its primary function will be to try to make Catholic education available to people from all ranges of income.

Pampusch also lauded the archbishop's commitment to all levels of education in the archdiocese.

Pampusch said Archbishop Roach's background as teacher and headmaster at St. Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights served him well.

"He just knew the kinds of issues that young people encounter, she said.

She said she particularly appreciated Archbishop Roach's recent efforts to detail the mission of the Catholic university to the St. Catherine board of trustees.

Phyllis Willerscheidt, executive coordinator of the archdiocesan Commission on Women, also praised Archbishop Roach's efforts to further the cause of women in the church.

In 1970, he established the first diocesan Commission on Women in the nation and helped initiate the U.S. bishops' committee on women in church and society.

He also encouraged leadership roles for women throughout the archdiocese.

During a recent Catholic Bulletin interview, Archbishop Roach said, "The Commission on Women has made a particular contribution to the church. And I have said publicly that I am very much in favor of continuing the study of women in the diaconate. If the church were to say, 'Now I believe this is valid and would be a good expression of order,' I'd applaud it."

Several people also commented about the archbishop's ability to step beyond the state's religious communities and into the sphere of civic debate.

Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Sister Fran Donnelly, archdiocesan Center of Ministry director, said Archbishop Roach's roots as a native son (born in Prior Lake) gave him a common touch.

"I can say that he has the ability to walk in several worlds simultaneously," she said. "An example of that is the respect paid to him from the civic community as well as from the faith communities."

Monsignor Hayden said, "He was respected in public life for his candor and ability to speak intelligently and with confidence on current issues."

Nearly everybody agreed that Archbishop Roach's leadership will be missed.

Sister Fran said, "I think his method and his style of leadership will serve as a touchstone for how to be a leader in the church for generations to come.

He is a true teacher, and only time will tell whether we have learned our lesson from him," she said.

Pat Norby
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

RESPECTED LEADER ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

His contributions and qualities at key times on many important issues lauded by others.

Archbishop John R. Roach's years of leadership on social justice, educational and rural issues earned him admiration and praise from workers in those fields and from other prelates.

Archbishop Roach has had a major impact on all levels of Catholic education, said St. Joseph of Carondelet Sister Catherine McNamee, president of the National Catholic Educational Association.

Sister Catherine's experience with Archbishop Roach started long before his 1986-89 tenure chairing the NCEA. She was president of the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul when he appointed her to lead the first archdiocesan Commission on Women in the Church.

She said during an interview that her first major task as NCEA president was preparing two major sessions on education for Pope John Paul II during his 1987 visit to New Orleans.

"Archbishop Roach was very helpful" in that task as well as garnering the support of other bishops and the public for Catholic education in general she said.

She cited the archbishop's own early career teaching and leading St. Thomas academy.

"Because he was a practitioner in education and, as a bishop, as an educator of the archdiocese and the church, in elementary and secondary education, in

seminary education, college education and religious education, in all of these areas he has had a very important role.”

Sister Catherine said she is looking forward to continued work on education with Archbishop Roach, as she will be a member of the U.S. bishops’ new committee on social justice and education that he is chairing.

John Carr said Archbishop Roach’s membership on that newly appointed committee highlights “a wonderful combination of his priorities” of social justice and education.

Carr, secretary of social development and world peace for the U.S. Catholic Conference, recalled that Archbishop Roach’s presidency of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the USCC from 1980-83 came at the key time when the bishop’s economic and peace pastorals were developed.

“He also chaired our International Policy Committee during three years of enormous change in the world,” said Carr, a Twin Cities native who attended St. Jon Vianney Seminary in St. Paul when Archbishop Roach was its first rector.

The archbishop became a respected and much-quoted source on the church’s international concern, he said.

“He is truly a person of the church,” Carr said. “He does not carry an ideological or political agenda, yet he has a passion for justice”

Carr recalled Archbishop Roach’s appearance before a congressional panel testifying about the Gulf War. After his presentation and those of several others, the panel directed its questions to the archbishop, he said.

“He is clear and articulate and he speaks from a perspective that has something to say,” Carr said.

Carr praised the archbishop’s “capacity to adapt while sticking to definite principles. He doesn’t give up on the basics.”

Joe Fitzgerald also recalls Archbishop Roach as a passionate advocate on rural issues.

“He wasn’t a farmer, and that’s not a prerequisite” for being involved in rural issues, said Fitzgerald, former executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. “But when looking at bishops around the country, he surfaced because he took it on as a justice issue.”

Fitzgerald's 1987-94 tenure at the NCRLC spanned Archbishop Roach's service as president of the conference's board from 1986-90 and as head of the U.S. bishop's Task Force on Food and Farm Policy in 1987-89.

"I always admired him for taking a very visible role in the Midwest and in the country," said Fitzgerald, now farm manager in the sprawling fields surrounding New Melleray Abbey in Dubuque County, Iowa.

"I was with him overseas when he spoke on agricultural issues, Sullivan said.

Archbishop Roach advocated care for the land as a matter of justice; protection of family farms as an economic justice issue; and justice within the food system, he said.

"He spoke eloquently and passionately," Sullivan said. "I admired his ability as a skilled and effective spokesman."

Sullivan credited Archbishop Roach with raising the visibility of food quality and hunger issues.

"He helped shepherd a couple of task force statements advancing church teachings on agricultural issues," Sullivan said. "I don't know if it would have happened without him."

In addition, Sullivan said, "He put his money where his mouth is when he helped open a full-time Rural Life Office (in the archdiocese) with Dale Hennen. That spoke volumes of his commitment.

"Dale has been a great resource for rural life and the archdiocese," Sullivan said. "With Dale's work continuing, that is part of Roach's legacy."

Also part of Archbishop Roach's legacy is the mentoring he has done for other bishops, including Bishop John R. Kinney of St. Cloud.

Bishop Kinney, a priest of the archdiocese who worked in the chancery when Archbishop Roach was an auxiliary, said Archbishop Roach "always has been a model of what a bishop should be in this day and age and a great friend. He is a great grace in my life."

That grace has included Archbishop Roach's consecrating Bishop Kinney as head of the Bismarck diocese in 1982 and as bishop of St. Cloud in May.

"I believe he has been an incredible pastor and great leader not only in the archdiocese," Bishop Kinney said. "His impact on the archdiocese has been phenomenal, as a pastor and as a bishop."

Bishop Kinney also cited Archbishop Roach's service to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, as president of the NCCB and on several NCCB committees.

"He has given leadership, focus and vision to bishops throughout the country that will extend for a long, long time," Bishop Kinney said.

However, amidst all the adulation, Bishop Kinney laughingly confided one quibble he has with the archbishop: "He was a lousy gin rummy player."

Bishop Kinney said he often ended up as Archbishop Roach's partner during games with other bishops.

"We never won, but it was always fun," he said.

Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, OH, recalled the years during the early 1980s when he served as vice-president during Archbishop Roach's presidency of the U.S. Bishops.

"Our close and cordial working relationship in that role enhanced my already high regard for Jack," Bishop Malone noted.

"Among his great qualities I especially admire his quick grasp of complex issues; his unstoppable optimism; and his pervasive, faith-filled approach to contemporary church challenges," Bishop Malone said.

Mike Tighe
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

INTERESTED IN BOTH EDUCATION AND CHURCH SOCIAL TEACHINGS, ARCHBISHOP WILL HEAD NEW NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Education always has been a priority for Archbishop John R. Roach. So it is no surprise that he agreed to chair a new U.S. bishops' committee on social-justice education in religious schools.

"Our mission is to evaluate the amount of content, and quality of content at elementary schools, secondary schools, in higher education and at the seminaries," he said.

With help from friends and John Carr, secretary of social development and world peace for the U.S. Catholic Conference, who will staff the committee, the

archbishop said a pilot survey was taken of several seminaries around the country, asking what the schools teach from the Gospel on social justice.

“We just wanted to get a feel for what kind of questions to ask,” he said.

The archbishop said he has invited several people to be on the committee, with membership expected to be announced Friday, October 6. He said he is counting on help from Ron Krietemeyer, archdiocesan social justice office director.

Another area person he tapped is Bernard Evans, a theology professor at St. John’s University in Collegeville, MN.

“He’s knowledgeable on social-justice teaching and food and agriculture,” Archbishop Roach said.

“I see food and agriculture at the heart of social-justice teaching,” he said. “Starving people can’t live in dignity.”

Locally, the archbishop expects to find that archdiocesan schools at all levels are doing fairly well at teaching social justice, he said.

“I hope it will be an affirmation of what they are doing,” he said.

And, he said it might provide a nudge for other schools to do more.

“Retirement will give me the luxury to do this kind of thing,” he said.

Pat Norby
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

TIME TO R-E-L-A-X

He says he’s trying to stop lining up things to do, but his schedule doesn’t show it. In a wide-ranging interview, Archbishop Roach talks about his plans for retirement, reminisces about the past, and looks ahead to the future of the Catholic Church.

Comfortable.

That one word could sum up the demeanor of Archbishop John R. Roach in retirement.

Despite a barrage of questions and photographs, the archbishop sat relaxed in a wing-back chair with a view of Rogers Lake just outside the window of his Mendota Heights apartment. Dressed in a warm golf sweater on a crisp autumn day, he pondered his new life without the demands of the office of archbishop.

“I’m trying not to line up a bunch of stuff,” he said. “I’ve lined up stuff all of my life. I tend to be fairly compulsive and I don’t want to be compulsive now in jumping into a bunch of stuff.”

However, his schedule since announcing his retirement September 8, has been full of engagements. He already has lined up several archdiocesan parish missions and a mission for priests in the San Jose, CA, diocese, along with agreeing to chair a new committee for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The archbishop said he also will be available to help Archbishop Harry J. Flynn with Confirmations, fund-raising for the Family of Faith Endowment and as a consultant.

“I have to trouble at all in letting go of the notion that I am archbishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis,” he said.

“I want to have the leisure to say, ‘I want to do that,’” he said.

But he said many of the things he enjoys are the things that a priest does. Liturgy, preaching, prayer, missions and working for social justice are the essence of a priestly life for Archbishop Roach.

He also will have more time to read, golf and walk, all things he heartily enjoys.

However, he said, he finds nourishment through the liturgy.

“The Eucharist” is the single most important event in my life,” he said, adding that it is where he bonds with Jesus Christ.

And he expects to have more time for prayer in the morning, evening and throughout the day, he said.

“I must get some private time for prayer in my life,” the archbishop said.

He expects to preach parish missions out of his experience in developing a relationship with Jesus Christ, he said.

“I think that’s what good preaching is about,” he said. “You have to share what has happened in your life.”

As a child, priest and prelate, the archbishop has much to share with others.

He has gone through the death of both of his parents and his sister, Virginia, to whom he was very close.

“I think any death in the family is tough,” he said.

Another difficult issue Archbishop Roach faced while leading the archdiocese was pedophilia.

“Probably the most traumatic thing that I’ve had to experience is the whole pedophilia thing with priests,” he said. “I think that probably effected me more negatively and positively.”

“When we had the first cases, I was totally unprepared to know what to do. I had no experience. There was no one who could share experience with me. And I was surrounded by people who were exactly in the same position I was in,” he said.

“That is the down side. The up side is that we scrambled hard,” he said. “We recognized we had to get something in place, not just to protect ourselves, but to protect people.”

The archdiocese put together a set of policies about sexual abuse. “We were really the pioneers around the country in getting a set of policies in place to address the question,” he noted.

“That is the hardest part of my being bishop,” he said.

On a more personal note, he said the DWI he received 13 years ago was very hard at the time, although he said he no longer broods about it.

“I can now see that as a grace from God, because it has given me an experience with the 12 steps, which has been a very deep part of my own spirituality,” Archbishop Roach said.

One further difficult aspect of his term as archbishop was dealing with the polarity of the Christian faithful within the archdiocese.

“I wish that I had been able to bring more dialogue into the kind of polarized positions of the church,” he said. “I do think they have something to learn from one another.”

The positive side of that challenge was “I think I’ve been able to be respectful of people from both sides and the result is people have stayed in the corral, in the church,” the archbishop said.

He pondered what else he might have done, such as acting as a convener, demanding that they come together and talk.

“My own experience and the experience of most people I know is that to do that is to run the risk of further division,” he said.

And, he noted polite dialogue among politicians and within society has followed a similar course, as he recalled the recent screaming argument that took place in Washington’s legislative hallways.

One regret that the archbishop said he hopes to turn around in retirement is a desire to have spent more time in parishes and in preaching.

“I think this would be true of almost any bishop I could name in a fairly good-size diocese; you wish that you weren’t quite so preoccupied with the administrative decision-making so you could spend more time with the people,” he said.

“On the other hand, I learned as headmaster of St. Thomas Academy, my primary job was to make sure that good teaching could go on in the classroom. I feel exactly the same way about the life of a bishop,” he said.

“The primary role of a bishop, as I see it, is to make sure that at the place where people meet church they do so most effectively, and that’s at the parish level,” Archbishop Roach said.

The essential role of bishop is to insure that liturgy, education, charity, social outreach and evangelization are done well, he said.

“Those things you do by supporting the people who work within the system.”

Along his vocation path, the archbishop noted the many people who supported and mentored him.

First and foremost were his father and mother, Simon and Mary V. Roach.

His mother was a teacher in North St. Paul before marrying and starting a family, he said.

“She was a reader and taught me to love learning,” he said. “She also had a very deep respect for order. I’m a clean desk person, and I got that from my mother.”

He noted that he had teachers at Shakopee High School and Nazareth Hall who were strong influences in his life.

“By and Large, I had people who formed me well,” he said.

“Father Rudy Nolan taught me how to be a priest,” said Archbishop Roach of his mentor and the pastor of St. Stephen in Minneapolis, where he was first assigned. And under the supervision of Father Vincent Flynn at St. Thomas Academy, then Father Roach learned how to teach, to respect others and to help people grow. He also learned how to handle responsibility.

“Father Vincent Flynn had an ability to hand over responsibility and not look over your shoulder,” he said.

Archbishop Leo Byrne helped guide him in the transition from priest to auxiliary bishop to archbishop, after Archbishop Leo Binz retired, he said.

As a bishop working at the national level, Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit gave then-Bishop Roach a “fair amount of attention,” he said. “I would call him periodically and test things out,” he said.

On local issues, Archbishop Roach speaks proudly of the quality of liturgy in the archdiocese. Although tough decisions were made in merging schools, the archbishop said the schools are stronger now.

He also is pleased with the accomplishments of CommonBond in meeting the housing needs of poor people, and a variety of social justice programs initiated under his leadership.

“I feel very good about lay leadership,” he said. “I think we’ve been genuine front-runners in developing lay ministry.”

The youth ministry office is one of the largest, he said. The University of St. Thomas and College of St. Catherine are “superb expressions of Catholic education,” he said. And after a “bad spell” of declining enrollment at St. John Vianney and the St. Paul Seminary, he said they seem to be on their way up again.

Archbishop Roach also noted proudly that, “I’ve ordained every permanent deacon in this archdiocese.”

His legacy goes on at the national level, where he was president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference from 1980 to 1983. During his tenure, the bishops completed a peace pastoral and began work on the economic pastoral.

“I’ve been at it a long time,” he said. Only three other bishops have been involved in NCCB and USCC longer than Archbishop Roach: Cardinal Joseph Bernardin

in Chicago, Archbishop James Quinn of San Francisco and Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, OH.

"I feel good about our success in finding a moderate position on the nuclear question, he said of his conference work. The conferences took strong stands for the poor and disabled in the nation and across the world.

"We were a consistent voice in human rights," he said.

As for the future of the church, the archbishop said he hopes there will be good preparation for lay leadership. "It's really and exercise of our baptismal character, and I think the church has got to continue to do everything it possibly can to assist in the development of that kind of leadership and that kind of ministry," he said.

He expects the church to face some hard issues, including the loss of Catholics to fundamental churches.

"That's going to be a problem," he said.

He also expects the Catholic Church to face some anger during the next state legislative session, if or when a death penalty bill is introduced.

"The church is going to have to take a position, which is going to be very unpopular with a lot of people who buy the notion of the death penalty," he said. "I see that is going to be a very tough fight."

But he also expects the church to be a persuasive voice.

"I think a lot of what lies ahead of us is a mystery," Archbishop Roach said.

And at 74, the prelate said he is more comfortable with mystery than he was 25 years ago.

"I don't know what's going to happen to me in retirement," he said. "God will give me the grace to do what I need to do, if I'm open to his kindness."

He said he feels the same way about the church. "Whatever comes up in the year 2020, I believe God is going to give us the capacity and the grace to deal with that," he said. L "God will take care of the mystery."

Pat Norby
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

A DAY TO HONOR HIM

Gov. Arne Carlson has proclaimed Sunday, October 1, Archbishop John R. Roach Day in Minnesota.

“Whereas: Archbishop John Roach, the first native Minnesotan to become archbishop, has faithfully served as a leader of the Archdiocese for the past 20 years; and

“Whereas: The Catholic population of the Archdiocese has grown and flourished by nearly 200,000 to a total of 700,000 members in 223 parishes during his years of service, and

“Whereas: Many organizations were founded or expanded through his initiatives and guidance, including St. John Vianney College Seminary; the Archdiocesan Commission on Women; Catholic Charities expanded outreach and a housing affiliate to low-income people; and on of the first AIDS ministries in the country; and

“Whereas: Far reaching interfaith efforts were initiated and supported by him, including interfaith worship service and leadership dialogue; the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant; and he was the first Catholic to be invited to preach at several denominational churches; and

“Whereas: His presence was felt on the national level as well, serving as president of the United States Catholic Conference during which time he helped to guide the development of the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter on war and peace and the pastoral letter on the economy; and

“Whereas: As a tireless defender of education and the rights of others, he worked particularly hard in support of private education; fought for sustainable agricultural practices and the preservation of the family farm; the development of lay ministries and ethnic ministries; and the protection of and respect for human life at every stage; and

“Whereas: As an articulate spokesman and defender of positive human values and a champion of active citizen participation, he often addressed the moral perspectives of issues affecting the voiceless, and also the general welfare of the Minnesota community of which he is a proud member.

“Now, therefore, I, Arne H. Carlson, Governor of the State of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim Sunday, October 1, 1995, to be Archbishop John R. Roach Day in Minnesota.”

Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

FROM THE EDITOR

SPECIAL ISSUE FOR A SPECIAL MAN IN SPECIAL TIMES

When John R. Roach took the reins of leadership of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis back in 1975, there were no permanent deacons, there were few lay professionals on parish or diocesan staffs, and no diocese in the United States had an official body that advised its bishop on issues impacting women in the church and society.

Upon his exit as archbishop 20 years later, much has changed.

The archdiocese now has 156 permanent deacons doing all kinds of work in parishes and ministries. Lay people trained in theology and pastoral ministry serve as directors of liturgy, ministers of pastoral care, directors of religious education and business administrators at parishes and in archdiocesan posts.

The archdiocesan Commission on Women—established here first—has been duplicated in dioceses such as Cleveland, Milwaukee, Newark, NJ and Sacramento, CA.

In 1975 Catholics in Apple Valley went to Mass either Sunday mornings at a public grade school or Saturday evening at a Lutheran Church. There were no Catholic parishes in suburbs like Eden Prairie, Eagan and Ham Lake, where today new churches stand. The Catholic population in 1975 was 520,416; today it is 701,811 and growing.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults hadn't taken root yet, and 1975 saw 893 converts; this past year 1,618 adults joined the church.

In 1975 there were 4,420 students at two Catholic institutions of higher learning, the College of St. Catherine and the College of St. Thomas. By 1995, that figure has jumped to 14,111 and the archdiocesan-operated St. Thomas was a university with campuses in both St. Paul and Minneapolis.

And those are just some of the changes Archbishop Roach oversaw in this local church. He helped to bring about change at the national level, too.

He played an integral part in bringing moral dimension into crucial national debates through his presidency of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. He shared his wisdom and advice in such far-reaching places as Northern Ireland,

Central America and the Middle East. He testified before Congress and he lobbied presidents.

As he begins his retirement years, this special issue of the Catholic Bulletin is a salute to a man who led our church through sometimes intense, sometimes troubling and always exciting times.

And, as we look back over the career and ministry of Archbishop Roach, we have included a look forward, too, at the newly begun ministry of Archbishop Harry J. Flynn.

Our thanks to all the advertisers who made it possible.

Bob Zykowski
Catholic Bulletin
September 28, 1995

YOU'RE INVITED TO PRAY AND TO PARTY WITH THE ARCHBISHOP

Celebration set for two sites on Sunday, October 1

A prayer service and reception will celebrate the life and work of Archbishop John R. Roach and the community is invited to join in the festive day.

Archbishop Harry J. Flynn will preside at the 2:30 p.m. ecumenical service on Sunday, October 1, at the Cathedral of St. Paul. Archbishop Roach will deliver the homily.

"On October 1, what I'm going to tell the local church is how much I love them and how much they've done for me, and how proud I am of them. And that's pretty much going to be my homily," he said.

Of course, it will have a few more details about where they have been and gone together in the past 20 years, he said.

Choirs from the Basilica of St. Mary, the Cathedral of St. Paul and the Festival Choir will sing at the service. Cathy Condon will be the cantor and Kevin Vogt will be the organist.

The reception will be at the Shoenecker Arena at the University of St. Thomas immediately after the service. Both events are open to the public.

Catholic Bulletin

September 28, 1995

FUNERAL PAYS TRIBUTE TO ARCHBISHOP WHO LIVED BEATITUDES

Leadership style was civil but not soft; political, not partisan.

Archbishop John Roach's funeral Mass July 16 was a grand, solemn and moving celebration of his life, occasionally peppered with bursts of laughter that the good-humored leader likely would have appreciated.

More than 15 bishops came from around the United States, including Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, D.C., and retired Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco.

Hundreds of the archdiocese's priests processed into the Cathedral of St. Paul, passing the closed coffin that was covered with a red, black, brown and cream pall with gold detailing that had also been used for the funeral of Archbishop Leo Binz in 1979.

It was a warm day, and many wiped sweat from their brows, throughout the Mass, which lasted two and one-half hours. One man fainted as the bishops processed by him. Emergency medical technicians later helped him outside.

The readings, which included the beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew, reflected Archbishop Roach's own touch. He had planned many aspects of his funeral, including who would read, make comments and deliver the homily.

St. Cloud Bishop John Kinney, a longtime friend of the archbishop, said in his homily, "I think at this moment, he would look out and say, 'Well I couldn't be more pleased.'"

Speaking about the Gospel, Bishop Kinney said, "Those beatitudes of Jesus Christ became, I believe, John Roach's daily examination of conscience and his own personal way of following Christ. The beatitudes also are to be our way of living as well."

"Archbishop Roach loved the church," he said. "And he worked hard so that the church would be everything that Christ wants it to be."

"He was never afraid to speak out, even when there was criticism or opposition, and there was a lot of it," the bishop said of his friend. "He did not cotton to intimidation or to power. And he did not even let his own weaknesses and faults

deter or paralyze him. Rather, he wound up using his faults to show forth God's power and God's graced."

Another longtime friend, John Carr, added his own reflection at the end of Mass.

Carr was a first-year seminarian the year Archbishop Roach became rector at the new St. John Vianney Seminary in 1968. A young student in the years after Vatican II, he was not afraid to challenge the archbishop. Now, Carr is the social development and world peace secretary for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"At times, I thought he was too rigid. He clearly though I was not respectful enough," he said, garnering laughs from the full Cathedral.

Amid funny anecdotes Carr summed up the archbishop's leadership style.

"In his civic roles, he was political but not partisan. He was principled but not ideological. He was civil but not soft. He was engaged, but would not be used.

"He refused to be chaplain for any party, cheerleader for any candidate. Rather he challenged all of us to defend human life and dignity, to seek greater justice and pursue peace."

Among the 2,500 worshipers who paid their final respects to the archbishop was an old friend, Ed Boegemann, who grew up with "Jack" in Prior Lake.

They were just a month apart; in fact their mothers playfully argued about whose son was the first baptism at St. Michael of Prior Lake. The log church was brought over across a frozen lake from Spring Lake in 1921, said Boegemann, now a member of Our Lade of Peace in Minneapolis.

He took catechism classes with Archbishop Roach, but it was his big bat that Boegemann recalled most vividly.

"In the summertime we played baseball in the street," he said. "Jack was the heaviest hitter."

When he wasn't slugging homeruns, Boegemann added, Archbishop Roach helped his dad at the local grocery store called Simpkins and Roach.

"He probably had some good experiences with people in helping his dad at his grocery store," Boegemann said.

Gerry and Mary Alice Frawley said they "were pleased to be in town to be here." Gerry a former chief executive of St. Joseph Hospital in St. Paul, worked with the archbishop's auxiliary bishops to argue against a bill that was introduced in the

Minnesota Legislature that would have forced Catholic hospitals to allow abortions in their facilities. "I respected his leadership," he said.

Joanne Connelly Hennes brought her 11-year-old granddaughter, Shannon LaRock to the funeral. Hennes, a distant relative, remembered a time when the archbishop "caught her eye" at a funeral they both attended for a relative. And Shannon said she was impressed by the ceremony.

"I may be the only person from Missouri to go to Archbishop Roach's funeral," she remarked.

Archbishop Roach's funeral may have been a formal, ornate affair but his family made sure he didn't miss a lighter-hearted event that honored his Irish wit and humor.

"They did his Irish wake while he was still around (a few weeks ago) so he could enjoy it," said Mary Gilbert, a parishioner at Nativity of Our Lord in St. Paul.

The archbishop's sister, Mona Strunk, spoke more about her brother's love of his Irish heritage at the end of the Mass. She remembered a trip the two had taken to Ireland together.

"He said, 'I have found my roots. Ireland is even better than I expected. The roads are narrow, but the Irish hearts are broad and gentle.'"

"At the end of his life, his heart was weak indeed, but to us, it remained broad and gentle. Jack, may God grant you a gentle peace."

Emilie Ast Lemmons

(Christina Capecci and Mike Krokos contributed to this article.)

The Catholic Spirit

July 24, 2003

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE TWO ARCHBISHOPS AND THE CAR KEYS?

Archbishop Harry Flynn ended his remarks at Archbishop Roach's funeral with this humorous anecdote, reprinted here in his words.

I can always say he was supportive of me. On every single occasion he would support me—except one.

It was when he was getting a little weak, and I knew ... that he shouldn't be driving anymore. He didn't like that.

So I had a meeting with him and another person, and told him that I had the keys to the car and no longer could he drive.

Everything was agreed to.

Then I get a call at the chancery. "I'd like those keys."

I said, "Archbishop at that meeting, it was agreed that the would not be given back to you." I said, "We all heard that."

He said, "We might have heard it, but you were the only one to understand it."

I said, "Be that as it may, you're not getting the keys."

And he said, "You're stubborn, you're mean and I resent you."

And I said, "I can be stubborn, I can be mean, but I've got the keys."

And when I saw him the very next day, he didn't mention the keys, and neither did I.

He was one great man that we all loved.

The Catholic Spirit
July 24, 2003.

