

## **A Week in September**

**The first day of school has come and gone: the evening shadows lengthen each day and the crisp air of autumn has arrived. These thoughts came to mind the other night as I was reflecting on the summer season too quickly past and the start of a new “pastoral” year. Once September comes, the lazy, hazy days of summer are only a pleasant memory and we must pick up our tools of labor and begin working in earnest again.**

**During the past week this was abundantly clear to me when the daily round of meetings began. If you ever wondered what the Bishop does when he is not celebrating Mass, meetings are a large part of his life.**

**On Tuesday, there was a meeting of the Episcopal Council. The Episcopal Council is the Bishop’s Cabinet. The Council finds its origin in the Code of Canon Law (Canon 473). It is comprised of the Vicar General and the various Episcopal Vicars, as well as the Chancellor of the diocese. Its purpose is to foster pastoral action in a unified way. During the year, we meet approximately every two weeks. In this way I can consult my closest advisors and discuss issues which require both input and action. All discussion is aimed at offering practical pastoral service to the people of our diocese.**

**On Wednesday the thirty-one Diocesan Department Heads and Office Heads met at Wadhams Hall to review their goals and objectives and to discuss areas of interest that would be beneficial for others to know. These group meetings take place about four times a year. The charitable, educational, and pastoral ministry of the diocese is the focus of these meetings. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, but it is also a complex living organization requiring multifaceted service in reaching out to the people of our diocese. Our department and office heads are all necessary and provide valuable assistance in the mission of the Church. Under the guidance of Monsignor John R. Murphy, the Moderator of the Curia, they strive in their own particular area of expertise to serve the people of our diocese. Together with all of you, they are the living stones in the Church with Christ as the head.**

**Thursday dawned bright and beautiful. It was a wonderful day to drive to St. Patrick's in Brasher Falls where the Council of Priests met for their fall meeting. The Presbyteral Council is mandated by the Code of Canon Law (Canon 495). It is comprised of thirteen priests and according to the statutes, the priests of the diocese elect about half of the members, and the others are ex-officio members by virtue of the office that they hold, or appointed by the Bishop. Just as the priests are the principal collaborators with the Bishop, so the Council of Priests is the primary consultative body for the Bishop. The Bishop has a**

**responsibility to hear their opinions in affairs of greater importance and needs the Council's consent in certain areas expressly defined in Canon Law. The meetings consist of various reports on spiritual and temporal matters, as well as discussions on planning for the future of parish life. In the course of the year, meetings are held in four different areas of the diocese.**

**On Friday, the Diocesan Investment Committee met. The Investment Committee is a group of lay faithful who assist the diocese in making wise investments, thus providing for the fiscal needs of the diocese. These men and women are expert in their field and assist Mr. Michael Tooley, our Diocesan Finance Officer, in making recommendations to provide proper funding for the future.**

**On Saturday, there was a meeting with the Diocesan Council of Religious. While the Sisters on the council meet regularly, there is usually an annual meeting with the Bishop. The Sisters represent the various communities of women religious who serve in the diocese. The Council serves as a healthy vehicle of communication as issues of common interest are addressed. The hopes and concerns of the Sisters are discussed and the Bishop has an opportunity to share his insights, as well as the pastoral plan of the diocese. The Sisters who serve in the Diocese of Ogdensburg remain a vital force in spreading the faith. We are grateful to them for all that they have done in the past. We benefit**

from their outstanding service in the present and we look forward to a future bright with hope.

On Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> we celebrated The St. Paul Event. From Adams to Mooers, from Schroon Lake to Ogdensburg, from all eight deaneries, from most of the towns and villages that comprise the North Country, came the young and old, one thousand strong, pilgrims on a journey of faith. They gathered in our magnificent Cathedral for Sunday Vespers and a stirring homily given by the Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito, the much loved twelfth Bishop of Ogdensburg. It was a spirit filled profession of faith and will long be remembered by all who were privileged to participate. Participants were encouraged to follow the example of St. Paul and to be missionaries proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their local communities, among family and friends.

All of the events and meetings of the past week reminded me of the extraordinary gifts present in this local church in its clergy, religious, and lay faithful. You are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9). By your active participation you declare the wonderful deeds of God.

I am reminded too of the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who tells us that the Church is holy, even if the members need to be purified in order that holiness, which is a gift of God, can shine forth from them

**with its full splendor. The people of our diocese are precious in God's sight and although we are a people on a pilgrimage, we are each in his or her own way moving towards that holiness which will enable us to live with God for all eternity.**

**The advisory groups with whom I met this week help so many people in the diocese. They imitate the selfless service and love of the Lord as they give of their time, their talent, and their treasure to the mission of the church. I am most grateful to them and to all the wonderful people of our Diocese who serve the Church in our North Country so tirelessly and faithfully.**

Most Rev. Robert J. Cunningham  
Bishop of Ogdensburg  
September 15, 2008