

DONOVAN

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He has offered to help his successor, the Most Rev. Alfred Markiewicz, formerly auxiliary bishop of Rockville, N.Y. He's also overseeing the myriad details for Markiewicz's installation on Monday and Tuesday.

It was Donovan's suggestion, for instance, to have representatives of minority groups present themselves to Markiewicz during Tuesday's Mass. The idea is not inconsistent with Donovan's style.

As bishop, Donovan formed a close relationship with the Pokagon Indians in the Dowagiac-Three Rivers area. They hold Donovan in deep respect and affection, said Joe Winchester, Pokagon chairman.

"One thing that personally struck me is that he never forgets a person's name," Winchester said. "He has worked with the band in various situations, not only spiritual, but also in business matters."

Donovan is proud of the diocese's jail ministry and its marriage counseling program. The diocese also has developed a program to reach out to Catholics who have left the church.

"We all know there are Catholics out there who feel alienated from the church," Donovan said. "We want to invite them back, to take another look."

He would like to see a retreat center built in the diocese "where folks can come to pray" for a day or a weekend, and said he thinks the diocese needs to re-establish a home for unwed mothers.

"We've been severely criticized" for the church's unwavering opposition to abortion and seeming insensitivity to women with unwanted pregnancies, Donovan said. He tells detractors the diocese has provided housing, medical care, employment help and volunteer women "friends" for 500 such women.

Women in crisis is a topic about which Donovan has some of his

deepest feelings and is the first priority of the diocese's Common Ministry fund, which Donovan established.

"Many were kicked out of their home," he said about those who the diocese has helped. "They had no place to go."

He is just as passionate in his convictions against abortion.

In the late 1980s, merger talks between Borgess Medical Center, which is Catholic, and Bronson Methodist Hospital finally broke down over the issue of abortion, although Bronson said it would limit the procedure to cases where the mother's life was in danger or where the fetus was anencephalic, with a brain stem but no brain.

Donovan was "grieved" over the failure of the talks, he said at the time. But he maintained abortion "could never be acceptable."

His positions defy easy labels. He supported a lettuce boycott seeking better working conditions for Hispanics in the late 1970s. He led a day of fasting and prayer on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, and helped start a food bank.

Donovan says he developed his social sensitivity early, as the fifth of nine children growing up on a Depression-era farm.

"Our family was very poor. But I had a wonderful mother who taught us that you had a responsibility to the poor," he said. "Every time she baked bread, one of us would have to take a loaf up the road to an old man" who had even less.

Donovan attended a rural one-room school in Iowa and even then considered the idea of some day joining the nearby Trappist monastery.

"Ah, Paul," an Irish monk told him, "ye talk too much."

Still, Donovan maintained his penchant for contemplation and spiritual reflection and the desire for a role in religious life.

"Oh, my God. Tell me what you want me to do and help me do it" was his prime prayer then.

Now that his life is changing again, he says, it's his prayer still.