



Msgr. Sylvester J. Holbel

... two decades of leadership

Msgr. Holbel's Service Here Spans 20 Years

By MARGARET FESS

20-YEAR MARK — The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Sylvester J. Holbel, nationally known in educational circles, will round out 20 years as director of Catholic Schools in the Buffalo Diocese on June 26.

When Msgr. Holbel took over the superintendency, 40 per cent of the Catholic children in the eight-county di-

specialized in educational administration and psychology.

On July 1, 1939, he was appointed assistant director of schools and on retirement of the Rev. John Peel, was named director on June 26, 1941.

Msgr. Holbel was designated a papal chamberlain in 1946 and domestic prelate in 1951.

Msgr. Holbel now is pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Church, S. Buffalo and Thorne, Orchard Park.

Msgr. Holbel will be honored in connection with his anniversary at a dinner at Hotel Statler Hilton Monday June 19.

case attended elementary parochial schools. The figure has now risen to 65 per cent.

In 1941 there were 150 elementary schools with an enrollment of approximately 48,000. Now there are 193 elementary schools attended by about 80,000 children.

INNOVATION—The greatest innovation has come in the parochial high school system. Until 1946 there were only private Catholic high schools or those attached to parishes. During the tenure of Bishop John P. O'Hara, CSC, the movement to establish diocesan high schools was begun.

There are now 17 diocesan high schools and 13 private Catholic high schools with a combined enrollment of 15,400. When Msgr. Holbel first became superintendent there were 22 Catholic high schools with an attendance of 4,733.

Three new high schools will be opened next fall.

Special schools have increased from three in 1941 to 11 at this time.

GROWING DEMAND—

"Parents' appeals for Catholic education for their children are increasing each year," said Msgr. Holbel. "One of our greatest challenges is keeping pace in providing teachers. The number of lay teachers in the system is rising constantly."

"In 1941 we had 71 lay teachers and 1,388 teachers from religious orders. At the beginning of the last school year we had 770 lay teachers and 1,385 from religious orders."

INTELLECTUALLY ALERT

—Msgr. Holbel, said today's students are much more intellectually alert than they were 20 years ago.

"They ask more questions—probe for answers and knowledge," he said. "I think this alertness is due largely to a generation of better educated parents."

Msgr. Holbel was born in the Black Rock section. He attended St. Francis Xavier School, Canisius High School and Canisius College, and Niagara University. His ordination took place on March 3, 1923.

OLEAN SERVICE — The priest's first parish was St. Mary of the Angels, in Olean. He left there in 1933 to come to All Saints Church, on Esser Ave.

In 1938 and 1939 he did graduate work at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he

WORKS HARD — Known throughout Western New York as an energetic worker, the clergyman has served on scores of educational committees and has been active in the area's cultural affairs.

Among his many endeavors, the monsignor serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra; the Buffalo Historical Society, and the Buffalo Museum of Science.

He is especially interested in sports, music and reading, but he added that the rush of duties forced him to give up his favorite hobby—golf.

Msgr. Holbel has two brothers, Benjamin A. Pontiac, Mich., and Clement G., Grand Island, and two sisters, Mrs. Joseph E. Schweitzer, Buffalo, and Sister Mary Carmela, SSJ, Our Lady of Victory Infant Home, Lackawanna.