



**THE TRIAL** of the holy life, the heroic practice of virtue and reputation for holiness of Servant of God Father Patrick Peyton, CSC, was opened in Fall River on October 1 at the Cardinal Medeiros Residence for Retired Priests. At left, Holy Cross Father Thomas M. Feeley, left, vice postulator of the cause, reads his opening statement. With Father Feeley is Holy Cross Father John Phalen, president of Holy Cross Family Ministries. Center photo, from left, Father Paul F. Robinson, O.Carm., J.C.L., diocesan judicial vicar and episcopal delegate and Instructor of the Trial; Bishop George W. Coleman, and Msgr. Daniel Hoye, J.C.L., Promoter of Justice, officially open the Trial. Right photo: Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, right, Postulator of the Cause, from the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in the Vatican, takes his oath of office. (Anchor/Jolivet photos)

## 'Rosary Priest' sainthood cause takes next step

### Bishop Coleman presides over opening of trial of Father Patrick Peyton

By DAVE JOLIVET, EDITOR

FALL RIVER — On October 1 Bishop George W. Coleman, Ordinary of the Diocese of Fall River and Ordinary Judge of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal presided over a gathering of clergy and appointed lay persons at the Cardinal Medeiros Residence for Retired Priests here, to open the Trial of the holy life, the heroic practice of virtue and reputation for holiness of Servant of God Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton, known worldwide as "The Rosary Priest," who is buried in Easton, which is within the Diocese of Fall River. Easton is the home of Holy Cross Family Ministries, founded by Father Peyton, which includes Family Rosary, Family Theater Productions, Father Peyton Family Institute, and Family Rosary International.

Father Peyton, who is known for coining the phrases "The family that prays together, stays together," and "A world at prayer, is a world at peace," was a Catholic media pioneer. He spent 51 years serving the spiritual needs of families, especially encouraging them to pray daily together, particularly the rosary.

He founded Family Theater Productions in Hollywood in 1947, through which he produced more than 600 radio and television programs that featured hundreds of movie stars and celebrities, and had more than 10,000 broadcasts.

The Trial continues the process begun by former Fall River Bishop Sean P. O'Malley, OFM Cap., now archbishop of Boston. On June 1, 2001, Bishop O'Malley announced that he sought formal approval from the Vatican Congregation for Sainthood Causes to open the cause for possible canonization of the beloved priest. The bishop also revealed he received the  *nihil obstat*

("no objection") from the Vatican congregation to open a diocesan inquiry into the sanctity of Father Peyton.

"Father Peyton, through his devotion to the rosary, touched the lives of thousands of people and helped them to discover the joys of praying the rosary," Bishop Coleman told *The Anchor*. "It is a privilege for me, and an honor for our Diocese of Fall River to be involved in the process we pray will lead to his beatification."

The purpose of the Trial is to appoint a Theological Commission to examine the published writings, sermons and private letters of Father Peyton, to determine their orthodoxy and the depth of his spirituality; and an Historical Commission, whose responsibility it is to study the historical content of the documents in an effort to determine the character of Father Peyton through his life and works.

Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, Postulator of the Cause, from the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presented his credentials and requested that Bishop Coleman open the Trial. After Msgr. Daniel Hoye, J.C.L. Promoter of Justice, examined and approved the credentials the Trial officially began.

Holy Cross Father Thomas M. Feeley, professor emeritus at Stonehill College in North Easton was sworn in as vice postulator.

Since Bishop

O'Malley's announcement in June, 2001, Father Feeley has been gathering testimonies about the holiness of Father Peyton from several Hollywood stars and the priests and laity with whom he worked and shared.

"Father Peyton was a model of Christian life," Father Feeley told *The Anchor* following the opening of the Trial. "He was so devoted to Our Lady, and his first priority was always focused on the family."

"In speaking to some of the many Hollywood stars who were touched by Father Peyton's kindness, Dolores Hope, widow of the late Bob Hope, perhaps put it best saying, "When you were with Father Peyton, you were embraced by his love."

Father Feeley has also been keeping records of favors requested and granted through Father Peyton's intercession, especially those concerning dramatic healings.

"There have been some re-

markable testimonies," said Father Feeley. "There have been testimonies of sight being restored, bones being healed and AIDS being cured. Many of the miracles attributed to Father Peyton's intercession have to do with healing whole families, not just individuals."

At the Trial, each person involved was sworn in and signed a contract to faithfully perform the duties assigned. The documents were notarized and stamped with the official diocesan seal.

Members of the Theological Commission are: Holy Cross Father John Ford, professor of Theology and former chair of the Department of Theology of Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.; Holy Cross Father Thomas Looney, associate professor of Theology and chair of the Department of Theology of King's College in Wilkes Barre, Penn.; Laetitia Rhatigan, director of the Albany office of Holy Cross Family Ministries, who

holds a doctorate of ministry and is a candidate for a doctorate in Mariology from the University of Dayton, Ohio. She is writing a dissertation on the spirituality of Father Peyton.

Once the Theology Commission has completed their examination of Father Peyton's writings, sermons and private letters, each is required to write an individual account of the research done and their findings, providing an opinion on Father Peyton's

spirituality. The individual reports will then be submitted to the Tribunal.

Father Paul F. Robinson, O.Carm., J.C.D., judicial vicar and episcopal delegate, was confirmed as Instructor of the Trial.

Also sworn in were members of the Historical Commission, which included: James Kenneally, Ph.D, professor emeritus of Stonehill College, where he chaired the History Department and ran the Martin Institute; Philip Silvia, Ph.D, Professor of History at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts; and David Goodrich, M.A. Library Science, the archivist of Holy Cross Family Ministries.

These individuals will study the historical context of the documents gathered, and they too are requested to write a summary of their findings and also formulate a profile of Father Peyton's personality and the influence he had during his lifetime and following his death.

The notaries for the Trial are Denise Berube and Helene Beaudoin from the diocesan Tribunal, and William Riley, chief operating officer, and Patrick Rock, Esq., associate director of Development, both from Stonehill College.

Joanne Campanello has been appointed the official typist. Father Michael McManus, chancellor of the curia for the Diocese of Fall River was present to record, sign and stamp all official documents.

**Beginning with this edition, The Anchor will publish a running article featuring the life of Father Peyton, the Trial process and an explanation of the stages in the process of canonization.**

**Father Peyton's sainthood cause is the first to be initiated in the Diocese of Fall River.**



FATHER PEYTON with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.