

## **Bishop McHugh as Mentor**

**By: Dianne Traflet, Associate Dean, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Seton Hall**

### **University**

I am pleased and honored to be here today to pay tribute to Bishop McHugh. On a very personal note, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to two friends and mentors, Msgr. George Graham and Fr. Bob Batule. These priests knew me when I was practicing law, studying theology, and considering work for the Church. They patiently listened to my constant question: “What am I going to do with my life?” They gave kindly advice, and something I appreciated even more: their prayers. I’m glad to be able to thank them publicly.

Today, I’d like to confess that there was another mentor in my life, a mentor I never met. Indeed, I never conversed with him, never even heard his voice. But, I did read his words of wisdom. I was inspired by his courage—courage to face opponents as he defended human life in all its stages, and courage to face death, as he confronted the fragility of his own life. Bishop McHugh was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Newark on November 20, 1987, and ordained on January 25, 1988. I was in my last year of study at

Seton Hall University Law School. I remember distinctly being so proud of our pro-life bishop. I had been researching and writing on issues of abortion and euthanasia. In fact, in the very month that Bishop McHugh was ordained, I was serving on the Moot Court Board, advising students on a project concerning whether or not a feeding tube could be removed from a comatose, terminally ill patient.

On issues such as these, I wanted to hear a strong pro-life message; more importantly, I wanted that message to come from the spiritual leadership of my Church. Indeed it did, in the powerful and passionate eloquence of Bishop McHugh.

To call someone a man of conviction implies that he is able to articulate his values with forceful clarity. To call a *priest* a man of conviction implies that he speaks and acts with forceful clarity *and* charity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To call a *bishop* a man of conviction implies that and more. His very presence implies that he has the courage of his convictions, and that he will give witness to the Truth with every fibre of his being. This was Bishop McHugh. As Cardinal McCarrick once explained, Bishop McHugh was “a courageous and articulate leader in so many ways, and especially in the

defense of unborn human life. I have never known a braver, more dedicated man of God.

We will all miss his clear and constant voice.”

I find it appropriate that, as a young man, Bishop McHugh majored in classical languages, graduating from Seton Hall University in 1953. He knew well the value, power, and beauty of the written and spoken word. He grew not only to know, but also to love, the majesty, splendour, and inspiration of the Word of God, as he embraced a vocation to cling to the Word made Flesh. In 1957, he completed studies at Immaculate Conception Seminary, and was ordained to the priesthood. Almost 20 years later, he would return to teach theology at the seminary.

In the eight years following his ordination, he served at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Newark, and Holy Trinity Church, Fort Lee. His commitment to human life issues shone through in his service to the Archdiocesan Family Life Committee (1962-65) and the Bergen County Catholic Physicians’ Guild.

Bishop McHugh also was a champion of Catholic education. Devoted to his alma mater, he served on the Board of Regents of Seton Hall University, and was a guest speaker at Seton Hall’s Health Law Teachers Conference and the homilist at Seton Hall’s

Red Mass. Teachers, lawyers, doctors, politicians: he spoke forcefully to them all and his message was clear. Be true to your vocation. Build the Kingdom of God on earth. Cherish and protect God-given life. Never veer from your Catholic principles. Love your faith.

His words had power, because they came from the depths of his soul. They were inspiring, because they were consistent with his own life. They had the capacity to transform hearts, because they came from the courageous heart of a Bishop of conviction. Seton Hall University and the Archdiocese of Newark are blessed with the memory of a truly spiritual leader, a man of eloquent words, devoted to the Word, a champion of Life, committed to Christ, the Way the Truth and the Life.