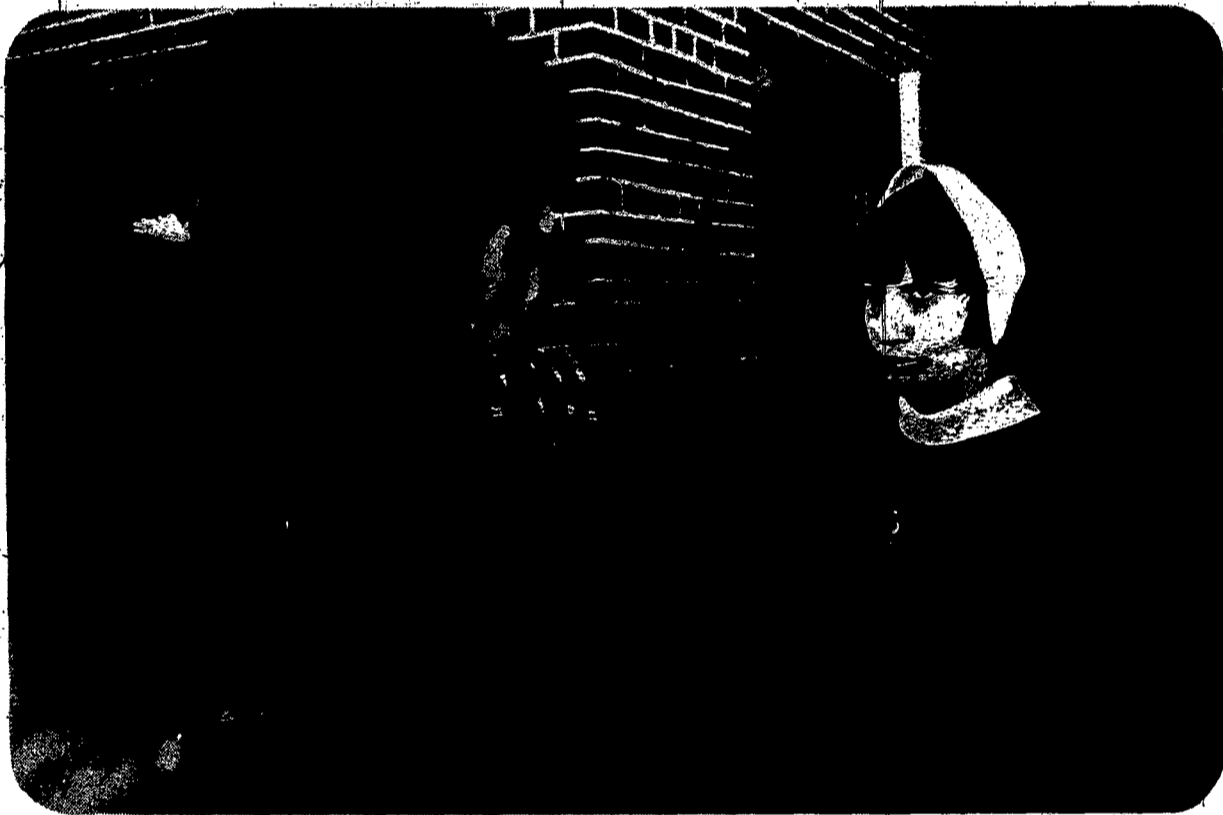


The sign says it all: crossing guard Eugene Tallmadge stands by traffic sign in front of St. Francis Xavier school, one of two which will close as part of a diocesan consolidation of inner city education.



Sister Janice Morgan, principal of St. Francis, talks to upset parents about school closing.



Rosalie Pecora sits at front of empty classroom, talking about school closings.

St. Francis and St. Lucy

Schools That Close

TEXT BY CHARLES RANDISI
PHOTOS BY LAURENCE E. KEEFE

It was January, but it seemed like June, at St. Francis Xavier and St. Lucy Schools. The temperature was close to 60. And the schools were closing. Slowly but surely.

For the Council of Inner City Parishes had voted to retain Catholic education at five of the seven schools within its jurisdiction. St. Francis and St. Lucy drew the short straws.

At St. Francis where an 11-year-old building houses grades K-6, there were some feelings of resignation, some anger.

Sister Janice Morgan, SSJ, has been principal of St. Francis for only four months, and she feels that she has been able to look at the situation objectively.

"I think it was buildings against people," she said, "and people won."

"I feel badly about it," she added, "but I guess you have to face it that things don't last."

At least one bus will be provided next fall for St. Francis pupils who wish to continue in Catholic school. Sister Janice said that although some students undoubtedly will go to their neighborhood public school, "we hope others will stay within the inner city (Catholic) schools."

Mrs. Sam Pecora has taught at St. Francis for 15 years, and was born and raised within the parish. She called the decision to close her school "a great robbery" and "an unjust thing." She will miss the students most of all, especially "the flash in their eyes" when she teaches them.

Parents of St. Francis students were likewise displeas-