

School Merger Decision To Be Made Friday

By PAT PETRASKE

The future of three parish schools will be determined this week as representatives from Blessed Sacrament, St. Boniface and St. John the Evangelist, Humboldt Street, vote on a possible further consolidation of their schools.

The voting to be announced March 1 centers on the proposal to form kindergarten through sixth grade schools at St. John's and St. Boniface's and a junior high school at Blessed Sacrament. During the 1973-74 year of cooperation, seventh and eighth graders from Blessed Sacrament have been attending St. John's, whose junior high school later was named after Bishop Joseph L. Hogan. This was considered to be the first step towards a possible merger of all three schools.

The 1974-75 consolidation would affect 220 K-6 grade students from Blessed Sacrament, of whom 46 would attend St. Boniface and 174, St. John's, to provide a satisfactory student/teacher ratio in each and maximum efficiency in busing. Elementary school enrollment is projected at 208 students at St. Boniface and 241 at St. John's.

Transferred to Blessed Sacrament would be 72 junior high students from St. Boniface and 96 from St. John's. Blessed Sacrament would have approximately 84 students of its own in Bishop Hogan Junior High School.

Parish council members from St. Boniface and Blessed Sacrament and the two co-pastors from St. John's are voting on the recommendation made by the General Committee of Consolidation composed of five members from each parish.

Father John Mulligan of St. John's explained that he and his colleague, Father James Boyle, would base their decision on recommendations made by the parish staff, the finance committee and the school board, which has made an attitudinal study of the parishioners.

What the outcome will be is up in the air. The proposal stipulates that the decision must be unanimous on the part of the

parishes.

Father John Norris, pastor of Blessed Sacrament, said he was "hopeful" and believed "from listening to and not polling" his parishioners, that his parish council might approve the proposal.

Father Mulligan stated that many of his parishioners would "like to keep a parish school" but realize that because of rising costs and declining enrollments, a consolidation might be necessary.

He added that without the consolidation, the costs of operating St. John's would increase 13 per cent for next year.

Charles Armstrong, chairman of the school committee under the Blessed Sacrament parish council, roughly estimated the operating costs for a kindergarten through eighth grade in the 1974-75 at \$105,600.

Enrollments have been steadily

declining over the past five years. Father Norris estimated that Blessed Sacrament enrollment had decreased 12 per cent per year. St. Boniface is not far ahead with a 10 per cent decrease. A more dramatic decrease in enrollment was cited by Sister Ann Miller, principal of St. John's, who said that last year 45 children were entered in the first grade while only 24 were enrolled for this year.

An alternative to the consolidation proposal suggested by its opponents calls for a continuation of the experiment with the Bishop Hogan Junior High School for another year. Father Norris noted that a survey of parents and of students who attended the junior high school revealed a favorable response to the program which is "as good if not better" than having two separate junior highs.

"Many people favor what is going on but hesitate to take further steps," Father Norris said. He explained, however, that the

consolidation committee had decided last year not to allow the year of cooperation to be extended. "The assumption was that we would not stay where we are but would either step up or down," Father Norris said, noting that this assumption would "force the issue."

None of the schools has a building large enough to contain K-6 grades and junior high students from three parishes. Father Francis Taylor, pastor at St. Boniface, explained that his parish did not enter into the pilot program last year because plans had "moved too fast" for his school to "try and get in on it" for the 1973-74 school year.

Two objections voiced by members of all three parishes are the problem of busing and a possible loss of parish identity due to the consolidation according to their pastors. "The regional school is the direction churches have to go," commented Father Mulligan, who believes the parishes will become

more involved in the rising number of ministerial duties.

In weighing the "risks" involved, Father Norris wonders if parental support for parish schools will be lost. Blessed Sacrament will no longer have grammar school, so some parents may decide to send their children to a public school rather than allow them to travel to either St. Boniface or St. John's he observed.

Dr. Gerard Guerinot, president of the St. Boniface parish council, feels the consolidation may result in a "loss of closeness to the parish life and unit." He questions whether the consolidation will improve the quality of education. "We have an excellent program now but with six teachers it may be broader," Guerinot said.

Busing is also a problem, especially at St. Boniface. Bus service is available through the city and Penfield school systems only to children who live 1 1/2 miles or more from their schools.



Bona Dean

Miss Sarah Luna, a Nazareth Academy graduate who formerly taught in local high schools, has been named dean of students at St. Bonaventure University. She is responsible for campus disciplinary and judicial programs and student life policies in general, the university's announcement said. Since 1971, she has been dean of women. Miss Luna is a graduate of SUC Cortland and holds a master's degree in education, awarded by St. Bonaventure. She joined the faculty there in 1967, as a physical education instructor. From 1957 to 1959, she taught at Nazareth, and 1962-1966, at Cardinal Mooney High School.

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