



Hard at work on their turkeys are Jenny Shively (left) and Kristen Whittlesey at St. Mary's pre-school program in Dansville. On the right, Mrs. Shirley Hillier looks on as Pattie Jo Mastin "shows and tells" about a seemingly endless number of items to an attentive audience.

Photos by Martin Toombs

## Optimism Runs High Over New Pre-Schools

By MARTIN TOOMBS

Low enrollment has plagued many of the parochial schools that have survived the cutbacks of the last 10 years. But optimism is certainly present in many parishes; some have responded to the problem by adding new programs to create more interest in Catholic education. Many schools in the diocese have added pre-school sessions. The theory, which seems to be working, is that children who have attended a kindergarten or pre-school in the parish will stay through elementary school.

One thing common to the 17 programs currently operating in the diocese is the great enthusiasm shown by those involved. The teachers are eager to talk about their programs, the children seem to be learning and having fun, and the enrollment of nearly 500 in the diocese indicates the approval of the parents.

Each school has designed its own program. Classes meet anywhere from one to five days each week, usually for about two hours. In many cases, the pre-school teacher also has a kindergarten group the other half of the day. Some schools involve the parents directly; others, the older students in the school.

St. Mary's in Dansville is one of the schools that has added a pre-school program this year. Mrs. Shirley Hillier meets with 19 four year olds twice each week. There is a waiting list, and another session probably will be added sometime in the future.

Crafts and opportunities for the children to express themselves are important parts of the program. One day before Thanksgiving, a "show and tell" period was followed by construction of a paper turkey, a project completed by the children relatively easily. Many of them had a great deal of trouble with scissors cutting paper. This is an important skill, and it is surprising to see children who have very little trouble aligning the various parts of the turkey on the body struggle with the scissors.

Possibly, the largest pre-school program outside of Rochester is conducted at St. Frances DeSales School in Geneva. Miss Julia Annonny teaches 46 three and four year olds, in three sessions. The three year olds attend twice each week, and the four year olds are split into two groups which meet three days each week.

In nearby Waterloo, in St. Mary's School, 28 children attend a pre-school program twice each week, with one group meeting on Monday and Wednesday, the other on Tuesday and Thursday. Diane Miner is the teacher of the pre-school as well as the kindergarten that meets in the morning.

In Newark, at St. Michael's School, 45 pre-schoolers meet, about 20 each day, with Mrs. Francis Rooker and Mrs. Raphie Priebe.

Seventeen pupils are enrolled in Our Lady of Lourdes pre-school program in Elmira. Mrs. Ann O'Conner has the children for either two or three days each week, at the parent's option.

At St. Agnes School in Avon, Mrs. Victoria Rose has 40 pupils, split into a two and a three day session. A unique element is that two parents work with the children each day, an assignment handled on a rotating basis. The parents as a group also have an input into the operation of the total program.

One group of pre-schoolers meets on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and another on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at St. Mary's in Bath. Miss Jane Wilkinson has 21 on Wednesday, with half of the the group attending the other days of the week.

Several pre-schools are operating in Monroe County.

At Annunciation, 10 students meet with Mrs. Joan Fama three days each week.

Holy Rosary has 15 in the

regular pre-school program that meets twice each week, and 16 more participate in a story hour once each week designed to involve any child from the area. Mrs. Teresa Gerhardt is the teacher.

Miss Nancy Fletcher and Miss Gail Wheaton teach the 21 pre-schoolers at Nazareth Hall.

Thirteen pupils and teacher Mrs. Manz meet in Our Lady of Perpetual Help School three afternoons each week. In its fourth year, the program is one of the oldest in the diocese.

Mrs. Magdalen Odorisi has 16 pre-schoolers three mornings each week at St. Jerome's School.

At St. Pius X, Mrs. Cheryl Maxwell teaches four groups, meeting either in the morning or the afternoon, and either two or three days each week. The 48 children enrolled make it one of the largest in the diocese.

The pre-schoolers at St. Salome's meet with Mrs. Jean Ligozio either two or three days each week; 28 attend at present.

Thirty-four children go to the pre-school at St. James' School, for either two or three days each week. Mrs. Marietta Romeo is the teacher.

## 'Making Room' Theme of Appeal

Making room in our hearts for the poor in mission countries is the theme of this year's Christmas Appeal by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

"Today's missions are today's Bethlehem," Father Joseph Reinhart said last week. Father Reinhart is the diocesan director of the society which cares for more than 138,000 missionaries in 840 mission posts in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

He said that, at Bethlehem, the "No vacancy" sign posted for Mary and Joseph is a symbol of the rejection the poor face each day. Mary and Joseph "wanted only the most basic of human needs tended to: something to eat, shelter from the elements, and warmth," Father Reinhart said.

"Beneath this experience lies the deeper emotion of feeling rejected, alone, misunderstood, unwanted," he explained. "And yet, it was in this very environment that God chose to be born of woman and to proclaim the "good news".

"Missionaries in a real sense are the innkeepers of the poorest of the poor—and their doors are

always open. There is never a "no vacancy" response when it comes to human needs. Their inns," Father went on, "are the chapels, schools, clinics, relief centers, orphanages, or any place where their service and witness of God's love is present.

"Missionaries depend on your loving support for their service to the poor to be accomplished. So great is their need," Father added, "that the Holy Father begs on their behalf through his Society for the Propagation of the Faith. It is only with the collective offerings you send to the society, that the society can, in turn, help meet the most basic and vital needs of today's mission-Church.

"There is something you can do!" Father stated. "And what a beautiful opportunity Christmas affords us to realize it.

"Please share your love this Christmas time with the mission-poor by sending a generous gift to them through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith—please find room for them in the inn of your heart."

Father Reinhart's office is at 123 East Avenue, Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

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