

Hornell Hospital Merger Wins Approval

By Martin Toombs

Hornell — The merger of St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals has been approved by the respective boards.

Meeting last Thursday, Dec. 17, the Bethesda board added its approval to an agreement previously approved by the St. James Board.

In a joint release the boards stated:

"We are pleased that the professional consultation and long discussions have finally culminated in a positive decision to move forward together to provide for the health care needs of the area."

"We believe that this decision, although traumatic for all concerned, is in the best interest of the community, patients, employees, and medical staffs of both institutions."

"We appreciate the support of those who have encouraged the two boards and their committees through this time of decision."

Bethesda's 15-member board of directors had given the merger the needed nine-to-six margin when it voted Aug. 18. But the 18-member corporation fell one vote short, voting 11 to 7 favoring the merger, but failing to get two-thirds support.

A changed mind, possibly resulting from wording changes which were made at a joint meeting of the two boards in November, led to the successful 12-5 vote Dec. 17, according to Sister Rene McNiff, St. James administrator.

The controversy which has swirled around the hospital merger for the nearly 10 years it has been discussed has not ended. Bethesda board

members opposing the merger have continued their fight to prevent what they see as a take-over by St. James.

Last August, the St. James board submitted requests to do the renovation the merger agreement would call for at that site, and the construction of a 60-bed skilled nursing facility which the merger had planned for Bethesda.

Sister Rene said the application can now be modified to become part of the ap-

plication to merge and launch an extensive renovation project at the two sites.

The application to merge includes requests to do major reconstruction at both the St. James and Bethesda facilities, and the addition of the skilled nursing beds at Bethesda.

It will take some time before the state grants permission to merge and begin the reconstruction project, Sister Rene said, "but at least it's on its way."

Hearings Take Views on Teen Pregnancies

The diocese was heartily represented in the recent whirlwind of hearings held by the Coalition on Teenage Pregnancy (CTP). Half of the hearings were hosted by church agencies; and in at least one hearing sponsored by a Protestant church, persons who identified themselves as Catholic accounted for nearly half the testimony given.

The object of the hearings is to develop a proposal for funding to deal with the problems of teen pregnancies in Monroe County. The county is figured to have the third highest rate in the state.

At a hearing last week at Covenant United Methodist Church, a number of speakers laid the blame for the problem on societal trends toward sexual activity in general, attitudes variously described as permissive, encouraging of irresponsibility, and based on false principles.

Others laid the blame for the rise in teen pregnancies to inadequate sexual education.

The most extensive testimony of the evening came from Richard O'Hara, speaking on behalf of himself and his wife, both educators.

O'Hara said that in discussing the question of teen pregnancies, "the real problem is the irresponsible use of the power to create life."

He said that within the past two decades there "has been a breakdown in the civil consensus that extramarital sex is irresponsible and wrong."

That breakdown, he said, has either been caused or abetted by the media, the medical profession, society in general, and "by the silence of the Church" on matters of sexual morality.

At heart, he said, the whole question presents a moral problem which requires "strong moral and spiritual leadership" to be resolved.

"Until the consensus (that extramarital relations are wrong) is re-established, nothing will help," he told the panel.

He encouraged spiritual leaders to use the weight of their offices to bring about that consensus.

At least one speaker that evening challenged the entire structure of the hearings, said that the question was not one of focusing blame, but of developing positive programs as had already been developed by an earlier group studying the question, and said that he was "deeply hurt" by the Church's involvement in CTP.

The panel, chaired by Rev. Frank Anderson of the United Methodist Church, also heard from Sister Felicitas Wells,



Rev. Anderson, Walker, and Dr. Rodgers at the hearings.

MHSB, director of the Fairport School of Religion.

Sister Felicitas encouraged the use of Scripture and natural morality in the development of the coalition proposal. Both sources, she

said, provide norms for sound sexual development. She encouraged the coalition to develop a proposal which does not promote the use of contraception.

Nearly 20 persons attended

the Covenant United meeting; seven spoke. Other panelists were John Walker, director of the Office of Black Ministries, and Dr. Susan Rodgers, a member of the Monroe County Board of Health.

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

The stable of Bethlehem has no tree, no decorations, no blinking lights to prettify nor pretty boxes with toys and socks.

The Baby's bed is not bedecked with a baby boy's blue blanket. It has no varnish. It smells of dry grass and other feed for sheep and donkeys.

The Baby's food is from His Mother's breast. As Christ sleeps, Our Lady and St. Joseph munch a simple Christmas fare of bread and goat's cheese, a bit of fish and sup of wine.

And yet this cave so dark and stark God's tranquil spirit pervades. For Infinite Love is Incarnated in a tiny Baby.

And God's Spirit joins together Jesus and Mary and Joseph in one great love — not with stuff that perishes, stuff that TV ads seduce us to believe brings happiness, but the gift that perseveres — This is God's love, never to corrode or rot or dissipate.

In Christian homes throughout our country the memory of that stark night is recalled — alas, celebrated strangely by pretty cribs so clean and colorful, so odorless, celebrated by stuff piled high as if love were measured in things material.

In dull incomprehension these seem to say: expensive toys and costly liquors, sparkling trinkets, exotic smells, laden tables and every flesh satisfying comfort: these are the Gospel of Bethlehem.

But the Gospel of the Cave is otherwise. It is a divine protest against utter poverty and unconcern in the scandal that a Child however loved, should be so born in starkness. It is a lesson that even in poverty happiness abides where there is love and self-giving.

And by inversion there is a lesson this affluent nation has yet to learn: that material stuff corrodes and rots and dissipates but the things of the spirit, love and truth and beauty flow eternally from the Incarnate Christ "from Whom and through Whom and in Whom all good things come."

And our greatest Gift is the Word made flesh Who still dwells amongst us. That love and serve in the spirit of God's love and service.



Attendants at the hearing study statistics released by the coalition.

More Than a Day of Celebrations

Students at Our Lady of Mercy High School have been busy preparing to help many needy families this Christmas season with Christmas baskets. For the past month they have been bringing in food products and presents to be delivered to the families right before Christmas.

The Golden Mass, the school's culmination of the Christmas season, was

Tuesday, Dec. 22. The celebration the gifts of food and presents were offered up as Mercy's sacrifice this Christmas season. The theme of this year's Christmas appeal was "Make a Gift of Yourself."

According to school sources this theme has been carried over to more than just the Golden Mass. The freshman class at Mercy prepared a "Jesse Tree" for the school. Each freshman made an

ornament to decorate the tree, depicting some event or character from the Old Testament. This annual project is sponsored by the Theology Department.

Throughout the month students also brought in gifts of perfume, toothpaste, combs, brushes and other personal items to be given away at the annual State Hospital Christmas Party directed by Sisters Mary Dismas and Joan McAteer.

Business in Diocese

The 16th annual dinner Meeting of Art-Craft Optical's Pioneer Club took place recently at the Royal Scot Restaurant. The club is composed of Art-Craft employees with 25 years of service in the company. Frances C. Rodemeyer of Penfield was elected president for 1982. Mrs. Rodemeyer has served as secretary-treasurer in past years. Other officers are Russell R. Reed of Irondequoit, vice president; Rosalie Palozzi of Irondequoit, secretary-treasurer.

Fred W. Mularski has been appointed postmaster of Geneva. Mularski entered the

postal service in 1956 and was converted to career substitute carrier the same year. In 1970 he was promoted to foreman, mails, and subsequently to superintendent, postal operations, in May 1974. He has served approximately 10 years as president of the Geneva Chapter of Umpires and played professional baseball for the Canadian Americans in 1947 and the Border League in 1948-49.

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