

# Diocese Unveils Plan to Aid Retarded, Disabled

Catholic Charities and the diocesan Office of Chaplaincy Services have launched a program to find ways for the Church to show concern for the most profoundly mentally impaired and most severely retarded.

The program, LILAC (Life in Institution, Loving and Caring), focuses on those confined to care in the six developmental and psychiatric centers in the diocese.

According to William Privett, associate director of Charities who co-chairs the program with Sister Clare Roland, SSI, diocesan director of Institutional Ministries, a proposed six-step program of action for the diocese is being

reviewed by representatives of the Rochester, Elmira, and Willard psychiatric centers, and the Monroe, Craig, and Newark developmental centers.

That program is the result of meetings with physicians, nurses, administrators, chaplains and advocates for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled, Privett said.

Concerns raised at those meetings, he said, include the need for greater public involvement and support, staffing and funding deficiencies, staff morale problems, and a variety of deficiencies in direct patient care.



Concern also surfaced over the processes for movement of patients to group homes, the need for community resources, and improvements in tending to the spiritual and religious needs of the patients.

Privett said, "The diocesan proposals are intended to help the community better understand mental illness and developmental disabilities, and the needs of people who are institutionalized, encourage greater volunteerism and advocacy and promote improvements in the care of patients."

Privett said that the diocese proposes ten churches in the areas of the psychiatric and developmental centers select the mentally disabled as their priority concern and develop specific programs to express their care.

"The care for institutionalized disabled builds on the work of the chaplains at each center, and recent Charities and DePaul Mental Health Services development of community group homes, and a Charities sponsored group home, Disabled Citizens United, providing social and recreational services for severely disabled people," Privett said.

The plan of action, to be carried out through the diocesan Office of Social Ministries, calls for the diocese to establish parish-level support groups by setting up workshops for congregations, regardless of denomination, on the question of serving the institutionalized disabled. At such a workshop state agency representatives, chaplains and diocesan staffers would give presentations.

In addition, a work plan would be developed for each parish group to define such activities as establishing a study group, recruit a number of homes for family care within the community, enroll

a certain number of volunteers, plan a number of volunteer-sponsored events, enroll "Adopt a patient" sponsors who would take patients home for respite visits on weekends or holidays, bring fresh meals to patients at the institutions.

The proposal also calls for parishes to organize volunteer training programs and to give special attention to the religious and spiritual needs of institutionalized people.

The diocese hopes to promote institutional care of the chronically mentally disabled as a ministry and to provide morale-boosting services to staffers of agencies and centers serving the mentally disabled.

The proposal further calls for strengthening the chaplaincies of the centers by developing a training program on linking parishes and community groups within the institutions.

Along this line, deacons would be assigned to assist in establishing those centers, and chaplains would be offered additional training to meet the needs of an increasingly disabled institutional population as the process of

deinstitutionalization continues.

The proposal also calls for the diocese to promote respite care for those in institutions, and to further the establishment of community residential services through the agencies of Catholic Charities, DePaul Mental Health Services and the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry.

Finally, the LILAC group will bring its work and concerns before Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, Jewish congregations, and ecumenical groups outside the immediate Rochester area for the possible adoption of a joint action plan.

Privett estimated that there are at least 2,000 severely disabled persons in the area's centers.

## Fr. Albert Shamoni



Word for Sunday

## The Cross Holds Great Mysteries

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 14/1-15/47. (R1) Is. 50/4-7. (R2) Phil. 2/5-11.

One of the great mysteries of life is the cross. Why the cross? Why Good Friday?

As we begin this Holy Week, it might be well to reflect briefly on suffering.

One thing suffering does is to make us concentrate on ourselves. When you have a toothache, it is hard to be altruistic. This can be good or bad, depending on whether we accept our suffering like the good thief or reject it like the bad one.

Suffering also cuts down the opportunities for sinning and thus prepares the soul for virtue. It is easier to sin when you can run around than when you are flat on your back in pain.

In pagan Rome there were two reactions to suffering. The Stoics just gritted their teeth and bore it without a show of emotion. When Brutus, who was a Stoic, showed signs of grief at the death of his wife, Portia, Cassius said, "Of your philosophy you make not use." Stoics were supposed to be unmoved by joy or grief. The Epicureans tried to drown out suffering in merriment, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

Christ taught the Christian that suffering can be redemptive, as His was, when accepted with love. Pain without love is hell; pain with love is sacrifice. Love doesn't kill pain, but it diminishes it by giving it purpose. If you lost some money, you try to cushion the pain by saying, "I hope somebody who really needs it found it."

Jacob's seven years of labor for Rachel were as only a few days because of his great love for Rachel.

Love can sanctify suffering and benefit both sufferer and others. We can accept our crosses to make up for past sins. Or we can use them to help others, as Christ did. The tragedy of

life is that so much suffering is wasted.

Still, the perennial question remains, "Why suffering?" The Son of God came down to earth to show us that, without Good Friday, there could be no Easter. From the cross He could have asked, "What have I done to deserve this?"

Some think suffering is a punishment for a bad life. The so-called friends of Job equated prosperity with piety. They said, "Job, you are no longer prosperous because you are no longer pious." Job was not conscious of sin and rebelled against such an explanation.

Then Job asked, why suffering? Why the cross? God answered, "Who are you with your puny mind to question Me? Shall the clay say to the Potter who formed it, 'Why has thou made me such?'" A mouse in a piano might just as well try to understand why anyone should sit down and play the keys.

Twenty centuries later, Francis Thompson asked the same questions:

"Must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it? Yes, the artist must first burn the wood to make the charcoal drawing.

"Must Thy harvest fields be dugged with rotten death? Yes, fertilizer is dead things, but it is needed to make fields fertile.

Then Thompson learned that when God closes one door, he opens another. "All which I took from thee I did but take, Not for thy harms, But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms. All which thy child's mistake/ Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home! Rise, clasp my hand, and come!"

And so an answer began to dawn as Thompson asks the last question: "Is my gloom after all, Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?" It is!

In the end Job got back more than he lost. Jesus, by being lifted up on the cross, began to draw all things to Himself. No pain — no palm! No cross — no crown!

## Msgr. Shannon To Speak at Merton Center

Msgr. William Shannon, chairman of the Religious Studies Department at Nazareth College, will be the speaker March 25 in the "Facets of Merton" lecture series sponsored by the Merton Center at Columbia University.

The series features authors who have recently published books about Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk who became one of the leading Catholic writers and social critics in the 20th Century.

Msgr. Shannon wrote "Thomas Merton's Dark Path: The Inner Experience of a Contemplative." He will use as his topic, "Christian Faith: Transformation of Behavior or of Consciousness?"

A paperback of Msgr. Shannon's book will be published in June by Penguin Books. Last year, Msgr. Shannon was presented Nazareth College faculty's Distinguished Colleague Award.

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