

# Parish shelters' fourth season ends in hope and frustration

By Teresa A. Parsons

Coordinators of three Catholic church-sponsored shelters for the homeless were both elated and despondent as they closed their doors this week on their fourth winter.

Despondent because again this year most of their 30 guests will leave the shelters and return to the streets.

Meanwhile, after a relatively calm period in mid-February, all three shelters have observed a dramatic rise in the number of people seeking shelter. Seven or eight people have appeared at Corpus Christi consistently over the past month seeking one of their six beds. Coordinators at Blessed Sacrament and St. Bridget's have seen as many as 10 extra guests turn up nightly since February.

"I feel badly that there seems to be this upsurge of people now," said Blessed Sacrament coordinator Ann Byrne. "I don't know what the reason is or where they're coming from."

Despite their end-of-the-year blues, coordinators believe they were able to offer more care and opportunities to more guests this year than ever before. And they are encouraged by the stirrings of broader community interest in the problem of homelessness and of new responses in the works.

Since the shelters opened in November, Blessed Sacrament, St. Bridget's and Corpus Christi shelters have together provided more than 4,500 nights of emergency care.

For the first time, that included up to four beds specifically designated for women at Blessed Sacrament. Although the beds were hardly used before mid-season, nearly 25 women have stayed at the shelter since then.

Thanks to Corpus Christi's health care advocate for the homeless, Elizabeth Quinlan, guests at all three church shelters enjoyed a new level of health care. "She followed through on a lot of people we mentioned to her," Byrne said. "You could call her any hour of the day or night, and she would hit the streets."

Corpus Christi's coordinators credit Quinlan's influence with enhancing cooperation with other agencies serving the homeless.

"Our relationships are improving as we're learning the services they provide," explained Corpus Christi coordinator Christine Garrison. "At the same time, I think we're finding a better respect and appreciation for what we're offering and able to do that they haven't done."

Shelter coordinators also attribute the new cooperative spirit to a series of meetings organized last year and throughout the summer between church shelter volunteers and agencies such as the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America (VOA), Entry to Care and Open Door Mission.

One apparent result was that the Salvation Army accepted more referrals from all three shelters. Because Blessed Sacrament adopted a more aggressive policy on alcohol-abusing guests this year, Byrne said, they also sent more people than ever before to Entry to Care, a detoxification facility operated by the Salvation Army.

"Salvation Army was very good to us this year," she said.

"We had a much better working relationship with VOA and Salvation Army," agreed Jim O'Reilly, one of the volunteer coordinators for St. Bridget's.

A parishioner at St. Louis in Pittsford, O'Reilly also noticed a smoother relationship system between church shelters.

That was possible, in part, because of a stronger diocesan commitment, but also because Doris Williams, a Blessed Sacrament

volunteer, prepared hot meals each night for both St. Bridget's and Blessed Sacrament.

Meals as well as guests were then transported between shelters thanks to a car and part-time driver provided by the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry.

"They brought the food down so we didn't have to," O'Reilly said. "The driver was on time and very cooperative. We really appreciated it and so did the guests."

Guests at all three shelters benefitted from social service advocates. One new and valuable asset this year was the cooperation of Mary Green, a casework supervisor in the county Department of Social Services' (DSS) Adult Protective Unit.

"Mary has been very helpful when we've been trying to find out if people have received benefits from DSS and has given me advice on what to do for certain cases," Byrne said.

Social workers from the Southeast Area Resource Center were also very helpful, according to Byrne.

But coordinators are still frustrated by their limitations. "I think we're doing the best we can, taking into consideration that we're not professionals," Byrne said. "We made a more conscious effort at getting people into programs, finding them housing or jobs. But the bottom line is we can only ask — we can't force them. We just stressed that help was there if they wanted it."

By some estimates, 35-40 percent of homeless people suffer from mental illness. Church shelters were better able to deal with this segment of the homeless population this year, but help was still not easy to find.

"RPC (Rochester Psychiatric Center) seemed to be more open to our being here," Byrne said. "They referred people to us and have been more than willing to offer information to us about people we had staying at the shelters."

But, she admitted, she was able to place only one shelter guest at RPC this year.

Among the hopeful developments that will continue after the shelters close is a study of homelessness in Rochester being cosponsored by the Mental Health Association and a number of other agencies.

"The study would be aimed at finding out what's happening elsewhere that's working, how we can get more help for the mentally ill, what kind of facility would be ideal ... and what we should expect five years from now," said William Privett, associate director for Catholic Charities at the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry. The goal of the study would be to develop concrete recommendations for a combined city/county/private sector response to the problem of homelessness, Privett said.

Along with the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, agencies that already have expressed interest in the study include: the Salvation Army, Red Cross Emergency Services Division, the Center for Governmental Research, the Volunteers of America and the Rochester Housing Council.

Shelter coordinators are cautiously optimistic about the idea.

"Anything anyone wants to do is great. There doesn't seem to be a high level of interest out there right now," Garrison said. "I just hope it (the study) doesn't end up on somebody's desk."

Meanwhile, Corpus Christi Parish's transitional home for the homeless at 100-102 North Union Street is "coming along," she said. "We expect to have the first group in within the next couple of weeks."

That group will include Garrison, her husband and two children, emergency shelter coordinator Wally Ruehle, and parish associate, Sister Marjory Henninger. One guest from the emergency shelter may move in as well.

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## Along the Way

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Third Sunday of Easter.

For me, the delight of the Easter season is the sense of life and growth it brings. There is freshness all about and renewal and a variety of reminders that the Lord is always with His people, loving them and calling them to new life.

In the Word of God proclaimed these days, we find two strains of this. There is the healing, missioning presence of Jesus to those He had gathered to Himself in His years of ministry. He heals their wounds when that is needed, confirms them in faith even in the midst of their doubt, prepares food for them when they are hungry and offers them rest when they are exhausted from their work.

If there is a tenderness in His care for His friends, and certainly there is, there is no softness in it. His love has its own demands. Perhaps we can see that as clearly as anywhere in today's gospel story of reconciliation with Peter. In that story, Christ's love, so freely given, calls Peter not only to a special relationship of service to the community, but to an awareness that Christ's love for him will recall him to a share in Christ's own passion and suffering. What Peter did not grasp in the washing of the feet, he now perceives in the gift of Easter love. Peter will be led in ways he would not choose for himself and finally will experience the same kind of death that Jesus did. All of this he will accept impelled by nothing other than a desire to be faithful to the love he had received.

The second strain strong in our Easter readings is the story of the earliest

community of believers as they sought to be faithful to the life they had received. At times, their response was sure and peaceful as when the apostles impressed with great power and no one among the community was in want. Occasionally they were heroic as when in defiance of the religious authorities of the day, they continued to tell people about Jesus.

But they also had their struggles. Jealousies were still there and rivalries — one group was being preferred over another in the distribution of the goods. There were questions to be dealt with and no way to deal with them save by that wonderful combination of human effort and reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit — how else to decide what finally was required of those who wanted to be part of this exciting new way? How else deal with the growing awareness that the fullness of the kingdom was not so near at hand as they once thought?

In both streams we find evidence of life deepening and the struggles which inevitably accompany that process. Individuals such as Peter experience it and so do you and I. The early Church experienced it — and so does the Church today.

We do a disservice to what our community of faith is meant to be if we insist that we live it today in exactly the same way as we lived it yesterday. We must ever be faithful to Christ and all that He revealed. If we are genuinely faithful to that, there'll be no end to the change.

Peace to all.

### 'Crisis and Intervention'

A workshop entitled "Crisis and Intervention: What Can Happen" for clergy, others in professional ministry, and mental health professionals, will be held on April 28, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Gordon D. Hoople Training Institute of the Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center in Syracuse. The workshop will be led by Mark Matloff, Ph. D., a licensed clinical psychologist and member of the Adjunct Staff of the Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center.

The day-long workshop will combine didactics, experiential exercises, handouts and role play to develop an overview of crisis

theory. Participants will learn to assess key indicators of chemical, psychotic, homicidal and suicidal emergencies, and methods of identifying different levels of crisis. Appropriate intervention according to the level of crisis will also be discussed.

This workshop is one of a series offered through the Continuing Education for Pastoral Ministry Program of the Hoople Training Institute. Registration and a fee of \$50 is due by April 18. For further information contact: Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center, 324 University Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210 or call (315) 472-4471.

### Dinner marks Bishop Hogan's 70th birthday

On Friday, April 11, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, retired bishop of the Diocese of Rochester, was honored by more than 150 priests with a testimonial birthday dinner at Belhurst Castle, Geneva. The dinner, sparked by priests who have been Bishop Hogan's longtime associates, was enthusiastically endorsed by the priests of the diocese.

Father James J. Marvin, toastmaster, invited the following to speak on behalf of those present: Bishops Matthew H. Clark and Dennis W. Hickey, and Fathers William Leone, Michael Conboy and Michael Hogan.

The guest of honor, while thanking God for the blessings of his episcopate, expressed gratitude for the continuing opportunity of service to God's people at the parish level. In addition to teaching at St. John Fisher College, Bishop Hogan has been active in parish ministry at St. Patrick's, Victor; St.

Mary's Rochester; and St. Mary's, Canandaigua. He also continues to administer confirmation throughout the diocese.

### Diocesan Appointments



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following appointments, which are effective June 24.

**Father Foster Rogers** from parochial vicar, St. Alphonsus, Auburn, to pastor of St. Alphonsus.

**Father Paul Tomasso** from parochial vicar, St. John of Rochester, Fairport, to secretary to Bishop Clark.

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Registration now in progress for Summer Courses: Session I (begins May 12), Session II (begins June 16), and the Spirituality Institute (July 14-18) with Segundo Galilea.

CALL 716-271-1320 ext. 290, 8:30-4:30 p.m.