

# Social ministry division renewed through struggle, change

By Teresa A. Parsons

For the past year, an organizational revolution has been going on within the Division of Social Ministry.

Within the next year, the results of that revolution should become more and more apparent as renewal begins to directly affect the programs through which the diocesan Church reaches out to the poor, the sick, the imprisoned and the victims of injustice.

"Now the infrastructure is in place," said Tony Barbaro, director of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry. "We just need to put some flesh on it."

The seeds of the revolution were actually planted back in 1978. It was then — with the approval of a plan called "Catholic Charities of the Future" — that the vision of a diocesan office and three similarly structured regional offices first began to take shape.

With the creation of a diocesan board of social ministry and the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry last spring, the vision became a physical reality.

And despite budget and staff cuts, regional diversities and board-to-board conflicts, the vision still makes sense to those charged with carrying it out.

Last January, Bishop Matthew H. Clark named Father John Firpo the new director of the diocesan division. Father Firpo, in turn, named three associate directors to head the division's three newly organized departments — Catholic Charities, Justice and Peace, and Chaplaincy.

At 50 Chestnut Street, where the former diocesan Catholic Charities office had been headquartered, the Genesee Valley Office was established to meet the human service, justice and peace and chaplaincy needs of Monroe and Livingston counties.

New boards of directors were named for both the diocesan office and the Genesee Valley office.

Then came what Genesee Valley office board president Kathleen Machi calls "a year of shake-down, of getting ourselves ready for action."

At both the diocesan and Genesee Valley levels, that meant defining the role of a brand new staff and board taking overall responsibility for a staggering variety of programs already in place.

Budget cuts complicated the transition. The division lost a total of \$106,981 in Thanks Giving Appeal funds — \$56,614 in fiscal 1985/86 and \$50,367 in 1986/87.

Working together, diocesan and regional boards translated the budget shortfall into program and service reductions. At the diocesan level, secretarial and bookkeeping services were cut back, administrative services were charged to the Tabasco Mission budget and alternate funding sources were found for hospital chaplaincy and Human Life Pastoral Care.

A part-time chaplaincy position was eliminated and a full-time justice and peace position was reduced to part-time at the Genesee Valley office. The office also cut subsidies to Camp Stella Maris and Ventures in Human Services.

At the Southern Tier office, a part-time family counselor's position in Tompkins

County will be eliminated and no one justice and peace person will be hired for Steuben County. In the Finger Lakes office, the Family Life staff person's hours will be cut back.

Until last month, the Genesee Valley office was operating virtually without blueprints. The statement of its mission, charter, values, purpose and operating procedures only received final approval on Saturday, May 17.

"I've come to appreciate how incredibly difficult the charge is to go out and do social ministry in Livingston and Monroe counties," Machi said. "To be able to handle that with a green board and staff at the same time is just remarkable."

Even the combination of Monroe and Livingston counties into a single region presented a challenge — understanding and responding to the differences between rural and urban ministry.

One of the most difficult tasks the Genesee Valley office and board faced was defining their roles in relation to a number of very well-established agencies with strong boards — including the Catholic Family Center and the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO).

"There was a lot of apprehension a year ago that we would recommend doing away with both boards," Father Bausch recalled.

"But when we realized the depth and width of what they do, we recognized that it was more than one board could deal with."

"Had they been weak boards, it would have been a lot easier to tell them 'we're doing this, this and that,'" Machi said. "But by working through consensus, and coming to some very difficult compromises, we learned an awful lot about how to be a board."

Among the compromises was a somewhat complicated process for approving programs and activities, particularly those that involve financial considerations. Catholic Family Center's Project RESTART, for instance, is attempting to open a treatment facility for women who have drug problems. In applying for approval of the facility, staff members had to present their proposal not only to the Catholic Family Center and Genesee Valley boards, but also to executive and special program committees. Beyond that, they needed approval from the diocesan and corporate boards of social ministry.

"That's burdensome on staff," Machi pointed out. "We need a better planning process ... the relationship of what needs, levels of decisions and types of topics need to go to the diocesan board should be clarified."

The whole social ministry renewal process was initiated for several reasons: to better coordinate services to all regions of the diocese; to develop better and more comprehensive diocesan-wide programs; to enhance the working relationship with other diocesan divisions and with the bishop; and to better organize planning, budgeting and contract administration through such agencies as Catholic Charities.

But diocesan leaders also envisioned renewal because they believed that human services, justice and peace, and chaplaincy could work more effectively together. "I've



found that they really do blend," said Father Michael Bausch, director of the Genesee Valley office.

He pointed to the working relationship between staff members as an example. Human services staff react to unmet needs in the community, such as a lack of services to the disabled, by setting up programs. The justice and peace staff, on the other hand, might use information gathered through programs to advocate for federal or state funding.

It couldn't have worked unless staff members were willing to make it work with less money and fewer staff members than anyone expected thanks to budget cuts at both diocesan and regional levels. The division lost a total of \$106,981 in Thanks Giving Appeal funds — \$56,614 in fiscal 1985/86 and \$50,367 in 1986/87.

Working together, diocesan and regional boards translated the budget shortfall into program and service reductions. At the diocesan level, secretarial and bookkeeping services were cut back, administrative services were charged to the Tabasco Mission budget and alternate funding sources were found for hospital chaplaincy and Human Life Pastoral Care.

At the Southern Tier office, a part-time family counselor's position in Tompkins County was eliminated and no justice and peace person was hired for Steuben County. In the Finger Lakes office, the Family Life staff person's hours were cut back.

A part-time chaplaincy position was eliminated and a full-time justice and peace position was reduced to part-time at the Genesee Valley office. The office also cut subsidies to Camp Stella Maris and Ventures in Human Services.

"Beginning with 14 individuals with a variety of backgrounds — from family life to justice and peace, and human services — the staff has done a fantastic job in defining what social ministry ought to be doing in the region," Father Bausch said.

That also holds true for what it ought not to do. Although the Genesee Valley office started out in the spring with a chaplaincy director, Sister Mary Ann Ayers, by December, she and Father Bausch were seriously questioning whether the position was necessary as they had defined it.

Although their eventual decision to eliminate the position for the time being was hastened somewhat by the budget shortfall, Father Bausch said he is confident the decision was a good one.

"We don't do that enough in the Church," he said. "We create positions and don't consider doing away with them if and when they are not needed."

The diocesan board faced many of the same challenges as the Genesee Valley office, only on a far larger scale.

In only four meetings since last September, the board managed to oversee the establishment of the Genesee Valley office; to write and act upon a new set of bylaws; to educate its own members on requirements of the division's legally incorporated status; and to develop guidelines on when diocesan approval is and is not needed for regional actions.

"We've gotten a lot of the organizational changes and obstacles out of our way," said William Wynne, president of the diocesan board. "Now we've got to continue to define the flow both ways, between the diocesan board and the regional boards and the parishes."

Each of the regional offices presented a different challenge to the diocesan office. Neither the Southern Tier or the Finger Lakes offices were as directly affected as the Genesee Valley office, but both had to continue to function while the diocesan board was formed and became acclimated to its task.

A department of chaplaincy was nominally established at the Finger Lakes office — nominally because the office has yet to hire a staff person for the job. Directors of both regional offices have had more personal contact with each other and with diocesan representatives than in previous years.

"The diocesan board has begun to get a sense of its direction and role across to the regions so we have parameters to work within," Giovina Carosco, director of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry. "At the same time, I feel we have a certain amount of freedom to respond to the needs and priorities of people here."

Like the Genesee Valley board, the diocesan board encountered some apprehension in the regions.

"At one time, I felt that the diocesan board could have become like a big Church cop. That has not happened," said Tony Barbaro. "We're clearly not trying to put in place a system where every idea has to be approved by the regional board, the diocesan board and the corporate board," he added. "Regional decisions at the regional level are being respected."

"Tension will always exist because of change — it's the nature of society," Father Firpo said. "But change and the division of needs keep things flexible rather than static, and that alone is empowering."

Each regional office has a board, three representatives of which sit on the diocesan board. On one hand, this has improved the lines of communication and has created a greater awareness of the diversity of needs and issues between regional offices and the diocese. "Having seen things on a wider base from the diocesan perspective, I carry that with me when I come back to the regional level," Barbaro said. "There's a great release of energy when that group comes together."

On the other hand, as Project RESTART's experience has shown, the multiplication of

Continued on Page 6

## Stop Painting Forever!



Get Quality Vinyl Siding by  
**CUSTOM EXTERIORS, INC.**

Beautiful Gift to Qualified Homeowners  
Obtaining an Estimate!  
No Obligation • Call Today for Your FREE ESTIMATE



President Stan Ronnenberg  
C.S.R. is proud to be the only  
local certified siding  
remodeler certified by



**CUSTOM  
EXTERIORS INC.**  
112 Princess Drive  
334-6900  
Home 334-1218

Do you remember a time when you felt alone and lonely? Remember how good it felt to have friends help out? You can volunteer to help emotionally ill people who need two hours a week of your kindness. Discover Discovery Club. Activities, Outings, Crafts, Cooking — to share with your new friends. Staff Supervised. Share a special and rewarding experience.

Call COMPEER at: 546-8280.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

**Dr. Eugene A. Cimino**  
Ophthalmologist

Announces the relocation  
of his office to the  
**Lac deVille Office Park,**  
**1972 S. Clinton Avenue**  
(in front of Loehman's Plaza)

as of June 16th, 1986

Eye Exams by Appointment  
**244-2200**

### Hicks Home Heating

Call us for Summer Comfort

Heating & Heat Pump Specialists

• Sales • Service • Installation  
40 Years Experience — Since 1945  
ACCA - MEMBER

**424-4848 271-4650**

### GENEVA BUSINESS DIRECTORY

**THE SOUND SHOP**  
100 Seneca St., Geneva  
(315) 781-0215

• Denon • Para Sound  
• NAD • Mission  
• Mariah