

Office of Black Ministries marks its first decade of service

If not for the diocesan Office of Black Ministries, Shlonda Nash might have given up on her dream of a professional career.

Her teachers and guidance counselors encouraged the high school senior to find a job after graduation instead of going to college.

But after participating in the Office of Black Ministries (OBM) annual black college tour, Nash decided to apply to one of the colleges she visited.

"I found out that I am somebody special no matter what anybody tells me," she said.

Since OBM's founding 10 years ago, black Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester have gained a similar appreciation for the gifts they bring to the Church.

So there was plenty of reason to celebrate last Saturday evening as more than 170 people, including politicians, parish and diocesan leaders, and representatives of community agencies gathered to mark OBM's first decade with dinner, drama, music and preaching.

During his keynote speech, Father George A. Stallings Jr., a noted teacher and evangelist from the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., congratulated all those whose dedication has kept the Office of Black Ministries alive in spite of small staffs and short budgets.

But at the same time, he cautioned them not to mistake their priorities.

"We who are the leaders here have always found time to fight for causes out there in the streets," he said, "but we never have enough time to take care of home... Love must begin at home."

Popular music has a greater effect on many children than do their parents, Father Stallings said. "Do you know your children are listening to those rap groups? Do you know they are being more influenced by those groups than they are by you in the home?" he asked.

Instead of expending so much energy trying to change the mindsets of other people, he suggested that Christians should take more time to carefully form the minds of their own children.

"When we love those who are our own first, we can send them forth as agents of change. That's the only way the world will

become the Kingdom of God," he said.

Father Stallings admitted that excuses are easy to come by. "We're always saying what we would do, but... We need to get our 'buts' out of the way and put them on the 'would,'" he said.

Each individual and each race has gifts that are needed not only by the Church, but by the world, Father Stallings said. "OBM, as it issues forth the gifts of so many of you here tonight, asks only that you give to it

when your gifts are already rooted in your homes."

After the dinner, performances by Nazareth Academy's new gospel choir and soloist Melinda Bryant paid tribute to black expression in church music. Judith Beville of the Westside Theatre Collective also offered a dramatic presentation of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Retired Bishop Joseph L. Hogan was among the first bishops in the country to

found a diocesan office to claim and proclaim the gifts of black Catholics to their Church.

In recognition of his "vision, courage, and unconditional love," OBM board chairwoman and charter member Jean Pryor presented Bishop Hogan with a plaque, which read in part: "Because of you, we come together to celebrate this tenth anniversary of the Office of Black Ministries, October 25, 1986."

Religious Teachers Filippini honor double anniversary

Members of one of Italy's first teaching communities of sisters are marking their 75th year of service in the United States and their 50th year in the Diocese of Rochester.

On a recent weekend in Watkins Glen three Religious Teachers Filippini joined nearly 300 parishioners and former staff members from St. Mary of the Lake Parish to close a year-long observance of the order's double anniversary. On Sunday, October 12, Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving, followed by a banquet at the Watkins Glen Community Center.

In addition to Bishop Clark, special guests at the event included: Father Benedict Ehmman, a former pastor; Sister Muriel Curran, SSND, diocesan vicar for religious; Sister Victoria Dal Corso, one of the four original sisters assigned to Watkins Glen; and representatives of the Horseheads curia of the Legion of Mary.

Also present were Fathers Richard and Robert Beligotti. When the twin brothers from Watkins Glen were ordained as diocesan priests, the Religious Teachers Filippini helped prepare them to celebrate their first Mass.

Chairmen of the celebration were Nicholas and Mary Lou Ruvolo.

Commissioned by Pope St. Pius X, five Religious Teachers Filippini first arrived in the United States in 1910 to serve the needs of Italian immigrants. Their destination was St. Joachim Parish in Trenton, N.J.

Their mission almost ended before the decade did. In 1918, the sisters were recalled to Rome. However, Trenton Bishop Thomas

J. Walsh sent the superior general a telegram which read: "Government forbids departure."

Unsured whether the "government" to which he referred was civil or ecclesiastical, the superior general elected to stay.

The order also struggled financially during its early years in the United States. In 1920, Bishop Walsh purchased Villa Victoria, located on the banks of the Delaware River, to serve as their motherhouse and novitiate. Ten years later, the sisters moved their motherhouse to Villa Walsh in Morristown, N.J., where they also established a high school, a school of music, and a college.

In 1936, four Filippini sisters came to St. Mary of the Lake Parish in Watkins Glen at the request of Father Thomas Carroll, who was a close friend of Bishop Walsh.

Parishioners greeted them with open arms, bringing fruit, vegetables, money and other gifts to the convent.

The sisters taught religious education and sewing, trained altar boys, delivered food and clothing to the poor, cleaned the sanctuary and cared for the altar linens. They also formed a choir.

Today, the Religious Teachers Filippini continue to teach religious education, but focus on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), pre-baptismal seminars and other sacramental programs.

Through the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry's Schuyler County outreach center, located in the parish's catechetical center, the sisters help distribute food and clothing to needy neighbors. They also take

the Eucharist to area hospitals and nursing homes, and serve on local ecumenical councils.

Their foundress was a young catechist named Lucy Filippini who lived during the late 17th century. In 1692, Cardinal Marc'Antonio Barbarigo invited her to head schools he had founded to offer religious education to young girls from poor families in towns north of Rome. On October 15, 1704, the Pontifical Institute of the Religious Teachers Filippini was formally established and received their rule and habit from the cardinal.

Noted for her great virtue, Lucy Filippini was beatified in 1926 and canonized June 22, 1930.

Retreat for Christian women at Silver Lake in November

The Sisters of St. Joseph are sponsoring a weekend retreat for Christian women from Friday, November 21, to Sunday, November 23. The retreat will take place at Silver Lake beginning at 8 p.m. Friday, and ending at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

The weekend is designed to provide a time apart for prayer, quiet reflection and wholistic activities, as well as some formal presentations and informal sharing and relaxation.

The cost for the weekend, which is open to women over 18 years of age, is \$38.

Please call Sister Clare Ehmman, SSJ, at (716)586-1000, ext. 28, days, and 328-0116, evenings.

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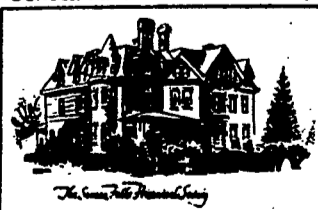
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Seneca Community Players presents The Fantasticks Oct. 31, Nov. 1 & 2 Dinner Theatre at the Holiday Inn Mound Rd., Rt. 414, Waterloo

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