



Ashes to ashes

Follow Fairport teens on a tour of Assumption Parish's columbarium, as they take a sensible approach to a touchy topic: cremation. See Page 3.



Tournament titans

The McQuaid varsity boys' basketball team remained unbeaten last week with two resounding wins to capture the 11th annual Hilton Tournament. See Page 11.

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World & Nation in Brief from NC News

World

Pope announces devotions

Vatican City — Pope John Paul II has announced a rare 14-month year of Marian devotions to help Catholics worldwide enter the third millennium of Christianity. A Vatican spokesman said standards for Marian events will be issued within a few months and will give "great freedom" to diocesan bishops in planning local ceremonies. The Marian year is the second called in the church's history. The previous one was held in 1953-54. The special year is to begin June 7, Pentecost Sunday, and end Aug. 15, 1988, the feast of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, the pope said.

Cardinal changes travel plans

Vatican City — Cardinal John O'Connor of New York canceled meetings with Israeli officials because of Vatican policy on such meetings in Jerusalem, a city whose current status the Church has contested, a Vatican spokesman said.

Before leaving for Jordan, a stop which preceded his Jan. 1-5 trip to Israel, Cardinal O'Connor said in New York that he had "failed to check Vatican protocol" in arranging the meetings.

Nation

New Communion guidelines

Washington — The U.S. Catholic bishops have prepared guidelines for receiving Communion. The guidelines, which are to be printed "in a prominent place" in parish missalettes, were announced in the December issue of the bishops' liturgy newsletter. They welcome non-Catholic guests at Mass but warn them that even other Christians cannot be offered "a general invitation to receive Communion" by Catholics because of the "sad divisions in Christianity."

Fire victims hard to identify

Washington — The "saddest, most painful aspect" of the Puerto Rico hotel fire is that so many bodies have been burned beyond recognition that relatives are unable to identify them, said a Puerto Rican priest. Father Armando Alvarez, part of a volunteer team of social workers, psychiatrists and ministers aiding victims' families, said in a telephone interview that in addition to the team, priests, sisters and lay people have been helping staff a medical center near the luxury Dupont Plaza Hotel that caught fire Dec. 31.

Archbishop visits with team

Newark, N.J. — Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark visited Jan. 2 in Puerto Rico with members of an archdiocesan high school basketball team who escaped a deadly New Year's Eve fire in the capital of San Juan. "It was the Lord's will that I should be here at this time," Archbishop McCarrick said of his visit with the Bergen Catholic High School basketball team in San Juan. His visit to Puerto Rico had been scheduled months before the fire. Team members had been staying at the Dupont Plaza Hotel when the fire broke out Dec. 31.

Office struggles to offer services without director

By Teresa A. Parsons

If you call the diocesan pastoral center looking for information about family ministry, you will most likely speak to a number of different people.

They could be connected with youth ministry or continuing education, or possibly the Office of Parish Services. Eventually, you might end up talking to the director for Catholic Charities in the diocesan Office of Social Ministry, who might in turn refer you to one of the regional offices of social ministry.

This confusion is not the operator's fault. At the moment, the Diocese of Rochester has no central office for family ministry, and that is a problem for the many diocesan and parish staff people whose work falls within that area.

"The family is supposed to be the most important area within the Church, but our programs are scattered piecemeal throughout the diocese," said Angela Gallo, director of ministry to separated and divorced Catholics for the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry. "Every division is trying desperately to take care of its own little needs."

Diocesan officials intended to appoint a successor to Margaret DeMeo when she resigned as director of the Office of Family Life in August, 1985. Several months later, however, the Thanks Giving Appeal fell short of its goal, and the family life director's position was one of several chosen to remain vacant to avoid layoffs.

At almost the same time, the Division of Social Ministry was in the final phases of a reorganization plan that called for regional offices to be established in the Genesee Valley, Southern Tier and Finger Lakes areas.

Since the Family Life Office fell under the province of social ministry, those functions of the absent director that couldn't be put off were divided among social ministry staff members at the regional and diocesan levels.

Ministry to the separated and divorced, which serves nearly 20,000 people across the diocese each year, and marriage instruction or pre-Cana programs, which annually prepare nearly 1,800 couples for marriage, were two of the areas deemed to be vital.

Gradually during the past year, regional offices of social ministry have hired additional staff people to serve in those areas. While such existing programs have continued fairly smoothly, they have taken their toll on staff. Pending the hiring of someone else to serve in the Southern Tier, Angela Gallo is still dividing her time between ministry to separated and divorced Catholics there and in the Genesee Valley region.

In the meantime, gaps between services are also becoming more apparent.

"We are doing the job of preparing people for marriage and helping people whose marriages didn't work out," said Mary Kessler, former director of marriage preparation for the Genesee Valley region. "But we are doing nothing for people in between. That's a big gap."

Early marriage enrichment is one of the areas that has been neglected. By requiring engaged couples to take marriage preparation classes, the Church is guaranteed an initial contact with new families, but too often fails to follow up.

"We have them for 12 hours or so, but we're not nurturing them," Kessler said. "In many cases, we don't see them again until the baptism of their first child."



Shadow dance

An ice skater, silhouetted by the late afternoon sun, leaps as she practices at Rockefeller Center in New York City.

NC Photo

Likewise grass-roots programs are suffering from the lack of a nurturing presence at the diocesan level. People like Ron and Judy Platten are continuing to develop and offer family programs to parishes. Since 1979, the Fairport couple has presented the Parentship Family Life program to more than 30 groups of parents and teens. But they have sorely missed the support of the Family Life Office.

"We used to get a lot of referrals from that office. Now people don't know who to call," Judy Platten said. "It's hard to continue doing this kind of work without those referrals and without the support and encouragement we received from getting together once in awhile."

There has been a diocesan Office of Family Life and at least a part-time director ever since the late 1950s. Originally created to administer marriage preparation, the office and successive directors have introduced and developed a variety of programs over the years, including natural family planning, parenting for peace and justice, marriage encounter, the Human Life Commission and ministry to the separated, divorced, remarried and bereaved.

Many of those programs, including marriage encounter and natural family planning, now function as independent entities. Others, such as Cana conferences for marriage enrichment,

have quietly been replaced or have fallen into disuse.

"Until four years ago, we were the only diocese that had a full-time lay person in separated/divorced ministry. Rochester is still one of the only dioceses in the country that has more than one person doing separated and divorced ministry," said Angela Gallo. "The diocese is not holding back. They're doing as much as they can. Structure-wise, we have more than most."

What's lacking is a strong advocate for family life who would link parishes with the diocesan structure, according to Kessler. "Every one of our divisions is doing family ministry," she said. "But we're fragmented."

That's a situation Frank and Sue Staropoli sought to avoid during their tenure as directors of the Family Life Office from 1977 to 1984.

While they worked to build up parish leadership in such areas as marriage preparation by offering training programs and retreats, the Staropolis also tried to ensure that the concerns of families were heard at the diocesan level and beyond.

"I think someone is needed to be a voice for the ministry of the laity and family life," Sue Staropoli said. "We were advocates. That was

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