

Religious order withdraws from Most Precious Blood

By Teresa A. Parsons

After more than half a century of service, priests from the Society of the Precious Blood will withdraw from Most Precious Blood Parish in Rochester this June.

Father Nicholas Arioli, CPPS, provincial of the society's Atlantic Vicariate, notified Bishop Matthew H. Clark of the order's intent in a letter dated February 24.

Earlier this year, Father Ronald Mahon, CPPS, who was appointed pastor at Most Precious Blood last June, asked to be relieved of the position "for his own personal reasons," according to Father Arioli.

"We canvassed everyone in the province, but we were unable to find a replacement because of our diminishing number of priests," Father Arioli said. "Because we have had 57 years there, it was difficult for us to do . . . We didn't want to leave, but we have to leave."

Only 21 priests and three brothers remain in the Precious Blood Fathers' Atlantic Vicariate, which stretches the length of the East Coast from Ontario, Canada, to Miami, Florida. In addition to Most Precious Blood, the order staffs St. Jerome's Parish in East Rochester.

"This in no way affects our status at St.

Jerome's," said Father Arioli, who has served as pastor there. "We are still going to stay there as long as we possibly can."

Bishop Clark announced last week that Father William Graf will serve as the new pastor at Most Precious Blood, beginning July 1. Father Graf is currently pastor at Annunciation Church in Rochester.

The Precious Blood Fathers are the second religious order to withdraw from Most Precious Blood Parish in less than a year. Last June, after serving in the parish school for nearly 20 years, three sisters from the Adorers of the Blood of Christ order abruptly resigned their positions and left, citing a lack of support and a shortage of personnel for replacements.

To Gerald J. Pucillo, who has worshipped at Most Precious Blood for 29 years, the bottom seems to have fallen out of the parish during the past year or two. "First the nuns up and left, and now this," he said.

"It is not the parish," said Nancy Sanzotta, an active member of Most Precious Blood for 11 years. "It's just circumstances, I guess. I don't understand it, but we're a family, and we'll stick it out somehow."

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Father Nicholas Arioli, CPPS

Both Sanzotta and Pucillo agreed that some parishioners compared Father Mahon unfavorably with previous pastors.

"(Father David Bonin, CPPS) being the type of person that was well-liked, a lot of people's feelings were hurt when he left," Pucillo said.

"Through no fault of his own, I think, Father Mahon was left holding the bag."

Sanzotta speculated that perhaps Father Mahon "didn't know how to handle the situation" because he lacked previous experience as a pastor. "Things just didn't work out," she concluded.

Most Precious Blood has had to cope with fewer changes in leadership than most parishes have. In 1930, Father Anthony Pece, CPPS,

founded the parish as a mission to serve Italian immigrants who settled on the city's northwest side. His curate, Father Sebastian Contegiacomo, took over as pastor seven years later and served for more than 40 years.

"The Precious Blood Fathers are (the parish) to people who've been here for 50 years," Sanzotta said.

Parishioners are nonetheless grateful that the diocese has assigned them a pastor, in light of diminishing numbers of priests. And Sanzotta hopes that having a new pastor will somehow pull the parish closer together.

"If we're going to survive, I think it has to," she said. "Maybe the diocese taking over will turn out to be a change for the better."

Knights of Columbus sponsoring Marian day of prayer at Silver Stadium

For the first time in more than 30 years, Catholics from all over the Diocese of Rochester will convene for a liturgical celebration at Rochester's Silver Stadium. The Finger Lakes Chapter of the Knights of Columbus expects 5,000 to 8,000 people to attend the Marian Day of Prayer it will sponsor at the Norton Street ballpark next month.

Knight William Schmitz, who is co-chairing the event with Patrick Murphy, says attendance at the day of prayer will be unlimited in the 13,000-seat facility. "If we have a problem with numbers, it will be the

most wonderful problem in the world," he remarks.

According to Schmitz, no events of this type have occurred in the diocese since the Holy Name Society discontinued its annual Red Wing Stadium rallies in the early 1950s.

The Marian celebration will take place between 3 and 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 17. The date commemorates the first appearance of the Blessed Virgin at Fatima and anticipates by three weeks the June 7 (Pentecost Sunday) beginning of the Marian Year promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

The timing of the event is also designed to conclude the Knights' year-long Pilgrim Virgin project and to pay tribute to Monsignor Joseph Cirrincione, who recently celebrated the 37th anniversary of his daily Family Rosary for Peace radio broadcasts.

The liturgy for the rally will consist of a living rosary formed by students from area Catholic schools; a reading from the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter "Behold Your Mother;" a meditation on the five glorious mysteries; a homily; consecration of the assembly to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; the reading of a papal message and blessing; Marian hymns; and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Homilist for the rally will be Father Robert Faricy, SJ, who will discuss the pope's latest encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*. Father Faricy, a theology professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, is co-author (with Sister Lucy Rooney, SND) of Paulist Press's

Medjugorje Up Close: Mary Speaks to the World.

In keeping with the Knights' 1986-87 theme, the rally will honor the Blessed Mother under the appellation of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Thanks to Auxiliary Bishop Alfred Abramowicz of Chicago, the Knights obtained a 32-foot by 20-foot painting of the patroness. The painting will be erected at center field and will serve as the backdrop for the altar.

Knights of Columbus chapters from throughout New York state and the Canadian province of Ontario are planning to send representatives to the rally.

Parishes within Monroe, Livingston and Wayne counties may arrange for bus transportation to the rally by calling Chris Mulholland of the Genesee Valley Regional Transit Service at (716)288-6050. Parishes in the remaining nine counties of the diocese should contact their area bus companies.

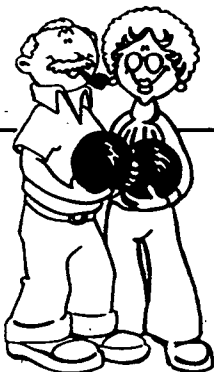
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