

Parish Notes

Parish celebrates 25th anniversary

St. John of Rochester, Fairport — Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday, June 20. The service has been planned to kick off a year-long celebration commemorating the parish's 25th anniversary. A reception will follow in the parish hall.

Other planned festivities include a parish picnic in August, a homecoming Oktoberfest in October and a New Year's Eve party. Former parishioners of St. John's are invited to participate in the celebrations.

In June, 1962, Bishop James E. Kearney formally established the parish in the rapidly developing town of Perinton. The new parish, founded to help relieve overcrowded conditions in St. Louis and Assumption parishes, took as its patron St. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, England, during the reign of Henry VIII and a martyr to the faith during Henry's persecution. Bishop Fisher always signed his pastoral letters "John of Rochester;" hence, the name chosen for the parish.

Over the years, the parish has grown from a nucleus of 321 families to 1,737.

Fund raiser offers office supplies

St. Anne, Palmyra — The parish has scheduled a special debt-reduction fund raiser from June 29 through July 2. A large quantity of office furniture and supplies will be on sale at a 60 to 80 percent reduction in price.

Among the items available will be file cabinets, organizers, shelves, lamps, folders, transparencies, bulletin boards, chalk boards, pencils, pens and paper.

For information, contact Mary Rutkowski at (315)597-4571.

Registration begins for Bible school

St. Rita, Webster — The parish's Vatican Bible School will run the week of July 20-24 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Registration is open to children ages four and older. Forms will be available in the rectory and religious-education, or may be obtained by calling (716)671-1456. The program will consist of Bible stories, music, crafts and play time. Bible school will operate concurrently with a week-long adult education program in the church for which babysitting will be provided.

Children honor Mary with Mass

Sacred Heart, Perkinsville — The children of the parish kicked off the Marian Year with a special "Celebrate Mary" Mass that concluded their catechetical year. The Mass, which began with a children's procession to Mary's altar, was celebrated by the pastor, Father Ronald Harley. A representative from each grade placed a vase filled with spring flowers on the altar.

The children also created large murals depicting the mysteries of the rosary. Children from the upper grades worked on the Flight into Egypt and the Annunciation, while those in the primary grades completed the Nativity, the Visitation and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple.

A children's litany celebrating Mary served as the post-communion meditation. Music for the service included four selections directed by Jan Roth and performed by the music group of the Sacred Heart Church. Group members are Sharon Bricks, Sally Leeson, Cary Roth, Pat Washer and Walt Washer.

Parents'

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federation's other activities. But, she remarks, since the federation's liaison meetings frequently focused solely on the marathon, schools that don't participate — including St. Ambrose — may have difficulty sustaining interest.

The frustration experienced by federation members doesn't end with the principals. Although they say they've enjoyed a good working relationship with the diocesan schools office, the two women clearly are dissatisfied with efforts to enforce diocesan policy concerning the federation and other aspects of school administration.

"The diocesan office has no clout because it's not a system," Ouweleen asserts. Because of the schools' autonomy from the diocese, such policies "really are only suggestions," she says.

As an example of such unenforced policy matters, she cites state textbook-loan law, a particular bone of contention between parents and principals. Under the law, public school districts must provide students in non-public schools with an equitable share of the textbooks the districts purchase. Public school districts, however, frequently attempt to cut back on allocations to Catholic-school students, while preserving allocations to students in the public schools.

When districts engage in this illegal practice, the federation contends, many Catholic school principals accept the move without a fight. They don't realize that it's parents' tax money they're throwing away, Ouweleen remarks, because "they're too busy having a nice, friendly relationship with the (public) school district."

"It's little fiefdoms, not a system ... The thing that has been our very strength — parochialism — is also our downfall," she continues, noting that even pastors do not attempt to supervise principals. "Nobody has any clout to require that they (principals) do things."

Among other unenforceable areas is the annual Marathon for Catholic Schools, which the federation sponsors and organizes each year at Rochester's Highland Park Bowl. In its seven-year history, the marathon raised a total of \$639,684 for participating schools. Despite the project's success, some principals have begun to run their own marathons in school parking lots, citing such reasons as an inability to interest students in going to the bowl, parental concerns about the safety of the city location, and a shortage of funds for bus transportation.

In addition, Gilbert and Ouweleen believe some principals underreport their earnings from the marathon, while others refuse to return all of the required 25 percent of proceeds to the federation. One principal, they claim, has yet to submit any money from last year's marathon. The federation uses the money for marathon costs, its dues

for membership in the New York State Federation, scholarships awarded through the Bishop Clark Oratorical Competition and other expenses.

"They sign a contract to abide by our rules and regulations, but they don't," Ouweleen charges. "They change them, and then they say we're hard to get along with."

The two women also point to complaints regarding the format for schol-

ars members on various education committees, but to ensure that some parents were included. The group sees itself primarily as a resource, conducting workshops and other educational programs.

"Our function is not to have an organization that's meeting all the time," Ouweleen explains. "Our function is to educate parents so they can function in their own schools ... We don't want to take people out of their

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**Gina Ouweleen
Rochester Federation
of Catholic School Parents**

arships the federation awards each year through the Bishop Clark Oratorical Competition, to the demise of the annual Catholic School's Week Mass they orchestrated, and to several instances in which they claim principals and diocesan education officials didn't want the federation's input but were very interested in the organization's funds.

Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan, principal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, is among the administrators who at times disagreed with federation members. Sister Mogenhan had favored returning oratorical scholarship money to the elementary schools and developing a less competitive distribution of scholarship funds — two proposals the federation refused to consider.

Nevertheless, she says she wishes to publicly thank the federation for all it had done for the schools. "I feel very bad because these parents have worked very hard," Sister Mogenhan comments. "Those parents have given years of service."

Federation members realize that their complaints are not unique to this diocese nor to Catholic schools. "There's an educator-parent tension inherent in education, but because of the paternal nature of our Church, it's worse for Catholic schools," Ouweleen observes.

The group also acknowledges that principals are under a great deal of pressure, struggling to raise funds and to survive. "They have their problems. The atmosphere in the diocese is that no one is safe, and they know that," she remarks. "Catholic schools are not a priority in this diocese. No matter what they do, the schools are going to be perceived as a drag" on diocesan or parish resources.

Yet "the sad thing is that the people who could help them with their problems, they ignore," Gilbert injects, referring to parents in general, not specifically to federation members.

The women emphasize that the federation's goal has never been to place

schools to be part of some superstructure." Despite the heavy workload engendered by the small size of the federation's executive committee, members deliberately chose to keep their numbers low. The two women observe that the schools need as many volunteers as possible, so it would be counterproductive to channel parents away from their schools.

They acknowledge, however, that the small and long-established executive committee could have been perceived as a clique. Some critics, they note, had said its composition was too city- or too suburban-oriented.

"I hope it will start again ... I think we need the parents; we need the federation," she continues. "We need people like the ones who have served."

That hope will be answered this summer as the diocesan education staff attempts to re-establish the federation in some form. According to Sister Tierney and Brother Walsh, the new group will place greater emphasis on a broad base of parental involvement and support.

"I think it's a given that you can't run a Catholic school system the way a system should be run without a parents' organization," Brother Walsh asserts.

Diocesan Appointments



Father Peter A. Deckman, from parochial vicar of St. Mary's Church, Dansville, and chaplain at the Groveland Correctional Facility to pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Rochester, effective June 30, 1987.

Father Daniel J. O'Shea, continuing as chaplain/coordinator of the Bethlehem Retreat House and Family Brothers at the Abbey of the Genesee, to additional duties as chaplain at the Groveland Correctional Facility, effective June 30, 1987.

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