

# Officials predict low turnover in diocesan teaching positions

## Displaced teachers hoping for openings

By Teresa A. Parsons

Letters of intent submitted last month by diocesan elementary-school teachers revealed good news for the Catholic school system, but bad news for some teachers at schools that closed for good this year.

The letters, which indicate whether teachers plan to return to their positions in the fall, pointed to a significantly lower rate of teacher turnover this year than occurred last year, according to Sister Joseph Gilmery Russell, SSJ, assistant school superintendent for personnel.

The diocese lost an estimated 9 percent of its teachers systemwide between January and December, 1986, according to Sister Russell. Many of the departures came late in the summer as a result of hiring by public school districts. Officials cannot yet estimate how many last-minute losses diocesan schools will suffer this summer.

Only 40 teaching positions have opened thus far in Monroe County's Catholic elementary schools, as compared to nearly 100 at the same time last year, Sister Russell said.

"I have a very strong sense that our turnover will be much lower this year — the openings are just not many," she added.

Sister Russell believes that the large number of teachers who left last year is, in itself, part of the reason for the lower rate of turnover this year. She also credits increases in teachers' salaries and benefits with keeping more teachers in the Catholic school system.

However, the number of teachers who are staying put this year doesn't bode well for between 40 and 45 of their counterparts who have been displaced by school closings and consolidations, and who want to continue to work in the diocesan school system.

St. Anthony of Padua in Rochester, St. Jerome's in East Rochester and St. Mary's in Bath will not reopen next year. Seventh and eighth grades at St. Anne's, Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Andrew's will move to regional junior high schools.

"The teachers displaced because of school closings will get first priority on openings," Sister Russell said. "We are working very hard to place every teacher who wants to return to the system."

All the teachers from St. Anthony of Padua School who wished to stay in the system have

already been placed in other Catholic schools. Rosemarie Muscolino, a kindergarten teacher for 20 years, will move to Holy Apostles/Holy Family next year, as will an estimated 90 percent of St. Anthony's students.

Two teachers from St. Anthony's are retiring and one is moving away. Principal Frank Vaccaro and one other teacher are looking for positions at a public school. "I believe in Catholic education," Vaccaro said. "I hope to return someday."

Placements will be slower in coming for teachers at St. Jerome's and St. Mary's, since the closings of those schools were announced later in the year. Of the 13 teachers at St. Jerome's, all but two are seeking other Catholic school posts, according to Principal Jane Lustyk.

"All we can really do is wait and hope that there are positions available," Lustyk said. "It is very difficult to be waiting this late in the year without knowing where you'll be next year."

At 70, Doris Gillispie is one of the lucky ones who isn't worried about finding another teaching job. After 26 years as a teacher and librarian at St. Jerome's, she believes it's time to retire and begin a new career as a private tutor.

Distance has compounded the lack of available openings for teachers from St. Mary's in Bath. The nearest Catholic schools are in Hornell, Wayland and Corning — all more than 20 miles away.

Most of the teachers at St. Mary's are facing the choice of relocating to another town, applying for a position at a local public school, or changing careers.

For Cathleen Francis, a single mother with four children, the options are few. "What I am left with is having to stay pretty much in the area," she said. "The hardest part for me is not knowing what I'll be doing next year."

Francis said diocesan officials have tried to be helpful, but have little to offer. "The problem is that they really don't know what to do with us," she said. "We're kind of out here in the middle of nowhere."

A teaching job with the local public school district would mean less of a financial struggle for the Francis family next year. On the other hand, Francis always regarded her seven years at St. Mary's as a vocation.

"It was very difficult, but I always felt that if it was what the Lord wanted from me, He would take care of me," she added. "I guess that wherever I end up is where He wants me."

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Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

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### Clarifications

Our article on Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, (C-J June 11: "Feminist nun 'begs for crumbs' for daughters of the future") failed to note that Sister Chittister's lecture was sponsored by the Great Lakes Ministry Center.

In last week's article, "Parents' federa-

tion disbands; lack of cooperation cited," last-minute reporting and editing on deadline caused two unclear references. The identification of Jean Gilbert, president of the Rochester Federation of Catholic School Parents, was inadvertently eliminated. The unattributed quotation regarding the continuing need for a parents' organization was made by Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan. We regret the errors.



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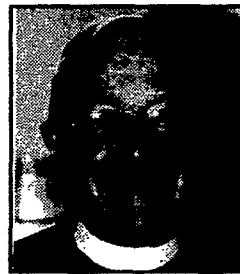
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