

Mercy sisters gathering to reflect on 'graced history'

The Sisters of Mercy will conduct their first-ever general assembly from August 27 to 31, at the Mercy motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road in Rochester.

"Graced History" is the theme for the week-long assembly, which is designed to give congregation the opportunity to pray over and reflect upon its history from a faith perspective.

Sister Jean Marie Kearse, superior general of the congregation, said the assembly's goal is to provide an experience for the congregation "that will heighten our awareness of and gratitude for God's loving presence throughout our 'graced history,' both personal and communal." The term "graced history" refers to a way of looking at personal and communal history from a faith perspective.

Sister Kearse views the assembly as a significant event in the life of the congregation, in that it "offers God an opportunity to develop in each of us a deeper interior freedom and peace, as together we rediscover the common ground of our lives as Sisters of Mercy."

Several sisters have been asked to prepare brief reflections on a particular facet of the graced history. Sister Mary Edmond Gauthier from Notre Dame in Elmira will talk on "Light History: Foundation to Vatican II;" Sister Mary Alphonsus Kruckow of St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell will discuss "Dark History: Foundation to Vatican II;" Sister Patricia Prinzing, also of St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell, will make a presentation on "Light History: Vatican II to Present;" the topic for Sister Mary Sullivan of Rochester is "Dark History: Vatican II to Present;" and Sister Sheila Steven of Rochester will speak on "Hope History."

These sisters will attempt to convey how God has supported the Sisters of Mercy through



Sister Anne Harvey, s.c. and Jack Milan, members of the Jesuit Team at the Ignatian Center of Spirituality in Guelph, Canada, will serve as facilitators for the sessions.

The nature of the inaugural assembly is in direct response to the efforts of Sister Kearse and the four-member Mercy council to carry out the congregation's first goal, "to develop prayer life and community life that serve to empower us for mission and ministry." In addition to Sister Kearse, the council consists of Sisters Janet Korn, Ann Miller, Kathy Milliken and Nancy Whitley.

Sister Kearse said she hoped that the personal and shared-reflection portions of the assembly "will help each of us to move toward the greater interior freedom necessary for personal and communal discernment, and decision making in the future."

Nearly all of the congregation's 265 sisters will attend the assembly. A similar meeting will be conducted later this fall for the Mercy mis-

sionaries in Chile, several of whom cannot attend the Rochester gathering.

The assembly coordinating committee is chaired by Sister Marlene Vigna, who will be helped in her duties by Sisters Marie Joseph Crowley, Diane Marie Erskine, Jean Marie Kearse and Kathleen Wayne overseeing the "Graced History" process are Sisters Maureen Flood, Rita Kaufman, Margaret Mary Mattie, Therese Richardson and Virginia Wilson.

The congregation endorsed the assembly concept during the 1985 General Chapter, with the expectation that it would become a yearly event.

The Sisters of Mercy, a worldwide congregation, was founded in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland, by Catherine McAuley. This year, the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester are observing their 130th anniversary in the diocese. The Rochester congregation was founded on June 9, 1857, at St. Mary's Parish, downtown.

both pleasant and painful periods of the order's history, even when the sisters might not have been fully aware of the "graces of the moment." The five brief presentations are intended to serve as catalysts for each sister's personal reflection.

Serving essentially as a time of renewal, the assembly will involve the participation of all sisters. It will include time for prayer, reflection, small-group sharing and eucharistic liturgy. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be the celebrant for the Eucharist each day of the assembly, and is expected to attend whatever sessions his schedule allows. In addition to the bishop, associate members of the congregation have also been invited to be present.

Helpline grant to assist elderly, handicapped

St. Mary's Health Care Services and the New York State Office for the Aging are now jointly offering 33 personal emergency-response systems to residents of the town of Brighton.

Helpline/Brighton is a system enabling elderly and handicapped people to live alone and remain independent. A small wireless "help" button, worn by the subscriber, is pushed when help is needed. This alerts the emergency center at St. Mary's Hospital, where 24-hour monitoring is maintained by hospital emergency staff.

Helpline presents an alternative to physicians, the elderly, handicapped persons and their families, by enabling subscribers to continue living alone. Although system units will

be provided at no cost to subscribers, monthly donations will be encouraged to support personnel costs. Neither subscribers nor their doctors must be associated with St. Mary's.

Criteria for the service are: those served must be 60 or older, residents of Brighton, physically or mentally disabled and judged to be at risk.

Helpline currently provides 180 units to residents in Monroe County. St. Mary's Health Care Services pioneered Helpline in 1980. The Brighton project is being undertaken through the efforts of state Sen. John Perry.

For information regarding Helpline, contact Marilyn Spang at (716)464-3369.

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How do I help the elderly at the time of a funeral?

Death of a loved one is painful. There is a tendency to believe that the elderly adjust more easily because they "should" anticipate the loss. Having more time to prepare does not guarantee that grieving will be easier. The elderly may have fewer resources such as long time friends, money or good health. Losing a partner or long time friend may mean living life alone at a time when a person may be least able to be independent. Support from family and friends at this time is most important. Being over protective or taking away a person's independence by making decisions for them is not desirable and may be harmful. Help the elderly begin their adjustment by attending the funeral and offering specific help.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets, not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry-free future.

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