

Local News

Committee pegs diocesan salary increases at 6 percent

By Lee Strong

Continuing a process that began in 1985, the Diocese of Rochester this week released 1988/89 salary guidelines for diocesan employees. The guidelines were developed by the Salary and Benefits Committee of the Comprehensive Personnel Commission.

The guidelines, which go into effect July 1, recommend 6 percent raises for the majority of diocesan employees currently covered under the diocesan guidelines package. By contrast, the 1987/88 guidelines — the first recommended by the committee — incorporated increased ranging from 3 to 29 percent.

This year's 6 percent figure was based on projected increases in the cost-of-living index, with percentage points added to bring diocesan salaries closer in line with salaries offered by other not-for-profit organizations, according to Mary Kessler, director of personnel services.

Two employee classifications that will not experience 6 percent increases are priests and elementary school teachers. Priests will receive 4.02 percent raises. In addition, their salaries will include car and professional allowances — which formerly were paid separately. The new guidelines call for priests' salaries to range from \$9,086 to \$13,827, depending on years of experience and duties.

Elementary school teachers are in the third year of a four-year plan to bring their salary levels up to the average levels paid to teachers in the eight Catholic high schools in the diocese. The new range for teachers will be \$12,100 to \$22,080.

Women religious will enjoy two changes. The diocese will allocate a \$1,750 car allowance for each sister because many more religious are living outside convents and using personal cars for transportation than had been the case in previous years. In addition, diocesan contributions to the sisters' retirement program will be raised \$50.

A new employee category now to be covered by the guidelines will be pastoral musicians. The recommended figures for full-time musicians range from \$9,750 to \$19,000, depending on experience and education. Part-time salaries are to be determined on a pro-rated basis depending on the number of hours worked. According to Kessler, this recommended guideline for musicians was based on a scale developed by the American Guild of Organists and a comparison with scales implemented in several other dioceses.

Included in the salary package are the results of a survey conducted last November on the salaries of such parish employees as secretaries, custodians, housekeepers and cooks. These results are intended to serve as a general guide for parishes, not to provide recommended scales, Kessler said. The 1989/90 guidelines will include recommendations for these positions once parishes have had a chance to look at the survey, and make comments and recommendations.

Kessler said she was pleased with the work of the committee and with the process involved in creating the new guidelines. "This has been the most public process ever," Kessler observed. "Throughout the entire process, representatives of the main employee groups in the diocese (were involved)."

The salary committee, as well as the two other committees of the personnel commission — the Development of Ministers/Employees Committee and the Policies Committee — were expanded last spring to admit representatives from a broad range of diocesan employees, including secretaries, religious education coordinators, teachers and campus ministers. The process of expanding the subcommittees began in 1986 with the addition of personnel experts from the community.

"We want to make sure the process is public," Kessler explained. "Employees should know that people are working on (salaries) and that (employees) do have a voice." She said the representatives on the salary committee met with their constituencies in regional and group meetings to inform them what the committee was doing, and to receive recommendations and suggestions about changes and issues to be addressed.

Father Robert J. Schrader, director of the Division of Personnel, Staffing and Development, noted a second advantage created by the expanded salary committee.

"I think for the first time, all of the various ministers on the commission were able to see what was going on with the other ministers," Father Schrader said. "They were able to see salary differences and different benefits (that each group had) and get a comprehensive picture of the various ministries."

An awareness of the entire package, he said, also enabled the representatives to realize "for the first time the impact the various raises would have."

Efforts to raise salaries and to improve

benefits are motivated in part by practical concerns, Kessler noted. If salaries are not competitive, or at least livable, the diocese will continue to experience a high employee turnover rate.

At the same time, Kessler said, increases must be in line with what the Church can afford. "We have to look at salaries, but we have to be aware of realities," she said. "Increases always will cause financial problems. We have to keep in mind the funding base."

More important than practical concerns, however, are social concerns, Father Schrader remarked. These improvements in salaries and benefits — and the process for developing them — are attempts to follow Church teachings in matters of economic justice. These teachings are expressed in the bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy and a position paper recently released by the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, entitled "Just Treatment for Those Who Work for the Church."

"We must recognize the right of (employees) to have what is fair," the priest noted. "(At the same time), as we strive toward what's most equitable and fair to each employee, (we must work) for a concurrent education of our people about what those documents say."

The committee's efforts to ensure the economic justice called for in these documents is just beginning, acknowledged Charlene Dishaw, the committee's chairwoman. The first priority for the committee, however, is to become a cohesive group.

"My goal is that by June the group will be a 'group,' and will be able to sit down and come down with an understanding about why we are recommending what we are recommending,"

Dishaw said. "As we go into the next couple of years, people will have worked with the package before. Their decisions will be based on a broader base, and now that we know how to do it we can begin to evaluate the criteria we used and can make improvements and changes necessary."

In the coming year, the committee will evaluate the 1988/89 guidelines and review feedback about the salary survey. It will also re-evaluate the current salary grades and scales, which were developed in 1981 and are now considered outdated. Future salary scales will incorporate such factors as funding sources, size and location of parishes and scope of responsibilities.

In addition, the salary committee will evaluate the benefits package. The committee will study the present package, examine packages offered by other not-for-profit organizations and decide what areas need the most work. Some areas that will receive special attention are education benefits, health coverage and pension plans.

To assist with efforts to improve salary and benefits, representatives from the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators — which conducted an on-site visit in December and is currently auditing the diocese — will report its findings and recommendations to Pastoral Center personnel in February.

According to Father Schrader, the continuing efforts to create just salary and benefit plans is important to the diocese — and to the Church as a whole.

"We're challenged as a Church to challenge others to be just in their lives," Father Schrader noted. "If we're going to do that, we're going to have to take a good look at ourselves."

Application forms to be ready for tuition-subsidy program

The Diocese of Rochester is offering 1988-89 tuition subsidies for students attending Catholic elementary and secondary schools. The subsidy program aids economically disadvantaged children who wish to receive Catholic education but cannot afford them.

According to Brother Brian Walsh, acceptance and registration at a Catholic school is required before a subsidy application can be made. Forms for secondary students will be available at each Catholic high school on

March 1; forms for elementary school students will also be available March 1 in the offices of all Catholic parishes and elementary schools.

Applications must be completed and returned to the schools by mid-March, and subsidy awards will be announced in June. Those wishing further information should contact their school or parish, or call Sister Virginia Steinwachs in the education office, (716)328-3210.

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St. Joseph's Seeks Full-Time Staff

St. Joseph's House is looking for individuals who are interested in working with and for the homeless and hungry of Rochester. Committed to the Catholic Worker philosophy of taking personal responsibility for the needs of others, St. Joseph's House feeds approximately 75 people daily. In addition there is a clothing room and a shelter program. Our current needs are:

House Manager: An individual who will work with the director and take primary responsibility for organizing the direct service dimension of the work of the House. Tasks include organization of routine maintenance, supervision of repairs and coordination of volunteer efforts; approximately 40 hours/week and one year commitment.

Staff Manager: Individuals working with director and house manager will take responsibility for any of a variety of house tasks — daily meal preparation, cleaning, advocacy for guests and production of the newsletter; approximately 30 hours/week and one year commitment.

Hospitality Coordinator: Individual who will maintain daily contacts with guests from 2-8 p.m. and facilitate interaction between guests and other service agencies; approximately 30 hours/week and six month commitment.

We offer room, board, the opportunity to live cooperatively with other members of the community, a small stipend, medical insurance and a transportation allowance. If you are interested, please write to us and together we will discern ways of working with one another.

Send inquires to: St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, P.O. Box 1062, Rochester, NY 14603.