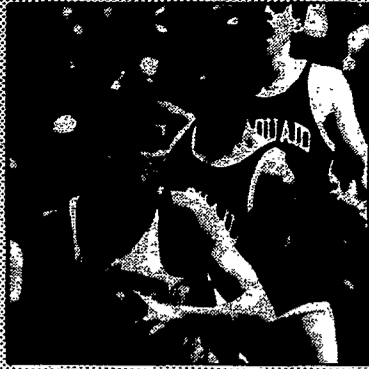




A cause for sainthood

Coming's four parishes assist in the Diocese of Buffalo's search for information on St. Mary's one-time pastor, Lockport philanthropist Monsignor Nelson Baker. See page 3.



Going to Glens Falls

A win over Hamburg Frontier last weekend sends McGuaid to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association hoop semifinals in Glens Falls. See page 8.

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Wearing o' the green

Bonnie Traflet/Courier-Journal
St. Patrick's Day celebrations began early this year in Rochester, with kickoff ceremonies and parade on Saturday, March 12. At left, Kate Murphy and her niece Sarah Abbamonte enjoy the festivities at Rochester's City Hall Saturday morning. Above, the Irish were decked in green from head to foot, as evidenced by the shamrocks sprouting from the head of Betty Rund (nee Mulhorn).

Waverly parish opts to close school to avoid debt

By Lee Strong

Five years ago, the finance committee of St. James the Apostle Parish in Waverly predicted that funds being used to keep the parish school in operation would run out in June, 1988.

The committee's prediction proved remarkably accurate.

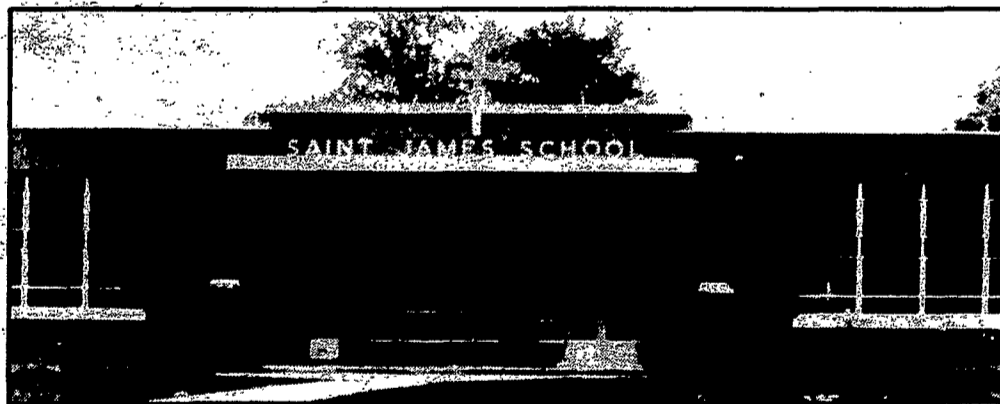
Faced with the choice of closing the parish's 34-year-old school or going into debt, the St. James Parish Council voted to recommend closing St. James School at the end of the 1987/88 school year.

Last week, Bishop Matthew H. Clark confirmed the council's decision, saying in a letter to the pastor, Father Edward J. Foy, that "it is apparent that the level of giving required to continue the Catholic school at St. James is beyond the ability and willingness of yourself and those who assist you."

According to Father Foy, the school's enrollment had been stable for several years, but increasing expenses had far exceeded what could be raised through reasonable tuition increases and had eaten into the parish's savings. "We just don't have the dollars, and the budget is beyond our ability to handle," the pastor said. He noted that for the last several years, school operations had been subsidized by \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually from the parish's savings accounts and bequests. By June, he said, parish savings will be almost completely depleted.

"We've been talking about the school situation for so long, and now we're up to the zero hour," the pastor said.

Brother Brian Walsh, superintendent of diocesan schools, agreed that the situation in Waverly had reached a point at which the parish could no longer support the school. "A school is a big undertaking for a small parish, and there comes a time when a parish is beyond the ability of a local parish to support it."



St. James School in Waverly, shortly after it was built.

Since last October, diocesan officials and parish leaders had been meeting to examine options for the parish, Brother Walsh noted. Among the officials involved in the discussions were Father Peter T. Bayer, diocesan chancellor; John T. Trickey, director of the diocese's Department of Financial Services; and Sister Anne Guerin, SSJ, assistant superintendent for planning and development for the Department of General Education.

As a result of the visits and ongoing communications with parish officials, "it became more and more clear that the local level (of support) was not able to sustain the school," Brother Walsh said. The parish does not have the financial ability to continue supporting the school, nor does it have the resources to maintain the tremendous amount of effort added fund-raising and recruitment would require, he noted.

In initial efforts to save the school, diocesan and parish leaders had explored ways to increase the parish's income, and had examined such possibilities as changing the school's configuration from kindergarten through sixth-

grade to pre-kindergarten through third-grade. None of the options proved viable, however, Brother Walsh said.

The final decision to close was delayed because St. James is the diocese's only school in the southern part of Chemung County, Brother Walsh observed. "They are the only game in town," he said, noting that parents who want their children to attend a Catholic school next year must either send them to Elmira — 20 miles away — or to the nearby city of Sayre, Pa., in the Diocese of Scranton.

The parish's decision to close the school has left parents saddened; according to the school's secretary, Sharon Lynch, "It was a tough, heart-rending decision," she said.

Lynch's own son had attended the school, and her grandchildren currently attend it. "I've been associated with the school for 12 years," she observed. "It's an excellent school, and it makes me angry that we can't get help from New York state."

Parishioners have been aware of the parish's financial situation for several years, however, so the decision did not come as a surprise,

Lynch said. "They can see we don't have the money to go on," she remarked. "How much can we go on-tuition?"

Father Foy acknowledged that parishioners and parents are anxious about the school's closing. "There's all kinds of confusion and tension about no longer having the school," he observed. To help compensate for the closing of the school, the parish's religious-education program will be examined and improved, Father Foy noted.

Brother Walsh said that with the closing of St. James' school, no other school closings are currently being considered by the diocese. "Right now there are no irons in the fire," he remarked. The situation could change after schools look at their enrollment figures, the superintendent acknowledged, but he said he believes that no more schools will be closed.

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