

Schools plan stresses flexibility

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The difference between the first draft of the system plan for Monroe County's Catholic schools and the final draft is about 28 pages.

The slimness of the nine-page schools plan released last week reflects the extensive revision that has taken place since the first 37-page draft was released last March by the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools. The commission is chaired by William Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College.

The final plan is devoid of the specific directives that formed the first draft. Each of Monroe County's four quadrants — northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest — will be given considerable leeway to determine their own educational futures within the diocesan school system.

Pickett acknowledged that the plan has been revised considerably in response to

input from quadrant leaders. The chairman, along with Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Brother Brian Walsh, diocesan superintendent of schools, detailed the plan at a press conference on Thursday, Aug. 24, at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates.

Highlights of the new schools plan are as follows:

Governance: The new plan allows each quadrant to draw up its own membership guidelines for forming a governing board by the fall of 1990. The original plan mandated specific membership guidelines, but under the new plan, any membership structure is acceptable as long as it provides for representation from pastors, principals, parents and parishioners.

Grade reorganization: Each quadrant may reorganize its schools' grade configuration as it wishes. Yet, as in the original draft, the new plan recommends that schools be re-configured to house either grades kindergarten through six or grades

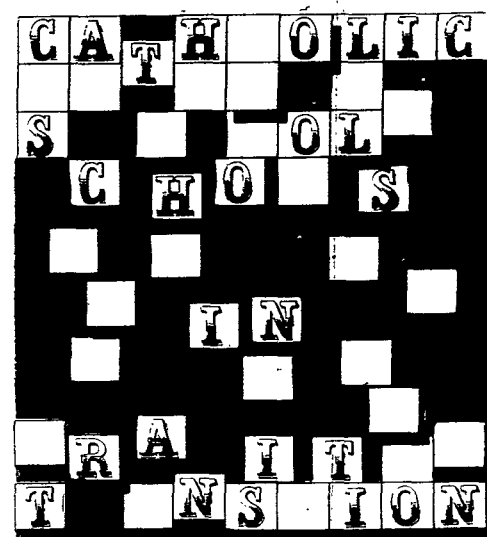
seven and eight.

Pickett noted that although the first draft called for a regional junior high to be established in each quadrant, quadrants are under no obligation to create such schools if they choose not to do so.

Finance: The new plan omits the parish education-subsidy proposal contained in the first plan. The original proposal had called for all Monroe County parishes to support all of the schools in their respective quadrants. Under the new plan, parishes will have to pay a subsidy according to their share of student populations in quadrant schools.

Parishes without schools will be only be asked to support Catholic schools when tuition, foundation money and parish subsidies fail to cover the complete costs of the county system. The commission noted that such a subsidy would not be assessed so as to hurt a parish's other ministries.

The plan does mandate that parishes



without schools be assessed a cumulative subsidy of \$100,000 in 1989-90 to provide the following:

- \$42,575 in tuition subsidies for disadvantaged children.
- \$32,920 in direct assistance to Corpus Christi and Holy Family Schools.

Continued on page 13

CATHOLIC COURIER

Diocese of Rochester Thursday, August 31, 1989 50¢ 20 pages

Traditional groups put faith in action

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard (Matthew 20:1-2).

Christ's parable of the vineyard forms the premise of Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on the laity, *Christifideles Laici*, released last January. The pope reminds his readers that the vineyard is the world, and that some of the most important laborers in that vineyard are the lay members of the Catholic Church.

For the last century in the diocese of Rochester, many of those lay laborers have found employment through such traditional groups as the Legion of Mary, the Knights of Columbus, the Blue Army and the Knights of St. John. The importance of these and other groups of lay Catholics is emphasized in the pontiff's exhortation.

"In some ways lay associations have always been present throughout the church's history as various confraternities, third orders and sodalities testify even today," he wrote, going on to note that such traditional groups now exist alongside newer organizations and movements, many of which grew out of the spirit of Vatican II.

Yet for many older diocesan Catholics, traditional lay organizations form a link to a pre-Vatican II church life that stressed devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus — a life that, in the United States at least, centered on the life of tightly knit neighborhoods populated by parishioners on the same economic and social levels.

Two desires generally contributed to the formation of these groups — a need for camaraderie with fellow Catholics in a social group devoted to active works of charity, and a hunger for spiritual fulfillment and apostolic work through communal prayer.

For the most part, such groups today comprise Catholics who are entering their 50s, 60s and 70s. They generally stress a conservative outlook on religion, while fostering a liberal approach to economic and social problems among their members and beneficiaries.

Despite a membership drop in this diocese of nearly 50 percent since the late 1950s, perhaps the best known and most thriving of these traditional groups is the Knights of Columbus, founded in 1897 in New Haven, Conn. An international organization of Catholic laymen, the K of C claims 5,000 members from throughout the diocese, according to Richard McHale, chairman of the Board of District Deputies for the Finger Lakes Chapter. Internationally, 1.4 million men belong to the K of C.

Chapters are usually organized to correspond with diocesan borders, McHale said, noting that each chapter is subdivided into districts each of which consists of several councils. Councils often encompass two to four parishes, depending on the number of members.

The Knights' activity reflects the pope's view in *Christifideles Laici* that efforts to transform society in a Christian manner should drive the activity of lay groups. The



As this 1970 photo shows, such traditional societies as the Legion of Mary once enjoyed large memberships. Although all of the local traditional groups have experienced membership declines since the 1960s, these organizations continue to contribute to the life of the church.

Knights' Finger Lakes chapter contributes several thousand dollars each year to such beneficiaries as nursing homes, soup kitchens and schools. One beneficiary, for example, is Rochester's School of the Holy Childhood, a center for mentally retarded children and adults. Each year, K of C councils donate \$10-12,000 to help underwrite the school's programs.

The Holy Father noted the philosophy undergirding such charity is "(a) commitment to a presence in human society, which in light of the church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person."

McHale put it in simpler terms. "It's a Catholic's responsibility to help people less fortunate than them in the world today. Our Lord wanted us to do that."

The Knights of St. John likewise exemplify much of the practical Christianity called for in the pope's document. Knights raise money for local charities, and members volunteer to help clients at such facilities as St. Ann's Home/The Heritage, a residence and rehabilitation center for the elderly. According to Frank Meleca, colonel of the Rochester Regiment, each regiment or district consists of several commanderies, usually associated with a specific parish.

Like the Columbians, the Knights of St. John have watched their membership decline since its peak in the early 1960s, falling from about 2,000 members then to about 200 today.

And, like the K of C, the Knights of St. John offer life insurance to their members, though the Columbians' policy is much more extensive than that of the Knights of St. John, who award a \$100 death benefit to family members of deceased Knights.

More important than the insurance is the solidarity of the Knights of St. John, Meleca noted. "(You join) just to be with

your fellow men. We're all Christians," he said.

Fellowship with Christian women is the fabric that binds the members of Catholic Daughters of America together. An offshoot of the Knights of Columbus, the CDA was started in Utica in 1903 and was originally called the National Order of the Daughters of Isabella.



The CDA promotes intellectual and spiritual growth among its members and furthers Catholic education in the United States. Made up of individual courts, the CDA in Rochester diocese has 16 courts, each numbering 30 to 80 members, according to Mary Alice Aiken, regent of Court 1193 which meets monthly at St. Philip Neri Church in Rochester.

CDA members regularly recite the rosary, roll bandages for the missions, promote academic award programs in Catholic schools and raise money for charity. The daughters also invite speakers on topics ranging from the church in Central America to the pro-life movement to their meetings.

"We wouldn't be exposed to that if we didn't belong," Aiken said of the CDA's efforts to recruit interesting speakers. She noted that through CDA membership, her soul has grown as much as her mind. "If you don't belong to a women's group, or if you don't gather with people who share the same faith, you just stick your head in the dirt," Aiken said.

Aiken's words echoed one of the main points of *Christifideles Laici*. "(I)n a secularized world," the pope wrote, "above all, the various group forms of the apostolate can represent for many a precious help for the Christian life in remaining faithful to the demands of the Gospel and the commitment to the church's mission and apostolate."

Continued on page 17

Inside			
Calendar.....	9	Op-ed.....	16
Columnists.....	14-15	Sports.....	12
Entertainment.....	10	World & Nation.....	4-6
Features.....	7, 8 & 20	Youth.....	11
Local.....	3		