

Workshops to focus on commitment process

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Part of the Commitment to Ministry Process is discerning natural affinities — parishes that, because of geographic proximity or common needs, might share programs or personnel.

On Sept. 23, the process itself will make use of a "natural affinity" — the diocesan Leadership Day, which has taken place annually for the last five years. Entitled "Living the Commitment: Being Church," this year's Leadership Day will include Commitment to Ministry workshops on the experiences of parishes that have worked with shared programs and personnel, lay involvement and staffing options, and a variety of ministries.

In addition, the day-long gathering at the Riverside Convention Center includes two of the scheduled six training sessions for parish reflection teams. These two sessions will focus on parish demographics, and, appropriately, affinities.

Meanwhile, inclusion of the reflection teams in this year's gathering has swelled attendance from approximately 300 last year to more than 1,100.

For some reflection teams, the day will also mark the jumping-off point for efforts to make parishioners aware of their future

staffing needs, and to help them develop plans for meeting those needs. On Pentecost, 1990, each parish will submit a report to Bishop Matthew H. Clark, summarizing the results of the entire two-year commitment process.

The workshop on demographics — to be offered three times during the day — will provide reflection team members with profiles of their individual parishes. Each profile will include a breakdown of the parish's population by age, and its sacramental history for the last decade.

According to Deacon Claude Lester, director of the Office of Parish Services and the coordinator of the education portion of the commitment process, those numbers are important for planning parish needs.

"So often we reflect in what we do our perception of reality," Deacon Lester said. "Without a sense of facts, we are dealing with assumptions."

Presenting the actual parish profile will make parishioners aware of needs for services other than those that directly affect them, Deacon Lester said. He noted, for example that his own parish, St. Bridget's in East Bloomfield, recently completed a parish census.

"The impression was we are a pretty old parish," he said. "But the census said

something very different. The early 30s is where the peak of the population was. The reality was we needed religious-education programs three times the size of what we have."

The profiles will not only help parishioners discern their actual needs, but will also provide a yardstick for comparison with other parishes, Deacon Lester added. This in turn will help in discovering natural affinities with parishes that have similar needs.

In addition to information provided by the diocese, the reports will also include sections surveying reflection team members on such areas as parish staff, finances, properties and activities. The reports also will pose questions related to the commitment process.

In the future, parishes will continue to

complete sections of the report not related to the commitment process as a comprehensive parish profile. These sections will replace a number of separate documents and records parishes currently submit to the pastoral office.

As part of the day, participants will also be able to attend workshops offered by individuals and groups in parishes that have already begun to experience shared ministry and alternative staffing. "All are done by local people, which I think is a very reassuring thing," Deacon Lester said.

These workshops will reveal that change has been going on in the diocese and that problems have been successfully resolved, Deacon Lester said. The ultimate message, he added, is that instead of being looked at as frightening or destructive, "change can be good and growth-filled."

Bishop announces plans for clusters commission

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark this week unveiled plans to appoint a Bishop's Commission on Clusters for the non-Monroe County regions of the diocese. The commission will be charged with overseeing the formation of a Catholic school system in the regions and the development of a well-integrated catechetical plan.

The commission plan, revealed at meetings Wednesday, Sept. 20, at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Elmira, and St. Patrick's Parish, Seneca Falls, calls for the 11-member panel to be in operation by Nov. 15. The commission will be charged with integrating by Sept. 1, 1990, the plans of the cluster boards in developing a Catholic school system framework compatible with the Monroe County framework.

In addition, the commission will direct the development and initial implementation by Sept. 1, 1991, of specific steps for implementing the other components of the catechetical plan. Those other components include the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, marriage preparation, youth ministry, Bible study, pre-school classes and sacramental preparation.

Because the commission will deal with all aspects of Christian education, it will include people with varied expertise, said Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, director of the diocesan Division of Education.

Each of the clusters — Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and the Valley, which consists of parishes in Livingston and Steuben

counties along the Genesee River — will be represented by two members chosen by their boards. The other five members of the commission will be chosen to complement the backgrounds of cluster representatives in order to ensure that the commission will have expertise in all areas of the plan — such as religious education and youth ministry.

One problem the cluster commission will need to consider is the geographic distances in the clusters. "You can't take Hornell and Avon, which are in the same cluster, and send the kids from Hornell to school in Avon," Sister Binsack observed.

As was the case in the four quadrants of Monroe County, all parishes in the clusters will be responsible for helping to support Catholic schools. "I think we're still going back to what Bishop Clark said, 'We will no longer have parish schools, we will have Catholic schools,'" Sister Binsack said.

Originally, the Bishop's Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools was charged with restructuring the Catholic school system throughout the entire diocese, Sister Binsack noted. Recognizing that the task would be too large, however, the board focused its efforts on Monroe County.

Sister Binsack acknowledged that this focus put planning for the clusters on hold. But with the formation of the new commission and the appointment in August of Sister Kathleen Murphy, OSF, as district

Continued on page 13



Christopher Millette

ROBERTSON IN ROCHESTER — Televangelist Pat Robertson came to Rochester last Saturday, Sept. 16, to help raise money for Christians in Action, a new organization sponsored by Project Life.

St. Mary's to consider renovating convent

CANANDAIGUA — Less than one month after community opposition scuttled plans to sell St. Mary's Parish convent, an ad hoc committee has developed a proposal to renovate the building for parish use.

The proposal, part of a report the committee delivered at a Sept. 14 meeting in St. Mary's School, involves converting the convent basement to meeting rooms and a community center, the first floor to parish offices, and the second and third floors to a residence for parish and retired priests. The Sisters of St. Joseph currently living in the convent would live in the rectory. Rooms made available by moving parish offices into the convent would be offered for rent to such church-related groups as Birthright.

The parish council met Monday, Sept. 18, to hear the committee's report and to consider the proposal. The ad hoc committee hopes to distribute questionnaires about the proposal to parishioners at weekend Masses, Sept. 23-24.

According to James Rulison, co-chairman of the ad hoc committee, the plan calls for repairs needed in the convent — estimated at more than \$200,000 — to be completed through a combination of volunteer labor, donated supplies, cash donations and matching grants.

For several years, the parish has been considering options for the 165-year-old convent, which is registered in the National Register of Historic Places and the New York State Register of Historic Places. This spring, the parish council and Bishop Matthew H. Clark approved the sale of the building to developer Charles Zanghi for \$165,000. Zanghi proposed using the building for offices.

Neighborhood residents and parishioners opposed the sale, however, and Zanghi agreed to withdraw his offer Aug. 22, with the understanding that if the parish does decide to sell the building, he will have the right of first refusal.

— Lee Strong

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