

Tier parishes considering 'team' approaches

By Richard A. Kiley
News editor

PAINTED POST — Diocesan officials announced Nov. 20 that beginning next summer the four parishes in the Corning-Painted Post area will be staffed by three full-time priests.

Representatives of the Diocese of Rochester informed the area's four pastors of the change at an Oct. 24 meeting. The pastors currently serving in Corning are: Father Richard M. Murphy, St. Mary's; Father Francis R. Davis, St. Patrick's; and Father Robert C. MacNamara, St. Vincent DePaul. Father Walter L. Wainwright is pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post.

Representing the diocese at the meeting were: Father Peter T. Bayer, diocesan chancellor; Father Robert J. Schrader, director of the Office of Personnel; and Father John M. Mulligan, vicar general and Pastoral Office moderator.

Father Wainwright, who is acting as spokesman for the group, said additional staffing options were presented at a Nov. 20 meeting among the three diocesan representatives, the four pastors and the Commitment to Ministry reflection teams from all four parishes. Reflection teams are now developing additional proposals for review by the four parish councils during December, he said.

At least two prioritized options will be recommended to Bishop Matthew H. Clark by February 1, 1990, Father Wainwright said.

"This all started as part of the umbrella of Commitment to Ministry," said Father Wainwright, who recalled that pastors from all four parishes began meeting with diocesan officials last summer. "Father Davis will be retiring from St. Patrick's, so it was decided that it was time to initiate changes here."

Father Wainwright said the October meeting produced an idea to implement a team-ministry approach, in which all four parishes would work jointly in a commutal effort — including a greater sharing of resources — and all three priests would live in a common residence.

Among other options are a more gradual process whereby one priest would serve as pastor on the north side of the area and another on the south side. Father Wainwright said that the north side would have an assistant pastor while several retired priests in the area would aid with duties on the south side.

Under that plan, all three active priests would reside with the retirees in a common rectory by 1991 or 1992, the priest said.

Currently, Father Thomas F. Brennan and Father Edward J. Foy are retired in residence at St. Mary's in Corning, while Father John Murphy is in residence across town at St. Vincent DePaul.

Another option would call for a similar setup along with the initiation of a team approach, according to Father Wainwright, who called the common residence "a very important factor" in any initiatives con-

cerning team ministry.

"It would be considerably more difficult to use the team approach if (the priests) didn't share a common residence," he said.

Although Father Wainwright stressed that a common residence for priests would have many positive results, he acknowledged that it would require "more of a period of adjustment for people who have been used to having their own priest."

But the proximity of all four churches will make a team-ministry approach a viable one, the priest said. The four churches are about 10 minutes from each other.

Parish reflection teams are working on further options that will be presented at a meeting on Jan. 2. The focus of the plan-

ning effort at this time is solely directed toward the allocation of priests.

Father Wainwright said that each option for consideration contains a "list of givens," which includes the fate of All Saints Academy, the Corning parishes' consolidated elementary school.

"Ideally, All Saints Academy would remain open," he said. Also, each option includes: the formation of a common council made up of representatives of all four parishes; a concerted effort to promote further sharing of facilities and resources, especially in the areas of religious education and social ministry; and a coordinated schedule for weekend Masses.

All four parishes in Corning and Painted Post are already familiar with the philoso-

phy behind the Commitment to Ministry process.

In Corning, for example, the staffs of all three churches have begun to meet regularly to discuss city-wide issues and coordinate activities. As a result, the three parishes — in conjunction with Immaculate Heart of Mary — jointly hired a youth minister two years ago.

Also, in 1988 St. Patrick's began to share Deacon Ray Defendorf with St. Mary's Church, where he has been serving since 1982.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, meanwhile, is one of a handful of parishes that have been temporarily administered by people other than priests. Sister Rita Heberle, RSM, served as temporary pastoral administrator of the Painted Post parish in the fall of 1986 when Father Wainwright was on sabbatical.

Among other joint endeavors, Father Wainwright added, the four parishes conducted a census in 1986, have held combined confirmation services and shared in the sponsorship of an Amerasian family.

"People have been preparing for the changes the priests knew were coming," said Father Wainwright, who has served at Immaculate Heart of Mary for nearly nine years. "The feedback from the parish reflection sessions has been generally positive."

But the priest said he knows the months ahead will test people. "It's a challenge. One of the most important aspects of this process is that it is looked at as a challenge," he said.

And the challenge is just beginning. "At this point, nothing has been determined," Father Wainwright said. "There are a few people around who think this thing is decided, but it's not."



No more than 10 minutes separate the four parishes in the Corning-Painted Post area. Beginning next summer, the four parishes will be staffed by three full-time priests.

Mercy officials announce plans for new junior high

BRIGHTON — Our Lady of Mercy High School plans to open a seventh and eighth grade in September of 1990, school officials announced Monday, Dec. 4.

School spokeswoman Joan Hildebrand said the school's operating order, the Sisters of Mercy, decided to initiate the program after conducting a feasibility study based on information from the Center of Governmental Research, interviews with local parents and input offered from the diocesan Division of Education.

The Commission on Reorganization of Catholic High Schools recommended that Mercy be allowed to add the classes after receiving input from the other Catholic high schools and the Southeast Quadrant Planning Board, according to a statement released by Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The statement also noted that the new program will not serve as a junior high for the southeast quadrant, since it is "designed to serve a relatively small number of

young women."

Hildebrand said that parents in the area have expressed interest in such a program for a number of years, and added that since the program had been announced, she'd received several calls asking about it.

Classrooms for the new program will be located in the west wing of the high school. Tuition will be \$2,100 per year, and tuition assistance will be available.

The program will have a limited enrollment of 25 students per grade, though the school may expand that figure if interest in the program warranted such a move.

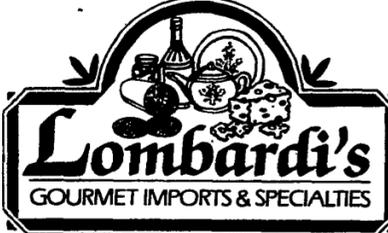
Students interested in applying to the school must contact the enrollment office and take a placement test on Jan. 6, at 8:30 a.m. Acceptance notices will be mailed about six weeks after testing.

Sister Barbara Hamm, principal, will administer the new program. She will be assisted by an associate principal, who will be assigned solely to the seventh and eighth grades.

Eighth-graders will be able to take ad-

vanced-placement courses for high school credit. The school will also offer "enhanced" programs in math, science, foreign languages, art and music.

The school will present an information night on Tuesday, Dec. 19, at 7:30 p.m. For information, call 716/288-7120.



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