

Fate uncertain for parish school in Penn Yan

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

PENN YAN — Citing increasing parish expenses and debts, St. Michael's Parish has requested that the Diocese of Rochester either grant the parish a subsidy or allow it to close the school at the end of the 1989/90 school year.

In a letter submitted to Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Father William Michatek, St. Michael's pastor, reported that the parish and finance councils had both voted in favor of requesting a subsidy. Both bodies also asked that if a subsidy is not possible, the parish be allowed to close its 107-year-old school, which serves 112 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

"I'm a strong proponent of Catholic education," Father Michatek explained. "(But) the point does come at which you have to say, 'Can we possibly do this?'"

According to Father George Norton, diocesan spokesman, Bishop Clark will seek input from the Catholic schools office and his financial advisors about the request.

Normally, such a decision would be made by March 1, 1990, Father Norton said. He added that Bishop Clark would most likely issue his decision as early in the new year as possible to give teachers a



Facing increasing expenses and debts, St. Michael's, Penn Yan, has requested that the diocese either grant the parish a subsidy, or give it permission to close its 107-year-old school.

chance to seek other jobs should St. Michael's close.

The parish's request of Bishop Clark comes after nearly 20 years of struggle to keep the school open, Father Michatek said.

In recent years, the pastor reported, the parish has faced mounting expenses overall. Because the parish has been slow in re-

paying its loans, the bank with which it has done business has refused to permit additional loans, he added.

This school year, the parish is providing \$80,000 of the school's \$190,000 budget. Tuition and fundraising activities by the school and the Home School Association make up the difference.

Father Michatek pointed out that St. Mi-

chael's needs to hire a religious education coordinator to conform with Bishop Clark's call for a well-integrated catechetical plan. Salaries and benefits for that post, along with increases in teachers' salaries, would require the parish to come up with an additional \$40,000 in fiscal year 1990/91.

In addition, Father Michatek said, the school roof is leaking. Projected repair costs are \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Without the school costs, the pastor calculated, the parish would enjoy a \$45,000 surplus rather than a \$20,000 projected deficit for fiscal year 1989/90.

Parish council president Patricia Curtin acknowledged that parishioners would like to keep the school open, but said that it had become too much of a burden.

"It seems as if the school occupies all of our (mental) energies," Curtin said. Through the commitment to ministry process, she has talked to people from parishes without schools, and has seen what those parishes have been able to accomplish.

"It just seems there's so much the parish could do, but our hands are just tied financially," Curtin explained. "My feeling is that the school is one of many ministries that a parish could have, but it shouldn't be the one to the exclusion of other ministries."

But Grace Zeigler, head of the school committee, sees a vital need in Penn Yan for the school. Although she is not a parishioner, Zeigler chose St. Michael's from among several options for her children.

"I really wanted my children to have a nice moral teaching," she said. "I wanted them to grow up in that environment. With St. Michael's, the option is there."

School parents have been supportive, according to the school's principal, Sister Catherine Gibbons, SSJ. Fundraising efforts — particularly by the Home School Association — have consistently raised the money the school needs.

The student population, meanwhile, has remained stable over the past several years, Sister Gibbons noted. Enrollment this year is down by one from last year's figure of 113.

The principal added that the school
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Quadrant board divided over proposal

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Members of the Southeast Quadrant Planning Board are sharply divided over their school-reorganization proposal, which would close Corpus Christi School and make Blessed Sacrament Junior High a regional magnet school, according to Paul Morehouse, board chairman.

Morehouse said the proposal to close Corpus Christi was one of the most divisive issues facing the board, which finally resolved to send the proposal to the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools because of the potentially high cost of repairs to the Corpus building.

Although the proposal will not officially be submitted to the commission until late this week, board member Sister Eileen

Daly, principal of Corpus Christi, predicted Monday, Dec. 11, that commission members will reject the plan because of contradictory opinions contained within it.

While the planning board's proposal contains a section calling for the closing of her school because of potential repair costs to the 101-year-old building, Sister Daly pointed out that the report also contains a section outlining reasons for keeping Corpus open, including the fact that it serves a large minority population and is financially sound.

Asserting that the board was divided over the proposal to close Corpus, the principal said the board had included the two sections on Corpus to show the school commission that it had not yet fully weighed the options of closing Corpus or keeping it open, Sister Daly said. "We

never got to the point where we could weigh the two options," she said.

The commission is charged with studying the reorganization proposal of each quadrant planning board before making its recommendation to Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Sister Daly added that the planning board only did a cursory survey of the school building in late November to determine potential repair costs. Corpus was being targeted because it is the oldest Catholic school building in the city, she said, and the planning board had to find some way to show that it was reorganizing the quadrant.

The principal also predicted that the commission would question closing Corpus because it serves a large minority population. Closing the school would hurt diocesan credibility with minorities, who hear the diocese claim support for them, but see Catholic schools in the city continue to close, Sister Daly said.

Before week's end, the proposal will go to the reorganization commission which is chaired by William Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College. The proposal also calls for the following grade configuration in the quadrant's schools to be enacted by September, 1990:

• Rochester — St. John the Evangelist and St. Boniface would remain K-6 schools; Blessed Sacrament would become
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Bishop unveils recruitment plan

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced plans for the Diocese of Rochester to launch a recruitment effort to identify people who may be called to ministry in the church.

Those people will be invited to attend a day of workshops, prayer and reflection Feb. 10 at St. Mary's in Canandaigua. Bishop Clark will deliver the keynote address, and will be present throughout the day.

The recruitment effort, called Bishop

Clark's Call to Ministry Program, will help identify men and women who might be called to selected church ministries, including youth ministry, religious education, and the permanent diaconate.

As part of the program, priests and parishioners will be asked to submit names of possible candidates to the diocese. During January, parish bulletins will include information about the program. In addition, homilists will be asked to preach about the program at liturgies on the weekend of Jan. 6-7.

Notice to readers

As is our custom, the *Catholic Courier* will not publish an issue on Dec. 28, the Thursday between Christmas and New Year's Day. The edition of Dec. 21 will be our annual Christmas Keepsake edition, and our next edition thereafter will be published on Jan. 4, 1990.

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