



Three members of the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools listen to comments from parish representatives during a recent meeting on the proposed southeast quadrant schools plan. The members shown (from left to right) are Peter Spinelli, Father Louis Serrani, and Michael Sullivan.

## School plan foes breathe sigh of relief over delay

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — If you travel through southern Monroe County these days, you may sense the wind picking up whenever you drive by a Catholic school.

That's not a storm front you're feeling — it's the collective sigh of relief being uttered by Catholic schools in the region.

That sigh followed last week's announcement that the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools was delaying the implementation of its configuration recommendations in the southeast and southwest quadrants until fall of 1991.

The commission made its announcement following a meeting Thursday, Feb. 8, during which members decided to delay submitting proposals calling for the June closings of four Catholic schools in the southeast quadrant and one school in the southwest quadrant.

Under the southeast quadrant proposal, Corpus Christi and St. Boniface schools in Rochester, along with St. Rita's in Webster and Guardian Angels in Henrietta, would have all closed in June of this year.

In the southwest, Most Precious Blood was targeted to close this year as well.

Both proposals also called for extensive restructuring of grade configurations in all remaining schools of both quadrants, and for the establishment of regional junior highs.

Commission chairman William Pickett noted that it was the enormous public opposition to the time line in each proposal that prompted the commission to reconsider submitting its proposals to Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Bishop Clark's approval would have been necessary for any of the commission's recommendations to be implemented.

Pickett said that several parish representatives had complained that the diocese was moving too fast to reorganize Catholic schools in the two quadrants. "It was clear that the reconfiguration recommendations could not go into effect in (19)90-91," Pickett said. "During the hearings, we kept hearing that we were moving too fast, slow down."

Pickett's comments came in reference to volatile public hearings that took place on

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## Bishop approves West Bloomfield parish closing

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD — Jim Powers' connections to St. Joseph's Parish are deep and long.

A life-long parishioner, Powers was a parish trustee — as were his father and grandfather before him.

Currently, Powers is a member of the joint parish council that serves St. Joseph's and St. Bridget's in East Bloomfield.

As a member of that council, Powers was, on Oct. 29, 1989, called upon to vote on a request that Bishop Matthew H. Clark allow the parish to close.

"After a long, drawn-out, emotional discussion — with a lot of mixed feelings — I voted yes," Powers said.

On Nov. 16, 1989, Bishop Clark approved that request. Some time later this spring, St. Joseph's Parish will close after

more than 125 years, and will officially be merged with St. Bridget's.

"It's sad," acknowledged Alice Rayburn, a parishioner for 48 years. But, she added, "I could see it coming within the last five years. There's not enough people to support the (parish) any more."

The declining number of parishioners was a key factor in the decision to close the parish, observed the pastor, Father John J. Philipps. St. Joseph's has only 46 registered parishioners, he said, estimating that only about half of those people are active in the parish.

In addition, the parish building needed expensive repairs and renovations.

"It doesn't have plumbing, it needs lighting, decorating, painting — just a lot of repairs," Father Philipps said. "We do have money, but not enough to do the repairs properly."

The decision to close the parish followed months of discussion and reflection by parishioners about the future of St. Joseph's. In October, 1989, parishioners were invited to the church to see the amount of work that would be needed to keep the parish open.

"I went to the meeting and looked," Rayburn said. "That's when I thought, 'This will take a lot of work, a lot of money.'"

The building that currently houses St. Joseph's was originally a Protestant church. It was purchased by St. Joseph's parishioners in 1867.

St. Joseph's began in the early 1850s with Masses celebrated in parishioners' homes by priests from St. Bridget's. The parish was formally established in 1856. From 1856-1878, and again from 1912-

## Parents join forces to counter quadrant-based school system

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — School parents opposed to Catholic schools reorganization in Monroe County have joined forces in a group called ACE — Alliance for Catholic Education.

The group participated in a song and prayer protest at St. John Fisher College on Sunday, Feb. 11. According to John F. Wagner Jr., ACE chairman, the demonstration was directed at the college's president, William Pickett, who chairs the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools.

The commission is charged with examining the reorganization proposals sent to it by each of the four Catholic schools planning boards in Monroe County.

About 200 protesters showed up for the demonstration, which lasted about an hour and was organized by members of parishes surrounding the college, Wagner said.

ACE is opposed to the implementation of the quadrant system of financing, governance and grade configuration, Wagner said. The group met for the first time on Friday, Feb. 9.

ACE members distributed petitions opposing reorganization of Monroe County schools at about a dozen parishes on Sunday, Feb. 11, Wagner said. The petitions criticize the diocese for switching from a parish-based school system to a quadrant-based system.

"Under the quadrant system, elementary schools will no longer be parish-based apostolates of education for life in a Christian community, but adjuncts of a large bureaucracy," the petition stated.

Among its criticisms, the petition claimed that the quadrant system would "endanger the teaching of sound Catholicism," increase tuition rates, weaken parishes and usurp the ministry of

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