



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

St. Agnes School students clean up Avon during Earth Day activities in April.

Sister Erskine resigns from post as head of Monroe County East

ROCHESTER — Sister Diane Marie Erskine, RSM, has resigned from her post as district superintendent for Catholic schools in Monroe County East.

Citing "personal reasons" for her decision, Sister Erskine will leave her position July 1, one year after she was hired.

Sister Erskine's position was one of three superintendent positions created last July in a reorganization of the diocesan schools office. At that time, Evelyn Kirst was named superintendent of Monroe County West and Sister Kathleen Murphy, OSF, was appointed superintendent of schools in clusters outside Monroe County. Both Kirst and Murphy are continuing in their positions.

No replacement has been named for the Monroe County East position as of yet.

As superintendent, Sister Erskine oversaw the reorganization of schools in the Northeast Quadrant, including the closing of four Catholic schools last year and the planned closing of St. James in Irondequoit this June. Also, a new quadrant junior high, Northeastern Catholic, will open on the site of Bishop Kearney High School in

Irondequoit next fall.

Prior to taking on her current position, Sister Erskine was principal of Annunciation, one of the four northeastern schools closed last year. She noted that moving to diocesan administration changed her perspective on quadrant reorganization.

"You have a better insight into questions asked ... (by principals) as an administrator," she said of her position. "I appreciate more and more what an overview means."

Sister Erskine said her "overview" included seeing the importance of cooperation between school principals to make the reorganization work.

"Somehow, you appreciate the fact, though it's difficult to believe, that your little part can make it happen," she said, adding, "Somehow the vision is clearer here than when I was in my own little parking lot."

Next fall, Sister Erskine will be parking her car in the lot outside of Holy Cross School on Lake Avenue, where she will teach junior-high classes.

— Rob Cullivan

Diocese tables proposed closing of school in Avon

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

AVON — St. Agnes School, which faced a possible closing this year, will remain open for the 1990-91 academic year, following a diocesan decision to table the matter until the new pastor for the Avon parish arrives this June.

The closing was originally proposed by St. Agnes' parish council in a 9-6 vote last April.

School and parish administrators learned of the diocesan decision late last week through a letter from Bishop Matthew H. Clark, according to Vicki Rose, principal. Rose said the bishop wrote that the school would be allowed to remain open because of "the short time left between now and September," and because the parish, currently administered by Deacon Owen F. Bowers, has no priest as its pastor.

"I think they just feel at the present time without a pastor, it wouldn't be prudent to close the school," Rose said, speculating on the diocesan rationale for tabling the proposed closing. Father James C. Burke, currently pastor of St. Mary's in Canandaigua, will become pastor of St. Agnes on June 21, she noted.

Pastors have final say on any parish decision to close a school, although all closings must ultimately be approved by the diocese. Rose pointed out that the bishop's letter stressed his hope that the new pastor will help reconcile the groups in the parish who either support or oppose the proposed school closing.

Many parishioners opposed the move, including school board president Michael Carroll, who cited the school's improved finances, stable enrollment and strong parish support. Other parishioners argued, however, that the parish's limited finances were needed for all its ministries, and not just for the school.

Carroll's reaction to the diocesan decision was "bittersweet."

"I'm happy that we're left alone," he said. "I really hope that we can all pull together ... Maybe we can get to be on better terms with each other and see what's possible down here."

St. Agnes' last pastor, Father Charles Bennett, who died last January, had written the diocese in December outlining financial problems with the school and asking the diocese for assistance. The diocese is providing a \$15,000 subsidy to the parish for 1990-91 to offset any budget deficits, Rose said.

She noted that although closing seemed likely for the school, enrollment for next year increased by three students to a total of 70, and her entire staff has agreed to stay on in the fall.

Rose also said that the school would change its tuition policy for next year in an effort to raise money. Currently, each parish family pays a tuition rate of \$960 for all children enrolled at St. Agnes.

Next year, tuition will be \$1,000 for a family with only one child enrolled, \$1050 for a family with two children in school, and \$1100 for a family with three or more children, she said.

Rose said that the new tuition policy reflected that of most schools throughout the diocese. Despite the change, the principal didn't see the increased tuition as a solution to the school's financial problems.

"Personally, I don't think it's going to be a whole ton of money," she said.

One-third of next year's \$154,000 budget will come from tuition, Rose commented, with another third coming from fundraisers, and the remaining third from the parish and the diocese. The school should operate in the black next year, she said.

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"No one knows whose womb bears the Chief."

— Ancient African Proverb




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