



File photo
Two months ago, St. Pius the Tenth Church in Chili reported three oriental rugs stolen.

Oriental rugs stolen at four area churches

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Oriental rugs have been stolen from four Rochester-area Catholic churches during the last two months, according to pastors and police.

The churches involved were St. Anne's and St. Ambrose in Rochester, St. Helen's in Gates and St. Pius the Tenth in Chili.

Following the 12:15 p.m. Mass at St. Ambrose Church on Friday, June 1, several parishioners saw a man walk into the church and roll up the oriental rug on the altar, according to Father James J. Marvin, pastor. When they asked him what he was doing, the man — described as Caucasian, tall, blond-haired and approximately 30-35 years old — told them he was taking the rug away to be cleaned.

The man subsequently carried the rug out of the church and drove off in a car described by witnesses as a full-sized, four-door "older" model with a red or burgundy roof and a gray or silver body in weather-beaten condition, according to Investigator Robert Wetzel of the Goodman Section, Rochester Police Department.

One witness from St. Ambrose gave police a license-plate number for the car, but the number turned out to be useless in the investigation, Wetzel said. "I think that the plate number obtained wasn't exactly correct," he said.

No witnesses have been identified for any of the other rug thefts, Wetzel said, adding that he is working with members of

the Monroe County Sheriff's Department in Gates and Chili, and the Highland Section of the Rochester Police Department.

Wetzel said St. Anne's was hit on June 6, the same day the oriental rug was taken from the altar at St. Helen's Church, according to Father Michael J. Bausch, pastor of the Gates parish.

Estimating the value of his parish's altar rug at \$2,000, Father Bausch said that while no one saw it being removed from the church, it was "definitely" stolen between 3:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Father Gerald T. Connor, pastor of St. Pius the Tenth, said three oriental rugs from the parish's altar and sanctuary areas were stolen two months ago. No one witnessed the thefts, he said, adding that they were reported to the county sheriff.

Wetzel said no estimate was available on the value of St. Ambrose's altar rug, and noted that it is difficult to obtain such estimates because many of the churches' rugs were donated years ago.

Two weeks ago, a diocesan memo alerted parishes to the series of thefts. The memo emphasized the necessity for parishes to review their security procedures.

But both Fathers Connor and Bausch chuckled when asked what steps they had taken to prevent further rug thefts at their churches.

"We took the rest of the oriental rugs out of the church," Father Bausch said, and Father Connor said his parish had done the same.

Process provides churches a means for setting goals

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — After approximately two years of reflection and effort, the Diocese of Rochester officially ended its Commitment to Ministry process with a series of celebrations May 29 to June 6.

At those celebrations — which were attended by more than 1,300 people — approximately 150 parishes presented Bishop Matthew H. Clark with individual reports detailing their demographics, characters as faith-communities, short- and long-range goals, and models for alternative staffing.

Those reports, plus others still expected to come in, will become resource documents to help guide diocesan planning,

noted Deacon Claude Lester, who coordinated training for the Commitment to Ministry process.

Deacon Lester is now in the process of reviewing the report sections dealing with goals and objectives, and he intends to complete by early July an overall report on those areas. In addition to being submitted to Bishop Clark, that report will be sent to the parish reflection teams so that they can see concerns, problems and patterns they share with other parishes.

The report will also be used to guide planning for the annual diocesan leadership day this fall, Deacon Lester observed. He said that a number of workshops will be slated for the leadership day to address some of the major concerns and problems raised in the report.

No comprehensive document covering all aspects of the parish reports is to be produced, Deacon Lester said. Instead, the material in the reports will be used by various groups and individuals as resource documents. By way of example, he noted that the Priest Personnel Board will review the individual parish reports when making

staffing decision. He also observed that Bishop Clark had committed himself to reading a parish's report before visiting the parish.

Furthermore, the commission overseeing the Diocese of Rochester's seventh synod — which officially began June 17 — will use the reports in developing themes for the synod, Deacon Lester said.

In the future, he noted, the individual reports will also be used by parishes to help discern natural affinities — similarities they have to other parishes due to geography or needs — and to discover ways of sharing resources and personnel when necessary. "The greater amount of cooperation we can have, the greater we will all be enriched," he said.

Deacon Lester pointed out that simply

preparing the reports — and the entire Commitment to Ministry process — had led parishes to reflect in ways many had not done before. He cited his own parish's experience, noting that as a result of the process, the parish had discovered a need for youth ministry.

The entire process also had served as a form of adult education, Deacon Lester noted, observing that the fruits of Commitment to Ministry will not only be the parish reports.

The process has given parishes time to realize their needs and provided a process for setting goals. Those skills will be used to prepare annual parish profiles for the diocese, but also for developing plans for the future as individual parishes and in con-

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No Courier July 5

As has been our custom following the Fourth of July each year, the *Catholic Courier* will not publish an issue on July 5. We will resume our weekly publication schedule on July 12.

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