

# BACK TO SCHOOL

## Special programs expand

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

The church has traditionally taken the role of evangelizing and educating members of the parish community.

Yet Maribeth Mancini, the director of religious education for the Rochester diocese, noted that even though most parishes offer some sort of religious education, those programs do not always meet the needs of the specially challenged.

For instance, Mancini said children and adults who have physical or mental disabilities are often excluded from the programs.

Although Mancini admitted that the need for special programs definitely exists in the diocese, she said religious educators are not always aware of that need.

"One of the focuses of the Office of Religious Education in the last year was to see how we serve the needs of the specially challenged," explained Mancini.

In an effort to help the parishes, Mancini said the diocese formed the Specially Challenged Children and Adult Focus Group last spring. The group, made up of seven catechetical leaders and special educators, sought to identify the parishes that needed guidance

in establishing special-education programs.

"The first step is to find out what is going on, then find ways to support what is going on by filling in the gaps," said Mancini.

Last spring, the committee developed a survey that was sent to the religious-education office at every parish in the diocese. The survey was designed to identify what programs were already in place within the parishes.

Mancini said the committee received more than 50 responses to the questionnaire, confirming its belief that many parishes already had some sort of special-education program in place.

From the information they tabulated, Mancini said the group developed a three-step agenda for the upcoming school year. First, the group prepared a list of print, video and human resources that will be distributed to religious instructors this fall.

Committee members have also made themselves available to religious educators to answer questions or to suggest ideas. Officials plan to offer skills to help develop new programs, as well as link the teachers to the proper educational resources.

Finally, the committee has slated a spring workshop to

provide an opportunity for spiritual renewal and enrichment for those who work with the specially challenged.

"The committee is attempting to connect the people serving the specially challenged together with each other and the diocese in an effort to support them," explained Mancini.

Support from the diocese is desperately needed, according to Marge Hart, coordinator of the St. Ambrose Special Religious Education Center.

Hart, who has been involved with the center since its inception in 1967, noted that teachers involved in special-education programs deserve as much guidance as other religious educators.

"There is nothing in the diocese for teachers of the handicapped," said Hart. "My teachers are asking for programs like the other CCD programs."

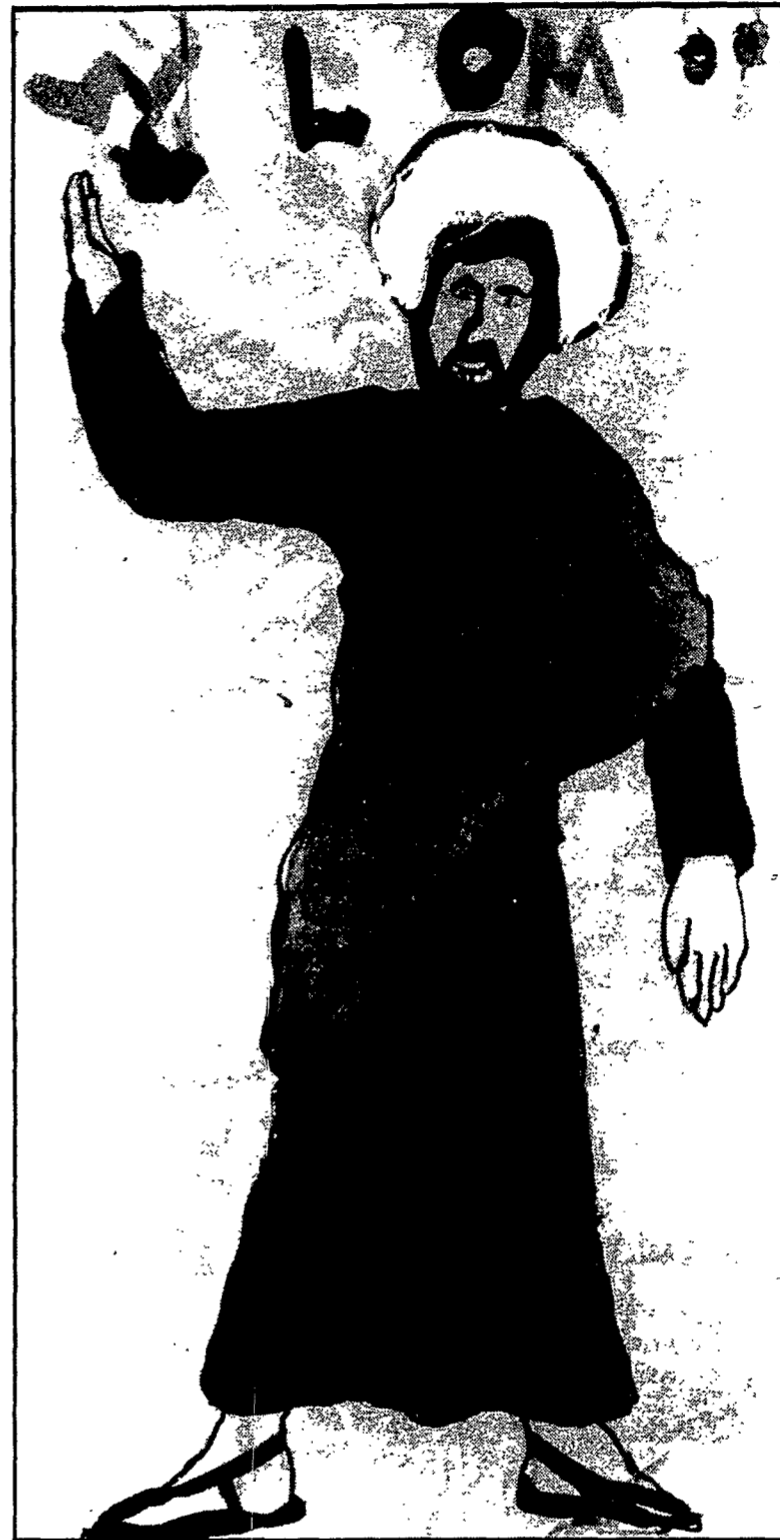
Hart, who is also a member of the diocesan committee, said she hopes that eventually teachers in the special-education programs will have structured guidelines and a list of suggested textbooks.

"Right now we have no specific books to follow. We get some guidance from the programs at the School of the Holy Childhood and the regular CCD programs," noted Hart.

Claudia Adams, a committee member who has more than 10 years experience in special education, hopes to receive enough guidance to begin a new special-education program at Our Mother of Sorrows this fall.

The Greece parish's religious-education coordinator will be conducting Sunday morning religious education and sacramental preparation classes beginning in October. Adams noted that seven students have already registered for the classes.

Due to her enthusiasm about the new program, Adams said she is actively seeking students who might be interested in the classes. In fact, she recalled that after a recent Mass she approached a mentally handi-



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
This life-size painting of Jesus hangs in the entrance of the church hall at Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Greece. Religious-education coordinator Claudia Adams received the painting last year from one of her students.

capped young man about the classes only to find out — much to her disappointment — that he was visiting from the Syracuse diocese.

"There is a great need in me to find people who need to be catechized," said Adams.

Although the committee has already begun efforts to make parishes aware of the need for religious education for the spe-

cially challenged, Mancini noted that the group's task is not easy.

"A lot of this is a learning process for us, too; because a lot of us don't know as much as we would like to about specially challenged people," acknowledged Mancini. "But we want to be open to their gifts because they are a gift to the community."



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### Elmira Notre Dame announces staff changes

ELMIRA — Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave., recently announced the appointment of David Bernatavitz as ninth-grade social studies teacher.

A graduate of Sayre High School in Pennsylvania, Bernatavitz received a bachelor's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in social studies from Mansfield University.

After serving in the Navy, Bernatavitz taught physical education at Epiphany School in Sayre.

In addition to Bernatavitz's appointment, Notre Dame will begin the 1991-1992 school year with a reorganized administrative team.

After serving Notre Dame for 13 years as teacher, coach and athletic director, Michael D'Aloisio will assume the duties of assistant principal. A gra-

duate of the State University of New York College at Cortland with a master's degree in education, D'Aloisio is currently completing his administrative degree leading to certification. He will continue his duties as athletic director and coach.

Brenda Teeter will become the director of development and alumni relations. Her responsibilities will include de-

veloping and executing programs that promote the fundraising efforts of Notre Dame as well as managing programs that promote relations between alumni and the school.

Teeter received her bachelor's degree in communications with a specialization in interpersonal relations from the State University of New York College at Brockport.

### Firm offers free information for teens

High school students can get free advice on subjects ranging from how to apply to the college of their choice to dealing with stress in a test situation through College Preparatory Service, Inc., an educational consulting firm in Pittsford.

The 15-year-old agency publishes *The Newsletter for the College Bound Student*, which

advises students on such topics as upcoming test dates for SATS and PSATS as well as how to prepare for the exams.

The newsletter is free and can be obtained by calling 716/586-7399 or 1-800-888-7288, or write: P.O. Box 68068, Rochester, N.Y., 14618-0068.