

Directors resign from diocesan Social Ministry

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The director and associate director of diocesan Social Ministry both submitted letters of resignation on Monday, Nov. 4.

The resignation of Father John Firpo, ministry director, becomes effective Nov. 15. Associate Director Lourdes Perez-Albuerne's resignation was effective immediately.

Father Firpo told the *Catholic Courier* he had been thinking of leaving the post for some time. He said he had completed much of the reorganization work that faced him when he joined Social Ministry in 1985, and that the ministry was now at a point of moving on to new projects.

"I thought it would be a good time to leave so that the new director could take on the new tasks," Father Firpo said.

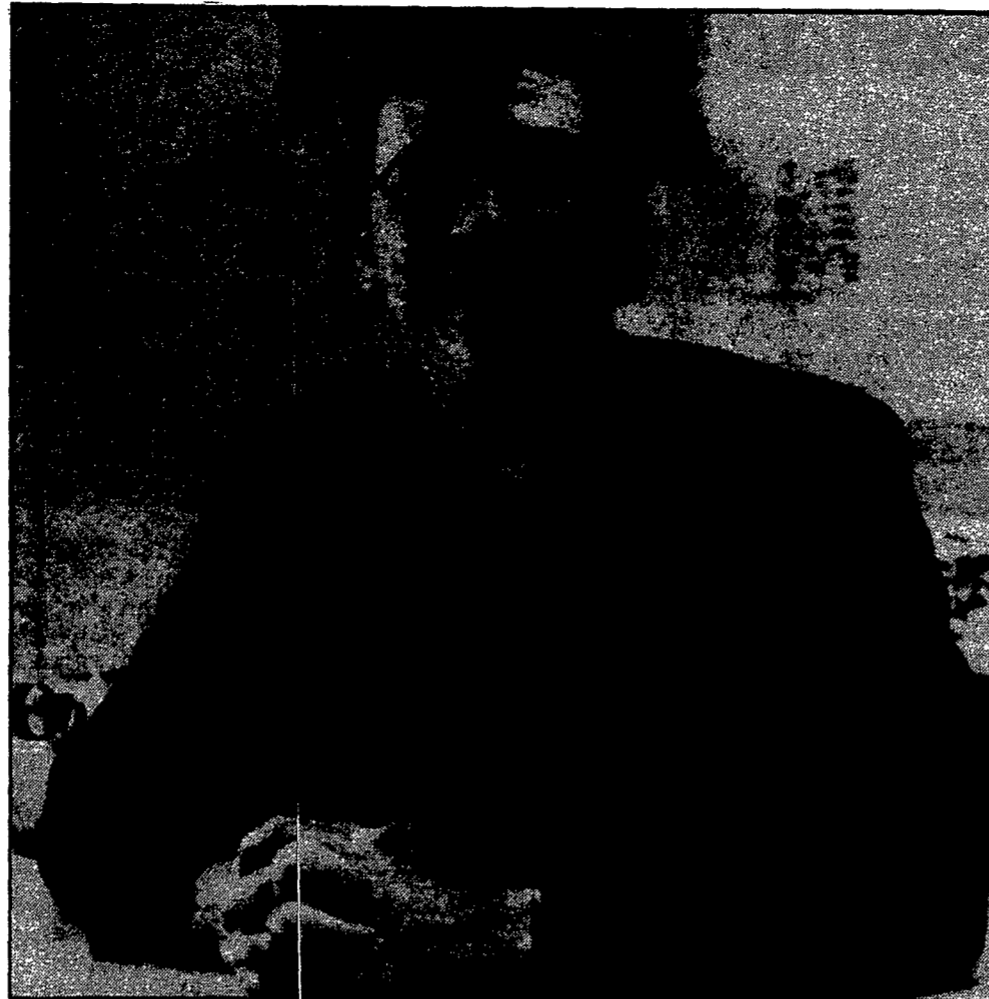
Perez-Albuerne could not be reached for comment about her resignation.

Father John Mulligan, moderator of the Pastoral Office, announced that Paul Pickering, director of the diocesan residential program, will serve as interim director of Social Ministry. A search for a permanent director will begin in January, 1992.

Father Firpo became director of what was then the Division of Social Ministry on June 1, 1985. Perez-Albuerne had been associate director since 1986. Previously, she had served since 1976 in a variety of diocesan positions, including coordinator of peace and justice.

Under Father Firpo's leadership, Social Ministry was restructured, combining separate social ministry, Catholic Charities and peace and justice components into one entity. It also was incorporated separately from the diocese.

Also during Father Firpo's tenure, Social Ministry assisted in the writing of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's 1988 pastoral instruction on AIDS, "The



File photo
Father John Firpo, director of diocesan Social Ministry, will officially step down from his post Nov. 15.

Lord Himself Taught Me to Have Compassion." In response to that letter, Social Ministry opened Mary's Place, a home for single mothers who test positive for the HIV virus.

Social Ministry also initiated a dialogue between pro-choice and pro-life groups. Meanwhile, the various social ministry offices undertook a number of projects, opening halfway houses in Rochester for individuals undergoing drug rehabilitation; housing units for low income families in Geneva; and developing a soon-to-be started workers' cooperative in the Finger

Lakes and Southern Tier regions.

Finally, the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry — now the Catholic Family Center — was formed to serve Monroe and Livingston counties, separating those activities from the diocesan office.

The diocesan office then evolved from providing direct services to individuals to providing educational and support services to parishes and the three regional offices of social ministry — the Catholic Family Center, the Finger Lakes Office and the Southern Tier Office.

"John has led Social Ministry through a period of transition and has helped develop programs and facilities to respond to human needs," Father

Mulligan commented. "The impact of his efforts on behalf of Social Ministry will be evident for many years."

Father Mulligan also noted that Perez-Albuerne "has persistently and ably challenged us to keep our responsibility to the marginalized in the forefront of our planning and ministry. Her spirit will be missed."

One of the tasks awaiting the next director of social ministry, Father Firpo said, is finalizing membership for the soon-to-be-created diocesan Board of Social Ministry. He said that board will help to set standardized personnel and ministry policies for the three regional offices of social ministry.

Father Firpo said restructuring Social Ministry had taken much of his time and energy since he became director. In 1985, he noted, several social ministry offices and departments had different personnel policies and maintained separate books. Those have been consolidated and standardized under his leadership.

He said he would like to have seen Social Ministry move in the direction of encouraging greater efforts on the part of parishes. He cited the Parish Shelter Network for the homeless as a model of diocesan-supported parish action, and said he wished he had had time to work on similar efforts.

On the whole, however, "I've been very impressed with the rich heritage that our diocese has in the work of charity and the work of justice," Father Firpo said.



Lourdes Perez-Albuerne

Bishop to celebrate thanksgiving Mass

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be the principal celebrant for a Mass of Thanksgiving for Lithuanian independence. The liturgy will take place at 11 a.m. Nov. 17 at St. George's Lithuanian Catholic Church, 545 Hudson Ave.

A concert harpist will provide music for the Mass, which will feature the reading of a letter to the parish from the Lithuanian ambassador to the United States. A reception will follow in the parish hall.

Originally, Bishop Clark was to con-

celebrate the Mass with Bishop Paul Baltakis, OFM, of Brooklyn, who is charged with assisting all Lithuanian Catholics residing outside Lithuania.

Complications relating to recent eye surgery will prevent Bishop Baltakis from traveling to Rochester, however, according to Father Ralph Fraatz, parish administrator at St. George's.

Father Fraatz estimated that many people will attend the Mass, since approximately 3,000 Lithuanians live in the Rochester area.

DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following appointments:

Deacon Daniel R. Hurley, from deacon at St. Mary Our Mother Parish in Horseheads to deacon at St.

Mary of the Lake Parish in Watkins Glen, effective Sept. 1, 1991.

Father Theodore J. Auble to part-time parochial vicar at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta, effective Oct. 13, 1991.

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