

# Northeast parents blast proposed closings

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A proposal to close three Catholic schools in the Northeast Quadrant met with militant resistance from school parents last week.

The quadrant's governance board voted 8-3 Monday, Nov. 18, to recommend closing the following schools: St. Thomas the Apostle, 41 Colebrook Drive; St. Cecilia's, 2763 Culver Road; and St. Stanislaus, 1150 Hudson Ave.

But at least one quadrant board member — Mark M. Greisberger, a representative of St. Ambrose Parish — stated at week's end that he will ask the board to reconsider submitting that recommendation to the diocese's Christian Formation and Education Council.

The recommendation must be submitted to the council by Dec. 1. If approved, it would then be sent to Bishop Matthew H. Clark for final approval.

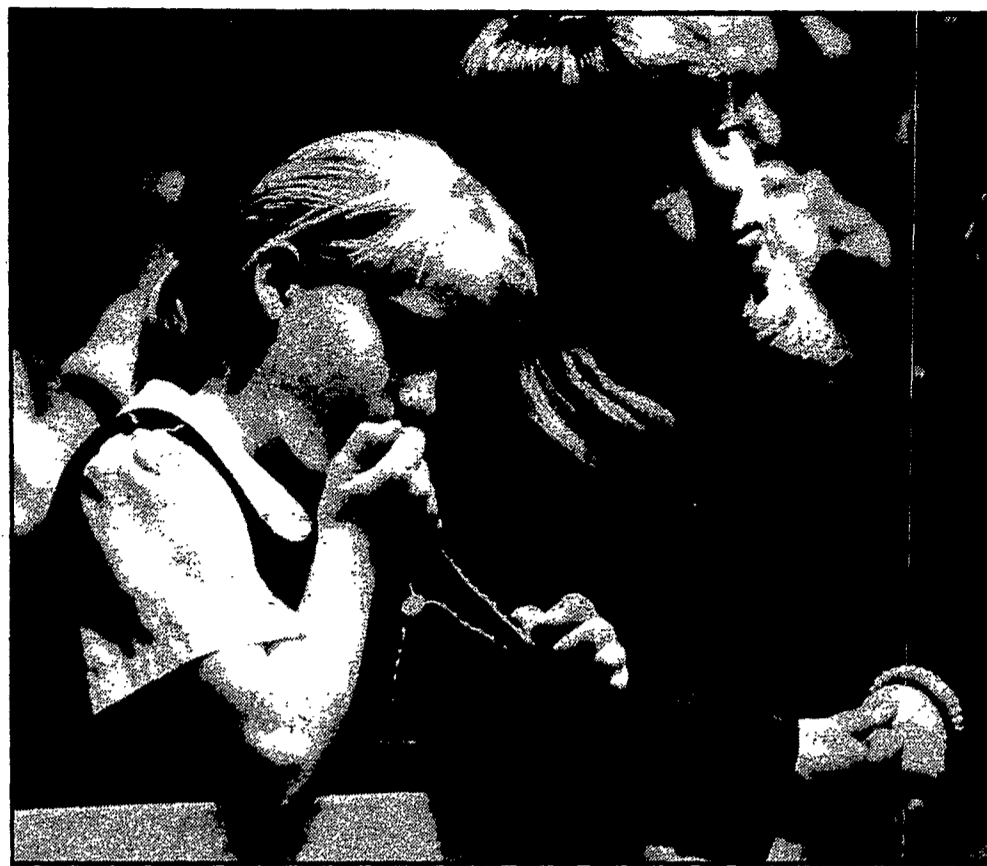
In addition to the closings, the plan calls for the quadrant's four remaining Catholic elementary schools — Christ the King, St. Ambrose, St. Andrew and St. Margaret Mary — to house grades kindergarten-through-six. These schools would be renamed, officials said.

The recommendation also would establish a half-day kindergarten and a pre-first grade for all quadrant students at Christ the King.

Members of the quadrant governance board and its strategic planning committee explained the plan at a heated public meeting Tuesday evening, Nov. 19. The meeting, attended by about 500 people, took place at Bishop Kearney High School.

The feelings expressed by most parents at the meeting were summarized by the words of Barry Sullivan, school board president at St. Thomas the Apostle.

"I encourage everybody here to draw a line in the sand and say, 'We're



Danielle Barry (left) and Carey Travis pray the rosary after the Nov. 22 meeting of Northeast Quadrant parents opposed to the quadrant's school-reorganization plan. The meeting took place at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish.

not going to stand for this," Sullivan asserted.

In response, the crowd gave Sullivan a standing ovation. Audience members also applauded his call for a meeting of like-minded parents at his parish on Friday night, Nov. 22.

When pressed Nov. 19 by school parents to identify which of the board members had voted in favor of the

recommendations, board members declined to identify by name those who had supported the plan.

Using a fact sheet distributed at the beginning of the meeting, however, board members did explain why they called for closing the schools.

In particular, the board cited the following statistics:

- Approximately 100 fewer stu-



St. Thomas first-grader Helen Mary Owens (right) and her classmates perform the song "From A Distance" in sign language after the parents' meeting.

dents enrolled in quadrant elementary schools for 1991-92 than did in 1990-91. However, in the same time span, enrollment did increase by about 80 students at Northeastern Catholic Junior High.

- Less than 60 percent of the classroom space contained in the quadrant's seven K-6 schools is currently being used.

• The quadrant is facing a projected \$104,000 deficit for 1991-92. On top of this loss, the northeast must still pay back 8-percent loans of \$250,000 to northeast parishes and the diocese. These loans were taken to cover prior quadrant deficits.

• Three northeast parishes cannot pay their quadrant school subsidies for 1991-92. Two parishes still owe on subsidies for 1990-92.

"Many parishes are having difficulty paying the subsidy as it stands because of the economic situation facing

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## Cenacle sisters to seek sale of property

By Les Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Religious of Our Lady of the Cenacle have announced plans to sell the East Avenue house in which they have operated a spiritual-renewal center since 1948.

But according to Sister Joan Fitzgibbons, local superior, any sale would stipulate that the congregation be allowed to use the 693 East Ave. house through the end of 1992.

"We are not closing," Sister Fitzgibbons explained. "We are preparing our ministry schedule for 1992."

She acknowledged, however, that selling the property means the congregation probably will leave Rochester after 1992.

The congregation's provincial offices in Flushing, N.Y. made the decision to

sell the property, Sister Fitzgibbons said. The high cost of operating the house was one consideration in the congregation's decision, she said.

The local Cenacle relies entirely on income earned from retreats and programs, she observed, noting that the number of people taking advantage of the Cenacle has been decreasing.

Sister Fitzgibbons pointed out that several parishes and other religious orders now are offering retreat centers and spirituality programs. In recent years the Cenacle found itself duplicating some of these offerings, which also attracted some people who might otherwise have used Cenacle services and programs, she added.

But she said the main reason for the move was that membership in her congregation is decreasing worldwide. The nine congregation members currently working at the Rochester Cenacle could be put to better use elsewhere, Sister Fitzgibbons said.

The congregation was formed in Southern France in the 1820s. They arrived in the United States in 1891.

The first Cenacle Sisters came to Rochester in 1948, moving into the East Avenue property given to them by then-Bishop James E. Kearney. Bishop Kearney had received the property from the estate of Mrs. Noah Conway Todd, who died in 1948.



Barry Sullivan, president of the school board at St. Thomas the Apostle, calls for a three-to-five year moratorium on school reorganization.

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