

Diocese stops raffle by Northeast parents

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Members of a Northeast Quadrant parents' group plan to abide by a diocesan directive to halt fundraising efforts, but say they will explore other means to ensure the survival of three quadrant schools targeted for possible closing.

"This is just a little fence in our road," said Ken Kuhn, a spokesman for the parents' group known as the Catholic School Committee. "What we'll do is just go around the fence."

The diocesan directive to halt fundraising came in the form of a letter addressed to Thomas O'Neil, president of the quadrant's governance board. The letter was signed by Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, director of diocesan Faith Development Ministry, which oversees Catholic schools.

O'Neil received Sister Binsack's letter Wednesday, Dec. 11. She also sent copies to quadrant pastors and principals, and to Barry Sullivan, leader of the Catholic School Committee.

The diocesan directive put all fundraising in the quadrant on hold until Bishop Matthew H. Clark approves a reorganization plan — a decision he is expected to make early next year.

Sister Binsack sent the letter after the Catholic School Committee announced plans last week to conduct a raffle. Organizers hoped the raffle — featuring prizes of \$10,000, \$15,000 and \$25,000 — would raise as much as \$200,000 to pay off the quadrant's deficit.

Kuhn said members of the Catholic School Committee were baffled by the order.

He said committee members thought the primary rationale for potentially closing schools was the quadrant's dire financial situation, and noted that the raffle was intended to alleviate that problem.

"It doesn't make too much sense to

us," Kuhn remarked.

Sister Binsack's letter stated: "(A) decision has been reached that no fund-raising efforts may be initiated in the Northeast Quadrant prior to the final decision on school configuration.

"To be effective, fund-raising efforts need to be in support of a clearly established school plan. ... Until then, ad hoc fund-raising is not in the best interests of the quadrant as a whole," the letter added.

Speaking on behalf of Sister Binsack, Father George Norton, diocesan spokesman, explained that the parents' raffle would only go toward securing the short-term financial health of the quadrant. Fundraising for the quadrant needs to be developed on a long-term basis, he said, and that can only happen when a plan for the schools is in place.

The quadrant currently lacks an "established school plan" due to disputes over the governance board's November recommendation that the quadrant close schools at St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Stanislaus and St. Cecilia's. The board later scuttled the plan amid harsh criticism from school parents.

The Catholic School Committee has offered the governance board an alternative plan to save the targeted schools through a variety of fundraising and recruitment efforts.

According to Peter Spinelli, chairman of the Christian Formation and Education Council, the parents' plan — along with the governance board's original recommendation for closings — is being considered as part of diocesan review of the situation.

Spinelli told the *Catholic Courier* that the council, which last met Dec. 11, had not decided what recommendations it would pass along to Bishop Clark for his final approval. Council members hope to meet with the bishop some time in January, he said.



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

CLINIC STOP — Senate hopeful Geraldine Ferraro visited the Hispanic health center of St. Mary's Hospital Dec. 12. The facility offers two types of health services: Centro Medico de la Mujer/Women's Health Center provides obstetrics and gynecological care, and Centro de Salud Familiar de Rochester/Rochester Family Health Center provides family medicine. Ferraro spoke with staff members, and took time out to meet young Luis Feliciano.

Parish school will retain middle grades next year

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ITHACA — Following a successful fundraising drive by parents, alumni and school supporters, the school board at Immaculate Conception Parish, has rescinded its Oct. 29 decision to close grades six, seven and eight in June, 1992.

The middle school grades will remain open at least until June, 1993, according to Father Bernard Carges, pastor. However, the school as a whole — pre-kindergarten through grade eight — has been told by the board's finance committee that it must enroll at least 177 students to keep the middle school open beyond June, 1993, he said.

The school board's finance committee outlined the decision in a Dec. 12 memo to the school board, which approved the committee's recommendations.

Noting the outpouring of financial support for the school since the middle-school closing was announced, the committee stated: "It is evident that you (school parents) feel, by your fund raising and long term approach, there is a future for a Catholic education in the Ithaca community."

After learning of the vote to close the school, school supporters launched a November fundraising drive that has raised \$45,000 thus far. Margaret Kirchgessner, chairwoman of the school's endowment fund, noted that she hopes to raise a total of \$100,000 by July, 1992.

She added that more than 100 people contributed to the drive, including one donor who pledged a \$60,000 property as collateral toward the remainder of the fund.

Only 28 of the school's 148 students are enrolled in the three middle grades, and the school currently suffers a deficit of about \$100,000. Declining enrollment and a deteriorating financial situation had led to the school board's Oct. 29 vote to close the middle-school grades.

School supporters plan to use the yearlong reprieve to dramatically increase recruitment efforts for Immaculate Conception School, according to Richard Marisa, a school board member and chairman of the board's enrollment committee.

The committee has already put out the second edition of a newsletter started in November. The newsletter, which publicizes the school, is circulated among other area parishes, Marisa said.

School parents have also volunteered to speak to neighboring parish councils about Immaculate Conception, or to promote the school from the pulpit at weekend Masses in the area, Marisa explained.

Using computer mail, parents hope to develop communication links with Catholic schools throughout the United States in order to share ideas about increasing enrollment.

The committee also may set up recruitment booths in area malls to sell the school to shoppers, he concluded.

Blacks knock diocesan hiring

ROCHESTER — A question-and-answer session following Bishop Matthew H. Clark's speech at the Dec. 14 Black Catholic Day of Reflection became a critical discussion of the Diocese of Rochester's record on hiring blacks.

Gathered at St. Monica's Church, 831 Genesee St., participants chastised the diocese for employing only one African-American among the 125 full- and part-time Pastoral Center workers.

"I'd like to hire more blacks," Bishop Clark said in response to criticism of the diocese's record. But he told one skeptical audience member, "It's not enough ... to roll your eyes and do nothing."

The bishop then asked the 48 participants to suggest ways in which the diocese could increase its employment of minorities.

Audience members complained that even qualified African-American applicants never get hired at the Pastoral Center.

Deacon John W. Holmes, a staff member at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin, said he had twice applied for diocesan positions and was not hired. The deacon later said that diocesan black Catholics were disillusioned with diocesan rhetoric on minorities in light of its hiring practices.

"There's no doubt that the diocese has really closed its eyes on the issues and concerns of black Catholics," he said.

Corpus Christi parishioner Jean Pryor suggested that the diocese create an employment "bank" to collect resumes of prospective minority employees. The diocese could turn to such a bank whenever it was seeking applicants for a vacant position, she said.

In other business, the participants nominated 15 people, including Holmes and Pryor, to fill 10 delegate slots for the Seventh National Black Catholic Congress, slated to convene July 9-12 in New Orleans, La.

A diocesan coordinating team for the congress will examine the nominees' qualifications and choose 10 to go to New Orleans, according to Jacquelyn Dobson, director of the diocesan Office of Black Ministries. Bishop Clark will give his final approval on the nominee slate early next year, she said.

— Rob Cullivan

Correction

The caption for a picture on page 3 of last week's paper incorrectly identified a Catholic War Veteran participating in a Mass marking the 50th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The veteran saluting the flag was George Schum. We regret the error.

CENACLE OFFERS SPECIAL EVENTS

Dec. 22 CHRISTMAS AT THE CENACLE — The joyful, spirit filled Birthday Celebration of Jesus, for children and the young at heart.

Dec. 31 YEAR END RENEWAL — Welcome in the New Year with prayer, reflection and celebration of Eucharist with Fr. David Mura and the Cenacle Sisters. (Optional overnight).

Jan. 24-26 CENTERING PRAYER — SURRENDER TO THE SPIRIT — A weekend of theory and practice to prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit, conducted by Sr. Annette Mattie, r.c.

Jan. 31- Feb. 2 ROOTED IN PRAISE: LITURGY AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF SPIRITUALITY — This retreat/workshop explores the ways in which liturgical celebration is "the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit" (Constitution on Sacred Liturgy #14), and also explores how contemplation and mission flow from the liturgical symbols. Conducted by Fr. Robert Kennedy, Assistant Professor of Liturgical Studies at St. Bernard's Institute.

All events are open to men and women of all faiths



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