

# Plan means adjustment for many

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Last week in this space, I wrote about the then-pending decision that would determine the shape of our Catholic-school apostolate in Monroe County's Northeast Quadrant. I tried to list the major concerns of those in the community who felt we should make no change. I also listed some of the questions I would be asking about any recommendation I received from our diocesan Christian Formation and Education Council.

Since that writing we have decided to carry out our Catholic-school apostolate in four buildings in the quadrant: St. Margaret Mary, St. Andrew, Christ the King and St. Ambrose. You will find other coverage of that decision in this issue of the *Catholic Courier*. In this column, I offer you a brief summary of the responses to the questions I raised about the plan submitted to me:

**1. Does the plan ensure the availability of high-quality Catholic-school education for students in the Northeast Quadrant?**

The four-school configuration allows places for all 1,842 students now attending the seven schools in the quadrant. It also leaves ample room for growth so that we can recruit new students at all grade levels. With the consolidation of space and services we will be able to provide program enrichments that previously were impossible because of the expense of maintaining empty or underused classrooms.

**2. Has the quadrant's financial deficit been addressed?**

The pastors of the parishes within the quadrant have met and agreed on a \$1.55 million contribution to Catholic schools, a sum they believe to be manageable. The proposed tuition would be \$1,348 (a 5.7 percent increase) for the first child of a family. Factored into the plan is \$190,000 of fundraising that needs to be done within the quadrant.

## A LONG THE WAY



**3. Are the physical facilities and instructional resources used in the best way?**

Using the principals' recommended average of 25 students per class, all students from the current seven elementary buildings can be placed in the new four-school configuration. This would still provide room to recruit new students at all grade levels. In the four-site configuration, we will bring the utilization of classroom space from its present 58 percent to 94 percent. We also will be able to better utilize staff and provide expanded programs for the intermediate grades.

**4. Is the commitment of finances and energy needed to make the plan work in proportion to other parish needs?**

Our young people are the future, and their education will influence their lives and the life of the church. Pastors have shown their support of education in the Northeast Quadrant by pledging more than 40 percent of their weekly offerings to the schools. The cost of educating a child in Monroe County's public schools averages \$6,000 per year. Catholic schools spend about \$2,300 per student, which reflects sacrifice both on the part of school parents and of all parish communities within the quadrant. While other parish ministries

are important, pastors and parishioners believe in education and are willing to support it.

**5. Have the poor been considered in the quadrant's school-configuration process?**

Keeping the tuition increase under 6 percent and keeping St. Andrew's school open are attempts to consider the needs of the materially poor, especially in the city. The whole point of moving from a parochial-school system to a Catholic-school system is to maintain the availability of Catholic education for all children to the greatest extent possible. As Catholics, we have a special concern and responsibility for the poorest among us.

**6. Have we made as full an effort as we possibly can to consider all of the input we have received in the context of the reconfiguration process?**

All the information compiled by the Northeast Quadrant Board's Strategic Planning Committee and the material from other interested groups was given to the Christian Education and Formation Council for review. This information — along with input from the Jan. 6, 1992, meeting with representatives from each parish in the quadrant — was part of the information the council used in making its recommendation.

I am aware that this decision means disappointment and adjustment for many people in the quadrant. But I encourage all interested parties to remember that the new arrangement allows for quality Catholic-school education for every student now enrolled in the quadrant. It provides for expansion at every grade level. It will allow us to realize necessary economies and to improve our educational offerings.

On Saturday of this week, I'll be leaving to visit Father Charles Mulligan and our Sisters of Mercy in Chile, and our Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil. "Along the Way" will be back in the Feb. 6 issue. In the meantime, peace to all.

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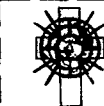
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