

Laity will play key role in three-parish cluster

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A little more than a month has passed since three city parishes formed the cluster known as the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward.

Comprising St. Augustine's, 410 Chili Ave., St. Monica's, 831 Genesee St., and Our Lady of Good Counsel, 640 Brooks Ave., the cluster has come off with far fewer hitches than Bernard Higgins thought it would.

"(The cluster) has moved surprisingly smoothly to me," observed Higgins, a parishioner at Our Lady of Good Counsel. "It has been well conceived. It is very well supported by the three parishes involved."

Father Robert T. Werth, former pastor of St. Bridget's Parish, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, has served as the cluster's pastor since its establishment July 1. The cluster has about 900 active members, he said.

Father Werth noted that he will be assisted by a parochial vicar from Ghana, Father Peter Enya-Boado, who is scheduled to arrive in Rochester Sept. 1. Father Enya-Boado currently lives in the Bronx. Both priests will reside at St. Monica's rectory.

The pastor has been helped in his priestly duties by Father Raymond H. Fleming, pastor of St. Mary's Church of the Deaf, which moved from its former location at St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, to Our Lady of Good Counsel in July.

According to Carol Botticelli, office manager for St. Mary's Church of the Deaf, the parish celebrates its weekly signed Mass at Good Counsel. Its offices are located on the second floor of Good Counsel's rectory, she added.

Father Werth and Botticelli both noted that St. Mary's Church of the

Deaf does not officially belong to the 19th Ward Cluster. The pastor added, however, that the church may join the cluster in the future. Botticelli pointed out that Father Fleming currently celebrates Masses for the cluster as well.

A new rotating daily Mass schedule has been implemented at the cluster. Two of the three parishes celebrate Masses each day, while lay ministers at the third parish conduct a Liturgy of the Hours.

St. Augustine's Church no longer has an 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass, Father Werth said.

In addition to sharing priests, the parishes also share finances, according to Higgins — one of three members sitting on a financial subcommittee of the parishes' clustering transition team.

Currently, each parish is contributing \$3,000 per month to a cluster bank account set up to cover the salaries of the clusters' pastoral staff and pastoral associates, Higgins said. That account will eventually encompass the payroll of at least 10 cluster employees, including a future business manager.

Higgins explained that the cluster account does not cover such expenses as secretarial salaries, maintenance, building repairs and groundskeeping. Such expenses must be covered by each parish, he said, adding that the current contribution each parish makes to the cluster bank account may increase in the future.

Much of the clustering's effects on the three parishes can't be assessed until the fall when parish programming begins and parishioners return from vacations, Father Werth said. In the meantime, members of parish groups and ministries are meeting to discuss implementation of their ministries in light of the clustering.

Kay Egan, a member of St. August-



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor



Pax Christi group inaugurated here

Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Bridget Hurley (above) was among 50 people — including Bishop Matthew H. Clark, several clergy and religious — who gathered at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Gates on Aug. 10 to inaugurate a diocesan Pax Christi group. The organization is asking the diocese to encourage churches to teach Christian non-violence to its parishioners. At left, Bishop Clark shares a happy moment with Anne McQueen.

tine's evangelization team, said representatives of each parish's evangelization ministries will meet this week to discuss coordinating their efforts.

The parishes will also host their inaugural cluster picnic at Westgate Park in Gates Sept. 13, Father Werth said.

The cluster's formation culminates a process begun by the three parishes in fall of 1991. At that time, priests from the three parishes began discussing clustering upon realizing that two of the pastors would soon leave their positions.

Sister St. Luke Hardy, SSJ, took over administrative duties at St. Augustine's last January when Father Robert P. Ring resigned his pastorate to become diocesan director of priests' per-

sonnel. Father Louis A. Sirriani, former pastor of Good Counsel, has been on sabbatical since June.

Father Werth hopes that parishioners interpret the clustering as an opportunity to exercise their ministerial duties, as outlined in the documents on the laity issued by the Second Vatican Council.

"The clustering has nothing to do with the shortage of priests," he said. "It has all to do with an educated laity being ready to take responsibility for its baptismal commitment."

Egan agreed with the pastor's assessment.

"We'll have an example to set to other city parishes that may go through it," she said.

Bishop Clark ordaining two men to priesthood Aug. 15

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Easter celebration marks the high point of the Catholic liturgical year.

An Easter celebration in St. Augustine, Fla., in 1982 also marked the moment when Deacon Brian E. Jeffers began his journey to the priesthood.

Deacon Jeffers will complete that journey this Saturday, Aug. 15, when Bishop Matthew H. Clark ordains him a diocesan priest during a 10:30 a.m. liturgy at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

Bishop Clark will also ordain Basilian Deacon John Huber, an Aquinas Institute teacher and a former parishioner at Rochester's St. Pius X Parish, during the liturgy.

A parishioner at St. Rita's Church in Webster, Deacon Jeffers looked back to that Easter a decade ago as the turning point in his spiritual development.

Then a senior at Webster's R.L. Thomas High School, he traveled to the Florida city to visit some friends.

When they went to Easter Mass, the deacon recalled, "It really struck me the meaning of Christ's life and how he served people. I saw the whole meaning of Christ's life, Christ's love, and his willingness to give up his life to serve his people."

"I had always accepted that at an intellectual level, but at that moment it became more personal to me."

Still, he added, "I never really connected it to a call to the priesthood."

Deacon Jeffers said he experienced inklings of that call in grammar school while serving as an altar boy at St. Rita's Church, 1008 Maple Drive.

"It was something that I thought about just a little bit," he explained. "But it was more the romantic thought of the priesthood. Then I stopped thinking about it."

Until the spring of 1983, that is.

Deacon Jeffers was attending Monroe Community College that year, planning on an engineering career.

"I was doing well in school," Deacon Jeffers recalled, "but I wasn't happy with what I was doing. I just felt I wanted to do more in terms of serving people."

That unhappiness led him to the Seek Program, one of the Diocese of Rochester's discernment programs. Later that fall, he moved into the Becket Hall residential program.

His involvement with the two programs helped him solidify his decision.

"It was nice just getting together with other people who were thinking of the same questions," he recalled, "as well as just the camaraderie and friendship. There weren't a lot of other people I could talk these things over with."

After completing his degree at MCC, Deacon Jeffers attended St. John Fisher College, graduating in 1986 with a psychology degree.

Diocesan officials then recommended that he consider either the American College at Rome or the American College at the Louvain, Belgium, for his seminary studies. He selected Louvain.

For the 1989/90 school year, Deacon Jeffers returned to Rochester to serve his pastoral year at St. Ambrose Parish, 25 Empire Blvd.

After a year of parish ministry — which included preaching, working with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program, and hospital visitations — Deacon Jeffers requested and received a year off from his studies to pursue spiritual formation at Piffard's Abbey of the Genesee.

He noted that he did not take the year away because he had doubts about his vocation.

"I just felt I needed time to sit back and reflect on some things," the deacon explained. "It was a sense I had that so much information was being fed into me and I didn't have time to process it all and incorporate it into who I was as a person."

The time, he added, "gave me more of a foundation in terms of a sense of myself and a sense of God's presence in my life. I felt able to continue on to the priesthood, especially the diocesan priesthood."

Ordained a transitional deacon June 1, 1991, he returned to Louvain to continue his studies for a master's degree in theology. He completed his degree

this summer.

After his Aug. 15 ordination, Deacon Jeffers will celebrate a 10:30 a.m. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Rita's Church on Aug. 16. The following day he begins serving as a priest intern at St. Mary's Church, 95 N. Main St., Canandaigua.

Deacon Huber will celebrate his first Mass at St. Pius X Church, 3032 Chili Ave., at 11 a.m. Aug. 16. The 1985 graduate of St. John Fisher College will continue to teach French and theology this fall at Aquinas, from which he graduated in 1981.

A 1990 graduate of St. Michael's Seminary in Toronto, Deacon Huber also earned a master's degree in French from Middlebury College, Vt. As part of his program at Middlebury College, he lived and taught in France for a year. He also serves each summer on the staff of the St. Anne de Beaupre Shrine in Montreal.

Deacon Huber said he had considered the diocesan priesthood, but eight years of contact with Basilians at the high school and college levels — coupled with a desire to teach — helped convince him to join the order.

"I very much admired the way of life and the (teaching) apostolate of the Basilians," he said. "I liked the community living and the support that exists in community."

In addition to teaching at Aquinas during the upcoming school year, he will serve as campus minister at the Dewey Avenue school.