

Seneca County job woes draw diocesan input

Lee Strong
Staff writer

SENECA COUNTY — Local church leaders and diocesan officials have joined efforts to reduce the economic and social impact of staff reductions at the Seneca Army Depot in Romulus and Willard Psychiatric Center in Willard.

During a July 31 hearing conducted by the New York State Senate Mental Health Committee at Willard State Hospital, Father Peter Clifford, director of the Diocese of Rochester's Parish Support Ministries, voiced diocesan concern for patients and employees who would be affected by a proposal to reduce the psychiatric facility's size.

Father Clifford — speaking on behalf of Bishop Matthew H. Clark — was joined at the hearing by Giovina Caroscio, director of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry; Monsignor Gerald Krieg, pastor of Geneva's St. Stephen's Parish; Father Nelson Ruppert, OFM, pastor of Ovid's Holy Cross Parish; and Father David Gramke, pastor of Seneca Fall's St. Patrick's Parish.

In addition, Fathers Ruppert and Gramke joined clergy from other denominations in an August 14 meeting with officials at the Seneca Army Depot to discuss staff reductions, which are slated to begin in November.

Under plans released by the U.S. Department of Defense, the army depot will reduce its civilian work force by more than 550 jobs on Nov. 13. The layoffs will reduce the depot's civilian work force to approximately 280 employees.

Some of those individuals who lose their full-time jobs will be hired for various jobs on a contract basis, however, making it difficult to assess the total number of jobs that will be lost, Father Ruppert noted.

Earlier this year, New York state reversed a decision to close the state hospital — which employs 540 people — but officials now are considering ways to reduce staffing as the hospital's population decreases.

Father Ruppert pointed out that among Holy Cross parishioners alone, approximately 24 families have at least one person working at the state hospital, and that an equal number of families had members working at the depot.

"It's a tense situation in our parish," Father Ruppert remarked to the

Catholic Courier. Not only will the reductions directly affect parishioners whose jobs were lost, Father Ruppert said, but the loss of jobs also "would have a ripple effect on businesses."

Although Geneva is farther than Ovid from the depot and hospital, Genevans, too, will lose jobs under the plans, Monsignor Krieg noted.

But the reductions — particularly those proposed for the state hospital — would have more than economic impact, he observed.

"The impact is of the loss of the facilities for the mentally ill within a distance families could cover; that's a real burden," Monsignor Krieg noted, pointing out that Willard served patients from the Finger Lakes region.

"We had a parishioner who made a remarkable return to normal existence because of Willard," Monsignor Krieg continued. The parishioner continues to travel to work at the hospital several days a week, he noted, adding, "The loss of Willard will be great for her."

As part of his presentation at the July 31 hearing, Father Clifford point-

ed out that more community-based programs will be needed to support Willard patients if the facility is closed or reduced in size. He said diocesan offices of social ministry currently provide some mental-health services in that area, and would be willing to augment those services if necessary.

"We have the capability and stand ready to meet the need for additional services — if resources are available," Father Clifford said.

In addition, Father Clifford called for economic development involving both the state hospital and the depot, and for funds to be allocated for job-training and counseling for employees who lose their jobs.

Further, Father Clifford proposed that a task force be created "to address issues relating to the Seneca Depot, Willard, and the spill-over effect from the Smith Corona (typewriter factory) closing in Cortland," which was announced July 21.

Monsignor Krieg said area pastors were pleased that Father Clifford spoke at the hearing.

"The local people were grateful to

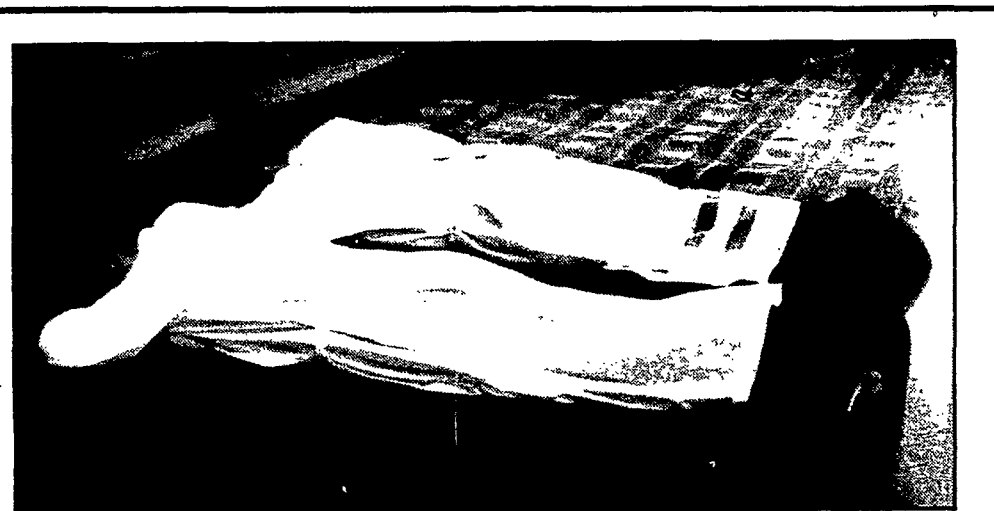
have advocacy from the bishop, and I think it impressed the state authorities and showed them that the impact would be wider than they thought," Monsignor Krieg said.

Father Ruppert said he recognized that reductions at the depot are needed in light of overall Defense Department cutbacks, but added that he had hoped the local reductions would be phased in.

The Holy Cross pastor also said that he is hoping for alternative uses for the depot and state hospital facilities to help offset job losses. He suggested that the depot airfield might be made available for civilian use and that the hospital buildings could be used for such purposes as county offices or treatment centers for Alzheimer's disease, tuberculosis and AIDS patients.

The committee members who met at Willard said that the state hospital would not be closed until an alternative use for the facility had been devised, Father Ruppert reported.

As for the depot, Father Ruppert said he told base officials, "Hopefully, whatever is done is done with justice."



Double ordination

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Basilian superior Father John Gallagher, CSB, ordained Brian Jeffers to diocesan priesthood and John Huber to the Basilian Fathers Aug. 15 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. At top left, Bishop Clark ordains Deacon Huber. Above, Deacons Jeffers (foreground) and Huber prostrate themselves during the Litany of the Saints. At right, Father Gallagher lays hands on Father Jeffers.



Mike Latona/Staff writer

Parishes prepare for fall sessions of diocesan synod

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Parishes are gearing up for this September's parish/community segment of the diocesan Synod by sending volunteers to facilitator training sessions.

As of the week ending Aug. 22, 16 of the 22 training sessions had already been conducted at various sites throughout the diocese. The remaining six sessions are scheduled to take place by Aug. 26 for facilitators from the Livingston County region and the northwest region of Monroe County.

According to Father Joseph A. Hart, diocesan director of the Synod, 2,300 facilitators will have been trained when the sessions are completed. Facilitators will moderate the discussion process that will take place in each parish during the Synod.

The role of "facilitators" should not

be confused with that of "leaders" in other types of group processes, according to the *Diocese of Rochester Parish/Community Synod Facilitator's Guide*.

The training booklet emphasizes the facilitators' role as guiding discussion by ensuring that all participants have a chance to speak. Facilitators are not intended, by contrast, to "lead" their groups to foreseen conclusions.

During the week of Sept. 20, parishes, or such communities as Cornell University Catholic Community, will slate one or more 2½-hour meetings to discuss the first synodal theme: "How can we as Church help strengthen Christian marriage and family life today in all its forms?"

Participants will be encouraged to read a background document on the theme. The document was prepared by a diocesan committee made up of lay, religious and clerical experts, and addresses the needs of the diocesan

church; analyzes these needs in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the church; and puts forth a series of concrete recommendations on ways the diocese can meet these needs.

Those who want to participate in Synod discussion sessions will be asked to preregister. The facilitators' guide emphasized, however, that walk-in participants will be welcomed.

Participants will be asked to complete confidential forms asking for demographic information. This information will be used by the Synod office to determine what segments of the diocesan population have come forth to participate in the process.

Each parish/community meeting will consist of a large-group gathering, followed by small group discussions, and a reconvening of the large group to vote on recommendations. The guide also noted that recommendations need to be specific, as in

"the Catholic schools office should ..." as opposed to a general tone embodied in "the diocese should ..."

Small groups will have no more than six or eight members who will develop recommendations to be considered by the large group.

The large group will then vote on the small groups' recommendations. The three recommendations drawing the largest number of votes will be forwarded to the diocesan Synod office for regional and general consideration.

And all of the small groups' recommendations will be forwarded to the pastoral council of the parish or community for further discussion and decision making on a local level.

The guide also stressed the need for multi-lingual parishes to provide translators, and for high school students to be paired off so that they won't feel isolated in discussion groups.