

Prelate sees Catholic schools turning corner

Delivers speech at Corning gala

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

CORNING — Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati believes that Catholic schools exist today for the same basic reasons they were built during the last century, and that Catholic school parents are looking for the same results their ancestors did.

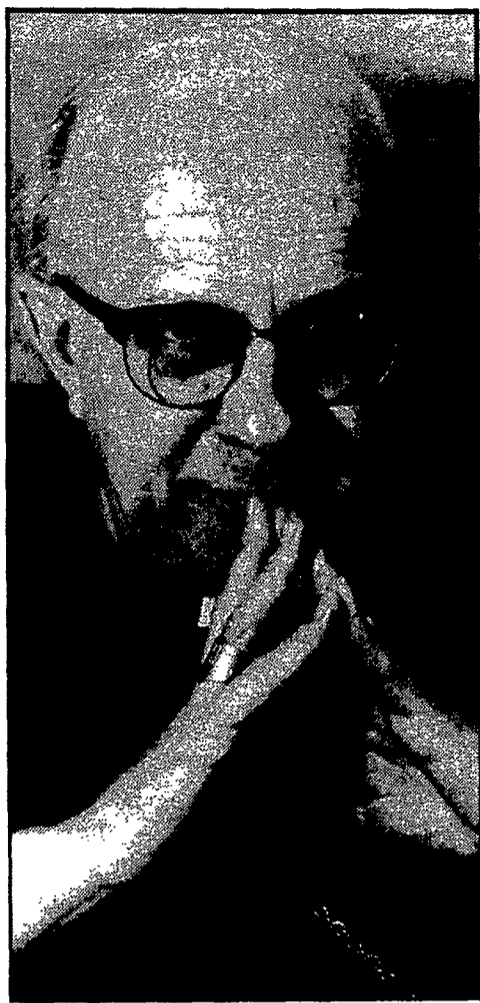
The prelate made his remarks during the fifth annual All Saints Academy Gala at the Corning Hilton on Saturday evening, March 27.

The dinner raises funds to help offset operating expenses at the K-8 school, which primarily serves the parishes comprising the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community — St. Mary, St. Vincent and St. Patrick in Corning, and Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post.

"I perceive that Catholic schools are beginning to thrive again," the archbishop said. "Catholic parents have realized that the goals, ideals and purposes of Catholic schools are just what they were looking for."

The archbishop noted that Catholic schools were originally founded to train immigrant Catholics for a prosperous life in this country, and to prepare their souls for an eternal life in the next world.

In particular, bishops of the 19th century knew that their flocks faced native hostility because of their Catholic faith, and the hierarchy wanted to steel their charges for the prejudice that confronted them, he said. Hence,



Ruth Adams/Photo Intern
Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati delivered a speech on Catholic schools during the fifth annual All Saints Academy Gala at the Corning Hilton March 27.

Catholic schools were an oasis of faith in a desert of anti-Catholic bigotry, he continued.

Even though today's Catholic families no longer face a direct attack from their fellow citizens on their church

membership, children face an even greater threat to their Christian moral sensibility, the archbishop said. Sexual promiscuity, drug abuse and violence all threaten young people's souls today, he explained.

Society does not reflect the values that the church holds dear, Archbishop Pilarczyk stated, especially when it comes to such concerns as the sanctity of human life, the permanence of marriage and the supremacy of God in human affairs.

"Parents realize that their children need something more in values and convictions than they get from the general culture," he said. "We are increasingly countercultural and increasingly out of the step with the world around us," he added.

Catholic schools offer a number of strengths that are no longer automatically found in the public-school system, the archbishop asserted, because Catholic school parents get involved in their schools.

"That which costs money generally provokes more interest than that which is perceived to be free," he said.

When it comes to money, however, Archbishop Pilarczyk assumed that Catholics who worry about financing schools will always raise their voices against spending more money on education — just as they did in the days when Catholic schools were flourishing nationwide.

"We never have and we never will have enough money," he said. The prelate added, "I am convinced that people will pay for what they perceive their children need."

To cope with financial woes, Catholic schools should aggressively pursue such fundraising efforts as establishing endowment funds, he concluded.

The prelate ended his speech by encouraging audience members to continue their work on behalf of Catholic education.

"I suspect that when we all reach the kingdom of heaven, we will all be grateful that we were a part of (Catholic education)," the prelate said. "And we will remember that as the saints go marching in."

The archbishop has written 15 books and a number of articles, including one praising Catholic schools that staff members at All Saints read last year in *Today's Catholic Teacher*, said Vincent A. Moschetti, principal.

"I thought this would be great to have him here," Moschetti said. "He is such a great supporter of Catholic education."

During the Gala, school officials paid tribute to another supporter of Catholic education — the late Gerald A. Smith, who died last December.

Smith's widow, Mary, accepted the Seton-Neumann Award from the school on behalf of her husband, a school board member who helped found the fundraiser and who was quite active in securing the school's finances. The award honors individuals who dedicate their life to Catholic education.

School parents and supporters such as Smith have helped ensure the school's future, according to members of the Corning community. In an era of Catholic school closings and reorganization, All Saints has experienced a steady increase in enrollment, said Father William V. Spilly, pastor of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community.

Father Spilly noted that enrollment has increased in the last three years from 200 to 260 students.

Parish Synods end with 'storm' of activity

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The diocesan Synod's parish/community phase has ended — albeit later than expected.

The March 13 blizzard that paralyzed much of the diocese forced a number of parishes and communities to cancel or postpone sessions scheduled for March 14-15.

As a result, many parishes held sessions as late as March 21. This will shorten the time the Synod office has to prepare for the May 22 Regional Synods, noted Father Joseph A. Hart, director.

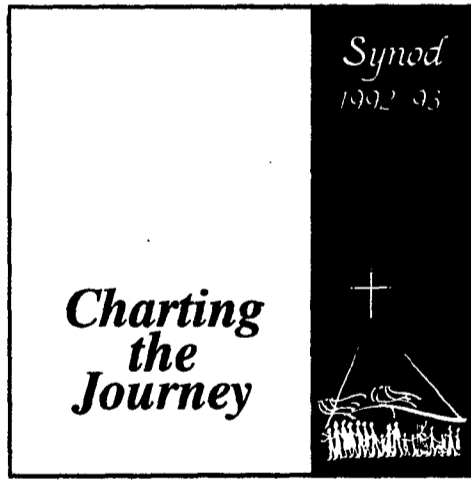
"The pressure will obviously be on this office and with the writing committee," Father Hart said. "We'll have to wait until they turn in their recommendations, until we have a true representation."

The storm most likely had a negative effect on the turnout for the Synod sessions, Father Hart acknowledged. He added, however, that he has not yet received reports on attendance figures for the latest sessions.

But, Father Hart observed, Synod organizers had anticipated a drop-off in participation during the three February/March sessions in comparison to the three fall sessions.

Synod organizers contended with several factors as they decided when to hold Synod sessions, Father Hart explained.

First, the time for Synod sessions was limited to the school year. In addition, organizers had to work around major feasts, meaning that some of the sessions had to take place over the



winter, Father Hart noted. And because diocesan Synods are so infrequent — the last gathering in the Rochester diocese took place in 1954 — Synod planners also wanted to cover as many themes as possible.

When six themes emerged during the planning stages, organizers realized that six consecutive weeks of sessions would be too much for most people to handle, Father Hart noted. Organizers decided to opt for two, three-week sessions, knowing they were taking a chance on the number of participants dropping off.

"Even though the number might be down during the span — that was envisioned — since you're only doing it once every 40 years, it was decided to get as much done as possible," Father Hart said. "It was done fully knowing the difficulty of sustaining participation for that long a time."

Father Hart cited three factors accounting for the drop-off in numbers.

Even when bad weather did not force the diocese to cancel or postpone

sessions, it helped to keep some people at home during the February/March sessions, the priest acknowledged.

"Second, there are a number of our senior people who are away in Florida during the winter," Father Hart said. He noted that many senior citizens participated actively in the fall sessions, citing a survey indicating that about 39 percent of the 30,000 people who took part in the fall gatherings were 56 years of age or older.

Finally, Father Hart noted, organizers had expected some attrition simply due to the amount of work involved.

The director said now that the parish/community sessions are over, the next step is for the Synod's various committees to organize and refine recommendations made at the local Synod sessions into recommendations for the 11 Regional Synods May 22. These recommendations must also be translated into Spanish.

The goal is to have these recommendations to be considered at the Regional Synods in the hands of delegates 10 days to two weeks before the May gatherings.

Regional Synod delegates will be the same people who took part in the regional gatherings in December and January, Father Hart said. In addition to pastors, those delegates include individuals selected at random from nominees suggested at the fall parish/community synods.

Ultimately, recommendations approved at the Regional Synods will be submitted to the General Synod for consideration Oct. 1-3, 1993, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

Diocese offers financial aid for eligible students

ROCHESTER — The Rochester diocese is offering financial aid to students attending Catholic elementary and secondary schools in 1993-94. Applications are available for registered students at any Catholic school in the diocese. Notification will be sent out in June to families eligible to receive assistance.

More than 1,100 students received more than \$679,000 in financial aid from the diocese in 1992-93. Funding for the aid program came from the Thanks Giving Appeal, the Monroe County Shared Pool, the Monroe County Catholic School Endowment Fund, and an anonymous donation to support the City of Rochester's 10 elementary schools.

For information, contact the Catholic school principal in your area.

Watson Center to host church worker seminar

PAINTED POST — A church secretary seminar is scheduled for Tuesday, April 13, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Watson Homestead Conference and Retreat Center, 9620 Dry Run Road.

The event is open to secretaries and office personnel who work for churches and other religious organizations.

Program fee is \$35. Overnight accommodations on April 12 are also available for an extra \$20.

To register, call Mary Kosty at 607/962-0541 or 962-8040.