

Icy weather greets Mercy sisters

3 women make visit from Chile

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Three Sisters of Mercy of Rochester from Chile visiting the diocese to learn more about the congregation to which they belong also discovered some things for which they were not prepared.

Snowstorms and bone-chilling temperatures.

The trio — Sisters Lia Nora González Sandoval, María Inés Olguin Caro and Soledad Cantillana Calderón — all commented on western New York's frigid weather during a visit to the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, on Jan. 14.

Indeed, when asked why they had come to the Rochester diocese, Sister Sandoval joked through a translator, Sister Kay Schwenzer, RSM, "To know the snow."

And Sister Calderón quipped, "You people in the First World do everything to excess, even your weather."

Weather permitting, the three women religious have an ambitious schedule during their visit, slated to last through Feb. 7. They arrived in Rochester on Jan. 5.

The sisters will observe a variety of ministries in which members of the congregation work — from schools to parishes to social service organizations and programs. They will also visit some of the region's tourist attractions, and take part in congregational education programs.

All three women religious came to know the Sisters of Mercy in Chile, where the local congregation has sent missionaries to work in parishes. After observing the congregation and its work, they joined the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester (as opposed to the other Mercy orders from around the world sending workers to Chile). Sisters Sandoval and Caro took their final vows in 1993, and Sister Calderón is scheduled to do so on March 25.

Sisters Sandoval and Calderón had previous contact with the Sisters of Mercy in Chile, and both had been impressed with these missionaries' desire to work with and learn from the people.

Sister Caro, on the other hand, had no previous experience with the Mercy congregation, but she had been advised to contact them when she had made known her desire to join a congregation. She was also impressed by what she saw.

"What attracted me was their hospitality," she said through Sister Schwenzer.

In Chile, the nine members affiliated with the Rochester congregation find themselves working primarily in parish work, the three reported. Sisters Sandoval and Caro, for example, both serve as administrators in mission parishes. The congregation in Chile is not involved with schools as it is in the Rochester diocese, they noted. And the U.S. branch of the congregation has more resources with which to work.

Nevertheless, the focus of the congregation's work in Rochester and Chile is similar, they observed.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Chilean Sisters of Mercy Lia Nora González Sandoval (from left), María Inés Olguin Caro and Soledad Cantillana Calderón.

"The spirit of Mercy is the same in whatever place you are," Sister Sandoval remarked.

Sister Calderón noted that the congregation's founder, Sister Catherine McAuley, had called for congregation members to "pay attention to the signs of the times and to respond to needs."

Congregation members are doing that both in Chile and in Rochester in light of the differing circumstances and needs, Sister Calderón noted.

Although the visit is intended to help acquaint the three women religious with the Mercy congregation's activities in the Rochester diocese, they may also have provided some education of their own.

During a Jan. 12 visit to Our Lady of Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Road, they asked the students in one class if they knew where Chile was located. The students knew it was in South America, but not exactly where.

"You can't be so ignorant of the rest of America," Sister Calderón remarked. "We exist."

Pledges are ahead of last TGA campaign

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — With the parish phase of the 1993-94 Thanks Giving Appeal completed, pledges are running \$230,000 ahead of last year's figures, according to Thomas D'Agostino, appeal director.

As of Jan. 5, 1994, the appeal — the diocese's major source of funding — had received \$4,020,000 in pledges, D'Agostino reported. At this point last year, the TGA had raised about \$3,790,000, he said.

The goal for the 1993-94 TGA is \$4.4 million.

The diocese, however, which has an annual budget of \$6.7 million, only needed to raise \$3.9 million — or 58 percent of the total budget — through the appeal to eliminate the need for making any cuts to diocesan programs.

In addition, D'Agostino noted that the diocese raised an additional \$213,000 during last spring's follow-up phase to the TGA. He projected that if this year's follow-up effort in February experiences comparable results, the 1993-94 appeal will receive approximately \$4.3 million in pledges by the time the campaign ends on June 30, 1994.

And if the traditional fulfillment rate for pledges achieved in previous years holds true, D'Agostino continued, then the diocese will receive enough monies to cover its budgeted programs.

During the last two appeals, TGA revenue came up short and forced the diocese to eliminate or reduce dozens of positions.

D'Agostino attributed the 1993-94 appeal's success to this year's campaign being more parish-based.

"I have to say in all honesty that the parishes did a very good job," D'Agostino noted. "I'm pleased with what went on in the parish phase."

Part of the success, D'Agostino continued, is due to the approximately 450 volunteers who took part in this year's parish phase. He ran a series of regional training meetings for these volunteers in September and October.

Meanwhile, D'Agostino is already beginning to prepare for the 1994-95 TGA. He plans to hold a series of meetings next month throughout the diocese with parish leaders and volunteers to assess this year's campaign. But he does not see the need to change much.

"A lot of what we're doing will be to continue to build on what we have done," D'Agostino concluded.

Youth Mass, dance set

HORSEHEADS — Two youth events are coming to St. Mary Our Mother Church, 816 W. Broad St.

A regional Teen Mass will be held Sunday, Jan. 23, at 5:30 p.m. Also, a "Post Mid-Term Dance" is set for Saturday, Jan. 29, from 7:30-10:30 p.m. Admission to the dance will be a donation of a canned or boxed non-perishable food item.

For details on either event, call 607/739-3817.

Fr. Ventura celebrates jubilee

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

WAYLAND — He now spends much more time at his dream retirement home in nearby Springwater.

But don't think a person with Father Gennaro J. Ventura's energy will ever drop completely out of the picture.

"I don't intend to slow down," said the diocesan priest, who looks far younger than his 75 years and moves at an even more youthful pace.

That's good news for the people of St. Joseph Church, 206 Fremont St. Father Ventura has helped out frequently at St. Joseph's since retiring to the area in 1989.

Family, friends and well-wishers gathered at the Wayland church last month to help Father Ventura celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Although priest jubilees are usually celebrated in June, Father Ventura's is a special case. Back in 1943, due to the large amount of priests who were being called into military duty, Father Ventura's ordination — along with four other priests — was moved forward six months by then-Bishop James E. Kearney.

Father Ventura celebrated his first Mass on Dec. 19, 1943, at his home parish of Holy Apostles Church in Rochester. He split time between two other Rochester churches, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Francis Xavier,

in the first three years of his priesthood. He then served nine consecutive years at Mt. Carmel, beginning in 1947.

His first pastorate was from 1956-61 at the former St. Lucy Church in Rochester. Father Ventura then became pastor back at Mt. Carmel from 1961-70, and moved outside Rochester for the first time as pastor at St. Francis de Sales Church in Geneva from 1970-80. Father Ventura's final pastorate was at Holy Ghost Church in Gates from 1980-89.

Upon his retirement, Father Ventura moved permanently to the house in the Springwater countryside that he's owned for 25 years. He previously was limited to visits there on weekends and vacations.

At St. Joseph's, Father Ventura assists on weekends and gives the homily every other week. He also teaches religious education and fills in when the pastor, Father Paul R. Schnacky, is unavailable.

Around the time of his retirement, Father Ventura recalled, "Father Schnacky asked, 'What are you going to be doing?' I said, 'I'm your parishioner.'"

Father Ventura took his 50th jubilee party, attended by more than 100 people, pretty much in stride.

"You are excited, but life goes on," he remarked. "I just say 'Thank you, God' for letting me live to celebrate 50 years. You can't celebrate without the gift of life."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer