

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Former Aquinas official charged

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Brian C. Buff, a former Aquinas Institute teacher and associate director of development, was arraigned in Rochester City Court Feb. 9 on multiple sex-crime charges.

Those charges include ones involving two teenage boys who attended Catholic Central High School in Troy, where Buff was vice principal from August, 1991, to January, 1993.

The charges involve no current or former students of Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave. Between September, 1988, and August, 1991, Buff taught social studies at the school and served as its drama director, then worked as director of recruitment and special events.

However, Buff does face charges involving a former office worker at Aquinas for an incident that allegedly took place March 16, 1993. Buff had returned to Aquinas in January of 1993 to serve as associate director of development. Buff left that position in September, 1993, to become the assistant development director at LaSalle Academy in New York City. He is currently on a paid leave of absence from the New York City school.

Buff surrendered to state police in Henrietta Feb. 9. Following the indictments in Monroe County, he was also indicted on a number of sex-crime charges in Albany and Rensselaer counties, according to Monroe County Assistant District Attorney Douglas Randall.

According to the charges, Buff is accused of engaging in sexual acts with the two boys, who were ages 15 and 16 at the time. Buff allegedly brought the youths to Rochester for some of these activities.

In addition, Buff allegedly had one of the boys engage in sexual activities with Mary Anne Cioffi, a mathematics teacher from Catholic Central High School. That

incident allegedly took place in Rochester after Cioffi drove the boy to Buff's apartment, where they then reportedly acted under Buff's directions.

According to Sister Ann McCarthy, CSJ, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Albany, Cioffi was fired from Catholic Central High School Dec. 10, 1993, due, the superintendent said, to "two complaints from students regarding verbal comments made in class. Since that time, other activities (by Cioffi) have become subject to criminal investigation."

Cioffi was arraigned in Rochester City Court Feb. 15 on three counts of rape in the third degree, one count of sex abuse in the third degree and one count of endangering the welfare of a child, reported Randall, who serves as chief of Monroe County's Child Abuse Bureau.

Buff was arraigned in Rochester City Court Feb. 9 on two counts of third-degree sodomy, fifth-degree conspiracy, third-degree sexual abuse, two counts of endangering the welfare of a child and harassment.

The sexual-abuse and harassment charges stem from the alleged incident involving the former female employee at Aquinas.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Feb. 10, William Ouweleen, Aquinas' director of development, said school officials learned of the investigation into Buff's activities when contacted by police authorities "about five weeks ago."

Ouweleen said the school was cooperating with the investigation.

The development director emphasized that the charges against Buff do not involve Aquinas students, observing, "No students or former students have come forward."

Elizabeth Brown, the diocese's director of constituent relations, pointed out that Aquinas Institute is operated by the Basilian Fathers and is not under diocesan control.

Brown said diocesan authorities received no complaints about Buff, but that if they had, they would have reported them to Aquinas officials.

### Ithaca parish will host peace and justice forum

ITHACA — St. Catherine of Siena Church, 302 St. Catherine Circle, is beginning its 1994 Peace and Justice Forum.

Dates, topics and guest speakers are as follows: Feb. 20, "Bosnia Revisited: A Non-Violent Witness," Scott Schaeffer-Duffy; March 6, "Northern Ireland: Past and Present," Edward J. McGowan; March 13, "Is Hope Still Alive for El Salvador?" Father Joseph Fitzpatrick SJ; and March 20, "Liberation Theology: Latin American and Afro-American Perspectives," Father Stephen DeMott, MM.

All sessions begin at 1 p.m. Light refreshments and child care will be provided. For details, call 607/257-2493.

### SUNY Geneseo to host week of pro-life events

GENESEO — A one-week pro-life program, titled "Choose to Know the Truth," will be presented the week of Feb. 21-25 on the campus of the State University of New York College at Geneseo. The public is invited to attend.

During daytime hours, a public-information booth and letter-writing campaign station will be set up in the MacVittie Union lobby. A variety of lectures, discussions and question-and-answer sessions will take place in the union ballroom beginning at 7 p.m. each evening. In addition, a 7 p.m. candlelight vigil on Feb. 25 will commemorate and celebrate the lives of the unborn.

This series of activities is being sponsored by Geneseo for Life, a pro-life educational-resources group based at the college. For details, call 716/245-6032.

## Diocese claims ex-pastor mishandled parish funds

SPENCERPORT — A diocesan audit has revealed that Father Robert J. Winterkorn, former pastor of St. John the Evangelist, 60 Martha St., mishandled \$137,500 in parish funds during the past seven years.

The diocese's chief financial officer, Jim Rinefierd, reported the finding to parish leadership Saturday, Feb. 12, and spoke to parishioners at weekend services. Bishop Matthew H. Clark also spoke about the issue at the church's Sunday Masses.

The irregularities were discovered in the course of a routine review of parish finances. Such reviews are conducted whenever a parish's pastorate changes hands. Most of the transactions were payments initiated by the ex-pastor to individuals, or payments to Father Winterkorn himself, diocesan officials said in a press release.

The pastor resigned last September in response to a request from Bishop Clark. The priest had admitted to sexual misconduct in the course of his professional duties.

Liz Brown, diocesan director of constituent relations, said the diocese would not reveal now or in the future to whom the money went. The diocese wanted to protect the privacy of the individuals involved, she said.

She also said she could not comment on whether legal charges would be brought against Father Winterkorn, nor could she comment on the possibility of

any link between the misuse of funds and the misconduct that led to his resignation.

Brown did say that there appeared to be no evidence that the ex-pastor used the funds for his personal benefit.

About half the money involved was taken from St. John's Cemetery funds, with the remainder coming from parish accounts. A portion of the money, \$16,900, has already been paid back, according to Brown. Father Winterkorn repaid the bulk of that figure, with \$3,200 coming from an individual who signed a promissory note for \$7,200 in 1986, she said.

The balance of the funds taken — \$120,600 — will be covered by diocesan self-insurance to which all parishes contribute, she said.

In a message to St. John's parishioners, Bishop Clark said: "I regret that you must bear yet another blow, but am confident that you can pull together and move forward as a parish community."

Father Winterkorn remains on administrative leave and is participating in treatment. Father Louis Nichols currently serves as the parish's temporary administrator, and a permanent replacement is expected to be named in June.

As a result of the St. John audit, the diocese will be reviewing its parish audit procedures and developing training programs for pastors and others with financial responsibilities, Rinefierd said.

— Rob Cullivan

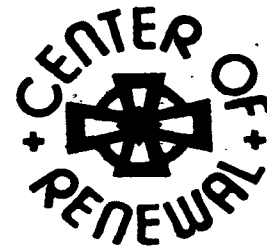
## Network wins jail victory



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## Expansion will be delayed

Terry Schmitt, spokeswoman for Catholic Family Center's Social Action Network, talks to reporters following a meeting with Arnold J. Eckert, president of the Monroe County Legislature on Wednesday afternoon, Feb. 9. The network, which consists of several Catholic churches, has been lobbying the legislature to divert jail expansion funding into drug treatment and rehabilitation. Schmitt and other network members announced that under a new Capital Improvement Plan, jail expansion will be delayed at least two years, and the network will work with a legislative drug task force.



### SPRING RETREATS ALONG THE NIAGARA

WALKING WITH ANOTHER ON THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY  
Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND  
March 25-27

SACRED STORY: A JOURNALING WEEKEND  
Janet Sahafi  
April 29-May 31

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