

Former schools

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closed in June, 1989, currently houses Rochester's Flower City School, No. 54 for grades 3-5. The school's lease runs until June, 1996, according to a Flower City official.

However, two other public schools housed in former Catholic school buildings will leave at the end of this month.

St. Anne Parish's former school building in the southeast quadrant is home to

The Children's School, No. 55, and the former St. Philip Neri's school building in the northeast section currently houses the Eastside Early Childhood Center School, No. 56.

Pastors at both parishes expressed some concern over the loss of their current tenants.

"As of July 1, we're high and dry here," lamented Father Richard J. Shatzel, pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish, 1782 Clifford Ave., Rochester.

The city pastor noted that St. Philip's uses School No. 56's rent money to help offset its Catholic school subsidy, an allowance Monroe County parishes must pay to support schools in their respective quadrants. He added that he has been meeting with diocesan officials to consider ways in which the parish might find a new tenant for the building.

Father Frank E. Lioi, St. Anne's pastor, also acknowledged that losing his public-school tenant would put a strain on the parish's budget, but expressed confidence that the building would find a new tenant.

"I tend to like educational use," Father Lioi said of any new tenant. "I think people feel that is an extension of parish ministry."

Another parish that has rented out its former school building for an educational enterprise is East Irondequoit's St. James Church. According to Father Robert C. Bradler, pastor, the Monroe County Board of Cooperative Educational Services opened an early childhood education center soon after the former St. James' school closed in June, 1990.

Like Father Lioi, Father Bradler — who is leaving St. James at the end of this month for St. Thomas the Apostle Parish — expressed satisfaction that the parish's former school building still echoes with children's voices.

"This was the ideal thing to come in here," he said of the BOCES program. "The building is being used for what it was intended ... education."

Like many pastors who spoke about their current school-building tenants, Father Bradler pointed out that his parish uses the rent money to help pay its school subsidy. He added that St. James can now concentrate on financing the upgrading of other parish facilities because it no longer has to support a school which, in its latter years, became a large drain on parish funds.

"We don't have to go into our savings," he concluded.

Ironically, some parishes lost their original schools, but gained a new Catholic school anyway.

Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Parish, for example, saw its junior high close in 1990, but then it became the venue for Corpus Christi School's later that fall. Corpus' school moved from its original site at Corpus Christi Parish to Blessed Sacrament for a number of reasons — one of which was the better condition of Blessed Sacrament's school building.

The former St. Theodore's School in Gates also became the site of a new Catholic school when the building became the southwest quadrant's junior high in 1991. St. Theodore's School closed in June, 1993, at which time All Saints Catholic Junior High became the only Catholic school on site.

Education continues to be the mission of programs located at other former Catholic school buildings, including Rochester's Annunciation Parish.

The city parish's former school building — which also closed in 1989 — houses the Career Systems Development Corporation. Peter Wagenblass, CSCD's administrative supervisor, noted that his corporation provides such services as vocational assessment, education and job placement for its participants, many of whom are hampered by a lack of financial, educational or learning ability.

St. Stanislaus Parish, also in Rochester, lost its school program in 1992, but still serves children by renting its school building out to the Head Start Plus program, a federally funded early childhood education program administered by Action for a Better Community.

Former Catholic schools are also now home to a number of other programs designed to serve the special needs of such groups as the physically handicapped or mentally disabled.

Two such former school buildings, both closed in 1992, are located in Irondequoit.

According to school officials and Fa-

ther Walter F. Cushing, St. Cecilia Church's pastor, the Irondequoit parish leases its former school building to a satellite school of the Mary Cariola Center, which educates children with multiple handicaps or behavioral problems.

In addition to housing its own religious- and adult-education classes, among other parish activities, St. Thomas the Apostle leases part of its old school building to Stepping Stones Learning Center, a nursery program for children with — and some without — special needs, according to center officials.

Another Irondequoit parish rents out part of its former school building for a different purpose. Creative Beginnings, a day-care program, shares St. Salome's former school building with the parish, according to Father William G. Darling, pastor.

Like St. Salome's, Rochester's Our Lady of Perpetual Help lost its Catholic school in 1989. And, like St. Salome's, OLPH has rented out part of the building to a day-care program — in this case, the Oregon-Leopold Day Care Center.

Father Neil R. Miller, OLPH's pastor, added that his parish uses the former school building for religious education, youth activities and social events.

The same goes for Holy Ghost Parish in Gates, according to Father Alexander H. Bradshaw, pastor. The parish, which lost its Catholic school in 1993, still uses the building for coffee hours and other social activities. And like OLPH and St. Salome's, the former school now doubles as a day-care center. In Holy Ghost's case, the center provides day-care services for children and elderly adults who are clients of the Generations program.

Although Monroe County parishes generally rent out all or part of their former school buildings, Auburn's St. Hyacinth Parish, which lost its school program in 1990, covers the cost of maintaining the building through such activities as Catholic Youth Organization basketball fees and monies collected from other events, according to Father Robert Grzybowski, OFM Conv.

The parish also uses the building for religious-education classes, meetings and various other activities, he said.

Regardless of what uses to which they put the old school buildings now, most interviewed pastors agreed that these school buildings continue to be an asset to the life of their respective parishes. Although some of the pastors acknowledged that keeping a tenant in the building is the only way their parishes can continue to own their old schools, none of the pastors seemed inclined to sell their former schools.

"It's an investment that the parish has done over the years," mused Father Lioi of St. Anne's former building. "It can be used in different ways depending on the times."

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