

DIOCESAN NEWS

Priest wins raffle, gives jackpot to two schools

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Two diocesan elementary schools — St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport, and Holy Family in Rochester — are each \$15,000 richer thanks to the luck of Father Paul G. Wohlrab, a retired diocesan priest.

Father Wohlrab purchased two \$100 tickets in McQuaid Jesuit High School's annual car raffle, held Nov. 17. The grand prize was a Corvette convertible or \$30,000, and one of Father Wohlrab's tickets was a winner.

Father Wohlrab has lived at St. John the Evangelist Church rectory since 1985, when he retired as pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Rochester.

In gratitude to the parish he now calls home, and to his alma mater, Holy Family, Father Wohlrab decided to split the winnings between the two

schools.

"It was a strange winning," Father Wohlrab joked. "I'm out \$200, but I think the schools are profiting."

Indeed, both schools' principals plan to put their unexpected cash infusion to good use.

Christopher Meagher, principal of St. John's, which houses 225 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth, said he wants to use the money to start an endowment fund and to provide tuition assistance. He added that he was overwhelmed by Father Wohlrab's generosity.

"I was shocked," Meagher commented. "It was very nice of him to do that."

Holy Family's principal, Sister Lorraine Burns, SSND, also plans to start an endowment fund with her school's share of the prize. Over time, income earned from the fund may go to finance school field trips, textbooks and curriculum en-



Father Paul G. Wohlrab

hancement, she said.

She echoed Meagher's comments about Father Wohlrab's willingness to donate such a large prize to the schools.

"I think I don't know anyone who has \$30,000 and would just give it away," she said.

Father Wohlrab said he saw his donation to Holy Family as simply a way to pay back the school for inspiring him to become a priest.

"I got a good education from both my home, and the priests and the Sisters of Notre Dame that taught (at Holy Family)," he commented.

In addition to volunteer work with senior citizens and hospital patients, Father Wohlrab teaches a weekly religious education class to Holy Family's third-graders.

"The kids just love him," Sister Burns said. "He's a super person, even without the \$15,000."

Welfare crisis both economic, moral, says Bethany director

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

FAIRPORT — Giving a new twist to a mantra of Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, Donna Ecker summed up what she saw as the real crisis in the nation's welfare system.

"It's not the economy, stupid," she said. "It's not moral decline, stupid. It's not either/or, it's both/and."

Ecker, co-director of Rochester's Bethany House, a Catholic Worker home for women and children, was one of four speakers to address about 150 people at "A Pre-Advent Reflection on Welfare" Nov. 29, at Fairport's Church of the Assumption.

The evening was offered as an opportunity for Catholics to hear about what does and doesn't work in welfare, and how Catholics should respond to the current debate. It was co-sponsored by the social ministry committees of three parishes: Assumption, St. Jerome's in East Rochester, and St. Joseph's in Penfield.

All the speakers agreed the welfare system needs fixing, but they urged thoughtfulness in forming opinions on how best to fix it.

Ecker noted that Catholics cannot ignore the welfare debate since their own faith calls them to exercise a special concern for the poor. More than 400 verses

in the Bible deal directly with God's concern for the poor and his wish that people help them, she noted.

"(The church) must remind those who have much that there are brothers in Christ who have not," she said.

In particular, Ecker wanted her listeners to know that most people on welfare are children. She cited a statistic: 15 million U.S. citizens under the age of 18 live below the poverty level. Any reforms in the system must take into account the fate of such children, she observed.

Ecker also stressed that many voters who have never been on welfare nonetheless benefit from government largess through such programs as Medicare and unemployment insurance. Hence, middle- and even upper-class voters drink at the same government trough as the poor who are often seen as the sole beneficiaries of government aid.

"It's not them versus us," she said. At the same time that it reminds the wealthy to aid the poor, the church must preach responsibility to the poor, Ecker said. She noted that the church must counsel teens who become pregnant — and the fathers who often abandon them — against such unthinking behavior.

Mary Jo Marshall, a legal assistant with Monroe County Department of Social Services, also urged the church to take a stronger stand on teenage sexual relations.

"We've got to teach these kids abstinence," Marshall said later in an interview.

During her speech, Marshall also praised Monroe County's policy of recording the images of welfare recipients' fingerprints, implemented earlier this year. The county inaugurated the policy in an attempt to stop welfare fraud by recipients who had posed in the past

as two or more people.

But fingerprint-imaging was severely criticized by many activists, including several members of the Catholic Worker community, who saw it as degrading to the poor. Marshall, however, told her listeners that so-called "double-dippers" wind up taking away money from recipients who have a legal right to assistance.



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