

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Woman's life, will show love for St. Mary's, Canandaigua

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

When her pastor at St. Mary's Parish in Canandaigua wanted her to teach school, Gertrude Schmitt assented. Years later he decided she should be parish secretary.

"And she of course said, 'Yes, Father,'" recalled Father Joseph A. Hart, a long-time friend. "It was a very different era. Essentially she gave her whole life to the church, and she was very dedicated, extremely capable."

Schmitt died at the age of 91 in March 1994. She had served as secretary for 16 years, after about as many years as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher.

Her ministry at the parish, however, continues through \$59,000 bequests each to St. Mary's Church and School. Those bequests were recently announced after her will was settled.

Father Walter Wainwright, the parish's pastor, said that church and school administrators agreed to invest most of the bequest. Interest will support a scholarship fund for students and also church projects unspecified at this time.

Any use, he said, "will be very much following her sentiments."

Schmitt was probably the only lay teacher at St. Mary's when she taught there, according to Sister Mary Benedicta Redmond, SSJ, who taught fifth grade at the school beginning in 1935. Her students "were well-trained and very good," recalled Sister Redmond, who has lived at St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary in Pittsford since the convent at St. Mary's closed in November.

According to friends, Schmitt was the last survivor of five daughters of Henry

and Rose Schmitt, German immigrants who worked several area farms.

She was "a great lover of history and care of the church," according to Father Wainwright.

She and her sister Marie were active in the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

"They were at every fire to make sure the people were taken care of," noted Father Hart, who served as associate pastor of St. Mary's in 1972, but who remained in touch with Schmitt over the years.

In addition, Schmitt administered the cemetery and kept better track of plots than did the map.

"They always got in trouble when they didn't listen to her," Father Hart recalled.

The foreign missions she supported were also designated in her will, as was a nephew, Father Hart said.

The will also instructed that one of her prized antique possessions, a historic painting that once hung in the church, be given to the Granger Homestead in Canandaigua. The painting, of Our Lady of the Assumption, had belonged to the family of Gideon Granger (postmaster general under Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison). Schmitt acquired and repaired it when it was being discarded during a church renovation.

Although she had been engaged, Schmitt lived at her parents' home caring for her father, and never married.

When the man to whom she had been engaged later died, she went to the bank and her savings deposit box and took out the engagement ring she'd kept there for many years, Father Hart recalled.

"She sold it and used it for Masses for his intention," the priest recalled. "She was a very selfless kind of lady. She very much had a heart of gold."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## School spirit overflows

Students at St. Margaret Mary School in Rochester kicked off a monthlong celebration of Catholic schools with a school Mass and spirit assembly Feb. 2. Above, second-graders join the whole school in singing the song "YMCA" by the musical group, The Village People. Right, first-grade student Daryl Scott leads his classmates in a class cheer. Catholic Schools Week officially runs Feb. 11-17. Events at diocesan Catholic schools are listed in this week's calendar on Page 8.



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