

DIOCESAN NEWS

Ex-priest starts ecumenical church

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

A former Catholic priest plans to start a church called "St. Anthony's Ecumenical Catholic Church" in his Waterloo home.

But he notes that he and his church are not affiliated with the Diocese of Rochester nor with the Roman Catholic Church.

A Binghamton native, Thomas J. Sterner was a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse for 20 years before he left the church in 1994.

He said that he left because he could no longer accept church teachings on the reservation of priestly ordination to celibate males, the role of women, divorce, artificial birth control and gays.

"I just got to the point in my mind where I just couldn't think one way and preach the other way and believe it," Sterner said in a telephone interview.

Father J. Robert Yeazel, vicar for priests for the Diocese of Syracuse, confirmed that Sterner had voluntarily resigned as a diocesan priest.

After resigning, Sterner learned through friends of the California-based Ecumenical Catholic Church and decided to join it, he said. About 30 ECC congregations exist in the eastern United

States, including ones in Plattsburgh and New York City, Sterner added.

The ECC performs all seven sacraments and celebrates liturgies in the Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran traditions, Sterner claimed. Membership and ordained ministries are open to all Christians regardless of sexual orientation and marital status, he said.

Father Kevin E. McKenna, chancellor and director of legal services for the Diocese of Rochester, said the diocese had no comment on the ECC, but stressed that it was not affiliated with the Catholic Church.

"We do not approve of it," Father McKenna said of the ECC's use of the word "Catholic" in its title.

Sterner emphasized that the word "catholic" in his church's title was not meant to refer to the Roman church, but reflects the ECC's universality and acceptance of anyone.

Sterner pointed out that his church will probably appeal to Christians disenchanted with their own churches but who wish to worship in the styles to which they are accustomed. He added that he is not setting up his church in purposeful opposition to area Catholic churches.

"I'm not here to steal anybody's parishioners," Sterner said. "There are many avenues to Christ."

He noted that he had already baptized the infant grandson of an area woman who was unable to have the child baptized in the Catholic Church.

When contacted for comment, the woman, who asked to remain anonymous, said that her son, who is the child's father, had refused to commit to raising the child Catholic when asked to do so by parish priests in both his hometown in New Hampshire and in a parish near Waterloo. Hence, she sought out Sterner, who subsequently baptized the baby.

Because the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the sacrament of baptism as celebrated by many other Christian denominations, Father McKenna said the child would not have to be re-baptized in the Catholic Church should he seek to become a Catholic someday.

"All things being equal, it would be a valid baptism," Father McKenna said of the infant's reception of the sacrament.

The woman said that her son had become alienated from the Catholic Church during his youth, and that she hoped that he might feel encouraged to return to the church if his baby was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

But since he was unable to obtain baptism for his son in the Roman Catholic Church, that prospect now seems unlikely, she said.

Pair publishes Web magazine

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

Editor and lawyer John F. Wagner Jr. has placed himself in an interesting situation.

A committed advocate for family, he and his wife Helen Ann launched their own electronic magazine (or "e-zine") called *Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly* June 2.

Since then, he acknowledged, "My family's after me sometimes for the amount of time I spend (on the weekly)."

But that should decrease as the e-zine — sent over the Internet — becomes more well-known and receives more submissions, he said.

Lately, the Holy Rosary Church parishioner sandwiches in 10-15 hours a week on the magazine — between work as a senior editor at Thomson Legal Publishing and time with his wife and their six children, 4 to 14.

Saturday nights he's at the computer, compiling a fresh issue for Sunday.

Each edition of the e-zine opens with family-oriented quotations. The July 14 edition, for example, quoted Pope John Paul II's 1994 "Letter to Families."

"The family is the center and the heart of the civilization of love."

The e-zine offers articles by the Wagners, their friends and other family advocates in places from Rochester to Maryland; articles from the Rockford Files, created by the Rockford Institute in Illinois, a 20-year-old, not-for-profit think tank; official church documents; and access to back issues. All the articles deal with topics that affect families in general and Catholic families in particular. The e-zine also reprints material from such publications as *Lay Witness*, magazine of Catholics United for the Faith.

"We're almost like a *Reader's Digest* kind of thing," Wagner said.

While there are numerous other Catholic ventures on the Internet, he said, the Wagners' project is meant to be an interactive publication written from the perspective of the family — the "domestic church."

Readers may access complete texts of documents, official Catholic pronouncements and other resources to help explain church beliefs and practices.

"If I enable someone by one mouse click to open to something that explains all about the rosary, it's something you can't do in print," Wagner said.

In early July the e-zine was temporarily not accessible. Wagner later learned his Internet service, Vivanet, had been undergoing a major system upgrade. The changes occurred while he was away on vacation.

"Hopefully that's all behind us now," he said. He said that according to a counter incorporated into the e-zine, it is read 70 to 90 times a week.

The Wagners' main costs are \$19 monthly for Vivanet, "and whatever blood, sweat and tears we put into it," Wagner said, referring to it as their "little apostolate."

The couple also had produced their own newsletter on family issues in the 1980s while they lived in St. Louis, Mo., he said.

"We're not into this for a buck. We're in it for the apostolic nature," Wagner said.

The e-zine is found on the World Wide Web by using the Internet address <http://www.vivanet.com/~wagner/cfp/hum>. Wagner welcomes e-mail at fwagner@vivanet.com. The Wagners also answer the phone, at 716/254-1811.

Human resource head set course early in life

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Many high school students dream of careers in such fields as medicine, law, teaching, perhaps even music or the theater.

But Patrice Beadle knew early on she was heading in a different direction.

"I knew I wanted a position where I could really be a resource to the whole organization and really demonstrate leadership," Beadle recalled. "I found (in college) that management was a way to do that."

And, she added, she discovered that the area of management that best suited her was human resources.

On July 18, Beadle became director of human resources for the Diocese of Rochester. She replaced Mary Kessler, who resigned the position to move to California.

Beadle comes to the pastoral center after serving as director of human resources for the Genesee Memorial Hospital in Batavia since 1989. Previous to that, she worked in human resources at Buffalo General Hospital and National Ambulance in Rochester.

She saw in the diocesan position an opportunity for growth and a stable environment — something she did not see in the health-care field in which she had worked.

"The health-care environment is pretty unstable right now," she acknowledged, noting, for example, that Genesee Memorial Hospital and St. Jerome's Hospital in Batavia were talking about the possibility of merging.

Moreover, Beadle, who converted to Catholicism while in college, liked the idea of working for the church.

"I had been pursuing other opportunities, but this had all the elements I wanted," Beadle said. Those elements, she explained, include the sense of faith, mission and values that guide diocesan operations.

She was especially impressed by the sense of collaboration in the diocese — as evidenced by the interview process for the position.

That process involved a search team that included members of the diocesan personnel commission, clergy and pastoral office staff.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Upon returning home from her new position as director of human resources for the Diocese of Rochester, Patrice Beadle is greeted by a few of the animals residing at her farm in Holly.

"That demonstrated to me a commitment to collaboration and having people who are going to be significantly impacted by the decision involved," she observed.

As human resources director, Beadle will oversee the recruitment and placement of all diocesan personnel — including priests, deacons, chaplains and pastoral center employees. She will also administer benefits programs for school and parish personnel.

One of the challenges she sees for the diocese is making better use of technology — such as computers — to promote communication between the pastoral center and parishes.

In the coming months, she also hopes to get out to parishes to help determine what added services she can provide. Those services might come, for example, in the form of workshops to help pastors and administrators develop their management skills.

Beadle has to make use of management skills in her personal life. She resides on

a farm in Holly, juggling work with raising five children, caring for — currently — eight cocker spaniels and an assortment of farm animals, and living next door to the sawmill her husband operates.

She noted that her home life is one reason she doesn't take advantage of "dress down" days at the pastoral center.

"I have work clothes, and I have barn stuff," she laughed.

Corrections

Catherine de Hueck Doherty established Friendship House, not Freedom House, in New York City, as mentioned in the Aug. 15 edition of the *Catholic Courier* ("Old Russian lady leaves rich spiritual legacy").

The telephone number for the Borromeo Prayer Center is 716/663-5856.

The *Courier* regrets the errors.