

DIOCESAN NEWS

Memorial to pay tribute to Great Famine victims

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Division 7 of the Ancient Order of Hibernians is raising funds for a memorial to victims of the Great Famine in Ireland, according to William J. Lawler, the memorial's coordinator.

Historians estimate between two and three million people perished during the famine, which lasted from 1845 to 1850. Millions of others escaped it by emigrating from Ireland to the United States, Great Britain and other nations.

The black granite memorial will be located on the St. John Fisher College campus, and will stand 5 feet high, Lawler said. The project is costing the Hibernians \$10,000, about one-quarter of which has already been raised, he said. The AOH, a Catholic Irish organization, wanted to erect the memorial as a way to pay tribute to those who suffered and died during years remembered as some of the worst in Irish history, he said.

"Every Irish family was touched by the famine," Lawler said. "We ended up flourishing in this land because of something so tragic."

The memorial will include the inscription, "To Their Memory — Ours Is Not To Reason Why, Or To Point Fingers At Those Responsible. They Are Long Gone And Had To Atone To The Almighty For Their Sins."

Lawler noted that those words allude to the fact that many in Ireland held the British government and many landlords in Ireland responsible for much of the starvation caused when a blight hit the potato crop on which the Irish peasantry subsisted.

"Some people feel that it was genocide," Lawler said. But he added the Hibernians simply want to honor the dead through the memorial.

Lawler's contention that the Great Famine, or Great Hunger as it is often called in Ireland, could be considered genocide is somewhat buttressed by the book *Paddy's Lament: Ireland 1846 to 1847; Prelude to Hatred*. Written by Thomas Gal-

lagher in 1982, *Paddy's Lament* paints a horrendous picture of English rule of Ireland during the famine, a rule whose effects Gallagher blamed for much of Ireland's misery at the time.

Gallagher noted that the famine began when a blight struck the potato crop, blackening its leaves and causing tubers in the ground to rot. A similar blight struck potato crops in the United States in 1843, and throughout Europe in 1846-1847. However, Ireland, unlike such nations as France and Russia, starved because it was forced to export the foods that other nations turned to when their potato crops failed.

"The potato had become the crucial food because all other food produced in Ireland was destined under Britain's economic scheme to be eaten elsewhere," he wrote.

Although some historians have called Ireland's Great Hunger tantamount to genocide, Gallagher sees it more as a matter of

criminal neglect rather than intentional murder.

"There is no historical evidence implicating the British government in a conspiracy to exterminate the population of Ireland," Gallagher wrote, "but many government officials, as well as those advising them, looked upon the famine as a God-sent solution to the so-called Irish question."

Gallagher's book pointed out that newspaper editorial writers, members of Great Britain's parliament, and British and Irish Protestant church leaders in speeches and writings continually attacked the Catholic Irish throughout the Great Hunger, and, in some cases, openly welcomed the fact that the famine was clearing Ireland of the Catholic peasantry.

Regardless of how people today see the Great Hunger, Lawler said he hoped the memorial would inspire people to study that era.

"We encourage people to conduct their own research about it," he said.

For information on the famine memorial, call 716/544-8052.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

No more guns

More than two dozen people gathered outside the Minute Man Gun Shop on Thurston Road, Rochester, March 5 to hold a prayer service and to protest attempts to sell guns at the shop. Father Robert Werth, pastor of the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, talks to a fellow protester after the service.

Fisher receives \$2 million bequest

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The largest bequest in St. John Fisher College's history will enable the college to significantly expand its emphasis on community service.

Fisher president Katherine E. Keough recently announced the establishment of the college's Service Scholarship Program. This initiative was made possible through a \$2 million bequest from the estate of Maurice R. Forman, former president of B. Forman Company, who was a 30-year member of St. John Fisher's board of trustees.

Keough's announcement was made at a Feb. 28 luncheon at the college. The event was attended by 120 high-school seniors who are nominees for the scholarship program. Several community leaders, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark and U.S. Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Rochester, also took part.

"This scholarship builds on Fisher's tradition of service to the community," said William Ouweleen, St. John Fisher vice president and director of development. "It speaks to the very core of the purpose of the founding of this college."

Ouweleen added that the service scholarship is designed to attract "students whose value system has already informed them of their role in serving others. We're

looking for students who have the heart to serve others, and the guts to act on their values."

The scholarship is available to high-school seniors who have an extensive record of volunteer activities and have been nominated for the award by community leaders.

The Service Scholarship Program was originally announced by the college last November. Ouweleen said that the initial recipients will be determined by March 15.

Scholarships will be awarded to 36 freshmen this coming fall. Funding per student is expected to total approximately \$6,000 annually and cover one-third of the students' tuition, fees, room and board. The program will provide scholarships for 36 freshmen in each subsequent year as well.

In order to continue receiving the scholarship money over a four-year period, students must maintain good academic standing and also remain active in community service efforts. Ouweleen said that students must complete 50 hours of community service their first semester, 80 hours their second semester and 100 hours each subsequent semester. This service commitment will be meshed with a newly developed four-year curriculum in which students can minor in service leadership.

Ouweleen noted that the college is already making arrangements to place students in service roles with Catholic Charities and the Wegman Inner City Voucher Program. He added that other community programs, also, are invited to contact the college's Campus Ministry office to request placement of service scholars.

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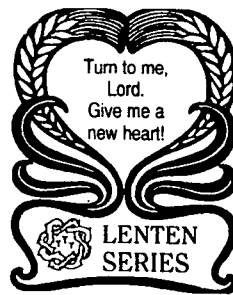
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