

Ministers to migrants
meet in Shortsville
- Page 3



Teens share lessons
on forgiveness
- Pages 6-7



Gates' St. Jude Parish
continues growth
- Page 12



Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 108 NO. 29 ■ THURSDAY, May 1, 1997 ■ 75¢ ■ 12 PAGES

Strategic Planning



Process requires parish cooperation

To most people in the Diocese of Rochester, "strategic planning" may still be a largely unfamiliar term.

"The parishes probably don't have a very clear idea," acknowledged William Pickett, diocesan director of planning.

For the most part, Pickett said, only a limited amount of diocesan Catholics have been involved thus far in the strategic planning process that began in 1996. Over the next few years, though, the effects of strategic planning will be felt throughout parish communities across the diocese.

As issues loom regarding the staffing, geographic pairing and even existence of several faith communities, Bishop Matthew H. Clark is urging parishioners to increase their awareness and involvement.

"We have to discipline ourselves to the fact that we certainly cannot carry on life as before," Bishop Clark said. "All of this activity takes place not by whim or arbitrary judgment, but in response to rapidly changing realities which impact us. Doing nothing means decay."

Bishop Clark would not rule out the possibility of church buildings closing down.

"I cannot guarantee you will have your priest and your church building to the degree you've always had it. I cannot make that promise," Bishop Clark said.

The strategic planning process, announced in April 1996, is a system through which groups of parishes will meet between now and the year 2000 to plan their collective futures. This process can include the sharing of buildings, staffs and priests.

Bishop Clark noted that a declining availability of diocesan priests

has been the chief factor in the timing of this process.

"The changing number of priests certainly calls us to make adjustments," he said.

Mary Ann Sloand, a parishioner at Church of the Resurrection in Fairport already senses that her parish will be without a resident priest within a few years. Father Louis Vasile is the current pastor, yet Sloand anticipates that her five-church group of parishes will eventually adopt a model that contains fewer than five priests.

"The reality is right there in front of us. The chance of our retaining a priest on our own is very small," said Sloand, who represented her parish at a regional meeting in March to review diocesan proposals. Church of the Resurrection is due to begin its first phase of planning in 1998.

The advent of strategic planning has also led to a rise in short-term priest assignments, noted Father Robert Ring, diocesan director of priest personnel.

"When there's better than a 50 percent chance that there's going to be a reconfiguration, we appoint a temporary administrator," Father Ring said. "This precludes giving a signal to the parish, as well as the priest in question, that things will remain status quo for six years."

Father Ring said that this practice applies especially to smaller parishes. Two examples are St. Patrick's/St. Bernard's in Moravia and Scipio Center, along with St. Anthony's Church in Groton. In both instances, the pastor is retiring in June and being replaced by a temporary administrator.

Continued on page 10

Story by Mike Latona • Photo illustration by Kim Parks and Matthew Scott