

DIOCESAN NEWS

Diocese prepares to 'Open Wide the Doors'

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

Some parishioners intent on attending Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral and St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan are stopped in their tracks — literally.

Both churches have doors that are closed and "sealed."

As dioceses prepare for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, with special homilies, workshops and other programs, the sealed doors are the most concrete reminder of what's to come.

Closed since Advent last year, these doors won't be opened again until Christmas Eve this year. That night, Sacred Heart Cathedral and St. Michael's in Penn Yan will join the pope in a symbolic gesture to "Open Wide the Doors to Christ" and the Jubilee Year 2000 celebration.

The pope will tap three times on the Holy Year Door in St. Peter's Basilica and make the traditional proclamation: "Open unto me the gates of justice."

The pope has declared the Jubilee as the period from Christmas Eve to Jan. 6, 2001, the feast of the Epiphany.

"I think, number one, we are sort of in union. People watching the pope visit here, saw him seal the doors in St. Louis," Father Thomas Mull, Sacred Heart's pastor, said. The archdiocese waited until the pope himself could seal cathedral basilica doors Jan.

27. "The pope spoke of our need to open hearts to reconciliation and the presence of the Lord," Father Mull said. "It's sort of a dramatic thing to come up to a locked, closed door. It's a constant reminder we are supposed to be getting ready."

One set of Rochester's front cathedral doors have been locked, with a sign of explanation posted; St. Michael's foyer doors display a 4-foot painting across them made by a parishioner, Linda Lefko.

Parishioners will learn more this year about the Jubilee, said Father Brian Cool, St. Michael's co-administrator. And when the doors are opened, he added, "It may say to people, 'This is a new beginning here and let's treat it as such. Let's find Christ differently in our lives.'"

Various programs are planned in the diocese to help prepare for the jubilee:

- Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the Catholic Charities board and Public Policy Committee will convene public meetings in the Finger Lakes, Monroe County and the Southern Tier, March 20, April 20 and May 22, respectively. People may contribute to public policy advocacy discussions at them, as well as to discussion of parish social ministry, using the U.S. bishops' 1994 justice statement, "Communities of Salt and Light" as a springboard. The statement examines principles of parish social mission.



- The Liturgy Office is issuing parishes Lenten and Easter packets of materials including reflection on such Jubilee and public policy concerns. "The jubilee themes of rest, liberation, restoration, reconciliation, caring for people on the margins of life, and more fully becoming God's People are prominent in the Lent readings," the materials note.

- The Department of Evangelization and Catechesis has begun training leaders to develop parish groups and will itself offer groups to study the U.S. bishops' document, "Go and Make Disciples" in keeping with the Jubilee's reconciliation theme.

- The diocese is studying forgiving debts for the Jubilee. It would target parishes with legitimate needs that are overburdened by debts owed for employee benefits and other programs the diocese runs on their behalf, as well as debts owed the Monroe County Catholic school system, according to Jim Rinefierd, chief financial officer.

- Workshops such as a Feb. 21 single adults' retreat at the Sisters of St. Joseph

Motherhouse will focus on the Jubilee. That day, Sister Maureen Finn, SSJ, will translate from a book by Brazilian Benedictine Father Marcelo Barros.

All Southern Tier ministry convenings this year will focus on the Jubilee.

- St. Stephen's Church in Geneva will distribute a Catholic Update insert and Millennium Monthly inserts from St. Anthony Messenger Press to help promote key themes, and has asked St. Francis deSales Church to do likewise. A St. Bernard's on the Road presentation April 11 and Lenten Mission March 13-18 will also address Jubilee themes.

- A simultaneous liturgy will ring in the New Year Friday, Dec. 31, in the cathedral and parishes throughout the diocese. The Liturgy Office will send out liturgy suggestions for those Masses.

- A hymn contest is planned for a processional hymn to be used in those services, and an evening hymn for the 12 regional celebrations of Evening Prayer the bishop will preside at during the year 2000. The hymn competition is by invitation only.

Hospitals cutting 350 positions

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Facing a loss of \$30 million in operating revenue, Unity Health System — an alliance of St. Mary's and Park Ridge hospitals — is cutting 350 full-time positions, according to Stewart Putnam, Unity's executive vice president and St. Mary's president.

In an announcement Jan. 29, Unity said the job cuts would be completed by the end of February. In a Feb. 11 telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Putnam said most of the cuts would come in areas where the two hospitals have duplicate services such as the management, radiology, financial and physical therapy departments. Other areas slated for cuts are maintenance, food service and purchasing, he said.

Unity currently employs 2,300 people, Putnam said, adding that the two hospitals will probably lose an equal number of positions during the job-cutting process. Employees let go during these cuts will be eligible for severance pay, he said.

Putnam said the cuts would come in four ways: Some employees will be let go permanently; current job vacancies will not be filled; some employees will move to new jobs within the Unity system; and some full-time positions will become part-time.

Because departments are still working out who will be let go permanently, he could not specify how many employees would actually lose their jobs, he said.

The cuts are expected to save Unity \$12.2 million a year, Putnam said. They come on top of previous cuts of 200 full-time positions, a process begun when the two hospitals allied in 1997, Putnam noted. Employees at both hospitals have known that more cuts were coming down the pike, he added.

"This isn't anything that wasn't planned or that people weren't aware of," he said.

Explaining the reasoning behind the cuts, Putnam pointed out that from 1997 to 1998, Unity experienced a 24 percent drop in inpatient admissions, most notably in medical surgery, an area with a high reimbursement rate from insurers, he said.

Outpatient care, on the other hand, has increased more than 6 percent since the alliance began, he said, noting that outpatient care tends to have higher fixed costs than inpatient care. He added that 60 percent of Unity's patient base now is outpa-

tient, a dramatic shift from less than a decade ago when inpatients constituted that same percentage of admissions. Putnam added that fees paid to consultants hired during the process to forge the alliance exceeded what Unity had originally expected to pay.

Another financial challenge facing Unity comes in the decrease in recent years of reimbursement rates paid by Medicaid, Medicare and private insurers, Putnam said. Such decreases amounted to a \$5 million revenue loss for Unity from 1997 to 1998, he said. He added that while all area hospitals have been affected by such reimbursement rate decreases, Unity was particularly hard-hit because 70 percent of Unity's patients are on Medicaid or Medicare.

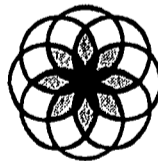


Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Talent takes center stage

Fifth-grader Kyla Dickey, 10, plays her bass clarinet during a talent show celebrating Catholic Schools Week Feb. 11 at St. Mary's School, Canandaigua. Sixty-seven children in grades K-8 participated in the show, which included comedy routines and a helmeted "Denver Bronco" playing Beethoven on the piano.

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