

## CONTINUED...

## Retired priests

Continued from page one

and five retirees in the four churches comprising the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community.

The total has shrunk to two full-time priests while Father Davis is now the lone retiree, helping out at all four churches. He is also spiritual director and chaplain for a number of local organizations.

"Without him, the picture would be drastically changed down here," remarked Father Michael Conboy, the cluster's pastor.

Father Davis said he feels moved to do whatever possible to shorten Father Conboy's list of responsibilities.

"He's under pressure, and you're conscious of that," Father Davis said.

## The right time to retire?

In the Rochester Diocese, the minimum age when a priest becomes eligible to retire with full benefits, barring health reasons, is 67 years old. He is required to submit his resignation by the age of 75, in accordance with Canon 538 of the revised Code of Canon Law.

Father Robert Ring, diocesan director of priest personnel, said that retired priests have total control over their schedules.

"They certainly aren't obliged, in any way, to take on certain jobs," Father Ring said. "Retirement means having choices about what you want to do."

Father Ring said that age 70 is "customary" for retirement in the Rochester Diocese. That age, he added, is common in many other U.S. dioceses.

Yet Father James Doyle, who's retiring from St. Rose of Lima Parish this June after 30 years as pastor, is 75 years old. If not for canon law, he said, he probably would have opted to continue at St. Rose. Father Davis in Corning, on the other hand, said he never considered delaying retirement into his mid-70s.

"I'll tell you, when it came to 70 I was ready," Father Davis said.

Very few diocesan priests, in fact, retire past age 70. Of the nearly 40 diocesan priests in the 70-75 age range as of June 30, only four will not yet be retired.

A handful of diocesan priests over age 75 have maintained parish leadership positions, such as Father Albert Shamoni, 83, administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel in Fleming; and Fathers Charles and Dominic Mockevicius, 81 and 76 respectively, co-administrators of St. George Church in Rochester. However, Grocki explained,



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Father Robert Kanka visits with Mercycare Health Facility resident Dominic Mauro in Hornell Feb. 26.

these priests are officially retired and only remain in administration because their parishes are comparatively small.

## Meetings, no thanks!

Most retired priests, Father Ring said, seemingly can't wait to leave their administrative duties behind.

"Many of them count the days until their last meeting," Father Ring said.

Father Davis said that while recently chatting with members of a parish committee, he was invited to drop in on their meetings.

"They said, 'Don't ever hesitate to join us.' I said, 'No, that's okay,'" Father Davis remarked with a chuckle.

Father Ring explained that retired pastors are justified in feeling this way, pointing out that retirement occurs much earlier in many other professions.

"It makes you wonder why you should be carrying all the burdens of your responsibility into your 70s," Father Ring said.

On the other hand, Father Doyle said he is going to miss being in a leadership role.

"Administration didn't bother me. I rather liked it," Father Doyle said.

Which goes to show, Father Kanka said, that each priest has his own unique circumstances regarding retirement.

"I don't know of any two retirements that are quite the same," Father Kanka said.

Father John Rosse was only too happy to take a 2½-month vacation this winter following his 1998 retirement from Greece's Holy Name of Jesus Church. With golf clubs in tow, Father Rosse visited Puerto Rico as well as Florida, where he stayed with his sister and another retired diocesan

priest, Father John Hempel.

"These are people who had invited me down in the past, but I never had the time," said Father Rosse, 70.

Although he misses his former Holy Name parishioners, Father Rosse said he relished the chance to leave the following message on his answering machine before heading south: "Hello, this is Father Jack Rosse. I'll be out of town until mid-March enjoying warmer weather."

Father John Hedges said that a lengthy trip can also help a priest transition into retirement. Upon retiring

in 1988 after 10 years as pastor of St. Helen's Church in Gates, he went to Italy for six weeks.

"When I came back, I didn't know where St. Helen's was. You need that separation," said Father Hedges, 81.

## Moving on

Separating from one's former parish is indeed a major life change, Grocki noted.

"It can be a difficult transition for some. For others, it's a relief," she said.

Grocki said that priests can move into a private residence, or into a rectory where they generally exchange ministerial duties for their lodging. Father Ring noted his office conducts workshops so that retiring priests can prepare for these changes.

Father Hedges pointed out that priests are so accustomed to taking parish assignments, the freedom of retirement can be a jarring change.

"Some guys have to adjust to not being told where to go," Father Hedges said.

A handful of priests, Father Ring said, continue living in the rectory of the parish they retire from, such as Father Joseph McDonnell, 94, of St. Michael's Church in Newark. He has remained pastor emeritus there since his 1975 retirement.

But the norm, Father Ring said, is for retiring pastors to move. This, he explained, cuts down the odds of friction between the retiring pastor and his replacement.

"It would be difficult to be living in the same place and see things done differently," Father Ring said.

"You could get people going to him for advice rather than the (new) pastor," Grocki added.

Father Hedges mentioned a saying of the late Father Raymond Heisel: "When other people retire, they go home. When we retire, we lose a home."

Father Doyle, upon his retirement from St. Rose Parish, hopes to remain in the Lima area and continue his volunteer duty with the local fire police.

"It's been my home. You make a lot of friends," he said.

But much as Father Doyle loves St. Rose, he never considered staying at the rectory.

"I've had situations like that and it's not very comfortable," Father Doyle remarked.

"I feel that the new pastor or pastoral administrator should be absolutely free and unhindered in parish operations."

Father Andrew Kalafsky, longtime pastor at St. Mary of the Lake in Watkins Glen, said he was ready to move on by the time his 1989 retirement rolled around.

"Fourteen years in one place, that's long enough," Father Kalafsky, 80, remarked.

On the other hand, Father Davis said he'd hoped to stay on in retirement at St. Patrick's in Corning — but was told by diocesan officials that "that was a no-no."

In his nine years of retirement, Father Davis said, he has resided at three rectories.

"It was relatively painless. I did make one request, that I could keep the same bed," Father Davis recalled. His wish, he said, was granted.

Most retired diocesan priests don't move too far away. Although some have taken up residence in such balmy climates as Florida and California, 76 of the current-90 retirees continue to live within the diocese.

Such is the case with Father Rosse, who enjoyed his recent vacation but was happy to return to his new rectory apartment at St. Margaret Mary Church in Irondequoit.

"Oh, I love it," he said.

## A lifetime of service

Wherever they go to live, retired priests generally don't hang up their alb and collar.

"It's true that they often end up getting in as much work time as they did previously," Father Ring said.

A good example is Father Kalafsky, who essentially acts as parochial vicar to Father Gerald O'Connor in three parishes: St. Catherine of Siena, Addison; St. Stanislaus, Bradford; and St. Joseph, Campbell.

Father Kalafsky recently drove from Bradford to Corning to meet Father Davis for lunch, but remarked that he doesn't see his friend as often as he'd like.

"He's so busy and I'm so busy, we don't have the time," Father Kalafsky laughed. "I think we work just as hard as we did before."

Asked if he's had any health difficulties, Father Kalafsky responded by striking a Charles Atlas pose, flexing his arms.

Meanwhile, Father Rosse assists at daily and weekend Masses at St. Margaret Mary in Irondequoit. He also attends to emergency calls and helps at St. Ann's Home.

Though he has an extended travel and golf ledger in retirement, Father Rosse said he will never stop carrying out his vocation.

"I couldn't do that. I would go crazy," he said.

Father Hedges noted that when he lived at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield from 1988 to 1998, early in his retirement, he once performed 20 weddings in one year.

Though he moved to McAuley Residences at the Sisters of Mercy motherhouse last year following heart bypass surgery and a stroke, Father Hedges carries on his priestly duty by celebrating daily Mass with Father Austin Hanna, 90, at his side.

"It was something I wanted to do," Father Hedges said. "The Mass has been a center of my life for 54 years."

## Haven't you suffered from hearing loss long enough?

Now a hearing aid that is so small and easy to use not even your closest friends will know you are wearing it.

- Easily inserted and out of sight
- Volume control automatically adjusts
- New sound processing allows you to hear speech better



with Starkeys

Sequel multi-channel digitally programmable hearing aid. Call today to schedule a complimentary hearing aid evaluation and demonstration of this new technology.

**Park Ridge Hearing Center**  
227-9920

1561 Long Pond Road • Suite 115 220 Alexander Street • Suite 508  
at the Park Ridge Professional Bldg. at the Genesee Hospital Professional Bldg.

## Statistical notes

- The Rochester Diocese has 158 active priests.
  - There are 90 retired diocesan priests, including 76 who reside within diocesan boundaries.
  - In approximately seven years, the number of retired diocesan priests will equal the number of active priests.
- (Information supplied by diocesan Office of Priest Personnel.)



## Our Lady of Angels Association

MARIAN HOUSE • NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, NY 14109  
1-800-575-9956 • Fax (716) 286-8155

## MASS ENROLLMENT CARDS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

Sympathy, Healing, Birthday, All Occasion and Perpetual Enrollments. Mother's Day and Father's Day Novena Cards available. Cards are appropriate for Living or Deceased.

Write or call for more information and a brochure of available cards.  
Rev. William J. O'Brien, C.M., Director

