

DIOCESAN NEWS

Senior facility to cut ribbon

Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, a joint project of the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses of Rochester, will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house on Wednesday, Aug. 4, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Brentland Woods, a senior citizen living facility.

The new facility, located at 3831 E. Henrietta Road, consists of 51 apartments with low-income rents of \$1,800 a month for seniors in need of assisted living. Apartments are still available.

Plans call for an expansion to 90 units. Brentland Woods sits on 27 acres of land behind St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

Dignitaries expected to attend include Bishop William G. Burrill of the Episcopal Diocese; Diane Rosinski of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and New York State Assemblyman Jerry Johnson.

The RUSH Corporation and the Episcopal Diocese provided start-up funds for the project, which was financed by the Bishop Sheen Foundation. CH Services, an affiliate of the Episcopal Church Home of Rochester, will provide supportive care for the facility's residents.

LeCesse Corporation was the general contractor for the project; Barkstrom & LaCroix, designer; and Passero Associates, engineers.

The Bishop Sheen foundation is a not-for-profit corporation which works to provide housing for low-to middle-income individuals and families.

The public is invited to the event, being billed as a "country fair."

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Priest rejoices at new African diocese

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Father Charles Erb, SVD, has touched many people, as evidenced by the well-wishers who waited their turns to chat with him at a family reunion July 25.

In terms of numbers, that's just the tip of the iceberg. He has also brought the Catholic faith to countless African natives through decades of service as a missionary priest.

Father Erb offers a simple explanation for his efforts in northwestern Ghana, an area where Catholicism had been virtually nonexistent.

"Because Jesus told the apostles to go into the whole world and preach all the Gospels," Father Erb said during his family's reunion picnic at Ellison Park.

Father Erb can take special pride in a recent, significant event in Yendi, the area of Ghana where he worked throughout the 1960s.

Yendi became a newly created diocese this year, and on July 10, Ghana native Bishop Vincent Boi-Nai, SVD, was ordained its first bishop.

Bishop Boi-Nai, in a letter dated June 2, credited Father Erb for Yendi's current status as a diocese.

"Confreres in Ghana are praising you for the good insight you had in preparing the groundwork for the newly created Yendi diocese," Bishop Boi-Nai wrote. "What you dreamt long ago has now materialized and we salute you for being a prophet of your times!"

According to Bishop Boi-Nai's letter, there are 3,850 Catholics in Yendi out of a total population of 450,000. The Catholics are spread over six parishes.

Father Erb, who will celebrate his 93rd birthday on Aug. 3, said that Catholicism was not quickly accepted by the largely Muslim population during his early years in Ghana.

"You have to have a lot of nerve. You have to have the idea of taking a risk. Then, if God wants it to happen, it will happen," Father Erb remarked.

Father Erb was ordained a priest in the Society of the Divine Word order in 1933. After teaching in the United States for nine years, Father Erb served from 1942-



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

Father Charles Erb receives a blessing from Father Elmer Heindl, a close friend, at the July 25 Erb family reunion in Rochester's Ellison Park.

46 as a U.S. Army chaplain in Alaska, the Aleutian Islands and Europe. He left the service as a major with a bronze star medal.

His first stint in Africa was at a teaching college in Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast) from 1947-53. He did publicity for the Divine Word Missionaries for the next seven years before returning to Ghana in 1960.

For the next 10 years he worked as superior and vicar delegate in the Yendi District. During that time he established a parish, a catechetical school and a vocational school.

"Where I got the money, I still don't know," Father Erb commented.

From 1970-76, he was executive director of the Department of Social Communications for the National Catholic Secretariat in Ghana. Though he retired in 1980, he performed nine more years of hospital chaplaincy in Ghana until returning to the United States in 1989.

Ghana was marred by an outbreak of tribal warfare in 1994, and several Catholic buildings were destroyed in the

fighting. But for the most part, Father Erb said, the Divine Word priests were accepted during his years there.

"We decided not to bring our culture to them, to leave their culture alone. The Africans were grateful," Father Erb said.

Father Erb is a native of Rochester's Holy Family Parish. His large family includes three other relatives who are currently priests (Father Francis Erb, Father Ray Quetchenbach, SVD, and Father Charles Francis Adams, OFM); two nuns (Sister Gertrude Erb, RSM, and Sister Helen Marie Yockel, SSPS); and a deacon (Deacon John Erb). All were on hand for the 75th annual Erb family picnic July 25.

Father Erb currently resides in Techny, Ill., home of the Divine Word Missionaries. He said he stays in touch with many of the order's priests with whom he toiled in Africa. He added that they, too, are rejoicing in the formulation of the Yendi Diocese.

"I'm not bragging for myself," Father Erb said. "Don't praise me too much. I always say it's my team — German priests, Polish priests, Dutch priests."

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