

DIOCESAN NEWS

SBI Albany marks 10-year affiliation

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

St. Bernard's Institute at Albany began with three courses — on the synoptic Gospels, pastoral counseling and contemporary moral theology.

Ten years and 65 graduates later, the extension site — which currently offers 15 courses a year — is going strong. It provides ongoing theological and pastoral education for Catholic clergy, religious and laity as well as the ecumenical community in the Diocese of Albany.

"SBI at Albany is very healthy," said Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, president of SBI. The program is an outgrowth and extension of Rochester's SBI, a graduate institute of theology and ministry studies.

SBI Albany holds classes at the Albany Diocese's pastoral center — but uses the Rochester SBI's charter. The charter allows it to grant degrees.

More than 10 years ago, Father Tom Powers and Sister Danielle Bonetti, CSJ, both of the Albany Diocese, "were buffaloed" as to how to set up a graduate-level program that offered degrees, the priest recalled. He wanted the program especially for priests and deacons; Sister Bonetti wanted it for catechists and other people in faith formation.

"We had a whole garden of problems. But we were gifted with stubbornness," said Father Powers, then head of continuing education for clergy.

He recalled that he and Bishop Matthew H. Clark were traveling together one day and the bishop offered to investigate the possibility of using St. Bernard's charter.

"He said, 'What's wrong with ours?'" Father Powers recalled. "I said, 'Nothing,'



Provided photo

Father Thomas Powers and Sister Danielle Bonetti, CSJ, pose at SBI Albany's 10th anniversary celebration.

And that's where it started. ... We had a ray of light on a charter."

He said he hadn't known much about St. Bernard's.

The resulting collaboration, Father Powers said, is like a bank whose main charter rests with headquarters and "whose branches can do about everything the main office can do."

"It's been a wonderful thing when you think of it, and shows the possibilities of growth all over the state," the priest said. "What you have there is tremendous."

SBI is unusual not only because it is one institution in two dioceses, he and Sister Schoelles noted, but also because it is an accredited institution for graduate theological studies in the Roman Catholic tradition that focuses on training laypeople (as well as deacons). It is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

St. Bernard's Institute was formed after St. Bernard's Seminary, one of the

first seminaries to open its doors to laity, closed in 1981. SBI signed a covenant with Colgate Rochester Divinity School to establish a graduate-level affiliation, shifting its mission to educating lay people. SBI shares a campus with the Divinity School, but is seeking a different location to accommodate the institute's growth.

SBI also runs courses in Syracuse and Horseheads, and has run some in Ithaca.

However, Sister Schoelles said, "We have a unique relationship with Albany. ... We have the same president, administrator, dean, programs, faculty, everything."

Sister Margery Halpin, RSM, is director of SBI Albany. The program supplements the two or three SBI Rochester faculty members who travel to teach in Albany with local and visiting adjunct professors. Students also attend SBI in Rochester.

This year six students received master of arts in theology degrees and two their master of divinity degrees — the first at Albany.

This fall Sister Nancy Hawkins, IHM, will join SBI's faculty as a full-time assistant professor of systematic theology; and Father John Colacino, of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, as a full-time assistant professor of theology studies, and administrator of the certification program for designated ministries.

White

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ther after an Aug. 15 Mass, two days after Mr. White died.

"Obviously he was sad. He said he was grateful for my prayers," Father Kacprzak said.

Catholic Church teaching states that although human life is a gift from God, and euthanasia is morally wrong, "One is never obliged to commence or to continue extraordinary painful, expensive or intrusive measures which offer little hope of benefit or prove burdensome to the patient and caregivers," diocesan officials noted.

In a brief Aug. 8 interview in his hospital room — during which he acknowledged his intention to die — Mr. White told the *atholic Courier*, "My body is worn out."

He had the most severe form of paralysis, and he was one of the longest-living paralyzed persons on a ventilator. The longest, according to some sources, is about 40 years. Long-term ventilator use by a paralyzed person leaves that person vulnerable to medical complications. Mr. White was physically deteriorating and losing function, the hospital noted.

Mr. White had first targeted Aug. 6 for ending his ventilator treatment, but his death was delayed a week as Relin looked into legal ramifications, at the hospital's request.

Relin said he informed hospital officials Aug. 12 there would be no criminal law violation if they disconnected the ventilator.

"They've talked to him extensively to counsel him and spent dozens of hours with him to talk about the decision," he told the

Courier. "They've told him extensively over the past month this is not a decision you have to make, we will continue to treat you."

Under New York law, he noted, a patient has the right to terminate treatment. "It is not a decision we are making or the hospital is making. It is a decision the patient is making."

Relin said several dozen people had called his office as it was reviewing the situation. They appeared evenly split, some saying the patient should have the right to make such a decision, and others saying Mr. White should have been stopped in his attempt to cease ventilator use.

The Center for Disability Rights fell into the latter category. Bruce Darling, the center's executive director, said his organization filed appeals for temporary injunctions Aug. 12 and 13. He had hoped for a one-week injunction so he could present Mr. White with options he believed might have changed his mind about dying.

Darling — who never met Mr. White — said his agency has no plans to sue the hospital, but he still felt that Strong Memorial could have sought more avenues to keep Mr. White alive. Sharing Darling's sentiment was Mr. White's close friend Mike McBride, who had known him for 25 years.

"Why was this guy's life suddenly not worth living, when he wasn't in a terminal situation?" said McBride, who had brought the matter to public attention by contacting local media beginning Aug. 3.

McBride and Father Anthony Mugavero,

pastor of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester, said they visited Mr. White Aug. 12 and 13. Though neither was pleased with Mr. White's decision, they realized he was not about to change his mind.

"It was sad because he was very much alert and very much alive," McBride said.

"I did the best I could to stay with him in his processing of this, always encouraging him to stay open and think of other possibilities," Father Mugavero said.

McBride said Mr. White's father, brother and sister also spent considerable time with him the week of his death. Mr. White's mother died less than two years ago.

D'Agostino said that arrangements for funeral services and burial would be determined by Mr. White's family. Father Mugavero added that he would not hold a memorial service at St. Bridget's unless he knew the family would approve of it.

Mr. White was raised Catholic but told the *Courier* Aug. 8 that he considered himself Christian, not a practicing Catholic. In recent years, he had become well-known to the St. Bridget's community through his fundraising efforts for the inner-city parish, selling T-shirts from his hospital bed.

"He was a tremendous fighter for life, a real inspiration," McBride said. "He was very concerned for others and would never talk about his condition. He had a great personality and a great sense of humor."

Contains reporting by Kathleen Schwar.

Obituary

Sister Mary Noel Woyciesjes, SSJ; longtime teacher

Sister Mary Noel Woyciesjes, SSJ, died July 18, 1999, in the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, after a short illness. She was 67.

Sister Mary Noel entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1949 from St. Francis de Sales Parish, Geneva. She had obtained a dispensation from the Ukrainian Eastern Rite, in which she was raised. She earned her baccalaureate degrees in education and history and her master's degree in ed-

ucation from Nazareth College.

Sister Mary Noel taught in diocesan elementary schools for 48 years: St. Joseph, Wayland (for 19 years); and also St. Stanislaus, Corpus Christi and St. Monica, Rochester; St. Francis de Sales, Geneva; and St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads.

Sister Mary Noel is survived by two brothers, John of Dundee, N.Y., and Joseph (Valerie) of Dallas, Texas; one sis-

Store awards help schools

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

Debbie Holmes is the kind of first-grade teacher who when teaching about fossils and dinosaurs has her students dig like paleontologists, but with toothpicks through a three-layer dessert searching for pieces of graham cracker.

She's the kind of teacher who drives across the state for a workshop and pays for it herself.

She's also one of at least five Catholic schoolteachers in the Rochester Diocese who received Wal-Mart/SAM's Club Teacher of the Year Program awards this year. Each received \$500 with the award, which recognizes outstanding teachers.

Holmes is a first-grade teacher at All Saints Academy, Corning. Also recognized were Kathy Sopko, physical education, St. Lawrence School, Greece; Theodore Mullen, earth science, physics, principles in engineering, DeSales High School, Geneva; Georgia Zappia, elementary-level English/communication, math, science and social studies, St. Michael School, Newark; and Barbara Bednar, second grade, of Holy Cross, Charlotte.

Each Wal-Mart or SAM's Club may give one such award a year. Store associates choose a winner from school officials' nominees and award the \$500, to be used in the classroom.

"That's the carrot," said Marilyn Zinn, principal of All Saints Academy. She noted that because of tight budgets, Catholic teachers often pay for expenses out of their own pockets.

"Our hands are always out in one way or another as a Catholic school," she said.

Holmes applied her grant toward a reading series for the entire first grade, Zinn said. The books can be read as a group or with partners, to supplement other materials and help increase comprehension skills and interest level, she said.

The school celebrated in an outdoor ceremony in May. Wal-Mart representatives presented the award, a Wal-Mart smiley-face vest and a certificate. The store also paid for treats from an ice cream truck.

Holmes' parents, husband, sister and uncle turned out for the festivities.

"She was very surprised," Zinn said. "We contacted her parents — they are quite involved and help her in the classroom. Her uncle helps, too, with plumbing."

No overall list of winners was available for the Rochester Diocese. However, at a diocesan principals meeting last spring, officials from the five schools awarded made it known their teachers had won.

"I think it's neat, it's just another feather in our cap," Zinn said, adding that she wrote a thank-you to Wal-Mart. "I'm pleased there were that many people that award was given to."

Correction

The outline for the St. Stanislaus Festival (Aug. 12, Page 12) incorrectly identified the person in charge of making pierogis. Production, which began in May, was overseen by Bernie Bialaszewski.

ter, Jane (Edward) Pacjorek of Lima, NY; three nephews, one niece; and her sisters in the congregation.

Father Paul Schnacky was principal celebrant at her funeral liturgy in the motherhouse chapel July 22. He was assisted by several other priests. Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Contributions may be made in Sister Mary Noel's memory to St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.