

DIOCESAN NEWS

Video project raises interfaith concerns

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

A local coalition's plan to mail a video about Jesus to every household in Monroe County has raised concerns among some diocesan officials and Jewish leaders.

The Jesus Video Project of Monroe County would send copies of the 1979 movie, "Jesus," to 304,600 households in December.

Its efforts are in conjunction with The Jesus Video Project, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ, which has distributed 6 million copies of the video in the United States since 1992.

The production is a literal depiction of the Gospel of Luke, filmed in Israel and using actors from that country for many roles.

The Monroe County Jesus Video project has enlisted the support of some 20 churches, according to project coordinator Carol Muhlbacher, of Perinton Community Church. Most are members of the Greater Rochester Association of Evangelicals. Continuing to seek support from Catholic and other churches, she has invited church leaders to a noontime luncheon meeting Sept. 7 at Mario's Via Abruzzi in Pittsford.

The estimated cost for purchasing and bulk mailing the video is \$760,000, which will be covered by donations, she said.

The Diocese of Rochester's interreligious officer, Suzanne Schnittman, responded to reports of the effort in an Aug. 27 statement.

"Roman Catholics take great joy in the diversity of faiths that surround us," the statement reads. "Although we profess the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, we do not impose those teachings among people who do not profess them."

It concludes: "Interrupting good relations by promoting one's beliefs on another, especially at one's private home, dimin-

ishes our best intentions. While we recognize that such personal promotion is the vehicle many choose to spread their message, our value of collaborating with religions different from our own helps us choose not to participate in such activities."

Schnittman said she had not been contacted by the project's organizers, and was unaware that any Catholic parishes had been contacted.

Meanwhile, Larry Fine, director of the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, said that while the Jesus Video Project people had a right to distribute the video, the effort was causing discomfort in the Jewish community.

Fine pointed out that the Jewish community's concerns must be understood in light of "1,800 years of having other religions imposed" on them.

Moreover, he said, Jews are uncomfortable with this style of evangelizing.

"It's not part of the Jewish tradition to do so," Fine said. "Many Jews find those who go door-to-door uncomfortable."

He added that while he suspected the people involved had no desire to offend, offense would nevertheless be taken.

"I think anyone who would receive anything unexpected, unsolicited, would feel uncomfortable," Fine said.

Responding to those sentiments, Pam Dumas, customer assistance director for the national Jesus Project, based in San Bernardino, Calif., said, "I wouldn't expect them to feel any other way."

"It's not our desire to offend anybody," she continued. But the bulk mailing companies being employed cannot distinguish which homes receive the video.

Nevertheless, she said, "They don't have to watch it. They can throw the video away."

That view was echoed by Aly Nahas, acting director of Rochester's Islamic Center. "They have the freedom to do whatever

they want," Nahas said of the local project organizers. "I don't have to view it. I don't consider it an invasion of privacy."

"The thing we'd like to do is present the culturally and historically accurate portrait of Jesus from the Bible and let people make up their own minds what they want to do," Muhlbacher explained. "We are giving a free gift of love of the life of Jesus. There's no pressure involved."

Each video will be accompanied by a card that recipients can mail to request more information. In addition, some churches will probably undertake follow-up efforts in their neighborhoods, Muhlbacher said.

She pointed out that according to surveys, "30 percent of the people in our county don't attend any place of worship. They certainly would be a focus of who we would like to reach."

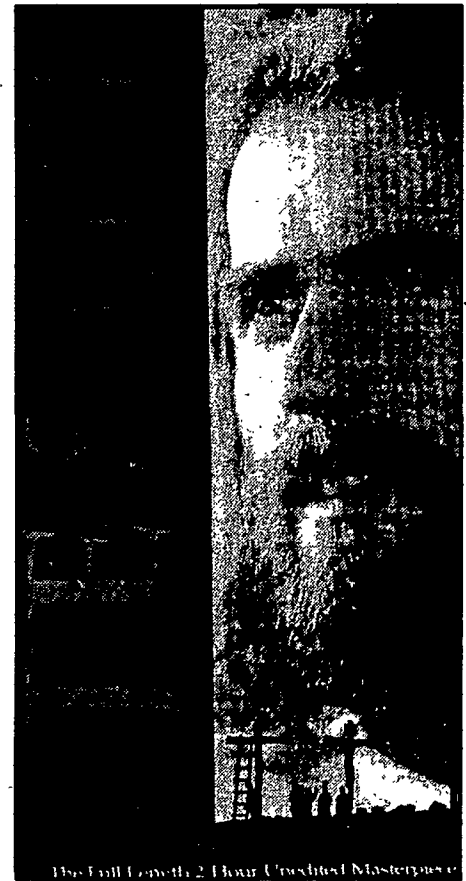
But Dan Andriacco, director of communications for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, questioned the effectiveness of such an approach. The Jesus Project mounted a similar effort around Easter in Dayton, in the archdiocese.

"We really think that evangelization is a person-to-person experience, not a person-to-video experience," he said.

According to Jesus Project organizers, some 400 churches in the Dayton area distributed 390,000 videos. Andriacco said the archdiocese was not involved in that effort, but that some individual Catholic parishes may have been.

This summer, he continued, Jesus Project organizers contacted the archdiocese about Catholic support for a similar effort in Cincinnati.

Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk responded Aug. 4: "Although I have done nothing to stop or discourage individual parishes from taking part in your project, neither can I give it the endorsement that



you are seeking. The Catholic approach to evangelization is rooted in the personal witness of our lives as Christians and in the transforming power of God's word, especially in the liturgy."

Notice to readers

Bishop Clark did not write a column this week. His column will return next week.

Due to insufficient letters, there is no opinion page this week.

Seven Catholic schools begin year with new principals

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Seven Catholic schools in the diocese are starting the 1999-2000 school year with new principals.

Two of the principals, **Frances Barr** and **Debra-Anne Eveland**, have transferred from the same positions at other Catholic schools. Barr moves to St. John of Rochester in Perinton from Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Brockport, and Eveland moves to Northeastern Catholic Junior High in Irondequoit from All Saints Catholic Junior High in Gates.

Barr, who replaces **Marilyn Tripp** at St. John of Rochester, was principal the past four years at Nativity. Prior to that, she taught at St. Louis School in Pittsford (1987-95) as well as in Virginia, Ohio and West Virginia for five years. She received her master's degree in education from SUNY College at Brockport, and her ad-

ministration certification from the University of Rochester.

Eveland, who replaces **Norman Fagnan** at Northeastern, was principal (1995-99) and assistant principal (1994-95) at All Saints. She also taught at Nazareth Hall Middle School (1993-94); was principal at St. Helen's in Gates (1991-93); and taught at Rochester's Holy Family (1989-91) and Our Lady of Good Counsel (1982-89). She received her master's degree in education, as well as her administration certification, from the University of Rochester.

Maggie Frank is the new principal at Nativity in Brockport, replacing Barr. Frank previously taught at Seton Catholic School in Brighton (1994-99); served as a drug and alcohol drug counselor at Park Ridge Chemical Dependency (1987-94); and taught at St. Helen's in Gates (1982-87), St. Francis de Sales in Geneva (1978-82), Nazareth Hall (1976-78), St. Anthony of Padua in Rochester (1973-76) and St.

Mary's in Dansville (1971-73). She earned her master's degree in education from Nazareth College and is currently enrolled in the University of Rochester's administration certification program.

William Davis is the new principal at All Saints Junior High. He was assistant principal at All Saints (1995-99) as well as principal at Rochester's Most Precious Blood (1994-95). He also taught at St. John of Rochester (1983-94). He received his master's degree in education, and his administration certification, from the University of Rochester.

Frederick J. Smith is the new principal at St. Mary's School in Waterloo, replacing **Arlene McDermott**. He was previously an administrator at Penn Yan Central Schools (1998-99), as well as in Westmoreland (1996-98) and Baldwinsville (1994-96). Smith was also a teacher and administrator for 26 years in the Syracuse City School District. He received his master's degree in

education, and his administration certification, from SUNY College at Cortland.

John Daniel Farrelly takes over at Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca, replacing **Diana Baker**. He previously taught at Immaculate Conception (1998-99) and in Cortland (1997-98) and DeRuyter (1996-97), as well as at St. Joseph's School in Auburn (1992-96). He earned his master's degree from SUNY College at Cortland and is working on his administration certification at Cortland.

Allan H. Miskell is the new principal at Ss. Peter and Paul School in Auburn, replacing **Sister M. Boniface Macklack, OS-BM**. He had been retired for 16 years after serving as principal of Auburn East Middle School (1972-83). He was also a teacher and administrator in Auburn Central Schools (1958-72), and taught in Port Byron (1952-58). He received his master's degree in education, and his administration certification, from Syracuse University.

Unity, ViaHealth announce plans to consider potential collaboration

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Officials of Unity Health System — an alliance of St. Mary's and Park Ridge hospitals — have announced plans to begin discussions with ViaHealth about "potential collaboration initiatives."

Those initiatives could range from joint projects to actual merger of the health-care providers. Unity and ViaHealth are two of Rochester's three major health systems. ViaHealth operates Genesee and Rochester General hospitals.

But news of the talks — which have not officially begun — also raises ethical concerns.

Abortions are performed at the doctors' office building adjacent to Genesee Hospital. The hospital is the target of

weekly pro-life protests.

In addition, Dr. Timothy Quill, who has acknowledged helping a patient end her life and who has gained national attention as a supporter of physician-assisted suicide, is a senior attending physician at the hospital.

Carol Silver Elliott, vice president of corporate communications for Unity, said that such issues will play a role in the discussions.

"Those are some of the things that will have to be examined," Elliott said. She added that any discussions will keep in mind the U.S. bishops' 1994 "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care."

Moreover, she said, "Unity has a real strong commitment to maintaining St. Mary's."

The St. Mary's-Park Ridge alliance went into effect Jan. 14, 1997.

Meanwhile, Scott Winship, a spokesman for the Daughters of Charity National Health System — to which Unity belongs — said: "The Daughters of Charity National Health System would never do anything that would violate the ethical and religious directives."

Elliott said the discussions are prompted by the financial effects on both Unity and ViaHealth of managed care, declining reimbursement — especially in light of cuts in Medicare — and changing utilization patterns as health care shifts from hospitals to outpatient centers.

Unity lost more than \$27 million last year, and ViaHealth, \$20 million.

Unity has also laid off 450 workers in 1999 as part of efforts to consolidate ser-

vices, Elliott said. She noted that no further layoffs are in the works.

"It's incumbent on every health-care provider to explore any and all options possible," she said of the upcoming talks.

She noted that Unity board of directors had only agreed to the talks Aug. 20, and that discussions would probably begin early this month. She also acknowledged that the participants in the discussions had not been named, but that those participants would likely include members of the boards of directors of the two systems, physicians and key administrators.

But the goal of those discussions is not yet set, Elliott emphasized.

"The discussion at this stage is to explore whether there are opportunities to have further discussions," she said.