

DIOCESAN NEWS

Corpus ministries to cut official ties with parish

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

In the latest chapter of a story that began with the removal of Father James B. Callan as administrator of Rochester's Corpus Christi Church in 1998, four of the parish's five outreach ministries now are planning for their independence. The parish announced Jan. 10 that each will incorporate separately from the parish.

The ministries have brought wide recognition to the parish as some of the most visible signs of its commitment to the surrounding neighborhood and the poor.

In late 1998 Bishop Matthew H. Clark removed Father Callan for publicly defying various church teachings. Hundreds of supporters of Father Callan eventually founded a breakaway church called Spiritus Christi in Rochester.

The turmoil that engulfed the parish led, in some cases, to a drop-off in donations and volunteers for the ministries, according to directors of Corpus Christi's outreach ministries. Going independent will allow the ministries to appeal to the wider community for support without fearing repercussions of the controversy suffered by the parish, they agreed. They noted that independence from the parish also will enable their ministries to solicit a wider range of private grants as well as government monies.

"I have mixed emotions," said J. Fran Moise, director of Dimitri House, the parish's overnight men's shelter and emergency food cupboard, one of the four ministries leaving the parish. "However, I know it's the best thing for the people we serve. If people are holding back because we're still affiliated with the church, they don't have to worry about that anymore."

Also leaving the parish fold are Isaiah House, a home for the dying; Corpus Christi Prison Outreach, a group of programs that serve ex-offenders and inmates;

and Corpus Christi Center, a neighborhood center for health, dental and social services.

Matthew's Closet, a low-priced clothing store, will remain affiliated with Corpus.

Pending state court approval, the Diocese of Rochester will donate to the respective ministries the properties and buildings used by each outreach ministry planning to become independent. Although each ministry is moving on its own timetable, at least two of the directors said they each hope to be independently incorporated by July.

The ministries will also continue to have an informal relationship with the parish, directors said. They noted that they will probably continue to derive part of their funding from various events promoted by the parish and from yearly collections.

The ministries' decision to become independent was announced at a parish meeting. Sister Sue Hoffman, SSJ, Corpus Christi's pastoral associate, said the parish staff and the outreach directors began last fall to discuss the possibility of the ministries going independent.

"The whole process started ... when it became apparent that the financial situation of the ministries was getting precarious," she said.

On that note, Morse pointed out that the controversy did affect Dimitri House initially. Donations dropped by 50 percent between September 1998 and September 1999.

"But it's picked up amazingly," she said, pointing out that Dimitri House's public appeals for donations have yielded results in recent months.

The prison outreach program also lost some volunteers after Father Callan was removed, according to its director, Richard Conheady Jr.

"There were some people who have said they could not continue to volunteer for Corpus Christi Church," Conheady said.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Clockwise from bottom left, Bonita Bell, 9, Latisha Fletcher, 10, Charlester Wims, 8, and Shilita Bell, 9, clap hands while singing a rhyme at the Corpus Christi Center after-school program Jan. 12. The center is among ministries planning to become independent from Corpus Christi Church.

However, he stressed the parish had always struggled to maintain its prison ministry even when Father Callan and the old staff ran the parish.

"The cause of ex-offenders is not one that brings in (volunteers) like the homeless will or Corpus Christi Center," he said.

Two of the ministries, seemed to be little affected by the turmoil. Sister Kathleen Ann Kolb, RSM, director of Corpus Christi Center, said it experienced no drop in donations or volunteers in the wake of the controversy. Meanwhile, Kathie Quinlan, director of Isaiah House, said her ministry only experienced a slight drop in both donations and volunteers. She added that she thought more volunteers left her ministry due to personal circumstances rather than any reasons related to parish turmoil.

Maribel Torres, director of Matthew's Closet, said that in the months following Father Callan's removal she lost 10 of 15 core volunteers. She noted that the remaining core volunteers are all attending the breakaway Spiritus Christi services.

"I love them all, and I'm very much connected to them," she said of her volunteers, noting that she has attended Corpus Christi for 24 years.

She said she wanted to keep Matthew's Closet under the parish umbrella because

of personal spiritual reasons and because going independent would do the ministry no good. She noted that, unlike the other outreach ministries, Matthew's Closet is located on parish grounds (in the old school building) and that low-income clothing programs tend to be directly affiliated with churches. Going independent would force the program to either find a new location or pay rent, she said, citing that neither option is attractive to her.

The four other ministries plan to widen their affiliation with various churches, Catholic and non-Catholic, directors said. Sister Kolb added that she is currently exploring having her order, the Sisters of Mercy, sponsor Corpus Christi Center. However, she noted that any sponsorship would not involve the sisters financially supporting the center, which will continue to rely on private donations.

Regardless of their future individual directions, the ministry directors and Sister Hoffman agreed that Corpus Christi will continue to be part of their ministries spiritually and emotionally, if not legally. Going independent is the right choice, Quinlan commented.

"I think it will be a respectful way of dealing with all this crisis that has surrounded us," she said.

Obituaries

Brett Jones, 12; received fundraising, prayer support in fight against leukemia

Twelve-year-old Brett Jones died Dec. 23, 1999, from T-cell leukemia.

The Fairport community had rallied around the boy as he anticipated each new day as a possible step toward a bone-marrow transplant. Friends and family staged a jamboree fundraiser at his parish, Church of the Assumption in October, and offered a steady stream of prayers. In November, St. John Fisher College hosted a Red Cross bone marrow drive for the youth.

A Martha Brown Middle School seventh-grader, Brett had been at home and in re-

mission, but never regained the strength necessary to receive a transplant.

Though extremely weak physically, he was "sunshine" to those around him, said his aunt, Phyllis Jones, and he often sang Broadway music to them.

Sheila Cody, pastoral minister at Assumption, described the Dec. 28 funeral Mass at Assumption as an "incredible celebration, a celebration that reflected his life and what he loved about life. It was sad, but also a recognition of the gift that he was."

Brett's friends brought personal me-

mentos of his life to a table in front of the altar. They included his Yankees baseball cap and a snow globe of New York City. The friends also brought a "Phantom of the Opera" mask Brett had worn when he attended the production in costume.

Father Rob Bourcy, a family friend, presided at the funeral, linking "Broadway Brett" in his homily with the priest's own good friend and Broadway fan, Father David Faraone, who had died Dec. 19.

"He was just at the start of the bloom of life," Cody said, but added that Brett had al-

ready touched many lives. "There's so much we just don't understand. It's a mystery we have to trust to God."

Brett is survived by his parents, Amy Jones and Frank Gaston; his maternal grandparents Phyllis and Lee Jones; paternal grandparents, Doris and Frank Gaston; and numerous relatives and friends.

Burial was in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Fairport. The family has asked that contributions be made to C.U.R.E. Childhood Cancer Association, 840 University Ave., Rochester NY 14607.

— Kathleen Schwarz

Sister Marie Alice Schauseil; spent 20 years at Horseheads parish

Sister Marie Alice Schauseil, SSJ, died Jan. 2, 2000, at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

A native of Rochester, Sister Marie Alice entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Holy Rosary Parish in 1932. She taught for 53 years in diocesan schools, including Nazareth Hall, Our Lady of Lourdes, Holy Rosary, St. Theodore, Blessed Sacrament and Christ the King, all of Rochester; St. Mary, Elmira; St. Mary, Auburn; St. John

the Evangelist, Greece; St. Jerome, East Rochester; and St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads, where she served for 20 years as teacher, librarian, CCD teacher and catechist for RCIA and religious education.

Survivors include four sisters: Veronica Wills, Sister Albertus, SSJ, Helen Hall and Mary Schallenberger, all of Rochester; three brothers, Albert, Richard and Thomas, all of Florida; and nieces, nephews and her sisters in the congrega-

tion.

Father Thomas Burr, pastor of St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads, presided at Sister Marie Alice's funeral liturgy Jan. 5 at the motherhouse chapel, and Deacon Daniel Hurley gave the homily. Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

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