

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bishop begins Jubilee journey

By Joe Sarnicola
Guest contributor

AUBURN — Bishop Matthew H. Clark made the first stop of his Jubilee Year pilgrimage through the diocese at Holy Family Church Jan. 19.

"It was great he came to visit Auburn and started the Jubilee year in Auburn," said Father James C. Burke, Holy Family's priest administrator. The event drew 350 people from churches in the Seneca-Cayuga region.

At the conclusion of the prayer service, Father Paul Brennan, regional coordinator and pastor of Auburn's Sacred Heart Church, surprised the bishop with checks for nearly \$8,000, the first contribution to a Jubilee Forgiveness Fund. (See related story on this page.)

"We wanted to set the precedent," Father Brennan said, explaining that the region's churches contributing to the fund had taken up special collections, conducted fundraisers and practiced almsgiving in recent weeks.

The evening prayer service followed guidelines provided by the diocesan liturgy office, and featured participants from the various churches. Among them were the choir of St. Mary's Church, Auburn; ushers from Holy Cross Parish, Ovid; and lectors from St. Patrick's Parish, Seneca Falls, St. Mary's Parish, Waterloo, and Good Shepherd Catholic Community of southern Cayuga County. The Auburn Knights of Columbus provided an honor guard.

"It was a very collaborative effort and went off almost without a hitch," said Maureen Collins, business manager for Sacred Heart Church, Auburn, who noted that evening prayer services are unusual in the area.

The Seneca-Cayuga priests had recommended that the bishop make his regional pilgrimage visit at Holy Family, because it is the "mother" church of Auburn, from which all other Auburn parishes grew. The history of the Holy Family community dates to the 1820s, and the cathedral-style church was built in the late 1860s.

"I invite you to a spirit of jubilee," Bishop Clark told the congregation, "and to be healed and empowered in our journey of faith. Pray and reflect on the Scriptures. Honor the Sabbath. Honor the presence of God in our daily lives."



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Grace Siracusa listens to Bishop Matthew H. Clark at Holy Family Church, Auburn, on Jan. 19 during his first Jubilee pilgrimage regional visit.

The bishop encouraged participants to honor the earth and creation, and to rediscover Christ, the source of life. He also encouraged living, in a spirit of forgiveness, which is the bedrock of any jubilee year.

"We are called to forgive. Ask for forgiveness, and offer it to others," he said.

At the conclusion of the one-hour service, Bishop Clark left briefly to remove his vestments and then returned to answer questions from the congregation. No one stepped forward to offer a question, to which the bishop replied, "Amen," filling the church with laughter. A reception followed.

The bishop's next pilgrimage evening prayer services will be at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 22, at St. Michael's Church, Newark, for the Yates/Ontario/Wayne region; and at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 29, in the southwest Monroe County region, tentatively set for St. Theodore Church, Gates. On Wednesday, April 5, the bishop will be at St. Louis Church, Pittsford, in southeast Monroe.

Plans are still being finalized for some of the remaining pilgrimage visits, April 12 in Tompkins/Tioga and then in October through December.

The sites for the bishop's visits are distinct from the five churches that have been established for Jubilee pil-



Bishop Clark blesses the pascal candle with incense during the prayer service in Auburn.

grimages by members of the diocesan community: Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester; St. Mary's, Auburn; Immaculate Conception, Ithaca; St. Mary's, Corning; and St. Stephen's, Geneva.

These five churches are receiving pilgrimage visits daily throughout the year. Anyone planning to make such a jubilee pilgrimage is advised to call ahead to confirm the times the church is open.

Includes reporting by Kathleen Schwarz.

Diocese to forgive old debts owed by parishes, institutions

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

As part of its jubilee-year celebrations, the Diocese of Rochester is planning to forgive old debts owed to its operating fund by parishes and other institutions, according to Father Joseph A. Hart, vicar general and moderator of the diocesan Pastoral Office.

The diocese will consider debts on a case-by-case basis, Father Hart said.

In addition, the Priests' Council is slated to vote on two jubilee-related plans at its next meeting, Tuesday, Feb. 1, Father Hart said.

One plan would create a "Jubilee Forgiveness Fund" to help poorer parishes and other institutions retire debts owed to creditors other than the diocese; the second plan would establish a permanent fund to aid poorer parishes.

Father Hart added that the debt-forgiveness plans stemmed, in part, from the diocese's desire to join Pope John Paul II's

call for worldwide debt forgiveness to mark the Great Jubilee Year 2000.

Father Hart declined to name the amount of old debt owed to the diocese. However, he did say that it would entail some sacrifice by the diocese, whose budget constraints in recent years have forced lay-offs.

"We can't easily afford this, but we can't afford not to," he said, adding that if the diocese calls on others to forgive debt in this jubilee year, it must lead the way in doing so.

Regarding the two plans to be voted on by the Priests' Council, Father Hart said the proposed Jubilee Forgiveness Fund would be supported by donations from parishes, institutions and individuals, as well as the diocese. Already, parishes in the Seneca-Cayuga region have donated \$7,709 to be used for the fund, according to Richard A. Rosati, diocesan director of development services.

Father Hart added that the plan also includes a proposal to create an ad hoc com-

mittee of lay people and priests to administer the Jubilee Forgiveness Fund.

Meanwhile, the proposed permanent fund to aid poorer parishes would be supported through an annual solicitation by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Father Hart noted that parishes would have to be able to fund its ongoing ministries and pay its monthly bills to qualify for aid. He said low-income parishes are often hard-pressed to make needed building repairs, especially if their churches are old. The proposed fund could help such projects.

He pointed out that the idea for a permanent fund had originated with Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who was bishop of Rochester from 1966 to 1969. The late archbishop proposed a 10-percent tax on parishes' new building funds, with the collected monies to be used for poor parishes. Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey,

who died in October 1999, had been one of Bishop Sheen's two vicars general. Bishop Hickey had revived the idea in discussions about debt forgiveness last year, Father Hart said. The Priests' Council will examine a number of proposals to fund the permanent fund, including one proposal for voluntary contributions from parishes.

Father Hart said a group of priests with financial expertise has been working with indebted parishes to determine how they can get their financial houses in order. He said helping parishes resolve their debt issues is important because it would help them to explore areas of ministry heretofore closed to them by financial obstacles.

"When you can plan for new ministries, when you don't have to service debt, that's like a whole new breath of spring," Father Hart observed.

Obituary

Sister Towns; longtime teacher

Sister Joseph Catherine Towns, SSJ, died Jan. 7, 2000. A parochial school teacher for 36 years, she was 88.

Sister Joseph Catherine was a native of Rochester. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1935 from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish and went on to earn degrees in education and history from Nazareth College.

Sister Joseph Catherine taught at such schools as St. Ambrose, Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. Bridget and St. Theodore, all of Rochester; St. Mary, Canandaigua; Immaculate Conception, Ithaca; St. Mary, Waterloo; St. Paul, Oswego; St. John the Evangelist, Greece; St. Mary,

Dansville; and St. Jerome, East Rochester.

From 1976 to 1984 she was chief switchboard operator at St. Ann's Home. In 1984 she moved to the order's motherhouse, where she served as receptionist and performed various other services. She moved to St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in 1995.

Father Donald Curtiss, infirmary chaplain, celebrated her funeral liturgy Jan. 11 in the motherhouse chapel. Sister Joseph Catherine is survived by many cousins and her sisters in the congregation. Contributions may be made in her memory to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

Recognizing

* Students at Northeastern Catholic Junior High School, Rochester, collected \$618.70 in December, along with diapers, disposable cloths and food for a family with triplets with various health problems.

* Catholic Charities Community & Residential Services, Rochester, recently elected board officers: Carol Mordaci as secretary and Mary Jane Brennan, principal of the campus school at St. Joseph's Villa, as treasurer.

* The AIDS Institute, a division of the New York State Department of Health, awarded the "Fifth Annual Dr. Nicholas A. Rango Case Management Award for Outstanding Performance, Leadership and Dedication in the field of HIV Case Management" to Jane Hallinan, director of the Diocese of Rochester's AIDS Services, on Nov. 18.

* John W. Steger, Fourth Degree An-

sembly No. 2297, Knights of Columbus, Gates, has received the "To Be A Patriot" award for 1998-99. The award recognizes the most outstanding patriotic assembly in St. Isaac Jogues Province, which consists of 150 assemblies in New York and northern New Jersey. The award recognizes the assembly's year-long program, titled "Honoring Our Flag and American Veterans Living and Deceased," which included the raising of burial flags of deceased veterans along with displays of patriotic songs and songs. The award ceremony took place at St. Jude's Church, Gates.

* The American Mason Supply Dealer Association has awarded a commendation to the local lodge, No. 100, for its participation in the "Operation Christmas Child" project. The lodge, which is located at the corner of