St. Francis of Assisi discusses possible closing

By Rob Cullivan Staff Writer

Due to a low level of attendance at Masses and continual financial challenges, St. Francis of Assisi Church, 77 Whitney St., Rochester, may close on June 30, according to Father Paul Tomasso, pastor.

Father Tomasso informed parishioners of the possibility in a letter dated Feb. 22. He also wrote that he had contacted the diocese for assistance in the matter. The diocese must give final approval to any parish closing, according to Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan chancellor.

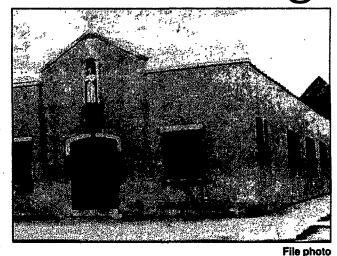
In the letter, Father Tomasso wrote that the 9 a.m. Sunday Mass attendance "struggles to reach 50 people," and noon Mass only draws about 70. The parish, he wrote, "is no longer capable of providing opportunities for parish life."

Father Tomasso added that the parish's buildings need

repair, but to invest in repair would be to take away money that could be used for ministry. Finally, he wrote, the parish could not balance its budget without dipping into its savings and without the financial support it receives from the diocese and St. Pius the Tenth Church in Chili, which tithes on behalf of St. Francis.

Father Tomasso, who had presented his concerns to the parish council on Feb. 16, wrote that it "was the general consensus of the Parish Council that our parish should close." The parish has held meetings on the matter since that meeting, and the parish council will address the issue again March 15.

The last two parishes to close in Rochester were St. Theresa's Church in 1997, and Holy Redeemer Church in 1985. St. Theresa's parishioners merged with those of St. Stanislaus Parish, and Holy Redeemer's members joined St. Francis Xavier Parish to form Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Parish.



St. Francis of Assisi Church, Rochester

