

FEATURE

Retiring pastor says that laity invigorated him

Father P. Paul Brennan has remained relatively stationary over the past 33 years, serving just two parishes in all that time.

Father Brennan, who turns 67 on May 29, is retiring from Sacred Heart/St. Ann in Auburn and Owasco, where he has been pastor since 1987.

"One thing that's always impressed me is that they're a thinking group of people here," Father Brennan said. "They don't just take everything you say and then say, 'OK, Father, that's it.' They'll challenge you on social-justice issues. They're not afraid to voice their opinion, and I appreciate that."

In his previous assignment, Father Brennan also encouraged participation of the laity. He served for 20 years at Rochester's Immaculate Conception Church from 1967 to 1987, first as co-pastor and later as



pastor. While at Immaculate Conception, Father Brennan was also chaplain of the Catholic Interracial Council of Rochester.

"Those were very exciting years," he recalled. "The fruits of Vatican II were really coming forth. Things were beginning to happen that are very common today."

Father Brennan noted that Immaculate Conception was one of the first diocesan parishes to embrace the African-American influence in its liturgies, especially in the area of gospel music.

"The greatest thing was the whole concept of a black Christian experience," he said. "When people went there, that was what they were going to find. People came from all over the city to worship there."

Father Brennan, a native of Auburn, grew up in Holy Family Parish. He attend-

ed Holy Family Grammar School, St. Andrew's Seminary and St. Bernard's Seminary. He was ordained June 6, 1959, by Bishop James E. Kearney.

Father Brennan served as assistant pastor at St. Michael and St. Andrew parishes in Penn Yan and Dundee (1959-65), and was also assistant at St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport (1965-67), before settling in for his long stays at Immaculate Conception and Sacred Heart/St. Ann.

In retirement, Father Brennan will reside at his home on Owasco Lake. He said that "there are a lot of things I'm interested in" but hasn't yet solidified his ministry plans.

A picnic reception for Father Brennan is set for June 11, following the 11:30 a.m. Mass, on the Sacred Heart parish grounds.

-Mike Latona

Pastor maintains priesthood is where God wants him to be

When Father Thomas R. Statt was a boy attending Nazareth Hall in Rochester, his eighth-grade teacher daily asked the class to pray that three of the students take up a religious vocation when they grew up.

"That certainly had an impact on me," Father Statt said, noting he also credited his family environment for fostering his choice of the priestly life.

"I very much enjoyed people, and I saw the priests working with people and being of service to them," said Father Statt, who grew up attending St. Augustine's Church in Rochester.

Pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows Parish at Paddy Hill in Greece, Father Statt will retire June 27, but said he will stay on at the parish as priest-in-residence. His replacement will be Father Alexander H. Bradshaw, pastor of Holy Ghost Parish in Gates. Father Statt said his parish will hold a reception to mark his retirement on Friday,



June 23, from 6-9 p.m., and he will preside at a Mass at 11 a.m. on Sunday, June 25.

Ordained May 31, 1958, by Bishop James E. Kearney, Father Statt served as associate pastor at St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua, from 1958 to 1961, and then at Corpus Christi Parish, Rochester, from 1961 to 1964. He then became chaplain of the Newman Community on the Genesee campus of the State University of New York, a position he held until June 1976.

Father Statt left Genesee to become rector of Becket Hall College Seminary in Rochester where he worked until 1981. He then took up his current pastorate.

Father Statt is a trustee of St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester and the Nazareth Schools, as well as a member of the Monroe County Catholic School Board.

"I think the values that Catholic education offer are second-to-none," he said.

Reflecting on the best parts of his priest-

ly life, Father Statt said presiding at Mass undergirds the meaning of his vocation because it is in the liturgy that a priest encounters the greatest number of people at one time. However, he added that being a priest also means being with people in less public settings.

"I think in moments of difficulty, and especially serious illness and death, the sympathy that the priest gives to the family ... is extremely important."

Father Statt also said that he would recommend the priesthood to any man seriously considering it as a vocation.

"Having lived the priesthood for 42 years, I could never envision the happiness and joy that I've known through these years," he said. "It hasn't always been easy, but there's always been a joy and contentment and peace because I think this is what God wanted me to do."

- Rob Cullivan

Psychiatric center chaplain retires

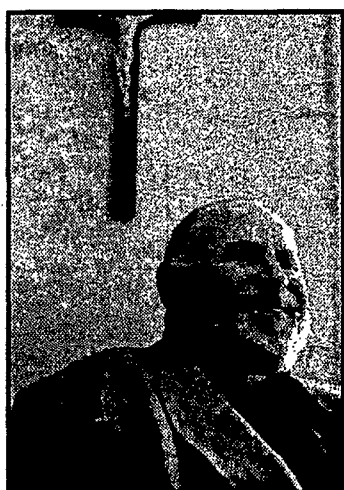
Father Thomas D. Hctor said he grew quite fond of his chaplaincy at Rochester Psychiatric Center, where he served full-time for 22 years until retiring March 29.

"I love these people," Father Hctor said. "When I first went there, there were days I was ready to quit that afternoon ... but after about six to eight months, they got used to me because I was a 'regular.' And they began to open up to me; the wall crumbled."

"When you can make them smile, it's a real boost for them - and for me," he added.

Father Hctor, 68, grew up in Rochester's Corpus Christi Parish. He attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries and received master's degrees in literature and in health counseling from the University of Rochester and C.W. Post, Long Island University, respectively.

He was ordained June 6, 1957, by Bishop Lawrence B. Casey at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Father Hctor served as assistant pastor at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit (1957-59) and St. James Church in Irondequoit (1959-61). He then taught literature at St. Andrew's Seminary (1961-67) and St. John Fisher College (1968-74) and was Catholic chaplain at the University of Rochester (1974-75). He was assistant pastor at St. Louis Church in Pittsford (1975-78) before accepting the chaplaincy at Rochester Psy-



chiatric Center.

He was president of the New York State Chaplain Association (1982-84) and has belonged to the New York State Catholic Chaplain Committee since 1981.

Father Hctor has resided at St. Anne Church in Rochester since 1983. He plans to move in late May to Webster's Holy Trinity Church, where he will assist. He also continues to work on a limited part-time basis at

Rochester Psychiatric Center.

A retirement party for Father Hctor was held at the psychiatric center on March 30.

-Mike Latona

FATHER BRUCE F. AMMERING

On behalf of all the parishioners
of the Church of
the Blessed Sacrament,
we thank you
for all the years
of your ministry
and wish you God's blessings.



The people of
St. Michael's Church,
Newark
wish to
congratulate

FATHER JOSEPH
MCDONNELL
on the
70TH YEAR
of his ordination

Father Bruce Ammering, pastor of Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Church since 1983, retired Feb. 1, as reported in the Feb. 3 *Catholic Courier*. Father Ammering declined to be interviewed for the Milestones edition.