

DIOCESAN NEWS

\$1.1 million pledged to debt fund

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

More than 140 parishes and more than 400 individuals have pledged \$1.1 million to the Jubilee Debt Forgiveness Fund, according to a June 13 letter sent to parishes by Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The bishop added that more gifts are expected to be pledged. In addition to the pledges garnered so far, the Diocese of Rochester, the Catholic Schools of Monroe County and the *Catholic Courier* also will forgive some outstanding debt. All told, parishes and schools will be relieved of almost \$2 million in debt.

The fund is designed to help parishes rid themselves of old debts, according to James M. Rinefierd, the diocese's chief financial officer. The majority of donations came from parishes, with 10 percent of the total coming from individual donors. Plans for the distribution of the forgiveness funds will be finalized within the next few weeks.

After consulting with the Diocesan Priests' Council about how the diocese should mark the Great Jubilee the Catholic Church is celebrating in 2000, the bishop invited parishes and individuals during Lent to pledge to the fund. He suggested that parishes give 3-5 percent of their savings and investments. In his letter, Bishop Clark expressed gratitude for the enthusiasm with which the fund's creation was met.

"I received many letters from pastoral leaders describing the prayerful discussions that led to enthusiastic and generous response to those in need," he wrote. "Their letters remind me of the ... understanding of our pastoral leaders that they not only oversee individual communities but also bear collegial responsibility with me for all the churches. The response indicates the reality that we are all committed to taking care of parish communities in need."

Father William Donnelly, a member of an ad hoc committee of diocesan and parish leaders that worked on the debt forgiveness

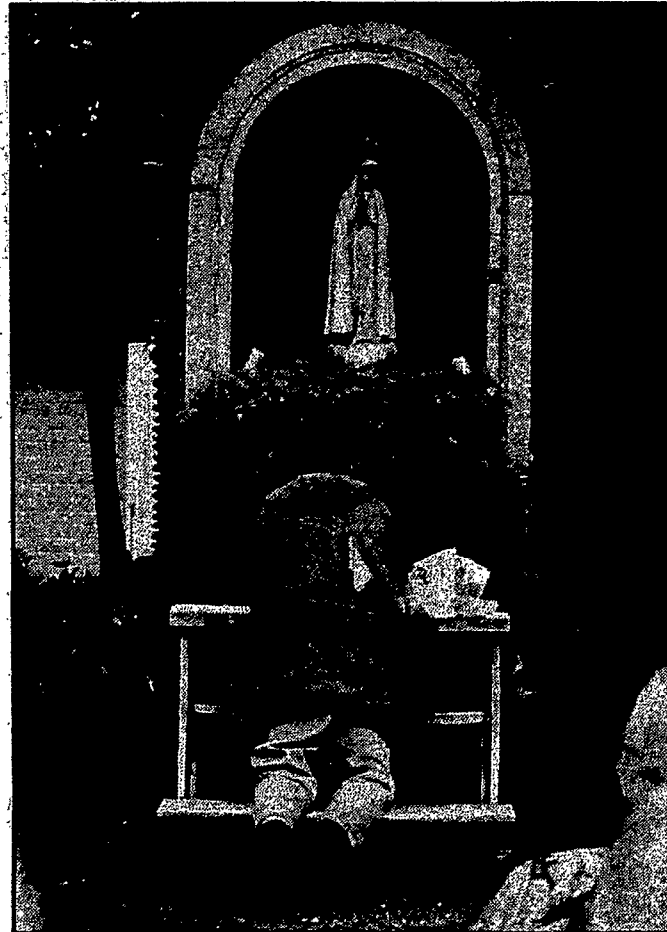
fund, said St. Mary's in Rochester — of which he is pastor — made a "sizeable donation" to the fund. St. Mary's was motivated by "our commitment to the poorer parishes in the city," he said. He added that parishioners' only questions about the fund concerned what kinds of safeguards had been established to ensure it was not used in parishes that had incurred debt through financial mismanagement or irresponsibility.

Rinefierd said the diocese is well aware of the need to distribute the funds to

parishes in a manner that encourages fiscal responsibility. He said that the diocese would examine parishes' old debts on a case-by-case basis before determining what kind of debt relief should be given. Rinefierd added that he was pleased by the response to the jubilee fund.

"I'm extremely heartened by the way parishes have come forward to help others and, hopefully, as a result of this effort, we can help get some parishes and communities on their feet," he said.

A prayerful appeal



Robert Cascino, along with 20 other parishioners, prays at the Our Lady of Fatima shrine in the rose garden behind St. Francis of Assisi Church, Rochester, on June 7. The parishioners were protesting the closing of their church, set for July 1. Prayer protests will continue in the rose garden every Wednesday at 7 p.m. throughout June. The parishioners have also filed an appeal to have Bishop Matthew H. Clark reverse the decision to close the church.

John Powell/Photo intern

Brockport Catholic will serve jail time for protest

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

Ten protesters, including John Honeck, a parishioner at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Brockport, have been sentenced to federal prison for trespassing Nov. 21 on the grounds of Fort Benning, Ga., home of School of the Americas, a U.S. Army training facility for Latin American soldiers.

In federal court in Columbus, Ga., June 8, Judge Hugh Lawson sentenced Honeck, 39, to three months in prison and a \$2,500 fine. He was convicted on two counts of trespassing at the facility during a protest orchestrated by SOA Watch, a human rights group led by Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois, which has called for SOA's closing.

Protesters like Honeck contend the school foments human rights abuses by its graduates in Latin America, whereas the school's defenders contend it serves to deter graduates from abusing their power by training them to respect human rights. Murder victims of SOA graduates include bishops, priests, nuns and church workers, many of whom were targeted for speaking out on human rights abuses. SOA defenders contend the majority of the school's graduates have been smeared by the actions of a few.

Along with Honeck, other defendants received sentences ranging from probation to one month to one year in prison. The severity of the sentence depended on previous convictions, and if defendants said they would return to the fort again.

Honeck, going to jail for the first time, is one of seven defendants who said he would return to protest at SOA. He stated in court that he was compelled to violate the law, in part, because of the example set by Father Juan Ramon Moreno, SJ, one of six Jesuit priests murdered by SOA graduates in El Salvador in 1989.

"Our actions simply honor him and all the others murdered, raped, disappeared or tortured by the SOA and its agents of repression," Honeck said.

Honeck said he should learn in the next few weeks where he must serve his sentence. He said he has asked to be placed in a federal penitentiary in Pennsylvania to be close to his wife and three children.

Obituaries

Sr. Joseph O'Connor, SSJ, 86; taught school

Sister Joseph Francis O'Connor, SSJ, died at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary on May 20, 2000. She was 86 years old.

Sister Joseph Francis was a native of Auburn, and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1932 from St. Aloysius Parish. She was a graduate of Nazareth College of Rochester. Sister Joseph Francis taught in diocesan elementary schools for 56 years in Rochester, Ithaca, Dansville, Canandaigua and Auburn. She retired to the motherhouse in 1996 and moved to St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in 1998.

"She was a gentle, gracious lady, always thinking about the other person," Sister Joseph Gilmary Russell, SSJ, infirmary coordinator, commented.

Her funeral liturgy was celebrated in the motherhouse chapel May 22. She is survived by her brother, Msgr. Joseph O'Connor of Lawrenceville, N.J.; her sister, Mary O'Connor of Auburn; her brother-in-law, Robert Marullo of Auburn; her nephew, Father Lawrence Marullo of Old Forge, and a nephew, Robert Marullo of Lockport.

Sister Joseph Francis was buried in St. Joseph Cemetery, Auburn.

William C. McHugh, 69; singer, pianist

William C. McHugh Sr., a generous music maker for special events, died April 28, 2000, at the age of 69, after a brief illness. He had been music director in the Gates-Chili School District for 32 years, until retiring in 1992.

A native of Massena, Mr. McHugh graduated from the Eastman School of Music. He played piano and sang for many weddings, funerals, nursing homes and St. Pius Tenth School plays. He also participated in the 9:30 Sunday folk-group Mass at St. Pius Tenth Church. He was an active member of SPEBSQSA, barbershop quartet singing society, belonging to the Holland Land Harmonizers. He also had directed the Chorus of the Erie Canal Monroe County West.

"Bill is just in one word a delight," observed Father Foster Rogers, pastor of St. Pius. "He lived his faith to the hilt. ... He never counted the cost of how he could help others."

Mr. McHugh was predeceased by his first wife, Olive. Survivors include his second wife, Joyce (Conolly); children, Mary Kathryn Panek, Nancy Schwalm Sr., Gerald, Stephen, Julie Martin, William Jr., David, Colleen Capuano; step-children, David Conolly, Maureen Howard, Stephen Conolly, Ann Snyder, Kevin Conolly; and sisters, Annie Rodenrys, Mary Bogdovitz, Marge Marlowe, Edith McHugh, and Helen Sabad.

A funeral Mass was celebrated on May 1.

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