

CONTINUED...

Still Catholic

continued from page 1

annually submit to the diocesan schools office a list of religion/theology course titles and descriptions. At all seven schools, religion classes are required in each year of high school, and cover such topics as basics of Catholic teaching and traditions, the sacraments. Old and New Testament study, morality, worship and witness. The schools generally also require Christian service. McQuaid Jesuit High School's class of 2000 (142 students) performed 29,000 hours, well above the required 100 hours each.

The plan requires also that religion teachers be practicing Roman Catholics.

Every other year the schools will submit a self-study survey to the diocese. This will briefly describe what helps identify them as Catholic, including missions, Masses and Christian service.

And in terms of governance, the schools also will submit to the diocese their constitutions, bylaws and any changes. Two-thirds of the board members as well as the president, principal and chaplain at each school must be practicing Roman Catholics.

"This just puts some safeguards in place for the bishop," Dwyer said.

To Daniel Skinner, principal of St. Francis DeSales High School in Geneva, such safeguards as hiring Catholic religion teachers are a "no-brainer." DeSales has always

been operated independently of religious orders, under the auspices of a lay board of trustees, he noted, although Sisters of St. Joseph have staffed the school. But he added he understood that "there is a definite concern as orders do come out (of the schools) that Catholicity is maintained."

"The diocese wanted an understanding between the bishop and the Catholic schools, to protect the Catholic identity," remarked Father James J. Fischer, SJ, president of McQuaid. He noted the school had also just developed a sustaining agreement with the New York Jesuit province to which it belongs that set in writing the expectations of each. "It's just something that's in the air and everybody is concerned about."

The local agreement that administrators and two-thirds of the board be practicing, committed Catholics, is an extension of what Pope John Paul II required of colleges in his 1990 apostolic constitution on Catholic higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, he noted.

Following footsteps

McQuaid, too, is experiencing a decline in clergy, and its primarily lay board is working to ensure the Jesuit-sponsored school remains grounded in the Jesuit tradition.

Still, noted Father Fischer, "We'll have 14 total (Jesuits) stomping around here one way or another." One includes the new principal, Father Philip G. Judge, SJ.

Former Principal Franklin L. Kamp said he will remain on as an administrator overseeing faculty development, mentoring teachers and "working with issues pertaining to the Ignatian character of the school." As pioneer teachers retire, it is important for incoming faculty to be familiar with St. Ignatius, his approach to education and documents of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (JSEA), Kamp added.

Teachers are trained to emphasize reflection, for example, and that the final step in learning should be translating what was learned into action.

Meanwhile, the Congregation of Christian Brothers is finalizing "Essential Elements," guiding principles for their schools, including Bishop Kearney. Mark S. Peterson, the school's first lay president, beginning his new job this summer, said the school's trademark will be "education in the tradition of the Christian Brothers."

Its mission remains focused on Brother Edmund Rice, Christian Brothers founder, and "has to be woven in everything we do," even though the brothers no longer conduct the school, Peterson said.

At Aquinas, focus is on the Basilian motto, "Teach me goodness, discipline and knowledge." Said Hanley, "We try to make sure it influences every aspect of the institution."

At Notre Dame High School in Elmira, Principal Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM, noted the Sisters of Mercy still sponsor the school, which incorporated separately some time ago to give local people a greater role. "Before we do certain things we get authority from the sisters," she said.

A sister sits on the board of trustees, and two more are ex-officio members. Two sisters work as full-time administrators and two are full-time teachers, while a few more work part-time, she said.

All of Mercy's secondary schools are affiliated with a Mercy network, Sister Hickey said. "They are working hard to do programs to make sure the faculty, administrations and board are knowledgeable and current about the charism, values and ideals of the Sisters of Mercy. As far as I am concerned, this is always going to be a Sisters of Mercy school."

The diocese's other Mercy-affiliated high school, Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton, five sisters of Mercy were on last year's faculty of 60. But, as the high school and junior high are in the same building as women religious' offices, "there is a presence of the Mercy sisters," noted Rebecca Plonsky, director of communications for the high school. And the community's rituals, traditions and programs define the school's identity, she stated.

As in other Catholic schools, class begins

with prayer, and daily prayer also is said over the public address system. Six school-wide eucharistic liturgies are celebrated per year, and two family liturgies. Weekly Masses are celebrated during Advent and Lent.

At Nazareth Schools in Rochester, even if the Sisters of St. Joseph, who own and operate the schools, were to turn over administration to a lay board, "I assume sisters would stay on board" and ensure the mission, said Sister Ann Collins, SSJ, executive director. The congregation operates as the school's board of trustees, she explained.

About 10 sisters work in teaching and administration at the high school, Nazareth Academy, which has 300 students.

Everybody's business

Across the country, lay administration of Catholic high schools is on the rise. In 1997 48 percent were led by religious or clergy, versus 74 percent in 1983, according to the National Catholic Education Association.

Yet 44 percent of the schools remained sponsored by religious communities, which had ultimate responsibility. Dioceses had responsibility over 33 percent, and one or more parishes, over 23 percent.

"Does it help to have priests, sisters and brothers? Sure," remarked Michael Guerra, NCEA executive director, who noted that religious and clergy have long periods of preparation and study in the church.

But, he said, "There was often a tendency to put the mission on the shoulders of sisters, priests and brothers. They are taking care of it, the rest of us are going about our business." Everybody agrees now it's everybody's business.

"The key is in bringing together the right people," he continued. "So I have no doubt about Catholic schools ... today some are more Catholic."

Whether following the examples of Mother Catherine McAuley, St. Ignatius or Brother Rice, the Rochester Diocese's Catholic high schools agree on major goals.

"The landscape is not going to change," Hanley said. "...What I want at the end of the day is ... somebody to graduate from Aquinas with an appreciation of the gifts and talents God has given them, that they have had the opportunity to explore and grow in their faith, have an appropriate understanding of their faith as an emerging young adult, and have a sense of 'I can learn, I can achieve, I am not afraid to make a mistake by using the gifts and talents and what I believe to live a healthy, productive life' ...and have the opportunity to give back to the community."

"All the (Catholic) schools have a mission and work hard at achieving it and are really successful. The Catholic high schools in Rochester are real treasures."

Auburn school awaits OK

Auburn's Tyburn Academy, which has operated as an independent school in the Catholic tradition since the fall of 1993, may become the diocese's eighth Catholic high school.

The school applied to the diocese last fall, according to Principal Jeanne Hogan. But the dialogue has been going on at least for a couple years, according to Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools.

Something of a Catch-22 exists.

"The first step was to gather support of Auburn parishes and the community," Dwyer said.

But Auburn's pastors said they look to the diocese to grant its approval of the school first, according to Father Robert Schrader, pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Auburn. He said Tyburn's administrators invited area pastors invited to a meeting a few years ago, hoping to gain recognition from the priests.

"The way we left it was, it's not really up to us," he said. "If the diocese says you're official ... fine, we have no problem. ... Then when they invite us to official functions at the school, I'll feel its more appropriate to come."

Tyburn was founded by parents with the guidance of Father Albert Shamon, a retired priest who serves as administrator

of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel in nearby Fleming and writes a weekly column for the *Catholic Courier*. It is chartered by the New York Board of Regents.

The name honors more than 100 English and Irish martyrs.

Tyburn would be the first Catholic school in Auburn since Mount Carmel High School, run by Carmelite friars, closed in 1970. Tyburn graduated three students in June, and will have 37 students this fall, according to Father Shamon.

Several of Tyburn's 13 teachers retired from Auburn High School, as Hogan did. "I looked on it as an apostolate, sort of," she said. "I loved being able to talk about God and the truth of the church."

Hogan said she has been awaiting word from the diocese as to any curriculum changes it would like.

Father Shamon, too, awaits word. "It's Catholic right to the core," he said. "I say Mass there three times a week."

He indicated he understood the diocese did not want to immediately endorse "something that might be fly-by-night and peter out in a couple years."

This month the school moves into a former dental lab it purchased in the city, after operating temporarily at St. Hyacinth's Church and a gymnasium.

— Kathleen Schwarz

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