

DIOCESAN NEWS

Jubilee day acknowledges persons with disabilities

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

NEWARK — Sunday, Dec. 3, has been declared by Pope John Paul II as the Jubilee Day for Persons With Disabilities. This observance, Deacon Ed Sergeant says, signifies the Church's increasing sensitivity toward the developmentally disabled.

However, Deacon Sergeant says, there's still work to be done — especially at the parish level.

"The parish is much more welcoming," he said. "It's not like they're saying no. Probably more than anything else it's a question of 'What do I do and how do I go about it?' At times, he said, "The community doesn't really know what to do."

Deacon Sergeant has served for 15 years as Catholic chaplain at the Finger Lakes Developmental Disabilities Service Office. He ministered to Catholics with developmental disabilities residing in all parts of the Rochester Diocese.

"Parishes degrees, every parish would have a number of them," he said.

Yet other parishioners may not be aware of this population. The deacon said that those with developmental disabilities often don't have transportation to church and may miss out on parish activities. "Sometimes they just go out of sight," he said. "They can't drive, many can't walk."

Parishioners can help out by providing rides, he suggested, when staff from social service agencies are not available. Individuals can perform an immense service by making Communion calls and other friend-



ly visits to residents of group homes, he also said. Deacon Sergeant estimated that 137 group homes, with more than 1,000 residents, are spread across the diocese.

Key to the overall effort, Deacon Sergeant said, is for parish administrators and staff to promote outreach. "It's the calling forward. You may not get anybody, but you can try," he said. Individuals can then

join an existing parish ministry for those with developmental disabilities, or volunteer through such social service agencies as Catholic Charities.

Deacon Sergeant observed that several diocesan parishes are moving in the right direction by blending people with developmental disabilities into such volunteer roles as ushers, greeters, altar servers, choir members and event staffers.

"It's not just getting them to Mass. It's getting them to be part of the community," Deacon Sergeant said.

At Christ the King Church in Irondequoit, for example, residents from a United Cerebral Palsy group home — located across Kings Highway — join the parish for Mass. According to Father Norman Tanck, CSB, pastor, the residents help with children's Liturgy of the Word, ushering and singing; one person even brings up the gifts in his wheelchair. Father Tanck said that the parish's response has been "wonderful."

Father Tanck also noted that one of the Kings Highway group-home residents is an altar server at Rochester's St. Ambrose Parish. Meanwhile, David Russell, who lives in a Catholic Charities group home near



George Hulbert (left) puts his arm around Deacon Ed Sergeant, performing for a group of seniors with developmental disabilities at the Adult Rehabilitation Center in Newark Nov. 22.

Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Irondequoit's St. James Church, sings in St. James' adult choir and performs kitchen duty at parish events. And Robert Machi, a student at School of the Holy Childhood, who was featured in an Oct. 26 *Courier* article, said he began altar serving at Penfield's St. Joseph's Parish after his pastor, Father Kevin Murphy, invited people with disabilities to become more involved as parish volunteers.

Catholic parishes can also host activities specifically geared toward those with developmental disabilities. For example, Deacon Sergeant noted, Father Peter DeBellis celebrated liturgies for those developmental disabilities while he was priest intern at St. Michael's Parish in Newark.

To commemorate the Jubilee Day for Persons With Disabilities, the Catholic bishops of New York state offer some suggestions for parish ministry to such people. Whereas Deacon Sergeant works with a

specific segment of this community, the bishops' statement is designed to cover all people with disabilities — developmentally and otherwise.

Among the bishops' pleas:

- Encouraging parents to choose life for their unborn baby, even when a disability has been detected.
- Providing support for families who care for children or other family members who have a disability.
- Offering religious education, as well as full inclusion in the sacraments, for children and adults with disabilities.
- Providing physical access to churches, social halls, meeting rooms and bathrooms.
- Encouraging residents of group homes to be a regular part of the parish.
- Expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities in such liturgical duties as lectors, eucharistic ministers and altar servers.

Obituaries

Helen Pratt; longtime attorney in Dansville

Helen Pratt, an attorney for more than 60 years and parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Dansville, died Oct. 27, 2000, at her home. She was 94.

Ms. Pratt grew up in the former St. Patrick's Parish in Dansville. She graduated from Albany Law School and was admitted to the bar in 1928. She then practiced at the Pratt Law Offices in Dansville until her retirement in 1992, taking over the practice after her father passed away.

Ms. Pratt was nominated and elected to the U.S. Electoral College in 1976. She served as Dansville village attorney, president of the Livingston County Bar Association, and chair of its Committee of Legal Ethics. She was also active in numerous civic organizations.

Father Richard O'Connell, pastor of St. Mary's Parish from 1972-78, remained friends with Ms. Pratt after he left Dansville. He described Ms. Pratt as a quiet phil-

anthropist who, in the early 1990s, contributed a large amount of money toward the renovation of St. Mary's Church.

"She did a lot of good for a lot of people, but she kept that unpublicized. She was quite a private person," Father O'Connell remarked.

Her funeral Mass was held Oct. 31 at St. Mary's Church. Father Stephen Kraus, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community, served as celebrant. Concelebrants were Father O'Connell along with Fathers Joseph Catanise and P. Frederick Helfrich, who also formerly served at St. Mary's. Interment was at Greenmount Cemetery.

Ms. Pratt is survived by one niece and several friends.

Sr. Hatterscheid; Kearney teacher

Rochester native Sister M. Celestine Hatterscheid, SSND, who formerly taught at Bishop Kearney High School in Irondequoit, died Oct. 31, 2000, at Lourdes Health Center in Wilton, Conn.

Sister Hatterscheid served as a high-school teacher for 45 years. She also taught at St. Mary's High School, Buffalo; and St. Savior's High School, Brooklyn. She retired in 1996.

Sister Hatterscheid is survived by a brother, Joseph, and sister, Rosemary McHugh, both of Rochester; and several nieces and nephews.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated Nov. 2, at the School Sisters of Notre Dame motherhouse in Wilton. Interment was in St. Mary's Cemetery, Bethel, Conn.

Donations in Sister Hatterscheid's memory may be made to the SSND Development Fund, Wilton, CT 06897.

Recognizing

★ Kathleen Urbanic has updated her book, *Shoulder to Shoulder: Polish Americans in Rochester, N.Y.*, which had sold out, in an Edition 2000 published with grants from the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, the Louis Skalny Foundation and Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies at the University of Rochester. The hard-cover edition now covers the history of the local Polish American community from 1890-2000. The 500-page book contains more than 140 photographs, maps and original sketches. It was illustrated by Frank Anders.

★ Corey Simpson, a senior at McQuaid Jesuit High School, Rochester, was recently named a scholar finalist in the National Hispanic Recognition Program. The program recognizes the exceptional achievements of Hispanic high school seniors, and Corey is one of 3,000 students chosen from among 175,000 nationwide who competed for the honor by taking a scholarship test. He is the son of Paul Simpson of Irondequoit.

★ Rick Aronberg, coach of the men's and women's swimming and diving teams at Nazareth College, Rochester, has been named an assistant coach for the U.S. team that will compete in Israel July 7-27, 2001, at the 16th World Maccabiah Games. The games will involve athletes of Jewish heritage from 56 countries.

★ Interfaith Action, a Rochester-based federation of churches, many Catholic, has received a five-year \$350,000 grant from the Raskob Foundation. The funds will help congregations explore the connection between faith and community organizing, and promote community and religious initiatives to revitalize the city's commercial district.

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