

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Obituaries

### Mother Miriam O'Brien, OCD

Mother Miriam O'Brien, OCD, superior of the Carmelite Monastery in Pittsford, died Nov. 15, 2000, at St. Mary's Hospice in Rochester after a long illness. She was 88.

Born Mary Joseph O'Brien, the Carmelite nun was a native of Brighton, Mass. Upon entering the Order of Discalced Carmelites in 1936, she moved to Rochester and took up residence in the original Carmelite Monastery on East Avenue. The monastery is now located at 1931 Jefferson Road.

Mother O'Brien professed her final vows in 1940. As a cloistered nun, she was not permitted to leave the monastery grounds except for medical reasons or emergency.

Even so, Sister Magdalen Praetz, OCD, said that Mother O'Brien developed close relationships with people on the outside. She explained that Mother O'Brien was one of the few nuns in her Carmelite community who was designated to meet and talk with the public.

"She got to know people very well. These people began to love her for her compassion and help. She helped them through many trials, more so than others might. More and more, we have found how people have looked to her for advice," observed Sister Praetz, who has resided at the Carmelite Monastery since 1941.

Although Mother O'Brien had been quite ill in recent years, Sister Praetz said, she was not given to complaining. "Her whole outlook on life was, 'God's will,'" Sister Praetz remarked.

Known as Mother Miriam of the Angels among her community, Mother O'Brien was finishing a three-year term as the Carmelite Monastery's prioress at the time of her death. Sister Praetz said that Mother O'Brien had also served previous terms as prioress during her lengthy stay at the monastery.

Mother O'Brien's funeral Mass was celebrated Nov. 18 in the monastery's chapel. Bishop Matthew H. Clark served as celebrant, and was joined by 15 priests. Interment was at the Carmelite Monastic Cemetery.

Mother O'Brien is survived by her sister, Nora A. Higgins; brother, Paul T. (Mary) O'Brien; nieces and nephews; and her sisters in the Carmelite Monastery.

-Mike Latona

### Sister Schaller; taught in Rochester

Sister M. Frances Romana Schaller, SSND, who taught at Holy Family School, Rochester, died Nov. 14, 2000, in Lourdes Health Center, Wilton, Conn., after a brief illness. She was 90.

Sister Schaller was born in Woodhaven, N.Y., and professed her final vows as a School Sister of Notre Dame in 1937 in Baltimore. In addition to teaching at Holy Family from 1930 to 1933, she also taught grammar school and middle school students or served as an administrator at St. Joseph's, Midland, Md.; St. Mary's, Washington, D.C.; St. John Nepomucene, Bohemia, N.Y.; and St. Brigid's, Westbury, Long Island. She al-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

### Merry music

(Above, left) Frank Anselmo, music teacher from St. Pius Tenth School in Chill, directs the All Diocese Select Orchestra, made up of students from St. Pius, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Lawrence, All Saints and Holy Cross schools, at a holiday concert Dec. 17 at Marketplace Mall in Henrietta. (Above, right) Holy Cross sixth-grader Christina Drexler (left) and Adrianne Easterly, an eighth-grader from St. Lawrence School, play flutes at the concert. (At left) Jeff Jamberdino, an eighth-grader at All Saints, plays the baritone.

## SSJs issue sanctions to longtime member

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

Margory Henninger, a Sister of St. Joseph associated with the breakaway Spiritus Christi Church, remains a member of the Rochester order although she refuses to comply with orders from her superiors.

On Oct. 31, congregational leadership told her to cease calling herself "sister" in her work and in public, and to stop publicly identifying herself with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Yet Henninger told the *Catholic Courier* that she has no intention of following these instructions.

Further, the congregation has stopped paying her stipend.

"It wasn't a dismissal at all," said Sister

Janice Morgan, who said she met with Sister Henninger Oct. 31 and gave her a letter at that time.

"We have been in ongoing discussion, because it has continued to be a struggle, and we continue to try to embrace her and keep her here as part of our family as a Sister of St. Joseph."

In June 1999, the congregation's previous leadership began formal proceedings to remove Henninger. The new administration has chosen to go with sanctions rather than steps toward removal, however, according to Sister Morgan. The sanctions were necessary to demonstrate that the congregation was not lending silent approval to her association with Spiritus Christi, she said.

"If her family still calls her sister, if friends or relatives call her sister, that's fine," Sister Morgan said, adding the sanction related to Sister Henninger's work, "which all comes from Spiritus Christi, a church in schism."

Spiritus Christi is, indeed, a church in schism, according to diocesan officials, who note that its members have excommunicated themselves from the Catholic Church. Its leader, Father James Callan, a diocesan priest and former priest administrator of Corpus Christi Parish, was suspended from active priestly ministry by Bishop Matthew H. Clark in December 1998.

Yet Henninger, with the order for 40 years, told the *Courier* Dec. 15 that "I still will call myself sister. I did let Sister Janice know I could not abide by that."

The congregation still covers health insurance and pension contributions for Henninger, who will turn 60 on Jan. 14.

Henninger is director of Grace of God House of Recovery, which she started a year ago in downtown Rochester as a Spiritus Christi outreach.

"We're not going further at this point," Sister Morgan said. "It's very hard. It's probably one of the hardest things we will do during this administration. It's wrenching... We are praying that the reconciliation will somehow come."

"We have talked with her," Sister Morgan continued, "I don't want to use the word begged, and said we would open a recovery house and you can operate under the auspices of the Sisters of St. Joseph."

Henninger had served at Corpus Christi since 1977. She told the *Courier* that she refuses to sever ties with the Spiritus Christi people with whom she has associated for 20 years.

"I do not see this as an obedience issue," she said. She added that she cannot support the church's position on women's ordination, on homosexuality and on intercommunion with non-Catholics.

"As a woman religious I can no longer stand with the Catholic Church on those issues," she said, "And as a Catholic I have the right to dissent."

Sister Morgan said the congregation had not spoken with the Vatican about the situation. And she said, "We've never heard from Rome."

"The only ones we've been in consultation with are canon lawyers," she said.

### Matilda Weaver; was active in numerous Catholic organizations

Matilda Wetzel Weaver, a parishioner at Rochester's Holy Rosary Church for 57 years, died Nov. 25, 2000.

Mrs. Weaver was a lifelong Rochester resident. She attended St. Francis Xavier School and St. Joseph Commercial School of Business where she was class valedictorian.

She was an active member of Our Lady's Sodality and served as prefect of the

St. Francis Xavier Unit. She also belonged to the Mercy Guild and Our Lady of the Snows Associates, and was an avid supporter of Catholic education.

Mrs. Weaver was predeceased by her husband, Edward J. Weaver. She is survived by her children, Sister Edwardine Weaver, RSM, Catherine Brien, Edward A. Weaver, Carolyn Skill and Margaret Mary Covington; 20 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchild-

dren; and two great-great grandchildren.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated Nov. 29 at Holy Rosary Church, and a memorial Mass was said Nov. 30 in the St. Ann's Home chapel. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Donations in Mrs. Weaver's memory can be made to the Rochester Sisters of Mercy, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, NY 14610.

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