

DIOCESAN NEWS

Former Auburn convent to be home for dying

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

The time has come for a home for the terminally ill in Auburn, supporters say.

Among them is a convert to the idea, Sacred Heart parishioner Eva Lambton. Long before her husband, John, was diagnosed with cancer, the couple had talked about what they would do if one became seriously ill.

"Neither one wanted to do hospice; it would be too hard on the other," she recalled. But when John became seriously ill and had to be hospitalized, he changed his mind. So the couple called on Hospice of the Finger Lakes to take care of him in their home.

"They were what I call my earth angels," she said. "They made what I held impossible very possible."

"Actually I was quite afraid of death and dying, and my husband was, too," Lambton said. "(Y)ou don't have a choice ... when you get cancer, you get cancer."

After John died in 1997, Eva wondered what similar couples would do if they didn't have a "primary caregiver" at home, since Auburn has no home for the terminally ill. She joined others researching such a project and also became a volunteer for Hospice of the Finger Lakes.

Peter Randall, a retired nurse anesthetist also from Sacred Heart, also signed on.

"There are several around in Syracuse, Rochester and Ithaca," he noted, "and it has



Andrea Dixon/Staff Photographer

(From left) Eva Lambton, the Rev. Janet Newman and Judy Nichols gather Feb. 9 outside the old St. Hyacinth's Convent on Pulaski Street, Auburn. Plans are to convert the building into Matthew House, Auburn's first home for the terminally ill. The women are three members of the Matthew House board.

been determined there is a need and certainly a use for it."

Randall's interest grew as he volunteered for Hospice of the Finger Lakes and saw some pitiful conditions. In one home where relatives cared for a dying man, "The living quarters were closer to a pig sty than a home," he said.

Supporters have named their home Matthew House after Matthew Moran, who died three years ago at the age of 23. He, too, was fortunate that his parents, John and Sue, were able to care for him at their home in Skaneateles. Since Matthew's death, the Morans have organized a yearly benefit golf tournament, and designated

some of the money to the home.

In addition the organizers have received \$50,000 from the Allyn Foundation, which offered another \$25,000 in the form of a matching grant. Anything they can raise up to that will be matched.

The Rev. Janet Newman, pastor of Scipioville Presbyterian Church and president of the Matthew House board, said the board is planning a campaign to raise \$275,000 to cover the purchase of the home, renovation, and hiring a registered nurse and coordinator. In addition, about 100 volunteers will be needed to help cook, landscape, decorate and maintain the home, and sit with patients, according to Judy Nichols, a counselor for a Syracuse battered women's shelter and vice-president of the Matthew House board.

The old St. Hyacinth's convent building on Pulaski Street, built in 1929, has been promised to the group, according to St. Hyacinth's pastor, Father Xavier Nawrocki, OFM Conv.

The convent is assessed at about \$90,000, and the parish will accept \$45,000 for it, he said, noting the project is "such a beautiful, human thing ... that nobody could say no." The convent has been used sporadically since the women religious left in 1992, he said.

The project awaits only state approval of the transfer from one nonprofit to another, organizers said. That should happen within a few months.

"When we get the building, we can really get started and really feel we are doing it," Lambton said. "We feel the Holy Spirit is guiding us, doors seem to be opening."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Further information is available from Rev. Newman at 315-253-2272, or Nicholas, at 315-468-3260 or 689-9305. Contributions are being accepted for Matthew House at P.O. Box 283, Auburn, NY 13021.

Vatican denies appeal to keep church open

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The Vatican has denied an appeal by a group of parishioners to keep open St. Francis of Assisi Church, Rochester, which was closed last summer.

The Diocese of Rochester announced the Vatican's decision in a statement issued Feb. 12.

"The Congregation for the Clergy, the Vatican office bearing responsibility for processing such appeals, ruled that due to procedural inadequacies, the recourse made by concerned parties at St. Francis of Assisi Parish was not admissible," the statement read.

A Jan. 17 letter from the Congregation stated that the St. Francis petitioners had not formulated their appeal "in accordance with the norms of Canon Law, nor within its time frames."

A small group of parishioners filed the appeal last July after Bishop Matthew H. Clark, following the recommendation of the St. Francis parish council, closed the church. Among the reasons cited by the council for closing the church were declining Mass attendance, an aging membership and financial challenges.

The parish celebrated its final Mass Aug. 15, and most members of St. Francis designated neighboring Holy Apostles Church as their new church. St. Francis transferred its sacramental records to Holy Apostles, which also revised its constitution to establish a new standing committee, the Latino Ministry Committee, after the St. Francis parishioners arrived. St. Francis' Hispanic community had a Sunday Mass, and when the church closed, Holy Apostles began offering a Sunday Mass in Spanish.

"We recognize that the situation has been a painful one for all involved," said Fa-

ther Joseph A. Hart, diocesan vicar general, in the diocesan statement. "However, great strides have been taken during the last few months ... Former St. Francis parishioners have been welcomed into other area parishes that have greater resources to meet their needs and offer more opportunities for enriched parish life."

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