

## DIOCESAN NEWS

## Potential Sicilian saint has relatives in diocese

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**IRONDEQUOIT** — Someday, Sister Marie Therese Alaimo, SSND, may have to look no further than her own family tree to find a Catholic saint to venerate.

The Vatican is currently investigating the canonization cause of Sister Alaimo's first cousin, known as Sister Maria Alfonsa Alaimo-Bruno of the Child Jesus, AR.

Canonization means the Catholic Church officially declares that a deceased person is living in heaven and worthy of veneration. The process follows beatification and investigation into a person's virtues, writings, reputation for holiness and miracles ascribed to the person's intercession since his or her death. Martyrs, however, do not require miracles for canonization.

An Italian who worked with the children of mining families in Steubenville, Ohio, from 1960-68, Sister Alfonsa was noted both in this country and in her native Sicily as a gentle, prayerful woman who served as a trustworthy confidante to many souls. She died Aug. 23, 1994, at the age of 57.

Sister Alaimo, who served as pastoral associate at St. Cecilia's Parish from 1985-2000, is one of a handful of Sister Alfonsa's relatives in the Rochester area. Sister Alaimo's immigrant father, Samuel Alaimo, who died in 1976, was the brother of Sister Alfonsa's mother, Gerlanda Alaimo, who married Leonardo Bruno.

According to a Sicily-based group promoting her cause, Sister Alfonsa was a member of the order Handmaids of Reparation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was born in Tarquinia in the province of Viterbo, Italy, on April 11, 1937. She entered her order in Messina, Sicily, on Nov. 4, 1956, and took her perpetual vows Feb. 3, 1964.

She originally entered the order with the dream of becoming a kindergarten teacher. However, she never worked in that capacity, instead taking care of the children of Steubenville mining community families. By the late '60s, she had fallen ill with rheumatic arthritis, a rheumatic lung, and ankylosis of her limbs. She returned to Sicily as an invalid in June 1968, and used a wheelchair the rest of her life.

Despite her restricted mobility, Sister Alfonsa remained cheerful and wrote and meditated upon the sufferings of Christ, Sister Alaimo said.

"I believe that suffering is a gift from God," Sister Alfonsa was reported to have said. People would come from miles around to her order's motherhouse in Messina to ask for her cousin's advice on numerous subjects, most notably difficult family matters, Sister Alaimo said.

Among Sister Alfonsa's relatives here who met her was Antoinette Alaimo of Rochester, an aunt to Sister Alaimo and Sister Alfonsa.

"She was just a lovely person with a good sense of humor," Antoinette Alaimo said. "She seemed to have this beaming face like she appeared to have a spiritual inner beauty that just showed on her face."

Although she never met her cousin, Sister Alaimo said she has kept in touch with her cousin's friends and relatives in Sicily where every August a Mass is celebrated in her honor. Sister Alaimo said she wants to promote her cousin's sainthood cause in the Diocese of Rochester. She noted that she would like to organize a prayer service or possibly a Mass for her cousin in this diocese if enough interest is generated in her cause. She added that she has promoted Sister Alfonsa's cause in the local Italian-American community. For example, she said, in December, the Rochester publica-

tion Italian American Community News published a short piece in Italian on Sister Alfonsa. Sister Alaimo said people can contact her at St. Cecilia's at 716/654-8528 to learn more about Sister Alfonsa. A Web site in Italian features Sister Alfonsa at <http://digilander.iol.it/suoralfonsa>.

Although she has actually been a nun longer than her famed cousin was, Sister

Alaimo said she has nonetheless profited from her younger relative's sainthood cause. For example, she said, she now prays for her cousin's intercession for miraculous help and urged others to do the same.

"It's been a beautiful experience knowing that someone so close in the family would be at this point of sainthood," she said. "I'm just so sorry that I never met her."



Karin von Voigtlander

## Palm Sunday

Father William Laird hands palm leaves to Judy Valvo at a Palm Sunday Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Auburn April 8.

## Dominican sister named Catholic schools superintendent

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

Sister Elizabeth Meegan, OP, will become the new diocesan superintendent of schools July 1.

A Dominican sister with more than 30 years' experience in education, she was vicarress of the Congregation of Sinsinawa Dominicans in Wisconsin from 1994-2000. For the past year she has been academic adviser to 217 student athletes at the University of Portland, Ore., where she was named an assistant professor and taught in the School of Education.

"It has been a great transition from leadership to where my heart is — elementary

and secondary education," she said in an interview from Portland.

Sister Meegan has served as superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pa. (1992-94) and the Diocese of Phoenix, Az. (1988-92). In both, she worked with diocesan high schools.

In Pittsburgh she contributed to a decreased subsidy to the diocesan high schools, she stated in her resume, and in Phoenix, turned the finances of the diocesan high schools from deficits reaching more than a half-million dollars, to an excess of \$100,000.

She also has been a teacher and principal at schools in various cities in Wisconsin, Chicago, Omaha and the Bronx. Her Ph.D. is in educational administration from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

"Obviously I'm delighted that she has agreed to come to Rochester," said Father Joseph A. Hart, Pastoral Center moderator. "Someone of her background, experience, enthusiasm and energy is a most welcome addition to our management team."

While the diocese does not have a direct relationship to the Catholic high schools within its boundaries, Father Hart added, "Given her extensive background she will be a helpful resource for the high schools."

Timothy W. Dwyer, who has been superintendent since 1992, announced in November that he would resign this summer. He is returning to his native Michigan,

where his wife became a hospital administrator.

"I really believe I can make a difference in the Diocese of Rochester," Sister Meegan told the *Catholic Courier*. "Every single person that I met there seemed to be pulling in the same direction, seemed to be interested in the church of Rochester."

The fact that people were nice, she added, "wouldn't be enough if I didn't see evidence the diocese was planning and looking ahead, instead of trying to tread water."

Sister Meegan served on the U.S. Catholic Conference Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education, producing "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions," in 1998, and "From the Ground Up: Teaching Catholic Social Principles in Elementary Schools," by the National Catholic Education Association in collaboration with the USCC, in 1999.

Both are used in the diocese's Catholic schools, according to Dwyer. "They raised the awareness within the school communities that one of our obligations is to convey the social teachings of the church," he said. "They did it in a professional way and converted them into a format that fits our curriculum well."

The diocese will be "very fortunate" to have Sister Meegan, he added.

Sister Meegan chaired the committees whose work led to the creation of Dominican Sisters, USA, a federation of 23 congregations. She will be accompanied by a retired Dominican sister with whom she can live in community. The nearest others will be hours away, she noted.

She said it was too early to comment on what she wants to accomplish in Rochester.

"It's really important to me to make a difference in Catholic education," she said. "I don't expect to raise unreasonable expectations or unreasonable fears."

### Cover art

Linda Jeanne Rivers' illustration is of the Easter triduum, the three-day commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection. It begins with Holy Thursday evening Mass recalling the Last Supper and continues through Good Friday and the Crucifixion; Holy Saturday and meditating on Christ's passion and death and awaiting his resurrection; the Easter vigil; and concludes Easter Sunday after Sunday Mass and evening prayer.

The triduum is not part of Lent.

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### Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)

Vol. 112 No. 27, April 12, 2001

Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

### Lunch Specials

#### SHRIMP ALEXANDER

Jumbo shrimp stuffed with goat cheese, wrapped in bacon and set on a bed of sauteed escarole

#### MUSHROOM LASAGNA

Layered with mushrooms and spinach, topped with a tomato basil sauce

#### CATCH OF THE DAY

Each day the Lamplighter features a new seafood selection.

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Our chef selects a new and interesting combination each and every day.

All Lunch Specials served with a choice of soup or salad

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SUNDAY  
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MOTHERS'  
DAY

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### Dinner Specials

#### PORTOFINO

Lobster, shrimp, scallops and crabmeat sauteed in olive oil and white wine, served with artichokes & black olives over a bed of pasta

#### GRILLED VEAL CHOP (14oz)

This fusion creation is marinated in Chinese herbs, served on the bone with a maderia wine sauce

#### RACK OF LAMB

Marinated in balsamic and crusted with Dijon, makes my mouth water just to talk about it.

#### ROASTED DUCKLING

Seared with a sundried cherry macadamia pesto and a port wine glaze.

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