

DIOCESAN NEWS

Four Steuben parishes dissolve, form one entity

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Four parishes in Steuben County are being canonically dissolved, or suppressed, for the purpose of forming one new parish with four worship sites.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has issued decrees of suppression for St. Mary's, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Patrick's churches, all in Corning; and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Painted Post. The parishes had petitioned Bishop Clark for the decrees in January 2001 and he issued them in April, noting that they would take effect July 1.

The four parishes were formerly known as the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community. The new combined parish will become All Saints Parish as of July 1. Sister of St. Joseph Joan Cawley, pastoral administrator, said all four church buildings will retain their individual names despite being formally suppressed.

A significant facet of this move is that one set of financial and sacramental records will now be kept. "All assets which formerly belonged to the separate corpo-

Diocesan priests depart parishes

Diocesan officials have announced that Father Eric Phillips, 31, who was ordained a priest in 1998, has requested and received a leave of absence from Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The leave took effect June 26.

In an unrelated matter, Father Robert O'Neill, 64, has resigned his pastorate at St. Christopher's Parish in North Chili. His resignation also is effective June 26.

Both diocesan priests announced their decisions in their respective parishes at weekend Masses June 23-24.

Father Phillips had served as priest intern at St. Joseph's, Penfield, for the past two years. Father Michael Conboy, diocesan director of priest personnel, said Father Phillips requested to take leave so he could deal with "some personal concerns and issues."

"We wish him well and that he'll be able to resolve his issues and resume active ministry," Father Conboy said.

Father Pius Pathmarajah, an extern priest from Sri Lanka, will serve as part-time parochial vicar at St. Joseph's.

Father O'Neill had served at St. Christopher's since 1998 — one year as administrator, the last two as pastor. He will be reassigned after dealing with health concerns, Father Conboy said.

Father Norbert Kyumu, an extern priest from Kenya who has been St. Christopher's parochial vicar, has been appointed as administrator.

The announcements by Fathers Phillips and O'Neill continued a string of sudden priest departures during the last few months. In mid-April, Father Kip Corriveau, chaplain of Strong Memorial Hospital, and Father Brian Jeffers, pastor of the six-church Good Shepherd Catholic Community in southern Cayuga County, both began leaves of absence. Like Father Phillips, Fathers Corriveau and Jeffers are in their 30s. And earlier this month, Father Philip Billotte, pastor of the six-church Our Lady of the Lakes Parish in the Finger Lakes, resigned his pastorate.

Father Conboy noted that Fathers Corriveau, Jeffers and Phillips are on administrative leave, whereas Fathers Billotte and O'Neill are merely taking time off after resigning their pastorates. They are both expected to return in the near future.

Asked about these changes' effect on priest staffing and morale, Father Conboy said, "With the shortage of priests, when even one decides to take a leave of absence or resign (a pastorate), it makes a dent. The priests on active duty are very concerned."

—Mike Latona

rations of the four parishes will now be considered the assets of the new parish, and all liabilities that are currently part of the four individual parishes will be assumed by All Saints Parish," Bishop Clark stated in each letter of decree. "It will also be important that all sacramental records will be maintained by the new parish community."

In many respects, Sister Cawley said, these new developments are extensions of a process that began several years ago. The Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community was launched in 1990, with one pastor designated for all four churches. In 1996, four parish councils became one, and several committees and staff positions were also combined.

"We're making explicit what has been implicit," Sister Cawley said. "We've already been moving in this direction."

Sister Cawley was named Corning-Painted Post's temporary pastoral administrator in January 2000 and received a four-year term to the position last June. Priests for the parish include two sacramental ministers, Fathers Mark Miller and Donald Curtiss; as well as a retired priest, Father Francis Davis.

Also beginning in early July, Sister Cawley said, the number of weekend Masses for the new parish will drop from eight to six. She said this reduction is in line with recent reminders from Bishop Clark that that, according to canon law, no diocesan priest should celebrate more than three Masses per weekend. The parish will continue to offer 11 weekday Masses spread among the four worship sites — two Masses each on Monday-through Friday, and one on Saturday.

Sister Cawley said the new parish name will appear on church bulletins, stationery



Sister Joan Cawley, SSJ

and collection envelopes. When opinions were sought for a new parish name, "95 percent of the parishioners said to keep it short," she said with a laugh. "For example, at the Sunday Mass we had said 'Welcome to the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community here at St. Mary's Church.' Now we can just say, 'Welcome to All Saints Parish.'"

The parish name is derived from Corning's two Catholic schools, both named All Saints: the Denison Parkway building (pre-K through grade one), located at St. Patrick's; and the State Street building (grades two through eight), located at St. Mary's.

"All Saints just seemed the logical

choice. It just seemed to be the inclusive name," Sister Cawley said.

The new Steuben County configuration resembles the move made by six parishes in southern Cayuga County in 1999. They, also, were canonically suppressed and one parish, the Good Shepherd Catholic Community, was formed.

Four weekend Masses are held most of the year among the six churches in Good Shepherd. The parish had been led by a priest pastor, Father Brian Jeffers, until he went on a leave of absence in April 2001. Deacon Thomas Cass began duties as temporary pastoral administrator beginning in June. Father Felician Sierotowicz, an extern priest from Poland, began as the parish's sacramental minister June 26.

William Pickett, diocesan director of planning, added that the six parishes in the Tioga Region planning group — five parishes in Tioga County and one in Chemung — plan to adopt a similar model beginning in 2003. Those parishes also would be suppressed so that one parish with six worship sites could be formed. The new parish would be staffed by one pastor and two sacramental ministers.

Pickett said this is one way that medium- and smaller-sized parishes can maintain themselves in light of the declining availability of priests. As of last year, there were 2,961 families in the four Corning-Painted Post parishes, an average of nearly 750 per church, he said. There were 2,338 families in Tioga, an average of nearly 600 per church; and 536 in southern Cayuga, an average of less than 100.

However, Pickett said it's too soon to determine whether the model will become a trend in the diocese.

"I think we have to watch this and see how it works," Pickett said.

Obituary

Father Joseph Gaynor; led Elmira parish

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

Father Joseph T. Gaynor, a diocesan priest for 56 years and pastor of Elmira's St. Charles Borromeo Parish for two decades, died June 26, 2001, at Auburn Memorial Hospital. He was 82 and had recently been diagnosed with lung cancer.

Father Gaynor's home parish was St. Alphonsus in Auburn. He attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, and was ordained to the priesthood on March 17, 1945.

He served as assistant pastor at Holy Cross, Rochester (1945-47); Holy Apostles, Rochester (1947-54); St. Francis of Assisi, Auburn (1954-56); St. Michael's, Newark (1956-61); and St. John the Evangelist, Clyde (1961-67).

Father Gaynor was appointed administrator, then pastor, at St. Catherine of Siena in Addison in 1967. He served there for two years before beginning his lengthy pastorate at St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira. During that time he belonged to the diocesan Priests' Council; served as a regional coordinator; and was active with the Cursillo movement.

"In his quiet, gentle way, he was involved in everything," said Deacon Bill Dougherty, a St. Charles parishioner during Father Gaynor's entire pastorate. Dea-



con Dougherty also credited Father Gaynor with encouraging him toward the permanent diaconate.

Father Gaynor ministered in a low-key

fashion throughout his priesthood, according to two of his classmates.

"He was a very quiet, unassuming man who loved reading," Father L. James Callan remarked. "He was always kind. There was a reserve about him that attracted him to people."

"He was a very, very brilliant man — not flamboyant in his preaching, but it was always good solid stuff," added Father Francis R. Davis. "He was very welcoming, and very caring and concerned for his brother priests and his flock."

Upon his retirement in 1989, Father Gaynor returned to his home parish of St. Alphonsus. For the last several years, he

held many ministerial roles.

"He never really retired," remarked Father Louis A. Vasile, St. Alphonsus' pastor since 1998. "He was always involved, accessible and available."

Father Vasile noted that Father Gaynor spent much of his retirement ministering to the sick. "Father Gaynor was the person who did a lot of the home visiting and hospital visits," the St. Alphonsus pastor said.

"He was absolutely a pastoral person — a priest from head to toe."

Father Gaynor is survived by his sister, Mildred Gaynor; nephew, John Pimm; niece, Kathleen Pimm; grandnephew and three grandnieces.

Father Gaynor is scheduled to lie in state at St. Alphonsus from 4 to 7 p.m. Thursday, June 28. A vigil service will follow at 7:30 p.m. His funeral Mass is to take place at St. Alphonsus Friday, June 29, at 10:30 a.m., with Bishop Matthew H. Clark presiding. Interment will be at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Auburn.

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