

DIOCESAN NEWS

Ukrainian Catholic school closes in Irondequoit

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Citing declining enrollment and mounting debt, St. Josaphat's School, a Ukrainian Catholic institution in Irondequoit, has closed after more than a half-century of operation.

Bishop Basil H. Losten, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of Stamford, Conn., told the *Catholic Courier* he was notified by St. Josaphat's Parish in late May that the school would not re-open in the fall. He said that any school closing in his diocese is initiated by the parish pastor and finance committee.

St. Josaphat's pastor, Father Edward P. Young, an archpriest of the Ukrainian diocese, said that 78 students were enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten-through-eight at St. Josaphat's during the 2000-01 school year.

"It's a combination of things," Father Young said. "There were not enough students coming to the school, and the financial drain was very burdensome. The financial burden could no longer be borne."

The school was launched in the 1930s as an evening school for Ukrainian Catholic children, when St. Josaphat's Parish was located on Hudson Avenue in Rochester. With staffing support from the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, the Eastern-rite parish began a full-time day school in 1945.

In 1964 the school moved to a new building at Stanton Lane and Ridge Road East in Irondequoit. In 1979, St. Josaphat's Parish opened its current



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

church on the same campus.

Father Young said that enrollment at St. Josaphat's exceeded 200 in the 1960s. The school also got an attendance boost in the early 1990s, when numerous students transferred to the Ukrainian Catholic school after several Rochester diocesan parish schools closed in north-east Monroe County.

But enrollment ebbed in recent years, and the availability of women religious teachers dropped as well. Father Young said these factors created a financial crisis while the parish continued paying an all-day teaching staff according to Rochester diocesan salary guidelines. During the 2000-01 school year, the school employed nine full-time teachers,

a full-time secretary, and five part-time paid employees. Sister Bernitta, SSMI, served as principal.

Father Young credited the 600-family St. Josaphat's parish community for attempting to keep the school open, saying its effort was "way beyond the call of duty."

"The parish has sacrificed a great deal of money and energy, people doing fundraisers," he commented.

"It's a very sad death and a big loss."

St. Josaphat's was not an official member of the Rochester diocesan Department of Catholic Schools. However, Sister Ann Guerin, SSJ, director of school communications, said the department invited St. Josaphat's faculty and staff to

meetings, and referred teachers to the school.

"They're not responsible for the same policies but if they wanted advice, we'd give it to them," Sister Guerin said.

Sister Guerin added that she was saddened by the school's closing, saying, "It's one less opportunity, one less choice."

St. Josaphat's closing leaves Ss. Peter and Paul School in Auburn as the only Ukrainian Catholic school still operating within Rochester diocesan boundaries. According to Joanne Regets, secretary, the kindergarten-through-grade eight school expects an approximate enrollment of 130 this fall.

Although this is a healthy figure for the school, Regets said that Ss. Peter and Paul, as well, is affected by the shortage of women religious.

"There aren't any sisters to send to us," Regets said.

The school's principal last year was Sister Mary Cornelia, a nun in the Order of St. Basil the Great. There will be no full-time sisters staffing the school in 2001-02, and two Ss. Peter and Paul teachers, Maryann Dec and William A. Locastro, will voluntarily fill the principal slot.

St. Josaphat's and Ss. Peter and Paul are among four Ukrainian Catholic parishes within Rochester diocesan boundaries; the others are St. Nicholas in Elmira Heights and Church of the Epiphany in Rochester. They all belong to the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of Stamford, which has 54 parishes in five northeastern states.

Diocesan Council
The Rev. James J. Balinsky, president of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester, was elected chair of the New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors (CCCCD). The council is composed of the diocesan director of Catholic Charities in each of New York's eight Roman Catholic dioceses. It provides advice to the New York State Catholic Conference in regard to public policy and legislation that affect the state's social services. Balinsky's two-year term as chair began July 1.

Dr. Jack Calarezo, who started his career as a seventh- and eighth-grade teacher in Rochester's diocesan schools, has been named president of Ohio Dominican College in Columbus, Ohio. He started as president in June and will be formally inaugurated in December. Calarezo is the first man and the first lay person to lead the 100-year-old Catholic liberal arts college. All 17 of the college's previous presidents have been Dominican monks.

A number of members of the diocesan young adult council met in their 30s and 40s, raising about \$1,000 for the American Cancer Society through a March fundraising event that drew large numbers of people. The fundraiser, in which

members of the parish in Geneva, N.Y., raised money for the parish, was held in January. Mr. Calarezo died in January at age 48 after a long struggle with diabetes, and was an active participant in Odyssey's social and spiritual activities.

The Rochester Labor and Religion Coalition, co-chaired by Marvin Mich, director of social policy and research at the Catholic Family Center, received the Rochester Labor Council AFL-CIO Community Solidarity Award 2000. The award recognized efforts in helping to win living wage legislation and to educate the community about sweatshop labor.

Seventeen parish social ministers were noted for their work at Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier's Social Ministry Dinner June 4: David Biviano, St. Mary's Parish, Elmira; Elaine Harrington and Patricia Caldwell, Eastside Catholic Parish, Elmira; John Crowley, Nancy Kline, Beverly Mathew, Ronald and Mary Kay Taylor, and Francis and Maureen Smith, Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira; Maria Marrocco and Marion Agan, St. Charles/St. Casimir, Elmira; Marceline Benedict, St. Mary's, Bath; Josephine Dibble, St. Stanislaus, Bath; John De Stefano and Sister Lucy Whitehouse, St. Anthony/St. Patrick, Bath; and Linda Stroudman, St. Mary's, Bath.

Charges filed in fatal crash

State police have filed three charges against the driver of an SUV involved in a July 22 accident in Fayette, Seneca County, that killed Father Brian Jeffers, 37.

Investigator Marie Kirkwood said Philip R. Johnson, 53, of Geneva, was charged July 27 with driving while intoxicated, failure to keep right and wearing no seatbelt. Further charges were possible, pending continuing investigation and consultation with the Seneca County District Attorney's office, she said. Blood alcohol results were pending, she said, but the charges were based on the "observation of the troopers."

Johnson was driving a Nissan Pathfinder north on State Route 96A, and Father Jeffers was driving his motorcycle southbound on the same route. The SUV drifted across the center line on a right-hand curve south of Larson Road, about five miles southeast of Geneva, and the motorcycle struck the side of the SUV, police said. The accident occurred at about 5 p.m.

Johnson, who was treated for an arm injury at Geneva General Hospital and released, was scheduled to appear in Fayette

Town Court Aug. 27.

Father Jeffers died July 23 at Strong Memorial Hospital, to which he was airlifted.

Ordained in 1992, he served as priest intern at St. Mary's Church, Canandaigua, 1992-95; parochial vicar at St. Stephen's Church, Geneva, 1995-98; and pastor of the Good Shepherd Catholic Community's six parishes in Cayuga County from 1998 until receiving a leave of absence April 18. He had asked his congregation for prayers in discerning his future.

— Kathleen Schwarz

Correction

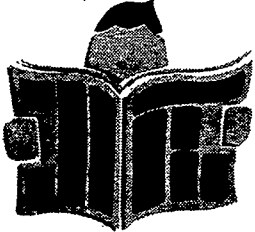
Amy Crossed-Rieck is a certified catechist for children ages 3-6 in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. A July 19 story on the new Women's Commission members contained incorrect information.

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