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Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer  
Students dissect a shark at Bishop Hogan Jr. High's open house Jan. 10.

# Diocese will close 7th, 8th grades

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

School halls will be new all over again for many Catholic school students this fall. The Catholic Schools Office, with Catholic School Board of Monroe County support, has decided to close the seventh and eighth grades at St. Lawrence, St. Charles Borromeo and St. John the Evangelist schools in Greece and Sacred Heart Cathedral School in Rochester at the end of this academic year.

The diocese is encouraging students who would have enrolled in these school's upper grades to go to All Saints Academy, Gates; Bishop Hogan Catholic Academy, Irondequoit; or Siena Catholic Academy, Rochester.

The decision to close grades at the four

schools did not come out of the blue, according to the diocesan schools office, which has been studying the junior high situation for years and assigned a task force to the topic in 1999.

"The priority is really the ability to provide the richest possible educational program for these students," said Dominican Sister Elizabeth Meegan, diocesan schools superintendent. At the same time, she noted, combined seventh- and eighth-grade enrollment at the four affected schools has declined to 183 students, a 38-percent drop in the last eight years.

Total enrollment of seventh- and eighth-grade students in the three Monroe County junior highs and the six schools that have been offering K-8 is 1,090.

Due to their higher enrollment and oth-

er factors, Our Mother of Sorrows and Holy Cross schools will continue to offer seventh and eighth grades, according to the schools office.

"The situation at the two remaining K-8 schools will continue to be monitored very closely," according to information the schools office sent to parents Jan. 9.

Officials said the comprehensive junior high programs, established in 1990, better enable the schools to offer stable, specialized instruction and help meet increasingly demanding state standards.

"My parents are very positive. Most of them are in full support of this," remarked Eileen Preston, principal at St. John the Evangelist. "They recognize the needs of the children will be met and are happy with that, as long as their needs will

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# Catholic Courier



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## Inside This Week

Personal center  
in the updated  
...and  
...project



Relief Web site  
aims at children  
intended as a fun  
way to learn  
— Page 5



Health committee  
...off events  
...with major  
...in diocese

## A heart-to-heart on the priesthood

**W**hat's it like to be a priest? No matter what the impression of anyone discerning such a vocation, chances are his image isn't very accurate.

"There are a lot of things they don't teach you in seminary," said Father Joe Marcoux, the diocese's newest priest, ordained last June. He was telling this to a group of young men Dec. 27 at Rochester's Becket Hall, the center for the diocesan pre-theology program.

Father Marcoux said he hadn't anticipated that, in addition to his ministerial duties, he'd be doing such a high volume of paperwork and attending meetings.

"You're just flying through the world as a priest. I didn't know I was going to be that busy, that fast," he remarked.

Father Marcoux was candid in both his talk and the question-and-answer session that followed. At one point, he described his first six months in the priesthood as "sometimes



fun, sometimes miserable. Other times it was lonely, other times joyful. It's life."

The priest also spoke frequently of his love for his vocation, saying at one point, "There's just so much you can do. I think it's the coolest time to be a priest. It's a fun journey; I'm glad I'm taking it."

Father Marcoux's comments were appropriate for clearing up misconceptions about the priesthood, said Father John DeSocio, diocesan director of pre-theology and seminarians.

"You have to lay things on the table, be more realistic. We're as honest as we can be," Father DeSocio stated. He and Patricia Finnerty, director of the diocesan Office of Vocations Awareness, organized the Dec. 27 event, which was attended by five non-seminarians who are interested in the priesthood and three of the six seminarians currently living at Becket Hall. The gathering included a Mass and dinner.

The non-seminarian-  
Continued on page 8

Father Joe Marcoux says a silent prayer during Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester Jan. 4.

National Vocations Awareness Week — Jan. 14-20

STORY BY MIKE LATONA • PHOTOS BY ANDREA DIXON