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

Inside

This Week

## 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 eighthgrade enrollment at the four affected schools has declined to 183 students, a 38percent 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 Continued on page 9

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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 anticibated that, in addi-

tending meetings.

one point, he de-

scribed his first six

months in the priest-

hood as "sometimes

marked.



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."

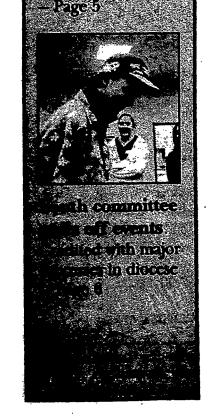
Father Marcoux's comments were appropriate for clearing up misconceptions about the priesthood, said Father John DeSocio, diocesan director of pre-theology and seminarians.

"You have to lay things on the table, ore realistic

We're as honest as we

can be," Father DeSo-

cio stated. He and Pa-



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Intended as a fun

way to learn

his talk and the ques-Father, Joe Marcoux says a silent prayer during Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral in tion-and-answer ses-Rochester Jan. 4. sion that followed. At



tricia 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-seminari-Continued

on page 8

STORY BY MIKE LATONA · PHOTOS BY ANDREA DIXON