

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Fr. DeSocio gets new post in Belgium

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

After nearly nine years of ministering to young men preparing for the priesthood, Father John DeSocio was exploring a return to parish duty this summer.

Yet his work with seminarians was deemed so valuable that he'll remain in that ministry — across the Atlantic Ocean.

On July 1, Father DeSocio will begin as vice-rector of The American College of the Immaculate Conception at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. There he will work with major seminarians for a five-year period.

Father DeSocio has served since 1993 as the Rochester Diocese's assistant to the bishop for vocations and priestly formation. He is also vice president of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors.

The 55-year-old priest said he was "surprised, totally" when he was approached by officials from The American College, saying, "It was a great honor just to be considered."

Father DeSocio received notification of his appointment in late January. He was selected for the position by Bishop Edward

K. Braxton of Lake Charles, La., who chairs the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for The American College.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has agreed to release Father DeSocio from his diocesan assignment. However, Father DeSocio will remain a priest of the diocese.

"While our local church will miss John, I know that his talents will be put to good use preparing the seminarians at the college for a future of ministering to the Catholic people of the United States," Bishop Clark said in a statement.

As vice-rector at The American College, Father DeSocio will work closely with students who are in the final stages of training for the priesthood. The American College was established in 1857 and is owned by the USCCB. Father DeSocio noted that several diocesan priests have studied in Louvain, the most recent ones being Fathers Joseph Marcoux (ordained in 2001) and Patrick VanDurme (ordained in 2000.)

Father DeSocio has a long history of ministering to young people in the Rochester Diocese. Prior to his work with seminarians, he was chaplain at Ithaca College from 1984-93.

Ordained in 1978, Father DeSocio is a

native of St. Anthony Parish in Elmira. He has also served at Immaculate Conception Parish, Ithaca (1978-80) and St. Charles Borromeo, Greece (1980-84).

Upon Father DeSocio's departure, Father William Donnelly will become diocesan director of pre-theology and rector of Becket Hall while maintaining his pastorate at St. Mary's Parish in Rochester. In addition, Father James Schwartz, pastor of St. Louis Parish in Pittsford, will become director of the diocese's seminarian formation program. The new positions for Fathers Donnelly and Schwartz are both currently held by Father DeSocio.

As he prepares for his own new assignment, Father DeSocio says he will carry fond memories to Belgium.

"The hard part is going to be leaving behind the people I've worked closely with; I will miss them a lot. They will always be a part of my life. I'm so happy they've chosen what God has called them to do," Father DeSocio said of Becket Hall's past and present seminarians.

Father DeSocio noted that seven seminarians now live at Becket Hall, compared to two when he began there as rector.

Another step forward, he said, was the founding of the diocesan Office of Voca-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer  
Father John DeSocio holds up the chalice during Mass at Rochester's Beckett Hall March 10. Father DeSocio will become vice-rector of the American College of the Immaculate Conception in Belgium July 1.

tions Awareness in 1999. Pat Finnerty, the office's director, said of Father DeSocio, "He's made so many contributions to vocation ministry. There's been a wonderful warmth about his caring attitude and love of the priesthood, and that will be a real asset to those he'll minister to in Belgium."

## Students to learn what schools they will attend in fall

By Jennifer Ficaglia  
Assistant Editor

Junior-high students affected by the closing of seventh and eighth grades at four diocesan schools will soon find out where they will attend classes in the fall.

In January, the Catholic Schools Office announced that 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 would close this June because of declining enrollment. About 175 students are affected by the closing of these grades.

The diocese has encouraged students who would have enrolled in the junior-high grades at these schools to instead apply to attend Bishop Hogan Catholic Academy in Irondequoit, All Saints Academy in Gates or Siena Catholic Academy in Brighton. The application forms are currently being processed, and students who have decided to re-enroll at these schools will learn during the week of March 18 whether they have been accepted, said Sister Patricia Carroll, SSJ, an assistant schools superintendent and middle-school specialist.

Sister Carroll said that Bishop Hogan, All Saints and Siena collectively have more than enough room to house all of the affected children.

"We're trying to work with the families," she said.

And so are The Nazareth Schools, an educational ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph that operates independently of the diocesan Catholic Schools Office. In February, the schools announced plans to accept 70 to 80 more middle-school students at Nazareth Hall this fall in response to the closing of the diocesan grades. Susan Hasler Ryan, director of enrollment management, said there is enough space at the schools' Lake Avenue facility to expand middle school enrollment, and that more teachers would be added if necessary to keep class sizes small.

Hasler Ryan said students can register at The Nazareth Schools at any time, and that the school would speedily process the applications of displaced students.

Although the Catholic Schools Office is usually informed of impending changes at The Nazareth Schools, Sister Carroll said she was not aware of the school's plans to add middle-school classes.

After considering all the options available to her, Sheila Abelein of Greece decided to send her daughter, Kelsey, a seventh-grader at St. John the Evangelist, to All Saints. Although there wasn't a lot of time to make the decision, she said she was happy overall with the way the diocese handled the situation.

"Under the circumstances, the process went well," she said.

Abelein said she decided to stay with a diocesan school because she wanted Kelsey

to have Catholic education and religion as part of her everyday life. She said she also likes the sense of community found in a small Catholic school.

Rochester's Elizabeth Cilano, on the other hand, is considering sending her son, Kevin, a seventh-grader at St. Charles Borromeo, to The Nazareth Schools. She said she felt the diocese did not deal with parents of displaced students in good faith.

Sister Carroll said the diocese understands and appreciates the fact that parents did not have a lot of time to find another school. She also noted that this is the fourth time the diocese has moved seventh and eighth graders since 1990. The first time the seventh and eighth graders were moved, the diocese told parents a year or more in advance. As a result, she said, parents chose not to enroll their children in diocesan schools for these grades. Since that time, parents

have not been given as much time to make a decision, she said.

Cilano said she also didn't like the fact that the diocese was pushing only All Saints and Bishop Hogan as alternatives. Because of this, she considered home-schooling Kevin for his eighth-grade year, then decided to look at a Catholic school outside the diocesan system.

"We are leaning heavily toward Nazareth Hall," said Cilano, adding that the tuition is higher, which will tax her budget.

Although Cilano said she plans to send Kevin to a Catholic high school — Aquinas, where his older brother now attends — she said she'll have to think long and hard about sending her 1-year-old daughter, Julia, to a diocesan elementary school.

"It's not going to be a no-brainer decision like (with her older children) to send her to St. Charles," she said.

## More interior changes announced for Sacred Heart

By Jennifer Ficaglia  
Assistant Editor

A new organ, two new confessionals and a new baptismal font are among newly announced interior changes slated for Sacred Heart Cathedral.

In February, the diocese released a partial list of interior renovations for the cathedral. That list included construction of a new altar in the nave of the church, moving the tabernacle to a new Eucharistic chapel, and restoring the stained-glass windows.

The latest round of interior plans, released this month, includes:

- Relocating the choir and organ from the rear to the cathedral's north wall. A new organ is expected to be purchased at a later date, according to Father John M. Mulligan, Sacred Heart's pastor and a diocesan vicar general.

- Using moveable chairs with kneelers to fill the rear of the church area, as well as the transepts, in order to accommodate up to 800 worshippers.

- The design and installation of a new baptismal font for immersion baptisms at the front entrance. Father Mulligan noted that "immersion is the preferred form of baptism" in the Catholic Church today.

- Creation of two new, larger confessionals near the new Eucharistic chapel, in a space now occupied by a crying room. These reconciliation chapels will accommodate both anonymous and face-to-face confessions. The four existing confessionals, which were built in 1925 and are too small for such a function, will be converted into shrines featuring statues relocated from other parts of the cathedral.

- The design of a new bishop's chair to be situated facing the worshippers. It will stand alone with no other chairs around it,

and it will not have a canopy over it.

- The addition of restrooms, which currently are not available in the cathedral.

- The construction of a ramp at the front entrance and modification in the grade level at a new entrance at the rear of the building. Although the cathedral is not required to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act, Father Mulligan said, the committee wants to make the church accessible to those with physical challenges. Plans also call for the worship space, as well as the Eucharistic, reconciliation and the Marian chapels to be accessible by wheelchair.

Father Mulligan noted that the interior changes are not arbitrary, but have a theological and liturgical basis, and are in compliance with the Catholic Church's wishes.

Schematics for the interior design will be completed by the end of June, Father Mulligan said, and the public will have a chance to comment on the plans.

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