

DIOCESAN NEWS

Dansville and Wayland schools table changes

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Following consideration of several options, St. Joseph's School in Wayland and St. Mary's School in Dansville will not make any changes in the schools' structure for the 2002-03 school year.

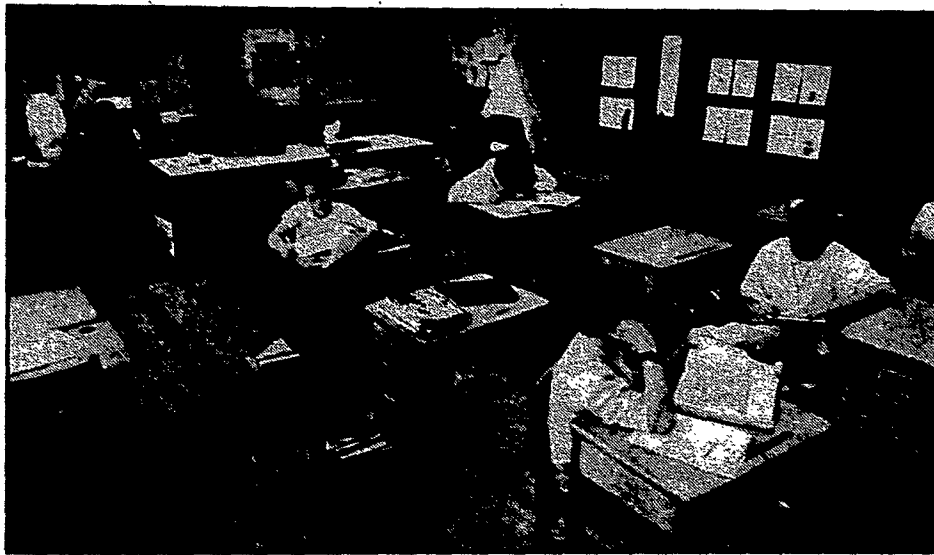
Father Stephen Kraus, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community — which includes St. Joseph's and St. Mary's parishes, where the schools are located — made the announcement to parishioners at Masses the weekend of March 16-17.

"Because there are still people who believe the enrollment in both schools can come up, we are going to wait to see the enrollment figures for the upcoming school year," Father Kraus said in a statement. "This September, I will make a decision whether or not to recommend to Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark that we bring our two schools together in September of 2003. I hope that this will assure everyone involved that a decision is being made, and at the same time that we are moving slowly enough to provide for adequate planning."

Six options had been established earlier this winter by an 11-member feasibility committee. That committee had recommended combining some grades at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's as its top option, and closing one of the schools as its second option. The other scenarios were: closing both schools; making no changes; having one principal for both schools; and consolidating the budgets of both schools.

Father Kraus had originally planned to announce his decision the weekend of March 2-3. He had also expected that some sort of change involving consolidation would take effect this coming fall.

"We were heading in that direction, but what we discovered was there were too



File photo
Students work in Kris Sigwald's sixth-grade class at St. Joseph's School in Wayland Feb. 8.

many unanswered questions," he told the *Catholic Courier*, citing such issues as busing, differences in tuition rates and teachers' pay scales between the two schools, and the fact that St. Mary's and St. Joseph's are not in the same public-school district.

"That's not to say we're not going to do something later on. We'll have to look at enrollment in September," he added.

Father Kraus said his decision was based on input from a feasibility committee as

well as parents, the Holy Family cluster's common council and parish councils, the school principals, the diocesan Department of Catholic Schools and parishioners from the cluster's four parishes: St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, along with St. Pius V, Cohocton, and Sacred Heart, Perkinsville.

St. Mary's offers pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and St. Joseph's offers pre-K through sixth grade. Enrollment at both schools has declined sharply in recent years: According to the diocesan schools office, St. Mary's currently has 83 students and St. Joseph's has 62 (not counting pre-K at either school). Monette Mahoney, principal of St. Joseph's School, told the *Courier* last month that each school takes up 46 percent of the budget from its respective parish.

"I would ask everyone to work as hard as possible to increase enrollment. This must be our major focus for the time being," Father Kraus said in his statement.

Father Kraus said the two schools will collaborate more frequently on future events and programs. He also envisions a more aggressive approach to fundraising and publicity — efforts that should involve the entire parish community.

"We're encouraging people to ask their neighbors, relatives and friends, 'How about sending your child to Catholic school?' Sometimes Catholics are a little bashful about doing those things," he said.

Obituary

Father David Bonin, 53; ministered in several communities

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

When Father David Bonin died March 13, Sister Catherine P. Theiss not only lost her former colleague at Schuyler Catholic Community, but also her "best friend."

"He was what I called a priests' priest," the Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet said during an interview, as she alternated between choking up and chuckling at fond memories. "He was meant to be a priest."

Sister Theiss is pastoral associate for SCC's two parishes, St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen, and St. Benedict's, Odessa. Father Bonin served as SCC's pastor from 1989-2001.

"You know, we have lost a great man, but we have been blessed by his presence," she said, noting that the priest oversaw renovations at SCC; introduced Stephen Ministry, an outreach program to people in crisis; and established a Lenten Mission.

Father Bonin was 53 when he died at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton. A native of Rochester, he had been baptized at St. Augustine's Church. He was confirmed at St. Helen's Church in Gates, and attended Our Lady of Good Counsel and St. Helen's schools, as well as



Cardinal Mooney High School. He completed theological and seminary studies at St. John Fisher College and St. Bernard's Seminary, both in Rochester, and was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of Precious Blood in 1974.

As an order priest, Father Bonin served as associate pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Niles, Ohio, from 1974-78, and as associate pastor at Most Precious Blood Parish in Rochester from 1978-80. He then became pastor at Most Precious Blood, where he remained until 1986, when he was named pastor of St. Ann, Palmyra, and St. Gregory, Marion.

In 1987, he was named temporary administrator of St. Mary's Parish in Bath. From 1987-89, he served in ministerial and administrative capacities at St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin; St. Ignatius Loyola Parish and St. James Mercy Hospital, Hornell; Holy Name of Jesus, Greece; and the Newman Community at the University of Rochester.

For 17 years, Father Bonin suffered from Type II diabetes and related compli-

cations. He discussed his condition and the challenges it presented in a *Catholic Courier* cover story about church ministers with disabilities. The article appeared in the newspaper's Nov. 29, 2001, edition.

"I've felt all along and over the years been taught by both the disability and working with people that people struggle with a lot of things, and you need the basic belief that God loves you and cares for you and will see you through," he said in an interview for that article.

In 1989, Father Bonin left the Precious Blood order and became incardinated in (formally attached to) the Diocese of Rochester at his request, and took up his position at SCC. Since October of last year, he had been serving as priest administrator of St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin.

Father Bonin served as director of the diocese's Cursillo Movement, a lay spiritual movement, from 1993-98. He was fondly remembered by his friend, Father Louis Vasile, pastor of St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn.

"Throughout his ministry, and particularly through his days of illness, Father Dave never gave up and was always so generous," Father Vasile said.

Sister Theiss said Father Bonin enjoyed playing jokes on her and others. On April Fool's Day one year, for example, she said he placed an advertisement in a local paper, saying: "If you see Sister Catherine today, wish her a Happy Feast Day!"

At the same time, she said, Father Bonin was a deeply tender man who particularly cared for ministering to the sick. She added that he always had interesting perspectives on scriptural stories, and said once in a homily that there was a reason Jesus was born in a stable, and not in an inn.

"If you look at it," she recalled him saying, "inns are for travelers, and Jesus came to stay."

Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided at a funeral Mass for Father Bonin on the morning of March 16 at Most Precious Blood. Interment will take place at the convenience of Father Bonin's family.

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