

OBITUARIES

Sister M. Wintish; led Lansing parish

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Mercy Sister Mary Wintish, one of the first people in diocesan history to serve in the role of pastoral administrator, died March 20, 2002, at the Mercy Motherhouse in Rochester. She was 67 and had been battling pancreatic cancer for more than a year.

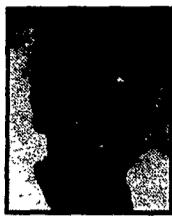
Sister Wintish had served from 1994-2001 at All Saints Parish in Lansing, Tompkins County — the last three years as pastoral administrator.

"Sister Mary was a visionary way ahead of her time. She had a healthy respect for the hierarchy of her church and was still able to challenge in ways that were healthy and good for the church," said Barbara Pedeville, diocesan director of management and staff relations.

Sister Wintish, a Rochester-native, was baptized at Corpus Christi Church and confirmed at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. She graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School in 1952; entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1953; and professed her perpetual vows in 1959. She received an associate's degree from Catherine McAuley Junior College in 1958; a bachelor's degree from Niagara University in 1962; and a master's degree in urban affairs from St. Louis University in 1976.

Sister Wintish's school assignments were as follows: teacher, St. Louis, Pittsford (1956-57); teacher, St. Rita's, Webster (1957-63); teacher, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Rochester (1963-65); principal, Mount Carmel (1965-67); teacher, St. Rita's (1967-68); teacher, Elmira Notre Dame High (1968-73); and principal, St. Michael's Junior High, Rochester (1973-74).

Sister Wintish then turned her focus toward urban ministry, serving from 1974-75 as assistant director of Project Upward



Bound; from 1976-77 as field coordinator for the diocesan vicar of urban ministry; and from 1978-83 as the diocesan episcopal director of urban ministry, at that time the highest office held by any woman in the diocese.

She served from 1983-88 as principal of St. Patrick's School in Owego. She then logged pastoral-associate assignments from 1988-94 at St. Patrick's, Savannah; St. John's, Clyde; and in the Northern Cayuga Cluster before her arrival in Lansing.

Starting out as pastoral associate at All Saints, Sister Wintish was elevated in 1998 to pastoral administrator — a model introduced in the Rochester Diocese four years earlier whereby someone other than a priest is charged with operation of a parish.

Her appointment also allowed All Saints to establish itself as a canonical parish for the first time in its history, which dates back to 1913. All Saints was previously a mission church and had been affiliated most recently with St. Catherine of Siena in Ithaca.

Father Ronald Gaesser, St. Catherine's pastor who hired Sister Wintish in 1994, noted that during her tenure All Saints grew to "well over 200 families" while also erecting — and paying off in full — a parish center. Father Gaesser added that "lay ministry is flourishing" at All Saints as a result of Sister Wintish's guidance.

"She definitely was a leader ... she was an intelligent woman who had lots to give. Organization was one of her strong points — motivating people, organizing people," Father Gaesser said. "If she could have been a priest, she would have been a priest. But she was not soured by the fact she wasn't; she was very proud being a Sister of Mercy. She told me her goal in life was always to be a pastoral leader. She achieved her dream,

with a great deal of success."

"Her style of leadership was to show someone what to do, and then empower them to do those things," said Dave Lippert, vice-chair of the All Saints parish council, who oversaw many of the parish's day-to-day responsibilities during Sister Wintish's illness.

"She was always encouraging others; she could empower people better than anyone I've ever met," said Pedeville, whose office is involved in developing and hiring pastoral administrators. Pedeville noted that Sister Wintish was on the diocesan task force that developed the model for pastoral administrators, and was the first Sister of Mercy to fill this role.

After her cancer was diagnosed in early 2001, Sister Wintish ministered in a limited capacity, moving between Lansing and Rochester. Father Scott Kubinski has served as temporary administrator at All Saints since the fall of 2001.

"She told me she cried for a few moments (upon learning of her illness) and then put everything in God's hands," said Father Gaesser, who added that he shared a special bond with Sister Wintish because he is battling prostate cancer.

Sister Wintish is survived by her sisters, Mercy Sisters Margaret Mary and Barbara Joan Wintish; brother, Peter (Debbie) Wintish; nieces, Jana and Jayme Wintish; and the Sisters of Mercy.

A funeral Mass took place March 23 at the Mercy Motherhouse chapel. The celebrant was Father Dennis Shaw, pastor of Rochester's Community of Hope cluster. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Donations in Sister Wintish's memory may be made to the Sisters of Mercy, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, NY 14610; or All Saints Church, 347 Ridge Road, Lansing, NY 14882.

Fr. Charles Mockevicius of St. George's

Father Charles L. Mockevicius, who served as co-administrator of St. George's Lithuanian Church in Rochester with his brother, Father Dominic Mockevicius, died March 21, 2002, at the age of 84.

"He was good to the people and ministered to the sick," said Stanley J. Gudonis, who served as the parish's maintenance man from 1979-2000. "He was very close to (the parishioners) because he was Lithuanian himself."

The son of Lithuanian immigrants, Father Mockevicius was born and raised in Rochester and grew up at St. George's. He attended the parish school as well as Holy Redeemer. In a 1997 *Catholic Courier* interview marking his 50th year as a priest, Father Mockevicius said he dreamed of being a priest even as a boy.

"I used to have a little altar at home and pretend I was saying Mass," he recalled.

He enrolled at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries in Rochester, and also attended St. Mary's Seminary in Norwood, Ohio, before being ordained a priest of the

Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, in 1947.

He spent much of his career serving as both an assistant and as a pastor in such dioceses as Rockville Centre — to which he became attached as diocesan priest in 1968 — and Brooklyn. He also served as a hospital chaplain and school principal in Ohio, and did a stint as an associate chaplain at a senior citizen's residence in Uniondale, N.Y., in the mid-1970s.

From 1980-87, Father Mockevicius served as chaplain of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northport, N.Y. He retired in 1987, and came back to the Rochester diocese to assist his brother, Father Dominic, who was then pastor of St. Vincent de Paul's Church in Churchville. Father Charles became administrator of St. George's in 1992, and was joined there by his brother in 1994.

In the 1997 interview, Father Mockevicius reminisced about his priestly years, and said that he fondly remembered meeting Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker movement founder. She told the priest to never con-

cern himself about where he was assigned.

"She said 'God will put you where he wants you.' Those were very satisfying words. I think about them all the time."

In addition to his brother, Father Mockevicius is survived by his brother Frank and sister-in-law, Nancy, as well as nephews, nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces.

Frank Mockevicius said his brother was a devotee of Mary, and loved his vocation.

"He never said no any time to anyone who was in need," Frank said.

Father Dominic added that his brother's dedication inspired him to become a priest as well.

"He was a priest. He never thought of anything else," Father Dominic said.

Bishop Paul A. Baltakis of Brooklyn, leader of all Lithuanian Catholics outside Lithuania, and Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided at a funeral Mass on the morning of March 25 at St. George's. Interment took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester.

— Rob Cullivan

Sister Mary Berchmans Ross, RSM; taught in Elmira

Sister of Mercy Mary Berchmans Ross, who served at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rochester as well as at Elmira's St. James Mercy Hospital, died Feb. 16, 2002, at the age of 87.

Born in Utica, she graduated from Nazareth Academy in Rochester in 1933. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1940, professing her perpetual vows in August 1946. She received a bachelor's degree in secretarial science from Nazareth College in 1949, and a master's degree in business education from Indiana University in 1977.

Sister Mary taught business at Our Lady of Mercy High School from 1943-52, and then began a 14-year stint as the school's office manager. In 1966, she was assigned to be a bookkeeper at St. James Mercy Hos-

pital, where she subsequently served as superior of the Sisters of Mercy convent.

In 1971, she went to work at Notre Dame High School, Elmira, as a business and accounting teacher. For a number of years, she also served as moderator of the sophomore class. Mercy Sister Mary Walter Hickey, Notre Dame's principal, recalled Sister Mary fondly.

"She was a wonderful woman and well-loved by everybody," Sister Hickey said. "I think we have a lot of accounting people in the world because she taught them the fine-tuning of accounting."

Sister Mary retired at the end of the 2001 school year, and then became treasurer of the Mercy sisters' convent located next to Notre Dame. She had resided since Janu-

ary at the infirmary at her community's motherhouse in Rochester.

Sister Mary is survived by her sister, Margaret M. Ross; niece Pat M. Ross Hurley (Dale) and sister-in-law Shirley Ross, all of Rochester; nephew Charles B. Ross Jr. of Ohio; and the Sisters of Mercy.

A funeral Mass took place Feb. 21 at the motherhouse chapel, and a memorial Mass was held at Notre Dame on Friday, March 1. Interment took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Rochester. Memorial donations may be sent to the Sisters of Mercy, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, NY 14610, or to Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave., Elmira, NY 14904.

— Rob Cullivan

Sr. Marie Tydings, longtime schoolteacher

Sister of St. Joseph Marie Tydings, a longtime schoolteacher formerly known as Sister Mary Michael, died Jan. 31, 2002.

Sister Marie entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1934 from her home parish of Holy Apostles, Rochester. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at Nazareth College, Rochester.

Sister Marie taught in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Rochester for 49 years, and also served as principal at the following schools: St. Mary, Dansville; Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Brockport; St. John the Evangelist, Greece; and Holy Apostles and Nazareth Hall, Rochester. When she retired to the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse in Rochester in 1986, she became a recreational therapy volunteer at the order's St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. She continued in that role until 1998.

Sister Marie came from a family devoted to the church. Her brother, Father Michael Tydings, who died in 1967, was a diocesan priest. Her nephew, Father Edward Zenkel, pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Honeoye, said his aunt and uncle both influenced him toward his vocation.

"Her life was centered on being a Sister of St. Joseph," Father Zenkel said of Sister Marie. "She loved education, and she had a very deep concern for the care of the sisters in the infirmary."

Sister Marie is survived by her sister, Margaret Zenkel of Livonia; her brothers, Joseph Tydings of Rochester and Gerald Tydings of Williamsville; sister-in-law, Geraldine Tydings of Rochester; nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews and the sisters in her congregation.

Father Zenkel was principal celebrant at the Feb. 4 funeral Mass. Interment took place in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, 4095 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14618-5798.

— Rob Cullivan

Sr. Pearson, RSM; 89

Sister of Mercy Mary Eugene Pearson, whose teaching ministry spanned nearly 60 years, died Feb. 18, 2002, at the Mercy Motherhouse in Brighton. She was 89.

Born Kathleen Pearson, she grew up in St. Charles Parish in Greece. She attended Nazareth Academy and Mercy and Nazareth Normal Schools. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1932 and professed her perpetual vows in 1937.

From 1931 to 1989 she taught at several parochial schools in Rochester: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, St. John the Evangelist (Humboldt Street), St. Salome, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Helen and Holy Cross.

Among relatives who predeceased her were two sisters who also were Sisters of Mercy: Sister Mary Joachim Pearson and Sister Mary Maurice Pearson. She is survived by her niece, Jeanne (Larry) Alexander, nephew, George (Lucia) Pearson, niece, Michele (Joe) Benjamin, several other relatives, and her sisters in the Mercy community.

Sister Pearson's funeral Mass took place Feb. 23 at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse chapel. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Memorial contributions in Sister Pearson's memory may be made to the Sisters of Mercy, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, NY 14610.

— Rob Cullivan