

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Local priests speak out on abuse issue

By Jennifer Ficaglia  
Assistant Editor

On Palm Sunday, 16 priests serving parishes in the Finger Lakes joined together to publicly express their sorrow and their hopes for healing in light of the nationwide scandal of sexual abuse by clergy members.

A signed, joint statement called "Some Reflections on Our Priestly Lives" was printed in many Finger Lakes church bulletins March 24 and distributed to area media. It conveyed the priests' outrage over cases of sexual abuses by priests and the instances in which church leaders turned a blind eye to such abuse. The priests also expressed sadness over the plight of victims and their families, and prayed for their healing as well as for the healing of the church.

The idea for the joint statement came out of a monthly meeting of priests serving the Yates-Ontario-Wayne regions, said Father Douglas DellaPietra, sacramental minister at St. Bridget's/St. Joseph in East Bloomfield, and a signer of the statement. At their March meeting, the priests discussed at length the subject of pedophilia and child sexual abuse by priests. The Finger Lakes priests in attendance decided to write and sign a statement that encompassed their feelings on the issue, and e-mailed it to other Finger Lakes priests who were not present at the meeting, asking them to sign it as well.

"We wanted to say something about the victims and recognize the experience they and their families have had in a tragedy," Father DellaPietra said. He added that the 16 also wanted to point out that although fellow priests were involved in these acts, the majority of priests, including themselves, are committed to their vocations.

"We still love being priests; we still think it's a noble way of life and ministry," Father DellaPietra said.

A portion of the statement referred to this fact:

"In the midst of such outrage, there seems little redeeming light or grace. Some may see the whole priesthood tainted by scandal. Some priests fear a witch-hunt of false accusations. How can we restore a new level of trust within the Church? We priests do not wish to hide. Rather, we wish to express that we cherish our sacred calling to serve Christ and his people. We still value our commitment to try to live a noble life of service even with all of our human weakness."

Father Daniel Tormey, retired pastor of St. Mary's in Scottsville and another signer of the statement, agreed.

"This is something we wanted to say in light of the negative publicity and harsh

criticism. We are happy and proud to be priests," he said.

Unfortunately, priests who do not abuse children are "tarred with the same brush" as those who do, said Father William Barrett of St. Michael's in Lyons. By signing the statement, he not only expressed his anger at the hurt the abuse has caused, but also let people know that not all priests abuse children, and the majority have led wonderful, holy, sacrificial lives.

"It lets people remember of the 47,000 priests in the country, 46,500 are fine, upstanding gentlemen who didn't do anything wrong," Father Barrett said.

Father Thomas Mull of St. Mary's in Canandaigua, another signer, agreed.

"Since priests were being blamed for it, some kind of statement had to be made that it was a horrendous crime and something we are not proud of," he said. "It was meant to make sure people knew the door was open to talk about this."

Father Roy Kiggins of the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva, who signed the statement via e-mail, acknowledged that it provides a good stepping stone for individual conversations with people on the subject of priest abuse. And it also shows that area priests aren't interested in hiding anything and are "very concerned that justice be done across the board."

Since the statement was released, some priests who signed it have heard feedback from parishioners and other community members.

Father DellaPietra said a woman came up to him during a meeting March 27, thanking him for the statement and showing people that priests care about the issue of abuse by priests and don't want to keep it in the dark.

"We're looking in this time for healing," Father DellaPietra pointed out. "I'm also very convinced that God is with us."

### Appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following pastoral-administration appointments, which will take effect June 25:

• **Father Michael J. Bausch** to pastor, Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford, with the retirement of Father Gerald Appelby. Father Bausch is currently pastor of Good Shepherd Church, Henrietta.

• **Father Peter Deckman** to pastor of St. Michael Parish/Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Rochester, with the retirement of Father Neil Miller. Father Deckman is currently pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Auburn.

• **Ms. Deborah Housel** to pastoral administrator, St. Michael Parish, Lyons, with the retirement of Father William Barrett. Housel is currently pastoral associate of St. Michael Parish, Newark.

• **Father Dennis Shaw** to pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/St. Francis Xavier/Holy Redeemer Parish, Rochester. Father Shaw is currently pastor of the Community of Hope, which includes Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Michael, Rochester. This appointment is due to a planning group reconfiguration. As of June 25, St. Michael Parish will be clustered with Our Lady of Perpetual Help, under the pastorate of Father Deckman.

## All Saints plans \$1.1M addition

Work is set to begin on a \$1.1 million expansion project at All Saints Catholic Academy in Gates, which will help house students relocating from the four junior highs closing this spring.

"We're very excited about the project and feel this will only further enhance the educational experience of our students," diocesan schools superintendent Sister Elizabeth Meegan, O.P., said in a press release.

The expansion will be built on the school's north side. Four additional classrooms will be constructed, including a science lecture room and a science lab. Two laboratories and a hallway will also be added. As part of a technological upgrade, the entire school will be provided with a local-area computer network.

All Saints currently has 177 students, and the additional space will increase capacity to 300. Currently, 230 students are

registered, and registration continues. Much of the enrollment increase is being attributed to the relocation of middle-school students from Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. John the Evangelist (Greece), St. Charles Borromeo and St. Lawrence schools. The diocese decided in January that these schools will no longer offer seventh- and eighth-grade classes.

In addition to the expansion, several alterations are planned. They include renovating and enhancing the art, band and music rooms; media center; team/changing rooms; vice principal and advocate offices; multipurpose room and main office corridor windows; additional laboratories; and minor locker relocations.

Site work is expected to last through May, with concrete and masonry work to be completed in April. All work is expected to be done by the start of the 2002-03 school year.

## Arch of Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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## Divine Mercy Mass scheduled

On Sunday, April 7, the Feast of the Divine Mercy will be observed at Pittsford's St. Louis Church, 64 S. Main St., from 1-4 p.m.

Confessions will be heard starting at 1 p.m. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction will take place at 1:50 p.m. Mass will be celebrated at 2 p.m., and a Chaplet of the Divine Mercy — a series of prayers that uses the rosary — will be sung at 3 p.m.

Divine Mercy Sunday always takes place the Sunday after Easter and was established by Pope John Paul II after he endorsed the private revelations of Sister Mary Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who was canonized in May 2000.

During the 1930s, Sister Faustina had visions in which she reported that Jesus asked that the feast be established so that sinners might be forgiven all punishment due to them in this life and the next.

"I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the faucet of my mercy," Jesus reportedly said to Sister Faustina. "The soul that will go to confession and receive holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment."

Church authorities have stated that the requirement for confession may be fulfilled within seven days before or after Divine Mercy Sunday.

Catholics may have learned about Divine Mercy Sunday through an increasingly common image of Jesus. Devotees have promoted Sister Faustina's revelations by distributing copies of a painting she approved that shows Jesus pointing to his heart with the words "Jesus I trust in you" beneath rays of light.

Father Michael Volino, parochial vicar of St. Lawrence Parish in Greece, will preside at the Mass, and Father Frederick Bush, priest in residence at St. Mark's Parish, Greece, will serve as homilist.

The event is cosponsored by St. Louis Parish and the St. Michael the Archangel Chapter of Call to Holiness, an international lay Catholic organization.

For information, call 585/387-9662 or 585/723-8886.

Information on Divine Mercy Sunday and Sister Faustina can be found at [www.thedivinemercy.org](http://www.thedivinemercy.org), the Web site of the Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy.

Pamphlets on the Divine Mercy Chaplet are available from the Association of Marian Helpers at [www.marian.org](http://www.marian.org) or at 800/462-7426.

— Rob Cullivan

**EDITORS' NOTE:** St. Hyacinth Parish in Auburn will also hold a Divine Mercy Sunday observance. See calendar item, page 7.