

# MILESTONES

## Versatile Fr. Hafner plans move south

To hear Father Gerard Hafner declare "I love being a leader of the people of God" is not surprising, based on his track record in parish ministry.

Father Hafner, who will turn 67 on May 11, is retiring this spring and will move to Florida due to health concerns. His 40-year priesthood has been marked by remarkable versatility: two pastorates, four temporary-administrator assignments, and numerous stints as assisting priest.

Father Hafner is a native of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Irondequoit. He attended St. Thomas the Apostle School and Aquinas Institute, and later St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries.

He was ordained June 2, 1962, by Bishop James E. Kearney. He served as assistant at the following parishes: Holy Apostles, Rochester (1962-68); Holy Spirit, Penfield/Webster (1968-71); Our Lady of Mercy, Greece (1971-74); St. John the Evangelist, Clyde (1974-76); St. Joseph's, Penfield (1976-78); Church of the Annunciation, Rochester (1978-79); Sacred Heart

Cathedral (1980-82); and St. Boniface, Rochester (1982-84). He also logged brief assignments in Auburn at St. Francis of Assisi (1968) and Holy Family (1971).

In 1984 Father Hafner became the pastor of two Southern Tier parishes, St. Benedict's in Odessa and St. Pius X in Van Etten. He remained in that pastorate for three years before moving to St. Columba/St. Patrick in Caledonia and Mumford. There, he served as pastor for nine years.

Since taking a sabbatical in 1996, Father Hafner has had a number of long- and short-term assignments as assistant at diocesan parishes. Most recently he was temporary administrator for part of 2001 at Spencerport's St. John the Evangelist, where he resides. He currently helps out at St. Vincent DePaul, Churchville; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Hamlin; and St. Mary, Rochester. In addition, Father Hafner serves as auditor and defender of the bond in the diocesan tribunal, where he has worked since 1983.

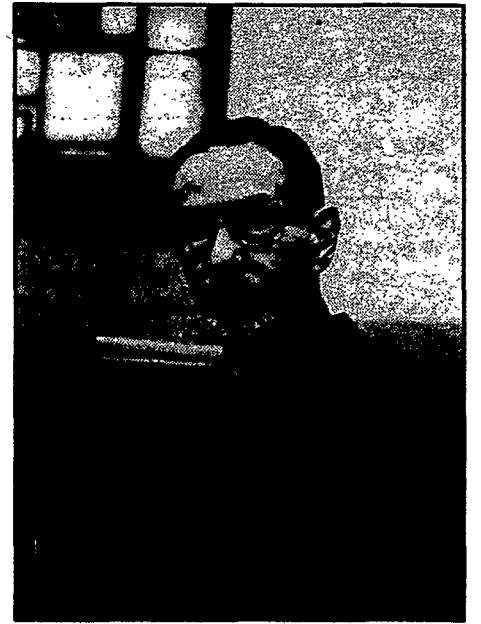
Looking back on his priesthood thus far,

Father Hafner is proud that he quit drinking more than 20 years ago and now maintains a strict fitness regimen. He noted that he has worn a beard since going dry to signify his emergence as a new person.

"I know I'm healthier now than when I was drinking. If I was still drinking, I wouldn't be around here right now," he remarked.

Father Hafner's retirement celebration will take place June 9 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, with a 1 p.m. Mass followed by an adult reception at approximately 3 p.m. in the church. Call 585/964-8627 for reservations.

The priest will relocate to Florida in hopes of easing a condition known as Raynaud's Phenomenon. This disorder of the blood vessels triggers changes in skin color and temperature, especially when the skin is exposed to cold. Father Hafner said he expects to visit the Diocese of Rochester from time to time, but for the most part will be anchored in the Diocese of Palm Beach, where he will assist at St. John's



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Parish in Boca Raton.

"That's what I'd like to be, a parish priest — at just *one* parish," Father Hafner quipped.

— Mike Latona

## 'Simple country priest' has covered all parts of diocese

Although Father William M. Barrett is a native of suburban Rochester, it's one of the few areas of the diocese where he's never been assigned. Instead, his 43-year priesthood has included stints in Elmira, Wayland, Rochester, Auburn, Newark, Dryden and Lyons.

"I'm well traveled; you might say I've been representative all over the diocese. I've got friends in a lot of places," Father Barrett said with a laugh.

Many of those friendships were created over the past nine years at St. Michael's Parish in Lyons. "These are sweet people here," said Father Barrett, 69, who will retire from St. Michael's this June.

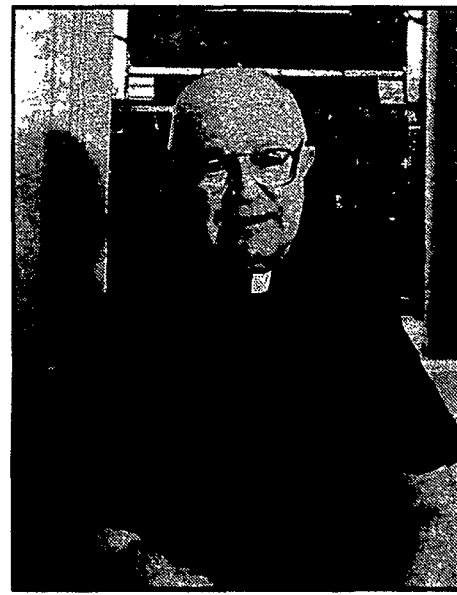
In addition to his pastorate, Father Barrett has been highly involved with civic groups in Lyons. He is chaplain of the Lyons Fire Department, belongs to the Lyons Rotary, and is a board member of Legal Aid Services for Wayne County. He's particularly proud of the ecumenical

growth in Lyons during his time on the village's Inter-Church Council.

Father Barrett grew up at Church of the Assumption in Fairport and later attended Rochester's Blessed Sacrament. A graduate of St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, he was ordained in 1959 by Bishop James E. Kearney.

He was assistant pastor at the following parishes: St. Mary, Elmira (1959-62); St. Joseph, Wayland (1962-1965); St. Monica, Rochester (1965-67) and St. Alphonsus, Auburn (1967-70).

In 1970 Father Barrett joined the Newark Developmental Center, now known as the Finger Lakes Developmental Disabilities Services Office, in Wayne County. He began as resident chaplain there in 1971 upon gaining certification for ministering to the developmentally disabled. He said the community there "taught me a lot about simplicity of life, about stating the truth in basic terms.



James Stein/Photo intern

Complications were small." Along with this ministry, Father Barrett spent many weekends during the 1970s with Marriage Encounter and Cursillo.

He was appointed pastor of St. Monica's in 1979, and remained there for six years. "That's kind of unusual, to go back to be pastor at a place you've already been," he noted. Father Barrett lauded the St. Monica's community for standing behind its church and school in an economically challenging environment. "They supported the place through thick and thin. They kept the school going in those tight years and made a lot of sacrificing," he said.

In 1985 Father Barrett "went from inner city to other country," as he described it, when he became pastor of Holy Cross in the Dryden/Freeville area of Tompkins County. He said he became sensitized to serving the poor at St. Monica's and carried that with him to Holy Cross. Whereas the urban poor "come to the door for handouts," he said, the rural poor must often be sought out in places far removed from the church. "You might find them in some beat-up mobile home parked off to the side of the road," he remarked.

In 1993 he arrived in Lyons for what would be his lengthiest assignment. During his three pastorates, he has also served on the diocesan Clergy Relief Board and the Respect Life Committee and was regional coordinator for Tompkins/Tioga.

A retirement service for Father Barrett will take place at St. Michael's Church Sunday, June 23, beginning at 2:30 p.m. It will be followed by an informal reception in the church hall.

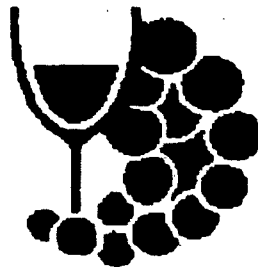
In retirement, Father Barrett plans to live with family members in Mayville, Chautauqua County. He said he looks forward to golfing and fishing, and the continuation of his self-described "penchant for working with the poor" in yet another rural setting.

"That's what I am, a simple country priest. I've been very happy through those 43 years of active service," Father Barrett said. "I hope this next section of my life will also be full of ministry-type things."

— Mike Latona

## Missionaries of the Precious Blood

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Message of Pope John Paul II  
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