

MILESTONES

Father Miller to work with sibling

Father Neil R. Miller began life in the womb with his twin sister, Mercy Sister Grace Miller, and now plans to spend his retirement working with her. The priest retires as pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Rochester on June 25.

The Miller siblings are well-known in Rochester for their work at the House of Mercy, an outreach center and shelter for poor residents which Sister Miller oversees. Father Miller is chairman of the facility's board of directors, and plans to devote most of his time working there and at Farbridge House, a relapse-prevention residence affiliated with the House of Mercy. His current parish cosponsors Farbridge with the House of Mercy.

Father Miller said he looks forward to working with his sister full time.

"We think alike, we feel alike and on many issues we agree," he said.

Father and Sister Miller were born in Corning on July 13, 1935, to Italian immigrant parents. Father Miller attended Catholic and public schools in his hometown before going to St. Andrew's and St.

Bernard's seminaries in Rochester. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Rochester at St. Mary's Parish in Corning May 27, 1961.

Following his ordination, Father Miller served as assistant pastor at these parishes: St. Michael's, Lyons, 1961-63; St. Agnes, Avon, 1963-67; St. Mary's, Watkins Glen, 1967-69; and St. Lawrence, Greece, 1969-73. In 1973, he was named co-pastor of St. Augustine's Parish in Rochester, a position he held until being named associate pastor of St. Casimir's, Elmira, in 1975. In 1976, he became a staff member of the diocesan Office of Human Development, and worked there until joining the diocesan mission team in the Diocese of Tabasco, Mexico, in 1983.

The priest fondly remembered his experiences in Mexico, where he served 10 impoverished villages. Some villages were accessible only by foot, he said, and others could only be reached by boat.

"The people were very good to us, kind to us," he said. "They were very much filled with faith in God. They're simple

folks just trying to do their best to survive and live for their families."

Father Miller was named pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in 1985. The parish has worked hand in hand with the House of Mercy, he said, and Farbridge House has been a place of hope for recovering addicts.

"What I like about it is when they discover their own worth and become productive, and they realize they have much to offer and much to give," he said. "It's rewarding to see them rebuilding their lives."

The priest added that the House of Mercy also plans to open a similar facility for women this year.

Perpetual Help parishioners plan to throw a party for their departing pastor on June 2 at The Party House in Chili, he said. He added that in addition to working with his sister, he plans to be available to help out at various parishes and will live at the rectory at Corpus Christi Parish.

Looking back on his years as a priest, Father Miller said he'd do it all over again if he had a choice to do so.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

"I think God would have chosen me again, and I think I would've said 'yes,'" he said. "The greatest thing is helping people. I'm not into building buildings. I'm into building people."

- Rob Cullivan

Father Appelby will leave his 'baby' behind at end of June

In a 2,000-year-old church, few priests get a chance to be pioneers. One of the lucky few is Father Gerald J. Appelby, retiring pastor of Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford. Father Appelby has been pastor of the parish since its founding in 1983.

"It was exciting," he said, reminiscing about the parish's early years, when parishioners met for services in a barn and later a movie theater. "There was the challenge of forming a community out of my own vision of what the church was calling us to after Vatican II."

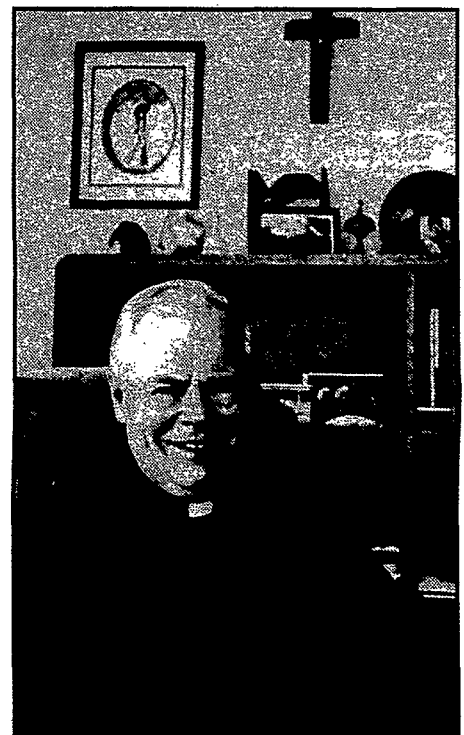
What the church was calling the faithful to was wider lay participation, he noted, adding that he saw himself "simply as catalyst" for lay Catholics.

The priest will be feted at a parish picnic Sunday, June 23, he said, adding that that will be the last Sunday he will preside as pastor at Transfiguration Masses.

"It is difficult to leave my baby," he said.

Over the years, Father Appelby said he has worked with the parish staff and members to bring good liturgies to Transfiguration and to make it a warm and welcoming place for Catholics. In particular, he said, he worked on making Transfiguration a place for people who had "trouble" with the church to return to it. Indeed, in a 1992 church history, a few parishioners wrote specifically about the parish's efforts to make Catholics who had left the church feel welcome.

"From the beginning, members of this parish have approached us, introducing themselves, giving us hugs, along with their prayers, during some hard times ...," wrote one couple. They noted that they had returned to the church at Transfigu-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

ration after not attending Mass for 20 years.

"Father Jerry and our Transfiguration family have been a source of strength and encouragement," they wrote. "Father Jerry and this community have given us so much that it would be impossible to address it all here."

Father Appelby said he has no specific retirement plans as yet, but said he hopes to focus on serving one parish. He added that he also plans to play more golf.

His handicap?

"Don't ask embarrassing questions."

Born July 26, 1934, Father Appelby grew up attending St. John the Evangelist Parish in Rochester. In addition to the parish school, he also attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries in Rochester. He was ordained a diocesan priest on June 5, 1959, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester.

Following ordination, Father Appelby assisted at the cathedral from 1959-66. He then became chaplain at the Rochester Institute of Technology, a position he held until he became pastor of Transfiguration.

He also served as co-director of diocesan campus ministry in the 1970s and early '80s, and from 1978-83 as director of the diocesan Division of Special Ministries, which included such departments as the Spanish Apostolate. Through the years, he has also served with the New York State Board of Diocesan Directors and the Catholic Campus Ministry Association.

Father Appelby said that his priesthood has given him a special privilege.

"Just being the part of the life of some awfully good people."

- Rob Cullivan

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**All Saints Parish
of Corning, New York**

**"How good it was
for you to be here ..."**



FR. JERRY APPELBY

**"We wish you well,
dear friend!"**

Your Transfiguration Family

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