

# Fisher's academic year closes amid disputes

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Commencement ceremonies May 11 brought an end to an academic year marked by division between the faculty of St. John Fisher College and its president, Katherine Keough.

Keough's opponents, including many who are forming a union, contend that the president on many occasions has acted in a dictatorial fashion toward faculty members, and has routinely violated the spirit of shared governance they believe should mark relations between faculty and administration.

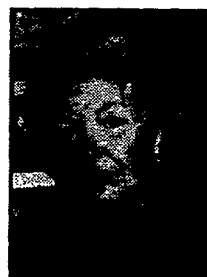
Supporters, on the other hand, contend that her critics are overstepping their professional boundaries and that there is no need for a union. And one of Keough's supporters contends that while the president wants to strengthen the college's Catholic

identity, some union supporters actually want to dilute or eradicate the college's Catholic foundations — a charge vehemently denied by a prominent union supporter.

Meanwhile, Keough told the *Catholic Courier* that she has acted within her rights as president in relation to the faculty. But she acknowledged that she has made some mistakes, and that she must do more to improve her relationship with faculty members.

"I think we need to spend more time talking to each other," she said. "I think I need to be in front of the average faculty member, and see that average faculty member."

Conflicts between Keough and the faculty came to a head in April. Instead of an expected vote of no confidence, the college's faculty assembly adopted a measure on April 23 calling for the establishment of



Katherine Keough

the management department at the Rochester college. He said he drafted the measure on April 22 to offer an alternative to a no-confidence vote in Keough. Such a vote might adversely affect enrollment and send a negative message to the wider community, he said.

"I was a little alarmed because, in my opinion, it was a little strong when you give a person a vote of no confidence when you

procedures and committees to resolve strong disagreements over various disputed issues.

Two-thirds of the assembly voted to approve the measure, which was put forth as a last-minute compromise by Dr. Hemant Sashittal, chairman of

have no clear agenda about what happens afterward," he said.

A no-confidence vote would have had no practical impact on the president, but it is the strongest symbolic measure faculty could have taken against her. Faculty members had called for the no-confidence vote April 18 after Keough and the college's board of trustees rejected two provost candidates favored by a search committee that comprised faculty and administration representatives. Keough and the board of trustees chose to retain for two more years Dr. Donald Bain, acting provost and dean of the college, who had been appointed in May of last year. A college's provost is an administrator who deals chiefly with faculty and curriculum.

Among its points, Sashittal's resolution called for the formation of a new provost search committee by October, and for Bain

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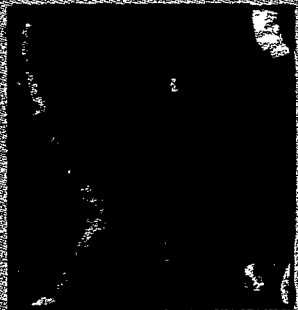


# Catholic Courier

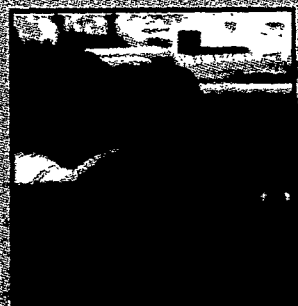
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## Healing process begins

In the wake of the diocese's decision that priests can no longer minister if credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been made against them, members of local churches — pastors, parishioners and abuse victims alike — are trying to find a way to deal with the local cases of sex abuse and to promote healing for themselves and others.

Earlier this month, Bishop Matthew H. Clark asked three priests accused of sexually abusing teenagers in the mid-1970s to resign their pastorates: Father Thomas Burr, pastor of St. Mary Our Mother Parish in Horseheads; Father Foster Rogers, pastor of St. Pius Tenth Parish in Chili; and Father David Simon, pastor of St. Paul Parish in Webster. The bishop also removed their faculties as priests, and forbid them to wear clerical clothing and or live in any parish or diocesan dwelling.

The diocese also placed further restrictions on two other priests accused of sexually abusing minors in the past: Father William Lum and Father Thomas Corbett were both accused of sexual abuse in the 1990s and lost their faculties as priests at that time. They are now banned from employment by the diocese and from living in any parish or diocesan dwelling. In addition, retired Father Robert O'Neill, against whom allegations of past sexual abuse have recently surfaced, has been removed from all ministry, and forbidden to wear clerical clothing or to live in diocesan or parish dwellings.

As the diocese continues to investigate three other priests accused of past sexual abuse, Bishop Clark also has decided to begin reporting to civil authorities all allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests. Previously the bishop had expressed con-

cern about doing so, fearing that it might deter victims from coming forward. After talking to victims, however, he decided that reporting is necessary.

"This is the most painful, difficult issue I've ever had to deal with," said Bishop Clark in an interview with the *Courier* earlier this month.

"There is certainly a lot of pain out there among our people and among our priests. It's wounded our community."

Knowing this, Bishop Clark decided to visit personally each of the parishes that lost pastors, to offer words of encouragement and healing. He visited the first of the three, St. Pius Tenth, on Sunday, May 12, telling parishioners that the search for a permanent pastor would start on Monday, May 13. Until the position is filled in late June, Deacon Leo Aman will serve as pastoral administrator.

During his homily at St. Pius Tenth, Bishop Clark asked for continued prayers for parishioners and abuse victims, as well as for the priests who have been accused of abuse.

"We all know there is considerable pain in our church just now," the bishop said. "I do want to be with you. I want to thank you for your faith. I appreciate that. Our whole church appreciates it. And we draw strength from your faith."

### Healing through faith

Faith is something many diocesan priests say they are relying on to get through this difficult period.

"Our faith tells us we're going to come out of this stronger," said Father Doug Della Pietra, parochial vicar at St. Mary's Parish in Canandaigua. "In the midst of all this, I'm happy to be

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Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

The Epiphany window at St. Michael's Church, Rochester depicts Jesus blessing the little children.

STORY BY JENNIFER FICCAGLIA