

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Solan to begin novitiate with Sisters of Mercy

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

She has been a secretary for nearly 30 years, including the last three at the diocesan Pastoral Center. Now Cathy Solan is beginning a markedly new stage of her life.

"I've enjoyed being of service to people; I'm well suited for the support a secretary provides," Solan said. "But it's time to move on."

Solan's last day at the Pastoral Center is May 31. She is due this summer to become a novice in the Rochester Sisters of Mercy, and thereafter will be known as Sister Solan.

As part of her novitiate program, Solan will move to Laredo, Texas, for a 10-month stay beginning in August. There, she will study her vows and also become active in community service, working with a largely Mexican-American population. Solan will be joined in this venture by nine other Mercy novices from across the country. "I know some of them and they're wonderful women," she commented.

Solan remarked that living in a multicultural environment out of state "will be a brand-new experience for me. I have lived all of my life in Rochester."

Solan, 47, grew up in Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Greece. She attended the parish school and went on to graduate from Cardinal Mooney High School in 1973. Solan credits her family for providing strong models of faith. In fact, her father, the late Deacon Robert Solan, was ordained among the Rochester Diocese's first class of permanent deacons in 1982.

Additionally, Solan has had a long-standing admiration for the Sisters of Mercy, and notes that they taught her both in elementary school and at Cardinal Mooney. "It was a lifelong connection. I



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Cathy Solan will leave her position as an administrative assistant at the diocesan Pastoral Center May 31 to join the Sisters of Mercy novitiate.

was always attracted to their charisms and services," she said.

After graduating from Mooney, Solan attended secretarial school and began serving in that line of work in 1974. She came to the Pastoral Center in March of 1999 and currently serves as administrative assistant in the bishop's office, supporting Father Joseph Hart, vicar general and moderator of the Pastoral Center, and Father Daniel Condon, chancellor.

Solan acknowledged that she gets an occasional phone call voicing a complaint or concern about some church-related matter. But she takes those conversations in stride: "Most of the time callers just want

to feel they've been listened to," she said. "The position requires someone with a high degree of patience. I think people are surprised to hear that I have that ability, because I'm a hyperactive person."

In 1996, Solan began to realize that her full-time occupation might someday be quite different than secretarial work. "I was in a transitional period in my life, searching for a way to strengthen my faith

life," she recalled. "It was through conversation with the Sisters of Mercy that I realized I was being called to religious life."

Solan has completed her candidacy with the order, and will become a novice on July 28 in Erie, Pa. Her summer will also involve retreat ministry and service with the Rochester Sisters of Mercy before she leaves for Texas.

Upon completion of her time in Laredo, Solan will return to the Rochester area to continue her two-year novitiate. This process involves serving a canonical year and an apostolic year followed by taking her first vows. Final vows do not come for at least a few years after that.

"I still don't know where the path is going to lead me. I just know I'm finding great joy in naming the yearnings I've had for all these years," Solan said.

Intense contemplation has helped get her to this point, she noted: "I'm an extrovert working on my shadow side. As time goes on you're called to look deeper and deeper into yourself." Entering the Sisters of Mercy, she said, "gives you the opportunity to look at things at such a deep level."

As she advances in her faith journey, Solan said she will carry fond memories of her days at the Pastoral Center. "My faith life has been enriched by my experience here at the diocese. It's also been fun; it hasn't all been work."

"There is a sadness in saying goodbye to old friends," she added. "But there's an excitement that what I've worked for since 1996 is finally here."

## Wegman donates \$10M

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Robert B. Wegman, chairman of Wegmans Food Markets Inc., has announced that he is giving \$10 million over the next year to Aquinas Institute in Rochester, from which he graduated in 1937.

Half the funds will be used to finance building renovations and the construction of a 20,000-square-foot fine arts center addition on the southwest corner of the school, according to Patrick A. Hanley, the school's president. The building project will cost \$7.5 million, and the school hopes to raise the remaining \$2.5 million needed from alumni and supporters, he said.

"We are confident that donors will take advantage of this opportunity to have their gift matched on a two-for-one basis," Hanley said.

The other half of the Wegman donation will fund the school's scholarship endowment, he said. About 40 percent of the school's 870 students receive financial aid, according to Joseph B. Knapp, director of public relations. Tuition is \$5,735 a year, he added.

"(T)his gift provides our students with endless opportunities in their pursuit of academic, social and spiritual excellence," Hanley said.

Aquinas has an extensive arts program,

Hanley said, and wants to create a facility that will attract high-school students interested in the arts. Many of the school's students have won arts awards, he said, and the school's marching band took first place in an international competition in 2001 in Toronto.

"We find that a lot of the students involved in music, arts and drama go on to college and major in those things, which is a nice endorsement (of Aquinas)," he said.

Hanley said construction on the art center is tentatively slated to begin in fall of this year, and the school hopes to open it by fall 2003. He added that the new center will feature rooms for music, visual arts, computer-aided art and drama programs.

In addition to the center, the school's 75-year-old building will also be renovated, mostly for the purposes of upgrading the facility, he said. Aquinas also plans to raise monies, in part, to enhance outdoor athletic facilities, he said. For example, the school purchased 14 acres of land from the Basilian order two years ago and is examining ways to better use the land, some of which is currently being used for practice fields, he said.

Along with his wife, Peggy, Robert Wegman has given more than \$32 million to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rochester, and has funded both elementary and secondary education programs.

## Obituary

### Sister Casler; teacher, missionary

Sister Shirley Casler (formerly Sister Eustace), a longtime teacher and mission worker for the Sister of St. Joseph of Rochester, died May 9, 2002, at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. She was 73 years old.

Sister Shirley entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Joseph's Parish in Cayuga. She attended Albany State Teacher's College, where she earned degrees in mathematics and Latin.

She taught at three Catholic high schools in the diocese: St. Agnes in Rochester for four years; DeSales in Geneva for eight years; and Nazareth Academy

in Rochester for 10 years.

In 1977 she began working with the Fathers of St. Edmund. For the next 20 years she served in various health centers and clinics in rural Alabama. In 1997 she returned north and provided home care for senior citizens until retiring in 1999.

Sister Shirley is survived by a sister, Ann (John) Suertin; nieces; and her sisters in the Congregation of St. Joseph.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated May 11 in Holy Family Chapel at the SSJ Motherhouse. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary.

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