

## VATICAN CONFIRMS EXCOMMUNICATIONS

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican's doctrinal congregation said it had considered and rejected an appeal from seven "ordained" women who sought to have their excommunication decree overturned.

In a new decree published by the Vatican Jan. 27, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said its members examined the appeal in December and arrived "at the collegial decision to confirm the decree of excommunication."

The women, who included former Ohio first lady Dagmar Celeste, were "ordained" June 29 by a schismatic Argentine bishop on a boat on Europe's Danube River.

## POPE AGAIN APPEALS FOR PEACE WITH IRAQ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A day before a U.N. briefing on weapons inspections progress in Iraq, Pope John Paul II appealed for peace and watched as two doves were released from his window over St. Peter's Square.

At a noon blessing Jan. 26, the pope said the release of the doves by two young Italian members of Catholic Action was a symbol "offering everybody a message of fraternity and hope."

The pope bolstered the appeal for peace as he noted commemorations of World Leprosy Day and the centenary of the birth of its founder, Raoul Follereau.

## PRIEST FINDS BENEFITS IN LITURGY EXPERIMENT

BEAVERTON, Ore. (CNS) — After 16 years in a community of Catholics and Lutherans worshipping together, Franciscan Father Matt Tumulty is convinced that the faith experiment is working.

"It really is a grass-roots experience where you begin to see that we are more culturally separated than doctrinally," he said of the Mission of the Atonement in Portland, founded in 1986.

The community gathers as one for prayers and readings and separates for the Eucharist, which takes place in two parts of the building. "Catholics deepen their own sense of what it means to be Catholic and at the same time they see the beauty of another tradition," he said.

# Members oppose any sale

## 2 Protestant groups want St. Philip Neri

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

A group of parishioners at Rochester's St. Philip Neri Parish are preparing to fight a potential sale of the church, following reports that two separate Protestant congregations have expressed interest in buying it.

However, the Diocese of Rochester and the church's pastor, Father Michael A. Mayer, both have stated that no deals have been made and that any possible sale of the church would not come until months of discussion have taken place with various concerned parties, including the parishioners.

According to diocesan and parish officials, the two congregations interested in purchasing the building are nearby St. Luke Community Tabernacle Church and the Calvary Chapel of the Flower City, which currently rents the parish's former school building. Phone calls from the *Catholic Courier* to St. Luke's officials were not returned.

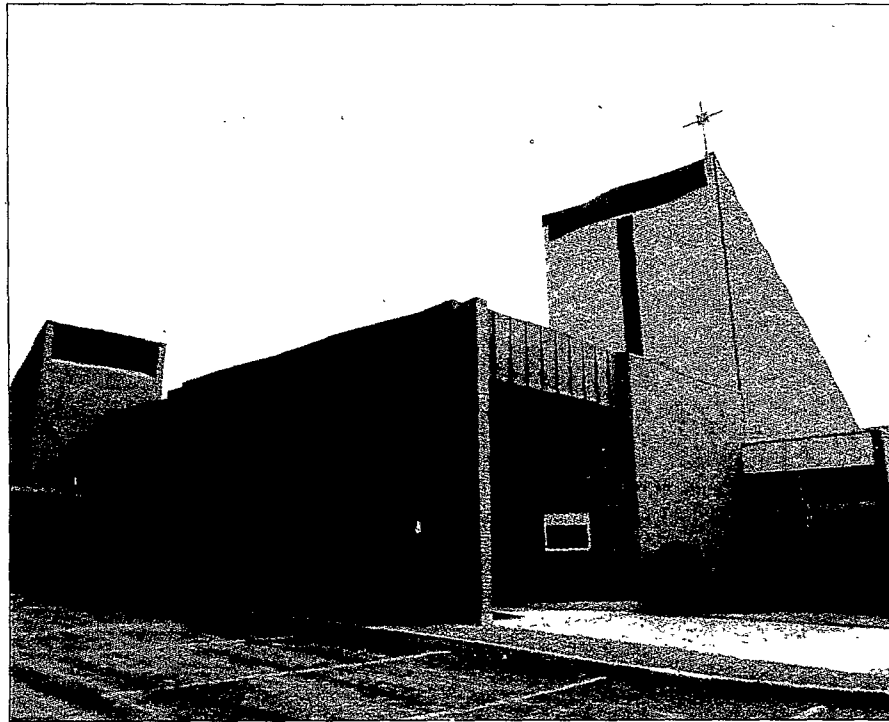
Meanwhile, Nick Reda, who serves on the church advisory board at Calvary, confirmed that his congregation is interested in buying St. Philip Neri should it become available for sale. He added that the church's leaders are currently drawing up a formal proposal they planned to submit to the diocese.

Many St. Philip Neri parishioners, led by parish council member Susan Scarlata, don't even want the diocese to consider selling their church because they consider it "sacred ground" because a priest and a nun died there heroically in a 1967 fire. According to Scarlata, Father George Weinmann and Sister Lillian Marie McLaughlin, SSND, became "martyrs" when Father Weinmann attempted to rescue the Blessed Sacrament from the burning building and Sister McLaughlin attempted to save him.

"To him, God was burning," Scarlata said of Father Weinmann, noting the priest's strong belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

"That church the Catholic diocese should maintain as a memorial place because blood was shed there," Scarlata said.

Scarlata said that about 50 parishioners recently attended a meeting in the church regarding a possible sale, and that they plan to wait and see what happens at a meeting of the City East parishes' pastoral



File photo

St. Philip Neri Church, 1782 Clifford Ave., Rochester.

planning group on Feb. 6. The City East group is one of more than 30 multi-parish groups meeting throughout the diocese to develop resource-sharing efforts in light of the priest shortage. In addition to St. Philip Neri, the City East group consists of St. George, a Lithuanian parish; St. Stanislaus Kostka, a Polish parish; Annunciation; and St. Andrew's, St. Philip's sister parish.

William L. Pickett, diocesan director of pastoral planning, said that Bishop Matthew H. Clark wants the City East group and St. Philip Neri parishioners to keep an open mind about a possible sale of St. Philip Neri.

"He's asking them to give a careful consideration to a broader range of issues," Pickett said. He added that St. Luke's approached the diocese first, and had not been solicited by the diocese in any way. Although it is important to recall that St. Philip Neri was the site of the deaths of two faithful Catholics, he said it's equally important to examine St. Philip Neri as it operates today and its relationship to the other parishes.

"Theologically, all ground is sacred, but I realize that there's a special history here," Pickett said of St. Philip Neri. Among the questions to be answered, he said, were "How many worship sites does this community need?" and "How many can it financially support?"

On that note, Scarlata, who serves on the City East planning group, said that St. Philip Neri had the least amount of debt of any of the

five parishes. She said parishioners have conducted a number of successful fundraisers over the years, and are dedicated to keeping the parish alive. Scarlata also provided a copy of an alternative scenario that would not entail closing or selling St. Philip Neri. In it, she suggested that St. George be sold and that its congregation be merged with that of St. Stanislaus. Meanwhile, Scarlata advocated locating an urban-ministry center in St. Philip Neri's school building and retaining the parish's convent.

Kathleen McHugh, chairwoman of the City East planning group, said her group is still developing scenarios for restructuring the group's parishes. She said that if St. Philip Neri were closed, she would suggest moving its altar to St. Andrew and erecting a permanent shrine to Father Weinmann and Sister McLaughlin.

Father Mayer, pastor of St. Andrew and St. Philip Neri, said the planning group hopes to resolve the issues surrounding St. Philip Neri's future sometime in June.

Meanwhile, both Protestant congregations have reportedly stated that they would be willing to memorialize the late priest and nun in some manner if they were to purchase the building. Reda said that if Calvary purchased the church, it would be sensitive to the history of St. Philip Neri and the feelings of its parishioners.

"We've come to have a good relationship with them, and we're concerned with them," he said.