

Storm disrupts diocese

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

A surprising early-April ice storm caused significant tree damage and power loss at several diocesan parishes, forcing the cancellation or postponement of Masses as well as other parish and diocesan events. As the *Courier* went to press Tuesday, April 8, several thousand people in the northern part of the Rochester Diocese, especially near Lake Ontario, were still without power.

The storm produced a thick glaze of ice that weighed down tree limbs and power lines, in many cases knocking them to the ground and forcing states of emergency to be declared — particularly in the northern part of the diocese.

Beginning late Thursday night, April 3, freezing rain began falling from the sky. Due to temperatures hovering around the freezing mark, the ice became easily glued to objects during the night. By early Friday morning, the toll was obvious as schools and work places closed. Though the most severe precipitation had subsided by Friday night, states of emergency remained in effect throughout the weekend in numerous communities.

Rochester meteorologist Kevin Williams, president of Weather-Track Inc., said the ice storm did not severely affect the Southern Tier, but became increasingly problemat-



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Limbs collapsed under the weight of the ice in the front yard of the Diocese of Rochester's Pastoral Center in Gates April 4.

ic heading north. Williams said that the most significant damage occurred in counties bordering Lake Ontario from Niagara County to Oswego County.

One of the hardest hit areas was northern Wayne County, where all four weekend Masses were cancelled at Church of the Epiphany, Sodus/St. Rose of Lima, Sodus Point. Father Lance Gonyo, pastor, said April 8 that travel restrictions were still in effect and that phone and utility loss had made communication extremely difficult.

"It was devastating. There was no question about it," said Father

Gonyo, who added that he and parishioners have spent considerable time clearing broken tree limbs on the Epiphany property.

A tour of Monroe County parishes near Lake Ontario revealed significant numbers of branches on the ground. At St. Thomas the Apostle in Irondequoit, Francis Burdick, buildings and grounds supervisor, was found contending with tree debris and a collapsed power line the morning of April 4.

"I was cleaning up branches, and other branches started falling down," Burdick said. "The bummer is, I had just gotten started with

spring cleaning."

Eric Patchke, diocesan manager of buildings and properties, said April 7 that despite the tree damage, no church appeared to have suffered structural problems. However, he added that several parishes have filed insurance claims on appliances that are malfunctioning due to the power loss.

Williams noted that the storm was "unprecedented. There was never a real major ice storm in April." However, he said it was far less severe than the infamous ice storm of March 1991, when ice glaze was nearly an inch thick and power outages continued for weeks.

Nevertheless, the adverse weather kept Mass attendance well below average over the weekend. The 7:30 a.m. Friday Mass at Holy Cross in Charlotte drew 11 people out of a normal 80-person attendance, according to Father Thomas Wheeland, pastor. And at Our Mother of Sorrows, Greece, three people attended the 8 a.m. Saturday liturgy. Even though the church was still without power Saturday night, Father Alexander Bradshaw, pastor, opted to go ahead with the full slate of weekend Masses.

"We will congratulate everyone who comes," Father Bradshaw said with a smile just before the 5 p.m. Saturday Mass. Half to two-thirds of the normal congregation for that Mass participated in liturgy in the dark, cold church. Mother of Sorrows' power was restored during 8 a.m. Mass the next morning.

— Mike Latona

Greece pastor to take leave in June

Father Charles T. Manning, pastor at Greece's Holy Name of Jesus Parish, has been granted a leave of absence by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The leave will take effect June 24, according to Michael Tedesco, diocesan director of communications.

In his column in the Holy Name parish bulletin for the weekend of March 1-2, Father Manning informed parishioners that he is resigning his pastorate as well. He wrote that he will use his leave of absence "for rest, reflection, a study leave and the completion of a sabbatical." Father Manning added that this process will continue through September 2003 as he discerns "what Jesus is calling me to for the

future." He did not indicate when or whether he plans to return to active ministry.

"It is time for me to take care of myself medically, spiritually, emotionally and most of all, in being true to my heart and myself," Father Manning stated, adding that his decision was made "totally on my own initiative ... under no pressure from a higher human authority."

Tedesco emphasized that Father Manning's leave of absence does not relate to allegations of sexual misconduct.

Bishop Clark has appointed Michele Bertot, pastoral associate at Holy Name of Jesus, to serve as the parish's pastoral administrator once Father Manning begins his leave.

Tedesco said diocesan officials have not yet made an appointment for sacramental coverage after June 24.

Father Manning, 55, was ordained in 1975. He served from 1975-78 as priest intern at St. Mary's Parish, Waterloo; from 1978-82 as associate pastor at Our Lady of Mercy, Greece; from 1982-84 as chaplain at Bishop Kearney High School and weekend assistant at St. Salome's, Irondequoit; from 1984-87 as chaplain at SUNY College at Geneseo; from 1987-91 as associate diocesan director of youth ministry; from 1991-98 as pastor of Sacred Heart, Perkinsville, and St. Pius V, Cohocton; and since 1998 at Holy Name of Jesus.

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