

AQ GRAD PLAYS FOR STANLEY CUP CHAMP

Brian Gionta, a 1997 graduate of Aquinas Institute, has become the first Rochester-area athlete to ever compete for a Stanley Cup hockey champion.

The 24-year-old Gionta plays at forward for the New Jersey Devils, who scored a 3-0 home win over the Anaheim Mighty Ducks on Monday, June 9. That victory clinched the National Hockey League title as New Jersey claimed the best-of-seven championship round, four games to three.

Gionta, 24, had one goal and eight assists during four playoff rounds. His best outing came in the Devils' 6-3 win over Anaheim in Game 5 of the championship series, when he netted his only playoff goal and also had two assists.

Gionta, who grew up in Greece's Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, was featured in a July 2002 *Catholic Courier* article.

CARDINAL DISAPPOINTED IN FEDERAL TAX-CUT BILL

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The \$350 billion tax-cut bill signed into law May 28 is a disappointment, said Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington in a letter to White House senior adviser Karl Rove.

He takes issue with the portion of the bill that increases the amount of tax credits given to some families with children. He points out that the final bill does not provide an expansion of that child-tax credit to millions of low-income families.

CHURCH MUST NOT BE SILENCED BY CRISIS

BELLEVILLE, Ill. (CNS)—Like parents who don't stop parenting because they have made mistakes with their children, the U.S. bishops cannot allow their moral voice to be silenced by the clergy sexual-abuse scandal, said Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville.

The bishop, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, made the comments in an interview marking the first anniversary of the bishops' formal response to the crisis.

"There are clearly people, groups that would like to say this moment should silence the Catholic Church," he said. "It cannot and will not."

Layoffs prompt questions

Diocesan personnel respond to concerns

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — Recent layoffs at the Pastoral Center in Gates were painful to carry out, yet nonetheless necessary in order to forestall greater financial problems in the future, according to Father Joseph A. Hart, diocesan vicar general and moderator of the Pastoral Center.

Speaking before a group of about 40 people at St. Michael's Church June 5, Father Hart added that it would take \$1 million — over the next three years — to restore the positions eliminated in the layoffs.

"One doesn't make quick decisions about laying people off," he said. "There are discussions back and forth about families and futures and who can get a job and who can't. That was part of the agony that went on for several months before the decisions were announced."

He had been invited by parishioners and staff of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, Holy Apostles and St. Michael's parishes to address the reasoning behind the layoffs. The forum was presented in both Spanish and English and was moderated by Father Dennis Shaw, pastor of Mount Carmel and Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier.

The parishes, which boast large numbers of Hispanics, were particularly interested in knowing more about why the director of the Spanish Apostolate was changed from a full-time to a part-time position, said Sandy Nucelli, a member of St. Michael's. Along with several audience members, she noted that Hispanics belong to a fast-growing Catholic population in the diocese, and need more ministers.

"To consider a half-time position for Hispanic ministry is sufficient — is that a fair assessment of need at this point?" she asked.

Bernard Grizard, diocesan director of Parish Support Ministries, which oversees the Spanish Apostolate, was on hand along with Father Hart to take questions. When the diocese reduced the position's hours, Grizard noted, the apostolate's director, Gabriella Jaramillo, was asked to focus on urban ministry. Before the reduction in hours, Jaramillo was also responsible for migrant ministry, he said.

Grizard also told forum participants that Father Jesus Flores, who is currently on sabbatical from his



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

During a June 5 meeting at St. Michael's Church in Rochester, Francisco Ramos expresses a concern about services to the Hispanic community in light of recent staffing cutbacks at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

Parish Support Ministries position as a sacramental minister to Wayne County migrants, will oversee diocesan migrant ministry when he returns in August. In an interview, Grizard added that Father Flores' previous position will be expanded to include administrative duties previously carried out by Jaramillo.

In answering questions from the audience, Father Hart reiterated many of the reasons for the layoffs he had given when he announced them April 7 at the Pastoral Center. He attributed the decision to eliminate nine positions to decreased diocesan revenues and rapidly rising health-insurance costs.

The diocese also reduced six Pastoral Center positions from full time to part time and shifted two employees from their positions at the Pastoral Center. Father Hart also announced that Pastoral Center employees would not receive salary increases for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2003, and will bear a greater share of employee health-insurance premiums as of Jan. 1, 2004.

In April, Father Hart had noted that the 2002-03 Thanks Giving Appeal, the diocese's primary fundraiser, fell short of its \$4.931 million goal by 6 percent. He added that the diocese's investment income has decreased significantly over the past few years as a result of poor stock-market performance. Overall, he said, the diocese faced an approximate decline in revenue of \$700,000 as it heads into 2003-04.

Father Hart also noted that the diocese is nearing completion of a costly Pastoral Center renovation, which was planned when the econo-

my was in much better shape. He said the diocese was required to go forward with the project by contracts signed two years ago, prior to the current economic downturn.

Members of the June 5 audience also asked about the diocese's Partners in Faith campaign, which seeks to raise \$50 million for a Catholic schools endowment fund, expanding the priests' pension fund, parish programs, cathedral renovation and several other initiatives.

One questioner asked whether the diocese might be able to put off some of these expenditures. Father Hart said the diocese had earmarked funds it raises for specific purposes, and cannot ethically use them for purposes other than those presented to donors. He added that putting off certain expenditures could prove more costly in the end, noting, for example, that one project to be funded by the campaign is building a \$2.5 million facility for St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry in Pittsford. He said that the diocese decided the move was fiscally sound because St. Bernard's would have to pay almost \$1 million a year in rent and fees if it remained at its location at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester.

"It seems more cost-efficient to build a building for \$2.5 million and save the rent," he said.

Father Hart also pointed out that the diocese is working to continue providing services to parishes as best it can in the wake of the layoffs and cutbacks.

"Everyone who remains at the Pastoral Center will have to work in new and creative ways," he said.