

Sisters to leave two SSND convents

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

The last two convents in the Rochester Diocese to house School Sisters of Notre Dame will be vacated within the next several days.

Both moves are expected to take place around the end of this month. Four sisters will move from St. Philip Neri Convent, 51 Springfield Ave., Rochester; and three will move from Holy Ghost Convent, 250 Coldwater Road, Gates.

The St. Philip Neri convent will no longer be available because the parish property — including the church — has been up for sale. Sister Roberta Tierney, who has lived at the convent since 1975, said the residents learned of the convent's potential sale this past winter and were advised in May to seek a new residence by Father Michael Mayer, pastor of St. Philip Neri and St. Andrew's parishes.

Michael Tedesco, diocesan spokesperson, said the St. Philip Neri property has not yet been sold. Discussions have taken place over the past few months between potential buyers, the parish and the diocese.

Meanwhile, Holy Ghost Convent is being converted into office space for parish use. Sister Mary Louise Brien and Sister Janice Nadeau, two of the residents, said they were informed of this decision in February by Father Albert Delmonte, Holy Ghost's pastor.

All but one of the seven sisters affected will remain in the Rochester area. The sisters at St. Philip Neri — Sister Tierney along with Sister Marie Therese Alaimo, Sister Mariella McMillan and Sister Mary Smith — will move into a house together on Lafayette Road in East Irondequoit. Sister Tierney said the house is being provided for minimal rent by a St. Philip Neri parishioner who wishes to remain anonymous.

"He definitely is doing a great service to us. We will be good tenants," Sister Tierney said. "To find a four-bedroom house to rent is very difficult and yet we want to stay together as a community."

Sisters Nadeau and Brien will each move from Holy Ghost into single apartments in Dunn Towers, which is also located in Gates. The convent's other resident, Sister Loreto Reynolds, has been battling health problems and is expected to relocate to her order's motherhouse in Wilton, Conn.

School Sisters of Notre Dame have long-standing ties with both parishes. The order became active at Holy Ghost in 1918, and the convent was built in 1955. St. Philip Neri



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Sister Janice Nadeau, SSND, (right) reminisces with Joanne Cordaro, a parishioner of Holy Ghost in Gates, during a June 28 reception at the church. The reception followed a farewell Mass for Sisters Nadeau, Mary Louise Brien and Mary Loreto, who are moving out the the church's convent so it can be converted into office space.

Convent went up in 1966, four years after SSNDs began staffing the new parish school. Emotions have run high as this era nears its close, Sister Brien said.

"The people here are just lovely — very warm and very supportive. A lot of them are hurting because we've meant so much to them, all the School Sisters of Notre Dame down through the years," said Sister Brien, who has resided at Holy Ghost Convent since 1984 when she began as principal of the parish school. She stayed in that role until the school closed in 1993, and is now a teacher at St. Joseph's School in Penfield.

At St. Philip Neri, Sister Tierney said the sisters' departure is one component of what appears will be the dissolution of an entire parish.

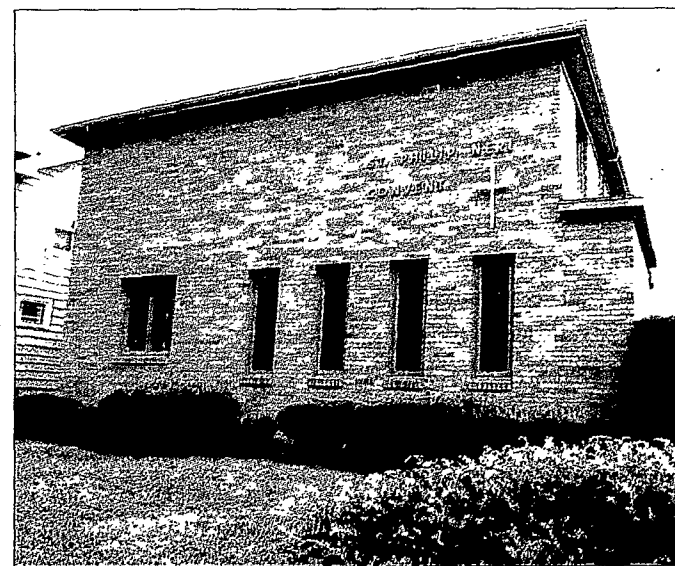
"We certainly feel concern for the parishioners who have been very supportive and loyal. We (sisters), fortunately, have a happy ending but there is a lot of concern and pain and tension," Sister Tierney said.

There are currently 16 School Sisters of Notre Dame in the Rochester Diocese; Sister Brien noted there were approximately 100 in the early

1960s. With no convents available, Sister Tierney remarked, it's unlikely the numbers will ever rise again.

"I think it would probably be difficult to attract sisters to the diocese," said Sister Tierney, who served from 1968-73 as principal of St. Philip Neri School (the school closed in 1989) and is now the parish life coordinator at St. Cecilia's Parish in Irondequoit.

Sister Nadeau — who has lived at Holy Ghost Convent since 1986 and was the parish's pastoral associate from 1986-98 — is taking an optimistic approach. She plans to carry on the spirit of Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, who es-



The St. Philip Neri convent, which houses four School Sisters of Notre Dame, is for sale along with the rest of the parish property, including the church.

tablished the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1830s Bavaria.

"Our foundress' goal was to move out of the convent in groups of twos and threes, to work with the poor," said Sister Nadeau, who is currently the pastoral minister at Holy Family Parish in Rochester.