

## MEDIATION ORDERED IN CHURCH-UNION FLAP

**BROWNSVILLE, Texas** (CNS) — Attempts to settle a dispute between four unionized parish workers fired by their new pastor and the Diocese of Brownsville have failed, leading to court-ordered mediation.

The United Farm Workers of America, an AFL-CIO affiliate that is representing the lay workers, has said the firings were part of a union-busting effort. Brownsville Bishop Raymond J. Pena has said he is not opposed to unions and that the decision to fire the four workers at Holy Spirit Parish in McAllen was carried out by a newly appointed pastor.

The Hidalgo County District Court ordered mediation, which is scheduled to start Aug. 12, after a temporary restraining order reinstated the four female workers at their jobs.

## JUDGE TOSSES SECOND ABUSE SUIT IN ALBANY

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — A New York judge threw out one sexual abuse lawsuit against the Albany Diocese and dismissed the diocese and Albany Bishop Howard J. Hubbard as defendants in another suit in recent rulings.

In New York Aug. 6, acting State Supreme Court Justice Christian F. Hummel threw out an \$8 million lawsuit against the Albany Diocese, ruling that the lawsuit was barred by New York's three-year statute of limitations.

In July, the same judge dismissed the diocese and Bishop Hubbard as defendants in another lawsuit alleging that a man identified as Jack Doe was sexually abused by a priest in the 1970s.

## CONGRESS CONCLUDES KNIGHTS' CONVENTION

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — A two-day eucharistic congress Aug. 7-8 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception concluded the Knights of Columbus annual convention in Washington.

Eucharistic congresses are a time for Catholics to renew their faith in, devotion to and understanding of the Eucharist, said Archbishop John P. Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communica-

# Parish to scale back plans

## St. Joseph's campaign fails to meet its target

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

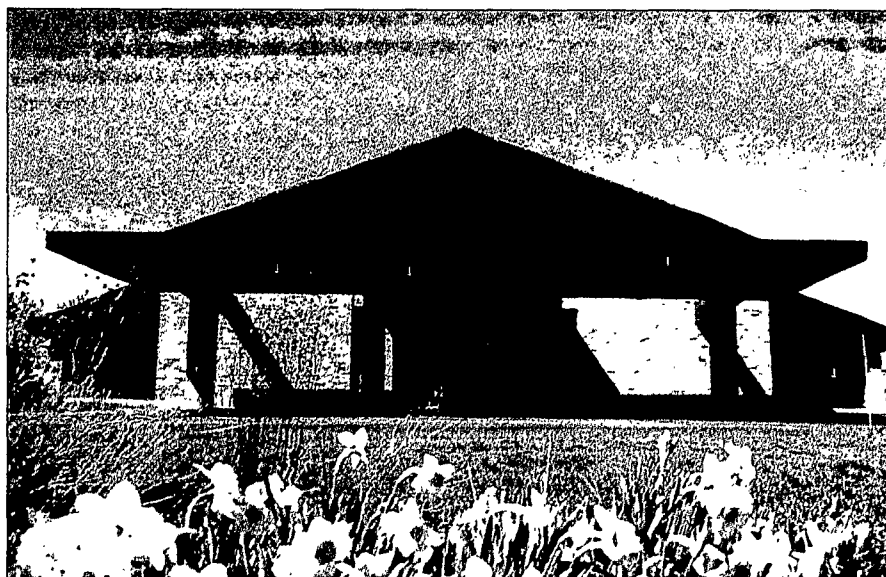
Penfield's St. Joseph's Parish is scaling back plans to expand its facilities after a \$3.216 million fundraising campaign this past spring raised only \$1.3 million in gifts and pledges.

Brian Waldmiller, the parish's business manager, said the parish is "going back to the drawing board" and revising its original expansion plans, which included a ministry center with a 400-seat capacity; a new school driveway and cafeteria; and a new maintenance building. Along with Nancy Giordano, pastoral associate, Waldmiller is serving as the parish's co-administrator until December, while Father Kevin Murphy, pastor, is on sabbatical in Ireland.

Parish officials have stated that expansion is needed partly to accommodate projected growth in the number of parish families from the current 3,000 to more than 3,500 families by 2010. In February, the parish began a campaign to raise funds from parishioners, who were asked to make pledges over a three-year period. A second campaign, slated to start in 2006, was supposed to raise funds for construction of a new church. However, plans to construct the new church have been put on hold indefinitely, Waldmiller said.

"Right now, we know that we could not do what we hoped to do under the original plan," Waldmiller said. "It's a criteria of ours that we would not go into long-term debt."

Although no firm plans have been



File photo

made, Waldmiller said the parish is considering reducing the seating capacity of the planned ministry center from 400 to 250, and postponing construction of the proposed school lunchroom. Due to the change in plans, parishioners who made pledges or gifts to the campaign were given the opportunity to withdraw their pledges, he said. Two parishioners opted to withdraw pledges because the campaign goal had not been met, he said, noting that the parish had received pledges and gifts from 654 parishioner households.

The planned changes at St. Joseph's drew opposition from a group called "Concerned Citizens of St. Joseph's Church and Community." Its members have questioned the costs of the expansion plan as well as its timing given current eco-

nomie conditions. One member, parishioner Walter L. Pidek, said he and his wife, Mary-Margaret, did not pledge to the campaign. Pidek said many opponents of the campaign felt a number of the construction proposals were unnecessary.

Pidek added that some opponents of the St. Joseph's renovation likewise opposed the Diocese of Rochester's Partners in Faith campaign. That \$50 million capital campaign currently is raising funds for several diocesan initiatives, including the renovation of Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Waldmiller said the parish had combined its capital campaign with the Partners in Faith campaign. The parish's original goal for Partners in Faith was \$1.35 million, with half of that figure — \$675,000 — pledged to the diocese.

## Settlement announced in Boston

**BOSTON (CNS)** — Barely a week after Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley became its head, the Boston Archdiocese offered \$55 million to settle 542 pending lawsuits over clergy sexual abuse of minors.

News of the proposal broke late Aug. 8 as attorneys for some of the plaintiffs made details available to the media. If accepted, it will be the largest settlement for a group of victims of clergy sexual abuse, but not the largest settlement per victim.

Father Christopher J. Coyne, archdiocesan spokesman, citing archdiocesan policy of not commenting on pending litigation, declined to confirm or deny the proposal.

For the proposal to take effect, at least 95 percent of the plaintiffs will have to sign on within 30 days. The amount will be reduced by 1/542 for every plaintiff who does not sign on.

In return, the archdiocese reportedly will not contest any of the claims or seek protection under a state law that says no charitable institution can be sued for more than \$20,000. A Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling in April invoked that law in setting aside a \$4.1 million malpractice verdict against a nonprofit hospital in Boston.

While the proposed settlement would mean an average of about \$101,000 per plaintiff — or about \$70,000 after attorneys' fees — lawyers said not everyone would re-

ceive the same amount.

The proposal reportedly calls for mediators, plaintiffs, and their lawyers to determine the amount for each plaintiff, based on "the type and severity of abuse and damage sustained." The archdiocese would not be a part of those negotiations.

The *New York Times* quoted Roderrick MacLeish Jr., a lawyer representing nearly half the plaintiffs, saying the offer was "the first concrete proposal the church has ever made" and calling it substantial enough to deserve "real consideration."

The *Boston Globe* reported that some victims expressed a desire to settle, but others said they want to take their cases to court.