

PARTNERS

Continued from page 1 help stabilize the existing pension fund, while providing additional retirement benefits as well as care for priests who are infirm.

• **Thanks Giving Appeal:** A portion of proceeds will be used to support diocesan pastoral and social services that are normally funded by this annual campaign, which has been suspended for this year. The TGA will be reinstated in 2004.

• **Catholic Charities:** Endowment funds will support Catholic Charities programs as well as technological updates for the department.

• **St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry:** 5 percent of proceeds were earmarked for construction of the graduate institute for lay ministry's new Pittsford facility. The new St. Bernard's opened in August, having relocated from space it had rented at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester.

• **Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis:** Endowment funds will support catechist formation and expansion of youth ministries.

• **Campaign expenses:** The diocese has retained Community Counselling Service, a New York City fundraising company, to manage the Partners in Faith campaign.

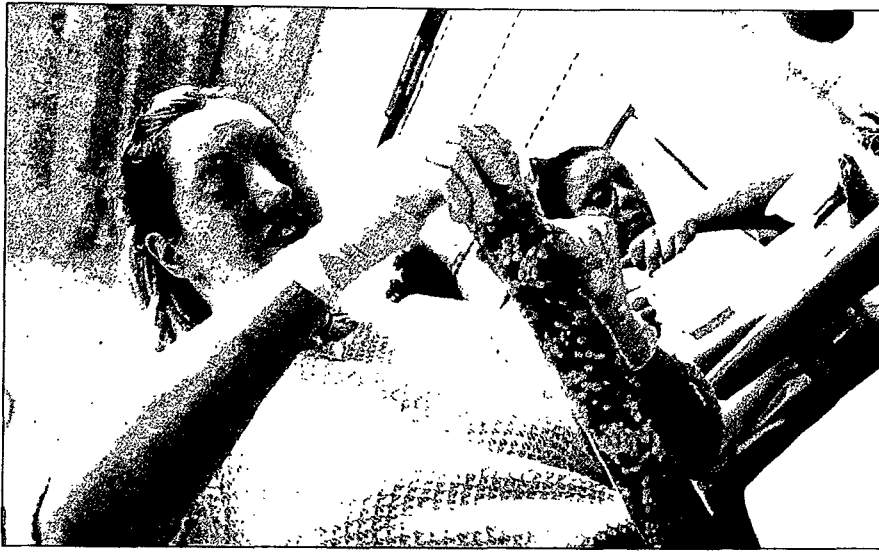
Approximately two-thirds of the parishes in the diocese have completed or nearly completed their campaigns, which are taking place in three phases, according to a diocesan press statement. The remaining parishes — more than 50 — are schedule to complete their campaigns by year's end.

Bishop Clark repeatedly expressed gratitude to God and diocesan Catholics for their support of Partners in Faith. "To date, the response of our people have been extremely generous," he said.

COMMUNICATIONS KEY

Answering questions in a straightforward manner helped to make the campaign successful, according to Father Schrader, who compiled questions his campaign volunteers were hearing and responded to them in a bulletin insert. The insert pointed out, for example, that campaign proceeds would not be used to pay off costs related to the sex-abuse crisis. The insert also noted that funds raised for Catholic schools, religious education, Catholic Charities and other efforts ultimately would benefit people in Auburn.

"I think when people saw the local tie-in, I think they were more willing to support the whole campaign," he said.



Sandy Geer (foreground) and Helen Reyes package beans Sept. 10 for Rochester's Healthy Sisters' Soup & Bean Works, an employment program of Restart Substance Abuse Services at Catholic Family Center. CFC is one of numerous agencies of diocesan Catholic Charities, which would benefit from an endowment fund through Partners in Faith.

Father Jeremiah Moynihan, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Elmira, said he appealed to his parishioners' sense of the larger church to promote the campaign. As of mid-September, his parish had reached 92 percent of its goal, he said.

"We tried to get the point across that we're part of the diocesan church," he said. "We need to think of more than our local parish."

Nancy Kline, a campaign volunteer at his parish, said she started out thinking the parish would never meet its goal and is now confident it will. In particular, she said, emphasizing how the campaign will benefit Catholic Charities, priest pensions and the diocese's faith-formation work appealed to prospective Partners in Faith donors.

The process used to implement the campaign, meanwhile, has garnered mixed reviews from parish leaders and diocesan parishioners. Father Robert Ring, pastor of the six-parish Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community in Yates, Ontario and Steuben counties, said conducting the campaign over the summer made it difficult because many people were away.

Some parishioners needed little to no persuading to give to Partners in Faith, whereas others declined to give at all, pastoral leaders and campaign volunteers said. Father Ring noted said one parishioner with whom he spoke was initially unwilling to donate, but changed her mind a few days after he spoke with her about the campaign and she prayed about it.

"We had a very wide range of responses," said Skip Warren, who with his wife, Karen, served on the Partners in Faith leadership team at St. Joseph's Parish in Rush. Some parishioners were grateful for the

opportunity to give, whereas others didn't answer calls from campaign volunteers, he said. Warren added that personal visits made by campaign volunteers, plus the fact that the campaign was benefiting Catholic schools and the priests' pension fund, were successful in encouraging people to donate.

"I think if we didn't make the personal contact, it would be easier for people not to respond," Warren said.

CAMPAIGN CONCERNS

Father William V. Spilly, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Rochester, said "no one was enthusiastic about the campaign" taking place in a time of economic turmoil and a dire world situation. He added that he thought the suggested donation amounts were too high, a point also echoed by Warren, who thought smaller suggested donations would have garnered greater participation in the campaign.

Yet in spite of such reactions, Warren's parish exceeded its goal by more than 8-percent as of late August, and Father Spilly's parish exceeded its goal of \$585,000 with pledges of \$629,445.

Sister of St. Joseph Alice Cooney, pastoral administrator at St. Joseph's, likewise noted that many people were initially taken aback by the size of donations suggested in campaign literature. People gave out of "loyalty to the church and to Bishop Clark," she said, but many expressed "grave reservations about the manner in which the campaign was handled." In addition to the suggested donation amounts, she said some parishioners also objected to the tone of the solicitation letters and the insistence on personal visits with donors.

Nevertheless, Sister Cooney said, "people were amazingly generous."

Indeed, Bishop Clark acknowledged that the size of suggested donations may have made people "gasp a little." However, he said he believed that the campaign was extremely important to the future of the diocese and that belief supported the diocese's request for great generosity on the part of the faithful.

As for the way the campaign itself was conducted, diocesan spokesman Michael Tedesco said it is always challenging to solicit donations.

"There's a delicate balance in asking people for a gift," he said. "Certainly we don't want to pressure people into giving. We want to be respectful of our donors. But there has to be a relatively strong 'ask' in a campaign."

Tedesco added that he thought the solicitation letters were respectful.

"Having viewed the letters, they don't appear to me be offensive or pushy," he said. "However, people react differently to what they read and their interpretation is different. Obviously this campaign has been very successful, and that indicates to me that we're conducting it in a respectful, proper manner."

A few parish leaders said controversy over renovations to Sacred Heart Cathedral turned off some potential donors, but for many the renovation plan seemed to be either a neutral factor or a positive one in influencing donor decisions. For example, Father Ring pointed out that most donors were persuaded by explanations that the cathedral, as the site of ordinations and numerous other diocesan events, is a structure that serves all diocesan Catholics, not just its own parishioners.

Father Schrader noted that his Auburn parishioners have attended cathedral events and are well aware of the need to upgrade the building.

In the end, it seemed the more a Catholic knew about how diocesan ministries benefit people at the parish level — from training lay leaders at St. Bernard's to providing social services through Catholic Charities — the more likely that Catholic was to donate, pastoral leaders and campaign volunteers said.

One such informed donor was Marion Burke, a member of at Holy Apostles Parish in Rochester, who said she was persuaded by a Partners in Faith booklet outlining the campaign's targeted beneficiaries and by the fact that 50 percent of proceeds would remain with the parishes.

"When I saw this come along, I felt it was a cause I could support," Burke said.