

Sr. Roberta Tierney; directed education

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Obituary



Brighton, was deputy superintendent and later superintendent of Catholic Schools under Sister Tierney.

"She was a quiet, yet effective leader and

a passionate advocate for Catholic education," Leahy said. "She led in a subdued, dignified manner and always had the students' and teachers' interest at heart. She will be missed."

Sister Mary Ann Binsack, diocesan vice chancellor and administrator of the bishop's office, served under Sister Tierney as diocesan director of religious education from 1981-1989, and succeeded Sister Tierney as education director in 1989.

"I was honored to be chosen to follow someone that I admired so much," Sister Binsack said. "She was gentle but firm, visionary yet willing to do the small tasks. Roberta was my supervisor, but more important, she was a mentor and a friend."

Sister Tierney shepherded the diocese's schools through a challenging time, Sister Binsack said.

"She loved Catholic education, and her talents and commitment were greatly needed and used in a time when Catholic schools were on the decline," Sister Binsack said. "I remember how hard she worked to form the diocesan Board of Education so that there would be a broader group of people — lay, priests and women religious — who could offer their skills and expertise as we addressed educational concerns and issues."

After resigning from her position as education director in 1989, Sister Tierney took a one-year sabbatical. Following its conclusion, she went to work for St. Cecilia's. She served on the *Catholic Courier's* Board of Directors and Editorial Committee from 1995-2001, and was a member of the newspaper's Strategic Planning Committee in 2000.

Father McKenna celebrated a funeral Mass for Sister Tierney at St. Cecilia's on Jan. 24. Internment took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester.

Memorial donations may be sent to the School Sisters of Notre Dame Development Fund, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897.

School Sister of Notre Dame Roberta Tierney, who served as the Diocese of Rochester's director of education from 1978-89, died Jan. 21, 2004, at the age of 65.

At the time of her death, Sister Tierney was serving as parish-life coordinator for St. Cecilia Parish. Father Kevin E. McKenna, pastor at the Irondequoit church, remembered her fondly in a statement released by the diocese.

"She touched so many people's lives," Father McKenna said. "People were her first love. It's such a tremendous loss for all of us."

A 1952 graduate of St. Michael's School in Rochester, Sister Tierney completed her high-school education at Holy Angels Academy in Fort Lee, N.J. She entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1956, and began teaching in 1958 at St. Matthias School in Brooklyn.

In 1962, Sister Tierney returned to the Rochester Diocese to teach at St. Margaret Mary's School in Irondequoit. She was named principal of St. Philip Neri School in Rochester in 1968, beginning a long career in administration.

In 1973, Sister Tierney was named assistant superintendent for curriculum of diocesan schools. A year later, she was promoted to deputy superintendent of diocesan schools. In 1976, Bishop Joseph Hogan named Sister Tierney superintendent of schools, a position that included oversight of diocesan religious education. In that position, she established diocesan offices for youth ministry and of communications.

At the time of her appointment as superintendent, she was the only woman attending meetings of the New York state Catholic schools' superintendents association. In a 1989 interview with the *Courier-Journal* — the *Catholic Courier's* former name — Sister Tierney credited Bishop Hogan and his successor, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, for easing her acceptance as a female administrator.

"I never felt that because I was a woman and not ordained, I couldn't participate," she said.

After being named education director in 1978, Sister Tierney facilitated the transfer of the Department of Continuing Education from the diocesan personnel office to the education division. During her tenure, she also helped establish the Diocesan Board of Education.

Tim Leahy, currently an administrator at Siena Catholic Academy in



Reuters/CNS

Dancing for the pope

Pope John Paul II listens to a rap song as a Polish youngster break dances during an audience at the Vatican Jan. 25.

Christians, Jews continue monthly interfaith talks

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Interfaith dialogue and Bible study is nothing new to many Rochester-area Christians and Jews. They've been coming together to study and discuss the common elements of their faith since 1997, when Public Broadcasting Service aired "Genesis: A Living Conversation."

In the 10-episode series, Bill Moyers gathered members of both faiths, clergy, Biblical scholars, artists, teachers and individuals to discuss the book of Genesis. He also sent letters to communities, urging them to set up local discussion groups nationwide. Officials at the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester decided to begin such a group, said Isobel Goldman, director of community relations for the federation.

The first discussion series was so successful, Goldman said, that another series focusing on the book of Exodus was planned for the upcoming months. Following the Exodus discussions, a year was spent on the remaining three books of the Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Torah.

The discussion program is a product of the Commission on Christian Jewish Relations, which is made up of members of the federation and the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, Goldman said.

The 2003-04 discussion series, titled "Family Ties," looks at family re-

lationships in the Old Testament. Discussions are held at the Jewish Community Federation from noon to 1 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month between September and May. They begin with a half-hour presentation by the presenters, followed by a half-hour of general discussion.

"In Rochester Christians and Jews continue to sit down with biblical texts and discuss it together and explore the relationships that have been created," Goldman said.

That trend continues in February, as the Commission on Christian Jewish Relations offers a separate program, "Jesus: His Life and Death." The topic will be explored by William Scott Green, dean and professor of religion and Judaic studies at the University of Rochester, and William R. Herzog II, professor of New Testament interpretation at Rochester's Crozer Divinity School. It will be held at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 2 at Rochester Museum and Science Center's Eisenhart Auditorium.

Goldman said this is the first time the commission has offered a program on a topic that is not common to both Christians and Jews. With all the media attention being given to Jesus these days — including Mel Gibson's upcoming movie "The Passion of the Christ" and Dan Brown's best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code* — it was felt the subject was an important one to tackle right now, she said, adding that the program will not focus on either of the works.