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PRIEST SHORTAGE PUTS CRIMP ON CATHOLIC CHURCH

By William R. Wineke; Wisconsin State Journal

The statistics facing the Madison Catholic Diocese remain frustrating: This year, five pastors will retire and only one young man will be ordained to the priesthood.

The numbers involved are small - the diocese is served by 146 diocesan **priests** and a number of other **priests** who belong to religious orders - but the cumulative effect on the church is that its professional leadership is stretched a little tighter, the **priests** will have to work a little harder, and the parishes will get a little less service.

In the long run, members of smaller parishes will have less security that their churches will remain open and **priests** who might wish to take leaves of absence for study or who might want to enter specialized ministries will have less assurance their requests can be granted. "What it means for most of us is that there are fewer assistant pastors and that means you say more Masses and rely more on lay staff," explained the Rev. Joseph Higgins, pastor of St. Bernard's Catholic Church, Middleton. "On a more positive side, it also means we are making better use of volunteers."

Bishop William Bullock, of the 11-county Madison Catholic Diocese, recently said he had ordered studies about ways to handle the **priest** shortage. He said the result probably would involve the "merger of some small parishes and the possible closing of others."

Bullock announced annual **priest** transfers earlier this week. The changes become official June 14.

Among those retiring are the Rev. Bernard Meloy, pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Boscobel; the Rev. Albert Schubiger, pastor of St. Thomas Catholic Church, Beloit; and the Rev. Anthony Young, pastor of St. Thomas Catholic Church, Poynette.

The Rev. **Archie Adams**, former pastor of St. Mary's and St. Paul's Catholic Churches, Mineral Point, was granted a medical leave and retired status.

And the Rev. John Gebhard, who announced last week that he has the AIDS virus, also was put on medical leave. Church officials this week would not comment on how Gebhard may have become infected.

Bullock has not yet announced a replacement for Gebhard. His office said other parish changes would be announced later this year.

John Auby, currently a theology student, will be ordained this spring, the diocesan office said.

The Rev. Paul Swain, currently Bullock's **priest** secretary, will become the diocese's first Moderator of the Curia and also will be pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Pine Bluff.

The position of Moderator of the Curia, Swain said, was mandated in a recent revision of the Code of Canon Law, which governs the church. It is an administrative position. Swain will coordinate the work of the various agencies of the church.

Swain will be replaced as secretary by the Rev. John Stillmank, who currently serves St.

Peter's Catholic Church in Madison.

Other **priest** changes include:

The Rev. August Buenzlli, currently pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Muscoda, will replace Young in Poynette.

The Rev. Thomas Doheny, pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Pine Bluff, will replace Schubiger in Beloit.

The Rev. John Urban, administrator of Saints Anthony and Philip Catholic Church, Highland, will become pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Boscobel. An "administrator" of a parish performs the duties of a pastor but does not have the permanent responsibility for the parish that a pastor has.

In addition changes will be made in:

Mazomanie: The Rev. Daniel Ganshert will become pastor of St. Barnabas Catholic Church and of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Mill Creek.

Jefferson: The Rev. James Kuhn will become pastor of St. Lawrence Catholic Church and chaplain of St. Coletta School.

Plain: The Rev. Richard Lenarz will become pastor of St. Luke's Catholic Church and, also of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Loretto.

Berlin: The Rev. Richard Lesniak will become pastor of St. Michael-St. Joseph Catholic Church.

Watertown: The Rev. Bernard Rott will become pastor of St. Henry Catholic Church.

Mineral Point: The Rev. Thomas Segerson will become pastor of Saints Mary and Paul Catholic Church.

Muscoda: The Rev. Roger Taylor will become pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and, also, of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Avoca.

Highland: The Rev. James Uppena will become pastor of Saints Anthony and Philip Catholic Church.

Montello: The Rev. Gary Wankerl will become pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and, also, of Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Westfield.

Janesville: The Rev. Thomas Kelly will become parochial vicar of St. John Vianney Catholic Church.

Madison: The Rev. William Nolan will become parochial vicar of St. Peter's Catholic Church.