

# PITTSBURGH Catholic

160th Year, CLX No.14 40c

Established in 1844: America's Oldest Catholic Newspaper in Continuous Publication

Friday, June 18, 2004

10

## DIOCESAN NEWS

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 2004 • PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC

### Project will showcase contributions of women religious in health care in western Pennsylvania

By MSGR. TIMOTHY P. STEIN

The contributions made by women religious to health care in western Pennsylvania will be honored and commemorated by a permanent exhibit being developed by a Slippery Rock University professor.

John Bavaro, a registered nurse with a doctorate degree, is coordinating the Sisters' Healthcare History Project, slated to be shown for the first time in fall 2005. The project, which has been endorsed by the Tri-Diocesan Sisters Leadership Conference (representing women religious in the Dioceses of Altoona-Johnstown, Greensburg and Pittsburgh), is being developed in collaboration with the Women's Studies Department of Slippery Rock University.

**'The cost, in terms of personal sacrifice on the part of these women, was staggering. This is a story that needs to be told.**

**All Pennsylvanians are in the debt of these women of faith.'**

— Dr. John Bavaro

The permanent, historical exhibit will provide insight into the mission of women religious in health care, while increasing the public's awareness of the contributions made by women

religious to health care in western Pennsylvania, specifically in the Dioceses of Altoona-Johnstown, Erie, Greensburg and Pittsburgh.

Communities of women religious participating include: the Sisters of St. Joseph (Baden and Erie), the Sisters of St. Francis (Millvale), the Sisters of Mercy (regional communities of Pittsburgh, Dallas and Erie), the Vincentian Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Divine Providence, the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, the Felician Sisters of Pennsylvania, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the Sisters of St. Benedict (St. Marys), the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm and the Little Sisters of the Poor.

"The sisters have given so much to all of us over the years," said Bavaro of his motivation for beginning the project.

"Now is the time to tell the story of their health care ministry, before their significant contributions are forgotten."

Bavaro continued, "From the founding of Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh in 1847, the first hospital to be founded by women religious in western Pennsylvania, until the present day, sisters have been at the forefront of providing quality health care to citizens of the commonwealth. The cost, in terms of personal sacrifice on the part of these women, was staggering. This is a story that needs to be told. All Pennsylvanians are in the debt to these women of faith."

The Sisters' Healthcare History Project will showcase the



Mercy Sister M. Carlotta Vanvoy, left, supervises the nursery at Pittsburgh's Mercy Hospital in 1947.

work of women religious in health care in western Pennsylvania from the 1840s until the present. Now in its initial stages of development, the exhibit will be owned and operated by Slippery Rock and will be a traveling exhibit, shown throughout the western part of the state. After the initial project focusing on western Pennsylvania is in place, Bavaro hopes to expand to include other religious communities from across the United States.

The exhibit will include health care memorabilia, archival materials from hospitals and religious communities, the orig-

inal habits worn by the nursing sisters, and story boards telling the tale of each community and their unique contribution to health care in western Pennsylvania.

Funding for the project is being coordinated through the SRU Foundation of the university. Both individual and corporate tax-exempt contributions are now being sought for the exhibit. Checks should be addressed and made payable to SRU Foundation, Advancement Office/Slippery Rock University, 100 Old Main, One Morrow Way, Slippery Rock PA 16047-1326. The words "Sisters'

Healthcare History Project' should be written in the memo portion of the check.

Any proceeds from the showing of the exhibit will be donated to the retirement funds of the communities of sisters participating.

For further information on the Sisters' Healthcare History Project contact Bavaro at 724-738-2265, or by e-mail at [john.bavaro@sru.edu](mailto:john.bavaro@sru.edu).

Msgr. Stein is editor of The Catholic Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.