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The Rev. Dan Schlegel
Holy Angels Catholic Church in Bainbridge Township

Catholic church officials working to restore faith

Jenny May
Staff Writer

Lately, the Rev. Dan Schlegel, administrator for Holy Angels Catholic Church in Bainbridge Township, has found his role in the parish has changed.

In addition to leading his parish, Schlegel has the task of helping members regain confidence in the Catholic Church

after numerous cases of alleged sexual abuse by clergy became public.

Schlegel has been dealing with trust issues largely through his liturgies.

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See FAITH, Page A4

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Notorious
"Superstar" actor
enjoying his role
as Judas.
Sidetracks

FAITH

■ From Page A1
are hurting as well."

A study released Feb. 27 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice has some Catholics taking a closer look at and even questioning their religious leaders.

The study, titled "The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States," includes information on the number of reported abuse cases against clergy since 1950 and the cost to the nation's 195 dioceses in compensation to victims, treatment costs and legal fees through 2002.

The study notes that 4,392 priests who worked between 1950 and 2002 have been accused of sexual abuse of minors. In the Cleveland Catholic Diocese, allegations have been made against 118 priests and deacons.

In response to the accusations, the Cleveland diocese, which covers eight counties, including Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga, came up with a program called "Protecting God's Children."

The program entails:

- Establishing and updating written policies regarding interaction with children and outlining proper follow-up to allegations.

- Required education and training for more than 40,000 adults who have contact with children through their service in the diocese.

- Creation of a Diocesan Response Office to respond to allegations of sexual abuse of children. The office is staffed by trained counselors and includes a telephone line. Allegations can be reported to (216) 334-2999 or response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org.

- Creation of a review board, composed almost exclusively of lay people, to serve in a consultative and advisory capacity and to assess the credibility of allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy.

"This reaches everybody from the priests to volunteer soccer coaches," said Robert Tayek, spokesman for the diocese.

"It's ongoing. The diocese also sent out a recommended healing liturgy directed specifically toward the abuse scandal."

Bishop Anthony Pilla announced in February that clergy child abuse has cost the diocese \$14.4 million in victim settlements, treatment and legal fees over 50 years, with most of the payouts since 1990. The payouts came from a dedicated self-insurance fund, Tayek said.

Some members of the Catholic Church have taken it upon themselves to help the healing process along.

Tim Warneka, president of the Black Belt Consulting Group, which has offices in Cleveland and Chicago, thought more needed to be done to support the Catholic Church and its members.

The group counsels individuals and businesses



Jeff Forman/News-Herald

Father Tom Dragga washes the feet of Sherie Hale during Holy Thursday services at St. Noel Church in Willoughby Hills.

on life issues and how to run a more effective business using principles from the Japanese martial art Aikido.

On April 27, Warneka's company will hold "An Evening of Lamentation and Healing" at St. Noel Catholic Church in Willoughby Hills.

The event is strictly for clergy to air their concerns about the abuse scandal.

Warneka, a member of St. Noel, said he felt the need to respond when many of his clients brought up their concerns about the report.

"I was seeing a lot of emotions," Warneka said. "People were really bothered by the report in different ways. I see responses all over the board. There are trust issues; some people are angry at the church. This is a way of getting people together to talk about how this sexual abuse issue has affected their lives."

Schlegel is also trying to answer questions from his parish members.

"People want to know why the church didn't act differently," Schlegel said.

"I try to explain that we can only know a situation from a certain point of view. I think many people on the local level trust their parish, but I think it's more difficult to restore the bond of trust in the larger church."

Some parishes seem to be healing faster than others.

The Rev. John Betters of St. Clare's Catholic Church in Mayfield Heights said his parish seems to have dealt with the issue and recovered.

"I addressed it and said it was difficult to hear those numbers," Betters said.

"We've had very little response. I think people are ready to move on."