

Editorials

Deaf to St. Stan's

Monsignor John Bonzagni came to Adams Thursday night for a meeting with parishioners concerned about the proposed closing of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, but there is no evidence that he came to listen. The Diocese of Springfield appears as determined as ever to close St. Stan's as a part of the consolidation of three churches in town and this is a decision that if made threatens to fracture the Catholic community there.

The three-fold argument by Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell to consolidate the three churches into the Notre Dame building as outlined by the monsignor is not a convincing one. With 600 seats, Notre Dame is larger, but St. Stan's has more than 500 seats and also offers more parking. Notre Dame may have more buildings on its campus but St. Stan's has a school that is in some ways the lifeblood of the Adams church community. The school will remain open but will not be with a church. The monsignor observed that Notre Dame is in a "prominent" part of town, but St. Stan's is hardly isolated. St. Stan's is also one of the most spectacular churches in the diocese, far more beautiful than either of the other two Catholic churches in town, and should be preserved for what it means to the town and county both aesthetically and architecturally.

St. Stanislaus is also financially sound, which

should be a major consideration given the harsh economic realities facing the Springfield Diocese, though it does not appear to be. If some of the most loyal and financially generous parishioners in the Berkshire are alienated from the diocese, there is a real danger that Adams will not have a viable Catholic parish in three or four years.

We agree with Monsignor Bonzagni that Reverend Daniel Boyle, who has been conducting Mass at all three churches, is a victim here, not part of the problem. However, writers of letters to the editor who criticize the reverend, or the diocese for that matter, have a right to free speech they should not be reluctant to exercise. The days in which Catholics will automatically obey a command to "knock if off" from a church leader have been over for some time.

Catholic Churches are closing throughout Berkshire County and no one is claiming that it is unnecessary. The population of the Berkshires as a whole has declined since the churches were built, and the number of Catholics has declined with it. The case for keeping St. Stan's open, however, is better than the case for closing it, and while the monsignor was regrettably dismissive Thursday of the effort of parishioners to make that argument, they have made it passionately and well.