

SPORTS SCORES

Super Bowl XLIV

Manning and 'mad scientist'

Colts QB and coach forge 12-year bond, 1C
In Florida, 3, 8C



2004 photos by Matthew Stockman, Getty Images
Duo: Tom Moore, Peyton Manning.

USA TODAY logo with 'NO. 1 IN THE' text and a blue car image.

Danes' next act: Plays animal-behavior expert Temple Grandin in HBO film, 3D. Image of Claire Danes.

Thursday, February 4, 2010

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By Robert Dornoch, USA TODAY

Pinkneys: Jerry, Gloria; son Brian, his wife, Andrea.

Storied family's new honor

Patriarch adds Caldecott Medal to literary legacy of Pinkney family, 1-2D



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Ronald Powell among football recruits going to the Gators, 1, 5C

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You can use them for games, movies, but quality, ease of setup a challenge, Edward C. Baig finds, 3B.

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Phil Mickelson says he will not use non-conforming club when he plays at California tourney, 1-2C. Meet U.S. luge team's Erin Hamlin, Games, 9C.

Life: Self-published authors get boost

Amazon begins publishing independently printed titles that have generated good reaction, 1D.



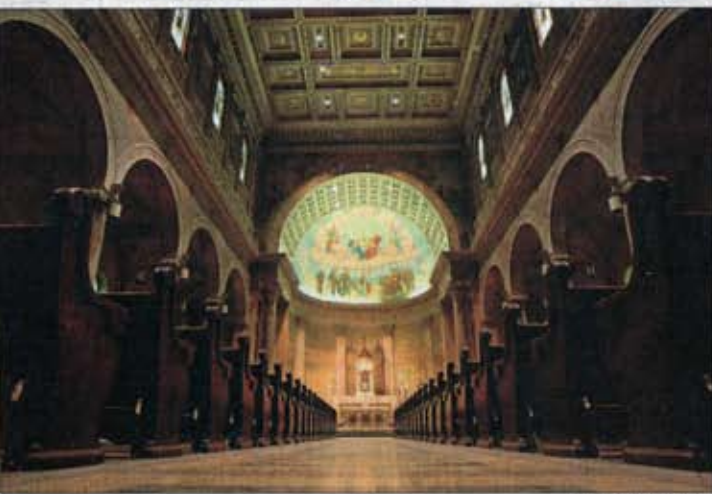
On Friday: Guide to the Super Bowl

Get ready for Sunday's game with our 14-page Bonus Section
Every matchup, what to watch for, statistics, more

Anxious days for Toyota



Comments by Transportation secretary, concerns about Prius add to carmaker's problems, 1B



By Doug Burt for USA TODAY

Headed to Georgia? Advocates say a plan to move St. Gerard's Roman Catholic Church from Buffalo to Norcross, Ga., could be a model for saving closed churches in the Northeast.

How to save a N.Y. church: Move it 900 miles south

Plan reflects shift in congregations

By Rick Hampson USA TODAY

BUFFALO — St. Gerard's was where her grandparents and parents were married, where she was baptized and wore the white dress, shoes and veil of First Communion. Years later, she can still hear the three great bells, still see the ceiling fresco of Mary crowned Queen of Heaven.

Sharon Wilbur took those memories of St. Gerard's Roman Catholic Church with her when she moved decades ago to suburban Atlanta, where such a church exists only in pictures. Now, two years after it closed, her old church could be following her south.

Instead of building a neoclassical church, Wil-



By Michael A. Schwarz, USA TODAY

Seeking a new home: Father David Dye and Sharon Wilbur of Mary Our Queen Church in Norcross, Ga.

Cover story

bur's growing parish wants to buy classical-style St. Gerard's, take it apart and ship it 900 miles east side to Norcross, Ga., for reassembly at Mary Our Queen parish. The parish has the endorsement of the Catholic archdiocese of Atlanta, the diocese of Buffalo and St. Gerard's former parishioners. All it needs is an additional \$10 million.

Transplanting an 800-seat, century-old basilica would be an exceptional solution to an increasingly common problem: what to do about the inventory of closed churches across the Northeast and Midwest.

In recent decades, thousands of American churches — no one, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has exact numbers — have closed. Some have

Please see COVER STORY next page

Failure rate for AP tests climbing

Schools' pressure for standards questioned

By Jack Gillum and Greg Toppo USA TODAY

The number of students taking Advanced Placement tests hit a record high last year, but the portion who fail the exams — particularly in the South — is rising as well, a USA TODAY analysis finds.

Students last year took a record 2.9 million exams through the AP program, which challenges high school students with college-level courses. Passing the exams (a score of 3 or higher on the point scale of 1 to 5) may earn students early college credits, depending on a college's criteria.

The findings about the failure rates raise questions about whether schools are pushing millions of students into AP courses without adequate preparation — and whether a race for higher standards means schools are not training enough teachers to deliver the high-level material.

"The standards don't teach themselves," says Stanford University's Linda Darling-Hammond, a noted teacher-quality expert who says schools shouldn't treat AP as "another silver bullet" that will raise standards and assure academic success.

"You have to build the whole system. You can't just bring in one thing and think that it's going to solve everything," she says.

The newspaper's analysis finds that more than two in five students (41.5%) earned a failing score of 1 or 2, up from 36.5% in 1999. In the South, a Census-defined region that spans from Texas to Delaware, nearly half of all tests — 48.4% — earned a 1 or 2, a failure rate up 7 percentage points from a decade prior and a statistically significant difference from the rest of the country.

College Board officials say it's misleading to lump all scores together, because some tests have vastly different historical pass rates. Scores on AP Physics tests, for example, are consistently up; those for AP

# Plan to move N.Y. church to Ga. called 'preservation by relocation'

Continued from 1A

been bought by other congregations. Others have found new lives as performance spaces, catering halls, art galleries, restaurants, homes and, in Cincinnati, an Urban Outfitters retail store. But a range of factors — including the unusual size and shape of churches, and restrictions sellers often impose on their reuse (no alcohol sales, no astrology, etc.) — limit the number that find an afterlife.

Many, like St. Gerard's, sit empty and decaying, waiting for demolition. A neighborhood loses an architectural grace note, and those who built it lose something they feel is sacred, according to Wendy Nicholas of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Advocates of the plan to move St. Gerard's say it could be a template for saving closed church buildings by finding them new parishes in the suburbs or the Sun Belt — "preservation by relocation," as Mary Our Queen's website calls it.

The Catholic diocese of Buffalo and most former parishioners describe the plan as the only way to save St. Gerard's. Buffalo has a glut of closed, empty churches — the diocese alone is trying to sell 22 other buildings — and a small congregation looking for a church probably couldn't afford St. Gerard's heating bill.

Historic preservation groups are split over the plan.

Some, such as Preservation Buffalo Niagara, accept the move as a necessary evil; others oppose it as what Tim Tielman, director of the Campaign for Buffalo History, Architecture and Culture, calls "a demolition and salvage operation. They want to harvest our architectural heritage and put it in a box."

David Franczyk, president of the Buffalo city council, has a message for the Georgia parish: "Build your own church. We have enough vacant lots."

## Tale of two churches

St. Gerard's change of address would reflect regional demographic changes in the U.S. Catholic Church. In New York state, the number of self-described Catholics has dropped from 44% in 1990 to 37%; in north Georgia, the percentage has increased over the same period from 4% to 11%, thanks largely to an influx of Hispanics and people from the Northeast and Midwest.



**A declining neighborhood:** St. Gerard's Roman Catholic Church, an 880-seat, century-old basilica that was closed two years ago, is among nearly two dozen buildings that the local diocese is trying to sell.



By Julie Simms, USA TODAY

When the cornerstone of St. Gerard's was laid in 1911, the German immigrants who pledged their nickels and dimes assumed it would always stand at the corner of Bailey and East Delavan avenues. Students were released from school to see the 12 granite columns carted down the avenue and the bells lifted into the 11-story tower.

The church, a scaled-down version of St. Paul Outside the Walls, one of Rome's four great ancient basilicas, was "a prayer in stone, plaster, wood and glass," as the program for the parish's 100th anniversary said in 2002.

The parish grew from fewer than 100 families to several thousand by World War II. In the years that followed, neighborhood residents began leaving for the suburbs. By 2007, St. Gerard's was down to about 100 families, and the diocese decided to close it.

The church was full for the final Mass in January 2008. After the dismissal, the people didn't want to leave. The ushers had to insist they join the procession outside.

The pastor, Father Butch Mazur, slammed the door shut behind him and locked it. "Everyone stood out in the street," he recalled. "No one said anything. They just looked at the church."

Meanwhile, in Georgia, another priest was looking for a church. Mary Our Queen was at the other end of the congregational

life cycle. After starting in a rented office building in 1994, the parish built a temporary worship space for its 700 families. Now Father David Dye, the pastor, wanted "a church that looks like a church, a real house of God," not a sterile "meeting house."

He commissioned architectural plans for such a church and began calling dioceses in the Northeast, looking for an altar. When he called Boston — which had closed 44 parishes — he was offered an entire church.

The priest was intrigued; austere neoclassicism, with its pediments and columns, had been out of style for so long that the crafts and skills to build such churches were almost lost. He could take an old church and move it.

Although the Boston church turned out to be unavailable, Dye kept looking until he heard about St. Gerard's. When he saw photos, he was startled: The church looked just like the one he'd commissioned.

When Dye and his architect, Bill Harrison, walked into the nave in spring 2008, they saw the fresco of Mary's coronation. "We were blown away," Dye says. "We thought, 'If the parishioners could see this...'"

Wilbur was in the choir the Sunday her pastor announced the plan.

"Oh my heaven!" she gasped. "That was my church!" This monument out of her

snowy, gritty past? Coming to her new parish, whose name recalls that fresco six stories above St. Gerard's altar? She started to cry.

## A movable feast

St. Gerard's parishioners are happy with the plan to move their church from the corner where it stood for a century — and a little skeptical. "Mind-boggling," says Dorothy Eckl. "How do you move something so big?"

Never has so large an American church been moved so far. "People look at you like you're nuts," Harrison says. "But it's not like Dorothy's house in *The Wizard of Oz* — it's not going to fly."

The church would be deconstructed, piece by piece, each piece numbered, packed, trucked south and reassembled. About 80% of St. Gerard's would be reused: the exterior limestone, oak pews, stained glass, stations of the cross and confessional; and the granite columns.

Harrison says the new church would look almost exactly like St. Gerard's but have a new steel skeleton, a new foundation, roof, floor and heating and air-conditioning systems, and a larger choir loft. The plaster ceiling, including the coronation fresco, would be impossible to move, and would have to be recreated.

The project can be done in 18 to 24 months, Dye says, and could begin as soon as this summer. He puts the cost at \$14 million to \$16 million, including a payment to the diocese. That's twice as much as the church Harrison designed, and one-half to one-third of what it would cost to recreate the grandeur of St. Ger-

ard's today. The parish has \$3 million and plans to raise and borrow the rest.

To drum up financial support across denominations and around the region, Dye is waging a campaign with a public relations consultant and a website ([www.movedbygrace.com](http://www.movedbygrace.com)) that bills the project as a destination to support Atlanta's claim as "the next international city."

## Tough blow to Buffalo

For those seeking to save closed churches, preservation by relocation could be "one tool in your arsenal," says Ann Friedman, director of the New York Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Program.

But in Buffalo, an economically depressed city whose population has dropped to 270,000 from 580,000 in 1950, some see the St. Gerard's move as an admission that things are so bad even the churches have to move south.

Some comments rankle — such as Dye's description of Buffalo as an architectural "organ donor" and Harrison's likening St. Gerard's to "a building supply" and "our quarry."

Franczyk, the city council president, compares the Georgians to British collectors who uprooted ancient art treasures, such as Athens' Elgin Marbles, in the 19th century. Moving St. Gerard's, he says, is "architectural degradation."

Some preservationist groups view the move as justifiable for lack of an alternative — "an odd-duck exception," says Henry McCartney, director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara.

Others vow to fight. Tielman of the Campaign for Buffalo History says he'll try to have St. Gerard's designated a landmark by the Buffalo Preservation Board (the city's landmarks commission) to delay or block its removal. Among his arguments: The move would leave the neighborhood without its greatest landmark and the city without one of its architectural gems.

But Franczyk acknowledges that because St. Gerard's is not an official landmark, its move probably can't be stopped. And Richard Fontana, the district's city council member, says there's no neighborhood opposition. Few community residents attended the church, so "to most people it's just another building on a corner. If there's no way to maintain it, it's probably better to move it."

A tree sprouts from the roof of St. Gerard's bell tower. Inside the church, paint is peeling and plas-

ter is falling. The roof leaks; before the church closed, several sections had to be roped off when it rained.

Mazur, the last pastor, conducts a tour, pointing out the intimate items destined for Georgia, including the stained glass window in which the face of the child sitting on Jesus' lap is that of the founding pastor's grandniece and the bronze plaque on the back wall with the names of parishioners lost in World War II.

Mazur says he's not sad about the move; he'll be here for the first day of deconstruction and will lead a group of former parishioners to Norcross for the first Mass there.

"This church is a testament to the people of this neighborhood," he says. "They realize times have changed. Their faith will be alive in another setting."

He comes to the base of the tower housing the bells, named Joseph, Ann and Anthony. He begins to pull on the 100-foot-long ropes, straining so hard his glasses almost fall off.

When the bells were dedicated in a ritual that dates to the time of Charlemagne, nothing was said about a priest shortage, suburban flight, the price of heating oil or preservation by relocation.

Finally, the bells begin to ring. In Georgia, Sharon Wilbur, 61, still says the rosary on beads she received for her First Communion. These days, she prays to be reunited with her old church.

Her faith is not only in God. "With modern technology," she says, "they can do anything."

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