

With loss of NCR, Dayton loses 'part of its identity'
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DAYTON DEANERY — The recent announcement that National Cash Register Corporation (NCR) will relocate its corporate headquarters to Georgia brought more pain to a community that has seen thousands of jobs lost during the economic downturn.

It reinforced for Catholic churches in the area the need to offer hope and strength to members of the community, and a Labor Day Mass in support of those affected by the economic crises is being organized by Father David Brinkmoeller, pastor of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and St. Helen parishes and dean of the Dayton Deanery.

Father Brinkmoeller wants to bring the community together and bless those seeking work. "It's actually triggered by the NCR departure," he said. "We had been having some conversations about what to do, and that really put it in the front burner."

The June 1 announcement, made after swift negotiations between the company and state officials in Georgia, will mean a loss of more than 1,000 jobs at NCR headquarters. The massive building will be put up for sale.

National Cash Register Corporation's headquarters building near the University of Dayton campus will be put up for sale. The company, which was founded in Dayton in 1884, will relocate to Georgia, taking more than 1,000 jobs with it. (CT/E.L. Hubbard)

While previous company closings and cutbacks have been painful, the NCR action is particularly difficult because of the company's 125-year relationship with Dayton.

NCR was founded in the city in 1884 and helped make Dayton an industrial force in the first half of the 20th century. The company has been part of Dayton's culture and a symbol of the city.

Marianist Brother Victor Forlani noted that NCR had a long history of being a concerned corporate citizen. "They did an awful lot for the local government and citizens of this area," he said, including donating surplus equipment to Bergamo Center in the 1980s, enabling the retreat center to

computerize its records.

“The move might have been inevitable, but it’s the way it happened” that has created anger, sadness and such loss, said Brother Victor, the first Marianist in residence at the University of Dayton’s School of Business Administration.

“Catholic social teaching makes clear the obligation to take into account the people you affect by your decisions and the dignity of the individual. You won’t always do what they want, but they should be given the chance to be heard. Businesses aren’t just chartered by society to make money for their shareholders. They’re also meant to be contributing citizens. What NCR did here isn’t indicative of that.”

NCR’s move doesn’t just mean the loss of jobs for Dayton, but the loss of leadership and respect in the community, Brother Forlani added. “Although the loss of jobs is significant, we’re also losing the involvement of NCR and their executives and employees in many facets of the greater Dayton community. There’s a real sense of sorrow as a result and a memory of better times when we were able to take of each other.”

As economic conditions in the city have worsened, parishes are trying to offer support, hope and prayer to those affected. Parishioners are also supporting each other.

“There are a number of people who are struggling. One of the really cool things is there are people who have jobs who are saying to themselves ‘It’s our business to carry the load for those who don’t have jobs,’” Father Brinkmoeller said. “We’re all in it together. Those who have income are filling in for those who are not able to at this point.”

During homilies, Father Brinkmoeller incorporates the idea that those who receive extra money from a tax refund or federal stimulus payment, for example, should put that money in other people’s pockets through increased tips or other means.

St. Christopher Parish in Vandalia is organizing two workshops to help people polish their job searching skills. A parishioner who works in human resources is conducting the workshops.

“We’re just hopeful that our parish members who are suffering will want to come to us and get this help,” said Cathy Campbell, the parish’s director of development and communications. “It will be a very useful tool for them.”

The sessions will be held June 29 and July 6, both at 7 p.m. at the parish. The first session will discuss job searching and networking, while the second session will focus on interviewing.

“We are hearing a lot about [people] losing their jobs, so we’re trying to find a way we can help them,” Campbell said. “We want them to know we’re here for them. That’s what our Christian faith is about.”

Each Sunday the parish also includes an intention for those seeking work or suffering because of the economy.

“I thought it would be a good idea to show our solidarity with people that are hurting,” said Father Francis Keferl, pastor. “Whenever [you] go through a crisis, you feel like you’re all alone.”

The archdiocesan Catholic Social Action Office in Dayton is also striving to promote outreach in the wake of NCR’s move and in response to the economic crisis as a whole, according to Pam Long, regional director.

On Aug. 29 the Social Action Office will host a meeting linking parishes in the Dayton Deanery with experts who can help them present a program to assist job-seekers. A location for meeting has yet to be determined.

“The concept here is to have employment strategy sessions throughout Dayton at various times,” Long explained. “It will include a focus on spirituality in coping and hoping through these times.”

Long’s office is also planning a study session of the U.S. bishops’ statements “Economic Justice for All” and “A Decade After Economic Justice for All.” The sessions are scheduled for Mondays, Sept. 14, 21 and 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m., or Tuesdays, Sept. 15, 22 and 29, noon-1:30 p.m., at Trinity Center.

Long notes that there is a responsibility corporations have to the local community from a social justice perspective and Scriptural perspective. “If you’re the leader of a corporation, you have to have a sense of how your

decisions will affect the local community, not just your bottom line," she said. "NCR's move isn't just a loss of jobs, but a loss of identity for Dayton, because a place you thought you could count on forever isn't going to be there any more."