

# Church in Forefront in Aiding Handicapped

By Elisabeth Larson  
Religion Today

Washington — The Catholic Church is making a strong effort to follow Jesus' example of love for the crippled, blind and deaf. It has become aware of the rights and needs of handicapped individuals, and it is trying to better serve these needs.

Pope John XXIII said in his encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), "In an ordered and productive community, it is a fundamental principle that every human being is a 'person' . . . (One) has rights and duties . . . flowing directly and spontaneously from (one's) very nature. These rights are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable."

The handicapped made a plea in the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. They asked to be noticed — not because of their differences, but because they are human beings with potential.

The 1977 White House Conference on the Handicapped triggered a Pastoral Statement on Handicapped People which led to establishment of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Advisory Committee on Ministry with Handicapped Persons.

The pastoral statement says the church should be concerned with the handicapped on a national level, on a diocesan level and on a parochial level.

"The handicapped persons should be in the Mass and special liturgies insofar as that it is possible, in any way the non-handicapped person is involved."

The advisory committee itself is composed of handicapped persons as well as people familiar with the ministry to the handicapped.

The task of the committee is a difficult one. All the major disabilities are in consideration — the blind, the deaf, the crippled and the mentally-retarded.

Each disability requires a different application: The liturgy and the catechism need to be translated into Braille for the blind; simplified in their language format for the deaf; and written on various levels, as well as explained verbally, to accommodate the many degrees of comprehension for the mentally-retarded.

Then there is the crippled parishioner in a wheelchair facing the numerous steps leading to the door of the church Sunday morning.

From the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Regulation 504 came into effect June 3, 1977. This regulation requires federally-funded projects and institutions to make their facilities accessible to all handicapped people by June this year.

Regulation 504 does not apply directly to churches but the Catholic advisory committee recognized the significance when they informed the bishops.

"We shouldn't wait until we are legally mandated, because of

our concern for the handicapped," said Father Thomas F. Cribbin, chairman of the advisory committee.

He feels it is necessary to educate the bishops about the needs of the handicapped so they can disseminate the information to the priests, laity and others interested in working with the disabled.

But he knows that to "really do the job, we need an office for the handicapped within the U.S. Catholic Conference. We need a full-blown office represented by all the major disabilities."

The endeavor of the committee promises success. A survey was taken of all bishops asking them who is the individual person — priest, religious or lay person — responsible in the diocese for problems concerning the handicapped. Better than 80 percent of the dioceses had someone and the others indicated that since they did not have anyone, the bishop would be the contact.

Will it be necessary to have separate churches for the handicapped? Or do we mainstream — mix — the handicapped with the non-handicapped?

Father Cribbin gave an encouraging answer: "The parish is the core of the Catholic Church — the faith of a community of people. We believe in mainstreaming."

The Catholic Church has opened its doors to the disabled. The handicapped are welcome — and very much wanted.

## Charities Launches New Initiative

William Privett, associate director of Catholic Charities in the diocese, announced an "entirely new initiative" on Charities' part, with "An Evening of Rest, Reflection and Refreshment," slated for Tuesday, May 13 at St. Agnes High School, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

According to a Charities' statement, Dr. Marie Gatzka, director of training for

Charities of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia; Robert Bonn, executive director of Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry, and Martin Lynch, executive director of the Association of Christian Therapists, will present an evening of "encouragement and insights to those who are involved in serving people in the community . . . teachers, volunteers, social workers,

nurses, police, etc."

"Our lives are our path to God and can lead others to God; it's a two-way road extending from God, into the world; to people and through people. Our work is a ministry for us and for those we serve," Privett's statement read.

## Speakers Available

The Rochester-Monroe County Chapter of the American Red Cross has speakers available to discuss specific topics at organization meetings. The topics include health maintenance, safety, disaster preparedness and relief, service to the military and veterans, volunteerism, blood services and youth services. Films are available to accompany speakers on many topics.

Those interested in receiving a speakers bureau brochure may contact the American Red Cross public relations office, 50 Prince St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607, or call 275-9800.

## Kreps Will Address Meeting

The Monroe County Human Relations Commission has scheduled its Nineteenth Annual Dinner Meeting for 6:44 p.m., Wednesday, May 21, in the main ballroom of the Americana, Rochester. Former U.S. Commerce Secretary Juanita M. Kreps will be the guest speaker.

The commission counsels individuals and families to resolve housing, employment, financial, educational and other problems. It is funded by county sources.

Tickets for the dinner are available for \$12 per person. Those interested may contact Nathan J. Robfogel, Esq., Harter, Secrest and Emery, 700 Midtown Tower, Rochester, N.Y. 14604. Telephone: 232-6500.

## Summer Of Service

The Sisters of St. Joseph are offering a "Summer of Service" for women over-18 who are interested in volunteering one to two weeks during July

The type of service varies from working with emotionally disturbed children to care for the aged, from city to rural parishes. Further information is available from Sister Marilyn Pray, 254-2582, or by writing Summer of Service, 4095 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14610.

## Drivers Needed

The American Cancer Society needs volunteers to drive patients from the Daisy Marquis Jones Hope Lodge, 1400 N. Winton Road, to area hospitals. Volunteers are needed to operate the 12-passenger van each morning, Monday through Friday.

Hope Lodge is a facility which offers housing, at no cost, to individuals who come to Rochester area hospitals for outpatient cancer treatments. It is a community where people who have common experiences and concerns are brought closer to each other.

Those interested in further information may contact the Monroe County Unit of the American Cancer Society at 288-1950.

## Mary's Day

The International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, Rochester Circle, will celebrate Mary's Day Saturday, May 10, at a 12:05 p.m. Mass in Corpus Christi Church. Friends are invited to join in honoring Mary as the Mother of Mankind on the day before Mothers Day.

## Dance, Prayer Lessons Slated

The Prayer Center of the Sisters of St. Joseph at 428 Mt. Vernon Ave. offers a continuing series of Dance/Prayer Workshops directed by Sister Mary Kay Ryan.

The group dances of Carla DeSola will be a feature of a May 29 workshop to be led by Sister Mary Kay. Further information and registration are available by calling the Prayer Center, (716) 244-1416.

## Death Penalty

Phelps — A workshop on the Death Penalty will be presented by Father William Spilly and Sister Anne Urquhart, SSJ, of the regional Human Development Office, at St. Francis of Assisi

parish hall on May 22 at 7:30 p.m. The evening will include a film and discussion on capital punishment, as well as a presentation of Catholic teaching on the subject.



## The Toymaker

The children at St. Jerome's School in East Rochester will present an operetta, "The Toymaker," next Wednesday and Thursday, May 14 and 15, at 8:15 p.m. in the school hall. Featured in the operetta are, from left, Kacey Dunn as the best doll, Ha Nguyen as the rag doll, Demetrio Cavatassi as the clown, Cathy Hagreen as the princess, and Brian Swagler in the title role as the toymaker. Tickets may be purchased in advance at St. Jerome's School or at the door on either night of the performance. Admission is \$1.75 for adults and \$.75 for children under 12.

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