

Local News

# Diocese emphasizes compassion in AIDS efforts

By Lee Strong

February is AIDS Awareness Month. But long before February arrived, Sister Lorraine Julien, SSJ, had begun thinking about the deadly disease. As pastoral assistant at St. Monica's, she believes its only a matter of time before she will have to deal directly with AIDS.

Nora Bradbury, youth minister at St. Augustine's, also has been thinking about AIDS. She knows that young people are one of the high risk groups for becoming infected, and in her ministry Bradbury must address the behaviors that put them at risk.

Through his work in the chaplain's office at Strong Memorial Hospital, Deacon Al Bergeron is already confronting the disease, visiting AIDS patients during his rounds.

In their separate endeavors, each of these ministers already has or will soon have to deal with the growing AIDS crisis. All three — along with 52 other diocesan ministers — attended the in-service day on AIDS sponsored by the Office of Continuing Education and the Office of Social Ministry on Wednesday, Feb. 3, at St. Francis DeSales Parish in Geneva. The purpose of the day was to provide individuals involved in Church ministry with factual information about AIDS and to discuss the Church's pastoral response to the AIDS problem.

The day included presentations ranging from "History, Symptoms and Prevention" to

"Educating the Parish Community," and open forums in which presenters — all of whom had medical, pastoral or theological expertise on AIDS — answered questions from participants.

The in-service day was just one of the many AIDS-related activities taking place at diocesan and parish levels during February. On Saturday, Feb. 6, 75 people attended a training workshop the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry (GVOSM) held for people interested in becoming companions for hospitalized AIDS patients. Corpus Christi's home for the dying, Isaiah House, sponsored an information session on Monday, Feb. 8, drawing approximately 50 people. St. John's in Greece held an AIDS-information session that attracted 85 people on Tuesday, Feb. 9.

The most publicized event, however, is the February 19 healing service for AIDS patients and their families at which Bishop Matthew H. Clark will officiate. The service, which will take place at the New Life Presbyterian Church, is planned in conjunction with a memorial service being conducted the next evening by Bishop William Burrill, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, at Temple B'rith Kodesh.

Although activities like these seem suddenly to have leapt into the news, they are actually the result of an ongoing series of efforts

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NC Photo  
A doctor examines a patient with AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Several recent diocesan efforts have been designed to help ministers show compassion for AIDS patients.

## Bishops study draft curriculum for state's Catholic schools

By Lee Strong

While education and training on AIDS goes on at diocesan and parish levels, Catholic educators are waiting for New York State's bishops to approve a proposed AIDS curriculum. Once the curriculum is approved, teachers will begin to incorporate AIDS education into lessons for next year.

The plan, developed by the New York state Joint Council Committee on AIDS Education of the Council of Catholic School Superintendents and Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, is currently in the hands of the state's bishops and diocesan school superintendents. The bishops are expected to approve the plan within four weeks, unless they decide to request changes, according to Joe McFigue, executive secretary of the council.

The proposed Catholic-school curriculum is actually based on the curriculum guidelines developed for public schools by the state Board of Regents. The state has required public and private school districts to develop all-encompassing courses of study for grades K-12 by next fall. Last year, the state published an instructional guide to provide a resource for creating these programs.

Evelyn Kirst, assistant superintendent for curriculum in the Rochester diocese, said the joint council committee was able to base its proposed curriculum on the state's guidelines because they are in accord with Catholic values. In fact, she added, the lessons for K-3 "are very much in line with what we're doing

in health, science, religion and social studies classes."

The fact that the state guidelines reflect Catholic values is due to input the New York State Catholic Conference provided to the state during the writing process, Kirst said. A committee formed by the Catholic conference not only suggested areas to be covered by the guidelines, but also offered critiques of early drafts. According to Kirst, one major effect of this input was the final document's emphasis on abstinence. "The original draft mentioned abstinence, but did not emphasize it" she explained. "Now abstinence from drugs and premarital sex have been made prominent."

In fact, the proposed guidelines state that abstinence from pre-marital sex and the use of illegal, intravenous drugs is the best way to prevent the spread of the disease. Moreover, the guidelines state that "abstinence is a life-style that affords greater opportunities for emotional, psychological and educational growth."

Kirst praised the state guidelines for placing a "heavy emphasis on respecting oneself and others." This emphasis is evidenced by lessons on such topics as healthful lifestyles, family structure, roles and responsibilities of family members and responsibilities for exploring sound interpersonal relationships.

The proposed Catholic curriculum, however, takes AIDS education a step beyond the state guidelines, according to Anne Wegman, associate director of youth ministry for human sexuality. Wegman, who served on the joint

committee that wrote the proposed Catholic curriculum, pointed out that the committee produced a second document, — "The Catholic School Supplement to the AIDS Instructional Guide" — modifying a number of the state's lessons, especially those dealing with condoms. "What we tried to do was give (the curriculum) a backdrop of Catholic teachings," Wegman explained.

Providing information about condoms is a controversial question in the Church at this time. The U.S. Catholic Conference's December 11 statement on AIDS — "The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response" — has received heavy criticism from conservatives because it tolerates presentation of factual information on condoms within public AIDS-education programs that also emphasize moral values.

Several bishops — including Cardinals John

J. O'Connor of New York and Bernard Law of Boston — and such lay organizations as Catholics United for the Faith object to this conditional acceptance of condom education because they say such acceptance might promote use of prophylactics. In a December statement, CUF condemned the bishops' AIDS document, saying that "giving children factual information about obscene and sinful acts such as the application of condoms sends the wrong message and, in effect, promotes per-

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