

et cetera

## Bishop's office

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participate in Operation Rescue (demonstrations) and still be pro-life," he said. "You have to be willing to accept the legal consequences. It's an agonizing process for most of these people because they have such a high regard for just laws."

The priest said, however, that he disagreed with the statement's assertion that "the primary goal of civil disobedience is to educate people."

"The primary purpose is to save a life; education is a secondary purpose here," Father Mugavero said. "That's where (pro-life demonstrations) are different from civil disobedience. We're simply trying to save lives."

Father David P. Simon, who was among 170 people arrested at a Vestal clinic back on October 28, echoed Father Mugavero's reaction.

"The Church is a sleeping giant; maybe

## Rite

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clear arms race, abortion, birth control?" Webster said. "We all interpret the Church ... but we try to give people all the ideas that are out there, and we try to tell people where does the official Church teaching fall?"

Generally, candidates and catechumens assessed both the quality and the quantity of information presented in the sessions as excellent. To help avoid gaps in candidates' and catechumens' knowledge of the Church, Billington pointed out that Webster schedules several one-on-one interviews with each person throughout the year.

"She asks 'Are we getting the information to you that you need?' he said. "There were some questions I had about policies and procedures. She wrote them down and incorporated those right into the program. Later, I found out that other people had had some of the same questions?"

Candidates and catechumens can nevertheless envision some improvements. Some are put off by the large number of people currently taking part in teaching sessions. Others, including Houlihan, wish for closer rapport between RCIA participants and other congregation members. "I wish there was more sharing among people, I wish we knew each other better ... and I wish more people from the congregation could participate," she said.

A lack of involvement on behalf of most of the parish also worries Webster. Yet no matter how many sessions the RCIA team schedules, members cannot meet every need or answer every question that will arise in a candidate's or catechumen's life of faith.

"We tell them right up front that we aren't going to answer every question they have about the Catholic Church. We don't have all the answers — not even those of us with master's degrees," Webster said. "So what's the RCIA for? To teach them about Church teachings and practices, and about where to look for answers to their questions after the process is finished?"

## Call

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numbers of potential candidates for the priesthood, Father Valenti is not content with the status quo. In January, another discernment/support group will start at St. John Fisher College. This group will consist of both men and women exploring vocations, both ordained and non-ordained. "I hope that's going to be another means of recruiting to the priesthood," Father Valenti said.

In addition, Father Valenti intends to recruit newly ordained priests to help discover more possible vocations to the priesthood. These priests will help to begin identifying potential priest candidates who are still in grammar school. Several of those priests are stationed in the Southern Tier, and the vocations director hopes to form some sort of vocations support group in that region of the diocese.

Still, Father Valenti recognizes that even with additional efforts, the numbers of today's seminarians will not equal those of previous generations.

"I don't think we're going to have large numbers," the priest acknowledged. "But there are some strong, strong candidates for the priesthood — men of faith, men of commitment, men filled with the desire to serve. I think they're going to serve and serve well."

"Although they're not large numbers," he added, "look what Jesus did with just 12?"

this will start to awaken people," said Father Simon, who is pastor of St. Margaret Mary's Parish in Apalachin. "Everyone is afraid of offending one another, but (rescue missions) have proven to be a clear way to publicize the issue. Look at all the national debate taking place, if nothing else."

Father Simon said that he, like Father Mugavero, agrees with the paper's acknowledgment that rescues are only one of many ways to show oppose the decision to legalize abortion in America.

"You've got to ask yourself, 'What are you doing?'" Father Simon said. "If you don't want to get involved in this manner, then what about another way?"

David E. Long, executive director of Project Life of Rochester, said he was "very encouraged" by the diocesan position paper. In recent months, Long has been trying increase Catholic participation in rescue missions.

"The position sounds like it is very supportive," said Long, who in recent months has organized several pro-life demonstrations in the Rochester area. "It's bold in the positive sense. There is a strong caution to stay non-violent, which is the basis of our group."

Long — reached for comment Monday evening, Dec. 12, after a Brighton judge postponed sentencing the Project Life director in connection with a pro-life demonstration in September — added that he was most happy for diocesan Catholics who are already involved with the pro-life movement.

"They can feel more relieved now that they know they're being supported," Long said.

Long and Gerald Crawford, who were

convicted last month of third-degree criminal trespass, resisting arrest and other charges stemming from the September protest, were sentenced by Brighton Town Justice John J. Ark to 30 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Both have refused to pay the fine.

On Monday, Dec. 12, Ark postponed the

two men's hearing, saying he wanted to wait for a pre-sentencing report from probation officials before deciding their sentences. Long and Crawford could face up to a year in jail.

Sentencing has been re-scheduled for Jan. 9.

## Action Center

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crated for the legislature's president, Democrat Kevin D. Murray, and Republican legislator Phil Fedele to visit the center, located in the Edgerton Recreation Center on Rochester's north side.

"We met some of the individuals benefiting from the program and people directly involved in running the program," Murray said of the visit. "We felt the program was justified."

Legislature Democrats subsequently included \$20,000 for the Action Center in a package of amendments to the finalized \$599 million budget, which was approved by a 17-12 vote November 29.

Geri Chaput, recently elected as president of the Monroe County Federation of Republican Women, was among those who helped obtain initial county funding for the Action Center. When that funding was threatened, Chaput readily agreed to help restore it.

"It would be one thing if there wasn't the money," she said. "(But) if they had \$180,000 for GeVa Theatre, I felt that it wasn't right to take away from the disabled."

Despite the success of Dechaine's lobbying efforts, the Action Center still must meet a nearly \$4,000 deficit in a budget she describes as "barely adequate."

"We are still very distressed that we can't get United Way funding and that we can't get more county funding," Dechaine said. "We are serving Monroe County residents who can't provide these services for themselves"

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