

# Diocese asked to condemn priest's actions



File photo  
Father Anthony P. Mugavero, parochial vicar at St. Theodore's Church, answered questions about his pro-life activity during a civil trial in May, 1988.

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — A group of pro-choice activists has issued a statement calling on the Diocese of Rochester to denounce Father Anthony Mugavero for his attempts to stop women from having abortions.

The group publicized its statement on Monday, Feb. 5, following Father Mugavero's appearance in Brighton Town Court. The priest faces charges that he harassed a woman seeking an abortion at a local doctor's office on Jan. 30.

"We believe the majority of Catholics do not agree with Father Mugavero's actions," said Mary Collins of the Greater Rochester National Organization for Women. "However, we believe that his actions are being sanctioned by local leaders of the Catholic Church. We must believe that the Catholic Church leadership also does not value women and is contributing to the violence in women's lives."

The pro-choice activists were led by Dr. Eric Schaff, who has picketed at St. Theodore's Parish — where Father Mugavero is assistant pastor — in weeks past to protest the priest's participation in "rescues" at physicians' offices where abortions are performed.

Brighton police arrested Father Mugavero on Jan. 30 and charged him with harassment and trespassing, then released him on his own recognizance. Father Mugavero told the *Courier* Monday that the town judge had ordered him to reappear in court on March 12. He declined to comment on the matter any further until his case is settled.

According to a report in Rochester's *Democrat and Chronicle*, Father Mugavero and an unidentified woman allegedly tried to stop an inmate from the Monroe County Jail and a jail employee from going into Dr. Morris Wortman's office at 200 White Spruce Blvd. Police said Father Mugavero and the woman tried to block the entrance to the office building, and then tried to prevent the elevator inside from going to the second floor, where Wortman's office is located.

The inmate pressed charges, and the priest was arrested later that day at a Monroe Community College forum, where a debate on abortion was taking place.

Father Mugavero has been arrested several times for anti-abortion activities. On Dec. 28, Rochester police arrested him after he blocked the entrance of Dr. David Gandell's Mt. Hope Avenue office. On Jan. 26, a city court judge ordered the priest to organize a blood drive for the American Red Cross over the next three

months.

Schaff, who spoke to a group of about 40 supporters following Father Mugavero's court appearance, called upon Bishop Matthew H. Clark "to go ahead and rein in Father Mugavero."

He noted that diocesan officials had met with pro-choice activists last week in an effort to resolve their differences concerning the use of "rescue missions" at the offices of area doctors. Schaff criticized Father Mugavero for engaging in "rescue" activity while such dialogue is going on.

Schaff, along with the Rev. Wendy Williams Spaly of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, met with officials from the diocesan Division of Social Ministry on Jan. 24. Following the meeting, both sides agreed to continue the dialogue.

Father George Norton, diocesan spokesman, said the diocese had no comment on the pro-choice activists' statement.

## Earlier campaigns spur interest in ministry day

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark's Call to Ministry program appears certain to attract as large a gathering as that drawn by his Call to Priesthood campaign last year.

As of Feb. 5, diocesan officials had received responses from 116 people planning to attend the ministry-discernment day, scheduled for Feb. 10 at St. Mary's School in Canandaigua.

An additional 32 people have expressed interest in the program, but are not planning to attend the day-long session.

The responses of these 148 individuals are the result of 575 invitations sent by Bishop Clark to people whose names had been submitted by fellow parishioners and parish staff as likely candidates for church ministry.

The earlier Call to Priesthood effort resulted in 110 responses to approximately 600 invitations sent out in the spring of 1989. Sixty men attended a day of reflection, discernment and prayer at St. Dominic's, Shortsville, on Aug. 12.

The program at St. Mary's this Saturday

will be similar to the format used for the Call to Priesthood at St. Dominic's. Participants will hear presentations about discernment of gifts; lifestyles of deacons, lay ministers, and men and women religious; and the actual experiences of such church ministers as pastoral assistants, religious educators, chaplains and campus ministers.

According to Mary Kessler, diocesan director of personnel services and one of the Call to Ministry program's coordinators, the response to the ministry day is due in part to interest aroused by the Call to Priesthood campaign last year.

In addition, Kessler speculated that interest in church ministry may have been awakened by the Commitment to Ministry process the diocese has been undergoing since 1988. That process is designed to assess parish staffing needs in light of the declining numbers of priests.

"I think the Commitment to Ministry program has really surfaced a lot of excitement, so (the Call to Ministry) may be just a natural follow through," Kessler said.

Call to Ministry is intended not for people already involved in paid church ministry, Kessler noted, but for individuals who may never have seriously thought about pursuing ministerial work. "I think a lot of people didn't think those positions were open to them," she said.

People attending the ministry day will attend morning sessions focusing on discernment of gifts and on the lifestyles involved in church ministry.

Each participant was asked to select one of the afternoon workshops, in which working diocesan ministers will focus on such specific church ministries as religious educator, pastoral assistant and liturgist. The discussion will cover not only the experiences of those involved in the ministries, but also the education and training needed for the positions.

As a follow up to the ministry day, participants will be directed to diocesan offices that direct the various ministries. Personnel from these offices will help the individuals evaluate what training and education they will need to attain their ministerial objectives.

Individuals who wish to pursue particular ministries will also be channeled into volunteer ministry work "to let them see more clearly what the job is so that they could continue the discernment process," Kessler observed.

Kessler said that after the ministry day is over, the vocations office and the vocations recruitment committee will evaluate the effort and decide if similar days will be scheduled in the future.

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