

Forum aired differences in faiths' abortion views

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The consensus among religious denominations on the morality of birth control and abortion is that there is no consensus.

While the Catholic Church, for example, holds direct abortion to be murder in all cases, some Protestant leaders would argue that a woman has a right to choose abortion. When a mother's life or mental health is threatened, the Talmud — the collection of writings constituting Jewish civil and religious law — actually mandates abortion.

So learned an audience of more than 50 people who attended a discussion on reproductive issues and religious tradition last Wednesday, June 6, at the offices of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley, Inc., on University Avenue.

Catholic, Protestant and Jewish speakers explained their faiths' respective positions on the issues and attempted to find common threads among the three points of view.

The discussion was co-sponsored by Planned Parenthood and St. Mary's

Downtown Community Forum, a parish-sponsored annual lecture series on various issues. The June 6 program was the second in a two-part series; the first forum took place at St. Mary's Church in March.

The three speakers were Mary Rose McCarthy, director of the work cooperative at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality and a former religious-studies teacher at Nazareth Academy; the Rev. John Cairns of Third Presbyterian Church of Rochester; and Alan M. Shapiro, a psychotherapist and son of a Jewish rabbi.

McCarthy observed that if one views the Catholic Church's viewpoint solely from the standpoint of its official teachings against abortion and artificial birth control, one ignores the fact that the church, as it exists, has not reached a consensus on either issue.

McCarthy said she believes in the primacy of a conscience informed by the church's teaching, but added that the church's teachings on birth control and abortion had not been formed with the input of women.

She further stated that interpretations of church views on abortion and birth control

Continued on page 11



Susan S. Petersen
Chris Murphy of Rochester was one of more than 50 people who attended a discussion on reproductive rights and religious traditions June 6 at the offices of Planned Parenthood.

Former Ss. Peter and Paul School reopens its doors as new home for a dozen families

ROCHESTER — A Catholic school building that once echoed with the sounds of classroom bells and students' voices is alive again with the music of family life.

Ten families already reside in the Ss. Peter and Paul Mutual Housing Project, which officially opened on Tuesday, June 5, at a ceremony presided over by Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr. By next month, 12 families are expected to be living in the rent-subsidized housing project, located inside the West Main Street parish's former elementary school building on 681 Brown St.

The school, which closed in the early 1970s, has housed various programs since then, including a tutoring program operated by the Rochester City School District in the mid-1980s.

The former school building was acquired from Ss. Peter and Paul Parish more than a year ago in a 30-year lease agreement with Housing Opportunities, Inc., a not-for-profit housing developer for low- and middle-income residents.

The lease condition calls for Housing Opportunities, Inc. to develop the building in lieu of actually paying rent to the parish, said Marva Tyler, the developer's

marketing and training specialist.

"(Ss. Peter and Paul Parish) really wanted to see it develop into some residence for low-income persons," remarked Robert Rynaski, a marketing and tenant management assistant with Housing Opportunities, Inc.

Rynaski said that all of the building's tenants receive some kind of public financial assistance and are screened for their financial condition and credit history before they rent. All the families have incomes below \$15,000 a year, and generally have had to previously spend more than half of that on rent. Rent payments vary depending on the family's size and income, Tyler said.

Renovation of the building began last July. New York State Social Services provided \$705,000 of the project's \$797,000 budget. The New York State Housing and Community Renewal Division awarded a \$91,500 grant, and the City of Rochester floated a \$100,000 loan for interim financing.

— Rob Cullivan

UR to establish professorship in study of Roman Catholicism

ROCHESTER — A \$620,000 donation from a Catholic couple in Rochester will enable the University of Rochester to establish a professorship in Roman Catholic studies within the university's department of Religion and Classics.

The university will begin in the fall to search in earnest for a person to fill the John Henry Newman Professorship of Catholic Studies, said William Green, chairman of the department. Green said that he hoped to have the appointee in place by July, 1991.

The exact nature of the position will be defined in part by the person chosen to fill the professorship, Green said. "The search will probably not limit itself to a single sub-field in Catholic studies," he said. "We don't want to limit the position."

The donation — from a couple wishing to remain anonymous — brings the total endowment for the professorship to more than \$1 million. The university is seeking an addition \$500,000 for the permanent endowment fund.

"I am extremely moved by the gift establishing this position," Green said. "The absence of the study of Roman Catholic thought and history has been a serious deficiency of our curriculum."

In addition, Green noted, "this position represents a positive step in the relation-

ship between the university and the Rochester Catholic community."

The creation of the professorship ends a quest that began in the 1970s. At that time, Catholic chaplains and the university's Newman community began to discuss the addition of Catholic studies to the university's religious studies program, which was established in 1968.

In 1974, the department began to offer occasional courses in Catholic studies. Those courses, taught by adjunct faculty, have been offered more regularly in recent years, and have proven popular, Green said. He added that Catholics represent the single largest religious denomination at the university.

Movement towards an endowed faculty position in Catholic studies received a boost in 1980 when the university's Newman community proposed that proceeds from the sale of the Newman Center to the university be used to create an en-

Continued on page 10

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