

State lobbyist urges parents to step-up efforts

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Seven million New York state Catholics have enormous potential political clout to effect change in public policy toward Catholic schools.

But unless Catholic school parents organize to lobby for beneficial legislation, such legislation will continue to languish without support.

That was the message Joseph W. McTighe, executive secretary for the New York State Catholic School Superintendents, brought to participants in a seminar on "Political Action, Public Policy and Catholic Schools."

Held at the University of Rochester on the morning of Saturday, Jan. 16, the seminar was sponsored by the Rochester Federation of Catholic School Parents.

McTighe, who also lobbies the state legislature as associate director of the New York Catholic Conference, called on Catholics to form networks of parents, principals and teachers in each diocese to work toward supporting such items as vouchers and tax credits for Catholic school parents.

"I think the principle reason for the Catholic vote's relative lack of influence is that despite our numbers and structures, we are just not well organized," said McTighe, who used slides to illustrate several of his points. "As a consequence, we lack the power of organizations that represent far fewer voters but have been uniquely successful in mobilizing members behind a well-focused agenda."

To bolster his point, McTighe compared the state legislature to "an oversized vending machine."

"Right now, the powerful, well-

financed lobbying groups — including the business community, organized labor, the public-school establishment, and other special interests — are quite adept at hogging the machine and walking away with most of what it has to dispense," he commented. "Too often, those with real need but little clout must make do with scarce legislative leftovers."

Citing the distribution of condoms and abortion referrals in some public schools as examples of the general undermining of parent's moral authority by the public-school system, McTighe maintained that society needs Catholic schools in order "to preserve alternatives to schools that assault fundamental religious principles."

Immigrants of several generations ago climbed out of material poverty through Catholic education — and to-

day's children can climb out of spiritual poverty through Catholic schools, he said.

McTighe also pointed to several studies indicating that Catholic schools competed on par or exceeded the performance of public schools in educating their students.

He noted, for example, that a study by the Rand Corporation tracked public-school youngsters who had transferred to Catholic schools on scholarships provided by businesses. The study noted that most of the students were African-American or Puerto Rican, came from single-parent homes, lived on welfare and had poor scholastic records. Ninety-five percent of such students graduated from the Catholic schools they attended, he concluded.

McTighe added that 25 percent of all New York City students attending

four-year colleges in 1990 graduated from Catholic schools.

"Are Catholic schools an asset to society?" he asked rhetorically. "Twenty-five percent of the four-year college pool at nearly no cost to taxpayers, you're darn right they are!"

Timothy W. Dwyer, superintendent of diocesan schools and a seminar speaker, echoed McTighe's comments that Catholic school supporters need to get together if they want the state to pass such items as school-choice vouchers. He noted the diocese will sponsor an in-service day sometime in March for teachers and administrators emphasizing the need to organize politically.

"We're going to try and light a fire with our faculty and administrators to get them involved in the Catholic school debate," Dwyer said.



Vigil marks annual march in Washington

Theresa Fredericks (left), Linda Rutherford (center) and Rosheen Rutherford perform for approximately 400 worshippers during a pro-life prayer vigil at St. Jude the Apostle Church, 4100 Lyell Road in Rochester Jan. 21. Sponsored by Rochester Marches for Life, the service preceded a bus trip to Washington, D.C. for the annual March for Life on Jan. 22. Please turn to page 5 for march coverage.

S. John Wilkin/Photo Intern

Bishop names Father DeSocio new head of vocations

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark has named Father John A. DeSocio the diocese's new director of vocations, effective July 1, 1993.

Father DeSocio, currently the Catholic chaplain at Ithaca College, will succeed Father Thomas J. Valenti, who has served as vocation director since 1980.

Father Valenti notified Bishop Clark of his decision to leave the position of vocations director last fall. He is currently discerning his ministerial plans for after June.

Bishop Clark praised Father Valenti for his work as vocations director.

"I think he's done a very fine job," Bishop Clark said. "I think the program he hands on to (Father DeSocio) is a very solid one."

Likewise, Father DeSocio noted that Father Valenti "has done an excellent job in a difficult time in vocations."

Father DeSocio said the outgoing vocations director saw the closing of St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester as well as a nationwide decrease in the number of men interested in the priesthood.

In the face of those problems, Father Valenti established a series of discernment groups to provide support for men considering a vocation to the priesthood. Those groups currently serve 31 individuals, ranging from high school students to men over 30.

An additional 13 men are studying at seminaries around the country to be ordained as priests in the Rochester diocese.

Father Valenti also developed the Call to Ministry Program, which asks people throughout the diocese to suggest potential candidates for the priesthood. These candidates have been invited to participate in regional gatherings, and — if they desire — to explore a possible vocation to the priesthood and join an appropriate discernment group.

"I think the Call to Ministry really opened the whole diocese to the awareness of vocations," Father DeSocio observed. "That's something (Father Valenti) has really been the guiding light in."

Father Valenti noted that one of his challenges as vocations director was adapting to the job as times changed.

When he began in 1980, the diocese offered both a college seminary program — located on the campus of St. John Fisher College — and a major seminary, St. Bernard's. His task had been to find potential seminarians and then turn them over to the directors of those two seminary programs.

Since St. Bernard's closed in 1981, however, he has had to find seminaries outside the diocese for interested seminarians. And he has had to maintain contact with those candidates through their ordination to the priesthood.

In addition to overseeing the discernment groups, Father Valenti since 1989 has also been the director of Becket Hall, the college seminary program which moved to the former convent at St. Boniface Parish, 330 Gregory St. That program has evolved from a college seminary program into a residential program for individuals

needing to complete prerequisites before entering a seminary.

Father Valenti said he decided to leave his position as vocation director after realizing that he had served in that capacity longer than most pastors stay at one parish — under current diocesan practice, 12 years.

"I always considered myself a pastor to those who were discerning," he noted.

In selecting Father DeSocio, Bishop Clark noted that he had asked diocesan priests to submit names of likely

candidates to become vocations director. Father DeSocio was suggested by a number of priests, he reported.

"It was obvious he was highly regarded by those who nominated him," Bishop Clark said.

Father DeSocio noted that he will continue many of the programs and policies Father Valenti established. In addition to visiting parishes to seek people's advice about the vocations program and potential candidates, Father DeSocio hopes to establish more frequent contacts with college Catholic communities in the diocese.

What you should demand from your dentist:

- 1. HE SHOULD LISTEN TO YOU**
When you first meet the Doctor, it's a good sign if you get to do most of the talking. After all, who knows you better than... you! Your needs and concerns are VERY important to us!
- 2. GENTLE, COMFORTABLE CARE**
Nowadays, your dental care can be surprisingly comfortable. With Nitrous Oxide (gas), Stereo Headphones (to block the sound), warmed anesthetic, tranquilizers, topical anesthetic and more, you will be amazed at how easy dental care can be! **We cater to cowards.**
- 3. REASONABLE AND FAIR COST**
We know how valuable your time and money are to you, that's why our goal is "on-time" appointments, "no-pressure" financing, and also, why your first consultation is free!

"When you need a dentist, you want one who really does take the time to be gentle and careful. That's exactly the way I built my practice! In this day and age of fast food and quickie marts, I've chosen instead to keep my practice just the opposite: Calm, Relaxed and Incredibly Comfortable.

New Patient Introductory Offer Exam, Cleaning & Bitewing X-ray Only \$35.00

586-2787 Robert C. Ciccone, D.D.S. Saturday & Evening Appointments Available

2094 Five Mile Line Rd. Just north of 4 Corners in Penfield

Special Financial Considerations for Seniors