

New public policy group to coordinate efforts

Committee sets agenda for 1993

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Diocese of Rochester has established a public policy committee to promote education on social issues, to foster cooperation among various groups in the diocese, and to enhance lobbying efforts at the local, state and national levels.

The committee, which comprises individuals from throughout the 12-county Catholic diocese, released its 1993 legislative agenda Feb. 5 to help guide the group and the diocese in the upcoming year, noted Father Michael Bausch, the committee's chairman.

"The published agenda is an educational and advocacy instrument," said Father Bausch, pastor of St. Helen's Church, 310 Hinckley Road. "It

will assist the Catholic community's informed participation in the political process.

"We also hope government leaders will consider these recommendations in debate and decision on critical legislation," the priest added.

The agenda echoes many of the concerns raised during the Public Policy Forum at the state legislature in Albany Feb. 2. The forum was sponsored by the New York State Catholic Conference. More than 70 representatives from the Rochester diocese joined approximately 1,000 Catholics from around the state to voice their concerns over issues ranging from abortion to aid for children and the poor.

Father Bausch credited the public policy committee with helping encourage local people to participate in the lobbying effort.

The committee has also organized a Feb. 26 luncheon at the Sheraton Canandaigua Inn for state legislators to meet with Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Part of the discussions that day will

focus on spending priorities in the state budget, Father Bausch reported.

The committee has also published a brochure listing its legislative agenda on the local, state and federal levels. That agenda includes calls for welfare reform; universal access to health care; child support enforcement; a more progressive state income tax; enactment of laws to protect farmworkers from substandard pay and housing; informed consent for abortions; and opposition to the death penalty.

Father Bausch said one of the committee's goals will be to coordinate the activities of various social justice groups throughout the diocese.

"There wasn't one place that all this was being coordinated in some fashion locally, and (which had) us look at legislation and how it impacts us as a diocese," Father Bausch said. The committee will also lend strength to lobbying efforts because the group can now speak for the whole diocese, the priest added.

Further, Father Bausch acknowl-

edged, the committee will help speed diocesan response to issues — particularly sensitive ones such as those surrounding abortion — whenever necessary.

"My hope," Father Bausch said, "is that we certainly can function as a conduit where issues can be spoken to more quickly."

In related news, the Catholic Family Center held a Feb. 5-6 conference at Asbury First Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave., to help create a Rochester-area social action network.

Titled "God's Covenant: a Hunger for Justice," the conference included participants from 38 parishes and community organizations around the Rochester-area.

In addition to a keynote address by Patti Croop, executive director of the Statewide Emergency Network for Social and Economic Security, the conference included workshops on a variety of issues ranging from health care to income-tax reforms.

Artful success



More than 1,000 people attended the Diocesan Rainbow of Arts Festival, held at Fairport's St. John of Rochester School Feb. 6. Hosted by music and arts teachers from diocesan schools, the event featured music, story telling, folk dancing and more. Megan Callanan (left), T.J. Conti (center, foreground), Debbi Conti (center, background) and Sara Stillings make good use of projects in the hands-on art room.

FLOSM announces upcoming sessions on food stamps

GENEVA — The Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry has announced upcoming sites for its food stamp information sessions.

FLOSM representatives will be available at the sites to answer questions and assist with filling out food stamp applications.

The sessions will take place on:

- Feb. 12, from 2-4 p.m. at the Interlaken Reformed Church, 8315 N. Main St., Interlaken;

- and Feb. 22, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Yates County Office for the Aging, Collins Avenue, Penn Yan.

To schedule a confidential interview in advance, or for information about the sessions, call Ed at 315/789-2686.

Diocese releases revised guide for building projects

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Two parishes in the Rochester diocese — both shall remain unidentified — recently took different approaches to renovation projects.

One church arranged for renovations costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. But the project's supervisors had failed to first consult the Diocesan Building Commission, and ended up with flawed work. Parishioners must now live with this imperfect work — for which they must still pay.

The second parish, however, contacted the diocesan commission before work began. This church community soon discovered that their proposed project would not fit liturgical norms and diocesan standards. In this case the project's supervisors had time to revise the plans before the work began.

The second parish took advantage of a diocesan board that has been available to help parishes, schools and church-affiliated organizations in the Rochester diocese for more than a quarter century.

"Part of the whole concept behind the building commission is to share the wealth of experience of a lot of parishes about what has worked well and what has not worked well," said Eric Patchke, diocesan manager of buildings and properties and the commission's secretary.

The commission consists of representatives from a variety of construction trades; a liturgical consultant; and pastors from parishes where construction or renovation projects were recently completed.

Parish plans family festival

EAST BLOOMFIELD — The donation of a nonperishable food item or paper goods is required for admission to the St. Bridget's/St. Joseph Church Family Fun Festival on Sunday, Feb. 14. The festival will take place from 2-5 p.m. in the parish hall, 15 Church St.

Donations will be distributed through area food pantries.

The festival will include Valentine's Day crafts, including decorating heart-shaped cookies with frosting and sprinkles; video games; and an indoor miniature-golf course.

The commission serves as an advisory group for parishes and organizations undertaking projects, and for Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Patchke noted. He added that under canon law, the bishop is ultimately responsible for all church property in the diocese.

Commission members review and evaluate proposals, provide suggestions, and serve as resources for parishes and groups undertaking projects. In fact, under the new guidelines, each project will be assigned a commission member to serve as an adviser and liaison to the board.

In November, 1992, a task force also completed revision of the guidelines for future projects, Patchke reported.

As part of the revision process, he said, task force members studied construction guidelines in 10 other dioceses. In addition to seeking feedback from parishes that had recently completed projects, the task force surveyed construction companies that worked on the projects.

The revisions have helped to clarify the renovation process by providing a step-by-step procedure for projects, Patchke said. The revisions also have an appendix offering sample contract documents and explanation of construction and liturgical guidelines.

In addition, the guidelines will explain that the parish should contact the commission for what is described as "major" projects: work which costs 10 percent or more of a parish's annual collection, or, in the case of schools and other institutions, 10 percent or more of the operating revenue from the last calendar year.

Using this formula, a parish with an annual collection of \$250,000, would not have to consult the commission unless the proposed project cost \$25,000 or more.

However, Patchke added that parishes and organizations should feel free to consult the commission for smaller projects as well. At the very least, he noted, the organization could be supplied with guidelines to help with the contract process and to make sure the project adheres to liturgical norms.

"We're not trying to create a big bureaucratic process here," Patchke said. "We're all in this together. What one parish has done can affect all the parishes and organizations in the diocese."



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