

# Death penalty checked

## Committee kills amendment bills

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

The New York state Assembly's Codes Committee voted 13-5 on June 8 to hold in committee two bills amending the New York state constitution and restoring the state's use of the death penalty.

That vote followed the Assembly's 61-49 vote on June 7 against forcing the Assembly's proposed death-penalty bill from the committee to the floor.

The Codes Committee's vote to hold both the Assembly bill and its Senate version effectively kills any attempts to restore the death penalty in the current legislative term.

Death-penalty proponents in both the Senate and the Assembly had proposed similar amendment legislation in an attempt to get around Gov. Mario Cuomo's opposition to death-penalty legislation. Both Gov. Cuomo and his predecessor, former Governor Hugh Carey, vetoed death-penalty bills every year since 1977.

The state Senate approved its version of the bill on June 1 by a vote of 37-20. A compromise version of the amendment would have been formed out of the Senate and Assembly proposals if both had passed.

If an amendment proposal had been approved by successive sessions of the Legislature's two houses, it would have placed the death penalty on the ballot for state voters to consider. Passage would not have required the governor's approval if the proposal had passed.

David Kerry, associate director of government affairs for the New York State Catholic Conference, noted that even several death-penalty supporters opposed the attempt at a constitutional amendment.

"Voting for a bill is one thing," Kerry observed, "but voting to change the constitution is different. They don't want to tamper with that document."

The state's Catholic Conference has consistently worked against all death-penalty measures, including the amendment proposals, Kerry said.

"We were in constant contact with members of the Codes Committee, and lobbied with other groups to defeat it," Kerry stated.

As they have done consistently in the past, Rochester diocesan officials had also opposed death-penalty legis-

lation this year, noted Jack Balinsky, director of diocesan Social Ministry.

"We have opposed the death penalty in our legislative agenda," Balinsky said. "In fact, the death penalty was an issue on Lobby Day February 2 (when diocesan representatives met with legislators in Albany).

"The death penalty was an issue when we — on the 26th of February — had our legislative lunch (in Canandaigua) with (Bishop Matthew H. Clark) and legislative delegates," Balinsky added.

Balinsky said Catholic opposition to the death penalty is based in part on studies revealing that: the death penalty does not work as a deterrent; wrongful executions have taken place; and the death penalty has been applied to minorities in a biased way.

From a spiritual point of view, Balinsky added, the church believes that individuals should not be executed because of the possibility that they might be rehabilitated and reform.

Kerry said it appears unlikely that death-penalty supporters will be able to gain approval of a constitutional amendment at any point in the near future. And Gov. Cuomo has maintained that any legislation to restore the state's death penalty will be vetoed as long as he remains in office.

# In service to God



Kellie McCann

## Bishop ordains deacons

Deacon candidates lay prostrate on the altar June 12 during the Litany of the Saints at Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park. Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided over the diaconal ordinations, conferring the Sacred Order of Deacon on eight acolytes. The ordinations bring the total number of permanent deacons currently serving in the Rochester diocese to 89.

# March draws little Catholic participation

ROCHESTER — More than 12,000 Christians of various denominations participated in the March for Jesus on Main Street last Saturday, June 12.

After walking down the city's Main Street with banners proclaiming their faith in Jesus, marchers rallied to pray at Manhattan Square Park.

The march was sponsored by 50 Rochester-area churches, but Catholic participation was minimal, according to Peter G. Izzo, a parishioner of St. Ambrose Church, 25 Empire Blvd., Irondequoit. Izzo served as one of a number of coordinators of Catholic participants.

The Rochester diocese did endorse the event. In a letter to pastors and parish staffs dated April 28, 1993, Margery S. Nurnberg, director of the diocesan Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, noted that "many questions have been raised concerning the March for Jesus," but that the event "is not a protest march, does not represent political issues nor does it seek media attention."

"The primary purpose is simply to

exalt Jesus," Nurnberg noted. "The March for Jesus is an ecumenical event which I believe deserves some attention. I ask that (pastors and staffs) foster and support this endeavor and that you encourage the participation of your parishioners."

Yet prior to the march, Izzo noted that only four Catholic parishes — Corpus Christi, Rochester; St. Joseph, Penfield; Holy Spirit, Webster, and St. Ambrose — officially registered to take part in the march.

Izzo expressed disappointment at the march's lack of Catholic participation, noting that some parish priests even curtly rejected his inquiries about the march. Prior to the event, organizers tried a number of ways to get Catholic parishes interested in the event, including inviting pastors to an informational breakfast and distributing letters.

"We couldn't even get a priest to acknowledge (the march) and come down and say a prayer," Izzo explained. "We asked five or six and got turned down by every one."

Izzo noted that the turnout was more than double what organizers had expected. Still, active Catholic participation could have greatly increased that figure, he said.

Despite disappointment with his own denomination's turnout, Izzo hopes that a similar march slated for June 25, 1994, will be better publicized and better attended by Catholics.

The event was one of 300 similar marches held around the country last weekend to honor Jesus. According to information from the March for Jesus headquarters in Austin, Texas, these marches are designed, in part, to create "a climate for evangelism" and "build unity among churches."

The marches are also designed to rid Christians of any shame and intimidation they may feel in proclaiming their faith openly, the press release stated.

In 1992, 300,000 Christians in 142 U.S. cities marched for Jesus, along with 300,000 other Christians in more than 25 European nations, according to information from March for Jesus.

— Rob Cullivan

## School seeks alumni

AUBURN — As part of the parish celebration marking its 125th anniversary, St. Mary's School, 17 Clymer St., has scheduled a reunion for all graduates July 24-25.

The reunion will include a celebration at Casey Park on Saturday, July 24, and a 9 a.m. Mass at the church, 15 Clark St., on Sunday.

Although many of the school's alumni have already been contacted by mail, the Alumni Association is still looking for graduates who have not yet been notified about the reunion.

The 125th anniversary festivities will also include a 12:30 p.m. Mass on Aug. 15, with Bishop Dennis Hickey serving as the principal celebrant. The Mass will be followed by a dinner at the Holiday Inn on North Street.

For information on the reunion, write to the St. Mary's Alumni Association, P.O. Box 663, Auburn, 13021.

# St. Bernard's Institute names first woman president

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Sister Patricia A. Schoelles, SSJ, chairwoman of the moral theology department at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Md., has been named the first woman president of St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St. Her appointment is effective Aug. 16, 1993.

Sister Schoelles becomes the second president to head St. Bernard's, a graduate school of theology and ministry located on the campus of Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary, with an extension program in Albany.

Although Bishop Matthew H. Clark maintained that St. Bernard's did not

deliberately seek to hire a woman as president, he nonetheless acknowledged that Sister Schoelles' appointment illustrates diocesan encouragement of both men and women to pursue theological and ministerial roles in the church.

"It sends out a positive, encouraging message that St. Bernard's welcomes all of our constituents," Bishop Clark said.

Founded in 1893 as a seminary, St. Bernard's was restructured into a graduate institute in 1981. Father Sebastian A. Falcone, SBI's first president, resigned in December 1992. He was succeeded by interim president Charles J. Meder.

A native of Buffalo, Sister Schoelles moved to Rochester as a teenager and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph congregation in 1966. She graduated from Nazareth College of Rochester, where she taught for four years, and she also taught and coordinated the junior high

at Holy Trinity School, Webster.

Sister Schoelles was not available to comment on her appointment as the *Catholic Courier* went to press. In a diocesan press release, she noted that St. Bernard's "is where we're headed as a church, and training for ministry is where I want to be."

"We are at a watershed moment in American Catholicism," she continued, "being now one generation into the shifts initiated by Vatican II."

Sister Schoelles added that theological education must now face the issues of women in ministry, the expanding lay ministry and diminishing institutional finances.

The author of scholarly publications on ethics and liberation theology, Sister Schoelles belongs to several academic societies, and she also serves on the Baltimore archdiocese's Justice and Peace Commission and the Interfaith Coalition of Peace of the Central Maryland Council of Churches.