

# Final vote satisfies activists

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Upon learning that the Consistent Life Ethic was selected as the only one of 24 new General Synod recommendations to reach the final ballot of 19, Carol Crossed was extremely pleased.

Yet she was too tired to show much emotion. That's what staying on a sidewalk for the better part of two days and nights will do to you.

"Oh, I can't believe it," Crossed whispered hoarsely on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 3.

As it turned out, this recommendation was not only chosen as one of the five which the diocese is committed to implementing, but it received the second-highest number of votes.

Crossed and fellow pro-life activists had huddled outside the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, 123 E. Main St., throughout the weekend in support of issues covered under the Consistent Life Ethic.

This recommendation called for diocesan parishes, ministries and agencies to "promote and implement a clear and consistent application of the 'seamless garment' philosophy in respecting life in all its forms."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Bernice Kleinhammer, a parishioner at St. James Church in Irondequoit, stands outside the Rochester Riverside Convention Center Oct. 1 holding a banner quoting Pope John Paul II. Kleinhammer was showing her support of issues covered under the 'Consistent Life Ethic.'

A parishioner at Corpus Christi Church in Rochester, Crossed spearheaded the 36-person demonstration which also included members of the Parish Pro-Life Committee and Common Ground of Upstate New York. Although most participants demonstrated in four-hour shifts, Crossed was the only one who slept overnight both Friday and Saturday.

Accompanying the demonstrators was a banner quoting Pope John Paul II when he visited Denver, Colo., for World Youth Day in August 1993. The pontiff had stated: "All the great causes that are yours today will have meaning only to the extent that you guarantee the right to life."

She explained that the sidewalk demonstration was chosen "because

we feel the unborn is the issue that gets pushed outside. It's politically incorrect to be pro-life in our culture today."

Another demonstration, in the form of a prayer vigil during Synod hours, was conducted by members of Pax Christi Rochester in the Convention Center's lobby.

The peace group supported a recommendation asking Bishop Matthew H. Clark to petition the Holy See to formulate an ecumenical council which "will teach clearly and authoritatively the Gospel value of non-violence."

"We have two conflicting traditions — the 'just-war' theory and Jesus' non-violence. The killing of war is not acceptable, and capital punishment is not

acceptable," remarked Jan Bezila, who serves as head of Pax Christi Rochester. She is a parishioner at Blessed Sacrament Church in Rochester.

Pax Christi's concerns were added as one of the 24 new recommendations drafted over the weekend. Although that particular statement was not included on the Synod's final ballot, Crossed noted that the Consistent Life Ethic is inclusive of some of Pax Christi's concerns.

"(Abortion) is a justice issue, and it being with violence, war and poverty," said Crossed, who also serves as executive director of the Seamless Garment Network — a 124-member national organization which addresses consistent-life issues.

# Lifelong religious education tops list of Synod priorities

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"I was very pleased," he said, adding that he was particularly happy that the Consistent Life Ethic priority was approved even though it was not on the agenda originally.

"I think it really was missing," he concluded.

A number of delegates who promoted the Consistent Life Ethic during the session on additional recommendations expressed similar sentiments.

Like many, Claudia Adams, religious-education coordinator at Mother of Sorrows in Greece, praised the fact that the ethic covers so many areas of church teaching.

"God forbid we should leave out cradle to grave," Adams said.

A parishioner at Dryden's Holy Cross Church, Marie Hebbon added that the ethic was "was in line with everything we're about" because it embodied the church's stance toward "abortion, euthanasia, abusive situations."

Fellow parishioner, Jennifer Derksen, observed that the ethic should also be attractive to diocesan Catholics because it does not focus merely on what threatens life, but also on what affirms life. "You're made to feel important and useful in society regardless of what stage of life you're at," she explained.

Some delegates suggested that the Consistent Life Ethic priority belabors the obvious in terms of where the church stands, however.

"You can't go wrong with that," Johan Engstrom commented sarcastically. The ethic "just doesn't challenge us to grow any further," he added.

Youth ministry coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes in Brighton, Engstrom would have preferred delegates to approve more specific recommendations such as one calling for the diocese



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Diocesan clergy wait in the War Memorial's loading dock before Mass begins.

and parishes to upgrade their missionary efforts.

"We've become more and more introspective," he said of the diocese, noting that it lacked a commitment to the world church. "We're looking out for our own needs."

Deacon John W. Holmes Jr., director of the diocesan Office of Deacon Personnel, was also "a little disappointed," by the priorities that were chosen.

"The ones they picked were good, but there should have been something there on social justice," he said.

Just as Engstrom and Deacon Holmes would have preferred that other recommendations receive priority, a group of African-American delegates issued a statement to their colleagues complaining that ending racism in the church was not a priority at the synod.

The statement labeled diocesan liturgies and programs "Eurocentric," and said that blacks lacked "empowerment"

in roles of church ministry, leadership, decision making, and committee and commission membership.

"Presently, there is not a partnership between black Catholics and the Church," the statement read. "Traditionally we have been planned for, but we must now be a part of the decision-making process."

Despite the occasional discontent expressed at the synod, most delegates seemed to welcome any chance to air their views on the church to their fellow Catholics.

Kathy Consler, a parishioner at Mother of Sorrows in Greece, was glad that delegates discussed and proposed an additional recommendation calling on the church to help the elderly and those who care for them. Consler said her mother is afflicted with Alzheimer's Disease, and that she hopes parishes will form groups of volunteers to provide respite to families taking care of

elderly relatives.

Dale Hartnett, a non-student parishioner at the Newman Parish of the State University of New York at Geneseo, was happy to see students mingling with other Catholics.

"I think a lot of people learned about campus ministry who weren't exposed to it," he said.

The weekend enlivened James Mancuso's perceptions of what the diocese means.

"At the beginning of the synod, I don't know if I was in favor of it, but I think it was a good thing for the diocese to do," noted Mancuso, a parish-council member at St. Anthony of Padua in Rochester. "It brings the diocese together to take a look at things that we might not have."

Father David P. Reid, SS.CC., pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Rochester, also felt the synod served a valuable purpose.

"I think we've lost the nerve to implement Vatican II, and this is an effort to implement Vatican II," he observed.

And no one would agree with that sentiment more than Bishop Clark's predecessor, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who oversaw the diocese from 1969-78.

A longtime advocate of the post-conciliar reforms that swept through the church in the late 1960s and the 1970s, Bishop Hogan expressed pleasure at large numbers of lay Catholics during the synod.

"Whatever the present needs, the church has to address them," he said. "We can't tackle the whole world, but we can do something in some areas."

Surveying the crowds as they left the War Memorial, Bishop Hogan added: "You've got 1,500 people praying and working together. Something good has to come out of it."