

### Lenten mission slated at Our Lady of Lourdes

BRIGHTON — Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Rhinecliff and Imperial Drives, is hosting a Lenten Mission from March 27 (Palm Sunday) to March 30.

Father William Gaffney, former director of the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua, will lead the mission. After Palm Sunday services, the mission will start each day with a 6 a.m. presentation. Each program will be repeated at 9 a.m. In addition, a holy hour will be observed each day at 2:30 p.m. The mission will conclude with a service each day at 7:30 p.m.

A complete listing of the mission can be obtained by calling 716/473-9656. The mission is open to the public, and baby-sitting is available for the 9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. services.

### Ministry day planned

WATERLOO — Finger Lakes Social Ministry, a regional office of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester, Inc., has scheduled a parish social ministry day focusing on families for this Saturday, March 26, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Mary's School, 35 Center St.

Titled "Putting Children and Families First: Building Communities of Salt and Light," the day will feature workshops on such topics as "Catechesis for Children and Families;" "Healing Broken Families;" "The Media: In Our Parishes and In Our Lives;" and "Supporting Today's Family."

Sister Barbara Moore, RSM, is scheduled to deliver the keynote address. Cost for the day is \$10 per person. The fee includes lunch. Registration is necessary. Call 315/789-2686 for details.

### Camp seeking help

MENDON — Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc., 1332 Pittsford-Mendon Road, is seeking volunteers for its summer programs.

Volunteer commitments can be made on both a weeklong and weekend basis.

For details, call 716/624-5555.

## Encyclical

Continued from page 1  
person" as an example.

The document itself was summarized in the Oct. 7 edition of the *Catholic Courier*, and is far too lengthy to completely examine in one article. However, its use of one Scripture passage in particular points to much of the encyclical's thrust, and may explain why it has created a stir among some diocesan Catholics.

The Genesis' tale of how Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil marks the beginning of a passage in Chapter "Freedom and the Law."

"With this imagery, revelation teaches that the power to decide what is good and evil does not belong to man, but to God alone," states the encyclical.

"The man is certainly free, inasmuch as he can understand and accept God's commands," the encyclical continues. "And he possesses an extremely far-reaching freedom, since he can eat of every tree of the garden."

But, the encyclical cautions, "his freedom is not unlimited: It must halt before the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil,' for it is called to accept the moral law given by God... God, who alone is good, knows perfectly what is good for man, and by virtue of his very love proposes this good to man in the commandments."

This particular passage alludes to the pope's major concern in *Veritatis Splendor* — correcting what he sees as a modern-day corrosion of absolute moral norms by a variety of factors, particularly those created by various schools of moral theological thought.

The encyclical opposes such moral theories as teleologism, consequentialism and proportionalism. All of these theories, the encyclical claims, allow for the commission of certain "intrinsically" evil acts. Even when chosen with a desire for a positive outcome or marked by good intention, such acts are always evil, the encyclical states.

"There thus exists 'negative' moral precepts (precepts, in other words, forbidding certain kinds of behavior), which have universal value and are valid without exception," concluded a Vatican summary highlighting the encyclical's key points.

In fairness to the theologians criticized by the pope, Father Richard A. McCormick, professor of ethics at Notre Dame University, argued in the Oct. 30



edition of *America* that the encyclical misses the point of proportionalism.

"(T)he encyclical repeatedly states of proportionalism that it attempts to justify morally wrong actions by a good intention," he wrote. "This, I regret to say, is a misrepresentation."

Father McCormick asserted that proportionalists do not assert that morally wrong actions can be justified by their ends, but rather, that "we must look at all dimensions (morally relevant circumstances) before we know what the action is and whether it should be said to be 'contrary to the commands of the divine and natural law.'"

To find examples of intrinsically evil acts, the encyclical refers to the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* — "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World."

That document lists a host of evils condemned by the church: homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, voluntary suicide, mutilation, mental and physical torture, subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, trafficking in women and children, and degrading work conditions.

*Veritatis Splendor* also includes "contraceptive practices whereby the conjugal act is intentionally rendered infertile," in its list of intrinsic evils.

Father William Cosgrove, pastor of St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville, attended the St. Bernard's conference and observed that the encyclical is a veritable godsend for pastors seeking to instill moral values among today's Catholics.

"Dissenting theologians, in the eyes of (lay people) have destroyed the credibility of the church," he said, adding that younger Catholics have become particularly skeptical of the church's teaching authority.

"We can't tell them it's wrong to have an abortion... No one's listening to the church. I think the pope is saying we've got to get back on track," he observed.

Some who attended the St. Bernard's conference also praised the document's clearly stated call to moral absolutes. Others, however, did not agree with such an assessment of the encyclical.

"I think the intention is fine, but the way it comes across hurts the intention," commented Casey Lopata, a graduate student at St. Bernard's and a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Rochester.

Lopata said the encyclical "could have been much more effective if it were a little more humble and a little more forthright."

In particular, he criticized what he saw as *Veritatis Splendor's* emphasis on the church's possession of certainty in relaying moral truths, an emphasis he found at odds with the Vatican II image of a pilgrim church.

"I think this certainty is something we're all still searching for, including the church," he said.

Yet, Lopata agreed that certainty has its value, a point Father Charles Mulligan made during the SBI gathering in regard to two particular groups, the young and the powerful.

A veteran of the Chilean Maryknoll missions who currently serves as parochial vicar at St. Michael's Church in Newark, Father Mulligan explained that young people need to know that the church teaches definite moral norms. Equally important, he said, is the fact that those who hold economic and political power also need to hear the church's firm voice on the use and abuse of such power.

In particular, the document deserves praise for labeling torture as an intrinsic evil, said Father Mulligan, who noted that his fellow Catholics often experienced this evil under Chile's former dictatorship. By bringing Christ's message to those profoundly corrupted by the abuse of power, including the torturers, the church plays a valuable role on the world stage of human rights, he noted.

"If a culture deteriorates morally, don't we need a corrective?" the priest asked rhetorically.

It is that strong moral message embodied by the pope and his encyclical that appeals to Catholics, even if they disagree, said David Higbee, director of the Irenaeus Center.

"I think they feel they're tying into an authentic Christian in the pope," Higbee said. "Even if they disagree with him, they want to grapple with what he's saying."

Joseph Madonia, a St. Salome's parishioner who attended the Irenaeus session, seemed to echo Higbee's contention.

"Now I understand where the pope is coming from a little better," he said. "I'm trying to understand where the dissenters are coming from, too."

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