

Pro-life event emphasizes youth involvement

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Although participation was down for the second annual "Celebrate Life" rally, held June 5 at Manhattan Square Park, Dr. Helen Owens took it in stride.

Owens, a parishioner at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit and the event's coordinator, explained that a celebration honoring some diocesan priest jubilarians and the Diocesan Junior High Youth Rally at Keuka College that same day kept this year's attendance at approximately 200 — down from last year's 350. The pro-life gathering was organized by an ecumenical coalition known as United for Life.

"The right people are here," she said.

Those people saw a number of displays by such groups as Birthright of Rochester, The Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., and Rescue Rochester. They also witnessed a variety of performances, from puppetry to singing to mime and talks, including a fiery address by the Rev. Johnny Hunter of Buffalo's Church of the Living Water.

"When adults do bad, you pay the price," declared Rev. Hunter, who aimed his talk to the young people in the audience — as did many of the activities for the day and throughout the weekend.

Rev. Hunter used the story of David and Goliath to help illustrate that adults have made abortion into a giant they are afraid to fight, and that just as it took a young person to bring Goliath down it



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Michael Hayes (far right), of Rochester's St. Thomas the Apostle Church, and Sean Gallagher, a member of St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport, pray the rosary June 3 at St. Rita's Church in Webster. The prayer service was in preparation for the Celebrate Life '94 rally held June 5.

will take young people to bring down the giant that abortion has become.

"You are the ones who celebrate life," Rev. Hunter declared, challenging the young people to fight abortion.

The event at Manhattan Square Park

culminated a weekend-long celebration that included the international pilgrim image of Our Lady of Guadalupe — one of only two replicas of the painting in Mexico City. The images travel around the world in part to aid pro-life causes.

Local views of papal statement suggest continued debate

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

Denise Mack experienced a feeling of irony after reading a news account of Pope John Paul II's May 30 apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which reaffirms the church's ban on women priests (see text of letter on page 6).

Mack, pastoral associate at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Mendon, was about to cut the article out of a local newspaper when she discovered that in doing so she would have to cut into another church-related article printed on the back of the page. That other article concerned the Vatican issuing a stamp honoring Galileo, the 17th century astronomer once condemned by the church. The Vatican acknowledged its error in 1992.

"I saw the juxtaposition as amusing," Mack said. "I think the Vatican issuing

that stamp on the very day that the letter was promulgated just speaks volumes about the position of women in the church."

And, Mack added, she would not be surprised if some day, the church will be issuing a stamp commemorating the first woman priest.

Mack's observation — as well as those of others across the nation — suggest that the pope's letter, rather than ending debate about women's ordination, is more likely to prompt continued debate.

That opinion was shared by Marvin Mich, associate professor of Christian ethics at St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester.

"The issue is not going to go away because the pope is not willing to talk about it," Mich said. "It's an instruction from the pope, and it needs to be taken seriously. But that does not mean you can thwart the process of theological re-

flection."

Mich pointed out that in the letter Pope John Paul II does not declare the ban of woman priests as an infallible teaching of the church — although he acknowledged that the letter is strongly worded and it requires respectful attention because it is a papal instruction.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, in a statement issued May 31, likewise pointed out that in issuing the letter, Pope John Paul II "has exercised his teaching office in a formal way to be honored by all of us."

"His primary purpose in writing," Bishop Clark continued in the statement, "is to reaffirm that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the church's faithful."

"The word definitive is a technical term," the bishop added. "My best un-

derstanding is that it intends to say that there can be no further doubt about the church's self-understanding in regard to the ordination of women."

Mich observed that words such as "definitive" suggest that the pope was indeed "trying to put (the letter) in the category of defined teaching." Such teachings require the assent of all the faithful, he said.

However, Mich noted, except in infallible doctrine, church teachings require that tradition, Scripture, reason and experience all work together. "I think the pope is taking tradition and making it the dominant voice," he suggested.

While tradition seems to clearly support the ban, Mich said, other elements do not.

Thus, on the issue of women priests, Mich said, "This does not end the conversation. We need to trust the Spirit."

Prayer services with the image were held at a number of local churches, Owens said. At St. Cecilia's Church the evening of June 4, for example, she estimated that 500 people came to pray. Some 200 earlier that same day prayed at St. Thomas the Apostle.

Youth-group members helped to escort and guard the image throughout the weekend, with young people taking shifts to pray around the clock.

They also took part in the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Bridget's Church, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, June 5. Approximately 35 of the youths then processed with the image from the church to the park for the activities there, according to Father Anthony Mugavero, St. Bridget's pastor.

"It takes time to develop things," Father Mugavero said of the event at the park.

The pastor noted, however, that the pro-life cause will soon become an even greater focus of activities in the diocese.

One of the five priorities established for the Diocese of Rochester as a result of its recent Synod was the consistent ethic of life, Father Mugavero said. Part of that recommendation was a yearlong celebration of life focusing on all life issues.

Owens also noted that efforts will continue to target young people to get them involved in the pro-life cause.

As part of that effort, organizers hope a youth delegation will join other activists at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., next Jan. 22 — the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision effectively legalizing abortion in the United States.

Parishes to promote health-care reform letters

Bishop Matthew H. Clark is calling on all diocesan parishes to participate this weekend in an "Offering of Letters" relating to the debate over national health care reform.

"As a Church, and as a community of faith, we are often called to pick up the pieces when the health care system fails," the bishop writes in a May 4 letter explaining the campaign.

"We continue to serve an ever growing population of uninsured sick in our hospital emergency rooms, shelters and soup kitchens," he continued. "We care for the elderly who have exhausted their resources, and the chronically ill who have been denied health insurance because of existing conditions."

For the past three weeks, many parishes have educated their members on the local church's position in the debate by using a packet of materials provided by the diocese.

The materials included handouts outlining the church's position that can be inserted in parish bulletins; suggested pulpit announcements; and postcards that can be sent to President Bill Clinton, the state's two U.S. senators, and parishioners' congressional representatives.

The postcards acknowledge the need for all citizens to engage in "some level of sacrifice" for the greater good of the nation. The postcards state that the writer is concerned over how health care reform will touch "the unserved, the uninsured, unborn and undocumented."

Bishop Clark's letter and the postcards note inclusion of the following principles in any national health care plan:

- Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.
- Respect for life.
- The common good.

The letter adds that the Diocesan Pub-

lic Policy Committee conducted hearings last winter throughout the diocese to gather Catholics' input into the debate.

"Our people spoke of burdensome, or even unmanageable insurance premiums, lack of health benefits in spite of employment, limited access to necessary services, and uninsurability due to existing health problems," the bishop writes.

The bishop added that the committee used Catholics' input in devising a position statement Bishop Clark took to Washington, D.C., for an April meeting of U.S. bishops on health care reform.

Judy Taylor, communications manager for Catholic Charities, said about 30 parishes in Monroe and Livingston counties had planned to participate in the Offering of Letters. She was unable to provide statistics on other regions of the diocese.

— Rob Cullivan

Ordination set for diaconate

ROCHESTER—Bishop Matthew H. Clark is scheduled to ordain six men to the permanent diaconate at a concelebrated Mass of Ordination 10:30 a.m. June 11 at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

The six men slated to be ordained to the permanent diaconate are: Thomas H. Beck; Anthony J. Caruso; Gary D. Clark Sr.; Felix A. Medero; Ronald J. Tocci; and Ronald P. Verkon.

Permanent deacons are men ordained to perform a number of clerical functions, including preaching, assisting the priest at Mass, administering solemn Baptism, presiding over funeral and burial services, and acting as the official witness at weddings. They also perform a variety of pastoral services.