

# Catholic Courier

DIocese of Rochester, New York ■ VOL. 106 NO. 10 ■ THURSDAY, December 8, 1994 ■ 75¢ ■ 20 PAGES



Bishop Matthew H. Clark (center) presided over an ecumenical Thanksgiving prayer service, held Nov. 23 at Rochester's Holy Rosary Church. Bishop Clark was joined at the 'Evening To Give Thanks To God For Those Who Refuse To Give into Violence' by the Rev. Peter Carmen (left), of the Lake Avenue Baptist Church, and the Rev. Miriam Owens from The Episcopal Church of the Ascension.

## Area efforts mount to counter violent trends

At Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in northeastern Rochester Nov. 30, participants attending the fall assembly of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches were discussing links between poverty and violence when a police officer appeared at the door with some bad news.

The officer reported that several cars in the church's parking lot had been broken into and vandalized. One of them belonged to Deacon Brian McNulty, coordinator of the diocesan Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Fortunately, Deacon McNulty lost nothing of value.

"It hit everybody pretty hard," he acknowledged. But the break-ins also added a personal touch to the discussion, he noted. "This is the reality. This is where we really live."

And the incident only helped to emphasize that poverty and violence are so related, Deacon McNulty agreed.

The real issue is poverty," the deacon said. "That leads to the kind of stuff that (was) going on in the parking lot."

Links between poverty and violence are among the issues addressed in the U.S. bishops' pastoral message on violence, "Confronting A Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action." Developed by the Committee for Domestic Social Policy, it was approved by the U.S. bishops Nov. 16 during their fall general conference in Washington, D.C.

In the document — scheduled for official release Dec. 8 — the bishops point to a number of sources of violence, including poverty, the disintegration of family life, media influences, growing substance abuse, budget cuts adversely affecting the poor and the availability of so many weapons. They also point out that violence is more than just crime.

"Beyond the violence in our streets is the violence in our hearts," the bishops wrote. "Hostility, hatred, despair and indifference are at the heart of a growing culture of violence. Verbal violence in our families, communications and talk shows contribute to this culture of violence."



Dr. Dennis Boike comforts Susan Koon during 'Celebration of Life,' a Nov. 30 ceremony marking the beginning of the Jennifer Koon Scholarship at Pittsford's St. John Fisher College. Jennifer Koon, Susan's daughter, was found slain in the city a year ago. The evening ceremony also marked Jennifer's 20th birthday.

Moreover, the bishops point out, "Increasingly, our society looks to violent measures to deal with some of our most difficult social problems — millions of abortions to address problem pregnancies, advocacy of euthanasia and assisted suicide to cope with the burdens of age and illness, and increased reliance on the death penalty to deal with crime. We are tragically turning to violence

in the search for quick and easy answers to complex human problems."

The bishops also call for concentrated action to begin to combat violence. In addition to the document, they plan to release guides for parish and diocesan action, and to call for a week of anti-violence activities between Rev. Martin Luther King's birthday on Jan. 15, 1995, and the Jan. 22 anniversary of the *Roe vs. Wade* decision that effectively legalized abortion.

At the same time, the bishops acknowledge that much is going on across the country to combat violence. They list in the document a number of such actions.

Were the bishops to look at the Diocese of Rochester, they would see numerous such activities, acknowledged Kathleen Cannon, director of diocesan Urban Services.

"I think there's a tremendous amount of commitment and concern and activity that is going on," Cannon said.

Diocesan and parish representatives, for example, participate in ecumenical and community efforts such as GRCC, the Community Task Force Against Violence in Rochester, and gun drop-off programs. Bishop Matthew H. Clark supported the Partners Against Violence Everywhere effort initiated by Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc., which offers a Caring and Sharing program for young relatives of victims of violence.

In an event held Nov. 23, Holy Rosary Parish, 414 Lexington Ave., Rochester, hosted an ecumenical Thanksgiving service presided by Bishop Clark.

The service focused on the theme "An evening to give thanks to God for those who refuse to give in to fear of violence." It included reflections by four individuals who live and work in the neighborhood.

According to Rose Marie Lombard, Holy Rosary's director of social ministry, the service was an attempt to help create a sense of community and to combat the fear of crime that so many people sense.

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**FIGHT VIOLENCE!**

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