

Coalition mails petitions against death penalty

ROCHESTER — Leaders of various religious groups, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark, have sent 15,500 signatures to Gov. George Pataki to show opposition to reinstatement of the death penalty in New York state.

At a Feb. 6 news conference held at St. Mary's Church's Dugan Center, 15 St. Mary's Place, Bishop Clark was joined by leaders of the Jewish community, the Greater Rochester Community of Churches and several Protestant denominations, as well as by representatives of the Rochester Area Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

One hundred Catholic parishes collected some 13,000 signatures as part of a diocesan educational and advocacy effort conducted in January. Those signatures were added to 2,500 collected from 25 different faith communities during January as well.

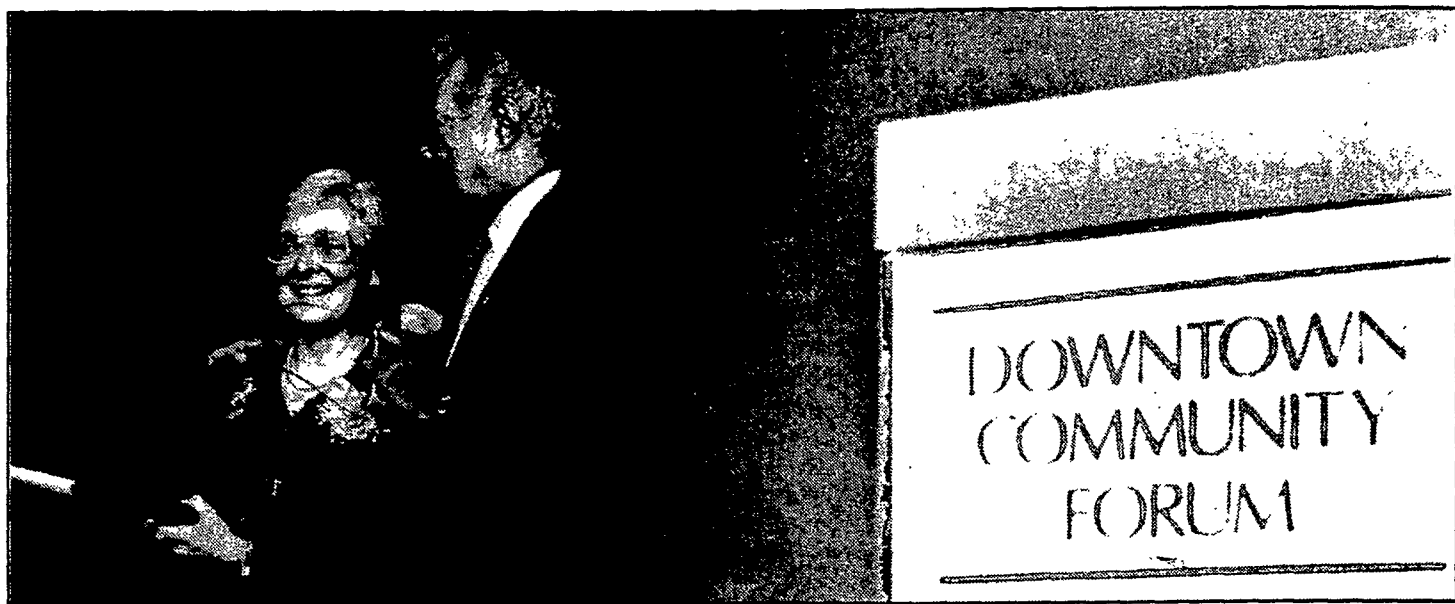
In addition to mailing the petitions to state legislators in Albany, leaders have sent a letter to Pataki informing him of the effort.

In a joint letter to legislators, local religious leaders said they recognized that the issue of growing violence must be addressed. While pledging their support for efforts to reduce violence, however, they emphasized, "We do not believe state sanctioned killing is an appropriate option."

Bishop Clark noted the church community's right and responsibility to bring a moral perspective to public-policy debate. He also referred to the consistent life ethic priority set forth by the diocese after its 1993 Synod.

"The consistent life ethic calls us to respect the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person, and to advocate for life on all life issues," Bishop Clark said.

— Lee Strong



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Forum celebrates 10 years of talk

Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson Jr. presents Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, pastoral associate at St. Mary's Church in Rochester, with a plaque proclaiming Feb. 1 as "Sister Joan Sobala Day." Johnson was also on hand to help celebrate the 10th anniversary of St. Mary's Church's Downtown Community Forum. During the last decade, the forum has brought hundreds of local and national speakers to the parish's Dugan Center to discuss important issues facing today's society.

Coalition targets domestic partnership laws

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

An ecumenical effort is underway to use the state's Municipal Home Rule Law to overturn the City of Rochester's domestic partnership laws.

The Coalition for Families, which consists of church groups and other organizations and individuals, has scheduled a 7 p.m. meeting Feb. 13, at Calvary Church of the Nazarene, 283 E. Henrietta Road, to explain a petition effort the coalition plans to launch.

The domestic partnership laws were passed by Rochester City Council last April. Under the laws, a registry was created to allow homosexual and unmarried heterosexual couples who live to-

gether to register as domestic partners. A second bill extended health care and other benefits to the domestic partners of city employees.

The Coalition for Families is proposing that the City of Rochester's charter be amended to prohibit recognition of domestic partnerships, and the extension of benefits to domestic partners.

According to Alan Knauf, an attorney who worked with coalition organizers, under Section 37 of the Municipal Home Rule Law, city residents — through the use of petitions — can require the city council to consider a bill to amend the city charter.

In order to force the council to consider such a bill, organizers need to have petitions signed by 10 percent of the

city residents who voted in the last gubernatorial election. Knauf estimated that the effort would need to garner approximately 5,400 signatures.

Rochester's City Council may then approve, reject, or put the amendment on the ballot for voters to consider.

If the council rejects the amendment, petitioners may put the legislation up for ballot if they secure signatures from an additional five percent of the voters.

"Put it up to the people to decide, not just a small group of politicians," Knauf argued.

Monroe County legislator George Wiedemer (R-Penfield), a coalition organizer and a member of St. Joseph's Parish said that the goal was to have the petition campaign completed by May 1.

SBI workshop to explore 'small faith communities'

ROCHESTER — The diocesan Department of Professional Development and St. Bernard's Institute will jointly sponsor a three-day workshop in March on creating small Christian or faith communities — one of the four goals included in the diocese's pastoral plan.

Small faith communities are gatherings of eight to 12 adults and/or young adults who share their experience of God's work and will in their lives.

The workshops, scheduled for March 16-18 at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1100 S. Goodman St., will be conducted by Fathers Arthur Baranowski and Robert Beloin, two national experts on small Christian communities. The sessions are scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. March 16; 9 a.m.-9 p.m. March 17; and 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. March 18.

Topics will include models of parish life; finding a core team; doing everyday ministries differently; identifying and training small group leaders; and setting up a time assessment.

Cost for the workshop is \$300 per parish, regardless of how many people from a parish attend the meeting. The pastor's attendance is mandatory for each parish involved.

The Divinity School will provide coffee and refreshments; lunch and dinner will be available to buy at the school.

The deadline to register for the three-day workshop is Feb. 15.

For information, contact Judith Kollar at the Diocese of Rochester, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, or call 716/328-3210.

Obituary

Father Anthony J. Valente, 61; beloved pastor

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer



PITTSFORD — Father Anthony Joseph Valente, pastor of Rochester's Our Lady Queen of Peace Church since 1986, died of a degenerative brain disease on Saturday, Feb. 4, 1995, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. He was 61 years old.

The priest's untimely death deeply touched Sister Jacquelyn Reichart, RSM, who was named the parish's temporary administrator after Father Valente's illness forced him to step down from his position last November.

"I think if we could really ever say that there was a person who saw the value

in every human person, that was Father Tony," she said.

Deacon Albert P. Bergeron, parish deacon, remembered the late pastor as a gentle and considerate man who was able to improvise when necessary.

"I never met anyone who could better rise to an occasion," the deacon concluded.

Born in Gaeta, Italy, Father Valente was baptized in his hometown parish of St. Cosma. After moving to Rochester with his family, he was confirmed at Holy Apostles Church in 1944.

Father Valente attended Aquinas Institute and St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries before he was ordained in 1959.

His first assignment was as assistant pastor at Geneva's St. Francis DeSales Church from 1959-63. He then served

as assistant pastor of Rochester's Mt. Carmel Church until 1965, when he was named chaplain of Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton.

In 1973, Father Valente was named assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in Auburn, where he served until he became co-pastor of St. Michael's Church in Rochester in 1974. He went on to become administrator for a brief time at Auburn's St. Aloysius Church Auburn in 1980. In August of that year, he was named pastor of Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Church, a position he held until June, 1983.

Father Valente then served as chaplain at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital until 1986, when he was named pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

Father Valente was predeceased by his father, Salvatore Valente; a sister, Josephine Valente; and his sister-in-law, Marylou Valente.

He is survived by his mother, Mary L. Tripani; his brother, Thomas Valente of Garland, Texas; another sister, Joanne Valente; his niece Cathy Ann Valente of Mesquite, Texas; as well as several aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan celebrated a Mass of Christ the High Priest on Wednesday evening, Feb. 8.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark was to celebrate a noontime Mass of the Resurrection on Thursday, Feb. 9.

Interment was to take place at Rochester's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.



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