

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Priests target welfare bill

The Priests Council voted Oct. 3 to petition senators and congressmen representing the 12 diocesan counties for support of two key provisions of Senate welfare-reform legislation. The action took place during the council's monthly meeting at St. Dominic's Church, Shortsville.

The vote led to the drafting of letters - dated Oct. 4 and signed by Father Daniel Condon, council chairman - to the entire diocesan delegation.

The letters urge the Congressional conference committee working out differences between the House and Senate versions of welfare legislation to retain two parts of the Senate version. The Senate bill does not include a family cap, which would prohibit added benefits for someone receiving public assistance who has additional children. The other Senate bill provision increases federal funding for day care.

Father Condon's letter also reiterated diocesan opposition to efforts to include funds for the Food Stamp program in block grants to the states.

The Senate passed its version of the welfare package in September. The stricter House version was passed in the spring. Once a conference committee combines the two bills into one, the legislation will be sent to President Bill Clinton, who will sign it into law or veto it.

Father Condon said the Priests' Council decided to send the letters as a follow-up to the visit a diocesan delegation led by Bishop Matthew H. Clark made to Congress Sept. 13.

"We did it so his visit wouldn't be forgotten, and to add our voices," explained Father Condon, pastor St. Patrick's/Holy Angels Cluster.

Priests' Council members also looked at welfare reform as a life issue related to the diocesan Synod Pastoral Plan goal promoting the consistent life ethic.

"With a family cap and the loss of day-care funds, the people who would most be impacted strongly may choose abortion," Father Condon said. "And not having child-care money may help stop people on welfare from getting jobs."

Lee Strong



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## Many joyful voices

Members of the St. Bridget's Children's Choir directed by Priscilla Humphrey sing Oct. 8 during the Rochester parish's annual Dixieland Mass. The lively eucharistic celebration featured Dixieland and gospel music, and was followed by a chicken barbecue on the parish grounds. Proceeds from the event benefited St. Bridget's Building Restoration Fund.

## Social Action Network raps Monroe district attorney

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER - Is Monroe County District Attorney Howard Relin fulfilling a pledge he made earlier this year to members of the Social Action Network in the 19th Ward? It depends on whom one asks.

In late June, the DA's office joined the mayor's office, the city council and the Rochester Police Department in a pledge to help 19th Ward residents who wanted owners of convenience stores in their neighborhood to be prosecuted for such violations as selling alcohol and cigarettes to minors.

Many such "mom-and-pop" stores also have been criticized by both residents and government officials for allowing excessive loitering and such illegal activity as drug deals to take place in and around their property.

The police have targeted such stores for enforcement in the last few months, and city officials are working on legislation to more closely regulate such establishments.

But the DA's office has failed to pursue prosecution of convenience store owners cited for various offenses by the police, according to leaders of the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, which represents the cluster of Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Augustine and St. Michael parishes. The leaders made their charge in a press release they issued Sept. 25 in conjunction with the Social Action Network, a diocesan-funded federation of churches and community groups.

Additionally, the leaders charge that Relin's office has failed to use its influence with the New York State Liquor Authority to close down stores that flout the law.

"Only Howard Relin has done virtually nothing to live up to his commitment to the people of this community," DeWain Feller, co-chairman of the 19th Ward/SAN Leadership Team, stated in the release.

Yet Relin - a Democrat who is up for re-election this year - denies that his office has failed to keep its commitment to the 19th Ward.

"We've worked cooperatively with the police and the state liquor authority to have as much influence as possible on many of the establishments that are selling liquor to kids," the district attorney told the *Catholic Courier*.

He added that SAN members do not understand that it takes a minimum of six months to begin and complete the processes necessary to prosecute a store owner for selling to underage buyers.

"We can't shorten procedures because people think the case can be done in two weeks," he said.

Relin also said his office has offered to have a representative from the state's liquor authority explain to SAN members the process necessary to get a store closed. But, the DA said, SAN members refused to take his office up on the offer; they were only willing to listen to the representative if he could give them immediate results, Relin said.

"I think some of the expectations people have are beyond anything that we, the

police or the courts could produce," Relin added.

Feller responded that SAN understands the slowness of the legal procedures involved in ridding the neighborhood of bad stores and their owners. But he claimed that Relin's office has communicated poorly, if at all, with SAN members about the legal processes involved. He and other SAN officials claimed that they have left repeated phone messages for the DA and his assistants, but rarely have received responses from the office - a charge Relin and other office officials disputed.

Feller also said that SAN was willing to listen to a representative from the state liquor authority, and said he could not understand why the DA would state otherwise.

When asked why SAN went public with its complaints about Relin, Feller said SAN members felt they had no choice.

"What our group is not trying to do is burn bridges," he said. "We used a press release as a last resort."

Relin, however, claimed that SAN members could have spoken to him in person had they only asked. He added that SAN gave him no warning that it intended to issue the critical statement, and that he learned of their displeasure only when he heard about the press release.

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