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Economic Justice for All

Story by
staff writer
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Bishops examined role of marketplace

Cleveland Browns fans may not realize it, but protesting their beloved team's move to Baltimore is giving Catholic social justice advocates a "teaching moment."

Just as the football fans are questioning the whole social purpose of a professional team, the nation's bishops questioned the whole social purpose of the U.S. economy 10 years ago in their pastoral letter "Economic Justice For All."

The Browns fans argue that the team's move does not take into account what the team does for them, what the move is doing to them and what the fans have done for the team.

In a similar fashion, the U.S. bishops asked in 1986 three questions about the U.S. economy:

- What does the economy do for people?
- What does it do to people?
- How do people participate in it?

"Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral, and Christian must be shaped by (these) three questions," the bishops claimed.

Although the plight of the Browns fans may elicit some sympathy, as most citizens well know, football fans are hardly the only people affected by businesses picking up and leaving U.S. cities.

In search of cheaper labor pools, tax relief and less governmental interference, numerous businesses have left towns and communities across the nation — and even the nation itself — in the decade since the U.S. bishops released their letter.

Other businesses have "downsized," a euphemism for firing or laying off people, and restructuring businesses to make them leaner and more profitable. Such changes have increased the insecurity of middle- and lower-class families who may feel they live in an economy where shareholder and investor priorities predominate to the detriment of family and community life.

Meanwhile, certain groups in the underclass are seeing poverty become a permanent feature of their lives, although debates rage over whether that condition originates in the economy or in decisions made by the poor themselves.

In light of such trends, the principles laid out in "Economic Justice for All" are as meaningful today as they were when the bishops proclaimed them, according to Kathy Dubel, director of the Department of Peace and Justice for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier.

The bishops' musings on global interdependence, welfare reform and

Continued on page 18

Employees need values, says 'coach'

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In their 1986 pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All," the nation's Catholic bishops had this to say about values and the economy:

"We cannot separate what we believe from how we act in the marketplace and the broader community, for this is where we make our primary contribution to the pursuit of economic justice."

Such sentiments get a hearty thumbs-up from Barbara K. Osterman of Frontier Corporation, a Rochester-based international telecommunications firm.

Indeed, employees who are free to express their moral values in the workplace become more valuable to a company, she noted.

"Work could be an expression of who we are," said Osterman, a parishioner at Church of the Transfiguration in Piusford.

Osterman spoke about bringing values to one's work at a conference titled "Money Management for People of Faith," held Feb. 1-2, at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1100 S. Goodman St.

The conference examined how churches, groups and individuals could practice stewardship of financial resources, and was organized by the school's Office of Continuing Education and Work-Play LLC, a consulting firm.

Other speakers at the conference included Sister Barbara Moore, RSM, who spoke on power sharing among peers in groups. Sister Moore is community services coordinator for Highland Hospital.

The conference was also sponsored by Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A.; BEST TIMES Financial Planning; and Howe and Rusling, Inc., which provides financial planning services.

Osterman serves as "lead coach" of several other service representative managers at Frontier, managers who learn people skills from her and apply them to relationships with their subordinates. In part, the object is to develop more pro-

Continued on page 18