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Events to highlight Synod priority

The calendar teems with events from Friday, April 26, to Tuesday, April 30, to highlight the diocese's commitment to the consistent life ethic.

Chosen as one of four major priorities by the diocese in its 1993 Synod, the consistent life ethic is based on the church's call for Catholics to protect life against abortion, poverty, euthanasia, violence, war and the death penalty.

All the following events are open to the public:

On Friday, April 26, the Catholic Leadership Forum will feature a speech titled, "Personal Consistency: How can we work and parent in a world full of roadblocks?" by John Carr, secretary of the Department of Social Development and World Peace for the United States Catholic Conference.

He will speak at a luncheon scheduled from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the University Club of Rochester, 26 Broadway St. Admission is \$10. For reservations, contact Nancy Nash at 716/328-3210.

As a promoter of the consistent life ethic, Carr writes public policy for the U.S. bishops, negotiates between them and governmental representatives, and speaks regularly on the topic.

Carr will also give a speech the same day on "Professional Consistency: Helpful hints for professional ministers to teach and live the consistent life ethic" at St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 at the door.

At 7:30 p.m. Friday, the diocese will host a consistent life ethic dinner with awards (see related story) at the Harro East Ballroom, 400 Andrews St., Rochester.

After dinner, Sharon Daly, deputy for social policy at Catholic Charities USA,

will speak at 8:30 p.m. The lobbyist will speak on "Political Consistency: How can we be politically correct with consistent life ethic beliefs."

Daly will give the same speech at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 27, at a daylong Social Ministry Convening for the Southern Tier at St. Mary Our Mother Parish, 816 West Broad St., Horseheads.

Sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, the convening (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) will consist of workshops by experts throughout the day on such topics as the biblical roots of social mission; environmental justice and the common good; faith and politics; rural issues; Cuba and Mexico; and wages, work and the growing gap between rich and poor. Admission is free.

St. Bernard's Institute will also host two consistent life ethic events Saturday.

At 9:30 a.m., Julie Loesch Wiley, author of *Pro-life Feminism: Different Voices* and *The Politics of Prayer*, will speak on "Prophetic Consistency." A contributing editor of *New Oxford Review* and a writer for *Commonweal* and *Sojourners*, Wiley will examine why advocating for the consistent life ethic requires people to courageously move beyond notions of liberalism and political correctness. Her speech will be preceded by a 9 a.m. prayer gathering in the school's chapel.

Following a 10:30 a.m. break, a play titled "The Past is the Past, or Parental Consistency" will be performed. Written by David A. Shakes and Arthur Brown, the play presents a reunion of a father and his son who is about to become a father. The play will explore the need for all to accept the role of both parent and child in order for everyone's life to be affirmed, according to publicity material.

Also Saturday, April 27, Catholic Char-

ities of Livingston County will host a consistent life ethic conference from noon to 3 p.m. at Haggerty Hall, 41 Spring St., Livonia. Area speakers will give presentations on the death penalty, welfare reform and euthanasia.

Admission is \$7 and includes lunch. Call 716/658-2118 for information.

On Sunday, April 28, and the following two weekends, the diocese has invited all parishes to affirm the consistent life ethic at their liturgies through homilies, songs and readings.

On Tuesday, April 30, about 20 diocesan Catholics will travel to Albany to join Catholics from around the state to lobby the legislature on various abortion-related measures.

Diocesan Catholics will deliver 14,500 signatures on petitions calling for parental notification of minors seeking abortions. Catholics will also lobby against Medicaid funding for abortion, and against legislative proposals to outlaw demonstrations outside abortion clinics.

On Wednesday, May 1, at 7:30 p.m., Carol Crossed, recent winner of a Diocesan Consistent Life Ethic Award, will speak at St. Januarius Church, 180 N. Main St., Naples.

On Sunday, May 5, at 10:30 a.m., Chris Wilkins, director of development for Finger Lakes Social Ministry, will speak on the consistent life ethic at St. Januarius.

Both Crossed's and Wilkins' speeches are free and open to the public.

To learn more about the Rochester events, or the lobbying day in Albany, call Suzanne Schnittman at 716/328-3210.

To learn more about the Southern Tier events, call Kathy Dubel, director of justice and peace for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, at 607/734-978.

Lobbyist

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When asked if the church should combine its commitment to the consistent life ethic with the vulnerable, Daly said the church "can speak with authority against abortion, poverty, violence, excessive military spending, physical assisted suicide, and the death penalty because its schools, hospitals, and agencies work on behalf of millions of citizens, many of whom are poor."

"We're not just a voice in the wilderness," Daly said. "It's very grounded in helping people get what they need to live a life of human dignity."

But using the church's political pull to promote the consistent life ethic does not mean playing partisan politics, Daly stressed. That's the mistake that such groups as the Christian Coalition make when pushing their moral agendas, she added.

"(The Christian Coalition) just paints Democrats as the root of all evil, as Satan incarnate," she said. "That's just the opposite of what the Catholic Church does."

Daly noted that the narrow alliances with Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, on a variety of issues depending upon how proposed legislation would affect the nation's most vulnerable citizens.

For example, she recently spoke at a hearing in N.Y. Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato's office about proposed legislation that would allow legal immigrants to receive Medicaid benefits if they could receive Medicaid in their own country.

The state's poorest immigrants, said Daly, and the poorest of the poor, the legal immigrants, are the most vulnerable. "If they can't get Medicaid in their own country, they can't get it here," she said. "It's a very important issue."

Daly and other lobbyists directed the state's support when they asked the court decision that legalized physical assisted suicide in parts of the country. In this new climate, poor immigrants may feel obligated to kill themselves when they become terminally ill because they can't get government-funded health insurance, Daly said.

"If they feel they're bankrupting their families, they may get out of the way," Daly said.

She added that Republicans eager to cut government spending will sometimes hold the ax from programs designed to help families after hearing the church's side of the story.

She noted, for example, that Republican Congressman Henry Hyde of Illinois has voted for programs aimed for elimination when church lobbyists have shown how women might resort to abortion if they lose the program.

On the other side of the political fence, Daly has even worked with such pro-choice organizations as the National Organization for Women.

Together with the church, NOW opposed caps on benefits to women who had more than one child while on welfare. NOW's position was grounded in its support for a woman's unencumbered right to reproductive freedom.

"Just to see an unlikely juxtaposition of pro-life people and pro-choice people on an issue gets attention," Daly said.

"The church can make such alliances because nearly everybody agrees with its stance on at least one life issue," she said.

"Because the church works with both parties and is consistent with its principles, we can do things that no one else can do," Daly concluded.

Diocese to honor five who have upheld ethic

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Carol Crossed has been arrested more times than some petty criminals.

And Sister Josepha Twomey, SSJ, has spent years in prisons.

What unites these two women, however, is not a devotion to outlaw activity, but a devotion to the Catholic Church's consistent ethic of life, which opposes abortion, poverty, violence, war, euthanasia and the death penalty.

In addition to serving as director of the Seamless Garment Network and legislative representative of Bread for the

World, Crossed has been arrested 16 times for nonviolent civil disobedience. She's protested at abortion clinics, nuclear facilities and U.S. government offices associated with human rights violations and support for war.

Sister Twomey, from 1978 until she retired last September, served as a chaplain at Camp Monterey near Watkins Glen, Elmira Correctional Facility and Southport Correctional Facility, successively.

Along with three other people, Crossed and Sister Twomey will be honored with Consistent Life Ethic Awards at an April 26 dinner at the Harro East Ballroom, 400 Andrews St., Rochester.

The others the diocese will honor are Donna Ecker, co-director of Bethany House, a shelter for women and children in Rochester; Walter Ruehle, an attorney for the Legal Aid Society in Rochester who specializes in aiding low-income clients in need of legal help; and Lee Skerrett, a volunteer and board member of Birthright in Ontario and a coordinator of parish ministry to the elderly at St. Mary of the Lake in Ontario.

Suzanne Schnittman, diocesan consistent life ethic coordinator, said the five winners were chosen by a committee of diocesanwide representatives who received 38 nominations from parishes, social ministry committees, and other organizations throughout the diocese. A total of 400 award applications were sent out, she said.

Each winner will receive \$200 from the diocese to be donated to the program of his or her choice, Schnittman added.

Crossed saw the award as the church's way of affirming those who take a unified stance against a variety of threats to life.

"That's the beauty of the consistent life ethic," Crossed said. "Everybody's offended."

Crossed plans to donate her money to the Seamless Garment Network, an umbrella group of 160 organizations throughout the nation that address consistent life ethic issues.

Sister Twomey welcomed the award because it showed the church includes inmates — often the most despised of society's members — among its top concerns.

"I think it's important that the men who are incarcerated, the women who are incarcerated, have someone who cares for them," she said. She added that she will donate her \$200 to the Catholic Community at Southport for Bibles, periodicals and retreats.

Ecker said the honor recognizes that quietly helping women and children, many of whom have suffered domestic violence, is consistent with the church's opposition to all threats to life.

"I think that what we do at Bethany House day in and day out is to have respect and integrity for each person," she said.

Ruehle will donate his \$200 to the Legal Aid Society's immigration program, which he directs. He saw his award as acknowledging the church's way of standing with immigrants who are currently the subject of bashing in this country.

"I think as church it's very important for us to welcome the so-called biblical stranger in our midst," Ruehle said.

Skerrett, pastoral associate at St. Mary of the Lake, also works with people with developmental disabilities. She plans to donate her \$200 to Our Lady of Guadalupe Community, a group of Hispanic migrant workers who attend Church of the Epiphany in Sodus.

"This particular community a lot of people judge," she said of the workers, many of whom support families in such countries as Mexico. "There's nobody closer to the Lord than those people."

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