

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bishop Clark, others: Don't cut social safety net

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — An ad hoc alliance of Monroe County religious leaders — including Bishop Matthew H. Clark — have issued a statement opposing several state and national welfare reform proposals, and calling for the maintenance of a financial safety net for immigrants, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

"Our society, we feel, exists not to create a winner-take-all society but to promote the common good," said the Rev. Richard S. Gilbert, a Unitarian-Universalist minister who joined the alliance and who chairs Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace, a coalition of Protestant, Unitarian and Reform Jewish congregations.

"In a competitive society, what do we do with the losers?" Rev. Gilbert continued. "Balancing the state and federal budgets cannot come at the cost of moral bankruptcy."

The minister made his comments during a June 3 press conference in the Dugan Center at St. Mary's Parish, 15 St. Mary's Place.

Present at the conference were Bishop Clark, Sister Joyce McGinn, RSM, who represented the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, and eight other leaders of the area's Protestant, Jewish and Islamic communities.

The leaders pointed out that their congregations' social service agencies are already swamped with requests for assistance from the poor, and that current

proposals to radically decrease welfare benefits will increase demand on an overburdened private social service sector.

The group issued a four-point statement outlining specific areas of concern:

1. *Opposition to arbitrary time limits on public assistance:* "(N)o single time limit is right for all recipients, given varying levels of education and child care demands," the statement reads. "Allowing flexibility in welfare rules will provide families and individuals with the best opportunity to become independent."

2. *Support of wage supplementation for working families:* The leaders' statement called for expansion of New York State's Earned Income Tax Credit and/or the creation of a state child tax credit.

Balinsky noted that the religious leaders also supported the state's ongoing experiment with the Child Assistance Program. That program was begun in 1989 with the blessing of the federal government, according to information provided by Monroe County's Department of Social Services. The program exists in 14 counties statewide; Monroe is the only county in the diocese that currently hosts it.

Unlike welfare programs that take away benefits from recipients as soon as they get a job, CAP recipients can keep 90 percent of their earnings, and remain eligible for welfare until their earnings combined with their welfare grant equal 156 percent of the 1989 poverty level. One example of that maximum level is a family of three with an income of \$15,687, the information said.

In Monroe County, 500 people have been placed in unsubsidized jobs since

CAP was instituted, the DSS information said.

Richard Schauseil, DSS director, added that single parents on CAP must identify the father or mother of their child or children so that his office can try to collect child support, something recipients of traditional welfare benefits have not been asked to do.

3. *Maintenance of a safety net for unemployable people:* Such people would be those with birth defects, or disabilities caused by accidents or illnesses, the statement said. The religious leaders expressed concern that the proposed tightening of regulations on Social Security

benefits may mean some such people would lose their support.

4. *Support for inclusion of immigrants:* Bishop Clark said the leaders oppose current proposals at the federal level to deny immigrants benefits. He said that immigrants should not be denied education, health care, and social services, and invoked the United States' ethnic heritage to bolster the leaders' arguments.

"All of us, save our Native American brothers and sisters, are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants," Bishop Clark said. "As part of our human family, they have basic rights."

New priests ordained



Matthew H. Scott

Bishop Matthew H. Clark ordained Frank Fusare of St. Anthony's Parish, Elmira, and Douglas Della Pietra of St. John of Rochester Parish, Fairport, to the priesthood June 1 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Above, the two men prostrate themselves as a sign of submission to God and to pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon them. At left, priests lay hands upon the two ordinands to invoke the Holy Spirit upon them and to show the unity of the priesthood.

Courier places among top papers in Catholic Press annual contest

PHILADELPHIA — The *Catholic Courier* earned eight awards, including two first places, in the 1996 Catholic Press Association newspaper competition.

In addition, two syndicated columnists who appear in the *Courier* received awards.

The awards were presented at the CPA's annual convention, held May 22-25 in Philadelphia.

Former graphics manager Lorraine Hennessy Till and staff photographer S. John Wilkin earned first-place honors in the Best Use of Art or Graphics category for "Communal Cup." The judges described the photo — which depicted gloved hands holding a chalice to help illustrate health concerns surrounding the sharing of the communal cup at Masses — as, "A striking piece that draws the viewer into the page."

Also earning first-place honors was advertising director Ray Frey in the Best Promotional House Ad category for his "Trust in the Catholic Courier — Our Readers Do" ad. The judges cited the ad's "excellent copy" and noted that "Good layout, effective use of white space and typography all help to make this ad a winner."

In addition, Frey garnered a second-place award in the Best Local Retail Campaign category for a series of ads promoting Becket Hall ("Few Are Chosen"). And Frey and Till received an honorable mention for Best Media Kit in the 40,001-plus newspaper circulation category.

Staff writer Mike Latona tied for third (with *National Catholic Reporter* writer Tom Roberts) in the Best Investigative Reporting category for his examination of co-habitation. The judges congratulated him and the paper "for going after a story that is on every diocese's doorstep but only one or two papers have the courage to write about."

Earning third-place honors in the Best Analysis/Background/Round-up Re-

porting category was associate editor Lee Strong for an examination of stress on parish priests. The judges noted that it was a "gutsy topic to tackle. The lead was fantastic and there was no effort to take the party line."

The entire staff received honorable mentions for Best Special Supplement category for the 1995 Parenting supplement, and for Best Seasonal Issue for the 1995 Christmas edition.

Also earning honors at the convention were Father Richard McBrien, whose "Essays in Theology" column appears weekly in the *Courier*, and Eileen Marx, whose Family Matters column appears on the *Courier's* monthly Parenting page.

Father McBrien won first place in the Popular Presentation of the Catholic Faith book award category as editor of the *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*.

Marx, meanwhile, earned second place for her column in the Best Regular Column — Family Life category.

Corrections

Two recent stories in the *Catholic Courier* contained errors.

Father John Mayer, OFM, whose obituary ran in the April 11 issue, entered the Franciscans in 1941. Among his survivors are a brother and sister-in-law, William and Lois; and another sister-in-law, Lois.

Jean Wolf, in the May 9 cover story ("Volunteers try out numerous niches"), and her husband Dave are both members of Webster's Holy Trinity Church Consistent Life Ethic Committee and Dave alone is a member of the Community Action Committee; their involvement in Marriage Encounter is limited to being members of a core group.

The *Courier* regrets the errors.

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