

DIOCESAN NEWS

Activist decries usage of capital punishment

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

It has been 12 years since Anne Coleman's 24-year-old daughter, Frances, was found fatally shot in her car in Los Angeles.

Police never made an arrest in the case. But even if an assailant were identified, Coleman's mother, Anne, does not believe that person should be sentenced to death. The key reason, she said, is the effect such an act would have on the killer's family.

"I wouldn't wish to inflict the same pain I went through on the mother of anyone else," Anne Coleman said in a recent telephone interview from her Dover, Del., home.

When capital punishment is proposed, she remarked, lawmakers and the general public should also consider the level of anguish that criminals' relatives would face.

"We have to have compassion for families of death-row inmates," Coleman said. "They get treated as outcasts."

In addition, Coleman believes that capital punishment is directly opposed to Gospel teachings.

"People will say to me, 'They deserve to be executed,'" Coleman said. "But I think Christ taught us that you should love your neighbor as yourself."

Coleman shared her views with Southern Tier social-justice leaders when she lectured Nov. 14 at the Community Menonite Fellowship in Corning.

The event, known as a "forgiveness forum," was sponsored by Twin Tiers Community Against the Death Penalty. This group, founded in 1995, is funded through the diocesan Consistent Life Ethic Fund.

Coleman, 55, delivers approximately 50

lectures per year throughout North America. She is also the co-founder of Eove Allows Compassion, an anti-death penalty group in Delaware. In addition, Coleman serves as death-penalty coordinator for Amnesty International in Delaware.

Coleman has been the spiritual adviser for several death-row inmates. In Delaware, she noted, eight executions have taken place in the past four years.

"Execution is very alive and very well there. Society knows what's best," she said sarcastically.

Her concerns about the death penalty are shared by many activists in the Southern Tier and northern Pennsylvania who have conducted forums, distributed leaflets and staged protests in the past year.

"I was so impressed with Anne Coleman. She epitomizes what forgiveness is, under the most difficult circumstances," said Frank Anastasio, an original member of Twin Tiers Against the Death Penalty.

According to Anastasio, the group began to solidify early this year when a protest was launched against a proposed execution chamber at the Southport Correctional Facility near Elmira. State officials are no longer considering Southport as an alternative site. To protest this potential development, Twin Tiers Against the Death Penalty picketed a speech given by Gov. George Pataki this fall during his visit to the Steuben County village of Bath.

"Our commitment is not having the death penalty anywhere — but more specifically, not to have one in Steuben or Chemung counties," Anastasio said.

He added that his group is planning as many as four additional "forgiveness forums" over the next six to nine months.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Home Is Where the Heart Is

St. Louis Church, Pittsford, together with Flower City Habitat for Humanity, recently completed the construction of a home on Hoeltzer Street in Rochester. Australia Blake (right, center row), the proud new owner of the home, stands with her granddaughter Alexis Harvey (front), and her children Shamora Walker (left, center row) and (right, back row) Akil Blake, and Yasay and Amos Harvey on the porch of their new home. The family worked on the home alongside volunteers from the Pittsford parish and Habitat for Humanity.

St. Ambrose welcomes pastor; administrator to lead Holy Family

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

St. Ambrose Church in Irondequoit kicked off its 75th anniversary celebration the weekend of Nov. 30-Dec. 1 with a visit from Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the arrival of a new pastor, Father Michael J. Schramel, former pastor of Holy Family Church in Rochester.

The priest's appointment ends a brief period of uncertainty for St. Ambrose, whose former parish administrator, Father Melvin Walczak, was granted a temporary leave of absence in September.

Father Schramel's departure from Holy Family also marked a new day for that parish, which will now be headed by a temporary administrator, Deacon Patrick M. Shanley. The permanent deacon will fill that role until the end of June 1997, at which time a permanent pastoral administrator will be appointed.

Staff members at both parishes expressed enthusiasm for their new pastoral arrangements.

Nancy Giordano, St. Ambrose's pastoral associate, temporarily administered her parish after Father Walczak's departure, and said the parish was happy to get its new pastor. In addition to the anniversary

celebration marking last weekend's Masses, and the visit of Bishop Clark, the arrival of Father Schramel lent a festive air to the celebrations, she said.

"It was a lovely celebration, and the parish got to look at the new pastor and meet and greet him," she said.

Prior to his arrival at the parish, Father Schramel served as pastor of Holy Family for a little more than three years. He expected to stay at Holy Family until June 1997, but said he decided to go for the St. Ambrose pastor position when it opened, in part, because he felt Holy Family was ready for new leadership.

"My goal here at Holy Family has been to prepare the parish for new styles of ministry in the context of parish life as we know it," he said.

Father Schramel also said that Holy Family's decision to create the pastoral administrator position grew out of discussions earlier in the decade with several neighboring parishes regarding clustering — a formal arrangement by which two or more parishes are linked administratively. Such arrangements have become more common in recent years due

to such factors as fewer priests and parishes' changing demographics.

Holy Family did not cluster with any of its neighbors, Father Schramel said, but eventually chose to create a pastoral administrator position at the parish. Such a position can be filled by deacons, religious or lay people, the priest said. Sacramental duties will be taken on by a sacramental moderator who was yet to be named when Father Schramel spoke with the *Catholic Courier* before Thanksgiving.

"We'll have one or two priests assigned or taking turns here," Deacon Shanley added.

Deacon Shanley also said that having a pastoral administrator at Holy Family, rather than clustering with another parish, allows the parish to retain its own sense of identity.

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