

DIOCESAN NEWS

Lambs go free, no bail

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Eleven Lambs of Christ, facing federal charges for blocking entrances to an abortion clinic, were allowed to go free without bail Jan. 10, after appearing before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jonathan W. Feldman.

The 11 activists — two of whom hail from the Diocese of Rochester — were fingerprinted and photographed after their court appearance in the Kenneth Keating Federal Building, 100 State St. They were released on their own recognizance after U.S. Assistant District Attorney Brian M. McCarthy said he had no objection.

Father Norman Weslin, OS, 66, founder of the Lambs, said they felt the judge and federal attorney had treated them fairly, and expressed pleasure that Feldman had released all of them.

"I think they're beginning to trust us," he said. "They're finding out that we're good American citizens."

No pleas were entered on their behalf, but if they go to trial, the Lambs will plead not guilty to the charges, according to the attorney for 10 of them, John J. Broderick of Long Island. Broderick's son, James, will represent the other defendant, Dwight Monaghan, 45, of Los Angeles.

The Lambs face criminal charges under the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act for blocking the entrances to Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley, 114 University Ave., on Dec. 7.

The activists were charged under the federal law after local authorities agreed to drop charges of resisting arrest and criminal trespass against the Lambs. According to McCarthy, this case marks the first time pro-life activists have been charged under F.A.C.E. in New York state.

During the protest at Planned Parenthood, which houses an abortion clinic, the Lambs blocked the front entrance with a disabled car, one protester glued his forehead to the back entrance, and others locked themselves to the building, or locked their limbs in a box.

John J. Broderick said he would try to negotiate with the government, rather than go to trial, and said that the Lambs would know which way the situation was going within six weeks. He speculated, however, that the federal government wants to go to trial and make an example of the Lambs who face six months in jail if they are convicted.

"Maybe the Clinton administration figures they can let loose with this broadside against pro-life activists," he said.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Passing the torch

Sister Marie Michelle Peartree (right) listens as Elizabeth Mullin answers questions during a press conference Jan. 14. Mullin was named president and CEO of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, replacing Sister Peartree, who has held the position for 32 years.

Diocesan parishes plan weekend Masses around health-care proxies

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — Fran Grillo's husband was on a Myrtle Beach golf course when he was rushed to the hospital with a massive aortic aneurysm two years ago.

When questions arose about his care, however, the St. Ann's, Hornell, parishioner was ready: The two had recently filled out health-care proxy forms.

Thus when a physician phoned her about her husband, she said, "The first thing I told him is I have a proxy; please do nothing if there is no help for him."

Jim died within a week, without heroic measures being taken, she said.

"Sometimes you try to remember the last words you said to each other," she said. But remembering their discussions about their final days proved to be a comfort. She knew his final wishes, she said.

New York enacted a proxy law in 1991, allowing individuals to designate a proxy to make health-care decisions for them if they become unable to make their own.

Although the law passed nearly six years ago and the subject of health-care proxies has been discussed and written about in Catholic circles, Sister Gratia L'Esperance, RSM, assistant director of the Mercy Center with the Aging, said the first question many Catholics still have is, "Does the church approve?"

The answer is "Yes."

The New York Catholic Conference initially issued booklets to help explain Catholic views on the use of proxies. Late last year it issued updated forms, which were written with collaboration from the Rochester diocese, with guidelines and ref-

erences from Catholic teachings.

"Unfortunately, those who advocate euthanasia have capitalized on the confusion, ambivalence and fear which people feel regarding serious illness, death, and the use of modern life-prolonging technologies," the proxy guide states. "A health care proxy can be a morally and legally acceptable means of protecting your wishes, values and religious beliefs when faced with a serious illness or debilitating accident."

The new form is larger and more "user-friendly," according to Kathleen Gallagher of the conference. It includes a reference to a 1992 statement on nutrition and hydration by the U.S. Catholic bishops:

"While medically-administered food and water pose unique questions, especially for patients who are permanently unconscious," the guide states, "decisions about these measures should be guided by a presumption in favor of their use. They must never be withdrawn in order to cause death. They may be withdrawn if they offer no reasonable hope of maintaining life or if they pose excessive risks or burdens."

The idea of completing a proxy form is only slowly catching on.

"The main reason we asked the Catholic Conference to reissue it was we felt it was timely again, partly because of *Vacco vs. Quill* and for the prevention of as much unnecessary suffering at the end of life as possible," said Father Charles Mulligan, co-pastor of St. Michael's Parish in Penn Yan.

The priest was part of a push as a member of the diocesan Public Policy Committee and a subcommittee dealing with end-of-life issues.

The diocese ordered more than 75,000 copies of the proxy form and at least 100 parishes plan to distribute them Jan. 18 and 19. Homilies also will focus on the issue.

Planning with a proxy does not have to be complicated and can avoid a lot of heartache, according to Sister L'Esperance. She urged that adults of any age complete a proxy form, noting tragedies occur even to young people.

A health proxy, the Mercy sister said, "is one of the things you must consider when you enter a hospital or nursing home. If

that is the first time you've heard of it, it's one of the worst times to think about doing a proxy. It is a time of high stress, a time you may be more disabled than usual and unable to cope with it.

"I like to say it is the greatest gift you can give to your loved ones," she added, "because it helps avoid the confusion and disagreement which can last for years after."

In particular, a proxy form should state wishes regarding artificial nutrition and hydration, in order for the proxy to have the authority to make decisions about those two aspects, she said.

Beyond that, Sister L'Esperance said, "What has helped me is if something prolongs living, it is probably a good thing to do, but if something prolongs dying, it is probably not so good a thing to do."

The first thing to do with a proxy form, she said, is discuss it with your physician.

Father Mulligan said the main criteria for a proxy, whether friend, associate or relative, are abilities to judge, to meet when necessary with medical professionals, and to help discuss situations that might arise.

In Yates County, an ad hoc committee may advise that all health proxy information be posted on a resident's refrigerator, he said.

The Mercy Center with the Aging provides family education seminars that include sessions on proxies. The office may be reached at 716/244-5190 for a schedule.

"A lot of people think they (proxy forms) are hard to fill out," Grillo said. "But they are not complicated. People should really think about this."

Obituary

Marion J. Burrell; served Tier parish

Marion J. Burrell, a longtime employee and parishioner in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, died Dec. 30, 1996, at Founders Pavilion nursing home in Corning. She was 82.

Ms. Burrell, a lifetime resident of the Corning area, was a graduate of St. Mary's School and Corning Free Academy. She was secretary at St. Mary's Church for former pastors Father Thomas Brennan and Father Michael Hogan. She retired in 1981. Ms. Burrell

was also active in the parish as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis and the Legion of Mary.

She is survived by a sister-in-law, Mary; five nieces; and a nephew.

A funeral Mass for Ms. Burrell was celebrated Jan. 2, 1997, at St. Mary's Church. Interment was at St. Mary's Cemetery.

Donations in memory of Ms. Burrell may be made to the St. Mary's Church Memorial Fund, 222 Dodge Ave., Corning, N.Y., 14830.

Date set for eye checks

Free vision screenings for people 55 years old or older will be offered Monday, Jan. 27, in Geneva.

The screenings are being provided by the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped and the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI). Goodwill Industries of Greater Rochester, Inc.

The screening will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Seneca Apartments, 529 Exchange St.

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 108
No. 14 January 16, 1997

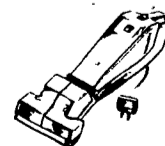
Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

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