

WORLD & NATION

'We Are Church' conducts first national campaign

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Loretto Sister Maureen Fiedler, national coordinator of the We Are Church Coalition, led supporters of the coalition's petition campaign in publicizing it and gathering signatures in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York Feb. 16.

Similar efforts were scheduled for several other cities, including Denver, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Des Moines and Philadelphia, as part of the effort to collect a million signatures. (Rochester diocesan officials said they did not know of any simultaneous local campaign.) In the Los Angeles archdiocese, coalition members planned to show up at the annual archdiocesan religious education congress.

Signers endorsed a statement with a series of declarations that include support for ordination of women and married men, lay participation in the selection of pastors and bishops, the "primacy of conscience" on issues of sexual morality such as birth control, acceptance of divorced

and remarried Catholics and freedom of speech for theologians.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York commented briefly on the campaign at the conclusion of his Feb. 16 Mass at the cathedral.

He told the congregation that Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, had warned it was "divisive."

But Cardinal O'Connor said he would leave the decision on whether or not to sign to each individual's conscience. "You are grown Catholics and I trust your judgment," he said. "I have never told you what to sign or not to sign."

After Mass, a few members of the congregation accepted petitions or stopped to talk with those handing them out, but many seemed to be ignoring them.

Cardinal O'Connor also suggested he would be willing to meet with representatives of the organizations involved if they thought the archdiocese could do more "within church teaching" to deal with their concerns. He also commented that he wished someone was conducting such a referendum on partial-birth abor-

tion.

Tom McCade, one of those handing out petitions, told Catholic News Service he was a laicized priest who has married and would like to be serving as a priest again. He said abortion was not mentioned in the petition because it was so controversial, but sponsors of the campaign thought it, too, like birth control, should be left to individual conscience.

In a later interview, Sister Fiedler said about 80 signatures were collected at St. Patrick's Cathedral. But she said that because of the cold, people were not asked to stop and read the petitions there, but to take them and send them in later if they were in agreement.

She said she was "very pleased" with the response of people at St. Patrick's Cathedral. "There are always some people who are negative," she said. "But many I talked to were very supportive."

Sister Fiedler said a report on the number of signatures collected would be taken to Rome for a gathering with people who have been promoting similar petition-signing campaigns in Austria, Germany and other countries.

She said they would gather Oct. 11 — the anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 — to hold a press conference and engage in "witness events for justice and human rights in the church."

In the United States, the campaign is based at the Women's Ordination Conference in Fairfax, Va., and is being led by that organization and Catholics Speak Out, a project of the Quixote Center. But Sister Fiedler said a total of 10 organizations involved in what she termed as the "church reform movement" belong to the coalition.

Among the others, Sister Fielder said, are Dignity, an organization of Catholic homosexuals who reject church teaching on homosexuality; CORPUS, the Corps of Reserve Priests United for Service, an organization of married priests; and the Maine chapter of Pax Christi, a peace group. Financial support comes from grants and gifts by grass-roots supporters, she said.

Although the campaign was announced last May, this was the first public attempt to secure signers on a national basis, she said.

CALENDAR

All Diocesan

Religious Activities

■ **SAT, MAR. 1** — Day of recollection: with Fr. Martin Boler, OSB, of Mount Saviour Monastery; SSJ Motherhouse Chapel, 4095 East Ave., Rochester; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; free; call Georgia, 716/383-1868, for reservation.

■ **FRI, FEB. 21** — Reservation deadline: for Mar. 1, 15 program "A Day of Prayer: Moving to Your Special Easter Vigil"; Notre Dame Retreat House, Foster Rd., Canandaigua; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; \$15; for reservations call 716/394-5700.

■ **TUE, FEB. 25** — Evening prayer: for Life; Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Pk., Rochester; 7 p.m., rosary; 7:30 p.m., liturgy of the hours; with Bishop Matthew Clark.

Chemung Schuyler

Religious Activities

■ **FEB. 24-27/MAR. 1** — Mission '97: hosted by St. Bene-

dict's Church, Odessa, and St. Mary's of the Lake, Watkins Glen; for adults and youth; featured speakers Bishop Matthew Clark, Sr. Patricia Schoelles, and Fr. David Bonin; call the parish office, 607/535-2786.

Monroe County

Fundraisers

■ **SAT, FEB. 22** — Dinner: to benefit Rogers House; Memorial Art Gallery, 500 University Ave., Rochester; 7 p.m.; call Jim Smith, 716/482-2694.

■ **SUN, FEB. 23** — Concert: to benefit Faith in Action, which serves isolated homebound persons; Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, 597 East Ave., Rochester; 3 p.m.; featuring Latino Youth Choir from Community of Hope; \$5 tickets at the door or FIA Office, 716/787-8336.

■ **SUN, MAR. 2** — Euchre tournament: sponsored by St. Christopher's Church, 3350 Union St., North Chili; 1:30-6 p.m. (play starts at 2 p.m.); \$5 donation; prizes, refreshments.

Meetings

■ **WED, FEB. 26** — Pro-

gram: "The Need to Reform Local Government in New York State"; Dugan Center at St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Pl., Rochester; 5-7 p.m.; free; call 716/232-7140.

■ **SAT, MAR. 1** — Reservation deadline: for Mar. 8 presentation "Catholic Women in American Society: Confronting the Culture of Death"; speaker Carol Crossed; sponsored by St. John Neumann Columbiettes; Church of the Holy Spirit, 1355 Hatch Rd. (at Plank Rd.), Webster; 9 a.m. Mass; 9:30 a.m. program; for reservations call Josie DeBruyn, 716/671-0276 (no tickets available at the door).

Religious Activities

■ **FRI, FEB. 21** — Renewal in the Spirit: and Secular Franciscans; St. Charles Borromeo Prayer Center, 3011 Dewey Ave., Rochester; 7:30 p.m.; sponsored by St. Patrick's Fraternity — Secular Franciscan Order; for more information call 716/225-4134.

■ **THU, FEB. 27** — Centering prayer: Guardian Angels Church, 2061 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester; 7:30-8:30 p.m.; call Nancy Werner, 716/334-0036.

■ **THU, FEB. 27** — Presentation: "What is Fundamentalism?"; St. Bernard's on the Road; St. Louis Church, Reddington Hall, 60 S. Main St.,

Pittsford; 7:30 p.m.; \$5; call 716/586-5675.

■ **FRI, FEB. 21** — Registration deadline: for Mar. 1 presentation "Celtic Spirituality"; Mercy Prayer Center, 65 Highland Ave., Rochester; 1-4 p.m.; \$15; call 716/473-6893.

■ **MON, FEB. 24** — Registration deadline: for Mar. 3 talk "Annulment — Declaration of Nullity"; Mercy Prayer Center, 65 Highland Ave., Rochester; 7-9 p.m.; freewill offering; call 716/473-6893.

■ **FEB. 24-26** — Lenten series: "Being a Christian in the Modern World"; Guardian Angels Church, 2061 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester; 7:30-9:30 p.m.; baby-sitting; call 716/334-1412.

■ **TUE, FEB. 25** — Program: "Men With a Secret: Healing Betrayals of Trust"; SSJ Spirituality Center, 402 Rogers Pkwy., Rochester; 7:30-9 p.m.; with Donald Schwab, D.Min.; also Mar. 4, 11, 18; \$10/meeting; call 716/336-4370.

Social Activities

■ **FEB. 21-MAR. 2** — Play: "The Children's Hour"; Department of Theatre Arts, Nazareth College, 4245 East Ave., Rochester; call 716/389-2170.

■ **FEB. 27, 28, MAR. 1** — Play: "The Sound of Music"; Mercy/McQuaid High School

Players; 7:30 p.m. each day, with 1:30 p.m. show also on Mar. 1; Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Rd., Rochester; call 716/383-8311 for tickets.

■ **THU, FEB. 27** — Event: Mercy Alumnae and Friends Networking Social; sponsored by Our Lady of Mercy High School Alumnae Association; Casa Larga Vineyards, 2287 Turk Hill Rd., Fairport; 5:30 p.m.; admission \$5 before Feb. 25; reservation and fee may be mailed to Mercy High Alumnae Association, 1437 Blossom Rd., Rochester, NY 14610.

Yates Ontario Wayne

Religious Activities

■ **MAR. 3-6** — Lenten Eucharistic retreat: "From East to West — and North to South — A Perfect Offering"; sponsored by St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's, 15 Church St., East Bloomfield (Mon. & Tues.) and St. Patrick's, 115 Maple Ave., Victor (Wed. & Thu.); 7:30 p.m.; with Fr. David Reid; for more information call 716/657-7626.

Mass
for
Gay & Lesbian Catholics
and their families and friends

Saturday, March 1 • 2 p.m.
Sacred Heart Cathedral
296 Flower City Park, Rochester

Presider and homilist:
Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Hosted by the Diocese of Rochester and
Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry

For information call Karen Rinefield at
716/328-3210 or 1-800-388-7177

Interpreted for the hearing impaired

paid advertisement

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EVENING PRAYER
FOR LIFE
Sacred Heart Cathedral
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 1997

7:00 p.m.
Rosary for Life

7:30 p.m.
Liturgy of the Hours

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