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## Controversial bishop slated for local talks

By Lee Strong  
 Associate editor

Abortion, cloning, economic justice and homosexuality may, on the surface, appear to have little in common.

But Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, sees links among these and other issues.

"The common bond that links all those issues is the importance of each individual person as a unique creation of God," Bishop Gumbleton declared in a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier* April 28. "Every one of these issues has to do with the inherent dignity of the human being."

Bishop Gumbleton will explore these issues and their common threads at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 6, at St. Catherine of Siena Church, Mendon, as part of St. Bernard's on the Road, and 10 a.m. Wednesday, May 7, at Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford, for diocesan staff.

The bishop has long been a target of critics for promoting the consistent ethic of life — linking such issues as war, abortion and euthanasia. Recently, he has been attacked for comments made at the New Ways Ministry Conference March 7-9 in Pittsburgh.

At the conference — where Bishop Matthew H. Clark also spoke — Bishop Gumbleton called for gay clergy and lay people to "come out."

"I wasn't glibly suggesting that this could happen overnight," Bishop Gumbleton said in the telephone interview.

He said many priests had contacted him after the conference to say "it was a good idea," but "that it was difficult at this time."

Bishop Gumbleton explained that homosexual people are often the targets of discrimination, ridicule and violence.

"They have been taught to feel ashamed of themselves just because of who they are," he said. "I think further development in our thinking will be needed" before many homosexuals will feel free to go public.

The bishop said he sees the issue as another involving the dignity of people.

"If you act unjustly toward people just because of who they are, you are diminishing the dignity of who they are," he said.

The bishop noted, however, that he does not advocate all of the "rights" some activists are seeking.

"I don't promote the idea of marriage for homosexuals," the bishop said by way of example. "Marriage has been established as the relationship between people of opposite sexes."

He said committed relationships among homosexuals may be recognized in some form in the future. But, he noted, "our understanding is not developed to that point."

Still, he acknowledged that simply speaking at the conference has at least some traditionalists calling for his — and Bishop Clark's — shunning by fellow bishops and even removal from their offices.

Bishop Gumbleton said he has seen no signs of such reactions from other bishops. And should there be any official actions, he added with a laugh, "I'm sure it would be public."