

DIOCESAN NEWS

Diocese plans protests of abortion conference

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A coalition of pro-life groups — including the diocesan Consistent Life Ethic Office — plans to protest a medical abortion conference at the Marriott Hotel, 5257 W. Henrietta Road, on Friday, Dec. 12, and Saturday, Dec. 13.

The conference, for primary care physicians, is titled "Medical Abortion Using Transvaginal Ultrasound." It is being sponsored by the University of Rochester's School of Medicine Office of Continuing Professional Education. Cosponsors are the university's School of Nursing and Strong Memorial Hospital Nursing Practice.

In a statement, Suzanne Schnittman, diocesan consistent life ethic coordinator, asked Catholics to oppose the conference.

"Catholic social teachings urge us to defend all life, including that threatened by abortion," the statement read. "They call us to educate the community about the practices that challenge the sacredness of life."

According to a brochure promoting the conference, physicians attending the event will learn about a chemical abortion procedure developed in the early 1990s. The procedure uses vaginal ultrasound imaging to detect pregnancy in its earliest stages, and employs the drugs methotrexate and misoprostol to induce abortion, the brochure said.

The brochure noted that the procedure was developed as an alternative to the use of mifepristone (also known as RU486) in chemical abortions because mifepristone's approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is still pending.

"Abortion is the most common surgical procedure in the United States with greater than 1.2 million occurring each year," the brochure states. "Despite the high need, there is a growing shortage of surgeons willing to perform surgical abortions ... The goal of this conference will be to assist primary care clinicians in providing medical abortions ..."

Course directors at the conference will be Dr. Eric Schaff, associate professor of family medicine, and Dr. Steven Eisinger, associate professor of family medicine, obstetrics and gynecology. The two doctors have done extensive research on medical abortions.

Bayta Elul, program manager at the Population Council of New York, and Larry Lader, president of Abortion Rights Mobilization, a national pro-choice group, are to speak at the conference. The Population Council has U.S. patent rights on mifepristone, and Abortion Rights Mobilization sponsored a University of Rochester mifepristone trial, the brochure read.

Schnittman said her office and several other pro-life and consistent life ethic groups that belong to the Monroe County Coalition for Life decided to protest the conference after learning about it.

The coalition plans to schedule representatives from its individual groups to picket outside the Marriott in one-hour slots between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Dec. 12, and between 8 a.m. and noon on Dec. 13, she said. No civil disobedience is planned, she said. She asked that people seeking information on the protest call 716/328-3210, ext. 304.

The negative side effects of chemical abortions on women's bodies are still being studied, Schnittman said, and the dio-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

World AIDS Day

Stacy Jennings and her sister Heather Jennings hold candles in Washington Square Park, Rochester, Dec. 1 during a candlelight vigil for people affected by HIV and AIDS. Bells tolled at St. Bridget's Church during the vigil, which followed an interfaith service Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided over at St. Mary's Church. The day was marked around the diocese with numerous other activities. Students at St. John Fisher College handed out red ribbons, as did Catholic Charities Community and Residential Services representatives at Irondequoit Mall.

cese wants to promote its belief that such abortions are "bad for women." She added that the diocese also wants the University of Rochester to be dissuaded from promoting similar conferences in the future.

"We want to show the U of R that this isn't the responsible thing to do," she said.

In addition to the planned protest, Schnittman said the pro-life group Feminists for Life and the St. Luke's Medical Association (formerly the Catholic Physicians Guild) will offer an alternative view of medical abortions in a conference at the University of Rochester on Dec. 12. The conference is slated to take place in Room 3-6408 of the university's medical center.

Dr. Joel Brind, a nationally known expert on abortion and its relation to breast cancer will speak at the conference, which will run from 2 to 4 p.m. An evening session is tentatively slated as well. More information may be obtained by calling 716/458-2842.

Meanwhile, the New York Lambs of Christ and the Christian American Family Life Association also plan to hold an alternative conference, from 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the Marriott. The conference will feature speakers; discussions of alternatives to abortion; and other activities, including rosary recitations. More information may be obtained by calling 716/889-2849.

Schnittman also said that Bishop Matthew H. Clark had written to a univer-

sity medical school official expressing the bishop's "distress" over the conference.

In addition to the Consistent Life Ethic Office, the following groups have agreed to participate in the protest at the Marriott, Schnittman said:

The Knights of Columbus; Feminists for Life of New York; the Seamless Garment Network; Common Ground of Upstate New York; the Problem Pregnancy Help Center and the Crisis Pregnancy Help Center, both in Rochester; and the Diocesan Pro-life Planning Committee; the Diocesan Pro-life Parish Network; and the diocesan outreach program Project Rachel. Representatives of St. Thomas the Apostle and St. Bridget's parishes in Rochester will also be at the protest, she said.

Paul Lambiase, director of Continuing Professional Education at the university's medical school, said the university understood why the diocese and other pro-life organizations felt compelled to protest the conference.

"We certainly have no reason to stop it or inhibit it," he said of the protest. "We only ask that the appropriate perspective be given to people who think differently."

Obituary

Brother Reeder, OFM, dies at 85

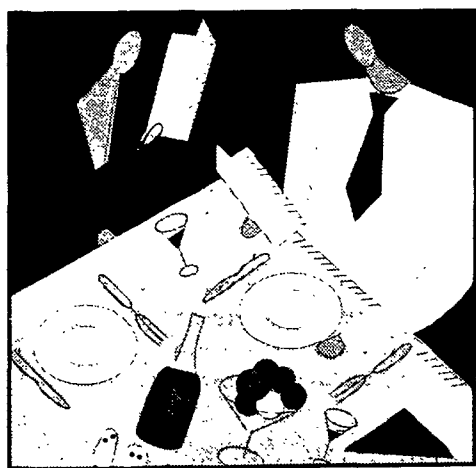
Brother John Reeder, OFM, a Rochester native, died Nov. 18, 1997, in St. Petersburg, Fla. He was 85.

Born Dec. 19, 1911, to Florian and Anna Reeder, Brother Reeder attended St. Stanislaus School and Aquinas Institute in Rochester. He entered the Order of Friars Minor Nov. 21, 1934, and professed his final vows Nov. 23, 1938, in Paterson N.J. He served at St. Francis Friary in New York

City from 1950 to 1995, when he retired to St. Anthony Friary in St. Petersburg.

Brother Reeder is survived by two nephews, John P. Reeder of Rochester and Joseph Zlotnic of Syracuse; two nieces, Sandra Palma of Webster and Mary Palma of Greece; and many grandnieces and grandnephews.

Interment was in Calvary Catholic Cemetery, Friars' Plot, Clearwater, Fla.



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"Music for the Mother and Child"
Choral Vespers, 4:00 PM,
Sung in chant by the Gentlemen of
the Cathedral Choir

Please join us!

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