

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bishops knock attorney general's stand on protests

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The heads of seven of New York's dioceses — including Rochester's Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Cardinal John O'Connor of New York City — have signed a statement sharply criticizing New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's recent legal actions against pro-life demonstrators.

In federal court in Buffalo, Spitzer has filed legal papers targeting several pro-life activists, including a number of Catholics and others from the Rochester area. The papers were filed in anticipation of a major pro-life demonstration April 18-25 in Buffalo and Rochester — "Operation Save America" — organized by the activist group Operation Rescue National. Spitzer was joined in his legal action by several pro-choice groups, in-

cluding Planned Parenthood.

A hearing was slated in federal court in Buffalo for Thursday, April 8, on Spitzer's request that the "buffer zone" around abortion clinics and other health facilities be widened from the current 15 feet to 60 feet. Protesters would then be prohibited from crossing the buffer zone around such facilities.

Spitzer also asked that protesters be prohibited from using megaphones and loudspeakers to make "excessive noise" within 1,000 feet of any of the facilities.

But the bishops' April 1 statement attacked Spitzer's legal action, calling it an attack on the the defendants' constitutional rights.

"As Catholic leaders in New York State, we affirm the right of all citizens to express their views peacefully and publicly on issues of concern," the bishops wrote.

"The recent actions of ... Attorney Gen-

eral Spitzer regarding upcoming activities in western New York are clearly prejudicial and cannot be reconciled with this American tradition ...," the bishops continued.

"At the heart of his lawsuit are presumptive allegations that the named persons will violate the law simply because they have spoken against abortion in the past," they stated. "Such unjust and arbitrary accusations not only hurt and violate the rights of those accused, but also may have a chilling effect on all who cherish their Constitutionally-protected First Amendment rights to speech, assembly and expression."

In response to the bishops' statement, Darren Doppo, Spitzer's spokesman, said that the attorney general's office "welcomed" the bishops' statement, but disagreed with its gist.

Contrary to the bishops' contention

that Spitzer's legal action threatened constitutional rights, Doppo said the attorney general's request for a wider buffer zone would actually help to ensure freedom of expression by decreasing the chance of violence at a protest. He added that several law enforcement officials throughout the state had advised the attorney general's office to call for the wider zones because of police experience with abortion protests.

"Widening the buffer zones will minimize violence," Doppo said. "We do not believe that widening the buffer zone will deprive people of their free speech rights."

Some pro-life activists, however, have told the *Catholic Courier* that they resented the implication by the attorney general's legal action that they somehow might be violent at a protest.

When told of this, Doppo said "we would apologize for any inference that these people are prone to violence." However, the attorney general will not be removing any names of pro-life activists from the legal papers prior to the April 8 hearing, Doppo said.

"They have the ability in court on Thursday to express their views ..." Doppo said of activists named in the legal papers. Doppo added that the attorney general was not attacking the protesters for their pro-life views.

"It's not about being pro-life, it's not about being pro-choice," Doppo said. "It's about being pro-law-and-order."

Archbishop Tutu to speak at convention

Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu of South Africa will speak at the Catholic Charities USA Annual Conference slated for Saturday, Oct. 2, to Monday, Oct. 4, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

Archbishop Tutu, a noted leader in the successful fight to end apartheid in South Africa, will speak to convention participants Sunday, Oct. 3. He will also receive Catholic Charities USA's Vision 2000 Award at the convention.

The archbishop won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his anti-apartheid work. In 1995, South African President Nelson Mandela appointed the Anglican leader to head South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which issued a re-



port in 1998 detailing people's experiences under South Africa's apartheid laws.

Currently, Archbishop Tutu is the Robert W. Woodruff visiting professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga.

In a diocesan announcement, Bishop Matthew H. Clark indicated his delight at the choice of the archbishop as a convention speaker. Bishop Clark said he was "particularly pleased that we will be able to share the opportunity to hear Arch-

bishop Tutu with the community at large."

William Carpenter, chief executive officer of Bausch & Lomb Inc., who with his wife, Chrissy, is co-chairing the convention's Honorary Host Committee, expressed pleasure as well at the selection of Archbishop Tutu.

"The archbishop's longstanding advocacy for justice, reconciliation and service to the poor is well-known and consistent with the mission of Catholic Charities," he said in the diocesan statement.

Catholic Charities USA is the nation's largest, private social service network. It has five regional offices in the Diocese of Rochester that serve 80,000 people annually.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark's column, "Along the Way" will not appear this week.

MISSION NEWS



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4/99

Evening of Prayer to

Good Saint Anne

Thursday, 15 April 1999, at 7:30 PM

Mass and Homily

Candlelight Procession

Veneration of the Relic of Saint Anne

This Saint Anne Evening Devotion is primarily a call to prayer. The evening is conducted in the same manner at at Ste. Anne de Beaupré in Canada. It is a great opportunity for the elderly, the disabled and other people who cannot come to the Canadian Shrine to experience a "mini-pilgrimage" in the Rochester area.



All are invited to

Saint Anne Church

1600 Mt. Hope Avenue • Rochester, New York

This solemn evening devotion to Good Saint Anne will be conducted by **Father Raymond Tremblay, D.Ss.R.** of the famous Canadian Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré. Father Tremblay was born in Shawinigan, halfway between Montreal and Quebec City, on 21 February 1929 and was ordained a Redemptorist priest in 1954. In 1995 he was sent to Greece where he studied Greek and Ancient History, completing his studies in Paris where he obtained his licentiate. For the next 24 years he taught in Redemptorist Seminaries where he also became spiritual director and superior. In 1981, he was assigned to the Aylmer Spiritual Centre where he preached, taught and did spiritual counseling. Since 1995d, he has been working at the Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré, at the service of numerous pilgrims coming to the Basilica.