

DIOCESAN NEWS

Church leaders examine work toward unity

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Rev. Dr. Diane Kessler said she felt there should be a "full organ swell" as she reported on churches' accomplishments toward Christian unity.

Kessler, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, joined 400 colleagues in the ecumenical movement at the Crowne Plaza Hotel for the 36th National Workshop for Christian Unity.

Participants described the May 3-6 gathering as an intense examination of the movement's progress. A number of them acknowledged that in their day-to-day work, they share a key dilemma.

"How do we bring about a reception for persons in the pews of what already has been achieved in the modern ecumenical movement?" Father Kevin McMorrow, SA, editor of *Ecumenical Trends*, noted in an interview.

"What does it mean to take ecumenical work out of the bilaterals (ongoing dialogues) and see it accepted formally into the life and faith of our churches?" asked panel member Rev. Dr. William G. Rusch, director of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches (USA). The U.S. Catholic Church itself is involved in eight such dialogues, including ones with Lutherans and Anglicans.

"I think (parishioners) really need to know in a concrete way and simple language the national and international efforts being made," Sister Joyce Cox, BVM, assistant to the archbishop in the Archdiocese of Seattle, said. "It comes across as too jargony, philosophically difficult. They need to know Pope John Paul II is saying ecumenism is not something we may do, but is something we must do."

For example, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued a *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* after the Second Vatican Council and updated it in 1993.

It states, "Concern for restoring unity pertains to the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the potential of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies."

The directory notes that ecumenism is the response to Jesus' prayer "that they all



Above, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, right, chats with Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Basil Losten, left, prior to a Roman Catholic-Eastern Catholic Eucharist at St. Josaphat's Church, Rochester, May 4. In the background is Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski of the Polish National Catholic Church. Below, Bishop Clark preaches at the Mass, one of several special services held during the National Workshop on Christian Unity in Rochester.

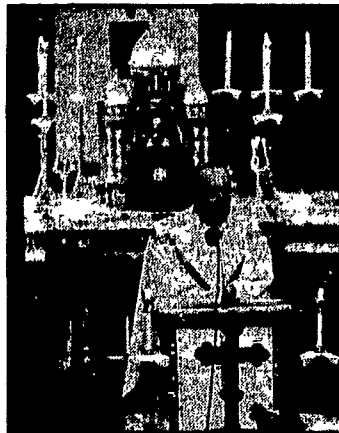
may be one" (John 17:21).

In such community projects as Habitat for Humanity, for example, interfaith groups build not only homes, but relationships, noted the Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, a high official in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Yet such groups can go a step further, Sister Cox told the *Catholic Courier*.

"Where the mix-up is, from my experience, is we rush in together to do social action and advocacy," she said. While projects may bring together Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists and others, she said, "you don't sit together and ask each other what it is in your principles and values of your denomination that impel you, feed you to be involved in this social action."

Catholics could share their church's principles of social justice; Presbyterians might



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

discuss issues facing their denomination, she said.

"All are meant to blend their richnesses, to bring about the reign of God in the world, the Gospel of the Good News," Sister Cox said. "We won't have that if we don't talk about those areas of belief."

She herself plans to talk at parishes and ask them to invite their neighboring churches of different denominations to the talks, for example.

Archbishop Alexander Brunett of Seattle, chairman of the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said he believes ecumenism is still in its early stages, despite decades of work.

However, in an update to the Catholic ecumenical officers meeting at the conference, he spoke about each dialogue — a statement on authority is due out this month by the Anglican-Roman Catholic In-

somebody knows that they are alive and breathing, and that someone knows it's nice that they're here with us today," she said.

One school has even formally recognized that peer disputes occur, and created a formal group to deal with them. For the past three years, Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester has trained a small group of students to act as mediators between peers when disputes occur, according to Mark Ball, Bishop Kearney's director of marketing and public relations.

Likewise, Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM, principal of Notre Dame High School in Elmira, said that when the school is alerted about a simmering dispute between students, staff will intervene.

"We try to get the two people together to talk it out," she said. "It's important that they come to a kind of understanding so there will be a (mutual) respect."

For that matter, no incident of verbal or physical abuse between students, no matter how minor, should be ignored, according to Lylac. She noted, for example, that she called police into Nazareth to talk to students last year after some students brought water pistols to school and used them. While some may consider calling the police to be an overreaction to the incident, Lylac commented that schools cannot allow students to think even simulating violence against each other is permissible.

"Teenagers tend to be followers," she said. "Things they do might not necessarily be addressed at home, and I think, as an educational institution, we have a duty to address even the smallest of things."

Littleton

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said, after 8:05 a.m. every school day, no one can come into the school without being buzzed in from the school office. Additionally, visitors can only come in through the school's main entrance because all the other doors have been locked, she said.

Meanwhile, the diocese's elementary schools have also taken measures in the wake of the Littleton massacre, according to Timothy W. Dwyer, diocesan schools superintendent. He acknowledged that in the weeks after Littleton, a Monroe County Catholic school eighth-grader was suspended after he told fellow students that he had been bringing bombs to school. The student's boasts turned out to be idle, Dwyer said, but the student was nonetheless punished and his case is still under review.

Dwyer noted that he sent out a May 10 letter to diocesan school parents pointing out that students exhibiting "inappropriate behavior" that is a "threat to student safety" would be investigated, and, if necessary, suspended. The proper authorities will be notified, Dwyer wrote, and "a mental health assessment will be required prior to the student(s)' return to school."

In the wake of the Littleton tragedy, diocesan school administrators also pointed out that every school must do more to reach its outcasts, like the two boys who did the killing at Columbine. Allegedly, the two Columbine boys had been bullied by school athletes, and the pair decided to exact re-

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venge upon the student body. Schools must not ignore the plight of such students who feel left out, diocesan school administrators said, pointing out that overlooking outcast students — especially after Littleton — is an error no school can afford to make.

For Edward J. Tracey, principal of DeSales High School, Littleton's tragedy struck a personal note. He witnessed a shooting of Catholic school students in 1948 when he was attending Power Memorial Academy in New York City. A mentally ill elderly man shot at the students, wounding 11 and killing one, who was Tracey's friend, when they were gathered in an armory preparing to march in the city's St. Patrick's Day parade, he recalled.

That incident taught him that violence discriminates against no one, and he has applied that principle to his work as a school administrator. Tracey noted that over the years, he has continually confronted bullies and comforted outcasts, and encouraged his faculty to do the same.

"There are outcasts in every class and in every school," he said. "You have to use every device to reach kids."

Julianne Palma, campus minister at Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton, added that she regularly asks popular students to make an effort to include students who seem to be left out of the school's social circles. She added that it's also important that the school's faculty recognize daily those students who might feel outcast.

"(Students) need the reassurance that

ternational Commission, various interchurch marriage guidelines have been produced, and the ground-breaking Joint Declaration on Justification (with Lutherans) is near signing.

And he encouraged local communities to prepare to celebrate that signing.

The statement is "the first one to come to this level" in all the Catholic Church's ecumenical dialogues, he told the *Courier*. For the first time, he said, "the two churches will say we can get beyond 400 years of difficulty."

And yet, he said, "The church has no experience of this. Therefore we should not be surprised at concerns."

If a Roman Catholic was raised thinking that Lutherans are "heretics," he said, it may take time to understand that the two churches have reached an agreement on what once divided them.

As Father John Hotchkin, executive director of the same committee, told a workshop gathering, the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue has caused the churches to travel back to a time when the "explosive issue" of justification by faith alone detonated, and divided heirs of Roman Catholic and the Reformation.

Today, in reaching agreement on basic points, he said, "This is a matter that affects not only Lutherans and Catholics. It touches Protestant and Catholic identity at its deepest source."

Justification by faith, he said "is Christianity's most consoling and empowering message, I believe, of our total dependence and reliance upon God. What he gives us is not due to our efforts or exertion but is his free gift."

Speaking to ecumenical officers, Archbishop Brunett also encouraged them to work together to invite unchurched people, alienated Christians, and "lukewarm" Christians into their communities, to help renew spiritual fervor.

"We can only pray that the coming millennium may be a moment of deepening communion," he said, "until we are able to rectify the alienation of the past millennium."

Playing a key role in planning the workshop locally was Deacon Brian McNulty, diocesan ecumenical officer, working with an ecumenical committee.

Appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has made the following priest assignments, effective June 29:

- Father Philip Billotte, from pastor, Naples/Prattsburg Catholic Community, to pastor of the Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community (St. Januarius, Naples; St. Patrick's, Prattsburg; St. Michael's, Penn Yan; St. Andrew's, Dundee; St. Theresa's, Stanley; and St. Mary's, Rushville.)

- Father Sean Garrity, from pastor, St. Joseph's, Ligon, to parochial vicar, Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community.

- Father Peter Deckman, from copastor, St. Michael's Penn Yan and St. Andrew's, Dundee, to parochial vicar, Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community, with sabbatical scheduled to begin July 1.

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