

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bishop Pilla: cities, 'burbs should work in concert

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Cleveland Bishop Anthony M. Pilla knows all about "those people" — as he's heard suburbanites refer to city dwellers.

He's one of them.

But Bishop Pilla wants to end divisions between city residents and those who live outside urban areas.

"In the context of faith, that call to unity for us is not an option," Bishop Pilla told more than 120 people gathered in St. Mary Church's Dugan Center June 9. His speech was co-sponsored by the parish's Downtown Community Forum and the Common Good Center, a program of the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

Earlier in the day, Bishop Pilla spoke to a joint meeting of the Diocese of Rochester Priests' Council and Stewardship Council. Both groups, along with several diocesan offices, have been working on a white paper that will deal with urban/suburban/rural issues in the diocese, according to Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities.

In 1993, Bishop Pilla released the pastoral letter titled "A Vision of Balance for City and Suburb," which addressed "sprawl" in the Cleveland diocese. Bishop Pilla, past president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, strongly criticized sprawl — the unchecked development of a city's suburbs at the expense of its inner core with no major increases in metropolitan population to justify spending public monies on new development.

For example, his letter noted, authorities recently built a \$65 million highway in the Cleveland region — a highway that would likely encourage people to move from the city.

"I'm not suggesting the highway should not have been built," the bishop wrote. "But ignoring its impact has further undermined the city of Cleveland ... (Highway) investment calls for a counterinvestment in the communities negatively affected by it."

Public demand for new suburban housing and other facilities that aid suburban growth often is met without a concurrent look at options to improve city living in ways that would keep city populations intact, his letter argued. In particular, that unchecked suburban growth adversely affects the Catholic Church.

"Catholic schools in the cities will serve an increasingly poorer population and will face ever-increasing financial difficulties," he wrote. "Meanwhile the parishes in the outer suburbs will continue to spend more and more of their parishioners' money to build for the increasing population. And that money is limited."

In his June 9 speech, Bishop Pilla stressed that he is not opposed to suburban development — and indeed understands that such issues as crime and bad schools can drive residents out of the city. However, prime farmland, environmental quality and other assets of outlying areas are being sacrificed on the altar of development, while the nation's inner cities continue to suffer the downside of corporate relocation to the suburbs, he said.

"We cannot have thriving regions with weak urban cores," he said.

Bishop Pilla noted that his 1993 letter attracted a lot of attention in Cleveland and led to his diocese's "Church in the City" project. The project emphasizes developing relationships among city, suburban and rural parishes and residents, as well as building connections among business, government and religious leaders of all faiths.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern



Eight join deacon ranks

(Above) The Diocese of Rochester's newest permanent deacons gather in front of Sacred Heart Cathedral with Bishop Matthew H. Clark, center, following their June 12 ordinations. From left, are Deacons Roger Loomis, Salvador Otero, Laurence Feasel, John Payne, Robert Cyrana, John Cunningham, Robert Burke, and Jorge Louis Malave. (At left) Bishop Clark and Deacon Feasel share thoughts after the ceremony. The diocese is also scheduled to ordain two transitional deacons — men en route to the priesthood — this year: William McGrath, scheduled to be ordained a deacon at the North American College in Rome in October, and Patrick Van Durme, to be ordained a deacon at the American College in Leuven, Belgium, in December.

For example, 80 city, rural and suburban parishes in the Cleveland area have formally linked or begun linking to help one another as well as to collaborate on social-ministry efforts, according to Cleveland diocesan officials.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Bishop Pilla stressed that it does no good to try to make suburban residents feel guilty about leaving the city when they may have good reasons to do so. Instead, city advocates should emphasize that when suburbanites help a city to thrive, they are invariably paid back by improvements in their own economic and social lot. He added, for example, that his diocese tries to balance its approach to suburban and urban Catholics by giving financial aid to both impoverished city children and middle-class suburban Catholic school students.

Following Bishop Pilla's address, the St. Mary's audience heard a speech by Mark A. Stefanski, chairman and chief executive officer of Third Federal Savings and Loan of Cleveland.

Stefanski, a Catholic, said he read Bishop Pilla's 1993 pastoral letter around the time he was contemplating building his bank's headquarters in inner-city Cleveland. The two men met and discussed ways they could help one another, and this led to Third Federal's "Broadway Initiative," named for the street on which the bank is being built.

The initiative's components include the funding of tutors to help children at neighborhood schools, and the establishment of a scholarship fund for inner-city schoolchildren who want to attend Catholic schools, Stefanski said.

He added that his bank is also working to

increase home ownership in the area, as well as working with the city to improve public transportation in the surrounding neighborhoods. The bank has also met with owners of local retail stores to discuss creating a market center that would centralize retail outlets in the area and open up more room for housing.

His bank is doing all this without accepting any tax abatement from local government, Stefanski said, instead telling local officials to spend tax money to improve the bank's neighborhood.

Both men stressed that the Church in the City program uses the input of as many people as possible who live in the areas affected by the program's initiatives.

"No one is too poor to contribute to this process," Bishop Pilla said. "And I want to remind you that no one is too rich to contribute to this process."

Recognizing

★ Sarah Laun' of St. Mary's Church, Waterloo, has won the Miss Majorette of New York State title for ages 13-15. She is a Waterloo High School freshman.

★ Helen Ventura, a member of Geneva's St. Stephen's Parish, was named Geneva's Senior Citizen of the Year for her volunteer efforts in the parish and the community. She received the award

at the Senior Citizen of the Year Gala April 23.

★ Agnes Brown, Frances Hoffman, Eleanor Howe, Hazel Hogan, Sarah Kimball, Mary Mead, Ann Miller, Phyllis Newman and Barbara O'Connell were honored by Court St. Rose of Lima 469 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas for 50 or more years of service. They were recognized at a Com-

munion breakfast following the annual Mass for departed members May 16 at St. Patrick's Church, Owego.

★ Margaret "Peg" Sweetman was named Cayuga County Senior Citizen of the Year by the Cayuga County Legislature May 20. A parishioner at St. Patrick Church, Cato — part of the Northern Cayuga Cluster — she was honored for her church and community activities.

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