

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Tier institute to debate laws

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

Reform of the Rockefeller drug laws will be the focus of a Southern Tier justice-and-peace institute Saturday, July 10, at St. Charles Borromeo Church, Elmira.

The institute is co-sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier and the diocesan Public Policy Committee.

Guest speakers are Sister Karen Klimczak, SSJ, director of HOPE House, a halfway house for men in Buffalo; and Mishi Faruqee, director of the Women in Prison Project at the Correctional Association of New York.

Kathleen Dubel, justice-and-peace coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, said approximately 50 people are scheduled to attend the institute, which will run 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Participants will be social ministry directors and activists from Catholic Charities' service area covering Chemung, Tioga, Tompkins, Steuben and Schuyler counties.

Sister Klimczak said her lecture will cite the effect of the Rockefeller laws on ex-prisoners she has served at HOPE House since its founding 14 years ago.

"There's just such unfairness with the drug laws," Sister Klimczak said.

The laws, passed in 1973 during the tenure of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, made New York's drug laws among the toughest in the country. They set mandatory prison sentences — even for nonviolent, first-time offenders. (See *Catholic Courier*, June 3.)

Sister Klimczak said most of the ex-prisoners at HOPE House had been convicted of some offense involving drugs and/or alcohol. Most are also African-Americans and Hispanics. Too often, she charged, these men were victims of both racism and vigorous application of the Rockefeller laws.

She noted that on a number of occasions when prisoners were released to her program, law enforcement officials told her they had no idea why the men had been jailed for so long.

Meanwhile, Dubel said the federal government has focused on punishment and halting drug traffic, but hasn't devoted a similar effort toward rehabilitation and prevention education.

"The war on drugs, I wonder whether we're not just chasing our tails," Dubel said. "It's costing taxpayers millions, maybe billions of dollars, and it's not changing anything. It's not dealing with the addiction. We're just putting nonviolent offenders away."

Since May, the diocesan Public Policy Committee has been campaigning for reform of the Rockefeller laws. The effort has included distribution to parishes of a petition calling for "new sentencing guidelines for offenses involving the possession and sale of controlled substances and allowing judicial discretion in sentencing nonviolent drug offenders to alternative punishments, addiction treatment or education programs."

The deadline for signing the petitions was June 30. The petition effort follows a March 9 statement in which the bishops of New York called for revision of the Rockefeller laws.

Meanwhile, Sister Klimczak noted that a series of demonstrations for prison reform — including changes in the Rockefeller laws — is scheduled to take place July 28-Aug. 1 at more than a dozen prisons in the Buffalo Diocese. The protests are being organized through the Prison Action Committee of the Western New York Peace Center.



## A priest forever

On July 3, Deacon Samuel D'Angelo, C.P.P.S., was ordained a Precious Blood priest by Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, SJ, of Halifax, Nova Scotia, before friends and family at his home parish, St. Mark's, in Greece. In top photo, he prostrates before the altar and Archbishop Prendergast. Right, he sits behind the chasuble he will wear. Above, Louis D'Angelo, principal of Bishop Kearney High School, embraces his son near the end of the Mass.

Photos by Mike Mergen



## Catholic Charities assists new workers

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes has launched CROSSROADS, a program to help single parents who have been on welfare make the transition to working.

Through the program, the Catholic Charities office is providing workplace mentoring and support services to these parents.

"The workplace mentor's role will be to assist the single parent employee in understanding workplace culture and expectations," according to a Catholic Charities release. "The mentor will focus on company policy, procedure and culture, and when necessary, address behavior that could get the employee fired."

"Ideally, the mentor will be a co-worker recruited from the employee's workplace who will 'adopt' the new worker." Otherwise, volunteer mentors will be recruited from the community.

The Ontario County Department of Social Services' Financial Independence Today program and Ontario County Department of Employment and Training are referring participants to the program.

CROSSROADS also will provide on-call assistance if crisis situations arise that could affect employees' jobs.

"This is another step in Ontario County's commitment to reinforcing the work ethic, moving people from welfare to work," stated Donald Ninestine, chairman of the Ontario County Board of Supervisors. "The county continues to shift its focus to those services that support people in the workplace. Partnership with organizations such as Catholic Charities is vital to helping people build the self confidence and gain the dignity earned through work."

Program coordinator is Mary Kinsky, who had worked for the Seneca County Employment and Training Department.

For more information on CROSSROADS, or to volunteer as a mentor or on-call volunteer, people may call Kinsky at 315/789-2686, ext. 336.

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