

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Four parishes protest abortionist's practice

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Four Brighton-area Catholic Church leaders have issued a statement of protest against Dr. Morris Wortman, an obstetrician-gynecologist, who plans to continue providing abortions when he opens his new office at 2020 S. Clinton Ave. on Aug. 1.

In particular, the church leaders protested the fact that Wortman's new office will be located near a child-care center and McQuaid Jesuit High School. The child-care center was not named in the statement.

Wortman's current office is located at 200 White Spruce Blvd., Brighton, and has been a frequent target of protests. Reportedly, his landlord, Home Leasing Inc., declined to renew his lease this year, in part, because of the company chairman's opposition to abortion.

The statement, released July 16, was signed by Father John O'Connor, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Brighton; Father Lee Chase, pastor of St. Thomas More, Brighton; Sister Jacquelyn Reichart, RSM, pastoral administrator of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Brighton; and Father Frank E. Lioi, pastor of St. Anne Church in Rochester near the Brighton border.

Father James J. Fischer, SJ, president of McQuaid, did not sign the statement, but told the *Catholic Courier* that McQuaid endorsed its sentiments.

The statement, titled "Memo to Brighton Community and Parishioners," was also signed by Suzanne Schnittman, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester. The statement was placed in the four

churches' July 17-18 bulletins.

"(Dr. Wortman's) new office is not a welcome addition to the neighborhood," the statement reads. "Located on Clinton Avenue, it is adjacent to a day care center and a close neighbor to McQuaid Jesuit High School.

"More serious than affecting the ambience of the neighborhood, the office will provide abortions, which are the taking of life," the statement continued. "Catholic social and gospel teachings ... call us to defend life threatened by abortion, the death penalty, economic injustice, euthanasia, violence and war. We therefore request Dr. Wortman to cancel plans to perform abortions at the Clinton Avenue site."

Seeking comment, the *Courier* faxed a copy of the statement to Wortman's office. Wortman told the *Courier* that he did not want to be quoted. However, he said he would submit a letter about the matter to the *Courier*.

When asked what prompted the issuing of the statement, Father O'Connor said many of his parishioners had told him that Wortman's decision to locate his new office in their neighborhood was "morally offensive" and "socially unacceptable."

Those sentiments were echoed by Leann Patel, a mother of two McQuaid students, who helped organize a prayer service at the school last May dedicated, in part, to opposing the opening of Wortman's new office.

"We are concerned that daily our sons and the children in that day care center will be exposed daily to the end of life," she said. "Our sons should understand what the evil of abortion is."

## Courier garners 12 press awards

The *Catholic Courier* won 12 awards — including firsts for coverage of religion, best front page and best portrait photo — in contests sponsored by the New York Press Association and the national Catholic Press Association, for 1998 issues.

In awarding the *Courier* first place honors for coverage of religion, the NYPA judges wrote, "The *Courier* provides well rounded and thorough coverage — notable emphasis given to youth features. The paper is not afraid to cover controversial issues with objective reporting. It's a newspaper that goes beyond merely informing its readers, the paper involves the readers."

The *Courier* won the NYPA first for best front page, for its "clean elegant layout." The judges noted, "This is how spot color should be used," and "Tone of art and story agree."

The CPA awarded the *Courier* second place in this same category.

The CPA also awarded a first in best portrait photo to *Courier* Photographer Greg Francis for "Mother and daughter," featuring social justice advocate Margaret Driscoll of Newfield and her daughter Eileen Zampogna. Judges described the photo as "A tender, warm moment made even better because of the open space surrounding

these two." Francis also took third in the same category for his portrait of an artist in Israel, taken during an interfaith mission.

Other NYPA awards were:

- Second place for graphic illustration by Graphic Artist Linda Jeanne Rivers. The judges commented, "This artist is good and her entry is well-executed. Fine art rarely translates onto newsprint — this one does."

- Third place in the feature story category for Staff Writer Mike Latona's story about Vietnam War veterans 25 years after the war ended. The judges noted, "Somber topic dealt with very nicely."

- Third place for coverage of health, health care & science. The judges wrote, "A unique entry that discussed health in a light not often seen — religion. Particularly good was the discussion of assistive reproductive technologies and theological implications."

The other CPA awards were:

- Second for best editorial page;
- Second for best seasonal issue (Christmas);

- Honorable mention for best news reporting on a national event for copy editor Kathleen Schwar's casino gambling report;

- Honorable mention for best local retail advertising campaign for Rogers House Restaurant ads.

## Obituary

### Sr. Reisdorf, 103; taught for 50 years

Sister Rose Irene Reisdorf, SSJ, died at the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary June 21, 1999. She was 103.

Sister Rose Irene was a native of Auburn. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Aloysius Parish, Auburn, in 1930. She taught in diocesan parochial schools for 50 years, including 24 years at St. Stephen's, Geneva, 19 years at Corpus Christi School, Rochester, and two years at St. Mary's, Waterloo.

In 1954 she opened St. Pius X School,

Rochester, serving five years as teacher and principal.

Due to failing health she retired to the convent infirmary in 1986.

Sister Rose Irene is survived by one sister, Rose Hayden of Auburn; and cousins, friends and her sisters in the congregation. Funeral services were held June 24 at the motherhouse. Burial was in the sisters' plot at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Contributions may be made in her memory to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

## Inspiring images

Al and Mary Lou Robinson, parishioners at St. Jude the Apostle Church, Gates, view the Missionary image of Our Lady of Guadalupe July 15 at the church. The picture, along with a visitation image of the King of All Nations painting, were brought to the Rochester area July 8-15.

## Diocese extends petition drive

The New York State Legislature's failure to pass a state budget is providing more time for a diocesan effort to modify the state's drug laws.

The diocese had initially set a June 30 deadline for collecting signatures on petitions calling for modification of the so-called Rockefeller Drug Laws. Passed in 1973 during the administration of the late Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, the laws set mandatory, often lengthy sentences for even nonviolent, first-time offenders.

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee — and New York's bishops — are calling for flexibility in sentencing. Several bills have been introduced to the legislature calling for modifications to the laws, but action was delayed as the legislature wrestled with a budget package.

The legislature was supposed to have passed a budget by April 1. It was unclear whether, once the legislature resumes deliberations as expected later this month, it would then take up other legislation, or would delay action on non-budget items until the fall.

As part of the local campaign, the diocese distributed petitions to parishes urging legislators to modify the laws. Suzanne

Schnittman, the diocese's life issues coordinator, reported that as of July 16, 39 parishes had returned signed petitions. She did not have an exact count, but estimated the number of signatures at more than 4,500.

In some cases, Schnittman explained, diocesan representatives will deliver signed petitions to legislators. In other cases, parishes or regional offices of Catholic Charities will deliver signed petitions.

The diocese will continue to collect petitions until mid-August and to lobby for reform until the legislature is ready to consider the drug law bills, Schnittman said.

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