

DIOCESAN NEWS

Naples parish honors memory of crash victim

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

St. Januarius Parish in Naples has launched a series of events in memory of Catherine Bly Casper, 39, who died July 11 in a gorge three miles from the Naples church. Her husband, Walter Casper III, has been charged with second-degree murder.

Rosary services are taking place prior to St. Januarius' two weekend Masses throughout August. In addition, staff members are collecting flowers and taking them weekly to Grimes Glen, where the van in which Mrs. Casper was riding rolled off a cliff and tumbled down an embankment. She died at the scene of the early morning crash.

"Everybody has felt so much concern and sympathy. They couldn't believe such a thing could happen — what those last few seconds of her life must have been like," said Sandy Johnson, a co-organizer of the St. Januarius events.

Father Philip Billotte, pastor of St. Januarius and five other churches in the Finger Lakes area, said that neither the Caspers nor their families had any formal ties with St. Januarius.

"It's just the fact that it happened here," he said, adding that he supports the staff members' efforts to commemorate Mrs.

Casper's death.

Parishioners are also being asked to wear red ribbons throughout August, to call attention to domestic violence, while attending Mass and the special services. The parish's social ministry, Christian formation and liturgy committees are coordinating the memorial efforts.

According to Johnson and Karen Petrone-Keber, St. Januarius' religious-education coordinator, the parish plans additional events over the next two months, including an interfaith healing service and an adult-education program on domestic violence.

When asked by the *Catholic Courier* why St. Januarius is focusing on domestic violence when there has been no legal conviction, Petrone-Keber said the exceptional nature of Mrs. Casper's death spurred the parish into action.

"I'm not saying (Walter Casper III) is guilty or innocent. I'm just saying a woman died a violent death, and he was there. Our responsibility as a community is to come together and pray for this woman's life and for the well-being of their children," Petrone-Keber said. "Even if it was accidental, we still need to pray for her soul."

New York State Police arrested Walter Casper III July 14 at troop headquarters in Farmington in connection with the fatal

crash.

According to State Police Capt. Mark Fischer, Casper was also arraigned July 14 and is charged with second-degree murder based on "depraved indifference to human life and recklessly engaging in conduct which causes the death of another person."

Fischer said the charge is based on a statement by Casper that he jumped from the van he had been driving, intentionally leaving it in gear to roll off the cliff with his wife inside.

Casper, 39, was released July 28 from Ontario County Jail on \$25,000 bond. His attorney, John Speranza of Rochester, did not return calls seeking comment. A call to the Casper home in Macedon also was not returned.

Fischer said Aug. 3 that Hopewell Town Court has issued an order forbidding Casper from having contact with his two sons, ages 11 and 9.

"Everybody tells me (Catherine Casper) was a lovely person. It's a real tragedy for those children. They've lost both parents," Fischer said.

Fischer added that it will likely be several months before the case goes to trial.

The Caspers were active parishioners at St. Patrick's Church in Victor, according to Father George Wiant, pastor at St. Patrick's.

Father Wiant not only presided over

Mrs. Casper's July 15 funeral Mass, but also visited Walter Casper III in jail "as part of my pastoral duties."

St. Louis School in Pittsford held a memorial prayer service July 19, Father Wiant also noted. The Caspers' sons, Walter IV and Benjamin, are students at the school.

In Naples, Johnson said that St. Januarius had originally sought to establish a trust fund for the Casper children, but opted for the rosary services after consulting Mrs. Casper's parents, Donald and Carol Bly of Greece.

"Her father said, 'What we need most right now is prayer from all of you,'" Johnson said.

The rosary services July 31 and Aug. 1 were well-attended, Petrone-Keber said. The church was half-full for the 9:45 a.m. Aug. 1 service, with a couple dozen people arriving early.

"There were way more people doing the rosary than at any time during the Lenten season. Maybe we should do this once a month, for different causes," Petrone-Keber remarked.

She added that she gathered flowers that had been left at the altar and took them to Grimes Glen on Aug. 1. But she had a difficult time getting near the site of the mishap because it was jammed with people still curious to see the crash site.

Neighborhood group attempts block of new clinic, abortions

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

Abortion provider Dr. Morris Wortman was expected to open his new clinic at 2020 S. Clinton Ave., Brighton, on Aug. 4, despite legal maneuvers by a Brighton neighbors association. Long the target of abortion protesters, the gynecologist built his own clinic after his previous landlord declined to renew his lease at 200 White Spruce Blvd., also in Brighton.

Brighton Residents Against Violence to Children filed an appeal July 28 with the Brighton Zoning Board of Appeals. It claimed a berm constructed behind the clinic building was illegal because it had not been approved specifically on a site plan.

"The town is clearly not in compliance with its own code," said Carol Crossed, a director of the association. She added that the association believed its appeal would cause an automatic stay of the certificate of occupancy Wortman needed to begin seeing patients in the new facility.

"We figure as long as we are able to delay his occupancy of that building, some children's lives would be saved," Crossed said.

However, Dr. Wortman was issued a temporary certificate of occupancy effective July 30, according to Brighton



Greg Francie/Staff photographer

Brighton Residents Against Violence to Children is appealing this berm behind Dr. Morris Wortman's new clinic at 2020 S. Clinton Ave., Brighton.

Town Planner Ramsey Boehner.

"After legal review, we do not find an appeal puts a stay on issuing a 'C of O,'" Boehner said Aug. 2. He planned to place the appeal on the zoning board's Sept. 1 agenda.

The Brighton association incorporated about a month ago to fight the clinic, Crossed said. Its 100 members include non-residents who work, worship or send

children to school in Brighton, she added.

Maureen O'Brien Di Poala, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Church and also an association director, indicated other action is being considered.

"In the meantime we'll keep up our prayerful protests," Di Poala said, referring to picketing outside the clinic on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

Brighton resident Jacqueline Morency, a member of the neighbors association, previously had complained to the town about the berm.

In a July 23 written response, Boehner told Morency that the berm was in compliance with comprehensive development and stormwater management regulations. The berm is a concrete wall about 6 feet high by 150 feet long and is covered with dirt. It also creates a barrier between the Wortman's building and the Children's Center of Brighton day-care center.

Diocese prepares for conference

More than 500 parishioners, pastoral leaders, clergy and religious are expected to attend Leadership Days '99, Aug. 17-19, at the New York State Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls. The theme is "The Many Facets of the Church as a Reconciling Agent," reflecting a major theme of the Great Jubilee Year 2000.

Keynote speakers and their topics are: Bishop Matthew H. Clark, "The Church as Living Witness of Reconciliation;" Father Robert Kennedy of St. Bernard's Institute, "The Once and Future Sacrament of Reconciliation;" and Father Richard Fragomeni of the Chicago Theological Union, "The Uncommon Quest for Common Ground."

The Office of Liturgy and musicians from throughout the diocese will present Marty Haugen's "Song of Mark," a Gospel-based musical on discipleship, at

7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18.

More than 50 workshops are planned on such topics as responding to marginal Catholics; interacting with couples seeking marriage in the church; African-American Catholic history and spirituality; family caregiving; interfaith and ecumenical reconciliation; job/career opportunities in the church; barriers for people with disabilities; communicating within and outside the parish; and envisioning women in leadership.

Leadership Days, presented by the Parish Support Ministry, is particularly designed for parish staffs, but anyone in the diocese may attend. Registration has been extended to Aug. 9 and may be arranged by calling 716/328-3228 or 800/388-7177, ext. 328. Further information is available on the diocesan Web site, <http://www.dor.org>.

In fact, Boehner said Wortman built the berm at the request of the Children's Center, for protection from any violence against the clinic.

Wortman was in the process of moving from one office to the other and did not return a phone inquiry from the *Catholic Courier*.

The association's appeal followed a July 16 statement protesting the opening of Wortman's practice near the child-care center and McQuaid Jesuit High School. The statement was issued by the pastoral leadership of Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Thomas More and Our Lady Queen of Peace churches, all in Brighton, and St. Anne Church, Rochester, near the Brighton border.

McQuaid's president, Father James J. Fischer, SJ, and Principal Franklin L. Kamp followed up the statement with a letter July 23 to Brighton Supervisor Sandra Frankel.

"Activities that run counter to life at any stage of development are antithetical to our mission with the students in our Grades 7-12," it said.

"We respectfully urge the Town of Brighton demonstrate by its actions in this matter that it does not actively welcome or readily facilitate those activities that lead to the termination of life."

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