

Letter seeks Vatican reconsideration of ban

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — More than 4,500 people have signed a letter asking the U.S. bishops to seek Vatican reconsideration of the decision barring Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent from continuing their 29-year ministry to homosexuals and their families.

About two dozen lay people, priests and the Newman Oratory Parish Council of Brockport were among the signers from the Diocese of Rochester.

The letter was published as a six-page advertisement in the Nov. 19 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* weekly newspaper and timed to coincide with the U.S. bishops' Nov. 15-18 fall general meeting in



Washington.

The signers ask the bishops to "lead by example" and petition the Vatican to reconsider the public notification issued in July by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The congregation permanently prohibited Sister Gramick, a School Sister of Notre Dame, and Father Nugent, a Salvatorian priest, "from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons" and declared them "ineligible, for an undetermined period, for any office in their respective religious institutes."

The public petition asks the bishops "to



appeal to the Vatican to reinstate the two ministers and to initiate reconciliation with lesbian/gay Catholics who have been further alienated from church structures because of the church action," according to New Ways Ministry.

The national gay ministry group, based in Mount Rainier, Md., was begun 22 years ago by Sister Gramick and Father Nugent.

At a Nov. 15 press conference in Washington, Frank DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, said the Vatican action left thousands of American Catholics feeling betrayed.

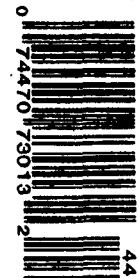
The advertisement expresses that sense of betrayal, said DeBernardo, and signals what he called a major crisis in the Catholic Church. Noting the letter's 4,551 signers, he added, "we didn't foresee this kind of response."

The only bishop to sign was Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit.

Diocese of Rochester signatories included those of Fathers Ed Palumbos, Robert Kennedy, Gary Tyman, David Simon, Ron Gaesser and William Spilly; Sisters Kay Heverin, SSJ, Judy Reger, SSJ, and Sharon Bailey, SSJ; and several lay people.

"I certainly hope the ban can be reconsidered," Father Tyman, parochial vicar of Assumption Church in Fairport, said. "They have done excellent pastoral min-

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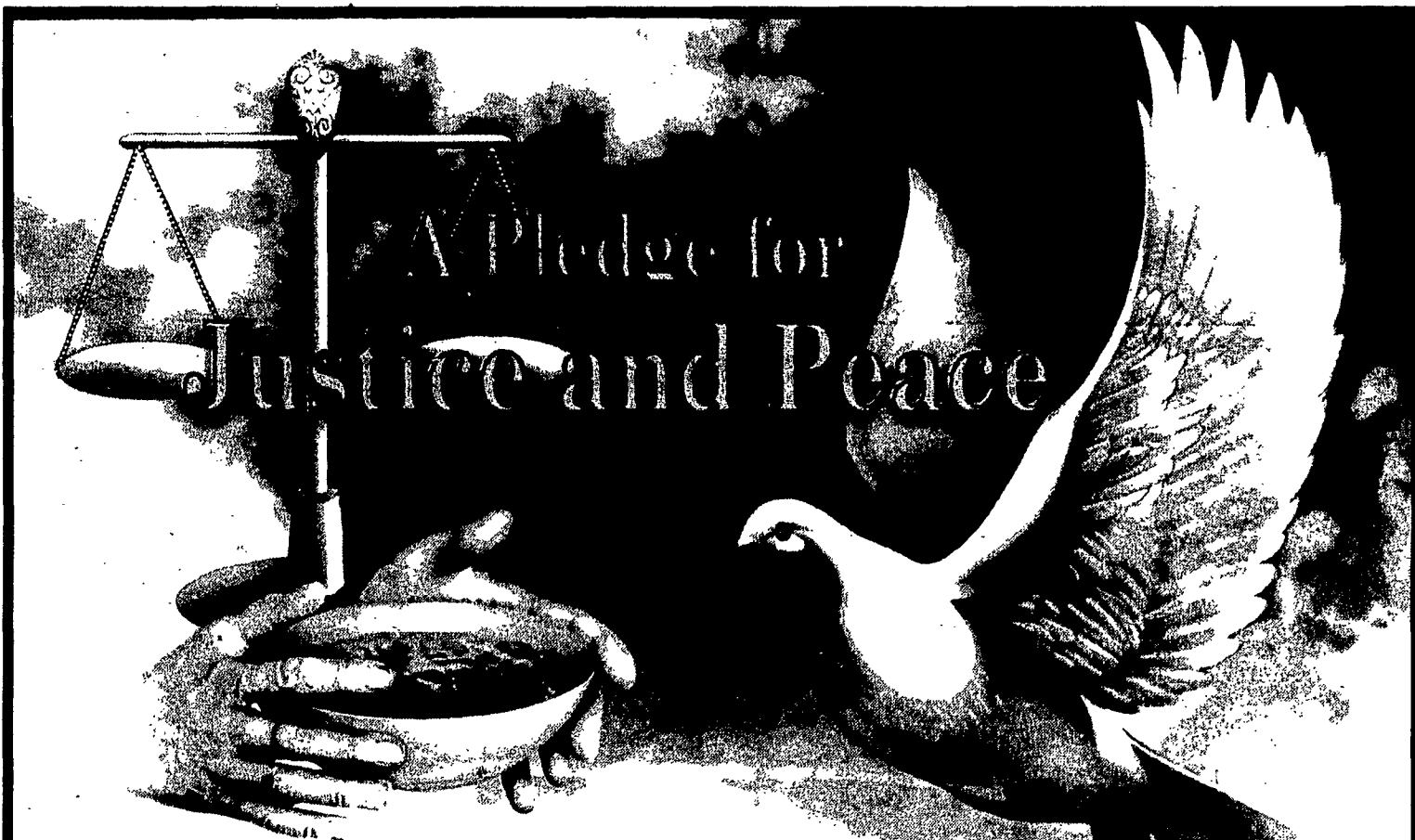
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What does it mean to make a pledge? Is it a promise to behave in a certain way? Or to send money to a certain group? Is it a promise of time? Is it a vow to be better in the future than we have been in the past?

As part of the Diocese of Rochester's preparations for Jubilee 2000, the diocesan Task Force on Jubilee Justice has spent nearly a year developing a Jubilee Pledge for Charity, Justice and Peace. The resulting pledge represents all of these commitments, and yet it is more than just commitments. It is a way to focus our priorities on the theme of Jubilee Justice — to help us rethink our relationships with each other, with God and with creation. And, yes, it is also a way for us to commit to improving — to re-balancing — those relationships. It is a concrete way for us to connect our faith with our lives.

The idea for a Jubilee pledge originates from Pope John Paul II's 1994 apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, in which he declared that "a commitment to justice and peace ... is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the jubilee." As the task force developed a diocesan version of the pledge offered by the

U.S. Catholic Conference, we had one goal in mind: Get it on people's refrigerators! Make it relate to families and make it measurable. How, otherwise, could people tell if they were satisfying it? Pledging to Jubilee Justice attempts to touch us where we live, where we interact with family members, with co-workers, with store clerks. It also aims to stretch us beyond where we might once have gone.

Those who take the pledge will make the following eight promises:

1. To pray daily for any human lives threatened by any form of violence and that I may more actively seek nonviolence.

We are accustomed to praying for lives lost to violent storms, to war, to terrorists, to murderers — and we actually do this well, often in public forums. We should pray for lives threatened by domestic violence, or abortion, or illness, or hate crimes or poverty. On a more subtle level, we might also pray for those threatened by the violence of poverty, racism or other discrimination. It is always good to pray, above all, for the perpetrators of violence and for those we view as enemies. To move toward Jubilee Justice, we need to pray about nonviolence as a way to solve problems. This means reacting to

others in a spirit not of power but of care, not of control but of trust. If we allow anyone — from family members to market competitors to strangers — to become "the enemy," it is easier to accept violence against them. It is easier to permit others to use violence against them.

2. To learn what Catholic social teachings say about how we use our money and how this affects the global community.

The 1986 National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All" challenges us to use money in ways that reflect our faith.

If we are owners, managers or investors, are our decisions about the use of capital moral? Do our companies create and preserve quality jobs at living wages? Investors should examine ownership, management and economic decisions in the light of the call to protect life, defend those who are poor and seek the common good.

As consumers, do we purchase from companies that defend human life, treat workers fairly and protect creation? Are we

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