

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Jubilee Day for Women to take place March 25

Pope John Paul has declared Saturday, March 25, as "Jubilee Day for Women." The pope has designated this day to honor and remember women for their contributions to society and the church, and to reflect with women on the challenges of the century.

The U.S. bishops have chosen as the day's theme, "Women Saying Yes to God," which refers to the Feast of the Annunciation celebrated March 25. The theme invites people to consider how women have responded throughout history to God's call in their families, religious communities, society and the church.

Two events open to the public are set at the following locations on March 25:

St. Anne's Church Hall, 136 Church St., Palmyra: "Miriam's Well - The Story of Women in Story, Scripture and Song," 6 p.m. This is sponsored by Wayne County Women in Church and Society Task Force. Further information is available by calling 315/597-4571.

Strong Hall, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester: "Women and Women's Gifts: An International Celebration," noon-2 p.m. Interfaith prayer and a reception are planned.

## Pro-life priest to speak at St. Mark's, Greece

Father Richard Hogan, associate national director of Priests for Life, a national pro-life group that educates priests to work against abortion and euthanasia, will be a featured Lenten speaker at St. Mark's Church, 54 Kuhn Road, Greece. He will begin with homilies at the 5:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday, March 25; and 8:30 and 10 a.m. and noon Masses on Sunday, March 26.

A priest of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Father Hogan will also speak on the following topics at St. Mark's in addition to his guest homilies:

Sunday, March 26, 7:15 p.m.: "The Gospel of Life - Pope John Paul II's encyclical;" Monday, March 27, 7:15 p.m.: "Abortion and the Culture of Death"; Tuesday, March 28, 10 a.m.: "Jubilee of the Year 2000"; Tuesday, March 28, 7:15 p.m.: "The Splendor of Truth - Pope John Paul II's encyclical."

For information, call 716/225-3710.

## Controversial nun defends her views

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff Writer

PITTSFORD—Sister Jeannine Gramick, SSND, nationally known for her work with and writings on gay and lesbian Catholics, is no longer allowed to work pastorally with such people. Yet, despite being banned from such work in July 1999 by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, she plans to keep speaking out on what she sees as the plight of gay and lesbian people in the church.

"I have a sense of church history, and I realize there's been injustice for centuries, and we won't have perfect justice until we arrive at heaven," she said, noting the ban did not include speaking engagements. "Just as we know that we won't have perfect justice in this world, we strive to rectify that and for that reason I'm trying to get this decision reversed."

Sister Gramick spoke with the *Catholic Courier* on March 17, in the home of Gloria Uterino, the diocese's former director of the Office on Women in Church and Society. The meeting occurred between her two talks at the University of Rochester, one the previous evening, and the other at noon on St. Patrick's Day.

Sister Gramick's engagements were part of a tour of upstate New York cities, sponsored by Call To Action Upstate New York. The organization has chapters in Rochester, Albany, Utica, Syracuse and Buffalo. Call To Action seeks to advance such reforms in the church as the ordination of married men and women, and the re-examination of church teachings on contraception and sexuality.

In a formal notification, the Vatican congregation banned Sister Gramick and Father Robert Nugent, SDS, cofounders of the Maryland-based New Ways Ministry, from working with homosexual Catholics and their parents. New Ways educates church workers about gay and lesbian issues. The CDF based its decision on problems it found with the duo's writings and teachings. After a 12-year investigation by both U.S. and Vatican authorities, the congregation said the church had found that Sister Gramick and Father Nugent essentially soft-pedaled or rendered ambiguous Catholic teaching that although there is nothing wrong with having a homosexual orientation, homosexual activity is sinful.

"(P)ersons who are struggling with homosexuality no less than any others have the right to receive the authentic teaching of the Church from those who minister to them," read the notification signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the congregation's



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Sister Jeannine Gramick, SSND, speaks to about 15 people in the University of Rochester's Library on March 17.

prefect, and Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary. "The ambiguities and errors of the approach of Father Nugent and Sister Gramick have caused confusion among the Catholic people and have harmed the community of the Church."

But Sister Gramick argued that there were many flaws in the notification directed against her and Father Nugent. Most notably, she claimed to have always presented Catholic teaching on homosexuality correctly, contrary to the notification's claim. She also said that under canon law, as pastoral ministers she and Father Nugent are not required to make a profession of faith that outlines their adherence to church teachings, a profession the congregation requested. Furthermore, she noted, even if she was required to do so, a profession only extends to teachings that are part of the

"deposit of faith," for example, the Apostles' Creed, and not the church's teachings on homosexuality.

On that note, she said that she has never publicly disclosed her own feelings about the church's teachings on homosexuality, and she considers inquiries into her personal beliefs a violation of the sacredness of her conscience.

"My role has been as a mediator or reconciler," she said of her work. "If there is tension or disagreement within a group ... you don't want the facilitator to inject their personal opinions or views regarding lesbian and gay Catholics within the institutional church."

She added that if she had to continually emphasize the church's stand against homosexual acts it would hurt her ministry just as a person ministering to divorced or separated Catholics would be hampered by continually calling attention to the church's teachings against divorce. She also wondered aloud why her work has been singled out for investigation when many Catholic moral theologians have publicly questioned the church's sexual teachings without being penalized.

"There seems to be an obsession on homosexual activity," she said of the Vatican and her critics. "For some people, the mere discussion of the topic raises fears that the church will change its teaching about the immorality of homosexual acts."

Until a few decades ago, she noted, no church leaders even told homosexual Catholics that they were valued by their church, much less acknowledged their presence in the church.

"Think of all the celibate homosexuals through the centuries whose very existence has been denied," she said.

She added that she would like to see every Catholic parish establish an outreach group for gay and lesbian Catholics and their families.

## Group targets adult businesses

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff Writer

ROCHESTER—Members of Interfaith Action, a federation of churches, want the City of Rochester to place new restrictions on adult businesses.

More than 100 residents of the city's northwest neighborhoods met with city officials at Most Precious Blood Church hall on March 9. City officials pledged to take the residents' proposals for new restrictions into account when examining the city's zoning laws in the next few months, according to James Shepard, an Interfaith Action member and parishioner at Most Precious Blood.

In a phone interview, Margaret Wuerstle, director of zoning for the city, responded to questions about each of Interfaith Action's proposals in a point-by-point fashion. The proposals, along with her responses, included:

- No strip clubs or adult theaters within 1,500 feet of a day care center, school or church, and no adult bookstores or video shops within 1,000 feet of a day care center, school or church. Wuerstle said that currently regulations bar adult establishments within 500 feet from such buildings. She noted that the city must do studies to determine if the distances can

be increased without putting undue restrictions on the businesses' legal rights to operate in areas zoned to permit adult establishments.

- No more than two strip clubs or adult theaters in any city quadrant. The zoning director said that the city cannot legally divide itself into quadrants and that—given the availability of property—as many adult businesses as possible can operate in a district for which they are zoned.

- Mandatory licensing of employees at adult establishments, including background checks for criminal records. She said that this may be possible, adding that the city could bar people convicted of prostitution from getting such licenses.

- Required on-site security at clubs and theaters to prevent prostitution: While the city can't require businesses to hire anyone, it can require that adult businesses ensure their parking lots are lighted to discourage crime and that clubs have security systems in place.

- Regular inspections of establishments to ensure compliance with all laws. The city already regularly inspects adult establishments, Wuerstle said, and recently shut down three "body rub parlors" where prostitution occurred.

The city has placed a moratorium on the opening or expansion of adult establishments until mid-May, and may extend that period to July, she said. She added that the proposals must be studied and then presented to the city's planning commission, which would then present them to City Council for approval.

Wuerstle added that she sympathizes with the neighbors but said the city also has to respect the constitutional rights of the establishments' owners.

"What's legal is not always what's moral, and we have to do a real balancing act and do what's fair and what's responsible," she said.

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