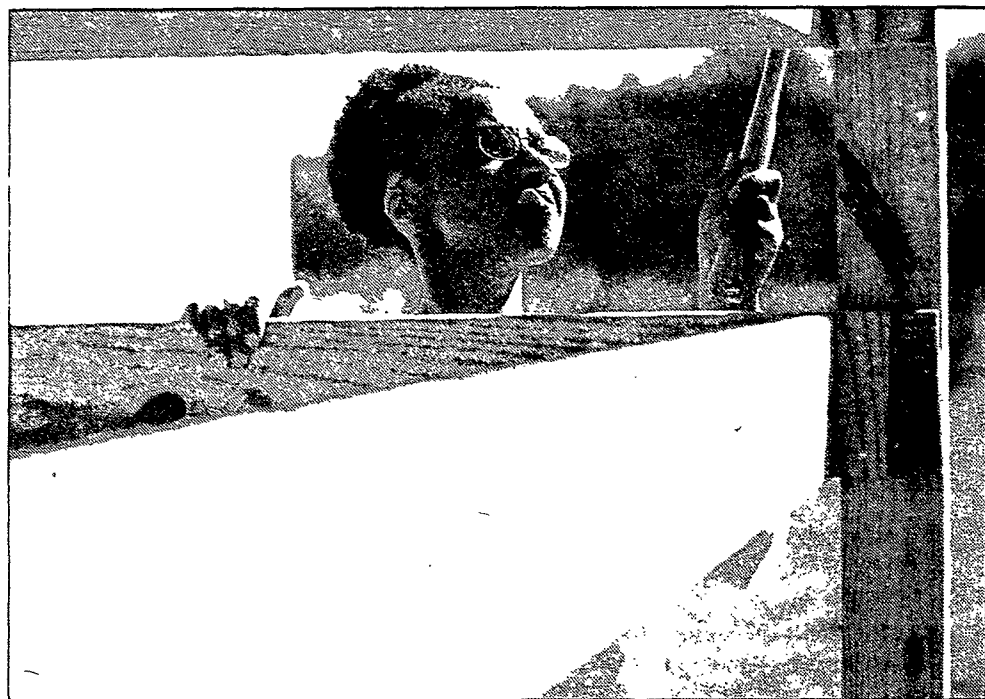


DIOCESAN NEWS

A giving spring break



Binghamton University student Terri Henry, 21, concentrates on driving a nail into the railing of a new porch in Berkshire on March 22. She and several other college students spent their spring breaks fixing up homes for housebound, elderly and low-income people through a Tioga County Rural Ministry program. Adult volunteers with construction experience instruct the college students in their work.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Terri laughs with Liz Babu, 21, also from Binghamton University, while building a porch.

Lobbyist: State leaders ignoring church

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

Is the Catholic Church — New York state's largest private provider of health, education and social services — a second-class citizen in the eyes of the state's politicians? It seems so when you look at some of the proposed legislation in Albany these days, according to Rick Hinshaw, associate director for communications for the New York State Catholic Conference.

In a phone interview from Albany, Hinshaw outlined a number of bills currently proposed in the New York State Legislature that blatantly disregard the Catholic position on health care. Meanwhile, he said, the state continues to ignore calls from Catholic leaders for school aid and has done little to increase funding for Catholic social service agencies straining from the costs of helping people move from welfare to work in a post-welfare-reform world.

"There's a real concern that certain groups are being catered to," he said, referring to pro-choice groups and teachers' unions that have continually battled the church in the legislative arena. "I think the concern is that the Catholic Church's contributions are being taken for granted. Maybe there's a sense (among legislators) that 'We can push them a little bit because we know that they're not leaving the playing field, and we can cater a little more to

these groups who have brought pressure to bear."

To fight that pressure, Hinshaw noted, various representatives of the state's dioceses were to converge on Albany March 28 to buttonhole legislators on a variety of issues. Bishops Howard Hubbard of Albany and Henry Mansell of Buffalo planned a news conference that day in the New York State Museum to discuss what they see as threats to freedom of conscience and religious participation in public life posed by certain bills or the lack thereof.

Marvin L. Mich, director of social policy and research for Catholic Family Center in Rochester, said 80 diocesan Catholics planned to represent the Diocese of Rochester. Groups of teachers, social service agencies' workers, volunteers and clients, as well as some parishioners were traveling to Albany from Rochester, Newark, Geneva and Elmira.

In particular, Hinshaw said, the state conference wanted legislators to hear the church's position on the following types of legislation:

- Bills that mandate that health insurers cover various fertility treatments and forms of contraception opposed by the church, including fertility techniques that involve the selective abortion of fetuses. No bills currently proposed contain any kind of provision allowing companies to refuse to provide such coverage if it runs counter to a company's conscience. Hence, Catholic health insurers could be forced to cover procedures they oppose or go out of business altogether, he said.

- Various proposed bills that mandate that there be no reduction in abortion or contraception services provided by non-Catholic hospitals when they merge or affiliate with Catholic hospitals. If passed, such legislation could force Catholic health facilities, along with the secular hospitals with whom they affiliate, to close their doors, he said.

"These services should not be forfeited to the community to satisfy the narrow pro-abortion ideological agenda," he said.

- Funding for "academic intervention services."

Along with the fact that Catholic school parents get no tuition aid from the state, be it vouchers or tax credits, the state has also refused to pick up the cost of *de facto* mandated services for students, according to Hinshaw.

That point was seconded by Sister Patricia Carroll, SSJ, the Rochester diocese's assistant superintendent for government services and administration. The state created new standards for elementary students to attain that have been in effect since 1998, she said.

Some students need "academic intervention services" such as tutoring to reach those standards. However, the state says that nonpublic schools aren't required to provide academic intervention services, and hence, does not fund such services, she said, whereas the state reimburses nonpublic schools for mandated services like student registration. Yet, by creating the new standards, the state essentially forced nonpublic schools to provide more services to students, services that are costing Catholic schools thousands of dollars, she said.

"Since we're incurring the costs, we're asking New York State to help us out," she said.

...

In addition to lobbying the state on behalf of church interests, Catholics in Rochester are joining other religious groups and labor activists in a statewide "Fast for Invisible Workers," according to Mich. The fast was slated to begin locally at 8 p.m., March 29, in a public ceremony at the Public Employees Federation in Rochester and end March 31, with a communal supper at noon at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester.

The fast was being promoted by the Rochester Labor-Religion Coalition. Among the goals of the participants was promotion of a proposal to increase the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour, which critics say is hardly enough to support a family. The coalition also points out that 69 percent of minimum wage workers are adults, and 39 percent of such workers are the sole breadwinners in their families.

Further information on the fast and the coalition is available from Mich at 716/262-7021, or Denise Young of the Public Employees Federation at 716/232-6980.

Sr. Korn accepts missions charge

Father Robert Bradler, diocesan director of missions, has appointed Sister Janet Korn, RSM, as mission-awareness coordinator in the Diocesan Missions Office (Society for the Propagation of the Faith).

Sister Korn, who served for 16 years as a missionary in Chile for the Sisters of Mercy, will speak to adult, campus, religious-education, school and youth groups.

Commenting by e-mail about her appointment, Sister Korn told the *Catholic Courier* that she was thrilled once again to be part of mission activity on behalf of the Rochester Diocese.

"When I worked in South America, I had the opportunity to experience all that the Church of Rochester does for developing countries around the globe. Now that I am back in Rochester, it will be a privilege to help support these mission efforts from the 'home base,'" she stated.

Sister Korn is working one day a week for the missions office, and continues as social-justice awareness coordinator for Catholic Charities four days.

"It is my hope to enliven mission efforts by engaging our parishes in twinning projects with parishes in developing countries, especially where we have men and women from Rochester working in those areas," she stated. "...I want to do whatever I can to increase the awareness of the diocese about our mission responsibilities."

In his March 7 letter announcing the appointment, effective March 1, Father Bradler wrote, "As the present generation grows older, we see a need to make the future generations aware of their call to support the missionary work of the church."

"When I was in school we had the nuns who reminded us frequently about the need of the missions," he told the *Courier*. "If you were chewing gum, they would ask you to give 10 cents to the missions. Those days are over. I'm not saying lay people are not doing their job. But they're not doing it as frequently as they should be. There are many other causes today."

Father Bradler, who also is pastor of Irondequoit's St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, was in rehabilitation for severed tendons in both knees, for seven weeks at St. Ann's Community. He had fallen Jan. 20 and 21 while on vacation in Jamaica. He returned to St. Thomas March 20.

"You just have to rely on people to do things, and they've been very, very good," he said. "I have depended on the giftedness of other people for something as simple as tying my shoes."

He added that he is getting around with braces on his legs, and with a walker, and also he is continuing with physical therapy.

"My main goal is to celebrate Mass, and the Easter mysteries," he said.

—Kathleen Schwarz

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'Milestones' correction

The *Catholic Courier* plans to honor couples who are celebrating "Milestone" anniversaries this year.

A notice in last week's issue mistakenly asked for information regarding anniversaries that were celebrated in 1999.

Couples who marked or will mark 25, 50, 75, 80, 85 or more years of marriage in the year 2000 will be listed in the special Milestones/Vocations issue April 27.

Please send the following information:

Full names of husband and wife;

Date of wedding;

Church and city where married.

Also include a telephone number for any necessary verification.

Deadline for submission is April 7.

Send all information to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester NY 14623.