

DIOCESAN NEWS

Social-justice expert to speak at Elmira symposium

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

Through workshops, speaking engagements and a newsletter, Sister Alethea "Lee" Connolly, CSJ, encourages Catholics to take a more active role in social-justice issues.

"Cynicism dominates, and induces such a lack of participation. (But) if we look at Catholic social teaching, we'll see very clearly that we're called to act," Sister Connolly said in a telephone interview from Albany.

Sister Connolly, who serves as state director of housing and social policy for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, is the scheduled guest speaker for a July 15 gathering of justice-and-peace advocates. The workshop, "The Politics of Love: Jesus and Jubilee," is sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier. It will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the agency's Elmira office, 215 E. Church St.

Sister Connolly, 56, has been involved in social-justice ministry for 25 years. She has served in the Albany Diocese since 1995, and ministered previously in the Syracuse and Ogdensburg dioceses. She also spent 1977-80 in Lafayette, La., working with poor plantation workers.

Currently, Sister Connolly serves as education committee chair for the Albany Diocese's Public Policy Committee. In 1998 she co-founded Pathways to Independence, a collaboration of educational institutions that help poor people "who have a lot of strikes against them," she said. The group,

Bishop Matthew H. Clark is on vacation. His column will return in August.

she said, strives to provide impoverished people with skills and job opportunities.

Sister Connolly spends considerable time publishing a newsletter, *Citizen Catholic*, which she said "provides insight on Catholic social teaching and issues that affect the poor and vulnerable." The newsletter is distributed to 1,000 addresses. In the June 2000 edition, Sister Connolly devoted a page to printing sample letters to state legislators which support the Hunger Relief Act and higher minimum wage. Readers can use the samples as guides for writing their own letters.

Sister Connolly said that Catholics should constantly bring Catholic social teaching into the political arena, rather than view separation of church and state as an all-encompassing principle.

"It's a misnomer. Those terms are for

court cases, not for saying religious thought doesn't have a vital role in the dialogue of shaping the policy affecting the poor, the elderly and those without power," Sister Connolly said.

Kathy Dubel, justice-and-peace coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, said Sister Connolly exudes "an enthusiasm and a sense of hopefulness" that makes citizens realize "it is a blessing to be a citizen of the United States" because they have the right to speak out on social policy.

Sister Connolly is passionate about young people as well. She works closely with Free the Children, an international group dedicated to helping children in foreign countries who are oppressed by poverty and politics. Sister Connolly oversaw a fundraising campaign by youths — mostly

from the Syracuse Diocese — that raised \$2,400 for Free the Children. The organization, based in Toronto, was founded by Craig Kielburger, himself a teenager.

"They want to build a school in Nicaragua, and that money will do it," Sister Connolly said. "It keeps me going, working with 10- to 16-year-olds who care."

Sister Connolly said that when she mentions these youths in her lectures, adults are impressed that younger generations are concerned about social justice.

"They really take to heart that these are people who are not just interested in going to the mall," Sister Connolly remarked.

EDITORS' NOTE: Registrations are still being accepted for July 15 workshop at Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier. The event is open to anyone interested in parish social ministry efforts. Call 607/734-9784.

Agency to open shelter for women, kids

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

In response to a shortage of emergency housing for homeless women and children, Catholic Family Center plans to open a 16-room emergency shelter for them in a former apartment building in Rochester, according to Susan Bennett, director of CFC's homeless and housing services.

The new shelter is tentatively slated to open in summer of 2001, and will provide food and case management to clients. Women and children will also be able to receive referrals to a variety of other services including health and financial.

CFC currently operates Women's Place, an 18-room emergency shelter in Rochester for women and children that provides the

same kind of services that the new shelter will provide. Women's Place generally operates over capacity, Bennett said. Such agencies as Monroe County Department of Social Services refer women and their families to the shelter. However, she said, the population needing shelter on any given day can be twice as large as the number of rooms available to accommodate it.

Women's Place is the only general emergency shelter for women and children in the city. Alternatives for Battered Women Inc., a private, not-for-profit organization, operates a 38-bed shelter for women and children in Rochester, but its clientele is restricted to people involved in domestic violence. While women and children who are victims of domestic violence also stay at Women's Place, other situations can put

them there as well, from inability to pay rent to being burnt out of a home, Bennett said. Women and children generally stay fewer than 14 days at Women's Place, but can stay up to 45 days.

"People are usually in serious crisis when they come to us," she said. "We're just the stop-gap so they're not living on the street."

The new shelter will primarily be funded by federal, state and private grants, she said, but CFC is seeking \$210,000 in monetary donations to pay for such items as paint, wallpaper, kitchen equipment, a security system, paving and landscaping. Volunteer help and in-kind donations are needed as well to get the shelter open, she said.

To learn more about the new shelter, call Catherine Feldman, CFC fund development coordinator, at 716/423-9590.

MISSION NEWS

SOMETIMES PRAYER ALONE CAN HELP...

"When the pain is very strong," says Primosi Mujemula, a 35-year-old Tanzanian with AIDS, "I pray. Then it does not hurt so much." Each day,



Sister Gratiana Nunuga travels up to 100 miles to help care for, and pray with, the 195 persons with AIDS who live in the Mwanza Diocese. At every visit, Primosi asks Sister Gratiana to pray with him. When she gives him her hand, her smile is reflected in his face; Primosi is immune to despair. Often, when medicine offers no answers, only people like Sister Gratiana can help. You can, too. Please pray for Sister Gratiana, Primosi and the people of the Mwanza Diocese. And, please, support the work of the Church in the Missions through the Propagation of the Faith.

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Vespers, Sermon, Novena Prayers

Wednesday, July 26

Feast of Saints Anne & Joachim, at 7:30 pm
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For the Novena Days: Organist: Brink Bush, Cantor: Colleen Liggett
For the Feast Day: Choirmaster: Daniel Brondel, Choir of Saint Anne Church

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