

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Diocese promotes push to end penalty

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Diocesan efforts to end the death penalty have entered a new phase.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark was slated to join other area religious leaders Jan. 24 at the Dugan Center in St. Mary's Church, Rochester, to sign a statement calling for a statewide moratorium on the death penalty and capital punishment trials.

Meanwhile, the diocesan Public Policy Committee has asked parish pastoral leaders to consider promoting anti-death-penalty activities beginning the weekends of Jan. 27-28 and Feb. 3-4. That effort may include homilies on the death penalty, as well as circulation of petitions calling for state and federal moratoriums on capital punishment and on capital trials. The petitions will be used in diocesan anti-death-penalty lobbying efforts with political leaders in Washington, D.C., and Albany.

The Public Policy Committee sponsored a daylong workshop on the death penalty at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates Jan. 13. The workshop was attended by 50 people from Monroe County and the Finger Lakes region, according to Judy Taylor, communications manager for diocesan Catholic Charities. She added that 10 people from the Southern Tier also participated in the workshop via computer linkup.

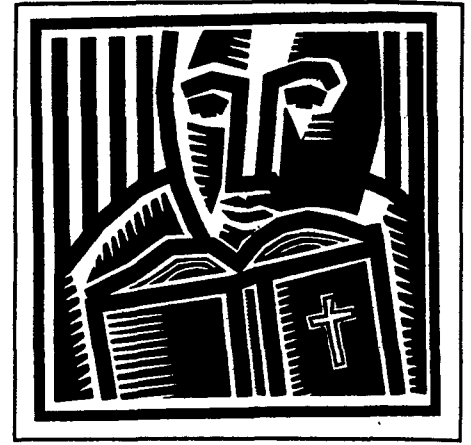
Moratorium efforts have been growing steadily nationwide for four years now, sparked, in part, by the increasing use of DNA evidence to exonerate wrongfully convicted death row inmates. The Diocese of Rochester joined several diocesan Catholic groups and parishes and other organizations and churches in the state last March to call for a federal moratorium.

The recent diocesan workshop featured legal, theological and educational presentations on the death penalty. Taylor added

that the diocese has provided parish social ministry leaders and pastoral staff with materials on the death penalty, including notes for homilies and bulletin quotes.

One item provided to workshop participants was the booklet *Choose Life! Building Opposition to the Death Penalty* (cover illustration shown at right). Published last year by The Roundtable Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors, the booklet is a guide for social ministry leaders and others in creating topics for small group discussions.

The booklet notes that the majority of Catholics, like most U.S. citizens, support capital punishment, and offers suggestions on how to change the minds of citizens, parishioners and public officials about the penalty. The booklet notes that although the church acknowledges the right of the state to execute "in cases of extreme gravity," in practical terms, the church no longer sees much, if any, justification for



the use of capital punishment.

Pope John Paul II has made numerous statements against the death penalty, *Choose Life!* notes, also stressing that the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against the aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means ..." (Section 2267).

## Faith Haven board closes its home for unwed mothers

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Faith Haven, an independently operated home for unwed mothers in Naples, closed in December, due to factors including a lack of clients and relief staff. The home has been supported by area Catholic and Protestant churches and individuals as well as the Diocese of Rochester.

In its 15-year existence, Faith Haven served more than 200 young unmarried mothers. The home could house up to six women at a time. However, in the past two years, Faith Haven has only been serving between two and three women a year, according to L. Michael Larson, treasurer.

Larson, a member of Perinton Community Church, attributed the drop-off in clients to a number of factors. Among them is the declining social stigma attached to unmarried mothers and the increasing numbers of unwed mothers who move in with the fathers of their babies.

He added that many young women from urban areas like Rochester did not want to live in Faith Haven's remote rural location nor abide by its rules, which disallowed smoking and driving cars. Residents were also asked to do regular chores, he said.

He also said that there was a lack of job opportunities in the region for the women who were no longer in school.

And Faith Haven lacked the kind of trained social service staff that other centers for unwed mothers offer, he noted, making it difficult to properly serve women with drug and emotional problems.

On top of the declining number of clients, Faith Haven has suffered from a lack of couples willing to work relief shifts for a live-in couple who serve as "parents," Larson said.

Faith Haven's board decided it was time to close out of a sense of responsibility to its donors and supporters, he said. The home cost \$140,000 to operate annually and will eventually be sold, he said, with assets being used to create a

scholarship fund for unwed mothers who wish to attend Roberts Wesleyan College in North Chili.

Cathy Wiedemer, a member of St. Joseph's Parish, Penfield — one of Faith Haven's supporters — was Faith Haven's original treasurer. Larson succeeded her. Although she expressed sadness at the closing, she noted that she agreed with the reasoning behind the board's decision.

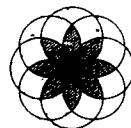
Bishop Matthew H. Clark's column, "Along the Way," will return next week.

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