

DIOCESAN NEWS

Anti-Catholic tracts distributed in Pittsford

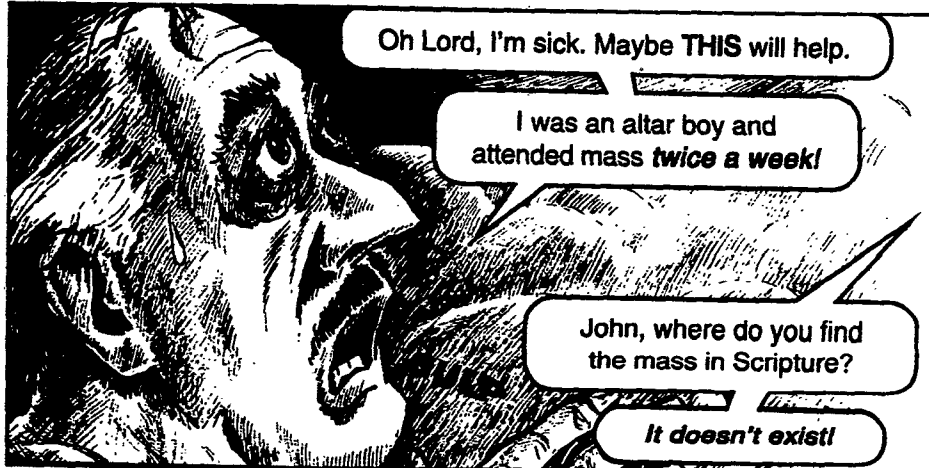
By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Someone has been distributing anti-Catholic literature to Pittsford-area homes, according to Allyn Smith, executive director of Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation Inc., an agency sponsored by the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses of Rochester.

Smith, who lives on Pittsford's East Street, said she found a tract titled "Last Rites" outside her mailbox earlier this month and subsequently learned that several such pamphlets had been left outside other homes on her street. Published by Chick Publications of Ontario, Calif., the tract is a comic-style booklet that tells the story of a Catholic man who dies and goes to hell because he adhered to Catholicism instead of the author's version of "true" Christianity. The publisher maintains a Web site at www.chick.com.

The tract, authored by Jack Chick, makes a number of false and misleading statements about Catholicism. For example, it confuses veneration of Mary, which the church upholds, with worship of her, which the church rejects. It also oversimplifies complex teachings about penance and the sin of presumption.

Smith, who attends St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport, said she turned the pamphlet over to the office of



This panel from "Last Rites" exemplifies the tract's anti-Catholic tone. Copies of the comic book were distributed on East Street in Pittsford earlier this month.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark because she was concerned about people distributing such literature. She also notified police and municipal authorities in Pittsford as well as the U.S. Postal Service.

"I was very concerned that nobody had the guts enough to put their name on it," she said.

In a phone interview, Rick Jones, an author with Chick Publications, told the *Catholic Courier* that his company merely sells such pamphlets, and that purchasers rather than the publishing company distribute them if they wish. The company

has existed for about 40 years, he said, and has created tracts in 100 languages, including English. Jones said he is a former Catholic who is now "saved," and that his company targets for conversion Catholics as well as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims. He described himself as a "nondenominational, Bible-believing Christian."

Jones, who is considered the company's expert on Catholicism, said he rejects the Catholic Church as a means of salvation for Christians and called it "unbiblical." He claimed that in framing his arguments

he only quotes back what he learns from official church teachings. However, when asked if, in some cases, he simplifies complex church teachings that are fully explained in such sources as the "Catechism of the Catholic Church," he termed the catechism difficult to "wade through" and "filled with gobbledygook." He said he based much of his research on older catechisms, centuries of papal statements and current Vatican documents. His writings on Chick Publications' Web site offer a standard litany of arguments critics of the church often cite for condemning Catholicism. These points range from the Inquisition to papal infallibility.

When asked why his company would want to create literature that could stir up hostile feelings, Jones was unapologetic.

"Whenever anybody is told that their religion is not biblical, it upsets them," he said. "Jesus told the religious leaders of his day that they were going to die and go to hell."

For her part, Smith stressed that she would have turned the tract over to the diocese even if she were not Catholic because she considers the pamphlet "hate literature." In fact, one panel in the tract depicts the Catholic man calling the tract "hate literature."

"I don't care what faith it was ... I would have done that for any other church," she said.

Assembly targets the church again in new infertility bill

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The New York State Catholic Conference has strongly condemned a bill passed by the Assembly May 13 that would force Catholic institutions to pay for insurance coverage for artificial reproductive technologies.

The bill was the latest in a series of Assembly initiatives in recent years perceived as attacks on Catholic institutions. Like other such bills that take aim at the church, this one was sponsored by Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.

Artificial reproduction technologies are a direct violation of Catholic teaching and routinely result in the direct destruction of developing human life, conference officials said.

"This legislation is an alarming example of religious intolerance and demonstrates a disregard for the sacredness and dignity of human life," said Richard E. Barnes, executive director of the Catholic Conference, which represents New York state's bishops in matters of public policy. "The Assembly is attempting to force Catholic hospitals,

nursing homes, schools and charitable agencies to pay for procedures in which human lives are created in a laboratory and subsequently frozen or destroyed and discarded as medical waste. We cannot abide by such legislation. The church cannot facilitate the destruction of human life."

Barnes pointed to recent infertility legislation passed in the state Senate as an example of a morally acceptable way of addressing the problem of infertility. The Senate bill mandates coverage for drugs and therapies that help couples conceive naturally, but does not force coverage of costly and morally offensive artificial reproductive technologies, such as in vitro fertilization and embryo transfers.

Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester's office of Catholic Charities, said the diocese opposes the Assembly bill but would support the Senate bill.

"We share the opinion of the New York State Catholic Conference that there is no need for a conscience clause in (the Senate bill) because there is no requirement for morally objectionable procedures," she said.

Conscience clauses generally protect the right of employers from paying for procedures they find morally objectionable.

In a memorandum of opposition regarding the Assembly bill — A.2003-A — the conference stated both its sympathy for childless couples and its concern over how couples seek to bring forth children.

"While the Catholic Church empathizes with childless married couples yearning for the joys of parenthood, the conference continues to have grave concerns with this insurance mandate," the memo reads. "These concerns include the legislation's requirement for funding acts that destroy innocent human embryos, both inside and outside the womb, and the endorsement of assisted reproductive technologies, which promote the manufacture of human beings, contribute to the breakdown in family relationships and interfere with the natural act of marital sexual intercourse."

Earlier this year, the Assembly passed a number of bills that called on employers — including such Catholic institutions as hospitals, schools and social-service agencies — to provide insurance coverage for contraceptives and abortifacients, and for

Catholic hospitals to provide contraceptives to rape victims. The church's viewpoint on such issues has generally fared better in the Senate, although this year both the Senate and Assembly passed contraception bills opposed by the church. Both bills contain inadequate conscience clauses, church leaders have said.

"When both houses passed legislation that would force the church to provide insurance coverage for contraception, we warned that it was the beginning of a slippery slope," Barnes noted. "And here in the same legislative session we have already seen an even graver moral outrage. How long until the church is commanded to provide or pay for direct abortion, assisted suicide and cloning?"

The state's bishops, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark, have condemned the Senate contraception bill, stating it would exempt only parishes and diocesan offices from providing benefits the church considers immoral. Other church institutions would not be exempt, and the bishops have said they may have to consider closing hospitals, schools and agencies rather than comply with the state's mandates.

Obituary

Sal Tripiciano, 83; Auburn native advocated for those in wheelchairs

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Despite being wheelchair-bound for the last 50 years of his life, Sal Tripiciano continued making his mark in the world around him.

Mr. Tripiciano, who belonged to numerous civic organizations and campaigned on behalf of other people with disabilities, died from congestive heart failure on May 6, 2002, at St. Ann's Home in Rochester. He was 83 years old.

Mr. Tripiciano was a lifelong Auburn resident except for his final 2 1/2 years, when he resided at St. Ann's. The product of an Italian immigrant family, Mr. Tripiciano grew up in St. Francis of Assisi Parish and was active in his father's ice cream business before joining the service in 1940. He logged more than five years in the United States Army, rising to the rank of staff

sergeant.

He married the former Millie Bisognano in 1946 and returned to the family business. In the summer of 1951, he experienced chest pains and suffered what was thought to be a viral infection or polio. The mysterious attack, which was never conclusively diagnosed, left him wheelchair-bound for the rest of his life.

Mr. Tripiciano's son, Thomas, who was 3 years old at the time, said the illness put an end to his parents' hopes of having several children. "That's why I'm an only child," he remarked.

But Mr. Tripiciano's condition did not break his resolve. "He had a wife and a son. He was not going to stop being a husband and father," said Thomas Tripiciano, who serves as pastoral minister at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Greece.

Thomas went on to add that his mother, who died in 2000, became his father's full-

time caretaker and was tagged by his dad as a "5-foot-tall pillar of strength." Thomas added that his father "was always smiling" and recalled the time his parents danced feverishly to the jitterbug at a wedding reception. Mr. Tripiciano then kidded the people who weren't dancing, calling them a bunch of cripples.

Mr. Tripiciano also spoke out on more serious issues. In Auburn, Mr. Tripiciano stumped for better conditions for the disabled. According to Thomas Tripiciano, the city instituted curbs for wheelchair access on its street corners — only after Mr. Tripiciano implored lawmakers to spend a day in a wheelchair before voting on the issue.

Another time, Mr. Tripiciano visited a veterans' hospital and befriended a young Marine who had suffered a spinal injury during the Vietnam War. The man was distraught about his condition, which had left

him permanently wheelchair-bound. But after a few days, he and Mr. Tripiciano were drag-racing up and down the halls in their wheelchairs.

Mr. Tripiciano was passionately devoted to the Cayuga County Council of the Boys Scouts of America, earning numerous awards through scouting. He was also active in the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Sons of Italy and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

After moving to St. Ann's Home, Mr. Tripiciano regularly attended the 3:30 p.m. daily Mass and was also active on the resident council. Mr. Tripiciano was to have been the subject of a "Senior Lifestyles" feature in the *Catholic Courier*, but was too ill in recent months to be interviewed.

Mr. Tripiciano's funeral Mass was celebrated May 10 at St. Francis of Assisi Church. Interment was at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Auburn.