

DIOCESAN NEWS

Bishop ordains deacons



Karin von Volgtlander/Staff photographer

Father John M. Mulligan, diocesan vicar general, looks on as Bishop Matthew H. Clark imposes his hands on the head of Lynn Kershner during the June 8 Mass at which the bishop ordained Kershner and three other men to the permanent diaconate. The celebration took place at Sacred Heart Cathedral.



Diaconal candidates John W. Nelson, Lynn W. Kershner, George Dardess and John R. Crego (at left) stand before the bishop during the ordination.



Bishop Clark joins hands with George Dardess for the promise of obedience.

Catholics gather to pray for victims, bishops

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

More than 120 people attended an evening "Prayer for Healing and Hope" on June 10 at Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral to pray for victims and for the church as it deals with the scandal of sexual abuse.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided at the service, which was held in anticipation of the Plenary Assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Dallas June 13-15. Thirteen priests and a deacon attended the service, along with several women religious.

The nation's bishops are slated to consider approving a draft charter that calls for laicizing priests or deacons who commit even one act of abuse. In part, laicization involves the removal of a cleric's ability to celebrate sacraments. The draft proposal contains several other new norms for dioceses, such as discouraging confidentiality agreements commonly used in the past as part of legal settlements between victims and the church. The bishops are slated to vote on a legal document as well that would express the new policies canonically in binding legis-

lation.

"Assuming that there will not be dramatic changes in the draft ... I think I will be happy with whatever the process yields," Bishop Clark said of the bishops' process for amending and adopting a charter. (For more on this process, see Bishop Clark's column, page 2.)

In addition to inviting all diocesan Catholics to participate in the service at Sacred Heart, the bishop had urged parishes to hold their own services that evening.

"I stand before you tonight with no news announcement, no brilliant insight on anything," Bishop Clark said during his homily. He added that he had simply come to join other Catholics in praying for God's guidance in helping both the victims of clerical sexual abuse and the church's leadership in dealing with the problem. He noted that all Catholics have suffered in some way from instances of abuse, which have filled the news since January.

"(W)e have been, on an almost daily basis, been made aware of the pain in our community," he said.

The service combined music, Scripture readings and prayer emphasizing the

need for God's forgiveness and healing. Paul Flansburg, a member of the folk music ensemble at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Rochester, said he attended to offer the bishop prayerful support as he leaves for Dallas. He added that he had also come to pray both for the victims of sex abuse and the priests who abused them. Flansburg said he liked the service.

"It was very powerful, and it was good because it called us all to acknowledge our sinfulness, which is important in times like this," he said. "We can't, as the body of the church, see ourselves as better or more holy than others. We're all sinners."

One woman, who asked that she only be identified as Donna, said she had come to pray for the victims of sex abuse. She added that she had been a sex-abuse victim herself, although she had not been victimized by a priest. She also said she wished the service had focused more on the victims than it did, and added that she believed church leaders seem to care more about the scandal's effects on "the brotherhood of priests" than on the victims.

"This service is a step in the right direction, but I guess we just have to know the pain of the victim," she said. "I thought that we would be praying for these people who would be under the power and control of others."

In an interview following the service, Bishop Clark said that he had been criticized at times for emphasizing the concerns of victims and, at other times, for emphasizing the concerns of priests. He added that the abuse scandals have made it "awfully hard to find the right word in a given circumstance."

"In some very real ways, you have to be very careful to take actions that honor all the legitimate concerns here," he said.

Four lay people added to abuse advisory panel

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has added four lay professionals to the advisory panel that investigates allegations of sexual abuse by clergy and makes recommendations to the bishop.

The new members are Andrew Meloni, former Monroe County Sheriff; Bill Dillon, former FBI agent who led the agency's regional office in Rochester; Tom Roche, chief of police for the Town of Gates; and Margaret Joynt, an attorney and child advocate who has dealt with numerous abuse cases.

Bishop Clark announced the appointments in a statement released just as the *Courier* was going to press June 11. The new panelists will join current members Timothy Sheehan and Jeff Munson, both therapists; Elaine Yudashkin, a clinical psychologist; and Father Daniel Condon, diocesan chancellor.

With these additions, four members of the current panel become staff liaisons to the panel. They are victims' advocates Father Robert Ring and Barbara Pedeville; Sister of St. Joseph Elaine Englert; and attorney Richard Chapman.

Bishop Clark also announced that Bill Mayer, a former major in the Rochester City Police Department, will review and make recommendations on the diocese's current process for handling allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy. Mayer led the police department's criminal investigation division and also is a board member for the Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

"I am delighted and extremely grateful that these talented individuals have so generously agreed to share their time and gifts to serve the people of our diocese," the bishop said.

The appointments are part of a series of changes being made to current diocesan policy on sexual abuse, which last had been revised in 1993.

The changes have resulted in the bishop's removal from active ministry three diocesan priests who allegedly sexually abused minors in the past. Further restrictions were placed on three other priests who allegedly abused minors in the past, and three additional priests are currently under investigation by the advisory panel.

Check out our online edition:
www.catholiccourier.com