



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

St. John of Rochester School kindergartner Elizabeth Bell's artwork and that of her schoolmates is on display at Fairport's Perinton Square Mall through Feb. 28.

the cover-up is the biggest problem practical Catholics have with the current scandal.

We have all been taught that the bishop is the spiritual leader of our diocese and today's Syracuse newspaper says that no one at the diocesan level knew that a certain person was preaching — teaching — in the diocese for 30 years. Come on! Would it be so difficult for a pastor to contact the diocese and get permission for a guest preacher.

The teaching on penance also prompts some comment. The first being that it leaves too much room for individual determination of the norms for general confession. Dare a layman say that some priests are too lazy to hear the number of confessions needed, or that their interest in counseling is for all practical purposes nonexistent.

The diocesan instructions to pastors would have been much better if it included numerical guidelines for the number of priests at a second rite service. Just how long does a confession take? What constitutes an adequate number? How long should a person have to wait?

I attend a relatively small, rural church, but believe me, if the number of people at a Lenten Penance Service all required individual confessions, even two priests would be there until well after midnight, unless the people went home lacking absolution. I say two priests because, if more than two were required for our community, the priests in the area would be hearing confessions for many hours every single night of Lent.

**Allen Weaver**  
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## Reform must target issues, not agendas

**To the editor:**

I am pleased that Voice of the Faithful may establish a chapter in the Diocese of Rochester. The organization is, as they say, "middle-of-the-road." They seek accountability structures in the Church which involve the lay people. That means a share in authority and decision making and policy making. They do not have an opinion about "hot-button" issues which more radical groups are promoting. And for their own credibility they need to be totally separated from the agenda of those groups. "Conservative" and "liberal" people should participate in VOTF.

Those who are nervous about "structural change" should read their Church history. There has been structural change throughout the history of the Church and some change is required now in the 21st century.

American Bishops need to be held accountable to the laity in a meaningful, intentional and purposeful way. The sexual abuse crisis shows how the credible authority of those overseers (episkopoi) has been eroded. We need to have a strong voice in how and who is elected to be bishop. In my not-so-humble opinion, that should mean that the laity as a whole should have the right to address the suitability of any candi-

date for the episcopacy. "Banns" should be published and the names in the proposed terna to the Holy See should be made public to ask for comments from the Faithful. The Faithful need to be consulted and listened to. And the People of God should have the right to nominate worthy persons for consideration to be their bishops. This is a structural change that has honorable antecedents in our Church. Witness St. Ambrose of Milan, for example. May VOTF be a useful and faithful addition to the life of the different regions within our diocese.

**Don Muench**  
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## Save funds to aid area's unemployed

**To the editor:**

St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Penfield plans a \$7 million expansion at a time when many of its parishioners are unemployed, experiencing salary cuts, or facing uncertain employment. What a travesty!!

The plan includes tearing down most of the current church, building a gathering space and school cafeteria. There are many options in lieu of the current, exorbitant expansion plan which the expansion committee members dismiss or ignore. The most common plea of the sensible opposition is that IF a larger church is needed, just add on to the current church

and do nothing else.

As many parishioners stress, our whole country is tightening their belts, and so should St. Joseph's. With state and federal aid cuts, more of the responsibility to help the unemployed falls on neighborhood churches. St. Joseph's capability to help will decrease if the parish fund raises for the exorbitant expansion bill.

Currently it is only Easter and Christmas when Masses are at or beyond capacity. At those times, the school gym could handle the overflow and show Mass via satellite. The committee wants a new Church because "the acoustics are bad." How ludicrous, they are fine! Besides, after a building addition, today's acoustic technology can make acoustics to order.

A gathering space is unnecessary. Currently social events are successfully held in the school gym. A cafeteria is planned so Catholic school children will no longer eat lunches at their desks in classrooms. IF this practice is truly unacceptable, buy folding tables and chairs that stack along walls of the gym when not in use.

God's church must not waste resources while some people hunt for discarded tires to make shoes. Seven million dollars could feed lots of unemployed people. St. Joseph's expansion committee needs to realize we must live simply, so others can simply live.

**Joseph and Jessica**  
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