

Diocese set to begin public-policy initiative

Advocacy for undocumented migrant farm workers will be the focus of a diocesan public-policy effort this winter.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has declared Feb. 7-8, 2004, "Public Policy Sunday." On that weekend, all parishes are being asked to take part in a petition-signing campaign in support of the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act of 2003.

Passing of the act would increase rights — including the opportunity to legalize immigration status — for more than 500,000 undocumented farm workers nationwide. The U.S. bishops, at their annual meeting in November, petitioned Congress and President George W. Bush to support this legislation. Catholic Charities USA is also an outspoken advocate of the act.

Bishop Clark noted that passing the act would impact tens of thousands of migrant farm workers in the Rochester Diocese. He said, in a

statement, that these workers are people "who work so very hard to put food on our tables and yet remain so invisible to us."

The local awareness-raising effort is being organized by diocesan Catholic Charities in conjunction with the Public Policy Committee. Judy Taylor, Catholic Charities communications manager, said that Public Policy Sunday will become an annual event in diocesan parishes, falling on the second Sunday of each February with a different yearly theme.

As a prelude to the upcoming Public Policy Sunday, a video conference will be held Jan. 7 in several parts of the diocese, with experts discussing migrant farm workers' rights. Other planned actions include distribution of educational material as well as increased hospitality efforts toward migrants and immigrants by parishes.

— Mike Latona



Mike Crup/Catholic Courier

Holiday decorating

Corpus Christi School sixth-graders Annie Hudson (from left), Mayashani Rivera and Crystal Rivera prepare Nov. 25 to hang their holiday artwork on the walls of the Monroe Avenue branch of the Rochester Public Library.

Rochester Zoning Board asks for modifications in cathedral plans

The City of Rochester's Zoning Board of Appeals approved Dec. 2 five of the eight variances the Diocese of Rochester had requested with respect to renovation of Sacred Heart Cathedral. The board asked the diocese to modify aspects of its plans for a parking lot north of the cathedral and for an addition to the cathedral and rectory.

In order to meet city code, some modifications to those plans must be made, according to Kevin Marren, an architect with LaBella Associates, P.C., the architectural firm in charge of the renovation.

For example, Marren said, alternative designs must be resubmitted

for a proposed terrace in front of the cathedral and for the north wall of the rectory addition.

The board also asked for an alternative method of screening from public view a proposed ground-mounted electronic transformer. Marren said the transformer will be relocated and additional landscaping will be added to comply with the board's requests.

During the meeting, David Ahl, a neighbor of the cathedral, spoke of his concerns regarding the size of the proposed terrace as well as other planned features of the cathedral.

"I'm not telling you to tell the (diocese) not to do this," Ahl told the

board. "I'm telling you to tell the applicant to do it better."

Marren said modifications to the plans should be able to be made to the Zoning Board's satisfaction.

"I think we're progressing, and we're going to accommodate the Zoning Board's concerns," he said.

Doug Mandelaro, diocesan spokesman, said the diocese was pleased with the board's rulings, and

considers them a "vote of confidence for the overall concept." The modifications called for by the board won't impede the progress of the cathedral's renovation, he noted.

He added that the diocese is currently engaging local artisans to design the cathedral's liturgical furnishings, and hopes to reopen the cathedral by late fall of 2004.

— Rob Cullivan

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