

**PLEDGE CASE TO BE HEARD MARCH 24**

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As the Supreme Court on March 24 considers the constitutionality of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, justices first must settle whether the parent who sued had the right to do so.

The case of *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow* was begun in 1997 by California parent Dr. Michael Newdow, an atheist who objected to his then-5-year-old daughter's exposure to the phrase "one nation under God" in the Pledge.

Newdow and the girl's mother, Sandra L. Banning, never married and she has always held primary custody. Banning said as custodial parent it is up to her alone to act as her legal representative.

**S. DAKOTA SENATE KILLS ABORTION BAN**

PIERRE, S.D. (CNS) — The South Dakota Senate, by one vote March 15, killed a measure that would have made abortion illegal in the state in most cases.

It had earlier voted 18-15 in favor of a similar bill, but Gov. M. Michael Rounds had vetoed it and suggested language changes aimed at keeping existing state restrictions on abortion in force had the proposed law been found unconstitutional.

The South Dakota House had overwhelmingly agreed with Rounds' language changes by a 52-16 vote March 15. But the Senate defeated the revised version 18-17 March 15 was the last day of the seven-week legislative session in South Dakota, which effectively kills the bill for the year.

**THIS WEEK'S READINGS**

Sun., Mar. 28: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalms 126:1-6; Philippians 3:8-12; John 8:1-11

Mon., Mar. 29: Daniel 13:1-9; 15:17-19; 30:32-62 or 13:41C-62; Psalms 23:1-6; John 8:12-20

Tue., Mar. 30: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalms 102:2-3, 16-21; John 8:21-30

Wed., Mar. 31: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; (Ps) Daniel 3:52-56; John 8:31-42

Thu., Apr. 1: Genesis 17:3-9; Psalms 105:4-9; John 8:51-59

Fri., Apr. 2: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalms 18:2-7; John 10:31-42

Sat., Apr. 3: Ezekiel 37:21-28; (Ps) Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-56

# Bishop praises planners

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

KEUKA PARK — "A Future with Hope" was the theme of this year's Pastoral Planning Leaders Day, as well as the keynote "State of the Diocese" Bishop Matthew H. Clark delivered during the March 20 event at Keuka College.

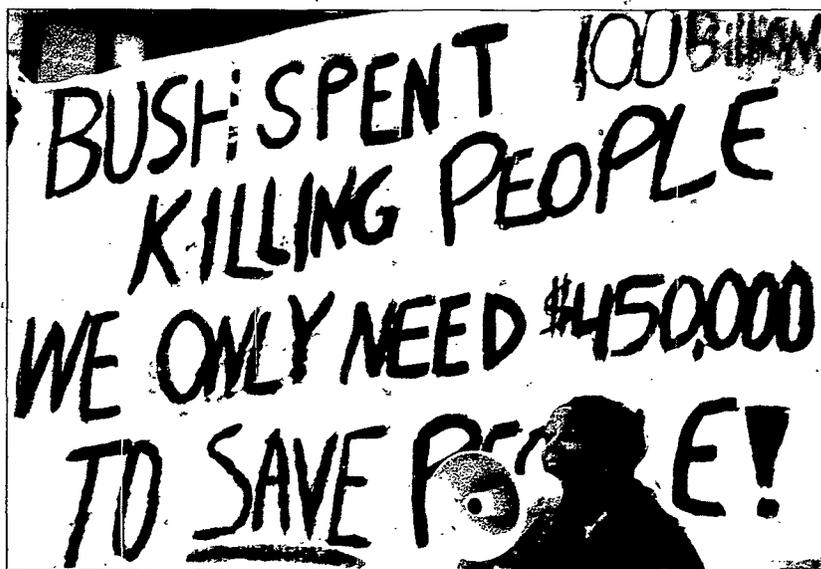
In his address, Bishop Clark urged parish representatives in attendance not to fear challenges, obstacles or change. Instead, he said, they should be filled with faith because what they have done for God and the church has borne much fruit and will continue to do so.

"I have always believed that one of my most important roles as bishop is to serve as a harnesser of visions, a conduit through which the energy and ideas of the laity and the clergy working together coalesce and move us to the core of our mission — to proclaim the Gospel and to share the treasure of a good and generous God," Bishop Clark said.

The bishop praised laity and the clergy of the Diocese of Rochester for rising to challenges and working well together, citing the pastoral-planning process as an example. He recalled the trepidation with which many moved into the process, the fears smaller parishes had about losing their identities and the questions larger parishes had about how best to share their resources. Now, however, no parish is seen as an island, and the definition of parish community has been expanded as neighboring communities work together to face their challenges, he said.

"Today, we are sharing resources, both human and financial, in new ways. And I dare say that we have moved from trepidation to hope and even excitement at what we have been able to accomplish and what we will accomplish," Bishop Clark said.

He cited the success of the diocesan Partners in Faith capital campaign as another sign of hope and success. The campaign has raised more than \$55 million, he said, surpassing its goal of \$50 million despite a troubled economy and the national clergy sex-abuse scandal. The campaign has already benefited the diocese by funding renovations to Sacred Heart Cathedral and



Eric Sucar/Catholic Courier

## Protesting Iraq war

Deborah Lovett-Chapman speaks to a crowd of about 75 people in downtown Rochester March 19, the one-year anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, during a rally and march to protest the war and promote the funding of social programs in the U.S.

the new Pittsford campus of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, which is especially important because lay ministry is needed and utilized now more than ever before, he said.

"The vast increase in lay ecclesial ministry in itself is much cause for joy. ... I don't believe that this increased involvement is a filling of any gap left by a decrease in the number of priests, but truly the realization of the vision and dream of Vatican II that just such a movement would occur," he said.

Bishop Clark also pointed to the growing number of youth ministers and involvement in youth ministry as another sign of hope for the future. Yet he noted the diocese still has challenges to be faced and obstacles to be overcome. Although the Diocese of Rochester is home to approximately 340,000 people who identify themselves as Catholics, average Mass attendance is only 100,000 per weekend, he said.

This low level of participation indicates the diocese must emphasize creating a hunger for Christ among more people and making liturgies and celebrations as inviting, exciting and relevant to people's lives as possible, Bishop Clark said. Bridging the generation gap will be an important part of this effort, he added, noting that teenagers and young adults must feel not only welcome, but essential and engaged in their parish communities. He said Catholics also must fight racism and "class-ism" that exists even in the church, and make clear that

whatever happens to the least of God's people happens to all.

Lee Skerrett, pastoral associate at St. Mary's of the Lake Parish in Ontario, said she shared Bishop Clark's hopefulness about the future of the church.

"We as people in the church have to make sure that this church will go on," she said. "It may be changed and it may be different, but that's OK. It will go on, and that's because the people will take ownership."

Donna Sciortino, a member of the parish pastoral council at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Greece, said she was surprised by the contrast between the number of baptized Catholics in the diocese and the number who attend weekly Mass. Bringing back those who do not regularly attend should involve every one at the parish and diocesan levels, so those who don't come to Mass will "see that the church has something to offer today that it didn't yesterday," she said.

After Bishop Clark's address, each participant attended one of 10 workshops offered on such topics as the skills of collaboration; discerning and deploying people's gifts; educating and communicating coming changes; and forming a new pastoral council for a cluster or merged parish.

One workshop addressed the essential elements of Catholic identity that must be safeguarded or imagined in new ways, and another examined the church's legacy and the kind of church the next generation will grow up in.