

Victory for Women and Unborn Children in 2015!

On October 21, 2015, Governor Cuomo signed into law several bills that were included in the original Women's Equality Act, EXCEPT for the abortion expansion bill, which will NOT become law! Last February, diocesan parishes gathered 10,362 signatures asking the New York State Assembly to pass the life-affirming provisions of the WEA that the New York State Senate had passed in January. While it took until the very end of the legislative session in late June, they did what we asked! NYS now has laws that further protect survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, that outlaw sexual harassment in all workplaces, and that require pay equity as well as greater fairness in the work place for pregnant women and parents. Your advocacy has defended the dignity of women and saved the lives of pre-born children. Learn more and sign up for the Catholic Action Network at <http://www.nyscatholic.org/>

DIOCESAN PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE (DPPC)

Bishop Salvatore Matano appoints the Public Policy Committee to assist him in determining diocesan public policy priorities and to develop an implementation plan.

Chairperson: Rev. Brian Cool Catholic Newman Community at U.R.

Committee Members: Jack Balinsky Diocesan Director, Catholic Charities
Dick Bierl Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick, Tioga County
Carolann Darling Immaculate Conception, Ithaca
Ann Marie Deutsch Catholic Schools
Marcus John Ebenhoe Cathedral Community
Mark Keller St. Kateri, Irondequoit
Judith Kiehl Pax Christi
Sister Janet Korn, RSM Sisters of Mercy
Doug Mandelaro Diocesan Communications Director
Dcn. Tom Ruda Schuyler Catholic Community
Lynette Saenz Diocesan Parish and Clergy Services
Ellen Durrigan Santora St. Paul, Webster
Jessica Shanahan St. Thomas More, Birghton
Mary M. Smith St. Boniface, Rochester
Suzanne Stack Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator
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ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER



2016 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In his most recent encyclical, *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, our Holy Father, Pope Francis writes: "It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected" (138) and that we must diligently work together to positively shape the future.

This year's Diocesan Public Policy agenda brings three interconnected issues to our attention: the teaching contained in *Laudato Si'*; education and advocacy about Physician Assisted Suicide; and education about Children and Families in Poverty. Each of these issues is connected because they are rooted in our common understanding of the dignity of the human person, given to us by God.

Pope Francis' encyclical speaks to "every person living on this planet" and calls all nations to care for God's creation, noting that these concerns have an immense effect on the poor.

Similarly, the dignity of human life in its end stages is not just a Catholic issue, it is a human rights issue. In concert with physicians, nurses, pharmacists, other healthcare professionals and disability communities, the Catholic Church defends Life, supporting the further exploration of health care measures that will alleviate suffering, so that the terminally ill might know and feel the love, concern, compassion and care of a society that protects them and cherishes them, easing the greatest pain, that which attacks the heart when people feel no one cares!

The most positive response to poverty is to find gainful employment. Assisting low-income families with affordable, quality child care is a proven strategy which helps the parents to maintain their employment and to assist them in raising and educating their children.

As sons and daughters of God, we are called to be faithful citizens. I encourage you to learn more about these issues which are at the heart of the struggle of the human condition. Please support the Diocesan Public Policy Committee's educational and advocacy efforts to ensure that those who need our prayers and assistance will "have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10).

Rejoicing in God's gift of life and His creation which is the home of life, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Salvatore R. Matano

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester



EDUCATION PRIORITY

LAUDATO SI'

"The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now."

Laudato Si' (161)

In his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls all people to work towards a solution to care for creation. The developed world especially bears a serious responsibility for solving the problem.

The urgency of the environmental crisis calls us to refocus our relationship with each other and all of God's creation. As Pope Francis reminds us, because they are so interrelated, we can no longer prioritize environmental concerns and care for the poor separately. "Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." *Laudato Si' (139)*

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee will continue to work with parishes to help them integrate care for creation, our common home, into parish life and provide resources for parish education. Specific suggestions include holding encyclical discussion groups, implementing a "care of creation committee" and setting an example of sustainability within the life of the parish.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

"Allowing physicians to participate in assisted suicide would cause more harm than good. Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks."

2011 Code of Medical Ethics of the American Medical Association

Far from compassionately reaching out to people at their time of greatest vulnerability, Physician Assisted Suicide would risk inviting to the bedside of the sick those who are primarily concerned with cost, not compassion.

Moved by the example of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and our sincere concern for our brothers and sisters, especially those in the most vulnerable stages of life, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester renews its commitment to promote the inherent dignity of and care for every human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.

The Consistent Life Ethic supports the dignity of all human life from the moment of conception to natural death. Physician assisted suicide is NOT natural death as it allows a terminally ill patient to get a prescription for a lethal dose of medication to end his or her life. California recently became the fourth state to allow physician assisted suicide and New York is now being targeted to be the next state to allow this. Bills allowing physician assisted suicide have been introduced in both the NYS Assembly and Senate.

The USCCB 2015-16 Respect Life Program, Every Life is Worth Living, has several resources on this issue. The NYS Catholic Conference provides a website at <http://www.catholicendoflife.org/>. Efforts are underway to educate Catholics on end of life issues to help plan for natural death and to oppose this legislation.

DIOCESAN-WIDE PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY

PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 6 & 7, 2016

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN POVERTY SUPPORTING QUALITY CHILD CARE

In the counties of our Diocese the poverty rate for children ranges from 15–28%. Helping low-income working parents afford quality child care is a proven way to move children and families out of poverty.

Low income working parents who receive child care subsidies and choose quality care:

- Are less likely to miss work days.
- Have a more stable income.
- Are less stressed at home and work.
- Are better equipped to work themselves out of poverty.
- Have reduced need for public services and assistance.
- Raise children who are healthier and better prepared to succeed in school and life.

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee (DPPC) petition in February will ask legislators in Albany to make this a high priority in the 2016-2017



NY State budget by increasing funding for quality child care for low income working parents. Educational materials and data on each county are found on the DOR website and by contacting your regional Justice and Peace staff person listed on this brochure.



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on legislative issues!
Join the Catholic Action Network
at www.nyscatholic.org

ONGOING ISSUES

The Public Policy Committee continues to follow and support other important justice issues including the Education Tax Credit, war and non-violence, federal immigration reform, the New York State Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act, and access to mental health care.