

DIOCESAN PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Bishop Matthew H. Clark 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:

John Boroski	Transfiguration Parish, Pittsford
Rev. Brian Carpenter	Peace of Christ Parish
Cecilia Colosi	St. Mary's, Canandaigua
Ann Marie Deutsch	Catholic Schools
Dcn. Larry Feasel	Criminal Justice
Linda Finlay	St. Catherine's, Ithaca
Janet Korn, RSM	Parish Support Ministries
Doug Mandelaro	Diocesan Communications Director
Edward Nowak	Criminal Justice
Karen Nowlan	Transfiguration Parish, Pittsford
Gerry Oftedahl	Adult Stem Cell Initiative, Inc.
Peggy Ruscio	St. Januarius Parish, Naples
Jessica Shanahan	Parish Representative
Mary M. Smith	St. Boniface, Rochester
Allynn Smith	Bishop Sheen Housing
Phyllis Tierney, SSJ	Sisters of St. Joseph

Staff:

Jack Balinsky	Diocesan Director
Jann K. Armantrout	Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator
Kathleen Dubel	Catholic Charities, Southern Tier
Brigit Hurley	CFC, Monroe, CC Livingston County
Marvin Mich	Catholic Family Center
Ruth Marchetti	CC Finger Lakes, CC Wayne

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<http://www.dor.org/charities/dioprograms/publicpolicy.htm>

For additional information or support, contact your regional justice and peace coordinator:

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Kathy Dubel 607-734-9784 ext. 2135

Monroe County

Marvin Mich 585-546-7220 ext.7021

Monroe and Livingston

Brigit Hurley 585-546-7220 ext.7099

Ontario/Seneca/Yates/Cayuga/Wayne

Ruth Putnam Marchetti 585-328-3228 ext. 1366

Steuben County

Lynda Lowin 607-776-8085 ext. 217

Tompkins County

Laurie Konwinski 607-272-5062 ext. 12

We made a difference in 2011!

In 2011, parishes throughout the Diocese of Rochester asked the Governor, the Assembly, and the Senate to give priority to programs that preserve and promote employment, with special attention to subsidies for child care and transportation for low-income workers.

We collected 8,273 signatures on the petition.

- \$7.2 million dollars was restored for Employment and Training programs.
- \$3,395,000 was restored for Child Care
- \$144,000 was restored for the Wheels for Work program.

Issues that remain high priority:

Reproductive Health Act: Both the Senate and the Assembly versions of The Reproductive Health Act would radically liberalize New York's abortion law. The resources of the NYSCC will be utilized when legislative action is taken on this bill.

Immigration and Farmworker Issues: We join with the U.S. Catholic Bishops in a call for just and humane Comprehensive Immigration Reform. We join with the NYS Catholic Conference in calling for The inclusion of farm laborers in the labor rights enjoyed by all other groups.

Energy Issues and Climate Change: Scientific findings document that the earth's climate is being dangerously altered and that human activity is the likely cause. Deep-water oil drilling, hydraulic fracturing for gas, mountain-top removal and underground mining for coal all pose hazards to the human community and the environment.

Peace: Human dignity will be best served when individuals and nations seek peaceful resolutions to conflict with as much passion as is currently expended on violence.



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

2012 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This year's Public Policy issues—better access to mental health care, the plight of those caught up in sex trafficking and working for the common good as faithful citizens—bring to mind Jesus' parable of the last judgment: "...Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you? And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Mt 25:37-40)

Many of us have been touched by mental illness in some way, either through our own experience or that of a family member or friend. Indeed, one in four Americans experience mental illness at some point in their lives. Whether the diagnosis is mild depression or a more serious condition like schizophrenia, we have cause for hope. Because treatment relieves the suffering in most cases, leading to a full and active life again, it is most troubling to learn that many individuals in need of mental health care cannot access the services and care they desperately need. We have to pay attention.

People whose dignity has been stolen by sex traffickers often are among the world's poorest and sometimes are mere children who have been sold by their own parents. Truly these are the least of these of his brothers and sisters. Just as Jesus took on the suffering of those in need, so are we called to do the same. We have to pay attention.

Our faith obliges us to respond to the suffering of others. As the Body of Christ, we cannot ignore the growing wealth inequality in our country that enslaves the poor and impacts us all. As a faithful citizen, I ask you to join me in prayerful consideration of these important issues.

Your Brother in Christ,

† Matthew H. Clark, Bishop of Rochester

Education Priorities

Releasing Captives from Bondage: Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking encompasses crimes in which human beings are used for commercial sexual exploitation. It is induced by force, fraud and coercion. Women and men, children and adults are transported across state, national and international boundaries under false pretenses. Traffickers use physical violence and mental abuse to keep their victims in bondage for sexual exploitation. Within the United States, desire for sexual entertainment, prostitution and pornography fuels the demand for sex slaves.

The depth of this problem within the boundaries of the Diocese of Rochester will be examined. An educational program designed to increase awareness of this problem; examine ways that individuals and organizations may be complicit in the development in this modern day form of cruel slavery and offer advice on what can be done to eradicate the problem is offered.

Suggested resources including books and videos that will help parishes better understand this issue will be posted on the Diocesan Public Policy webpages.

For more information contact Jann Armantrout at (585) 328 3210 x 1304 or armantrout@dor.org

The Common Good: We are One in the Body of Christ

Consider these realities:

- Between 2002 and 2006, 75 percent of all income gains went to the top 1 percent, that is, to households making more than \$382,600 a year.
- The ratio between the highest paid CEO and the average paid worker was 42 to 1 in 1980. By 2005 it had jumped to 411 to 1.
- Economic inequality has grown steadily over 3 decades under both Republican and Democratic administrations and Congresses.
- As economic inequality increases, the quality of life of everyone, including the wealthy, is negatively impacted.
- The plight of the poor is worse in societies of extreme economic inequality.

The concentration of wealth also threatens our democratic institutions because it leads to excessive political power as well: "the problem is not how many yachts wealthy people buy, but how many senators."

The Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching remind us that we are responsible for creating a more just world. Do our decisions reflect our nature and our oneness in Christ? We invite all Catholics to reflect on this "big picture" issue and to explore how we can act in ways that strengthen the common good while we enhance our individual well-being at the same time. The bishops' document, *Faithful Citizenship*, will be utilized in this educational effort.

DIOCESAN-WIDE ~ PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY

PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND ~ FEBRUARY 11/12, 2012

In the Image of God: Access to Mental Health Care

"[The Church] . . . reminds the political community of its duty to recognize and celebrate the divine image in man with actions that support and serve all those who find themselves in a condition of serious mental illness. This is a task which science and faith, medicine and pastoral care, professional skills and a sense of solidarity must help to carry out through an investment of adequate human, scientific, and socio-economic resources . . ."

Pope John Paul II, Nov. 1996

Our faith is centered in the belief that each of us reflects the grace and goodness of God. Yet those among us suffering from mental illness are often denied the dignity due them.

In the coming year, our Diocesan Public Policy Committee is asking us to consider the challenges facing individuals as they live with depression, anxiety, and other mental and emotional disorders. In particular we are asked to consider the situation of young people. In many areas of our diocese, mental health treatment for children is scarce. Desperate parents are forced to travel long distances, sometimes out of state, to seek the care their children need.

There are approximately one million children in New York State with emotional, behavioral, or substance abuse disorders. Yet on average only 20% of children and adolescents with psychiatric disorders in the U.S. receive mental health treatment.

This shortage of mental health care providers for young people is a result of a variety of factors - a lower-than-average salary for child psychiatrists compared to other medical specialties, a persistent stigma associated with mental illness, low reimbursement rates, and disparities in funding for graduate students entering the field.

In our Diocesan Public Policy education and action this year, we will consider these issues closely and advocate for improved care for this very vulnerable population.

Timeline/Resources for Parish Action:

- A Parish Resource Packet will be Distributed in **August 2011**. It will include background information, suggestions for parish education, bulletin pieces and a resource list.
- An Advocacy Resource Packet will be distributed in **November 2011**. It will include information about the specific advocacy issue as well as a petition, homily helps, bulletin inserts, announcements and other resources for **February 11/12, 2012** Public Policy Weekend.