

All Catholics are encouraged to register with the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.nyscatholic.org to receive e-mail action alerts on all the issues of public policy addressed by the NYS Catholic Conference of Bishops.

2016 Petition on Child Care Subsidy

In 2016 we delivered 8,771 signatures to NY State leaders requesting an increase in child care subsidies for low-income working families. We were not successful in increasing the level of funding, but our advocacy work on this issue continues. We are in this struggle for the long-term.

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

Dcn. Nick Valvo Sacred Heart, Auburn

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

Sister Phyllis Tierney, SSJ Sisters of St. Joseph

Dcn. Nicholas Valvo Sacred Heart/St. Anne, Auburn

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ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER



2017 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our Diocesan Public Policy Committee (DPPC) asks that we again consider three issues: Physician Assisted Suicide, Children and Families in Poverty, and Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. As Pope Francis reminds us in his Encyclical Letter, life issues are related to our concern for the environment:

When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is interconnected (# 117).

Our elected leaders in Albany are discussing a bill to legalize Physician Assisted Suicide. On the first weekend in February we will have the opportunity to sign a petition expressing our concern about this legislation as a violation of the dignity of life. In concert with physicians, nurses, pharmacists, other healthcare professionals and disability communities, the Catholic Church defends life and supports the further exploration of health care measures that will alleviate suffering. Through such efforts people who are terminally ill will know and feel the compassion and care of a society that protects them and cherishes them, easing the greatest pain which is feeling they are a burden to others.

In responding to our neighbors who live in poverty, the Diocesan Public Policy Committee suggests that parishes collaborate with Catholic Charities leaders in their region or county to address a specific policy which is a burden spiritually and materially to poor people as they seek to improve their lives. Here we are emphasizing the principle of subsidiarity by starting at the local level.

In this presidential election year 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, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ.

+ Salvatore R. Matano

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester



EDUCATION PRIORITY

LAUDATO SI: ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

In 2015 Pope Francis released his Encyclical entitled, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*. In this Encyclical, he appeals to every person living on earth to engage in dialogue about how we are shaping the future of the earth. He calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of the challenges facing us and to join him in *embarking on a new path*.

The encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility. Pope Francis reminds us, “*We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems.*”

Responding to Pope Francis’ appeal, the Diocese of Rochester Public Policy Committee invites parishes to offer opportunities for study and dialogue about *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* to discern how we ourselves are shaping the future of the earth, and to take steps communally and individually to embark on a new path in response to the many challenges. Members of the Public Policy Committee and Catholic Charities Justice and Peace staff in your region are ready to assist, sharing ideas and resources.

LOCAL RESPONSES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN POVERTY

Poverty is a violation of the dignity of everyone who is affected by it. While we continue to respond to immediate needs of the poor we must also address the causes of poverty and seek long-term solutions.



In the past the DPPC has suggested diocesan-wide responses to address poverty. This year, we suggest that parishes turn their attention to the local level, that is, to addressing the aspects of poverty particular to each region or county of the Diocese.

We ask that parishes and Catholic Charities leaders deepen their collaboration with each other and engage with other groups as well to advocate for policy changes that will assist people in their communities to escape poverty.

For example, in Tompkins County the lack of affordable housing is an enormous challenge for low income people. The policy response to this issue might include advocating with local government officials for:

- increased funding for subsidized housing
- rent control or other legislation to reign in slum landlords
- stricter code enforcement

Local issues that have surfaced in other areas around the Diocese include: transportation in Tioga County and child care subsidies in Monroe County. Your Justice and Peace staff person listed on the back of this brochure will help coordinate the initiative in your county or region.

DIOCESAN-WIDE PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY

PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 4 & 5, 2017

PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

When we subjectively determine when life begins and ends, when it is viable or not, or when it is too burdensome to endure, we begin a path toward self-destruction. Life is no longer precious, but just another commodity in the business of living. Relativism becomes the absolute, and even the value of life itself is questioned.”

—Bishop Salvatore R. Matano, *Statement Regarding Physician Assisted Suicide, January 2016*

A bill is again being promoted in the New York State Legislature that would legalize physician-assisted suicide for patients diagnosed with a terminal illness (A.10059/S.7579). This proposal asks those in the medical profession, a vocation dedicated to the service of life, to assist in the termination of the very lives they have pledged to heal and to comfort at life’s most critical moments.

As Catholics, we believe that the lives of people who are gravely ill or facing death are no less valuable than others. The New York State Catholic Conference (NYSCC) has joined with those in the medical community, disability rights community, and other faith-based groups, issuing a statement asking us to advocate for the dignity of every human life and oppose this legislation that fails those at such a vulnerable stage of life.

We join the NYSCC in seeking “to maintain New York State’s current prohibition on assisted suicide while ensuring increased support, resources, palliative and hospice care, appropriate pain relief and treatment



for the terminally ill.” The bishops of New York go on to say in their issue brief of Nov. 5, 2015 that:

Lifting New York’s ban on assisted suicide would provide a deadly, unnecessary option to patients, many of whom legitimately fear pain, depression and abandonment. These persons can be significantly helped through pain relief, palliative care, the hospice environment and compassionate loving care.

Parishioners of the Diocese of Rochester will have the opportunity to add their voices by participating in Public Policy Weekend and making sure their legislators know they stand for the value of all human life at every stage, from the moment of conception until natural death.

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, child care subsidies for low-income working families, access to mental health care, and religious liberty conscience protection.**

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on legislative issues!

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at www.nyscatholic.org