

Workshop for Catholic clergy addresses pastoral challenges of AIDS in the U.S.

ORLANDO — In response to the challenges that members of the clergy face as they find a growing number of their parishioners living with or affected by HIV or AIDS, the Diocese of Orlando's Office of Family Life and Pastoral Care and its HIV & AIDS Ministry will conduct a workshop on HIV and AIDS aimed at an audience of Catholic priests and deacons throughout the United States.

The *Clergy Practicum on HIV and AIDS* will take place on Friday, May 1st, 2009 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm in the Courtroom of the Diocese of Orlando Chancery Office, 50 East Robinson Street, in downtown Orlando. The workshop is co-sponsored by the Florida Catholic AIDS Network (affiliated with the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops), the Archdiocese of Atlanta's Office of HIV and AIDS Ministry, and the Southeastern Conference of Catholic AIDS Ministers (SECCAM).

Presenters for this *Clergy Practicum on HIV and AIDS* will be Rev. Glenn Parker, CSsR, Vice Provincial Consultor of the Redemptorist Vice Province of Richmond, and member of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life Board of Consultants; Ms. Irene Miranda, director for the Office of HIV and AIDS Ministry, Archdiocese of Atlanta; Sr. Rachel Sena, OP, director for the Maya Ministry Pastoral Office, Diocese of Palm Beach; Mrs. Beryl Andrade, director for the Office of Family Life & Pastoral Care, Diocese of Orlando; and Mrs. Donna D'Ambrosio, pastoral Care Manager for the Office of Family Life and Pastoral Care, Diocese of Orlando.

Pope Benedict XVI recently commented about the role of the Church in the battle against HIV/AIDS: "It is my belief that the most effective presence on the front in the battle against HIV/AIDS is in fact the Catholic Church and her institutions. ... The problem of HIV/AIDS cannot be overcome with mere slogans. The solution can only come through a twofold commitment: firstly, the humanization of sexuality, in other words a spiritual and human renewal bringing a new way of behaving towards one another; and secondly, true friendship, above all with the suffering, a readiness - even through personal sacrifice - to stand by those who suffer."

The myth that the AIDS epidemic in the United States is under control has exacerbated the crisis. The South, in particular, now accounts for the highest number of new infections, the largest number of people living with AIDS, and the greatest number of AIDS-related deaths. In Florida, the rate of new HIV infections has soared to more than 60 percent above the national average, according to recent data from the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that more than 50,000 new HIV infections occur every year in the U.S. and that 25 percent of those living with HIV in the country are unaware they carry the virus. AIDS shows no preference for any particular group or community; it affects the young and the old, male and female, rich and poor, black, white, Latino and Asian.

The *Clergy Practicum on HIV and AIDS* is free and includes continental breakfast and lunch; participants are responsible for their travel and lodging arrangements. To register and to obtain more information about this opportunity for continued education and about special offers in area hotels for members of the clergy who will participate in this workshop, please contact Donna D'Ambrosio at 407.246.4883 or by email at ddambrosio@orlandodiocese.org.