

# Human Rights Day, Dec. 10



By Patricia Boyce

Here is a typical day in the life of a regular guy named Frank — an average, middle class Rochesterian. Only one thing makes his story strangely sad: if Frank lived in places other than the United States, he could have been arrested and tortured for committing any one of nine offenses in this one day. Read his story and see if you can spot his "crimes."

Frank works at Xerox on the 3-11 p.m. shift. Being also a permanent deacon, he goes to daily Mass at 9 a.m. He then spends a few mornings each week helping out at the Catholic Worker house. Since today is Thursday, Frank meets with his writing instructor from the continuing education program at the high school. Frank's talent is clearly seen in the short stories and poems he wrote on U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and his sometimes difficult adjustments as a veteran. Some works have been published in magazines, and Frank hopes eventually to pursue a writing career.

At Xerox, Frank tends to his job and also spends time campaigning for the union elections. He's busy talking to people and voicing his views on union policies and worker benefits. In one conversation, some friends invite Frank and his brother Earl out for a beer after work. They know there will be lively discussion when the two get together. Earl's politics often get Frank going.

And no one at the bar is disappointed! Earl starts off with

denunciations of the nuclear freeze advocates and gets up on his right-wing soapbox.

Frank counters from his corner — and the debate is on. A few interested bystanders join in and the crowd loudly attempts to solve the nation's problems over beer and pretzels.

The talk continues as the debaters pour into the parking lot. Frank and Earl arrange for their families to get together on Sunday, and Earl drops some brochures in Frank's car. Frank sighs. Earl is always giving him right-wing organizational literature.

Frank is home by 12:30 a.m., lets himself in, and makes a cup of coffee. In the quiet of the night, he reads the newspaper. Concerned with the president's views on nuclear weapons (Frank is chairman of a nuclear freeze task force at his parish), he quickly writes a letter to the editor, addresses the envelope, and sticks it in the mail box for the postman. After locking the door and checking the windows, Frank visits his sleeping children for a goodnight blessing and goes to bed.

Frank is lucky. His home won't be raided that night by secret police squads. He won't be dragged away, held incommunicado detention and tortured. But he could have been. He could have been.

There is nothing extraordinary about this day. What our fictitious character did was simply to exercise many rights and freedoms that we all too often take for granted.

As Human Rights Day is Dec. 10, it seems appropriate to reflect on these freedoms — freedom of thought, of expression, of religion, of peaceful assembly — and the many others that we enjoy and that are denied to so many people in other parts of the world.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens with the statement: "... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." This historic document was adopted by the General Assembly in the U.N. Dec. 10, 1948.

The declaration is based, in part, on the U.S. Bill of Rights and its 30 articles cover a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Unfortunately, these human rights and freedoms are not put into practice in many countries.

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile." (Article 9)

In Argentina, Dr. Marcelo Dupont was abducted by what may have been government security forces as he was leaving the hospital where he worked on 9/30/82. His brother had recently testified at a trial of a former military junta member, and Dr. Dupont's arrest was seen as a way to intimidate the other witnesses. On 10/9/82, Dr. Dupont was found murdered.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment." (Article 5)

John Pierce, a U.S. citizen, was detained in Peru two years ago by the Peruvian Investigative Police. He was severely tortured, suspended by his thumbs and threatened with death.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression ... and to impart ideas through any media ..." (Article 19)

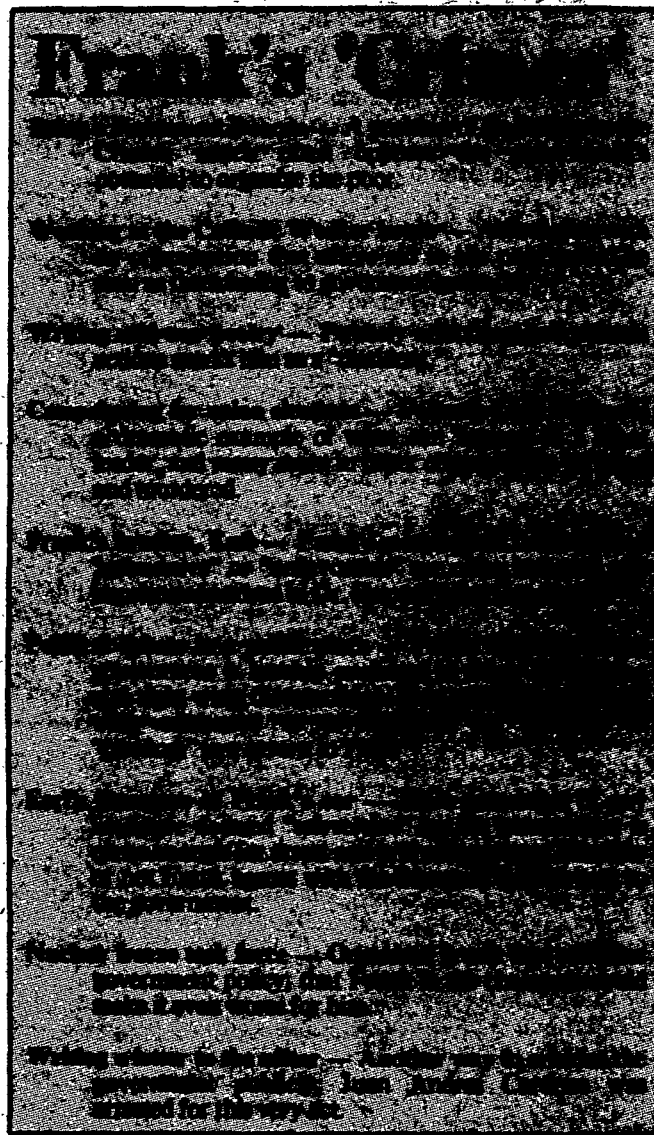
In Paraguay, Juan Andres Cardozo was arrested 2/25/81. He and other journalists had publicly criticized the government for the forced moving of 700 Tobo Maskoy Indians (men, women and children) from their homes to an arid part of the Chaco plain in Western Paraguay. The move was described by many as "genocide." Cardozo is held in incommunicado detention, and his location is not known. There are concerns that he may be tortured.

The above examples are actual cases from the resources of Amnesty International, a worldwide organization striving for the protection of human rights.

AI's yearly report documents thousands of human rights violations in more than 100 countries around the world. These three are only three drops in the well of human misery and abuse whose cries reach out to us.

The International Justice and Peace Commission's Human Rights Task Force works to spread an awareness of Amnesty International and the protection of human rights. Its goal is to involve parish groups in the Inter-Religious Urgent Action Network, a system of monthly letter-writing sessions for prisoners who face torture, who need medical help. More information is available by contacting the commission, 750 W. Main St., Rochester, N.Y. 14611; (716) 328-6400.

(Mrs. Boyce is a member of the Human Rights Task Force of the diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission.)



## Sisters of Mercy To Mark Closing Of Jubilee Year

The Sisters of Mercy will close their Year of Jubilee with a day of prayer and reflection on Sunday, Dec. 12, at the motherhouse.

This past year the congregation celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding by Catherine McAuley in Ireland, and the 125th anniversary of its foundation in the diocese.

Theme for the day will be "Deepening and Extending Mercy in the 1980s." Also scheduled during the day will be the formal installation of the recently elected Chapter 1983 delegates.

They are: Sisters Mary Ann Binsack, Mollie Brown, Anne Curtis, Jacqueline DeMars, Barbara DiFiore, Diane Marie Erskine, M. Bryan Ford, M. Bonaventure Hall, Jane Hasbrouck, M. Judith Heberle, Jane Kenrick, Kathleen Ann Kolb, Joanne Lappetito, Anne Marie Lennon, Margaret Mary

Mattie, Joan McAteer, M. Perpetua McHale, M. Rene McNiff, Ann Miller, Barbara Moore, Gaye Lynn Moorhead, Patricia Norton, Miriam Nugent, Katherine Ann Rapp, M. Dominic Reichart, Jacquelyn Reichart, M. Nathanael Seitz, Mary Sullivan, Joseph Mary Switzer, and Janet Wahl.

Alternates are Sisters Mary Kruckow, Jane Schur, Virginia Taylor, Virginia Wilson and Mary Wintish.

Members of the Executive Council are automatically members of the Chapter and will also be installed. They are Sister Jean Marie Kears, superior general, and Sisters Marie Joseph Crowley, M. Noreen Graney, Janet Korn and Nancy Whitley.

Held every four years, a Chapter of Affairs is a time when a religious congregation examines itself and its direction for the sake of its own renewal and the mission of the whole Church.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

### Turn The Sword Inward

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 3:10-18, (R1) Zeph. 3:14-18, (R2) Phil. 6:4-7.

In the old Church calendar, next Sunday was called "Gaudete Sunday" (Sunday of joy). The overall theme of joy still pervades the readings.

In the gospel crowds come to John and ask, "What ought we to do?" Among the crowds were soldiers. They likewise asked him, "What about us?" He told them, "Don't bully anyone. Denounce no one falsely. Be content with your pay."

John did not say, "Lay down your arms. Stop soldiering." He simply said,

"Be good soldiers. Don't misuse your power."

Today, I see and hear things about our military and our military might that greatly disturbs me. I am disturbed because the very idea of providing for the common defense of our nation is being branded as immoral. There seems to be a wave of excessive fear being generated, about nuclear war and nuclear holocaust. People are talking about apocalyptic times. Apocalypse Now!

In his opening address to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII said: "I must disagree with those prophets of gloom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand." To that I say, "Amen."

I believe our modern day "prophets of gloom and

doom" are false prophets. False, because the gospel is good news: "Shout for joy ... sing joyfully ... be glad ... exult ... fear not ... be not discouraged ... rejoice ... sing joyfully." (R1)

False, because there is danger of misleading people, of confusing them, of causing them to get out of focus, to misplace their emphasis on the wrong things. As long as Peter kept his focus on Christ, he did the impossible — he walked on water. But when he focused on the winds and the waves, he began to sink!

The problem today, as always, is never things, but people. The evils in our modern society are not in technology nor in armaments of destruction, but in people. Neither John nor Christ attacked Roman military might, but they both attacked sin and evil. Both called for a change of ways (metanoia).

Ban the bomb? Ban sin! Ban abortion! Ban drugs! Ban drunkenness! Ban pornography! Ban playboy philosophy. I don't necessarily mean by law. I mean ban these things in our personal lives.

Instead of letting the fear of nuclear holocaust cause us to be so naive as to turn on nuclear weaponry as the means to peace, let fear cause us to turn on ourselves. Turn the sword inward on ourselves, not outward against things. The outward thrust is easy. A euphoric feeling stemming from condemning things outside ourselves will change nothing. It may make me feel good, but it neither changes me necessarily nor brings peace. That was the Christmas message of the angels.

This is no time for despair. This is a time to re-evaluate our lifestyles in the light of the gospel. This is the time to ask ourselves such questions as: "Am I a good father? A good mother? A good youth? A good child? A good priest? A good religious? A good politician" and so on and on.

If we strive to be what God meant each of us to be, if each would do as John advised (R3), then we can lift up our heads for our redemption will be at hand. Instead of gloom, there will be joy, instead of despair, there will be hope!