

# Elmira Food Bank Shares Sense of Mission

By John Dash

Elmira — March 1 was a good day for Walt Kronicz — not only was it freighted with impending Spring, it marked a break in the usual routine.

Kronicz' routine, if it can be considered such, is to manage a food source which distributes more than 125,000 pounds of free food each month for the poor in the Southern Tier and beyond.

Kronicz is the coordinator of the Southern Tier Community Food Bank, an operation of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministries. The bank is the hub for food programs of eight New York State counties and four counties in Pennsylvania.

On the first of each month, Kronicz gets to make a detailed inventory of his stock and ready his storage areas for the arrival of trailer truck-loads of donated foods. A day for paperwork: the sort of duty the former accountant,

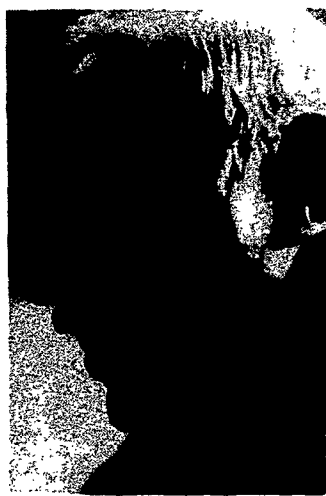
labor relations expert and corporate officer tackles best.

In his miniscule office on Sheridan Avenue, tucked behind the ranks of Canny's trucking rigs, Kronicz oversees the work of staffer Sandy Maxwell and a number of volunteers.

Through that office, agencies, nutrition programs and food cupboards across the area are serving 32,000 meals a month.

Kronicz explained that the two-year-old operation owes its existence, in large measure, to Father Neil Miller, director of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, and in particular to Sister Rosaria Hughes, RSM, who wrote the proposal which established the bank and garnered the initial funding.

In January 1981, the first month of the bank's operation, 25,000 pounds of food were distributed among 63 agencies in five counties.



FATHER MILLER

Today 106 agencies (serving 67 on-site feeding programs, 62 food cupboards and 2 brown-bag programs) draw their stock from the bank.

Father Neil Miller later said that in Elmira alone, unemployment is rising above 14 percent.

On a lighter note, the first of the month is the day when English muffins are available at the bank, and drawn by that knowledge, Sister Mary Garozzo journeys from St. Mary's of the Lake in Watkins Glen to the food cupboard at St. Mary's.

The petite Sister is a member of the Pontifical Institute of the Religious Teachers Filippini, MPF, their congregational initials from the Italian title of the institute.

St. Mary's is the Sisters' sole foundation in the diocese.

The Watkins Glen food cupboard started as a project of the area Ministerial Association, and now serves more than 100 families each month, she said.

"I want to emphasize that our food pantry could not operate without the food bank," she said.

## Oppy Award Presented At St. Joseph's

Elmira — Mrs. Sylvene Pratt, an employee of St. Joseph's Hospital who, according to a hospital news release, "has become an outstanding after-work volunteer," was awarded the Oppy Award during ceremonies Monday, March 14.

According to the release, Mrs. Pratt was recognized "for those efforts that included caring and concern for her fellow employees, volunteers and patients."

Mrs. Pratt joined St. Joseph's Hospital in 1959 and was appointed as assistant housekeeper in 1962. She became active in the department of volunteer services in 1968 and has accumulated nearly 3,000 hours of additional volunteer time upon completion of her work day.

In 1973, Mrs. Pratt transferred from housekeeping to assistant in the volunteer services area.

Through her hobbies, quilting specifically, she has contributed numerous handicrafts to the hospital auxiliary that have gone toward raising funds for hospital equipment.

Mrs. Pratt was presented a plaque, pin and words of congratulation from Sister Martha Gersbach, hospital administrator.



SISTER MARY

Although federal monies established the bank, as of July 1, 1982, the operation is funded by donations and contributions, allocations from county legislatures, churches (both Catholic and not) and private gifts, Kronicz said.

The lack of consistent large-scale funding has caused some new developments. Father Miller explained that the board of directors of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministries has established a task force to "plan for community awareness" on the problems of hunger in the area and the services of the food bank.

The task force ran an advertising campaign in the Southern Tier papers, a campaign which has so far netted three results: cash, volunteers, and yet more people who need food services, Father Miller said.

The food bank's major money outlay goes for transportation, Kronicz said.

And it is the cost of that transportation that frequently curtails the bank's services.

Kronicz has at hand records of instance after instance where thousands of pounds of food could not be accepted



KRONICZ

from donors because there were no funds to transport them to the food bank.

To help alleviate that situation, Kronicz said, Jack Lind, director of Corporate Physical Distribution at Corning Glass, is volunteering his services to the bank to devise a trucking network whereby foods could be brought to the bank at no cost or at a minimal cost such as \$1 a mile.

The formal statements and documents of the food bank make it clear that there exists another dimension above the charitable gathering and distribution food.

The bank's job is called a "mission," and is defined as helping to "eliminate the waste of edible food in the communities by encouraging the food industry to donate surplus products to help feed the area's poor and hungry. We carry out this mission

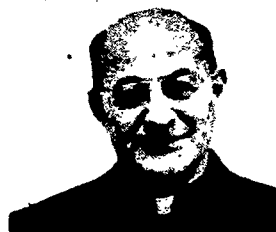
through direct solicitation of the local and area food industry and by encouraging local groups to communicate and solicit food from components of the more fortunate in their communities."

More than half of the bank's stock of food comes from processors donating through the Phoenix, Ariz.-based Second Harvest National Food Network, Kronicz said.

Last year, Kronicz said, Second Harvest moved more than 31 million pounds of food through the nation.

March 1 was also a good day to tote up accomplishments.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

## Suffering Servant

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 22:14-23:56. (R1) Is. 50:4-7. (R2) Phil. 2:5-11.

The first reading next Sunday is from the Suffering Servant poems. There are four of these poems, awkwardly inserted into the works of Second Isaiah. Sunday's reading is the third of these poems.

The Servant speaks of himself. In the words of Ezechiel and Jeremiah, he tells how he, though innocent, has suffered in fulfilling his mission. One of the enigmas to Jews was "Why do the innocent suffer?" The Servant answered this perplexing question by suggesting that suffering can be vicarious — "in expiation for others." The Servant suffers in this way; and, because he does, he knows God will exalt him. "I shall not be put to shame."

No doubt Jesus found in the Servant's teaching much strength to accept His passion and death. St. Luke tells the story of our Lord's passion from the viewpoint of God's love and mercy. Dante called Luke "the scribe of the gentleness of Christ" (scriba mansuetudinis Christi).

Consequently in the passion story, according to Luke, no one is blamed — Jew, Gentile, or disciples. Luke seems to reason, why blame anyone — the blood of Jesus takes away the sins of the world. Thus Luke omits the fact that the apostles slept three times and fled Gethsemane. Judas' betrayal is glossed over. Peter's swearing at his denial is not mentioned. Even the enemies of Jesus are depicted in less hostile terms. We are not told they spat on Jesus or bound him to bring Him to Pilate. Even the dreadful death on Calvary is

tempered by the fact that the friends of Jesus are there!

So in the glory of the great, pardon of the cross, practically everyone is absolved. Jesus heals the severed ear of an enemy. Peter repents of his betrayal. The thief is pardoned. The centurion is converted to believe that Jesus is innocent. Even Herod and Pilate are reconciled on Good Friday. All fruits of the cross!

The Pauline passage in the second reading was probably an early hymn to the emptying (kenosis) and glorification of Jesus. St. Paul used it to teach that our charity should have a self-renouncement like Jesus'. "Love one another." Jesus asked on the eve of His passion, "as I have loved you." And how is that? To the point of laying down one's life.

Loving with the love of Jesus means loving the other, in the full recognition of his otherness. All the difference in the world may exist between us and the other. No matter. Christian charity must cut across all the barriers which we are constantly building up between one another. It means embracing the suffering that rejection by the other will bring, the sentence of death for having loved!

But such love, because it is an emulation of Christ, will — like the love of the Suffering Servant and Jesus' love — be both victorious and productive.

In fine, love, suffering and death, in Christian terms, are intimately connected. Not that the Christian looks for suffering and death. If these come, above all if they are inflicted by the other, for the love of God and men, he will welcome them, as Jesus Himself did. And, like Jesus', these sufferings will be redemptive — "He saved others."

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