

# COURIER-JOURNAL



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

## Bringing Forth the Light

Sister Noreen Graney holds a flame symbolic of the light of Christ and the light of the Transfiguration, during the processional for the installation of Sister Jean Marie Kearse

as superior general of the Sisters of Mercy. For more on the August 6 installation ceremony at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, see Page 2.

## Proposed Homeless Shelter Pits Parish Against Politicians

By Teresa A. Parsons  
Neighborhood opposition to a community residence is seldom unexpected. But parishioners at Corpus Christi Church have been taken off guard by the nature of the objections that emerged last week against their plan to purchase property and a house at 283-285 Lyndhurst Street for a homeless shelter.

State Assemblyman David Gantt and County Legislator Ron Thomas are heading a group of Marketview Heights residents who say they object to the project because they believe the shelter would harm property values and the character of the neighborhood and because the community was not consulted.

Christine Garrison, who intends to live in the shelter along with her husband, Wayne, and their two daughters, said she is not sure which neighbors Gantt and Thomas represent. "We are the neighborhood, too," she said. "We have people from Lyndhurst Street coming to our programs, and our parish boundaries include part of the Marketview Heights neighborhood."

Parishioners at Corpus Christi Church have sheltered homeless people for the past three winters in the church basement and have served a daily meal for up to 14 people since 1980. The church also distributes food to families. These outreaches have flourished despite space and facilities that organizers say are inadequate to meet the extent of the needs they serve. All three would operate from the Lyndhurst address.

The shelter would house between five and

eight homeless people year round, Garrison said. The nightly supper program could expand to serve as many as 30 people.

Gantt and Thomas both live on Lyndhurst Street, and Gantt owns five other properties on the street. Both argue that the church should have informed the community of their plans sooner.

"We live there. We have a right to understand what's going on," Gantt said. "I can't understand why the church would bypass the process of community input ... We as poor people have rights too."

Church members thought they had more time to consult with the neighbors. "It was definitely on our agenda," Garrison said of the church's plans to inform people. "But from day to day we didn't know what was going to happen. Until we signed the purchase offer three weeks ago, we didn't feel we were at a point yet where there was anything definite to tell the neighbors about."

Thomas said he only heard of the project through the parish newsletter, which announced that a binding purchase offer had been signed, and described the ideas and plans church leaders had for the property. In addition to the homeless shelter, the newsletter described a proposed hospice.

"The parish newsletter is sent to everybody," said Irene Dymkar, the church's lawyer as well as a parishioner. "But it expresses the internal dreams of the church, of making the future come quicker."

"We all have the same concerns about the neighborhood. We're all on the same side,"

Dymkar added. "There have always been good relations with the neighbors before."

Opponents also argue that the program would draw people the neighborhood doesn't need. "We already have prostitutes and drug dealers, and now they want to push in all the drunks," Gantt said. He said that he has remained in the neighborhood in part to provide a positive role model, especially for young people. "I grew up poor, on welfare," he said. "I use my properties and upgrade them for the neighborhood."

Thomas also argued that the parents of children who play in the area would be uncomfortable about the backgrounds of people in Corpus Christi's shelter.

Both Thomas and Gantt admit they are concerned about the value of their own properties. "People have put a lot of time and effort into making that neighborhood something to be proud of," Thomas said, of the progress that's already been made.

Dymkar and Garrison point to the church-sponsored health center, daycare program, and the renovation of the Roger's House Restaurant as evidence that the church intends to have a positive impact on the area. "We can stand on our record of taking trouble spots and turning them around," Garrison said. Dymkar added that anyone who looked at 283-285 Lyndhurst would have a hard time imagining how it could be any worse.

"We don't need people from Corpus Christi to do something positive for the neighborhood," Gantt said. "We've done pretty well on our own."

The church wants to buy the three-story duplex at 283-285 Lyndhurst and five adjoining lots, including the building where Rogers Tour and Travel Agency is located, from three brothers, Thomas, Ralph and Nicholas Rogers, for \$172,000. The money for the purchase has already been raised from individual donors, not through parish collections, Garrison said. She believes an additional \$100,000 will be needed before the shelter can open.

But the sale has been held up by a conflict between the requirements of two city departments. Dymkar said that the city's real estate division required the Rogers brothers to improve three of the lots before they can officially receive titles for them. The improvements — landscaping and some additional parking — have been made. But last

Continued on Page 3

### Notice:

Due to an oversight in the pasteup of last week's Courier-Journal, no credit was given for the photograph of the mushroom cloud rising over Nagasaki, Japan, after the dropping of the second atomic bomb. The photo, which appeared on Page 1, was graciously furnished to us by the Bettmann Archive of New York City. We thank the archive staff for helping us to present last week's special edition and apologize for the omission.