

Masses commemorate anniversary of priest's kidnapping in Lebanon

By NC News Service

Family, friends, fellow priests and a former hostage attended Masses Jan. 8 to commemorate the first anniversary of the kidnapping of Servite Father Lawrence Martin Jenco.

The Rev. Benjamin Weir said at a Mass in Father Jenco's hometown of Joliet, Ill., that "I have come to love him as a brother in Christ," since the two were hostages together in Lebanon.

More than 30 members of Father Jenco's family attended the Mass at St. Bernard's, the priest's boyhood parish.

Mr. Weir is a Presbyterian minister who was kidnapped May 8, 1984, in Beirut and held hostage until Sept. 14, 1985. The Islamic Jihad has claimed it is holding the priest, who is CRS director in Beirut, and five other Americans until prisoners in Kuwait are released.

Mr. Weir said he first met Father Jenco July 2, 1985, when the two captives were brought to the same room. From then on they occasionally were able to meet and

worship together, Mr. Weir said.

He said he was thankful for the opportunity during the last part of his captivity to read and discuss scripture with the priest. The minister added that both he and Father Jenco could sense that God was giving them the inner peace they both so needed.

"I entrust him to God," concluded Mr. Weir. "He is working on behalf of Father Martin. He will fortify him through these events."

Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet, principal celebrant of the Mass, also urged the congregation to place their faith in God.

"When we come together as his people and ask for his help, he will not fail us," he said.

The Mass was celebrated by priests of the Joliet and Rockford, Ill., dioceses and by nine Servite priests.

Servite Father Mark Franceschini of Denver, homilist, called Father Jenco "a man of peace who speaks of healing of hurts, binding of wounds, forgiveness, reconciliation. He doesn't know any other way to live."

Convict executed despite Mother Teresa's plea

By John Conick

Columbia, S.C. (NC) — James Terry Roach died in the South Carolina electric chair Jan. 10 despite a plea for clemency from Mother Teresa to Gov. Richard Riley.

Roach, who knew of national and international efforts being made to the governor to halt the controversial execution, told a reporter Jan. 9 that he had never heard of Mother Teresa, founder of the Missionaries of Charity and winner of a Nobel Peace Prize.

He died for his involvement in a 1977 double homicide committed when he was 17 years old. Defense attorneys in their argument to spare his life said Roach was suffering from Huntington's Disease when he pleaded guilty to slaying two Columbia teen-agers.

The U.S. Supreme Court in a 7-2 vote the night before the execution refused to hear any further arguments to spare Roach's life.

A federal appeals court in Richmond, Va., Jan. 9 also refused to halt the execution. Lawyers for Roach had said they would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Roach became the second person to die for crimes committed while under 18 years of age since the United States resumed capital punishment in 1977. More than 30 people are on death row in various states for crimes committed while under 18.

Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler of Charleston, S.C., has backed state legislation to ban capital punishment for crimes by minors. In a Dec. 23 statement the bishop said that while the proposed legislation "would not keep minors from being tried as adults or sentenced to life imprisonment for murder, it

would prohibit the execution of adolescents."

At an interfaith prayer service before the execution, the Rev. William Bouknight, a United Methodist minister, said an "eye for an eye will lead us to an endless cycle of violence."

Msgr. Thomas R. Duffy, vicar general of the Diocese of Charleston, S.C., read a 1978 U.S. Catholic Conference Committee on Social Development and World Peace statement on "Community and Crime."

"The critical question for the Christian is how we can best foster respect for life, preserve the dignity of the human person and manifest the redemptive message of Christ," Msgr. Duffy said, reading from the statement. "In the sight of God, correction of the offender has to take preference over punishment for the Lord came to save and not condemn."

A year earlier Msgr. Duffy stayed with another South Carolina convict, Joseph Carl Shaw, during his hours of preparing to die in the same electric chair.

Roach and Shaw were accomplices in the crime of brutally murdering Tommy Taylor, 17, and Carlotta Hartness, 14.

A third accomplice, Ronald Eugene Mahaffey, who was younger than Roach, received a life sentence.

In his last statement Roach asked for forgiveness in a letter addressed to his family, death row inmates, "friends and enemies too."

"I'm going to a much better place without a heavy burden upon me. I pray that my fate will someday save another kid that ends up on the wrong side of the tracks."

Father Franceschini is the brother-in-law of Father Jenco's sister, Susan Franceschini.

At a Mass in New York, Servite Father members to respond to the kidnapping with courage and compassion rather than bitterness.

"It is hard not to be bitter, not to wish instant and severe retaliation against nations thought to be sympathetic to the terrorist cause," he said. "In short, it is easy under stress caused by frustration and prolonged powerlessness to take the un-Christian stance of seeking destruction to our enemies."

"But Martin had no enemies, none that I have ever been able to detect in the years I have known him. He tends to see people different from himself as potential friends, and should they prove to be enemies, they were to be prayed for and forgiven."

In addition to Father Charboneau, a priest of La Asuncion Church in Perth Amboy, N.J., two other Servites from La Asuncion participated in the service: Father Vidal Martinez and Father David Gallegos. A group of Servite sisters from Denville, N.J., also attended.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Edwin Broderick, CRS director at the time Father Jenco was kidnapped, and still a CRS board member.

Lawrence Pezzullo, the current director, and about 75 other staff members attended the Mass at the Church of St. John the Evangelist.

Beth Griffin, spokeswoman for CRS, said that in addition to the anniversary service,

Masses were celebrated for Father Jenco each Tuesday and Thursday.

Terry Waite, lay secretary to Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie, has sought to secure the release of Father Jenco and other hostages in Lebanon. On a visit to New York last fall, he held a press conference Nov. 25 and said he could give assurance that the hostages were "alive and well."

He was again in New York at the time of the anniversary Mass for Father Jenco, although he did not attend. A spokeswoman for the Episcopal Church said that he arrived Jan. 7 for "private meetings" that "presumably" related to the hostages. She said it was uncertain how long he would remain in New York.

Contributing to this story were Tracy Early in New York and Kim Kaveney in Joliet, Ill.

Winter Weekend For Adults

A midwinter weekend of sharing and relaxation is planned for adults who are separated, divorced, bereaved and remarried. Beginning at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 24, the weekend extends through 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26. Meals and lodging are covered by the \$45 fee.

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