

Filipino-Americans celebrate homeland's deliverance

By Karen M. Franz

A liturgy planned as a Mass of lamentation for the dead was transformed by the events of Tuesday, Feb. 25, into a joyous thanksgiving celebration for the Rochester Filipino-American community on Saturday, March 1.

Nearly 100 members of that community turned out at Murphy Chapel on the campus of St. John Fisher College to rejoice in the liberation of their homeland from the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and to pray for the re-establishment of democracy in the Philippines.

The scripture readings for this third Sunday of Lent were particularly fitting for the celebration, setting the tone of hope and faith in the Lord's deliverance:

God said ... "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:7-8)

In an emotional welcoming address, Dr. Rufino Pabico spoke of the "cascades of political events" that had placed the Philippines in the forefront of all media throughout the previous week.

"For all practical purposes, this could have been the Mass for the dead, perhaps prayers of lamentation," he said in a quavering voice. "But by Tuesday morning, it became very obvious that we would have a Mass of thanksgiving for the deliverance of the Philippines from the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos to the participatory democracy of Corazon Aquino."

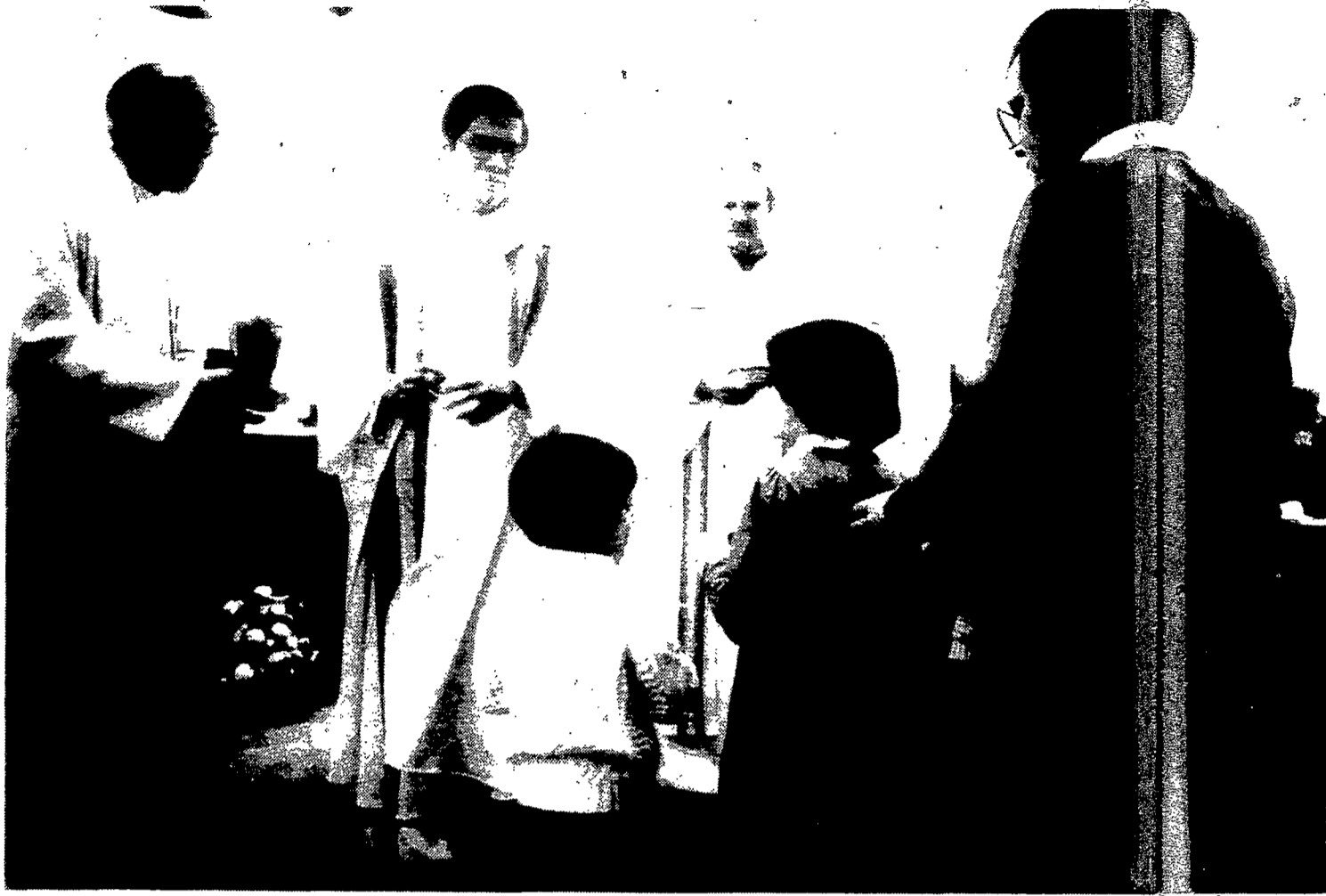
Pabico, president of the Filipino-American Association of Rochester, said credit for the as-yet bloodless transition belongs to a number of groups and individuals. First, he named the Filipino people themselves, for their "unfailing faith and unswerving belief that they would again have a democratic form of government." Secondly, he cited Mrs. Aquino, whom he said is not really the "simple housewife" she has been called. Aquino, Dr. Pabico said, is an extraordinary woman, a scholar and a courageous campaigner.

Pabico attributed much of the success of the Aquino campaign to the Catholic Church in the Philippines. "Under the archbishop of Managua, Cardinal Jaime Sin, it was unequivocally committed to maintaining what is just." He also commended those officials in the Marcos regime who defected to the Aquino camp early last week, saying they could no longer support President Marcos.

Finally, Pabico credited the U.S. government, including the Reagan administration and individual congressmen, for efforts to reach a non-violent solution to the struggle.

He closed his remarks by expressing the emotional ties the local community has to its countrymen in the Philippines and asserted that "It is indeed a great moment this evening to celebrate that we are once again a free nation."

The Mass was concelebrated by Fathers Joseph Trovato, CSB, chaplain at Fisher; Nilo Tanalaga, SJ, a native Filipino now in residence at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Rochester; and Douglas Kull, SJ, a professor at Boston College who had previously taught at a Jesuit school in the Philippines.



Jeff Gouling/Courier-Journal

Mindy Klose of Resurrection Parish in Fairport gets a little nudge from her father as she and her brothers, Tommy, left, and Larry (not visible) present the offertory gifts to fathers Joseph Trovato, Nilo Tanaloga, and Douglas Kull.



Singing a hymn are, from left, Ben Soriano, vice president of the Filipino-American Association of Rochester; Dr. Celia Ona, who organized the thanksgiving Mass; and Dr. Rufino Pabico, president of the association.



Ferdinand Tino, of St. Ambrose Parish, holds his daughter Rebecca, 6, during Mass.

In his homily, Father Tanalaga spoke of his experiences working among Filipinos who were squatters in their native land. He also spoke of the lessons to be learned from watching news reports of Filipinos fighting the regime of a powerful man, with food and flowers as their only weapons. The lesson to be learned, he said, is that "human attempts to be superhuman will be uncovered and can be overcome by our own humanness."

Epilepsy Benefit Set

The Epilepsy Association of Greater Rochester Inc. is planning a benefit on Tuesday, April 8 at 8 p.m. in the Eastman Theater. The Harry James Orchestra in concert with Helen Forrest will provide

musical entertainment under the direction of Joe Graves. Tickets are available at the E.A.G.R. Office & Ticketron. The cost is \$12.50 per person. Call (716)454-6890 for group rates.

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