

Fasters

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reported to be using wheelchairs to conserve their strength.

In addition to showing support of the veterans, the Rev. Gilbert said, the eight Rochester fasters aimed to urge people of the Rochester community to rise up and make the government aware of their views on aid to the contras. "Time is of the essence," he said.

Rabbi Miller concurred. "They've been on this fast for the past 37 days, so when they say they may die, they're not kidding."

Rabbi Miller likened the efforts of the Rochester fasters to the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) at the beginning of Jewish atonement services, in order to awaken the congregation to their sins. "American society is not just the government. It's you, it's me, it's everybody. We all have to repent," he said. "Someday, in some way, they (government officials) ultimately will have to be accountable to you, to me, and ultimately to God."

"I have been too quiescent," the rabbi continued. "Things have been done in our name ... that we would not normally allow to happen ... things that are morally repugnant."

Kathleen McTigue was quick to point to such reprehensible acts she said were being taken by the U.S.-supported contra forces. McTigue, who lived in a Nicaragua war zone for seven months, said that one of her friends, a 29-year-old Swiss agronomist, was brutally killed by "the so-called freedom fighters."

As the friend drove a truck transporting the mothers of Sandinista soldiers on their return from a visit to their sons, contras hand-detonated a land mine to stop the truck. Although the mothers screamed that they were not military personnel, the contras opened fire, killing all of the passengers and the agronomist, McTigue said.

McTigue claimed first-hand knowledge of contra terrorism. The inhabitants of the war zone in which she lived espoused a variety of political beliefs. "Many are openly anti-Sandinista, some pro-Sandinista, but all of them are terrified of the contras," she said, asserting that the contras rarely have skirmishes with Sandinista forces, confining their attacks primarily to civilian areas.

When a reporter asked why — in the face of such stories — the U.S. government calls the contras "freedom fighters," McTigue said that U.S. officials are, "for reasons of their own, deliberately ignoring this information."

In pointing out that the Reagan administration offers contradictory data as a rationale for its support of the contras, Isabel Morrison said, "the government lied about Vietnam; they're lying to us now."

"In Washington, people are talking about 'perception management,'" she said, referring to the U.S. government's characterization of the contras as soldiers for democracy and of the Sandinistas as communist repressors.

Yet, McTigue said, the issue in Nicaragua is not one of democracy vs. communism, but of self-determination. "Self-determination is democracy. Democracy cannot be imposed from outside; it must come from within," she said, noting that the Sandinistas were elected by the populace.

"The issue is not whether we like a government or not. The issue is whether we have the right to control the government of another society," Rabbi Miller agreed.

Citing other governments accused of repression, the Rev. Gilbert said, "We give aid to Pinochet (of Chile); Reagan refuses sanctions against South Africa. It's a totally inconsistent foreign policy."

For some members of the group, their inability to point out those inconsistencies to their elected representatives has become a sore point. To Sister Elizabeth Anne LeValley, the issue is one of U.S. citizens' access to government and their ability to influence government policy. "The govern-

ment has gone against polls results that show Americans don't want involvement in this war. Access has been taken away from the citizens," she said.

Group members noted that before undertaking the fast, they — like the four veterans — had attempted to lobby government, without success.

"For me, it is very hard to find that kind of access," Sister Elizabeth Anne said. Although she and other Sisters of St. Joseph were able to talk with representatives of Senators Alphonse D'Amato and Daniel Patrick Moynihan — albeit with limited lobbying success — Rep. Fred Eckert's office refused to schedule a meeting with the sisters.

Particularly in this year of the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, "it is important to question whether we are still a democracy," Sister Elizabeth Anne said.

Yet access is not the group's only objective. According to the Rev. Gilbert, the point at issue is "moving Horton and LaFalce not only to vote in opposition (to contra aid) but also to get them to engage in active lobbying" among their fellow congressmen.

"It is not only necessary to change the opinion of Congress," the minister said, "because the administration seems to find other ways to get the money to do what it wants to do." He said the American people should call for a full congressional investigation into U.S. overt and covert operations in Nicaragua.

The Rev. Gilbert noted that "the tide of history is in favor of human rights." Therefore, he said, the U.S. government should, if for merely pragmatic reasons, change its policy to one that would further the rights of people in the Third World. For example, he said "when a black government does take over in South Africa, they will have a long memory."

The group met again Friday, Oct. 10, to end the fast with a dinner at Temple B'rith Kodesh, and in a spirit of ecumenism, attended services at the temple. Group members will continue the fast, on a rotating basis, until the veterans' fast concludes. Each member of the group will fast once every eight days.

On Tuesday, Oct. 14, McTigue said that group members had sent joint letters to the veterans, all of their elected representatives as well as Sen. Richard Lugar and Rep. Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill. They are hoping to persuade Congress to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate U.S. government action in Nicaragua, based on information now coming forth as a result of the circumstances of the crash of a U.S. plane in that country.

In addition, they are planning to participate in a "Candlelight Witness" service in front of the Federal Building on Wednesday, October 29. McTigue said they hope the service will make voters aware of the situation in Nicaragua and of their representatives' stand on the issue before voters go to the polls in November.

Catechists to gather at regional congresses

Diocesan catechists are invited to three regional catechist congresses during the month of November.

On Saturday, November 8, St. Mary Our Mother Parish in Horseheads will host the Southern Tier gathering from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dr. Marie Murphy, a religious editor for William H. Sadlier, Inc., will be the keynote speaker. Her topic and the theme of the congress will be "And their eyes were opened..."

On the same day, Monroe and Livingston County catechists will gather at Guardian Angels School from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Father John Hayes, chaplain of the Dominican monastery in Elmira, will speak on "Praying: The Heart of our Ministry."

Sister Mary Ann Binsack, director of the

Office of Religious Education, will speak on "Sharing Our Ministry" at the Finger Lakes-area gathering, Saturday, November 15, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church in Auburn.

For information, or to register, contact: Finger Lakes region — Finger Lakes Office of Religious Education, 110 Exchange Street, Geneva, N.Y., 14456, (315)789-7611.

Southern Tier region — Southern Tier Office of Religious Education, 160 High St., Elmira, N.Y., 14901, (607)732-3862.

Genesee Valley region — Office of Religious Education, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, N.Y., 14624, (716)328-3210.

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Interested individuals send resumes to:

Rochester Catholic Diocese
 Attention: Martha G. Anciakaitis
 1150 Buffalo Road
 Rochester, New York 14624



IF YOU CAN'T GO — GIVE

THE HOLY FATHER'S MISSION AID TO THE EASTERN CHURCHES

October 19th is Mission Sunday — World Mission Day.

Christ asks all of us to be missionaries. He does not expect everyone to leave home and family and labor in His vineyards in foreign lands. You have work enough in your own neighborhood! But He does expect all of us to help spread His Gospel. You can answer His call in another way... through your gifts to Catholic Near East, the Holy Father's own mission to the Eastern Churches.

GO TEACH ALL NATIONS For just \$15 a month, you can train a native priest or a Sister, for \$15. For only \$15 a month, you can "adopt" a needy child. They'll send you their photos and write to you.

Churches, schools, clinics, rectories and convents, chapels and prayer huts are needed for our neighbors. You can build a special Memorial for someone you love. The true spirit is to give what you can, remembering that your gift will help our priests and sisters carry on their Christ-like service in the Near East.

A TASTY RECIPE Your Sunday dinner will seem tastier (and be more meaningful) if you share your blessings with the hungry families huddled in refugee camps of the Near East. Missioners must feed both body and soul of their people... you can help feed a refugee family for an entire month for \$20. (Can you feed your own family for a single meal with \$20?) Sacrifice for a family you may never meet except in prayer. To express our thanks, we'll send an olive wood rosary from the Holy Land. We need your prayers!

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