

Features

Rochester parish building dam, creating hope for Ethiopians

But see, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

Psalms 33:18-19

By Richard A. Kiley

Although news of drought in Ethiopia has been replaced by stories of maneuvers in the Persian Gulf and Californian earthquakes, that devastating condition painfully lingers for millions of Africans.

But thanks to the efforts of a Rochester parish and a Connecticut-based priest, one village in the ravaged African country now has access to a resource almost every American takes for granted — water.

Last month parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Church on Rochester's Humboldt Street presented Father Edward Nadolny with a check for more than \$32,500 to build a catchment dam. Father Nadolny, who has dedicated the last three years of his life to famine-relief efforts, combined that money with funds he raised through a television telethon and came up with the money needed to finance the nearly \$50,000 project.

The catchment dam, a project of Catholic Mission Hosanna under the supervision of Catholic Relief Services, will now enable the villagers of Timbaroworeda in South Shoa to route and direct water to wherever it is needed.

According to Cathy McQueen, who originally contacted Father Nadolny in the spring of 1985 on behalf of the parish, the project will provide 50,000 people with water for drinking, gardening and washing.

"We've shown that people can change lives," said McQueen, adding that the town was one of many throughout the nation to be designated a famine disaster area. "World hunger is something people become so overwhelmed of when they hear about it. People have a tendency to block it from their minds because it is so painful."

Although many of Ethiopia's 42 million people are still without sufficient water supplies, the efforts of St. John's Parish have made a difference.

"(The dam) has enabled them to develop the self-support necessary to a long-term solution for the famine," said McQueen, who joined the social ministry committee at St. John the Evangelist specifically for this project.

Thanks to the dam, the town's women will no longer be forced to spend entire days in search of water.

Father Nadolny, who began his crusade against hunger a few years ago after watching a British Broadcasting Company report on famine conditions in Ethiopia, said he was impressed with the initial commitment by St. John's.

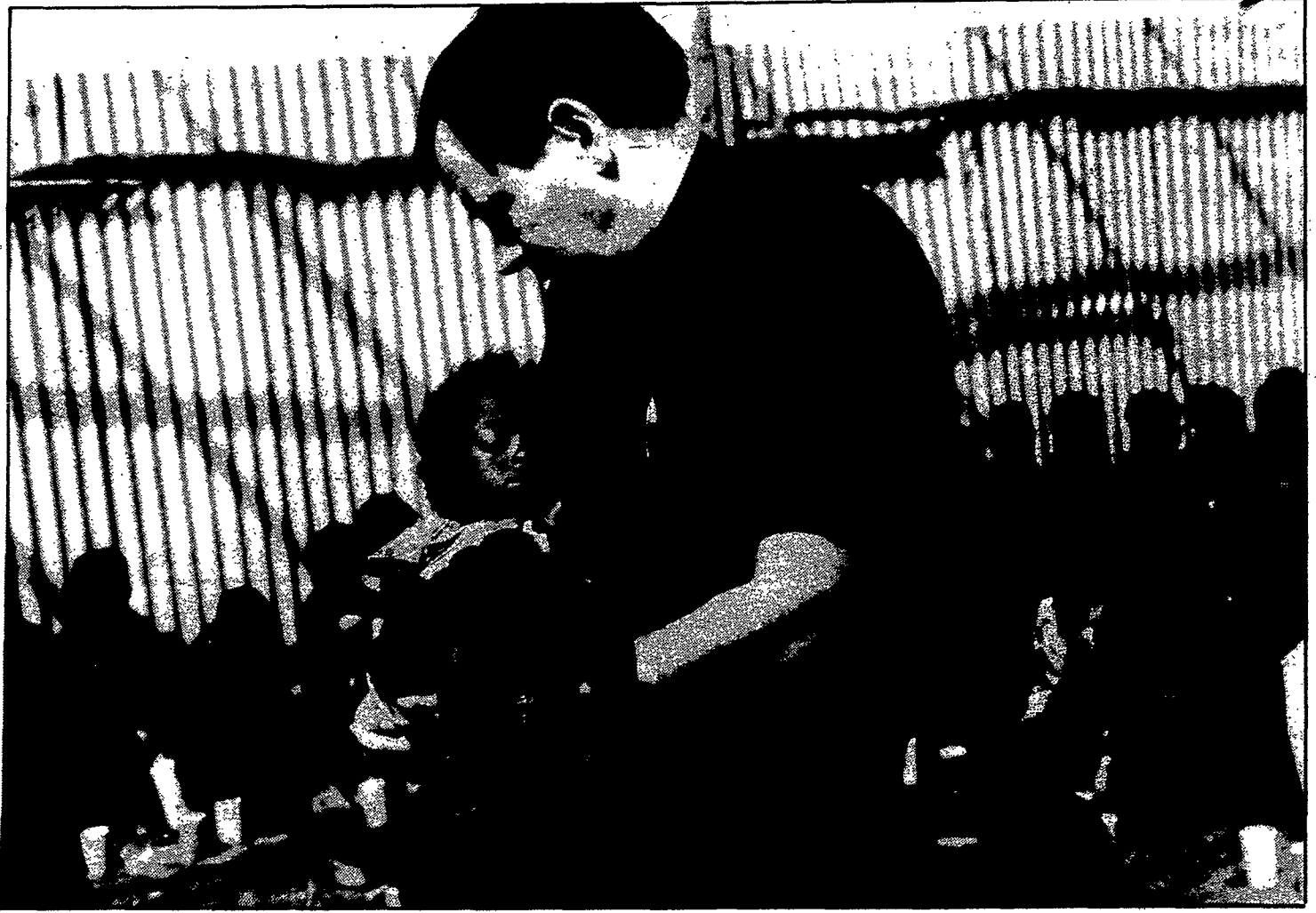
"To my knowledge, (St. John the Evangelist) is the first parish in the country that has taken on an Ethiopian water project as its own," said Father Nadolny, a priest of St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Naugatuck, Conn. "I don't know of any parish anywhere to commit to Ethiopia for a year."

According to Father Nadolny, who attended St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester from 1952-54, construction of the dam funded through St. John's began about a month and a half ago but that a date for completion was impossible to determine.

"None of the (dam) projects can be locked into a time when you have to gather the material," said Father Nadolny, adding that his first dam project took two and a half years to complete. "It took two years to get a drilling crane from Italy to Ethiopia," he noted.

St. John's efforts to raise money for the project began during Lent last March, when donations to such programs as Operation Breadbox were earmarked for building a dam. A supplement to the annual Catholic Overseas Aid Appeal, Operation Breadbox collections are sponsored in each parish of the Rochester diocese by the diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission. The program provides parishes with information on hunger issues, and attempts to support Third World development and local emergency food projects with money raised by parishes.

Although the parish raised money through



Father Nadolny, who uses his vacation time to visit strife-torn Ethiopia and other ravaged countries, holds one of the millions of starving children he has come across in his fight against world hunger.



At a relief camp in Ethiopia, a mother and her child show the effects of undernourishment.

an autumn cider and donut sale, a school candy sale and an indoor picnic featuring the Blue Suspenders, most of the money came from individual donations and a monthly "loose change" collection.

Most individual contributions were spurred by the "Give a Dam" buttons St. John's parishioners wore during months of fund-raising activities. "People would ask, 'What is that button all about?' and when we'd tell them they would give money," McQueen said. "Father Kevin (Murphy) wore his most faithfully; he probably raised the most money that way."

The parish also received contributions from 18 parishes across the diocese, according to Father Murphy, the parish's co-pastor.

"The bulk of the money was raised through the second collections on the first Sunday of every month," McQueen said.

Ten percent of the money raised went to Rochester-area hunger needs. "Some of the parishioners felt that we shouldn't forget that there are hungry people in Rochester also."

That concern for people closer to home has carried over into St. John's ongoing ventures. After sending out letters and inquiries to Rochester-area service agencies, the parish has decided to aid Sojourner — a temporary residence for women and children who are in need of a faithful, supportive environment.

The parish had made a commitment to raising \$20,000 for Sojourner even before its building was recently ravaged by fire.

"We're still in the process of trying to decide how to use the money," McQueen said. "We're not even sure where they will be located; we're waiting for them to pick up the pieces"

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Having access to water will allow Ethiopians to use it for drinking, gardening and washing.

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