



Plea for peace

An East German embassy official visited Rochester in response to a plea for peace from seventh-grade religious education students at Holy Cross Parish. See page 3.



Creating consistency

As local pro-life and anti-war activists move toward the "seamless garment" ethic, they experiment with ways of weaving the two movements into one. See page 7.

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Coalition tries saving city church

By Richard A. Kiley

As the possible demolition of one of Rochester's oldest German churches draws nearer, city residents last week began final attempts to try and obtain a reprieve for the historic building.

Friends of Holy Redeemer — a recently formed group of Rochester-area citizens trying to save the 110-year-old church from a date with a wrecking ball — invited community leaders out into the snow on Friday, Dec. 4, to be the first signers of a petition asking the Rochester diocese to delay demolition plans for the church.

The petition, which the group hopes to submit to diocesan officials before Christmas, will ask that demolition plans be tabled while the community looks for other uses for the church and adjacent buildings.

According to Susan Porter, a Friends of Holy Redeemer member, public reports of the church's possible demolition drew substantial public outcry.

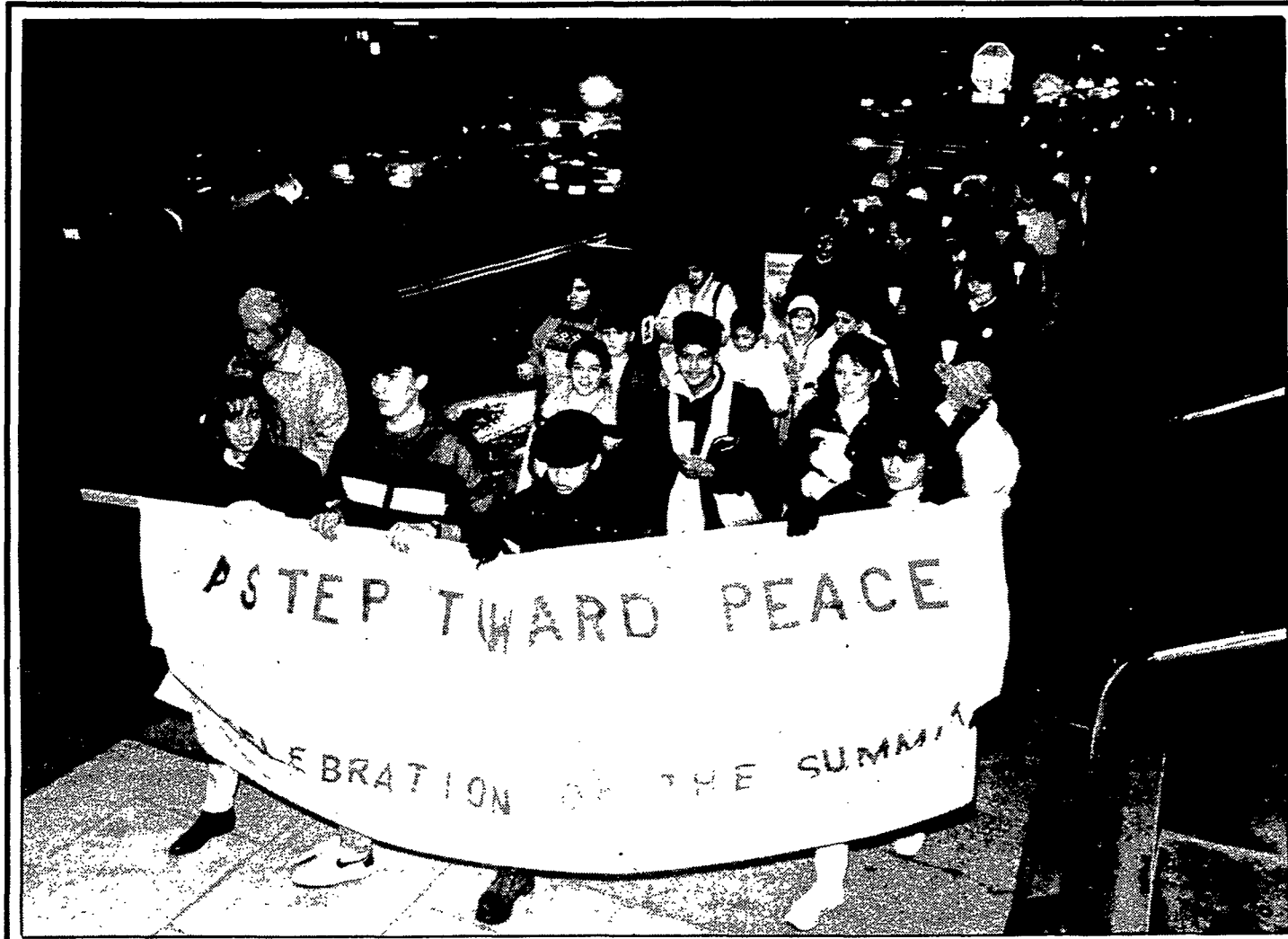
"There's a lot of community interest, and there are a lot of human needs that could be met (if Holy Redeemer wasn't demolished)," said Porter, a coordinator of Rochester's Judicial Process Commission. "I've always noticed that building since I've lived in the city, and I think it's important to save a city's heritage."

The group will attempt to raise money in the upcoming weeks to support its efforts. Funds collected during the drive will be used to ready the church for winter by boarding windows where much of the stained-glass has been removed.

Porter said that some 70 city residents have contacted the Landmark Society of Western New York in the last several weeks, inquiring whether the organization could help in the effort to save the church.

Cynthia Howk, a neighborhood conservation coordinator, said the the Landmark Society is now functioning as the basis for the citizens' group and is "taking a hard look at solid options" for the church.

"Several agencies have expressed interest in using the building as a community center or for library use," Howk said. "The school being used for school use and the church as a



Bonnie Trafelet/Courier-Journal

SUMMIT RAISES HOPES — Hundreds of candles cast a hopeful light across the faces of Rochester-area residents who walked through downtown streets Sunday, Dec. 6, during a vigil to celebrate the peaceful prospect of a summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

recreational facility is another option." She added that the Landmark Society became aware of the situation through a diocesan inquiry regarding the potential cost of demolition. The society then held a public information meeting for interested citizens.

Howk referred to "a national track record" of successful efforts to convert churches into concert halls, libraries and office space, among other possibilities.

"From what we've seen in other cities where we have collected quite a bit of information, it has been extremely successful," Howk said. "A building even of this large size can be adapted to other uses.

Certainly the precedent is there."

Howk said possibilities for the church range from conversion into office space or apartments, with the latter being the most worthy use. "The need for housing is critical," she said.

Bergmann Associates, a Rochester-based consulting engineering firm, has been asked to do a feasibility study on possible future uses of the Holy Redeemer buildings. The diocese urged the society "to move in a timely manner," she said, noting that Bergmann Associates was expected to issue a proposal this week.

Although he finds the intentions of

Friends of Holy Redeemer admirable, Father William B. Leone, pastor of Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, believes the parish and diocese already have exhausted every avenue open to them in the hope of preserving the church.

"I think the people of the parish have come to the conclusion that there is no real program of maintenance for the worship space — as beautiful and historical as it is," said Father Leone, who became pastor of Holy Redeemer in 1980.

Father Leone said that by delaying the inevitable fate of the church, demolition

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Vandals ransack Stetson Street church

By Lee Strong

In what police labeled an "unprofessional burglary," vandals broke into Most Precious Blood Church sometime during the night of December 6, ransacking the sacristy and sanctuary, and stealing approximately \$100 along with an undetermined amount of clothing and gifts intended for the poor.

The break-in was discovered when Father William Graf, pastor of the Stetson Street church, entered the building Monday at 6:40 a.m. to prepare for the 7 a.m. Mass.

According to Father Graf, vandals entered the church through a back door, smashing a window to reach the door's lock. They then pulled the sacristy door from its hinges and ransacked the sacristy, emptying drawers and throwing vestments on the floor. As far as Father Graf was able to determine, the only items missing from the sacristy were a few useless keys.

The vandalism continued in the sanctuary, where the intruders opened the tabernacle — but did not remove any of its contents — and opened presents parishioners had collected for guests of such agencies as Bethany House and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality.

Among the gifts were clothing, toiletries and food. Parish staff members are currently studying donation records to determine how many — if any at all — of the gifts were actually taken.

The burglars also smashed open wooden "poor boxes" and the coin boxes from devotional-candle racks. Approximately \$100 was taken, Father Graf reported.

Officer Douglas Macaluso, who is assisting with the police department's investigation, speculated that the burglars were amateurs — probably teenagers — because of the vandalism, the nature of the destruction and the fact few valuable items were taken. Police are currently questioning neighbors who might have seen the vandals, Macaluso said. They are also waiting for the parish to submit a complete list of missing items.

As the parish takes inventory of the losses and damage, Father Graf has discovered positive results from the break-in — despite his initial distress.

"I was upset, when I first entered the church because of the damage that was done, not because of what was taken," Father Graf

said. "What bothers me is that someone could do something like this."

"After my initial reaction passed," the pastor added, "I knew something good would come of this — and it has."

The good aspect, he explained, has come in the responses of individuals hearing about the robbery. "I didn't ask for help, and there's been a spontaneous response," Father Graf said. "A man of limited means from the other side of the city came to see me (Monday) and gave me a check for \$50."

Among other responses were a shut-in's promise to donate \$200, a couple's offer to contribute cans of food and a check for \$50 left by someone who stopped by the rectory 20 minutes after the first report of the break-in.

As he and parishioners sort through the damage and deal with insurance and repairs, Father Graf acknowledged that the generosity of these individuals has helped to make the robbery less painful.

"I guess I really feel at peace with it," Father Graf said. "I've seen some good things coming from it; it almost seems like a blessing."

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