

Local News

Peace activist addresses Elmira conference

Bishop Thomas F. Gumbleton of Detroit spoke to nearly 230 conference participants gathered at Elmira College on Saturday, Dec. 12. Noted for his activist efforts in the peace movement, the president of Pax Christi-U.S.A. commented on the treaty to ban intermediate-range missiles signed at the White House this week by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

"This is only a beginning. We have a long way to go to establish peace in the world, especially in the light of President Reagan's continuing desire to put Star Wars weapons in place," Bishop Gumbleton said.

Bishop Gumbleton attributed his long and occasionally valiant efforts for peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons to the inspiration provided by Thomas Merton. Bishop Gumbleton said he had never met the Trappist monk, but that he has used Merton's writings as a guide in his search for peace.

Bishop Gumbleton's desire to reverse the direction of the arms race found expression

the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response." He was one of five U.S. bishops who participated in the writing of the historic pastoral.

"The acceleration of the arms race — still in progress despite the recent treaty — cost the American people 900 billion dollars last year," the bishop said. "Contrast that figure with the fact that 800 million people live in poverty. This should distress us greatly; it is a moral evil."

Reaction to Bishop Gumbleton's remarks was generally positive among the 230 people who attended the conference.

Deacon William Dougherty called the bishop "a herald's voice on the college campus." Sister Patricia Carroll "was impressed by his simplicity and his persuasive desire to eliminate violence and hatred."

"Bishop Gumbleton's very presence is peaceful," Father Daniel Holland observed. "At the same time he challenges lifestyles materially oriented. He is an evangelist with a unique mystique."

The Detroit auxiliary bishop presented his views during the morning liturgy and keynote address of the day-long "Making Peace-Doing Justice" conference, which was presented by the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, Elmira College Campus Ministry and the Chemung County Council of Churches. Subtitled "Weaving Threads of Faith and Action," the conference also offered workshops on such topics as anti-Sovietism, the environment as a peace and justice issue, and parenting for peace and justice.

The conference was designed to lead people of the Southern Tier to a renewed and deeper involvement in the struggle for peace through justice. Organizers said they hoped to challenge participants to see opportunities to develop economic justice and peace by converting what they termed "a defense-oriented economy" to one that is centered on needed goods and services, and full employment.

— Father John Hayes

Nazareth Hall student captures oratorical competition

Jeff Wagner, an eighth-grader at Nazareth Hall in Rochester, has won the Seventh Annual Bishop Matthew H. Clark Oratorical Competition. Wagner was chosen from among 36 contestants who gathered Saturday, Dec. 5, at Our Lady of Mercy High School. He will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward tuition at the Catholic high school of his choice.

Mario Fallone, a student from St. Theodore's School in Gates, finished in second place, receiving a \$750 scholarship. All Saints Academy School in Corning supplied the third-place winner, Jonathan Methven, who earned a \$500 scholarship. All three top finishers received trophies.

Also recognized with certificates of participation were: Mary Ognibene, St. Pius X School, fourth place; Jennifer Bellavia, St. Lawrence School, fifth place; and Kimberly St. Clair, Good Shepherd School, sixth place.

Sponsored by the diocesan Office of General

Education, the oratorical competition featured 36 contestants from Catholic elementary schools across the diocese. Each participant wrote and memorized an original three-minute speech on the topic "Building the City of God."

Following is the text of Jeff Wagner's first-place speech:

If I were to pull down a wall map of the world, which one of you would like to come up and point to the City of God?

No volunteers?

You mean not one of you knows where the City of God is? Well, don't be embarrassed because, unlike Paris or Pittsburgh or Podunk, this city can not be found on any map or in any atlas or in any geography book. Well then, if it is not a place, what is it?

Father Daniel Schutte, the Jesuit who wrote the hymn which bears this title, must have had some idea, some insight, some inspiration. It is based on verses taken from Isaiah. Reading

the Bible, I would define "City of God" as an atmosphere in which the citizens act in the light of Jesus' message: "Love one another as I have loved you."

In the refrain of the hymn, we are asked to build this city — not the parish priest or the convent community or the diocesan bishop, but us — you and me!

And what will we use for materials? Instead of concrete — kindness. Instead of lumber — love. Instead of plaster — patience. Instead of tools — self-sacrifice.

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