



Bonnie Trafelet/Courier-Journal

both of Rochester, after the opening session of the weeklong event.

Taste of ecumenism

Bush, SSJ, evangelization coordinator at St. Augustine's Parish, had a more practical reason for wanting to become a counselor: she wanted to compare her long-range planning with a Catholic program she had attended at the University of Steubenville. "I went to see the Billy Graham method and what I could learn from it," she said.

Bush and Rossi and the other counselors at the key to Graham's crusades was planning. "If we've learned nothing from long-range planning is vital to such a counselor, Sister Doretta Rhodes, pastor at St. Ambrose Parish.

Success for the crusade began more than a year before the formation of an executive committee of subcommittees, including one for counseling and follow-up.

Active counselors from local churches and the "Christian Life and Witness" which consisted of four classes covering the follow with inquirers, ways to reach that might arise during counseling, memorization — of Scripture passages, included periods of prayer and reflections' faith. In between classes, counselors' homework, consisting largely of individual Scripture study.

Each applicant was interviewed as part of the Counseling and Follow-up on the interview, completion of the study of faith in Jesus Christ, counselors were then chosen by the committee.

Study, self-assessment and selection were "you can't have an inquirer come question, and you're not doing what you yourself," explained Marianne Lidom St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

It was when she began training to be a counselor that she realized how extensive or involved the work would be. Nevertheless, after finishing the training she chose to attend nurturing-training sessions and talks so that she would be prepared.

Everything went smoothly because of the support of the parish. For example, on the first day of crusade, she counseled a woman who wasn't really assured of salvation. She had been faithful all her life, Lidom just wanted that assurance that she would have.

"I do believe that assurance, and later in fulfilling her commitment to counsel the people she counseled. Lidom also to attend a prayer group for inquirers these people come forward and ac-

cept Jesus, then do nothing for them," she noted.

In addition to helping the people she counseled, Lidom discovered that her own faith had been nurtured through her efforts. "When these people come forward and I tell them Jesus loves them — Jesus forgives their sins — that is a feeling that just tops everything," she said. "I think this crusade is one of the greatest things that's happened in my life."

Sister Bush had a similar experience, but it came through counseling a woman who was unchurched. "I asked her why she had come to the crusade," the sister said. "She said with all the talk about the crusade, the thought came to her that she wanted to know more about Christ. She prayed, and that gave her the courage to go. Then she was moved to go down and offer her life to Christ."

"I was very impressed with this woman," Sister Bush continued. "Even before she went to the crusade, she was touched by it. I was thrilled, but I was also overwhelmed by her action."

One of the women Sister Rhodes counseled was a Methodist. At the end, the two embraced, and the woman said, "This is the first time I've ever been hugged by a nun."

Sister Rhodes noted that the crusade's ecumenical spirit was a source of joy for her. "I think what I see happening is that everyone in the stadium is there because they love the Lord," she said.

During the weeks following the crusade, counselors will again contact inquirers with whom they worked and meet with them in prayer groups. These groups will help to foster the community spirit that was created by the crusade, Sister Rhodes suggested. "We're seeing community built," she noted.

Likewise, Sister Bush said that she would like to see that sense of ecumenism continuing after the crusade is over.

"Somehow when the crusade is over I'd like to continue to pray with people from other denominations," she said. "Somehow, we enrich each other. From hearing each other's traditions we grow in our faith and in our understanding of each other."

One particular area in which Catholics benefited from participation in the crusade and from continued contact with other churches is in the area of evangelization, Sister Bush noted. "I think Billy Graham has done a great deal to educate people about evangelization."

Sister Rossi also noted that the Rochester churches can learn from their differences through the ecumenical spirit fostered by the crusade. Moreover, she believes the crusade will have a lingering effect on the Rochester community.

"This whole thing has been impressive — just to see all those people with a hunger for God," Sister Rossi said. "I think from the crusade we can expect a change in the City of Rochester just from the number of people who attended the crusade."



Billy Graham spoke to record crowds at Silver Stadium in Rochester during his weeklong crusade.

Parishes to build on crusade

By Lee Strong

The Billy Graham Rochester Crusade lasted only eight days.

For a number of diocesan parishes, however, the work of the crusade began long before Graham mounted the stage at Silver Stadium — and its effects will continue long after he has left western New York.

One hundred forty-five of the Diocese of Rochester's 161 parishes participated in crusade activities ranging from preparing bulletin inserts to appointing crusade liaisons and forming evangelization committees to coordinate Bible study and follow-up programs.

Between 15 and 25 percent of the 143,780 people who attended the crusade were Catholic, according to crusade estimates. An as-yet undetermined number of Catholics became "inquirers" — people who responded to the Rev. Graham's call to come forward and declare their faith in Christ.

Patrick Shanley, pastoral assistant at Holy Apostles' Parish, participated in the crusade's counselor training program to be ready for this potential influx of Catholics seeking ways to express their new-found or renewed faith.

"I went for the training as a counselor so I'll be ready for them, so I can be an effective follow-up person," Shanley said. "The opportunity is here for us to reach them, now all we have to do is say, 'I'm here!'"

In addition to his training as a counselor, Shanley attended as many meetings about the crusade as he could, and encouraged parishioners to do so as well. He also promoted the crusade, explaining why Catholics should be involved.

"I was surprised at the response," Shanley said. "Thirty to 40 people that I know of went to the crusade. Who knows who's going without my knowing?"

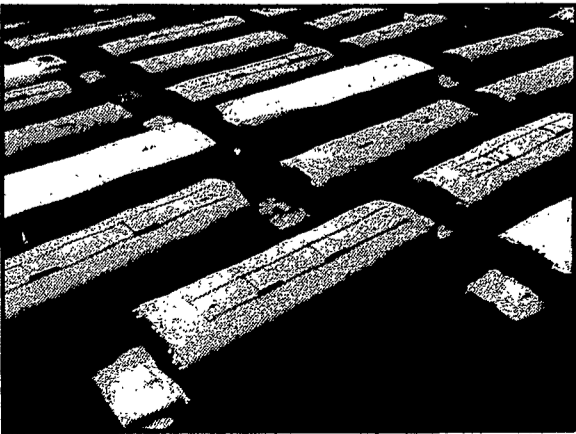
Shanley will also coordinate the parish's follow-up program. "Our idea is to make initial contact with whoever we get cards on and plug them in with other people in the parish wherever I can see them being involved — the folk group, our prayer group, religious education, Bible study," he explained.

Shanley's efforts are essentially a one-man campaign — albeit with complete support of the parish staff. Other parishes, on the other hand, have become involved more extensively.

On Tuesday, Sept. 13, five buses containing more than 200 people made the trip to Silver Stadium from St. Rita's Parish in Webster. Father John Reif, the parish's pastor, attributed the large number to advance preparation and support for the crusade.

"We had done quite a bit of long-range reminding about the crusade," Father Reif said. "We had preached about it, put notices in the bulletin and put up posters."

A parish committee was formed to coordinate crusade-related activities. In August, for example, parishioners joined members of other denominations going door to door to distribute leaflets about the crusade. The parish already had a great deal of interest in Bible study and religious education, so people were interested in the crusade, Father Reif said.



Buses jam stadium parking lots for the crusade.

The parish has no formal plans for working with inquirers at this point, Father Reif said. "We will decide what to do once we know how many people there are and what their needs are."

Parishioners at St. Augustine's Parish had also been preparing for the Graham crusade, beginning their efforts in January. Eight parishioners trained as counselors, four trained as Bible-study leaders for nurture groups, and the parish formed an evangelization team.

Three weeks before the crusade, St. Augustine's pastor, Father William Trott, preached on the subject. Parishioners joined the members of other churches in distributing leaflets, and during the crusade, parishioners formed car pools to go to the stadium. On September 14 alone, 54 parishioners used the car pool.

"There's a lot of enthusiasm for the crusade in the parish," observed Sister Campion Bush, SSJ, the parish's evangelization coordinator. "There were some people who were afraid at first, but their fears have been allayed."

"We saw it as an evangelization project, a way of reaching out to the unchurched," she said. "They may not want to go to church, but they might be willing to go to the crusade. While there, God will reach them."

As a follow-up to the crusade, the parish will begin a 10-week Bible study series on October 5. "We look to the Bible study as a nurture group," Sister Bush said. In addition, "we might encourage people returning to the Church to go into RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) for one year." Evangelization committee members will also work with individuals on a one-to-one basis, if necessary.

One of the most ambitious follow-up efforts to the Graham crusade will take place at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Greece. A parish spiritual-renewal committee was formed at the beginning of September to implement not only the Graham crusade's Bible-study program and to channel inquirers into already existing programs, but also to coordinate all of the parish's spiritual-renewal activities.

Spiritual renewal became a primary focus at the parish in June with the arrival of Father Terence Fleming, the new pastor, and Father Joseph Catanise, the new parochial vicar. The two priests had planned to promote spiritual renewal in the parish, "and the coming of the Graham Crusade was a blessing from the Lord," Father Catanise observed.

Thirty-four people attended the committee's first meeting, he reported. "I was excited that so many people came to take part in the spiritual renewal of the parish," Father Catanise said. During the coming year, the committee will begin training parishioners to send them out to evangelize door to door. "We want to bring people back to Christ and to let them experience Christ in the Catholic tradition. Our goal is to make St. Charles the most Christ-centered parish in Greece."

Father Catanise praised the Rev. Graham for instructing people to return to their own churches, and said he believes that Catholic churches should take advantage of this. He also suggested that Catholics need to examine their ideas about religion in light of the crusade's success.

"I do believe Christianity is a religion of the heart as well as of the mind," the priest said. "We've tended to be too cerebral — that's why we've lost people to the pentecostal churches."

Father Catanise noted that approximately one third of the people on the renewal committee had left the Catholic Church at some point, but had returned. "It's exciting to see that this is happening," he said, and added that the crusade has already led parishioners to see their Catholicism in a new light.

"One of the most beautiful things I heard people say is that the Protestants can go up for an altar call only at the crusade, but that we have an altar call every week when people come up for communion," Father Catanise said. "Every time you come up for the Eucharist, you commit yourself to Christ once again. That's beautiful!"