

Local News

Priest leaves academic world to learn lessons from the city

By Rob Cullivan

ROCHESTER — Father David Reid wishes the United States was less concerned with profits and more concerned with prophets — Isaiah in particular.

The Old Testament sage's concern for social and political justice has inspired the parochial vicar at St. Peter and Paul Parish to a far-flung career that has taken him from the streets of Dublin, Ireland, through Rome, Italy, and Washington D.C., to his current residence on Rochester's West Main Street.

Father Reid joined the parish last August, hoping to experience pastoral life after 18 years of college teaching. He envisioned a somewhat active schedule with plenty of time to write. But a twist of fate intervened to change his plans when Edmund Gennarino suffered a stroke last December 1.

Director of St. Peter's Kitchen, the parish's midday meal service for its inner-city neighborhood, Gennarino is currently recovering at home, while Father Reid serves as the kitchen's interim director. The priest can be seen at the kitchen six days a week, helping to serve its 250 daily guests. The job has changed not only the priest's schedule, but his dress style, too.



Linda Dow Hayes/Courier-Journal
Father David Reid and volunteers at St. Peter's Kitchen prepare lunches.

"I've worn my clerical collar more times in the last four months than in the last 22 years," he joked, noting that he decided to exchange the casual campus look he once affected for more traditional garb after noticing people's reactions. "In the kitchen, the collar is respected by a lot of the guests," he said.

Father Reid said he originally desired to wear the clerical collar as a 10-year-old altar boy in Dublin. Fathored by a carpenter whose income kept his family "not much above poverty level," he nonetheless had a happy childhood in a family devoted to the Catholic Church. Each member of the family would pray for an hour one night a month in reparation, a practice Father Reid credits with sparking his desire to join a religious community.

The community he entered as a novitiate in 1959 was the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary. His cousin and brother had both entered the seminary, but each had subsequently left, leaving him "holding the bag," Father Reid joked.

Eventually he packed his bags for seminary studies in New Hampshire. The monastic setting of his first American home shielded him from the world around, a world that later

opened up when he went to study at Catholic University in Washington D.C.

The combination of such world events as the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vatican II excited the young seminarian. "Coming from a conservative background in Ireland, it was a thrill to see things open up," Father Reid said. "When I was in Washington, there was hardly a day when the Catholic Church wasn't in the paper in some part of the world."

Another eye-opener was the presence of different races and cultures in the nation's capital. "My neighborhood was in close proximity to (a black neighborhood). That was nice, getting to know black people as my neighbors," he said.

Father Reid went back to New Hampshire after the year in Washington, and he was ordained a priest in 1966. Subsequent studies took him back to Washington and abroad to Rome. His congregation asked him to come back to the United States in 1970 to teach at the Washington Theological Union. It was there that he developed his interest in Isaiah. The prophet's presence in Israel's royal court intrigued the priest. "I thought I saw a dialogue between politics, religion and a deep concern for social justice," the priest said.

The priest acknowledged that politics even entered his pulpit once when he denounced the Vietnam War at a Mass in a suburban Washington parish, an act for which the pastor chided him.

The priest has expanded his interest in biblically inspired social justice over the years. "I have given a number of workshops in justice and peace, using the prophets to gain an insight into human relations," he said, noting that the role of the church is important in this respect. "We must keep examining religion in whether it is legitimizing injustice or exposing injustice."

After his days at the union, Father Reid spent his nights living out his beliefs by working at an overnight shelter in Washington. There he met many homeless people who touched him deeply. He recalled in particular a Vietnam War veteran who told him of the horrors of his tour of duty, a story he wishes the politically hawkish could hear. "People who don't know of that experience should know of (the veterans') reluctance to get back into war," he said.

As the War on Poverty of the 1960s faded out of memory and the Reagan Revolution asserted itself in the 1980s, Father Reid found himself alienated from the political mainstream. "I have

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Jesse Jackson groups join coalition for workers' rights

By Rob Cullivan

Local chapters of two organizations founded by the Rev. Jesse Jackson have joined the Community Coalition for Workers' Rights in their support of local workers' rights to unionize. The CCWR includes several diocesan parishes and offices, including the offices of the Spanish Apostolate and of Black Ministries, and the Division of Urban Services.

Local chapters of Operation People United to Save Humanity (PUSH) and the Rainbow Coal-

ition, both founded by Jackson, joined the CCWR in the weeks after it issued a statement Dec. 14, 1988, supporting the efforts of employees of Kleen Brite Laboratories, Inc., to join the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, according to Rebecca Gifford, director of the diocesan Division of Urban Services.

Gifford named the Rev. Franklin Florence of the Central Church of Christ, as a spokesman for PUSH and the Rainbow Coalition. The Rev.

Florence could not be contacted to confirm his organizations' support of the coalition. The CCWR distributed the statement to workers outside Kleen Brite's 600 Oak St. plant on Dec. 14. The statement accused D. James Manno, company chairman, of "foot dragging" in negotiations with workers at the Rochester plant and the company's two plants in Brockport. A majority of the company's workers voted to join the ACTWU last July, but Kleen Brite has filed objections to the vote with the National Labor Relations Board, which has yet to certify the union.

Kleen Brite manufactures household and cleaning products for a 15-state region.

The company did not directly respond to the CCWR's statement, nor has it communicated with the coalition since the statement was issued. Father Laurence Tracy, pastoral assistant for the diocesan Spanish Apostolate, confirmed that there has been no communication between the coalition and the company.

Also on Dec. 14, the company issued a statement of its own, which said: "No outside group is as interested in the occupational and financial

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Sr. Steinwachs resigns urban education post

By Rob Cullivan


ROCHESTER — The diocesan assistant superintendent for urban education, Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ, has announced she will resign in June.

For 24 years, Sister Steinwachs has worked in diocesan education administration, spending seven of those as assistant superintendent. Prior to being an administrator, she taught for 15 years.

Sister Steinwachs cited a desire for a change as her reason for resigning, but at this time she

has no plans to take another position. She plans to consult her congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph, on her next move, which she hopes will lead to another administrative or teaching position in the diocese. Sister Steinwachs said she is leaving under "happy" circumstances, listing the growth in the number of teachers trained in the diocesan Peace and Justice education program as among her proudest accomplishments. The program prepares one teacher at each diocesan school to teach students Gospel-based values of peace and justice, she said.

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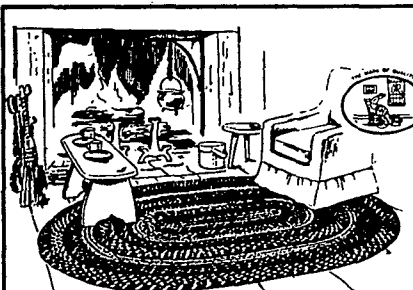


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