

# Kidnappers release priest

Continued from page 1

eral of the Basilians, also spoke with Father Amico on Monday night. The former captive told Father Finke that he had been targeted for political, and not religious reasons.

Father Amico's abductors had previously kidnapped two other Americans in Colombia to protest U.S. "meddling" in the country's internal affairs, according to a report from the Catholic News Service. The NLA also claimed responsibility for the kidnappings of those Americans, businessman James Arthur and teacher David Leslie Kent.

The kidnappings occurred in the wake of President George Bush's visit last week to Colombia to inaugurate a program of economic assistance designed to combat drug trafficking in Peru, Bolivia and his host nation.

Like Arthur and Kent, Father Amico was targeted by the NLA because he is an American, Father Tanck said. He noted that Father Amico and the Basilians have engaged in no political work in Colombia.

Father Tanck also explained that kidnappings are not "an unusual form of protest" in Colombia, and that the U.S. State Department told him that 98 percent of all kidnap victims there are released.

As of *Courier* press time, neither Kent nor Arthur had been released by the NLA.

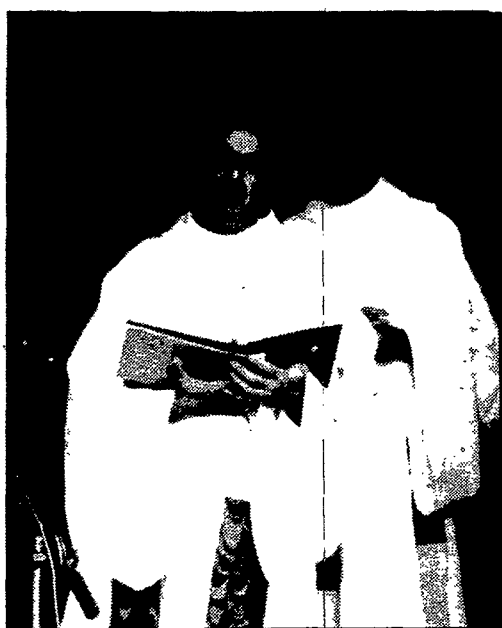
While Father Amico was in captivity, his fate was of uppermost concern in the minds of his family, friends and acquaintances in Rochester. Last Saturday, Feb. 17, about 150 of them assembled in Father Amico's home parish of St. Francis of Assisi for an afternoon Mass offered on his behalf.

The Mass was followed by a reception in the parish hall where Sue Bianchi clutched a letter from her late husband's cousin and spoke about the author as if he were her son.

"I always felt hopeful about Frank because Frank was a wonderful caring priest," she said of Father Amico.

Ironically, the December, 1989, letter noted Father Amico's fear of repercussions from Colombia's drug war, remarked Bianchi, whose husband, Carl, was a first cousin of Father Amico's mother, Anna Ferrari.

"The Colombian drug war has calmed a bit," Father Amico wrote Sue Bianchi in December. "The bombs that were nightly occurrences in Bogota, Medellin and Cali have now ceased and several of the top drug lords have been extradited to the USA



Father Francis Amico (left) leads worshippers in Cali, Colombia.

— but I wonder what will happen next. It was scary several weeks — hearing bombs go off not far from where we have our mission."

Father Dennis Noelke, superior of the Basilian Fathers of Aquinas Institute, said he had talked with Father Amico in the past about the dangers of working in Colombia, where political and drug-related violence has become a part of everyday life.

"He was so convinced ... it was worth the risk for him," Father Noelke said.

Father Noelke was one of seven priests who concelebrated the Feb. 17 Mass. Also among the seven were Father Robert T. Werth, pastor of St. Bridget's in Rochester and a high-school classmate of Father Amico.

The service and the reception that followed it were the brainstorm of two of Father Amico's former classmates from Ss. Peter and Paul Elementary School, Marcia Habecher and her sibling, Sister Rita Habecher, SSND.

"I feel we just have to do something rather than just sitting back and reading the newspaper," Sister Habecher, said, explaining why she called Father Werth to propose the Mass.

During his homily, Father Werth praised Father Amico's dedication to serving the poor. "I've always admired people like him who are clear in their purpose," Father Werth said of his friend, adding that the worshippers were "here in a very difficult time to lift up Jesus' name," and to "pray in forgiveness for those who are

right now holding (the priest) captive."

At the end of the Mass, Father Werth presented Rose Bianchi with a book about St. Francis of Assisi. "Certainly, our brother, Francis Amico, is a modern-day Francis of Assisi," he said. Later, at the reception in the parish hall, Father Werth led the worshippers in a chorus of "Happy Birthday" for Bianchi, who was celebrating her birthday that day.

Prior to the service, Bianchi talked about her nephew, whom she raised following the death of his grandmother, Frances Pazzozi, when Father Amico was 14.

"He's a good boy," she said, noting his longtime devotion to the Catholic faith. "Always when he was a child, whenever his birthday came, I always asked, 'What would you like?' and he would say, 'Oh, (religious) statues.'"

Bianchi said her nephew filled a "grotto" in his grandparents' back yard with religious statues and taught Bible lessons to his peers even as a child.

Father Amico was born May 13, 1945, and graduated from Aquinas Institute in 1963. He entered the Basilian novitiate that same year, taking his first vows in 1964. He earned his bachelor's degree in French from St. John Fisher College after spending his senior year at the Institut Catholique in Paris, France.

After teaching at Aquinas for a year, Father Amico went to Andean High School in Merrillville, Ind., where he taught for two years. He returned to Paris in 1971 to begin theological studies at the Grand Seminaire. Completing his theological work at Toronto School of Theology, he received the degree of master of divinity in 1974.

Father Amico then served as deacon at Detroit's St. Anne's Church, where he was ordained a priest in 1975. He studied in Mexico from 1977-78, and returned to



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer Rose Bianchi prays during a Mass for her kidnapped nephew, Father Francis Amico.

work at St. Anne's until 1982, when he left for graduate studies in Rome and Medellin, Colombia.

For three years, he served at St. Anne's Parish in Houston, Texas, and took up his pastorate in Colombia in 1987. Since his arrival there, he helped improve the living conditions of the many poor people in his parish, including the elderly, for whom he worked with the Sisters of Charity to establish a residence.

A service celebrating Father Amico's release was scheduled at St. Francis of Assisi on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 5:30 p.m.



"The Difference Between Good Seafood and Great Seafood"

PAY TO THE ORDER OF A Friend of Jonathan's \$ **5.00**

OFFER VALID MONDAY THRU SUNDAY, DINNER MENU ONLY. ONE COUPON PER TABLE. CANNOT BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFERS. CANNOT BE USED WITH THE EARLY BIRD MENU OR OYSTER BAR MENU.

AMOUNT FIVE DOLLARS

1225 Jefferson Rd., Rochester 716-272-8900 *Jonathan's*  
3237 Erie Blvd., East, Syracuse 716-446-4081 EXPIRES APRIL 16, 1990

The Smith Opera House presents

Coming in MARCH



**THE CLANCY BROTHERS**  
With Robbie O'Connell

MARCH 3 • 8PM  
SMITH OPERA HOUSE  
82 Seneca St.  
Geneva, NY

**Seating By Sections**

Section I: \$14.50; Sr. Citizen \$13.50  
Section II: \$12.50; Sr. Citizen \$11.50  
Section III: \$10.50; Sr. Citizen \$9.50  
Children (16 & under) \$6.00

For information and reserve tickets call

**315-781-LIVE**

Ticket Outlets: Geneva- Cass TV, Martin Music; Newark- Sears; Canandaigua- Townline Plaza Wayne Drugs; Seneca Falls- Smith & Jones Music; Penn Yan- Long's Cards and Books; Pittsford- Vigen & O'Shaughnessey

HIGHEST PRICES PAID

## ANTIQUES

NOW BUYING ALL ANTIQUES

FROM ONE ITEM TO ENTIRE ESTATE ANYTHING OLD, UNUSUAL OR COLLECTIBLE

WE SPECIALIZE IN THE PURCHASE OF USED ORIENTAL RUGS & ANTIQUE FURNITURE

**NO ONE PAYS MORE**

LOOK HERE FOR ITEMS WE NEED NOW...

- ORIENTAL RUGS
- WICKER
- LOUIS ICART PRINTS
- PAINTINGS/PRINTS
- BRONZES
- OLD CROCKS & JUGS
- TIFFANY/HANDEL LAMPS
- BANKS
- ORIENTAL ITEMS
- QUILTS/SAMPLERS
- MISSION OAK
- MILITARY ITEMS
- STICKLEY FURNITURE
- SILVER ITEMS
- RAILROAD ITEMS
- COSTUME JEWELRY
- INDIAN ITEMS
- CHINA/GLASSWARE
- TOYS-DOLLS-TRAINS
- CUT GLASS
- OLD BASKETS
- CLOCKS & WATCHES
- POTTERY
- ETC ETC ETC

REASONS TO CALL US: BECAUSE OF OUR NATIONAL MARKET WE CAN PAY YOU MORE THAN DEALERS WHO JUST SELL LOCALLY. WE BUY FROM MANY OF THE LOCAL DEALERS. WITH UNLIMITED CAPITAL WE OFFER HIGHEST CASH PRICES, RELIABLE AND CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE. NO ONE PAYS MORE.

**265-1230**

FREE APPRAISALS WITH NO OBLIGATION

• ESTATE & HOUSEHOLD SALES • AUCTIONS

**KITTELBERGER GALLERIES**

CLIP AND SAVE