



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
PLEADING FOR PEACE — About 75 people gathered in front of Rochester's Liberty Pole Saturday, May 5, to call for peace talks and an end to violence in Palestine. The event's sponsors were the Committee on Middle East Peace and the Peace and Justice Education Center.

Debts force St. Mary's Parish to cut staff positions

By Lee Strong
 Staff writer

CANANDAIGUA — Faced with more than \$100,000 in debts, St. Mary's Parish plans to eliminate three staff positions in fiscal year 1990/91, and to reduce the subsidy it provides to the parish school by \$21,000 less than the current level.

In addition, wages for one rectory employee will be cut, and those of other rectory employees will be frozen. Planned increases for school teachers will still go through, however, according to Steve Tempest, the parish's business manager.

The parish will also inaugurate a program of increased giving, and will seek greater involvement of volunteers to compensate for the loss of staff members.

These moves were among those recommended in the parish's proposed 1990/91 budget. They were made in light of an overall debt of more than \$100,000, approximately \$80,000 of which is owed to the Diocese of Rochester. The parish's long-range goal is to achieve a balanced budget and reduce debts over the next three years.

The parish has been battling increasing debts for approximately 15 years, Tempest said, adding, "People have finally said we have to right the ship."

Tempest — one of the employees who will lose his job as a result of the austerity measures — noted that the parish budget for 1989/90 had been based on projected weekend collections of \$9,750. Actual col-



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Father James Burke, pastor of St. Mary's Parish, will be leaving Canandaigua in June to assume the pastorate of St. Agnes Church, Avon.

lections have been only \$7,750 — resulting in an average shortfall of \$2,000 per week.

"For the size of the parish, people are just not doing their part," Tempest observed.

Robert Duplesis, chairman of the financial council that helped put together the projected 1990/91 budget, observed, however, that in the past year, "the amount that had been budgeted for weekend receipts was perhaps unrealistic.

"People in the parish respond very well to causes, but as far as meeting the operating expenses, that's been another matter," said the parish's pastor, Father James Burke.

Divinity school schedules convocation on freedom

ROCHESTER — "Freedom and Joy in the Midst of Oppression" will be the theme of the Spring Convocation and Continuing Education Program at Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary May 21-23.

For more information or to register, contact Andrew D. Davison, Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester, N.Y., 14620, or call 716/271-1320.

Father Burke noted that in previous years, the shortfall in collections had been offset by money received from wills and trusts, but that in recent years these additional monies have not been coming in.

The parish has made attempts to increase its income, Tempest said, noting that four years ago, it launched an increased giving program that produced an increase of \$1,500 in the average weekly collection.

But while collections have remained constant, the level of parish expenses has increased, Tempest said. He pointed out, for example, that the diocesan-recommended increase in salaries for Catholic school teachers had particularly hurt the parish. The parish staff had not pushed for even greater increases in collections in light of renovation projects that have taken place during the past decade, Father Burke observed. Those projects had drawn approximately \$1 million in contributions from parishioners, he said.

"We did not want to add to the burden," the pastor stated. The budget plan for the upcoming fiscal year calls for any income above the immediate needs of the parish to go towards debt reduction. The plan also contains provisions stating that if income increases and remains stable, those employees who did not receive salary increases in the original proposal will receive raises.

Father Burke said he had wrestled for months with the decision to let some staff members go. Ultimately, he said, "We had to make some cutbacks."

In addition to Tempest's position, the parish will also have to do without a pastoral assistant and a religious-education administrator. The cutback will necessitate the increased involvement of volunteers to help keep parish ministries operating at the same level.

Father Burke, who will be leaving St. Mary's in June to assume the pastorate at St. Agnes, Avon, speculated that the cutbacks will help convince the people of the parish that a financial problem does exist, and thus might produce increased collections.

"If people are convinced there is a need, they'll give," Father Burke said.

The incoming pastor, Father Walter Wainwright, currently the pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Painted Post, said he was aware of the situation in Canandaigua and that he approved of the moves made thus far.

"It's going to be a challenge," he predicted, adding, "The budget cuts that have been made will make a giant step towards getting a balanced budget."



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