

Prayers, sit-ins mark observance of murders

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Events ranging from quiet fasts and prayer vigils to loud demonstrations with arrests marked the U.S. observances of the first anniversary Nov. 16 of the murders in El Salvador of six Jesuits, their cook and her daughter.

The Search for Justice, a religiously-based campaign designed to keep attention focused on the murders, said there were at least 1,000 religious services scheduled in the United States to mark the anniversary.

On the night between Nov. 15 and 16, 1989, the six Jesuits and two women were killed at San Salvador's Central American University. Members of the Salvadoran armed forces have been charged with the murders.

The slain Jesuits were university rector Father Ignacio Ellacuria; vice rector Father Ignacio Martin-Baro; Father Segundo Montes, head of the university human rights office; and Fathers Juan Moreno, Amando Lopez and Joaquin Lopez y Lopez. All but Father Lopez y Lopez, a native Salvadoran, were naturalized citizens of Spanish birth.

Killed along with them were the Jesuits' cook, Elba Ramos, and her 15-year-old daughter, Mariset.

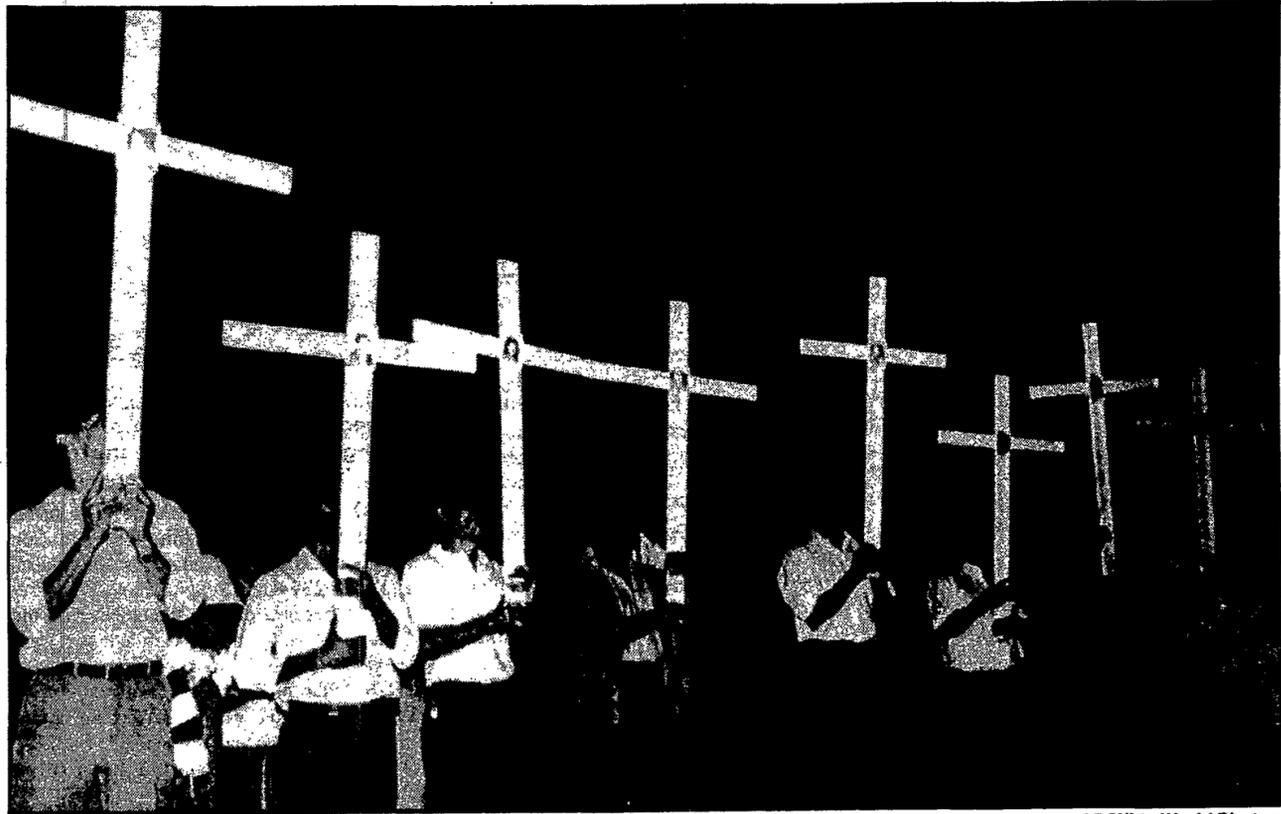
"On the first anniversary of the deaths of these people, eight among 70,000 (dead) in the whole country of El Salvador, we offer a combination of simple prayers and readings and a dramatization of what happened a year ago on this night," said Jesuit Father Paul O'Brien, rector of the Jesuit community in Indianapolis, at a Nov. 15 prayer service at Brebeuf Preparatory School, a Jesuit-run high school in Indianapolis.

"We want to remember what happened in the past, but also what continues to happen in the present," he added.

During the dramatization of the murders, student readers said the eight "were killed because they committed their lives to the poor of El Salvador ... because they proclaimed the truth about El Salvador." After the prayers, the students silently hammered white crosses representing the eight into the ground near newly planted pine trees in their memory.

A commemoration of a different sort took place Nov. 16 at Fort Benning, Ga., when three Vietnam veterans — including Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois — were arrested after spilling eight containers of what they said was human blood at the headquarters building of the U.S. Army School of the Americas, where some Salvadoran soldiers are trained.

"As people of faith, we feel called by conscience to oppose the suffering and death caused by the continued training of Salvadoran soldiers on our soil and continued U.S. aid to El Salvador," said a statement signed by Father Bourgeois,



AP/Wide World Photos
People carry crosses during a Nov. 16 torchlight parade in San Salvador. The parade led up to an all-night vigil marking the anniversary of the killing of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter.

Charles Liteky and Patrick Liteky.

"Our blood which we have poured today ... is that of North Americans mixed with the blood-soaked earth taken from the site of the Jesuit slayings," the statement said. "This blood is a symbol of the suffering and death of 74,000 men, women and children of El Salvador who have been killed since 1980."

Earlier this year, Father Bourgeois, Charles Liteky and seven others went on a water-only fast for more than a month at Fort Benning to protest the training and U.S. aid to El Salvador.

Jesuit Father Jack Seery, another participant in the fast, marked the anniversary of the Jesuits' murders with a talk at Our Lady of the Cape Church in Brewster, Mass. Catholics in the Diocese of Fall River also joined in a candlelight vigil Nov. 16 at the city's Federal Building.

In Los Angeles, 88 people — including at least one priest — were arrested outside the Federal Building after some 250 people formed a human chain blocking access to the building.

"We are here to speak out on behalf of those killed in El Salvador," said Father Christopher Ponnert, a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, after his arrest. "The blood is on our hands as Americans."

New York events included demonstrations outside the Salvadoran consulate and the Salvadoran mission to the United Nations and a candlelight procession from the consulate to St. Francis Xavier Parish for a Mass, at which Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan delivered the homily.

On Nov. 18, Father Joseph Parkes, provincial of the New York Jesuits, spoke to Masses at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish about the commemorative services two days earlier in San Salvador, which he had attended.

In the Northwest, Jesuits Brother Fred

Mercy in Yakima, Wash., and Father Jack Morris of Seattle went on water-only fasts from Nov. 1, All Saints' Day, to Nov. 16 as a way of commemorating the anniversary.

Some 3,000 black armbands, with a white cross and the likenesses of the eight murder victims imprinted on them, were distributed to Jesuits, their students, colleagues and parishioners in the Northwest and were worn during commemorations Nov. 16.

At Seattle University, a Jesuit institu-

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