

Students honor victims of slayings a year later

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — On Nov. 16, 1989, six Jesuits and two women were murdered in El Salvador. One year later, students at McQuaid Jesuit High School haven't forgotten the martyrs.

On the year anniversary of the murders, eight McQuaid Jesuit students played a special role in a commemoration ceremony, while other McQuaid students marked the event.

The Rochester Sanctuary Committee, an interfaith group seeking to educate people

According to findings made after the slayings, soldiers allegedly broke into the Jesuits' residence on Nov. 16, 1989, and dragged the men outside. The soldiers made them lay down on the ground, and allegedly shot them one by one.

The soldiers then searched the house for the housekeeper and her daughter. Since they were witnesses to the killings, they were murdered as well.

Many people believe the brutality of the killings stemmed from the army's fear that the Jesuits' preaching of the Gospel was causing unrest among the poor.



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
During a Nov. 16 commemorative service, McQuaid junior Matt Odmark (right) contemplates the murders one year ago of six Jesuits in El Salvador.

about United States involvement in South American countries such as El Salvador, joined with McQuaid Jesuit High School in developing the Nov. 16 service in the school's chapel. Donna Del Santo, parishioner at Corpus Christi Church, said the tradition will probably continue each year until some sort of resolution is made concerning the deaths of the Jesuits.

The service began with the acclamation "presente" being repeated as each of the martyrs were named. "Presente" is the word used in Latin America to affirm the work of the people named and to show a sign of solidarity in their struggle.

Next, a brief skit telling the following story of the murders was enacted.

In November of 1989, a military curfew had been enforced in the city of San Salvador.

Two days before the slayings, soldiers, with permission from President Alfredo Cristiani, had searched the Jesuit residence at the University of Central America. Death threats to the Jesuits had been broadcast over government radio.

After two Bible readings, eight McQuaid sophomores each read a short biography on the martyrs as slides of the victims were shown.

Each of the eight boys had their own views on the tragedy and the commemorative service. Bill Lavin, who did a reading during the service, said he is worried about recent events in El Salvador.

"It is alarming that the United States was involved," Lavin said. "It makes you so angry that you want to get involved with the government."

Chris Foti, who portrayed Amando Lopez Quintana, SJ, said the murders were tragic because the Jesuits weren't doing anything bad. "They were just teaching people," he said.

"It wasn't worth dying for," added classmate Mike Farwell, who read a poem during the service.

When the McQuaid students found out about the tragedy in 1989, they said the whole school was shocked. A special prayer was immediately said, and then a Mass was held for the victims.



The six slain Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were portrayed in the service by (left to right, front row): Chris Foti, Mike Farwell; (second row) John St. Martin, Gerry Cellura, Eric Domuracki; (third row) Grant Dwyer, Armando Delgado and Bill Lavin.

But Eric Domuracki said he would have forgotten about the murders if the memorial service wasn't held this year. Domuracki, who read the biography of Juan Ramon Moreno Pardo, SJ, said he believes it is important to remember the Jesuits.

"I'm glad that there are people who remembered. The rest of us need to be reminded," he said.

Gerry Cellura and John St. Martin both agreed that the memorial service was also an educational experience.

"I have a better understanding of what happened there," said Cellura, who portrayed Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, SJ.

St. Martin, who read about the life of Ignacio Martin Barb, SJ, said it was alarming to find out what really happened.

"This service gave me an insight of what is really going on down there," he said.

And Armando Delgado, who read about

Ignacio Ellacuria, SJ, had a special interest in the service. His godmother was in El Salvador when many of the brutal murders were being committed. He said she would tell him about the fighting and restrictions imposed on the people.

Grant Dwyer, who portrayed Segundo Montes Mozo, SJ, noted that going to a school run by Jesuits offers many spiritual activities for the students.

"If we went to the public schools, we would miss out on things like this service," he commented.

One student in the audience felt strongly about the service commemorating the Jesuits' tragic deaths.

"I think it (the service) was a worthy thing to do," junior Ryan Walsh said. "It's the kind of thing that should be done. If those guys had the guts to do what they did, then we have to show our support."

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The Catholic Courier
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Group sponsoring Irish history essay contest for youths

ROCHESTER — The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians is currently sponsoring the National Annual Irish History Essay Contest. The topic for junior high students (grades 6-8) is "Grace O'Mally: Pirate Queen," and the topic for high school students (9-12) is "The Birth of the Irish Republic: 1916-1921."

The first place high school winner on the national level will receive \$1000, and the

first place winner among junior high students will receive \$500. State and county awards will also be distributed.

The contest deadline for Monroe County participants is Jan. 10, 1991. The contest is open to all public and private school children in grades 6-12.

For information, contact Marie Logan, 716/467-3393.