

Parishes, groups step up pro-peace efforts

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Right before they left for Christmas break, about 100 students at Nazareth College in Rochester picked up some unassigned reading material in the student union.

The students won't be tested on any of that material when they start the new semester Jan. 15, but events in the Persian Gulf may compel some of them to learn it thoroughly anyway.

The Philadelphia-based Central Committee for Conscientious Objection was the source of the literature students picked up at an information table, which was manned by Nazareth faculty members hoping to enlighten students on the possibility of becoming conscientious objectors.

Despite the interest students showed in the material, one faculty member said she is concerned that they may not understand the full implications — including potential for a military draft — of a war between allied forces in Saudi Arabia and Iraq's forces in neighboring Kuwait.

"I think that the most troubling thing about the students is that they're not well-informed, and they're highly casual that (war is) going to happen to someone else," remarked Deborah First, an associate professor of education.

First, a Quaker, noted that in her local faith community — Rochester Friends Meeting — the option of conscientious objection has long been a concern in time both of war and of peace.

She said the possibility of training facul-



Father Richard Mattie of Hornell conducts a Midnight Mass for officers, crew members and patients aboard the USNS Mercy, a U.S. Navy hospital ship, in the Persian Gulf Dec. 24.

ty members to counsel students or refer them to knowledgeable sources on conscientious objection was raised by faculty members at a meeting last December. She noted that she has offered her expertise on the subject to help colleagues and students explore what is familiar territory to her.

A handful of faculty members plan to obtain formal training in conscientious objection counseling in the next week, according to Harry Murray, an associate professor of sociology at Nazareth and a peace activist.

Such news is welcome to Father Robert T. Werth, pastor of St. Bridget's Parish in Rochester and a member of Faith and Resistance Community, a local Catholic pro-life and anti-war group. The priest hopes his group will be "a clearinghouse" for diocesan Catholics interested in the question of conscientious objection.

Last month, Father Werth sent to pastors throughout the diocese a letter stating the group's intentions and asking the pastors to provide the group with names of

parishioners interested in becoming conscientious-objection counselors or who have done such counseling in the past; parishioners who want to obtain conscientious-objector status; and parishioners who currently are or formerly were conscientious objectors.

So far, only Nazareth College has responded to Faith and Resistance's requests for names, Father Werth said.

Whether there's a war in the Middle East, First hopes recent events will spur students to take a deeper interest in peace issues.

"If (the crisis) blessedly gets resolved without a war, we see ourselves in a continuation of the role of raising consciousness about how these things happen," she observed of faculty members' involvement.

Preventing a war and providing moral support for the troops in the Persian Gulf have been on the minds of many members of the diocese during the last several weeks. These dual concerns have become more pronounced as Jan. 15 — the United Nations' deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait — draws near.

In the month since the Catholic and Episcopal bishops of Rochester released their statement calling for a peaceful settlement of the Persian Gulf crisis, diocesan Catholics — along with numerous

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Police nab suspect in theft at parish

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Rochester police arrested a suspect last week on charges of stealing more than \$7,000 in cash and checks from St. Philip Neri Parish Dec. 27.

According to Sergeant John Flynn of the Rochester Police Department Goodman Section, Officer Marie Van Son apprehended the suspect — identified as Anthony Armstrong, 23, of 115 Woodbury St. — on the corner of North and Orpheum streets at 10:20 a.m. on New Year's Day after she spotted him on Clifford Avenue.

Flynn said Armstrong briefly ran from Van Son, but gave up after a short chase. Flynn said Armstrong has been charged with third-degree grand larceny and is being held on \$750 bail at the Monroe County Jail.

Flynn said parish employees identified Armstrong from police photographs as the man who allegedly stole funds from the parish rectory at about noon on Dec. 27 after asking for money to buy food and diapers.

Sister Mary Bernard Entress, director of religious education, told the *Catholic*

Courier that the man arrived at the door to the parish rectory asking to see the pastor. After being admitted by the parish secretary, he asked to see Sister Entress, who said the man kept changing his story as to what kind of assistance he needed.

"He was such a fast talker," Sister Entress said, adding that the man at first claimed to be part of a neighborhood citizens' patrol group, a statement which she and the secretary told him they wanted to confirm with the police.

Sister Entress then asked the man for his name and address, and left him in the front parlor for a few moments to get a pen and paper. While she was out of the room, she said, the man took several envelopes containing \$6,015 in checks and \$1,300 in cash from a money bag in an adjoining office.

Sister Entress said the man gave her a false name and address, and then quickly left the rectory, running down the street. She said the man attempted to flag down several cars to get a ride.

Although the parish did put a stop on all the checks, the money has not been recovered since the theft, Sister Entress said. She added that the parish has taken a

few extra security precautions since the theft.

To enter the church office, one must ring a buzzer at an outer door located down a flight of stairs from a second inner door opening into the rectory. Prior to the theft, the person in the rectory office would unlock the outer door by a remote mechanism, and then open the inner door slightly to ask whom the visitor wanted to see.

The man reportedly pushed open the second door to gain entry, Sister Entress said, pointing out that whoever answers the second door keeps it chained when they open it. She also said that the curtains on the window of the outer door — previously kept closed — now are open so that parish employees can see who is visiting.

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