

Bishop's view of war criticized during rally

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — If Bishop Matthew H. Clark thinks the war in the Persian Gulf is unjust, then he supports barbarism.

That's the opinion of Vietnam veteran Amy Stefano, who participated with approximately 50 other veterans and supporters Thursday afternoon, Jan. 31, in a march from the Rochester Community War Memorial on Exchange Street to across the road from the Federal Building, 100 State St.

"If the bishop truly believes what he's saying, he supports barbarism," Stefano said when asked about the bishop's December statement labeling an allied military attack against Iraq as unjust. The statement was issued jointly by the Priests' Council of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, and Episcopal Bishop William G. Burrell and the Episcopal Clergy Association of Rochester.

Stefano, who said she was a baptized Catholic, wasn't the only one at the march to criticize the bishop and other diocesan leaders. John Zabkar, a parishioner at Brighton's St. Thomas More Church and a veteran of World War II, said he was displeased with diocesan efforts to set up counseling for conscientious objectors through a network of parish volunteers.

"No freedom ever since the beginning of time was ever won without the shedding of blood," Zabkar said. "Those who hide behind that freedom to choose to be conscientious objectors are a disgrace to those in the service ..."

Several men belonging to the Catholic War Veterans also participated in the march, which was sponsored by the Monroe County American Legion. Edward Kraft, county commander of the Catholic War Veterans and a march participant, echoed Zabkar's remarks.

"I don't think it's an unjust war," Kraft said in a telephone interview after the march. "I think we have to stop (Saddam) Hussein before he makes it worse for everybody."

Kraft also noted his opposition to diocesan efforts on behalf of those seeking conscientious-objector status. "I think everybody should be responsible to his country and, if need be, fight in the war if they're physically able to," he said.

One Catholic World War II veteran remembered back to his high school days when he had ambivalent feelings about fighting Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler.

"At that time ... I felt the way some of these people did," Ralph Bleier said of anti-war protesters.

Bleier, county historian for Catholic War Veterans and adjutant for Our Lady of Perpetual Help Post 1156, fought with the U.S. Army as an infantryman and stressed that he wanted peace as much as anti-war protesters do. "Everybody wants peace," he said. "The only problem is, where we want peace we want to be showing we support our president. The other group, they want peace at any price."

Some veterans, however, are not supportive of U.S. policy. One Catholic veteran of the Pacific theater in World War II em-



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

phazied in a Feb. 2 letter to the *Catholic Courier* that he participated in the march solely to offer moral support for U.S. troops in the gulf.

"I was there marching 'in support of our troops,' not in support of the war, as I abhor any war," wrote Matthew Gac, a parishioner at St. Margaret Mary's

Church, Irondequoit, and a member of both the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Later in his letter, Gac wrote: "I remember the early part of 1943 while our 38th Bomb Group was in New Guinea fighting against a superior enemy — then — it was about five months before we received any mail from home. Therefore it is important for us vets, also the people to let the armed forces there know that we support them — all the way."

Rochesterians passing through the city on their way home from work let the veterans know they supported their march by honking horns and yelling slogans out of their car windows. Despite bone-chilling temperatures and falling snow, the demonstration grew to about 150 people by 6 p.m. Pro-war supporters carried signs bearing such slogans as "Don't Negotiate — Obliterate," and "Don't be a Scud — Be a Patriot."

On the other side of State Street, in front of the Federal Building, anti-war demonstrators, whose numbers grew to about 60 by day's end, prayed for peace and held signs sporting such phrases as "Enlist or Shut Up."

A contingent of staff members from St. Joseph's House of Hospitality participated in the anti-war demonstration by reading from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1967 speech in opposition to the Vietnam War.

Bill Appel, an Air Force veteran of that era and member of Veterans for Peace, stood with the anti-war protesters and emphasized his support for the troops, but not

Priest back home with new perspectives

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GATES — If U.S. citizens had to keep slipping on gas masks like the Israelis currently are doing, the United States would not have gone to war against Iraq, asserted Father Anthony P. Mugavero, who recently returned from a sabbatical in Israel and India.

The parochial vicar of St. Theodore's Church, 168 Spencerport Road, noted that reading about wearing a gas mask is quite different from having to wear one.

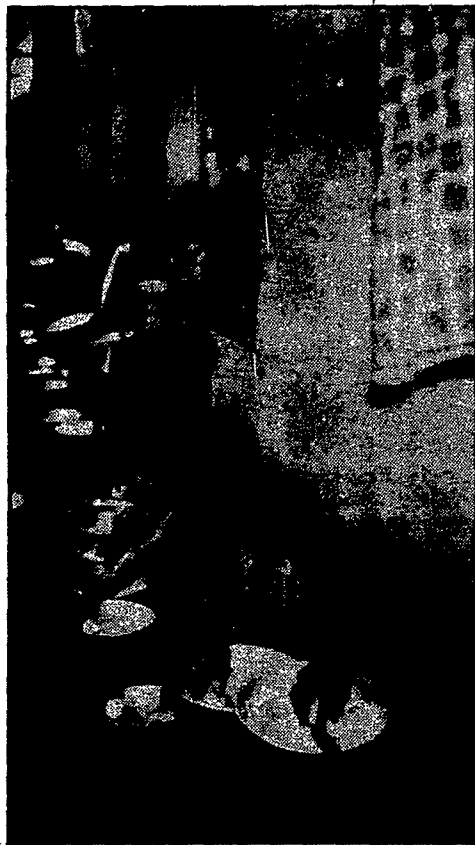
"It's like reading science fiction and it becomes a reality," the priest said. While studying in Jerusalem, Father Mugavero was charged with teaching his fellow students how to use gas masks in the event of an Iraqi chemical attack.

"It's a very ugly thing," he said of the gas mask. "When that comes to your mind, the thing you realize is that we are insane." He later added: "I just don't think that Americans, if they had to go through that process of putting on gas masks, I don't believe that the decision to go to war would have been enacted."

The painful reality — along with the extraordinary beauty — of the Far and Middle East apparently dazzled and dismayed the priest when he lived in both the impoverished city of Calcutta, India, and the strife-torn city of Jerusalem in Israel.

In an interview last week at his parish's rectory, Father Mugavero told a number of tales highlighting the differences between hearing about such places as the Far East and the Holy Land and actually living there as he did.

Father Mugavero lived part of his time in India with the Missionary Charity Brothers in Calcutta, sleeping on a floor, boiling water for drinking, riding in overcrowded buses that belched smoke through streets scarred by potholes, and, in general, sharing life with millions of other Indians who spend impoverished lives in hovels and squalor made more miserable by searing



Father Anthony P. Mugavero

Street children get a free meal each week at an outreach center run by the Missionary Charity Brothers in Calcutta, India.

heat. "I truly can not honestly say how a family can live in this," Father Mugavero said of Calcutta. Yet, he noted that much of what he considered intolerable, Indians considered part of regular life. For example, he said, when he complained of temperatures climbing up to 100 degrees, the Indians would reply: "Oh yeah, this isn't too bad."

One of the highlights of his stay in Calcutta was celebrating Mass at the Motherhouse of the Missionaries of Charity, where Mother Teresa lived. Before the Mass, Father Mugavero met the order's famous founder who showed up late

because she was stuck in Calcutta's traffic. "I had a real nice encounter with her," Father Mugavero said, noting she apologized for being late, telling him, "Father I'm so sorry for you having to wait for me."

The priest said Mother Teresa had a humble, unpretentious manner. "When she's talking to you, you're the most important person," he said, adding "the feeling was anything she has done she gives God total credit for."

In addition to the cultural differences he experienced in India, Father Mugavero noted that his scripture studies in Jerusalem last fall gave him a radically different perspective of Jesus. For example, his professors stressed the idea that Jesus probably spent his years prior to public ministry studying to be a rabbi.

In doing so, when one reads about Jesus arguing over Mosaic law in the New Testament with the scribes and pharisees, he may have been doing it in a spirit of internal squabbling with his fellow rabbis rather than external attacking, Father Mugavero noted.

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