

# Rosary program finds new home in convent

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — For more than 40 years, faithful listeners of the Family Rosary for Peace have been greeted nightly by the voice of Monsignor Joseph Cirrincione.

But those who tuned their radios to WSWG-AM 1460 the evening of Jan. 28, 1991, however, were welcomed to the program's 14,942nd broadcast by Sister Elizabeth LeValley, SSJ, superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

That broadcast marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Family Rosary for Peace. For the first time, the program was broadcast from its new home in the chapel of the congregation's St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary.

And Monsignor Cirrincione — like so many thousands of loyal listeners — was sitting at home, joining the rosary rather than leading it.

The priest said he's been pleased thus far with the program as it has been run by the congregation.

"They are doing a fine job," Monsignor Cirrincione said in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*. "I'm so gratified that they made it possible for this program, which has been a fixture in the diocese, to continue."

Monsignor Cirrincione, who launched the program March 4, 1950, after visits to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, was forced to give up broadcasting the nightly rosary program because of a heart attack and stroke he suffered in July, 1990.

Although Monsignor Cirrincione has recovered somewhat in the intervening months, the stroke has left him short of breath and unable to carry on lengthy conversations — or to lead recitation of the rosary.

Because of his age and health, Monsignor Cirrincione had been working with Father George Norton, diocesan director of telecommunications, even before the heart attack, in an effort to find a new home and leader for the radio show.

"For some time now we've been concerned that the rosary program continue beyond Monsignor Cirrincione's ability to carry it on," Father Norton said. "Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark shared that concern, and asked me to work with Monsignor Cirrincione to see how we could best continue the rosary."

The heart attack and stroke forced Father Norton to begin the search sooner than expected, he acknowledged.

The Family Rosary for Peace stayed on the air with pre-recorded broadcasts while Father Norton looked for people to assume responsibility for the program and for a new venue from which to broadcast. Virtually from its inception, the program had been transmitted from a house on the property of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, of



File photo  
Because of a stroke he suffered last summer, Monsignor Joseph Cirrincione, founder of the Family Rosary for Peace, had to give up broadcasting the nightly radio program after 40 years.

which Monsignor Cirrincione had been pastor.

Someone suggested that the two major congregations of women religious in the diocese — the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy — might be able to help, Father Norton said.

When he contacted them, both congregations expressed willingness and enthusiasm to help, Father Norton said. But after studying the sites the congregations were able to offer, he selected the chapel at the SSJ infirmary because it is more accessible to visitors, he explained.

Sister Joan McDowell, SSJ, spokeswoman for the Sisters of St. Joseph, said the congregation was happy to help keep the rosary program going because of the many devoted listeners, including sisters in the infirmary.

"The sisters at the infirmary are extremely sensitive to the needs of the shut-ins," she noted. "We saw this as in line with our mission of service."

The program will be coordinated by Sister Rosemary St. Peter, SSJ, the congregation's assistant superior general and the person with whom Father Norton worked with in relocating the rosary program. She said the Family Rosary for

Peace will continue in the same format that has proven successful for Monsignor Cirrincione over the years.

Sister Mary Ida Lynch, SSJ, sisters' coordinator at the infirmary, will help run the program.

Father Norton, who was a radio announcer before being ordained to the priesthood, will serve as the manager for the program, which is currently carried by four stations in addition to WSWG: WSWF-AM 1110 and FM 99.3 in Seneca Falls; WSIV-AM 1540 in Syracuse; WIQT-AM 820 in Horseheads; and WXRL-AM 1300 in Lancaster. In addition, WLEA-AM 1480 in Hornell picks up the show, but does not transmit it, relaying it instead to the local cable television system.

Father Norton also will handle finances for the program. The Family Rosary for Peace, Inc., is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. It has relied solely on



A Sister of St. Joseph recites the rosary during a recent broadcast.

donations and on an appeal conducted every September, said Father Norton, who noted that the annual appeal will continue.

In the future, broadcasts will be conducted by people outside the Sisters of St. Joseph, Sister St. Peter noted. Among future leaders will be Bishop Clark, who previously has led recitation of the rosary on the show. Members of other area religious congregations also will be invited to lead the recitation.

Sister McDowell noted that the broadcasts are open to the public, and that individuals interested in joining the audience are welcome to come to the infirmary chapel any evening at 6:15 p.m. The infirmary is located on the grounds of the SSJ motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Rochester.

Sadly, Monsignor Cirrincione, who spent so much of his life creating and leading the program, will not be among those who lead the recitation on air.

"I think (my condition) precludes the possibility of me doing it occasionally," Monsignor Cirrincione said.

The monsignor acknowledged that he will miss doing the show, but added, "I think the fact that it is continuing on the air in the same format overrides any nostalgia."

As for seeing the show able to continue in other people's hands, Monsignor Cirrincione remarked, "It's really a miracle that I've lived to see it to completion."



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Technical Advisor Bernie Lynch, left, gives Sister Rosemary St. Peter, SSJ, the countdown during the first broadcast of the rosary program from its new home in the chapel of the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary on Jan. 28.

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