

Father Berrigan among five arrested at protest

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan and four Rochester residents were arrested Saturday, Oct. 26, outside the University Avenue offices of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley. The five activists were protesting the organization's plans to open an abortion clinic.

The protest, part of the Rochester-based Faith and Resistance Community's fourth-annual retreat, followed a demonstration at the Kenneth L. Keating Federal Building on Oct. 25.

Also arrested at the Planned Parenthood protest were John "Pat" O'Hara, Carol Crossed, Donna Kearney and Janet Bezila, all members of the Faith and Resistance Community.

The five were among approximately 25 protesters who gathered at the Planned Parenthood office. They sat in front of the office's main doors, blocking entrance, and refused to leave when asked to do so by police.

They were issued appearance tickets for trespassing, and were scheduled to appear for arraignment in City Court on Wednesday, Oct. 30.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Father Berrigan said he would plead not guilty to the charges. His refusal to plead guilty would force a trial.

Father Berrigan said the goal of such a trial would be to convey a public message.

"We can't keep pleading guilty to protecting the unborn when we are not the ones who are guilty of the deaths of the unborn," Father Berrigan said.

According to Carol Crossed, one of the organizers of the retreat, the Planned Parenthood office was chosen because of the organization's recent announcement that it planned to open an abortion clinic.

"Abortion has nothing to do with planned parenthood," Crossed said.

Planned Parenthood's plans to establish an abortion clinic also have led to an announcement by United Way of Greater Rochester that the funding agency will cut off general funding to Planned Parenthood. Although the agency could continue to participate in the United Way, it would receive only those contributions specifically designated for it by donors.

As part of their action at the Federal Building, members of the Faith and Resistance Community chained a 10-foot cross to the flag pole. The protesters, approximately 35 in number, later moved the cross to the building's front door. Police made no arrests at that demonstration.

The two actions stemmed from the Faith and Resistance Community's emphasis on linking the issues of war and abortion, Crossed observed.

In addition to the protests, the two-day retreat included Masses, prayers and talks by three featured speakers. The speakers were Father Berrigan; Claire Schaffer-Duffy, a member of the Catholic Worker Community in Worcester, Mass.; and John



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Following an Oct. 25 protest in front of Kenneth L. Keating Federal Building in Rochester, Father Robert T. Werth (right) holds a corpus borrowed from St. Bridget's Church for the event, while John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe (left) and Father Daniel Berrigan, SJ, converse.

Cavanaugh-O'Keefe, a Vietnam-era conscientious objector who helped develop the non-violent anti-abortion protest techniques currently used by Operation Rescue.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Cavanaugh-O'Keefe explained that he began to connect abortion to warfare while serving his alternative service at a hospital in 1969. He recalled that a nurse he was working with began to confide in him about an abortion she had undergone, and that her obvious distress convinced him that abortion was wrong.

"She was a mother and her child was dead, but she had no way to grieve because she was in denial," he recalled.

In the early 1970s, Cavanaugh-O'Keefe read the works of Dr. Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. Through his reading, he "saw the possibilities of using King's insights with the pro-life movement."

In 1975, Cavanaugh-O'Keefe became one of the co-founders of the Pro-life Non-Violent Action Project in Washington, D.C. The group began staging sit-ins at abortion clinics.

A veteran of 31 arrests for anti-abortion and anti-military protests, Cavanaugh-O'Keefe said the value of civil disobedience is that it draws attention to the issues. The fact that protesters are willing to make personal sacrifices and risk being the target of violence is part of the technique developed by King and Gandhi, he explained.

Responding to criticisms of civil disobedience, Cavanaugh-O'Keefe remarked, "Find for me a single example of a massive, deeply entrenched social evil re-

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Scholar discusses findings during visit to Rochester

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — An Italian researcher who believes he has found proof that early Christians ordained women priests discussed his findings during a visit to Rochester last week.

The evidence, Italian historian Giorgio Otranto said, challenges church teachings that women have never been ordained — an argument used by some church officials to oppose the ordination of women today.

"I feel very strongly that the time is ripe for the question to be seriously addressed by putting the evidence on the table," Otranto said through a translator in an interview with the *Catholic Courier* on Wednesday, Oct. 23.

Otranto visited Rochester Oct. 19-23 as part of a six-city U.S. tour from Oct. 6-28.

In addition to conducting a slide-show presentation on his evidence at the Colgate Rochester Divinity School Oct. 21, he also led a shorter presentation at St. Mary's Church downtown on Oct. 22.

The national tour was sponsored by the Women's Ordination Conference, formerly headquartered in Rochester. The conference's Rochester chapter sponsored Otranto's appearances here in conjunction with St. Bernard's Institute and St. Mary's Downtown Community Forum.

The director of the Institute of Classics and Christian History Studies at the University of Bari in Italy, Otranto first published his findings in *Vetera Christianorum*, an Italian scholarly journal dealing with Christian antiquity, in 1982.

In the article, Otranto cited tombstone engravings, a letter written by Pope Gelasius in 494 A.D., statements from several

church councils, and ninth-century writings by Bishop Atto of Vercelli, Italy, to show that a small number of women served as ordained priests. These women were recognized as such in several regions of Europe during the first five centuries of the Catholic Church, Otranto said.

The article received little notice when it was first published, Otranto explained during the interview with the *Courier*.

However, in 1983, Mary Ann Rossi, a research fellow at the Women's Studies Research Center in Madison, Wis., discovered the article while studying in Italy. After translating the article into English, Rossi presented it in June, 1990, at the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in New York City.

The translation was subsequently published in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* in May, 1991.

One of the chief pieces of evidence is a letter written in 494 A.D. by Pope Gelasius, Otranto said. In that letter, he noted, the pope condemned the practice of women officiating at the sacred altar. The Latin word the pope used to describe what

the women were doing is the word used for the actions of a priest, he observed.

Otranto also cited several statements issued by early church councils prohibiting the participation of women in liturgical services.

The fact that the pope wrote the letter and the councils issued such prohibitions, Otranto said, "affirms in that negative process that women were being ordained."

In addition, grave inscriptions in southern Italy, parts of southern France, and in Dalmatia — now part of Yugoslavia — indicate that the women buried within were priests, Otranto said.

Those graves bear the feminine forms of the Latin words for priest — *presbytera* and *episcopa* — Otranto noted. In the past, he said, the Catholic Church has claimed that these words were being used to refer to the women as wives of priests, not as priests themselves.

Otranto noted that some of the references clearly indicate that the women — and not their husbands — were the priests.

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NE quadrant board considering closing three Catholic schools

ROCHESTER — A strategic planning committee has recommended the closing this year of three Northeast Quadrant Catholic schools. The recommendations are contained in a report submitted to the quadrant's governing board.

According to a copy of the planning committee's report obtained by the *Catholic Courier*, the committee has recommended that the quadrant close schools located at St. Stanislaus, St. Cecilia's and St. Thomas the Apostle parishes.

Schools at St. Ambrose, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret Mary would remain open under the recommendations, continuing to house grades kindergarten through six.

The recommended reconfiguration also calls for transferring children now in grades one through six at Christ the King School to other quadrant schools, and establishing a pre-school "early learning center" at Christ the King.

The report notes that the planning committee also had considered two alternate configurations. One of the alternate plans would have kept St. Thomas the

Apostle School open, while closing St. Margaret Mary's.

Saying the committee's report was to have been strictly confidential, Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, refused to comment on its contents. Sister Binsack is director of diocesan Faith Development Ministries, which oversees diocesan schools.

Apparently the committee report had been leaked to a reporter at the Rochester *Times-Union* on or before Monday, Oct. 28. The Gannett newspaper broke a story on the proposed closings in its evening editions that day.

Several school and parish officials contacted by the *Courier* also declined to comment on the report.

St. Stanislaus pastor Father Andrew Grzela acknowledged, however, that the severe financial strain imposed on his parish by school costs and declining enrollment would probably compel the quadrant to close the school.

— Rob Cullivan

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