

# Attorney, chaplain differ on approaches to war

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — For Christians who abhor war and its effects on young men and women, two speakers offered different yet equally compelling perspectives Thursday evening, Feb. 13, on the Persian Gulf war.

For Clare V. Overlander, an attorney based in Newburgh, N.Y., the Persian Gulf war meant leaving her practice in the spring of 1991 to spend five months in Frankfurt, Germany. In Frankfurt, she counseled military personnel who had filed for conscientious

objector status, and was sponsored by German peace organizations and churches.

For the Rev. Paul Womack, community minister with the United Methodist Church, the Persian Gulf war meant duty as a chaplain. A captain with the 98th Division of the Army Reserves, the Rev. Womack accompanied his unit to Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait from January to April of 1991.

The speakers' made their presentations at St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, as part of the parish's Downtown Community Forum "Life

After Five" series.

Overlander was highly critical of the way the military handled those who had applied for conscientious-objector status before and during the war. In particular, she knocked Army regulations that disallowed "selective conscientious objection" — objection to serving in a particular war, as opposed to any and all wars.

She noted, for example, that one Army lawyer expressed relief when she told him a client of hers was not a Muslim. The reason? The commanders really want to "get" the Muslims, she recalled the lawyer saying. Many Muslims in the service refused to go to Saudi Arabia because they would have to fight in a war in which other Muslims were killed, she said.

Neither speaker considered the Persian Gulf war "just." Indeed, both presenters agreed that few, if any wars, could qualify as just.

However, Overlander and the Rev. Womack differed on the way in which Christians should approach military service.

Overlander, a Catholic, said she could not see Christians — as "people of faith" — supporting any wars by serving in the military.

"I still like that poster from the 1960s which said, 'What if we gave a war and nobody came?'" Overlander remarked.

She pointed to an article she had written for the Winter, 1991, edition of *Pax Christi USA* magazine, in which she detailed several of the cases she handled in Germany. In part, the article also outlined her beliefs on war.

"What are we, as people who affirm the necessity for peace and cooperation in social interactions, to make of the monstrous evil of militarism which

pervades our world today?" Overlander wrote. "I think that, above all, we need to be clear about who we are and where we stand. One way for our church to make that statement would be to abandon completely and unreservedly any support for the outmoded 'just war' theory which serves as a mantle for warmakers and an obstacle for peacemakers."

Although he acknowledged the value of Overlander's criticisms of war and the military, the Rev. Womack also noted that he could never completely renounce the use of force.

"I'm not a pacifist — I'm just not," he said.

Additionally, the minister pointed out that unless Christians like himself opt to serve in the military, the average soldier will have no one to turn to for spiritual comfort. Nor will combatants have anyone to help them sort out the moral questions they face on the battlefield.

In a follow-up interview after the speech, the Rev. Womack buttressed his contention by recalling how he persuaded a group of U.S. soldiers to give medical attention to Iraqi prisoners of war. A number of U.S. troops had been killed or wounded that day, and the soldiers wanted to take revenge by neglecting the POWs' injuries, he said.

Chaplain Womack persuaded the soldiers to change their minds by reminding them that neglecting the Iraqis would violate Army regulations. More importantly, he said, the U.S. soldiers would be violating their own humanity by not taking care of someone, even if that person were the enemy.

"I told them if they did not do that, they would someday feel guilty and regret it," the minister recalled.



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

**SUSTAINING STAINED GLASS** — Arthur Femenella (background), president of the nationwide Association of Restoration Specialists, shows Kathy Urbanic how to do a life-size rubbing of a stained-glass window at Rochester's St. Stanislaus Church in Rochester Feb. 13. For a story on the project, see page 6.

## Diocesan employees slated to receive 5 percent raises

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Diocesan employees are scheduled to receive 5 percent salary increases when the diocese's fiscal year begins July 1, 1992.

At the same time, however, all employees who — prior to Jan. 1, 1992 — did not have to pay part of their health-insurance costs, will have to pay 15 percent of the premium price.

These are among some of the changes in the diocese's "Compensation Package for the 1992/93 Fiscal Year."

Released Feb. 13, the package also calls for an increase in the mileage reimbursement rate from 26 cents to 28 cents per mile for business-related travel, and announced that results of a salary survey conducted by Human Resources is slated for release at the end of March.

The 5-percent salary increase actually exceeds the 1991 increase in the U.S. Consumer Price Index, noted Mary Kessler, diocesan director of Human Resources.

The diocese decided to go beyond

the approximate index rise of 4.1 percent, Kessler said, because "we wanted to continue to recognize that we are not where we should be in terms of salary in many cases. We wanted to recognize the dedication of many people who are working in the church."

The 5 percent figure was decided upon after the diocese consulted parishes to determine whether they could handle larger raises than the index, Kessler observed.

Kessler acknowledged that as salaries increase, some parishes may have to reduce their number of employees.

"The continuing message," she said, "is we believe that we might end up with fewer people being paid, but being paid justly."

The package also calls for diocesan employees to assume a greater portion of health-insurance costs. The increase is part of the beginning stages of a cost-sharing plan, Kessler observed. The target is for all diocesan employees to pay 25 percent of the premiums and for the diocese or parish to pay 75 percent of the cost by July, 1994, she said.

Prior to Jan. 1, 1992, employees hired

before July 1, 1989, had not had to pay any of their health-insurance premiums for single coverage. As of Jan. 1, 1992, these employees have had to pay approximately 10 percent of the cost, Kessler said.

Employees hired after July 1, 1989, with family policies, had been paying a portion of health-insurance premiums. As of July 1, 1992, these employees will already be paying 25 percent of the cost. That percentage will remain constant while other employees' cost-sharing percentages increase to 25 percent between now and 1994, Kessler explained.

The cost sharing has become neces-

sary, Kessler said, due to "escalating health-insurance premiums and the ability of parishes to pay for them."

The compensation package also contained notice of the impending release of a salary survey conducted in 1991. Kessler said the survey's goal was "to find out what people are actually being paid," and "to help pastors in making salary decisions about people who had not been covered before."

The survey project, Kessler continued, helped to standardize job descriptions for a number of parish positions. These positions include such occupations as musicians, secretaries and maintenance workers, she said.

**Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)**  
Vol. 103 No. 20 February 20, 1992  
Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.  
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$19.50; Canada and foreign \$19.50 plus postage.  
Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340.  
Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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