

Anderson says faith helped him through ordeal

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BATAVIA — It was the scene so many had dreamed of and prayed for, but one which — for each year of Terry Anderson's captivity — seemed farther and farther from reach.

Anderson was back in Batavia last week, and thousands of well-wishers were overjoyed to welcome him.

Nearly seven months after his highly publicized, seven-year ordeal as a hostage in Lebanon ended, the 44-year-old Anderson returned to where he spent his childhood to visit family members and friends.

Anderson, who lived in Albion and Batavia before graduating from Batavia High School in 1965, made several public appearances during his four-day visit, which began when he arrived at Greater Rochester International Airport last Thursday afternoon, June 25.

Among the highlights of the visit was Anderson delivering the Batavia High School commencement address on Sunday, June 28. One day earlier, he was honored by nearly 4,000 people during an official welcome at the Batavia Downs racetrack. That ceremony was preceded by a motorcade parade through downtown.

Anderson, who last visited Batavia in 1978, was accompanied all weekend by his fiancée, Madeleine Bassil, and their 7-year-old daughter, Sulome, who was born a short time after Anderson was captured on March 16, 1985.

Everywhere he went, Anderson flashed the huge grin for which he has become known ever since Dec. 4, 1991, when he became the last American hostage to be released from the Middle East. For nearly seven years prior to that day, the only proof that he was



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Terry Anderson (far left) and sculptor Louis Dlugosz (far right) hold up the broken chains from a statue of the former hostage. Anderson's fiancée Madeleine Bassil (center) and their daughter Sulome look on during a June 26 ceremony at Batavia's Genesee Country Mall.



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Looking upward during a June 26 press conference, Anderson joked that he would often pray to God: 'Just get me out of here, please, and I'll do whatever you want.'

alive came from occasional videotaped messages released by his captors. Those videotapes showed Anderson to be articulate, but haggard.

The Associated Press correspondent's physical condition was the result of treatment received from terrorists, who — he reported during a May 4 press conference in New York City — would frequently chain, blindfold and beat him.

Anderson shared his experiences again during a June 26 press conference at Stonewood Ponds Executive Conference Center in Barre, Orleans County. While talking with the media, Anderson admitted that he may not have survived the ordeal without his renewed Catholic faith.

"I learned a great deal about my faith, and met some very Christian (fellow hostages)," Anderson said. "I had left the church when I was young, and only came back six months before I was captured. It was a very lucky thing."

Anderson, who answered all reporters' questions patiently and with deep thought, described himself as a changed man.

"I used to be pretty arrogant and pushy, not caring enough," he revealed.

While imprisoned, however, he considered all the strife he had witnessed during his travels with the Associated Press.

"You don't go off and watch wars and riots and people getting killed and not have it affect you. It does affect you, sometimes very strongly; and I had six years and nine months to reflect upon that," he said.

Now Anderson appreciates the gift of life in ways that wouldn't have been



Kellie McCann/Photo intern
Yellow ribbons and American flags adorned the trees inside the mall.

possible had he not suffered through those years of captivity.

"Just about everything I do, I enjoy very much ... there is freshness and newness to the things I do," he said.

Anderson said he harbors no hostile feelings toward his former captors, adding that the Christian way is to forgive. Neither does he feel angry toward the United States government, which came under heavy criticism — many times from Anderson's sister, Peggy Say — for its perceived deliberate pace in seeking the hostages' release.

Anderson currently lives in New York City and is busy writing a book about his ordeal. He is considering returning to work for the Associated Press, and said he also might go back to school.

Right now, however, Anderson is trying to readjust to American life, and make up for lost time with his fiancée and the daughter he had never met before last December.

At one point during the press conference, he joked that, while in captivity, he would frequently pray to God: "Just get me out of here, please, and I'll do whatever you want."

When asked what he communicates to God now that his release has become reality, Anderson turned somber and replied:

"I say 'thank you,' a lot. I can't think about starting a prayer without saying 'thank you.' God has been very, very good to us."

Group petitions Rome to overrule diocese's prohibition of Latin Mass

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A group of local Catholics has petitioned the Vatican to overrule Bishop Matthew H. Clark's decision at this time to forbid celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass in the Diocese of Rochester.

According to group spokesman Dominic Aquila, the petition has been received by Vatican officials.

Aquila said he sent the petition on June 12 to the Washington, D.C., offices of Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, apostolic pro-nuncio to the United States. Aquila said Archbishop Cacciavillan then forwarded the petition to the Vatican's Ecclesia Dei Commission, which handles conflicts surrounding celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass.

A parishioner at Rochester's Our Lady of Victory Church, Aquila said he sent the petition as the designated representative of 85 Catholics who wished to see the return of the 1962 version of the Traditional Latin Mass. The traditional Mass was replaced in 1969 by the *Novus Ordo* — the new order of the Mass.

"The people I represent are all in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church," Aquila declared during a June 26 press conference outside Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

"Those people who are attached to the Traditional Latin Mass are so because to them it represents more fully

the sense of mystery at the heart of the passion of Christ, which is re-enacted in the Mass," he said.

Aquila said he and others had repeatedly sought Bishop Clark's permission for celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass. The Vatican has allowed such celebrations — at the discretion of the local bishop — since 1984.

Rochester is the only diocese in New York state that does not permit the traditional Mass, Aquila said. He charged that in denying his permission, Bishop Clark was violating a right given to Catholics by Pope John Paul II.

Although Bishop Clark has not yet permitted celebration of the traditional Mass in the diocese, diocesan spokesman Father George Norton said "there is an active dialogue going on moving in those directions."

"It is not a dead issue," Father Norton added.

Meanwhile, Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan chancellor and canon law adviser, acknowledged that the pope had given bishops permission to allow the Traditional Latin Mass. But he said he did not believe that the pope had declared that Mass to be a "right" guaranteed to Catholics.

Father McKenna said he had not received word whether the Vatican commission had found the petition to have merit and thus require action. The chancellor added that he did not know when the commission might make such a determination.

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