

Latin patriarch wants pressure put on Israel

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem is calling on the United States and the international community to put pressure on Israel and the Palestinians to work for peace in the Middle East.

Patriarch Michel Sabbah also described the current peace talks among Israeli and Arab officials as "too slow."

"After one year they have produced almost nothing," he said.

The patriarch — a title comparable to archbishop — declared that justice was essential to peace, noting, "Peace is possible, if it is wanted."

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Patriarch Sabbah, the first Palestinian Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, visited Rochester Dec. 9-11 as part of an 11-day trip to Canada and the United States from Dec. 4-14.

During his visit to Rochester, Patriarch Sabbah met with Bishop Matthew H. Clark at the Pastoral Center. He also spoke at various sites, including Sacred Heart Cathedral, the Islamic Center of Rochester, St. John Fisher and Nazareth colleges, the Aquinas Institute, and St. John the Evangelist School on Humboldt Street.

The patriarch raised the need for granting Jerusalem a "special status" in order for Muslims, Jews and Christians to have free access to the city.

"A special status must be found for Jerusalem in view of its position as a holy city, enabling it to become the city of justice and fraternity," Patriarch Sabbah declared during his Dec. 9 evening address at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

"Through all its history, Jerusalem was owned by one religion and governed by one corresponding power," the patriarch continued. "Therefore, the holy city was always a cause of war. The only way for it to become a city of peace is to become the property of all

three religions."

The Israeli government currently controls Jerusalem, limiting access to Muslims and Christians from Arab nations, Patriarch Sabbah reported during a Dec. 9 afternoon forum at the Islamic Center, 727 Westfall Road.

The Israeli government claims that it limits access for security reasons, the patriarch noted to members of the Interfaith Forum at the session. He alleged that the Israeli government also denies certain rights to Palestinians in the occupied territories, again claiming security needs.

"As long as justice is not done there is a situation of violence," Patriarch Sabbah said. "There is a situation of hostility from Arab nations toward Israel."

In order to encourage justice, pressure must be put on both Palestinians and Israelis, the patriarch stressed. During a question-and-answer period, he said that Palestinians have already experienced sufficient pressure.

"The pressure is to be put on Israel," the patriarch said. "They are the stronger side."

During a private interview with the *Catholic Courier* following his Islamic Center address, Patriarch Sabbah said, "Peace is in the hands of Israel. The U.S. must convince (the Israeli government) to make things clear that peace must be done."

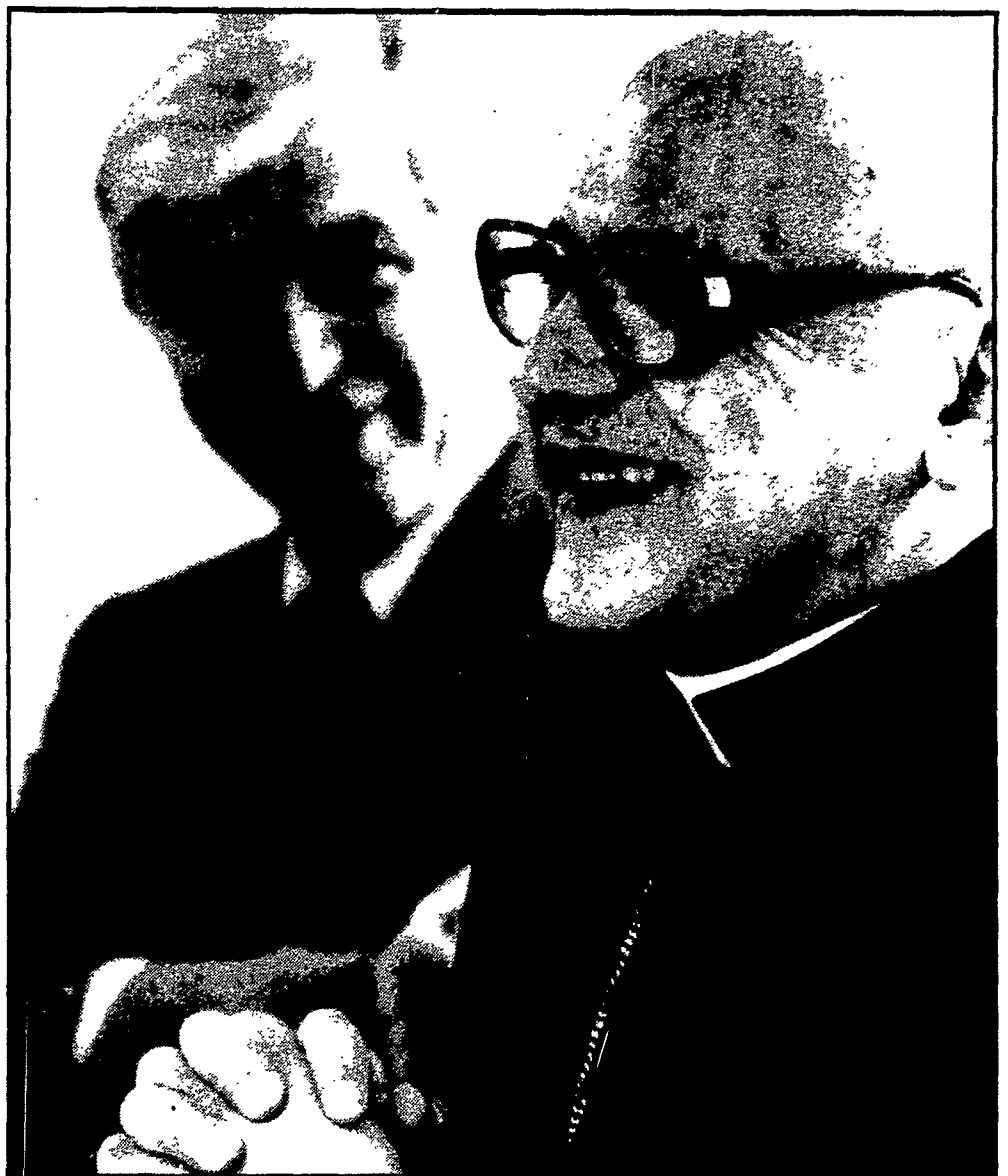
When the Israelis and the Palestinians learn to coexist, peace will come to Middle East, he predicted.

"Once the (Palestinian issue) is solved, then the (Arab) neighbors will be satisfied as well," he declared.

During his address at the Islamic Center, the patriarch noted that when talks among Israel and Arab nations began in Spain in 1991, "A new hope was born in the region, in the hearts of our people."

He pointed out that when the talks started, Palestinian children even gave Israeli soldiers olive branches.

But now that the talks are stalled and have "accomplished almost nothing," the patriarch said, frustration has grown and violence has returned. As a result of that violence, he observed,



S. John Wilkin/Photo Intern
The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah (right), laughs at a comment from a member of the interfaith forum at the Islamic Center of Rochester Dec. 9. Richard S. Gilbert of the First Unitarian Church looks on.

Christians, Jews and Muslims in Israel and the Middle East are all suffering.

Patriarch Sabbah noted during his interview with the *Courier* that Palestinians living in Israel proper had rights under the Israeli government, and peacefully coexisted with their Israeli neighbors.

"They show coexistence is possible in the occupied territories also," the patriarch suggested. "A solution is possible."

While speaking at the Islamic Center, the patriarch said that although the problem in Israel is political, not religious, religion has played a role in the conflict, and consequently can play a role in solving it.

The message of Jerusalem and of Bethlehem, Patriarch Sabbah said, "is

the message of peace, peace for all men."

He noted that "many people kill other people in the name of God." But, he added, anyone who kills in the name of God and religion, "does not understand his own religion."

"You must be loyal and faithful to your own church and religion," the patriarch continued. "(But) at the same time you must be open to the person who does not belong to your church."

All people are God's children, Patriarch Sabbah said. "The one who loves God must love God's children, whatever they are, whoever they are."

"We are called to love God, we are called to love the children of God," he concluded.

Snowstorm delays five of 11 regional synod meetings

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

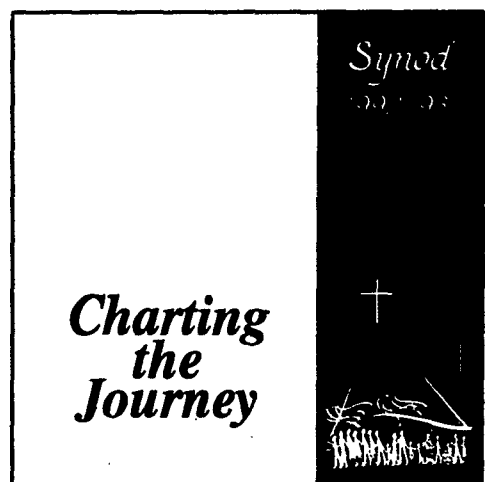
ROCHESTER — The Synod's next phase is temporarily on hold for nearly half of the diocese's 11 regions.

Last week's devastating snowstorm forced cancellation of five scheduled regional synod meetings on Saturday, Dec. 12.

According to Father Joseph A. Hart, synod director, the decision to cancel some of the regional synods was made on Friday afternoon, Dec. 11, after discussions with each regional coordinator.

Daylong synod meetings were postponed in the Tompkins-Tioga, Cayuga-Seneca, Yates-Ontario-Wayne, Steuben and Livingston regions. All have been rescheduled for Saturday, Jan. 9 at their original locations.

Those locations are: Tompkins-Tioga — St. John's Church, 24 Rock St., Newark Valley; Cayuga-Seneca — Sacred Heart Church, 90 Melrose Road, Auburn; Yates-Ontario-Wayne — St. Mary's School, 16 Gibson St., Canandaigua; Steuben — St. Mary's Church, 32 E. Morris St., Bath; and Livingston



— St. Mary's Church, 13 North St., Geneseo.

Father Hart noted that comparatively better traveling conditions permitted synods to go on as scheduled at all five regional locations in Monroe County, as well as the Chemung and Schuyler region.

"These communities have access to major roads. Others are much more rural; so people would have been traveling secondary or tertiary roads," Father Hart explained.

As for the snowstorm's effect on the overall process, Father Hart said, "Everything is still fine, although it would have been nice if everything was over with. It's more work for our office because of the delay in tabulating reports, and it's obviously inconvenient for delegates who had set aside that day (Dec. 12) for over a year."

Each regional synod's general report should be available by the third week in January, Father Hart said.

The regional synod process consists of discussions surrounding recommendations made during the parish/community synod process this past fall. Another regional synod is scheduled for May 22, 1993. The diocesan General Synod will take place on Oct. 1-3, 1993, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

Gloria Ulterino, a delegate for Monroe County's southeast region, reported a healthy turnout on Dec. 12 at Guardian Angels Church, 2061 E. Henrietta Road.

"There were maybe 30 name tags left on the table, but we still had over 200 people. It was an excellent

process," said Ulterino, a parishioner at Good Shepherd Church, 3318 E. Henrietta Road.

She added that some of the most interesting discussions dealt with the synod's second theme, "How can we support our parishes in being faith-filled celebrating communities?"

"Outreach to alienated people came up in discussion. We talked a lot about hospitality — welcoming people and making that obvious," remarked Ulterino, who serves on the writing committee for the second theme.

Father Hart attended the Chemung-Schuyler regional meeting, which was conducted at Church of St. Mary Our Mother, 816 W. Broad St., Horseheads. "There were only four people missing," he said.

The synod director noted that discussions were conducted on a very personal level.

"People really spoke from their own lived experience — a convert, a divorced woman, a woman who had faced serious illness. They helped the rest of the group to understand the importance of a particular recommendation," Father Hart said.