

# Ernesto Cardenal predicts peace in Nicaragua

## Suspended priest says Sandinistas to use ballot

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

PITTSFORD — Father Ernesto Cardenal, suspended from priestly ministry in 1985 because he refused to step down from his position of minister of culture for Nicaragua's Sandinista government, claims that the situation is worsening in his homeland under the current political regime.

But the poet and priest believes that the Sandinistas, who were voted out of power in 1989, will not resort to violence to oust the government of Violeta Chamorro.

Father Cardenal made those observations in the Lower Level Auditorium of the Nazareth College Arts Center, 4245 East Ave., on Friday, Oct. 22, after reading from his recently published work *Cosmic Canticle*. His visit was co-sponsored by Writers and Books and Nazareth College's Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs.

The 68-year old priest currently directs the House of Three Worlds, a cultural foundation in Managua, Nicaragua. He has been at the foundation since leaving his post as minister of culture, which he held in the Sandinista government from 1979-88.

Previous to his involvement with the Sandinista rebels and government, Father Cardenal had gained an international reputation for his poetry. Many of his poems dealt with human-rights violations in Nicaragua by the military and the governments that ruled that Central American nation from the 1920s until the Sandinista victory in 1979.

Father Cardenal was also a novice at Our Lady of Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky from 1957-59, when



Lauren McFalls/Photo intern  
Father Ernesto Cardenal, who read from his *Cosmic Canticle* at Nazareth College Oct. 22, holds up a book by his mentor, Thomas Merton.

he studied under Thomas Merton. The two men continued to write after Father Cardenal left the monastery due to ill health. He was ordained in Mexico.

Merton, a monk, writer and mystic, encouraged Father Cardenal to continue his writing. The two men corresponded until Merton's death in 1968.

Father Cardenal cut back on his writing during his years in the Sandinista government. After leaving government, however, he was able to complete *Cosmic Canticle*, a project on which he had been working for 30 years.

The Nicaraguan poet began his Rochester visit with readings — through a translator — from this lengthy poem. *Cosmic Canticle* includes references to the "big bang" theory that creation began with an explosion, to his own days as a student at Columbia University in New York, to human evolution and ongoing attempts to create artificial intelligence.

During a question-and-answer session following the reading, Father Cardenal said through a translator that although God was not repeatedly mentioned in the poem, God was continuously present in it. One finds God throughout the universe, he said.

Most of the questions, however, focused on Nicaragua and his own politics.

Father Cardenal noted that conditions have grown worse in Nicaragua since Chamorro's election — in part due to the policies of the United States government. He noted the increase in poverty and unemployment rates, adding that health care was available now to only those in the minority who could afford it.

However, Father Cardenal explained, the Sandinistas — who control the Nicaraguan army — have no intention to use violence to regain power. Rather, they are simply waiting for the next elections in 1996.

He acknowledged that sometimes violence is necessary — a position that goes against what Merton taught, and which Father Cardenal opposed for many years.

Indeed, in 1965, inspired by Merton's ideas on community life and nonviolence, Father Cardenal established a lay monastic community at Solentiname, Nicaragua. The community included work cooperatives, a clinic and an artists' center.

But by the mid-1970s, Father Cardenal had begun to voice increasing support for violent revolutionary groups, particularly the Sandinista National Liberation Front — named after Augusto Sandino, a rebel killed in the 1930s.

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## Diocese establishes 1993-94 TGA goal at \$4.4 million

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

GATES — Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced Tuesday, Oct. 26, that the 1993-94 Thanks Giving Appeal goal will be \$4.4 million.

The announcement came during a press conference at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road.

The TGA is the Diocese of Rochester's chief source of funding. Appeal proceeds represent 58 percent of the 1993-94 diocesan budget of \$6.7 million.

Even though the TGA goal is \$4.4 million, however, the diocese has actually budgeted for \$3.9 million in income from the appeal, noted James M. Rinefierd, the diocese's chief financial officer.

Parish collections will take place the weekends of Oct. 30-31, Nov. 6-7, and Nov. 13-14. Co-chairs for the 1993-94 TGA are Mary Lou Stotz and Thomas G. Maguire.

Bishop Clark said the theme of this year's TGA is Christ's Ministry Continues Through Us. This theme was chosen because it "embodies the mission of the annual Thanks Giving Appeal and reflects the caring character of the thousands of families and individuals who contribute each year," Bishop Clark said.

Campaign officials have made a number of changes this year. The appeal has a more parish-oriented focus than the last few campaigns, noted Tom D'Agostino, diocesan director of annual giving.

D'Agostino said the new focus was adopted in response to comments made by pastors and TGA leaders following the parish phase of the 1992-93 TGA — which raised \$3,952,000. Last year's goal was \$4.15 million.

As a result of those discussions, D'Agostino said, approximately 500 volunteers were recruited from pari-



1993-94 Thanks Giving Appeal

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shes. Although he did not know the exact number of volunteers for the 1992-93 appeal, he estimated that the number of parish volunteers last year was "significantly less than 500."

Parishes this year have also continued the policy of setting their own goals. As was the policy in the 1992-93 TGA, parishes falling short of their goals will not be required to make up the difference from parish revenues.

An additional change is that the leadership phase, during which campaign officials contact individuals capable of giving larger donations, has also been made more parish-based. Fellow parishioners are now making contact with potential donors. The dates for this phase have been moved closer to the three weekends of the in-church ("in-hall") collections. The effort began Oct. 11 this year, as opposed to early September last year.

In addition to the collections over three weekends, this year's campaign will include a new parish follow-up effort from Nov. 16 to Dec. 3. During these weeks, individuals who did not contribute or give a reason for not contributing will be contacted by fellow

parishioners either in person or by phone.

The diocese will then conduct a follow-up session of its own beginning in February.

The TGA has fallen short of its goals the past two years, forcing the diocese to eliminate or reduce the hours of dozens of positions. In the past, diocesan officials have attributed the shortfalls to a number of factors, in-

cluding a troubled local and national economy, layoffs at area companies, and protests over issues such as the reorganization of diocesan schools.

Bishop Clark noted at the press conference that the "harsh reality of the times in which we live calls upon each of us to be just a little more generous than in the past because through TGA we help change our world for the better."

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