

Diocesan Haitians gather for first-ever Mass

About 60 pray for peace in war-torn homeland

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — More than 60 people — including a small group of banner-bearing supporters of deposed Haitian president Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide — attended the first-ever Catholic Mass in diocesan history held specifically for Haitians. The Mass took place on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 31, at St. Augustine's Church, 410 Chili Ave.

A conga player, bassist and guitarist played lively Creole folk hymns performed throughout the Mass by a small choir. The service was celebrated in both Creole and French — the primary tongues of the Haitian people. Congregation members often swayed back and forth to the gentle rhythms of hymns they grew up singing in Haiti.

Many of the Haitians in attendance agreed that hearing their own music and their own tongues from a Catholic altar in the United States brought back memories of their homeland in the Caribbean.

"It was good to actually do something here," commented Myrna Marra, who served as a lector in her native land — a task she performed at the Mass in addition to singing.

The Mass may become a monthly feature at St. Augustine's, according to its celebrant, Father Peter Enyan-Boadu, parochial vicar for the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward. The cluster comprises St. Augustine's, St. Monica's and Our Lady of Good Counsel parishes.

"My goal is to build up this community of Haitians," said the Ghanaian priest, who is fluent in French. "We are building bridges between brothers and sisters."

Some of those bridges the liturgy's organizers want to build must cross the streams of suspicion and strife that have flown through Haitians here and abroad since Father Aristide — the nation's first democratically elected president — was overthrown in a 1991 military coup. The political leader was supposed to return to Haiti Oct. 30 under a plan brokered by the United Nations, but anti-Aristide forces successfully scuttled U.N. efforts.

Four men holding up a banner depicting Haiti with Father Aristide's face on it and a painting showing Haitians symbolically struggling over their island's future acknowledged the deposed president's fate during the Offertory.

"I want to go back in my country for the advance-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Briannle Exeart attended the first-ever Haitian Mass in the diocese with her mother, Judeline, at St. Augustine's Church Oct. 31.

ment of democracy," commented one of the men, Dieucine Cenecharles, who left Haiti in May, 1992. "I can't stay in the island because the army wanted to kill me," he added.

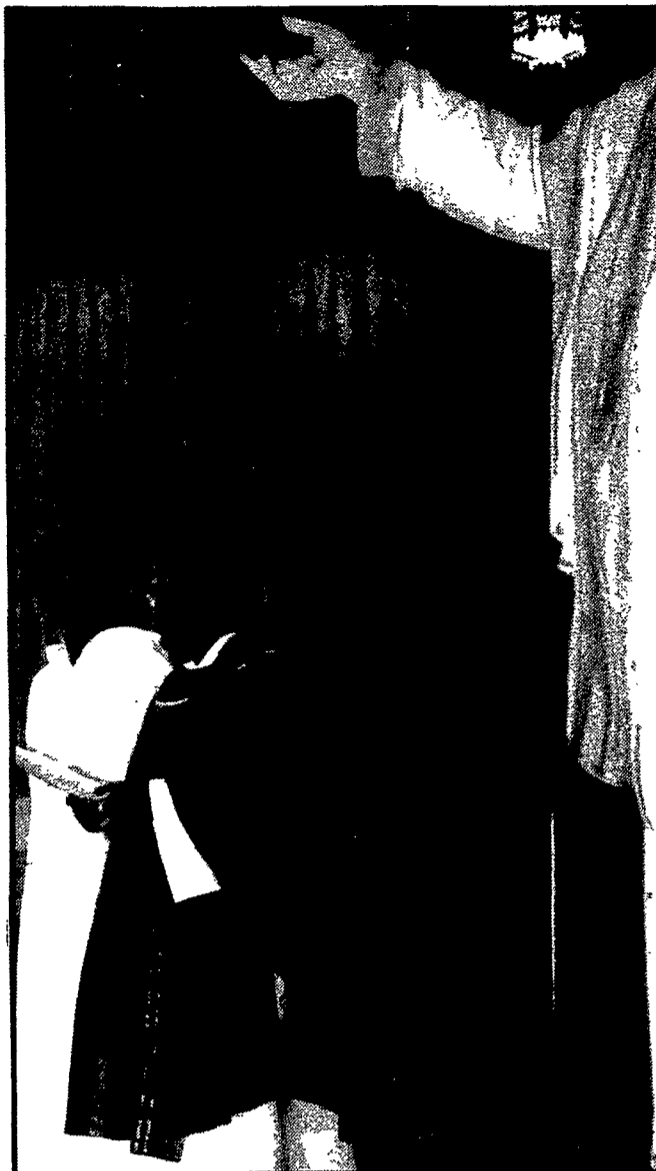
Himself active in Haiti's political arena, Cenecharles noted that 67 percent of his countrymen voted for Father Aristide's election. Yet, if 67 percent of Haiti's voters chose Father Aristide to lead them, that figure still points to a large minority who opposed him. Father Enyan-Boadu noted his awareness of this fact, pointing out that the intentions offered during the Mass were for peace in Haiti — not for any particular political outcome.

Fritz Cherubin, one of the liturgy's organizers, echoed the priest's concern that the Mass not become overly politicized.

"It's not political," he said of the Mass. "Our involvement is to build the Haitian community in the Rochester diocese."

He acknowledged, however, that Haiti's political fate weighed on the faithful's minds, and that his own personal hope was for peace in his native land.

Regardless of their politics, many Haitians at the Mass were simply glad to come to a Catholic liturgy. A number of them said they have attended services at several different Protestant and Catholic churches in an attempt to find a welcoming worship environment.



Father Peter Enyan-Boadu (right) and altar-server Gutemberg Pierre sing Creole folk hymns during the Haitian celebration.

"Having a Haitian Mass is a good way to get to know more Haitians," said Farrah Cherubin, Fritz's daughter. "Most of them go to Baptist churches."

The Mass' conga player, Dieuseul Alexander, explained that he had attended Baptist services, but that he was glad to have participated in a Haitian Mass.

"I'm coming back again," he said.

EDITORS' NOTE — The next Haitian Mass is slated for Sunday, Nov. 21, at 12:30 p.m. at St. Augustine's Church. Call Father Enyan-Boadu at 716/235-3322 for information.

Diocese seeks dialogue on confirmation

Readiness is key

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

The Rochester diocese is offering a series of sessions for priests, catechetical leaders and youth ministers to discuss a draft version of consolidated guidelines concerning preparation for and celebration of the sacrament of confirmation.

The sessions taking place throughout the diocese began in Auburn on Oct. 19 and were scheduled to conclude Nov. 3.

Their purpose is to gather opinions about the consolidated guidelines, noted Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, director of Faith Development Ministry. This feedback will help with the preparation of the document's final version, scheduled to be published in January, 1994.

The guidelines, Sister Binsack said, simply pull together policies developed in the diocese since 1981. No changes have been made to policies regarding confirmation, she emphasized.

"In the past few years there have been concerns raised about the celebration of confirmation," Sister Binsack observed. "We decided to revise the

guidelines to include all the directives about confirmation."

One of the problems, Sister Binsack noted, is that these directives have come from different sources at the Pastoral Center, including the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis, the Office of Liturgy, and the Office of Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The new guidelines simply incorporate all of these directives into one document to provide a reference for parishes.

The guidelines re-state the diocesan policy — as enunciated in canon law and by the U.S. Catholic Conference — that confirmation is a sacrament of initiation linked to baptism and the Eucharist, and that readiness, not grade level or age, determines when an individual is ready to receive the sacrament.

The concept of readiness, Sister Binsack said, is "based on the enlightenment of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It's more of a spiritual readiness."

Thus any individual over age 7 who expresses the desire to be confirmed and is supported in this desire by his or her family and faith community, has been baptized and regularly participates in the faith community, and is mature enough to understand the nature of confirmation, may be admit-

ted to the process of preparation, Sister Binsack explained.

The guidelines explain the foundational catechesis needed to enter this process, and the nature of this process, which, Sister Binsack observed, is short and focused like that of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. They also include a suggested model for preparation involving individuals of different age and grade levels, and detail the elements of preparing the celebration of the liturgy of confirmation.

Sister Binsack said sessions are intended not only to explain the guidelines, but also to see what additional practical questions might arise. These questions will help with the preparation of the final document, and may also be addressed during "inservices" slated to be held during the spring of 1994.

In addition to Sister Binsack, the following diocesan officials are taking part in all or some of the sessions: Maribeth Mancini, director of the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis; Barbara Carroll, coordinator for Sacramental Life; Sister Mary Louise Heffernan, SSJ, coordinator of the Office of Liturgy; Father Paul Tomasso, bishop's secretary; and Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan chancellor.

Fr. Arthur Looby; former teacher; 77

Father Arthur Looby, CSB, a former teacher at Aquinas Institute, died on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 1993, at the St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto, Ont. He was 77.

A native of Dublin, Ont., Father Looby entered the order of Basilian Fathers in 1937 and was ordained in 1946. He taught at Aquinas as both a seminarian, from 1941-42, and as a priest, from 1947-55. More recently, Father Looby served as administrator at St. Eugene Church in Toronto from 1978 until his death.

A Mass of Christ the High Priest was celebrated at St. Margaret Church in Toronto on Oct. 23. Interment was in the Basilian section at Holy Cross Cemetery in Toronto.

Program has openings

ROCHESTER — The Wegman Early Education Program for 3- and 4-year-olds has a few openings at the following schools: Holy Family, 899 Jay St.; Most Precious Blood, 179 Stenson St.; St. John the Evangelist, 545 Humboldt St.; and St. Margaret Mary, 400 Rogers Parkway.

Tuition assistance is available. Call 716/328-3228 or 328-3210 for information.