

YOUTH
FEATURE

Murder victims remembered at peace rally

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — If this service were to be repeated next year, organizers would love to considerably shorten one of the event's most touching segments.

Although that's not a goal under normal circumstances, it would make perfect sense to Teens for Peace. What the newly formed group aims to help reduce is lists of murder victims, such as those acknowledged this past Friday, Jan. 14.

Teens for Peace sponsored their first official event inside St. Bridget's Church, 175 St. Bridget's Drive. Approximately 200 youths and adults attended the peace rally and prayer service, held in conjunction with the Martin Luther King Day celebration.

Included in the service were musical presentations as well as speeches by local dignitaries, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Rochester Mayor William Johnson. The pervading theme throughout every stage of this event was an emphatic denouncement of violence.

A disturbingly large number of people were also included in the service on a spiritual level. Midway through the two-hour rally, candles were lit as names of each of the city's 70 people murdered last year — an all-time high — were announced one by one.

In addition to the human toll, Johnson pointed out that violence is costly in monetary ways as well. He said that expenses exceed \$14,000 to treat a gunshot victim who has been brought to a hospital emergency room. With funds for government health-care plans such as Medicaid being sapped, the mayor said that money which could have been applied toward other badly needed government programs is instead being applied toward senseless acts of violence.

"What a terrible thing, to spend \$14,000 hour after hour after hour," Johnson lamented.

Valeka Barfield, the sophomore class president at Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave., identified two forms of violence during her speech: physical and mental.

"It is the mental side," she stated, "that hurts the most. It's the disrespect we give each other."

Several teenagers at Monroe County-based parishes comprise Teens for Peace. In addition to the prayer service at St. Bridget's, these youths articu-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Nora Bradbury-Haehl, youth minister at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield, performs the opening song at a peace rally and prayer service at Rochester's St. Bridget Church Jan. 14.

lated their message by having two billboards, proclaiming "Live the Dream: Stop the Violence," erected last week at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Bartlett Street as well as the corner of Portland Avenue and Syracuse Street.

Bishop Clark lauded the teens' efforts by summing up the event as a "rich, challenging and rewarding evening."

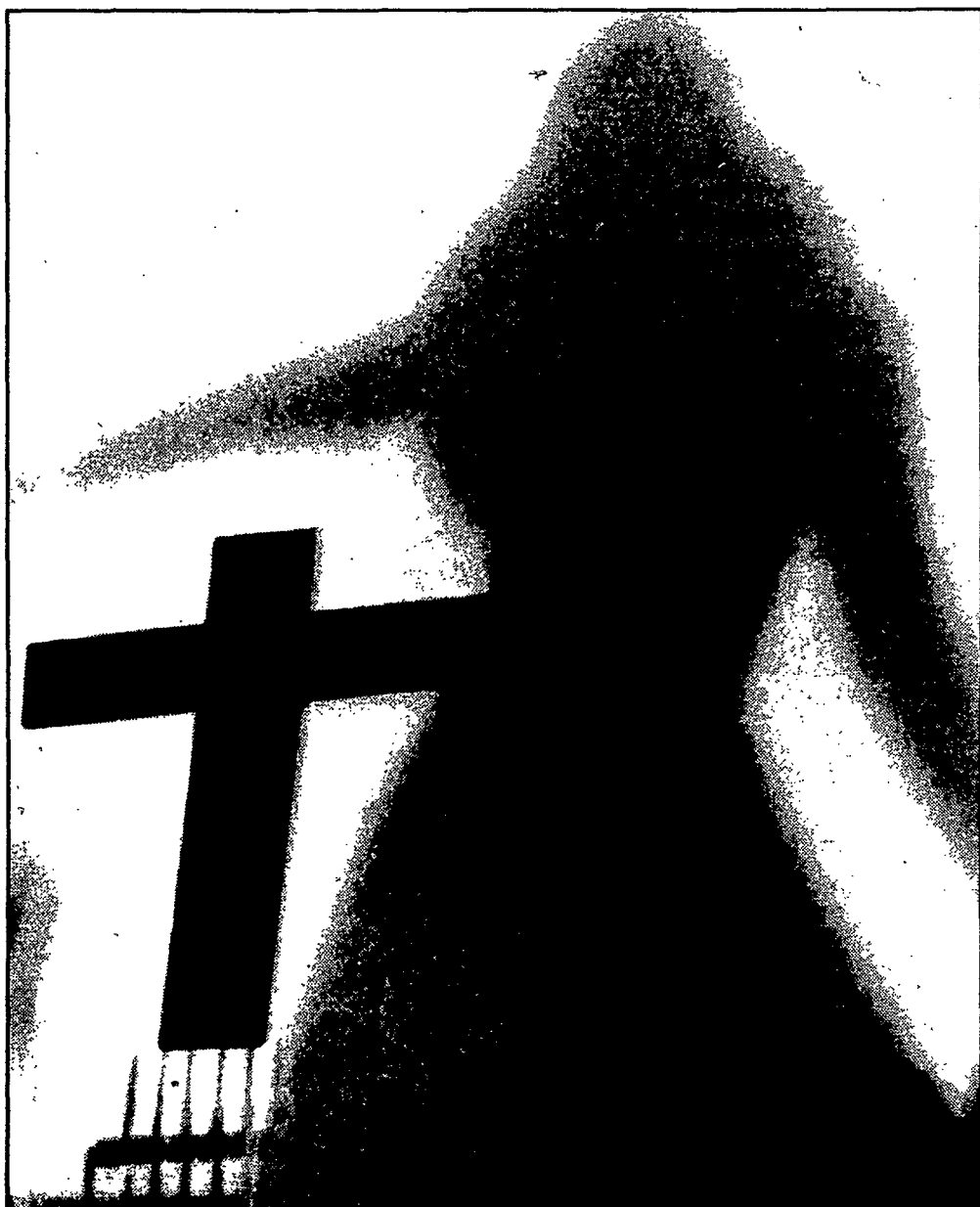
"I think this is a wonderful gift to our community," the bishop later told the *Catholic Courier*.

EDITORS' NOTE: Teens for Peace is planning to supplement the St. Bridget's event with several activities in the future. The first will be a dance marathon at St. Louis School, 60 S. Main St., Pittsford, from 8:45 p.m. Feb. 5 until noon Feb. 6. Proceeds will go to Teens for Peace. Individuals or groups wishing to participate can call Carmen Quinones at 716/381-4455.

Those seeking more information about Teens for Peace may call Jaime Tackett at 716/621-3527, Farrah Cherubin at 544-5673 or Meg and Steven Graves at 865-3475.



Above, Jamia Danzy holds a candle symbolizing one of Rochester's 70 murder victims while proclaiming her 'I have a dream for Rochester.' Below, dancers in the opening procession cast shadows behind St. Bridget's altar.



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