

March for Jesus draws thousands

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Approximately 10,000 area Christians — including a large number of Catholics — took part June 25 in Rochester's second March for Jesus.

This year's event was part of an international march taking place in more than 500 cities across the United States and in more than 170 nations. The march began at 10 a.m. in New Zealand, then progressed around the world beginning in each time zone at 10 a.m.

According to Bernice McGrath, a member of the Rochester march coordinating team, 65 Christian churches registered to take part in the local march. But, she said, other churches joined the event the day of the march without registering.

Thus, she noted, the estimate of 10,000 participants reflects only those who registered before the march. Since others came without registering and some neighborhood people joined in along the route, it is difficult to determine exactly how many people took part, she said.

Indeed, one Rochester television station estimated the march as involving 18,000 participants — a number McGrath thought probably too high.

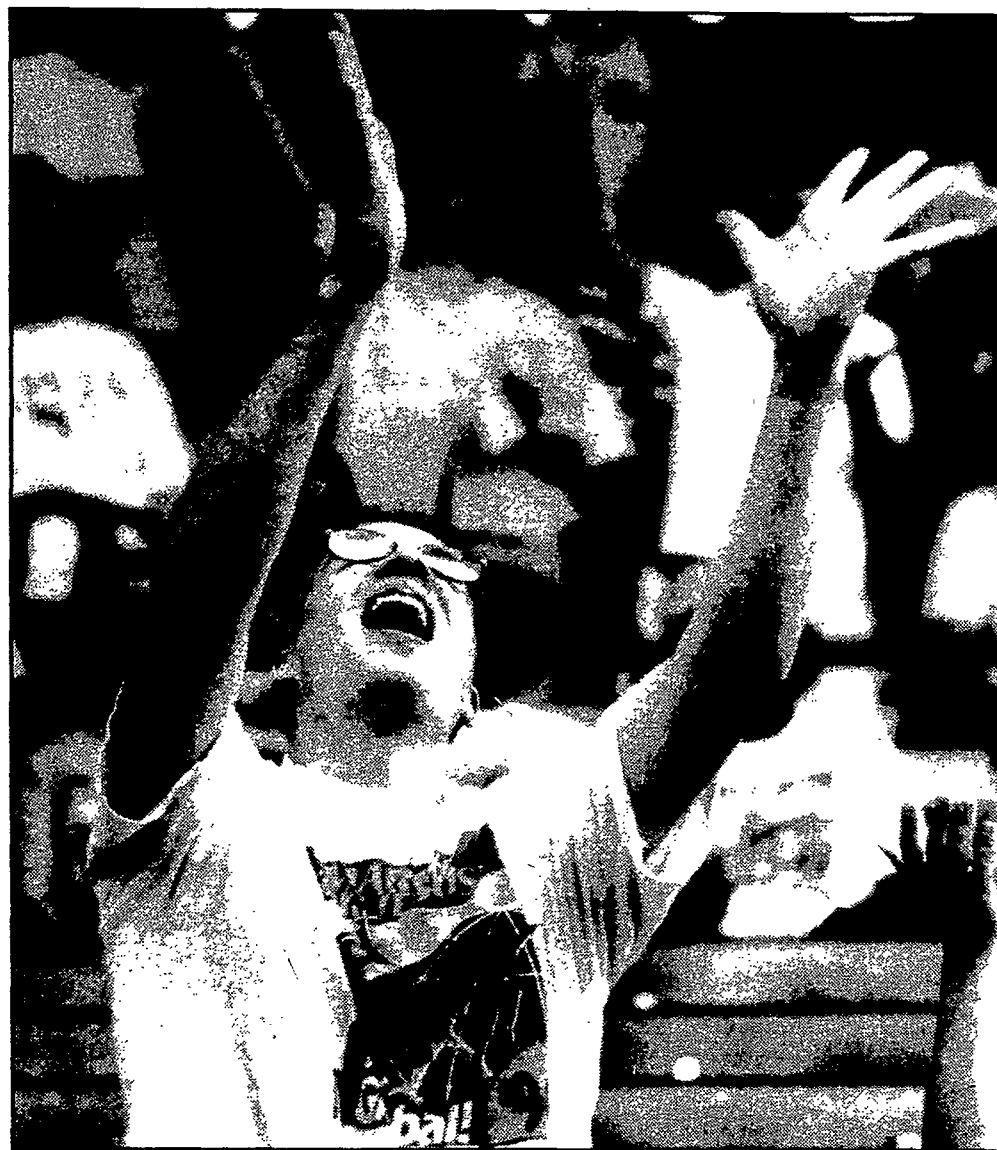
The march's objective was not to protest or to criticize nonbelievers, noted McGrath, a member of St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield.

"It was just to have the church out in the street and to worship the Lord and to show people that we are united together," she declared. "It was wonderful to say the name of Jesus out loud in the streets."

The march route this year began on Upper Falls Boulevard and North-Clinton Avenue, then went through one of the poorer neighborhoods in Rochester to Silver Stadium on Norton Street. This route was selected intentionally, McGrath explained.

"We had prayed about this for a long time," McGrath said. "But we thought, 'If Jesus were to come to earth today, would he come to Pittsford? to Penfield? Jesus goes where the poor people are.'"

The hope was to send a message to the neighborhood's people that Jesus unites all people, McGrath continued. Indeed, as residents along the route discovered what the march was about, she



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Graig Swan of the Irondequoit Assembly of God attended a prayer rally at Rochester's Silver Stadium at the conclusion of the June 25 March for Jesus.

said, "a lot joined us. It was wonderful to see. But that's what it's all about — trying to live together."

The march included music, dance, and a variety of banners and signs. It ended with a rally at Silver Stadium featuring prayers and music by an interfaith choir.

Last year, the official number of participants in Rochester's first March for Jesus — which was part of a national but not international effort — was 12,000. McGrath said participation suffered this year because weather forecasters had predicted rain and because a number of graduations occurred on the same day. She acknowledged, in fact, that her

husband attended a graduation ceremony rather than the march.

In spite of predictions, it did not rain during the march. Indeed, McGrath said, one of the event's high points for her came when the drums began beating to start the march.

"As soon as the music started, the sky opened up and the sun shone," McGrath said. "It was just like God was talking to us."

McGrath said a tentative date of May 27 has been set for next year's international — and consequently, local — march. The core team later will determine a route, related activities and ways to encourage greater involvement.

Priest reasserts church teaching on homosexuals

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — In a week that saw thousands of people converge on New York City for the "Gay Games," Father John F. Harvey delivered Rochesterians a message that flies in the face of the homosexual-rights movement.

"All of this propaganda has only one purpose in mind," Father Harvey told an audience at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, "to establish the homosexual way of living ... as an alternative to marriage on the same level of marriage itself."

Author of *The Homosexual Person*, and numerous articles on the pastoral care of homosexuals, the Oblate of St. Francis of de Sales made the remarks during a speech entitled "Homosexuality — Is it a Sin?" The morning lecture took place Saturday, June 25, in the former St. Thomas the Apostle School.

The gay-rights movement has manipulated statistics to make the public believe that at least 10 percent of the male population is homosexual, Father Harvey said. Noting that the 10-percent figure was drawn from a study by the late Alfred Charles Kinsey, the priest asserted that the study showed only that 10 percent of males between the ages of 17-34 may be involved in homosexual activity for a temporary period.

"Only 2 to 3 percent are truly homosexual," Father Harvey said, adding that no comparable data exists for the female homosexual population.

The church considers homosexuality an objective disorder that is disharmonious with the true purpose of sexuality, Father Harvey said. Scripture clearly shows in such books as Genesis and the Gospels that God created the two sexes for the purpose of permanent union and procreation. Furthermore, in such books as Leviticus and St. Paul's Epistles, same-sex unions are clearly seen as abominations, Father Harvey said.

Despite its objective immorality, homosexuality is a disorder for which a person is responsible with varying degrees of culpability, the priest noted. He commented that each homosexual person becomes that way due to a wide variety of complex factors, including environmental ones.

"It's entirely possible that a person could have limited responsibility for what he's done in the past," Father Harvey said. "The responsibility is to get out of the compulsivity through various kinds of therapy and support systems."

Although he acknowledged the possibility of a genetic factor for homosexuality, the priest maintained that current research on the subject is inadequate and flawed.

Father Harvey also visited Rochester to promote the Catholic support group Courage, which helps sustain homosexuals striving to live in accordance with the teachings of the church. The members use a 12-step program — similar to that used by Alcoholics Anonymous — to overcome their desire for homosexual activity, he explained.

Although some members of Courage have left the homosexual life and become heterosexual, the group only encourages its members to live chaste lives, he, noting that some gays find it too difficult to change their orientation.

Father Harvey pointed out that Courage groups meet in 17 U.S. and five Canadian dioceses. He encouraged lay Catholics in the Rochester diocese to start a chapter here.

EDITORS' NOTE: To learn more about Courage, call 212-421-0246.

Camp Good Days calls for end to violence

ROCHESTER — More than 2,000 people have responded to a call for volunteers in an anti-violence campaign initiated by Camp Good Days and Special Times, according to Gary Mervis, the camp's chairman and founder.

Called "Partners Against Violence Everywhere," or PAVE, the campaign seeks to unify community efforts to end the violence that has taken the lives of dozens of people — particularly young people — in the Monroe County area over the last few years.

Public-service announcements promoting the campaign have been carried throughout the month of June by Rochester-area newspapers as well as television and radio stations.

"At stake is whether or not we will continue to have the quality of life here necessary to raise families," PAVE's promotional flyer states. "If we and our children live in an atmosphere of constant, senseless violence, we will become a dysfunctional community."

According to its literature, PAVE will form a committee charged with creating a plan to coordinate the anti-violence activities of agencies, organizations and individuals.

Numerous community leaders, in-

cluding Bishop Matthew H. Clark, have lent support to the PAVE campaign.

"The solutions may be improved parenting, real jobs, better education, after-school programs, more police," the bishop states in promotional literature and advertisements for the campaign.

Of the individuals who already have responded to PAVE, Mervis noted, most have expressed concern that parenting skills be improved in the Monroe County area. To that end, PAVE plans to create a mentoring program for young single mothers. The program would pair parents with such mothers in order to improve how they raise their children, he explained.

PAVE also plans to meet with teachers in the Rochester City School District to discuss anti-violence measures in the schools, he said.

And Camp Good Days will expand its Caring and Sharing program this summer. Held over one weekend last year, Caring and Sharing will run for one week in July this summer, he said, noting that the program helps young relatives of victims of violence.

Mervis pointed to studies showing that such children often grow up to be either victims of violence or the perpe-

trators of violence. Such children need intervention at an early age if they are to learn how to deal with the extreme emotions often brought on by the violence dealt their loved ones, he commented.

Although Camp Good Days serves children with cancer, Mervis stressed that ending violence is consistent with the camp's mission.

"Children who live with violence lose childhood in the same way as children with cancer," he wrote in a letter soliciting support from area media. "Both face the prospect of death, and children who fear for their lives fall into despair. Despair in children, whether caused by cancer or violence, means giving up childhood."

"Our mission at Camp Good Days is to give back to our campers the part of childhood that is stolen from them," he concluded.

EDITORS' NOTE: To learn more about PAVE, call 716/624-5555, or write: Partners Against Violence Everywhere, c/o Camp Good Days and Special Times, Headquarters and Volunteer Training Center, 1332 Pittsford-Mendon Road, Mendon, N.Y. 14506.

— Rob Cullivan