

Getting ready for her Vespers



Madeline Foley, a student at St. Lawrence School in Greece, Dec. 1 rehearses for Vespers, the evening hour of prayer that includes Scripture readings, music, and dance. The students performed Vespers on Dec. 5.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

St. Joseph's nurses turn down contract

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ELMIRA — Nurses at St. Joseph's Hospital, 555 E. Market St., rejected the hospital's latest contract offer Nov. 29.

According to Barry Waldman, spokesman for the New York State Nurses Association in Albany, the hospital's nurses rejected the contract over what they termed small salary increases and because the hospital wants to make major cuts in health benefits to currently employed and retired nurses.

When asked about the vote's official tally, Waldman said the union does not traditionally release such information.

In light of the vote rejecting the hospital's offer, representatives from the nurses' union will meet with hospital representatives and a federal mediator Dec. 21 in an effort to reach a new agreement.

According to Waldman, St. Joseph's nurses did not take any pay increase for almost three years to help stabilize St. Joseph's financial situation. Nurses also thought this year's offered increase was inadequate to cover their living costs.

The hospital's contract would have given the nurses a salary increase of 3.35 percent — retroactive to June, 1994 — and a 1.2 percent pay increase in June, 1995, he said.

In addition to the salary increase, the hospital wants to "all but eliminate post-retirement health benefits," Waldman said.

"The nurses feel they have sacrificed significantly for the hospital," Waldman said.

He added that the union has grown tired of hearing about the hospital's financial problems.

"Every hospital in the state is saying that its having financial problems," he said. "After a while you get ... injured to the claim."

St. Joseph's is dealing with a budget shortfall of \$1.4 million, the hospital claims.

The nurses were also upset with the hospital administration's recent decision to cut back the equivalent of 40 full-time positions — none of which are held by hospital administrators, Waldman said.

St. Joseph's announced Dec. 1 that it was laying off 15 employees, reaching its goal of eliminating the equivalent of

40 full-time positions, said David P. Sullivan, a spokesman for St. Joseph's. Other employees whose positions were eliminated were shifted into other open positions, he said.

Sullivan added that no nurses — or administrators — were laid off as a result of the cuts.

Sullivan declined to comment on the contract negotiations, but said the hospital was "looking forward" to getting back to the bargaining table.

Waldman said the union would probably take no further action in the dispute until both sides meet again Dec. 21.

Obituary

Father Robert E. Baker, SM; 53

Father Robert E. Baker, SM, a Rochester native who spent a quarter century as a priest in the Society of Mary, died suddenly on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 1994, in Marietta, Ga. He was 53 years old.

After attending public schools in Scottsville, Father Baker entered the seminary of the Marist Fathers in Pendel, Pa. in 1958. He made his first profession of vows in Rhinebeck, N.Y. in 1963.

Father Baker was ordained a Marist priest in 1969 out of his home parish of St. Mary of the Assumption in Scottsville. He went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

After holding various positions in

Ohio, Georgia and Washington, D.C., he was vicar provincial of the Washington Province from 1979-83. Father Baker was assistant pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marietta from 1984-85 before taking over as pastor — a position in which he served until earlier this year. A Mass of Christ the High Priest for Father Baker was celebrated on Nov. 3 at St. Joseph Church. Interment was at Westview Cemetery in Atlanta, Ga.

Father Baker is survived by a brother, William J. Baker, of Scottsville; a sister, Sister Barbara Baker, MSHS, of Marietta; as well as two nieces and two nephews.

Contributions in memory of Father Baker can be made to St. Joseph Church Building Fund, 87 Lacy St., Marietta, Ga., 30060.

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Guatemala

Continued from page 3

tle, they'll have to give more," he said.

Currently, Shea teaches elementary school in rural Guatemala as part of an education program founded by a German priest. He was in Rochester on Friday night, Dec. 2, to talk at a memorial service sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph on behalf of Jean Donovan and three Maryknoll sisters who were raped and killed by Salvadoran soldiers 14 years ago.

The service also commemorated the fifth anniversary of the killing of six Jesuit priests, along with their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador.

In addition to Donovan and the three sisters, several thousand other lay, religious and clerical Christians have been killed, tortured and imprisoned by non-governmental, right-wing paramilitaries and by government soldiers for working with the poor throughout Latin America, Shea and other sources reported.

The war between leftists and rightists in El Salvador has ended, but the war in Guatemala continues.

According to Catholic News Service, the Guatemalan government and the leftist rebels resumed peace talks near Mexico City Oct. 20, breaking a three-month impasse in negotiations to end the country's 33-year civil war. Both sides have been accused of human rights abuses in the course of the war, according to CNS.

The talks, which began three years ago, were suspended in August when the rebels, known as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit, said the government was not honoring a landmark human rights agreement reached during negotiations last March.

Despite the talks, Shea admitted he is not optimistic about a peaceful resolution of the civil war. He noted that killings, particularly by government forces, have actually increased in the last few months. These killings have included major political assassinations.

"The rich and the government and the army don't want to admit that the indigenous have legitimate grievances ...," he said. "Unfortunately, I don't think we're going to see the rich surrender privileges."

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EDITORS' NOTE: For information about Witness for Peace, please write: Witness for Peace, 2201 P St. NW, Room 109, Washington, D.C., 20037, or call 202/797-1160.

**CFC, bank collecting
food up to Dec. 21**
ROCHESTER — Catholic Family Center's STAR (Support to Aged Residents) program and Rochester Community Savings Bank will be collecting non-perishable food items for low-income senior citizens through Dec. 21 at all RCSB branch locations.
CFC Elder Services staff, with the help of volunteers, will pick up and deliver donated food items. Those would like to help package and/or deliver food baskets should call CFC at 716/262-7069.

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