

Gandhi's grandson slated to lead Auburn workshop

AUBURN — Arun Gandhi, the grandson of Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi, is scheduled to speak and lead a workshop this Monday, March 6, at Cayuga Community College's Spartan Hall.

At 11 a.m. Gandhi will discuss "Why the King and Gandhi Dreams Remain Unfulfilled." The talk, which is free and open to the public, will be followed by an invitation-only luncheon. From 7-9 p.m., Gandhi will conduct a workshop in the student lounge on anger management.

Reservations are required for the workshop. Cost is \$10 per person for the workshop.

Born in South Africa, Arun Gandhi lived with his grandfather for a time. Influenced by his grandfather, he dedicated his life to fostering nonviolent solutions to societal problems.

In 1960, while working as an editor and journalist with *The Times of India*, Arun Gandhi created India's Center for Social Unity. One of his goals was to create self-help commercial ventures for communities of "untouchables," people of the lowest caste in India. The project now involves some 300 villages.

Gandhi is also the author of four books, and was the editor of the 1994 collection of essays and poetry, "World Without Violence: Can Gandhi's Dream Become Reality?" He founded the Gandhi Institute of the Study of Non-Violence, at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tenn.

The visit is being sponsored by the "Peace through Education, Action and Community Endeavors" program of the Coalition for a Better Auburn/Cayuga County.

For information, call Joy Shortell at 315/255-1743, ext. 230, or Mary Kelly at 315/253-3389.

'Follies' to be presented this month at Aquinas

ROCHESTER — The annual "Follies," a benefit musical variety show, will present five shows this month at Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave.

This Broadway-style blend of music, dancing and comedy is in its 18th year. Show proceeds are used for various community causes. Nearly \$135,000 has been raised since the Follies' first show. In addition to its productions at Aquinas, the Follies group performs throughout the year at several nursing and adult homes throughout Monroe County.

Performances in the Aquinas auditorium will be held on March 10, 11, 12, 17 and 18. All show times are 8 p.m. except for a 2 p.m. matinee on March 12.

Tickets are \$7 each. For the March 12 matinee, senior citizens tickets are \$5 and children under age 12 will be admitted free. The Aquinas building is handicapped-accessible.

For ticket information, call 716/621-8376.

CFC seeks volunteers

Catholic Family Center is seeking volunteers for its STAR program.

Volunteers are needed to assist homebound and frail senior citizens with grocery shopping, friendly visiting and transportation. Mileage reimbursement is available. Call 716/262-7069 for details.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Father Edwin B. Metzger Feb. 21 celebrates a 'Mass of Thanksgiving' at Rochester's St. Michael's Church, 869 N. Clinton St. In addition to marking Father Metzger's 40th anniversary as a priest and 65th birthday, the celebration saluted his father, Edwin Sr., and his late mother, Florence Kesel Metzger.

Priest relishes Kenyans' deep faith

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Father Edwin B. Metzger Jr. finds missionary work in Athi River, Kenya, challenges many traits he had developed as a U.S. citizen.

The diocesan priest known to many friends as "Ted," who is now an associate of the Maryknoll Fathers, has served in the southeastern African nation since 1989, when he left his pastorate at St. Francis DeSales in Geneva.

Father Metzger, noted, for example, that he and a fellow priest recently decided against installing a television aerial that would pull in far more than the two channels their TV currently shows. Such an aerial would be an unnecessary luxury in the somewhat impoverished parish they serve, he said.

"In America I would watch too much TV," Father Metzger recalled. "I would fool myself into thinking it was necessary to watch all those news programs. In Kenya, I found I couldn't."

The priest also eats far less meat, walks to most of the places he must go, and generally lives a much simpler life than he did in the states. In doing so, he finds it easier to keep in touch with the lifestyle of his 8,000 parishioners of St. Jude's Church.

"They don't have fine things, but what they have, they share," Father Metzger said.

The missionary spoke of his life in Kenya during an interview on Thursday afternoon, Feb. 23, at The Heritage, a seniors' residence affiliated with St. Ann's Home, 1500 Portland Ave.

His 95-year-old father, Edwin B. Metzger Sr., who lives at The Heritage, celebrated his son's 40th year in the priesthood last Tuesday, Feb. 21, at St. Michael's Parish, 869 N. Clinton Ave, where the younger Metzger grew up.

The celebration was marked by a Mass of Thanksgiving that also saluted Father Metzger's father and mother, Florence Kesel Metzger, who died in 1973.

Despite his simple lifestyle now, Father Metzger stressed that Kenya is far more developed than its neighbors: Somalia, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Indeed, he remembered his first two-year assignment in Nairobi, Kenya's capital, which lies about 25 miles from Athi River. He went to Nairobi half-expecting to see the Africa of his school-day lore, and



Father Edwin B. Metzger (middle) offers the sign of peace to his father, Edwin Sr., as Ted Miller (right), Father Metzger's nephew, looks on. Edwin Sr. is 95 years old.

instead found a modern city.

"Soon after I arrived there, a (parish) family invited me over to watch a video of their child's first holy Communion," he recalled.

Yet the people he now serves nonetheless often live on the margins of life, some residing in simple homes with electricity and running water and others living in cardboard shacks without even the benefits of area sewers.

"A good number of parishioners have no job at all," he explained, pointing out that a local meat processing plant employs many parishioners, while other parishioners and area residents compete for the few jobs at other area factories.

Hunger is not as rampant in Kenya as it is in other African nations, Father Metzger said, but malnutrition afflicts some of his parishioners despite development and relief agencies such as Catholic Relief Services providing food and farm seeds to area residents.

Athi River's religious life apparently suffers far less malnutrition, according to Father Metzger, who pointed out that the Kenyans have a living faith marked by song-filled liturgies and an awareness of Christ's healing power.

"The people refreshed my appreciation for prayer, blessings and miracles," Father Metzger said, remarking that before he went to Kenya, "I had drifted into a state of indifference about the need for blessings before and after meals, or house blessings. My enthusi-

asm has been restored."

Father Metzger expressed pleasure that the Rochester diocese had adopted small Christian communities as a priority during the 1993 Diocesan Synod. He noted that his own parish has about a dozen such communities.

St. Jude's SCCs study Scripture readings, reflect on how they are relevant to their own lives, and perform such charitable works as repairing homes of those in need, he said.

Mercy is a precious commodity in Africa which has been hit harder by such evils as AIDS than other regions, Father Metzger said. So over-

whelming has the disease's impact been that his parishioners pray for more than medical cures, they plea to God for deliverance, he added.

He recalled, for example, reading one parishioner's prayer request left at the shrine of St. Jude on the saint's feast day.

"It said, 'Dear God, please cure my son of AIDS and cure everyone in the world from AIDS,'" he recalled. "This comes from the stance that there really is no hope left but hope in God."

But even then, the Kenyans have a deep sense that God cares for them and their own relatives who have gone onto the next life, Father Metzger said. He pointed out that the Kenyans call the deceased "the living dead" and are very aware of what the church calls the "communion of saints."

He added that Kenyans have experienced a birth of hope in recent years as its corrupt political system has opened up to multi-party democracy. Many opposition leaders calling for change in the nation have been silenced or killed, but the Kenyan people have not given up their desire for real change, he said.

He added that he wants St. Jude's small Christian communities to produce more leadership for the people of Athi River, and to take on issues — such as environmental pollution — which directly affect their living standards.

"If we speak out, if the people speak out, they can be doing things together that they can't do alone," he concluded.