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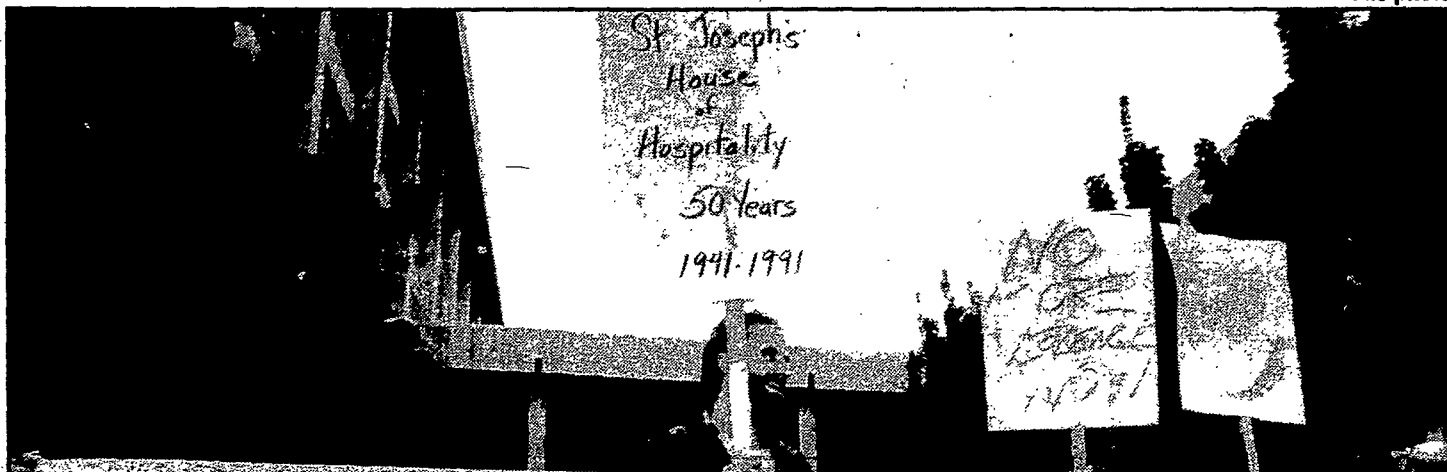
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Pax Christi

Father Robert Werth served as celebrant for the first "Parish at the Gates" Mass at the New York Army National Guard Armory on Rochester's Culver Road in May, 1993. The Mass was the first in a series of monthly liturgies sponsored by Pax Christi Rochester.



File photo



File photo

Paul Tremblay (center) joined about 20 people — including members of Pax Christi Rochester — outside Rochester's Federal Building in September, 1994, for a peaceful rally promoting nonviolence.

Gulf War sparked group's rebirth

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

From peaceful protests to monthly Masses and Saturday-morning gatherings, the latest incarnation of Pax Christi Rochester remains feverishly devoted to its causes.

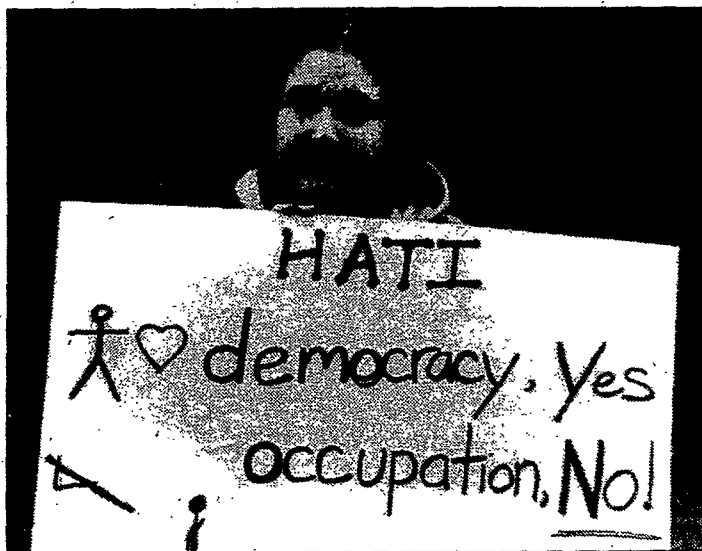
The Rochester area's first Pax Christi group was formed in 1982, but disbanded about five years later. Pax Christi Rochester was revived in the early 1990s, when a group of activists decided to join under its banner to protest U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War.

"We were people who were very active in justice-and-peace issues. And at the time of the war, we were very alarmed about what was being planned in (U.S. citizens') name," remarked Rochester resident Jan Bezila, who currently serves as coordinator of Pax Christi Rochester.

Since that time, Bezila said, Pax Christi Rochester has also focused its attention on U.S. military involvement in Somalia and Haiti.

While Pax Christi Rochester addresses the same concerns of Pax Christi International and Pax Christi USA, Bezila noted that the local group stages many unique activities as well.

Among them are monthly Masses, begun in May of 1993, in front of the New York Army National Guard armory on Rochester's Culver Road. In addition, Pax Christi Rochester meets for prayer and reflection at members' homes on several Saturday mornings throughout the year.



File Photo

Susan Maxey, a member of Pax Christi Rochester, voices her concerns about repression in Haiti during a September, 1994, demonstration.

Pax Christi also has loyal supporters in other parts of the Rochester diocese. Kathy Dubel, justice-and-peace coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, said she and a large number of residents in Steuben, Chemung and Tomp-

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Pax Christi, still pursuing peace at 50

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

BRUSSELS, Belgium — From its headquarters on Grain Market Street in Brussels, Pax Christi International says it wants to sow new seeds for peace in a rapidly changing world.

The Catholic peace organization, with branches in more than 30 countries, turned 50 this year. The anniversary was a time for its leaders to reassess the movement's role in the post-Cold War era, in which curbing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting detente among superpowers have moved off-center stage.

"Human rights is more on the front stage now. The world is more psychologically insecure. There are more local wars," said Etienne De Jonghe, a Belgian who has been the organization's secretary general since 1978.

"From Yugoslavia to Rwanda we have the issues of nationalism, ethnic diversity and multiethnic states," he added.

"The big challenge is to build conflict resolution skills so we can contribute on the ground inside the warring countries," De Jonghe said.

This would involve placing trained workers in refugee camps, acting as go-betweens among warring factions and bringing people together so that natural conflicts do not break out in violence, he said.

Peace also means calling world attention to massive human rights violations in civil wars, such as the one in Sudan, said De Jonghe.

Genocide is being used increasingly as a tool for eliminating political enemies, he said.

Current Pax Christi plans include sending high-level delegations into Sudan in September and the Serb-controlled Bosnian region of Banja Luka in August. In both places religion is a dividing factor and Pax Christi has been only partially successful in previous efforts to get into both areas.

Planning to lead the two delegations is Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Pax Christi's president. The visits are designed to build up good will and position the organization as a reconciling force once the fighting ends.

"Conflict resolution can only be successful if it also involves a healing process, for the victims as well as the perpetrators of violence," said Cardinal Danneels at a May 25 ceremony in Assisi, Italy, to mark the organization's 50th birthday anniversary.

For Pax Christi this has meant opening contacts with religious, academic and civic leaders in conflict zones to foment indigenous human rights and peace organizations.

A statement adopted at the Assisi meeting said that since the end of the Cold War, new conflicts have caused "an ever increasing number of civilian victims."

Shifting to adapt to the needs of the times is nothing new to Pax.

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