



Alan Dunham, who served with the U.S. Army and Navy in Vietnam, salutes during a ceremony at 'The Moving Wall' in Waterloo's Lafayette Park July 12.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Normalization draws mixed reactions

The head of the U.S. bishops' International Policy Committee hailed the U.S. decision to re-establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam as a welcome step that could lead to greater religious freedom in the Southeast Asian country.

Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of Worcester, Mass., chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference committee, made the comment in a statement July 12, the day after President Clinton announced the return to full diplomatic relations 22 years after the end of the Vietnam War.

"Let this moment, in the words of the Scripture, be a time to heal and a time to build," Clinton said.

But here in the Rochester diocese, Catholics who had fought or lived in Vietnam struck a more cautious note about the normalization of relations now with the United States and Vietnam.

"Sooner or later you have to normalize, but is now the time? I don't know," observed Robert Stratton, Monroe County Commander of the Catholic War Veterans. Stratton served in Vietnam as a U.S. Navy signalman from 1966-70.

Stratton was cautious of Vietnam's communist leaders, noting that in 1975, North Vietnam broke its 1973 agreement with the United States to not invade South Vietnam following a U.S. pullout. In addition to this historical breach of faith, Stratton pointed out that Hanoi has yet to account for all U.S. servicemen who are still missing in action.

The president said the U.S. government will use its renewed ties with Vietnam to press for a full accounting of the 2,202 U.S. service personnel still listed officially as missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Anthony Tran Minh, president of the Vietnamese Community of Rochester, Inc., and himself a Catholic, pointed out that some members of his community — particularly those who had been political prisoners — wondered whether now was the proper time to open relations with Hanoi. But Minh added that it was almost inevitable that the United States would recognize Vietnam someday.

"The U.S. government is the last to accept that the Communists (won) there 20 years ago," Minh commented.

Minh hopes that the United States would use whatever means were at its disposal to persuade Vietnam to lessen re-

strictions on religious and political freedom, a view echoed by Thang Nguyen, president of the Vietnamese Catholic Community of Rochester.

"As Vietnamese, we are always looking for our country to get out from under the communist regime," he said.

Bishop Reilly said the U.S. bishops welcomed the move "in the hope it will improve and strengthen discussions between our two countries on matters of great concern, especially human rights and religious freedom, the MIA-POW question, and refugee and immigration concerns."

He said he viewed the U.S. government's action "not as a sign of approval of a regime that still fails to assure the full rights of its people, but as a means of strengthening the needed dialogue, of making more effective our concerns for the people of Vietnam, and of moving forward in healing the wounds of war."

The bishop noted that Vietnam's

Catholic bishops "have long advocated increased diplomatic, trade and other relations between their country and the United States."

After recent talks with Vietnamese authorities, a Vatican official expressed hope for long-term normalization of relations but disappointment over the country's rejection of four bishops' appointments.

Monsignor Claudio Celli said in an interview last April that on the whole, he found the church in Vietnam vibrant and generally free to express itself. He met with church and government leaders during a weeklong visit that ended April 4.

In contrast with previous years, Monsignor Celli was left alone to discuss church issues freely with local bishops, priests and pastoral workers. He said he also was able to consult with bishops during his talks with the government, without authorities present.

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Historic church seeking donors for ambitious capital project

ROCHESTER — Parishioners of St. Peter and Paul Church, 720 W. Main St., are hoping to raise \$500,000 during a capital campaign to repair and renovate their historical city church.

Parish officials will solicit parishioners, businesses, foundations and church friends in the next few months for financial support of the project. The renovations, already underway, should be completed by next June.

In addition to the building's exterior, the effort will include renovating the worship area where the church's back pews are currently located into a new space featuring community rooms as well as a conference room, elevator, ramp for the physically challenged, kitchenette, offices, reception desk, storage room, work room, bathrooms and vestibule.

The campaign will also cover the costs of repairing the church's roof, gutter, steps and bell tower. In addition to restoring masonry, replacing doors and adding storm windows, the project will repair the city church's sidewalks and parking lot as well as upgrade its electrical service, lighting and heating systems.

"The repair phase of our program will secure the bricks and mortar of this city landmark for years to come," said Father David P. Reid, SS.CC., pastor, in a letter to potential campaign donors. "The adaption phase will not only provide for a more intimate worship space for our current community, but will also allow us to creatively share this wonderful building with our neighbors."

Tax-deductible donations may be made to the campaign over a period of three to five years. Campaign officials have a wide variety of options for donors to consider, including gifts-in-kind from businesses and a plaque/memorial for those wishing to commemorate their gift in their name or that of their family or business.

For information on how to donate to the St. Peter and Paul Repair and Adaption Campaign, call 716/436-3110 or write to the church at 720 W. Main St., Rochester, N.Y. 14611.

Obituary

Sister Mary Florence Sullivan; Mercy High founder

Sister Mary Florence Sullivan, RSM, the last surviving founder of Our Lady of Mercy School and the school's principal for 11 years, died Thursday, July 13, 1995, in the infirmary at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road, Brighton. She was 98 years old.

Born in Rochester on Nov. 22, 1896, Sister Florence graduated from Nazareth Academy and entered the Sisters of Mercy at St. Mary's Parish in downtown Rochester June 30, 1916. She was received into the novitiate in 1917, and professed perpetual vows on July 6, 1922.

Sister Florence earned a bachelor's degree in English and Latin from Canisius College in Buffalo in 1927 and a master's degree in history and English from the college in 1928. She also studied library science at Columbia University in New York City; at Geneseo Normal; and at



Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

An educator for 51 years, she taught for 11 years at Mt. Carmel, St. Mary's, St. Andrew's and Holy Cross schools in Rochester. In 1928 she became one of the founders of Our Lady of Mercy High School, where she served for 40 years in a variety of roles — teacher; librarian; moderator of school publications and the missionary-aiding organization; vice principal (1948-57); and finally as principal, a post she held from 1957-68.

Sister Kathleen Milliken, who came to Mercy High School as a teacher in 1952, recalled, "She seemed to be present everywhere and had her finger on the pulse of the school, the teachers, the students — and she wasn't above cleaning a bathroom or emptying a trash barrel if that's what needed to be done!"

Sister Florence was a member of the Rochester community's leadership council from 1961-67. She was then asked to build up the order's archives, a task she performed until 1985. During this time, she also wrote a book, *Mercy Comes to*

Rochester, the early history of the Mercy sisters in the Rochester diocese up until the early 1900s.

"She and I were collaborators in diocesan history for the past 50 years," said Father Robert F. McNamara, diocesan archivist. "She was a very good historian."

Father McNamara light-heartedly recalled Sister Florence's forward in her book recounting the order's Rochester roots from 1847-1902: "No attempt has been made to fictionalize or embellish any of the facts for the sake of reader interest," Father McNamara recalled Sister Florence writing. "If a conjecture has been made, it is stated as such. History is history and thus it stands."

Sister Florence is survived by her brother and sister-in-law, Charles and Todd Sullivan of Florida; nieces and nephews; and grandnieces and nephews.

Donations may be made to the Sister Florence Sullivan Memorial Scholarship Fund at Our Lady of Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14610.