

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Emotions run high at St. Theresa's final Mass

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — As the St. Theresa's Church choir began singing *Serdeczna Matko* ("Dearest Mother") June 8, many handkerchiefs and tissues emerged throughout the tightly packed church.

That hymn served as the recessional for the final Mass in the 70-year history of St. Theresa's Parish. Just moments earlier, Deacon Raymond Mielcarek had announced, "For the last time, let us all go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

"That was the hardest thing I ever had to do," Deacon Mielcarek later said.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. During his homily, Bishop Clark stated that worshippers will always recall their Polish-American parish with great pride.

"Remember the beautiful events you have experienced in the bosom of this parish community," Bishop Clark told the congregation.

The bishop also implored St. Theresa's parishioners to remain strong in their faith during this "very difficult moment of transition."

"While there might be adjustments we have to make, there are tomorrows with promises and new opportunities," Bishop Clark said.

The Mass was attended by many people whose ties with St. Theresa's go back several decades. One such person was Parish Council President Leo Krzanowicz, a parishioner for the past 65 years.

"Over the years I have witnessed many changes, and today we are making a final change," Krzanowicz said.

The parish voted in late February to dissolve St. Theresa's. Declining membership and dwindling finances led to this de-



Kerry Huller

After the final Mass at St. Theresa's, Rochester, parishioners looked through photographs and memorabilia recalling the history of the church.

cision, Danuta Piekut explained.

"In the last few years, financially, we were just barely making it," said Piekut, who has served as St. Theresa's secretary since 1984. "There was no hope, no way to turn it around. The people had decided it's time."

Members will be absorbed into St. Stanislaus Parish, 1124 Hudson Ave., the only other predominately Polish parish in the city of Rochester. Sacramental records of St. Theresa's parishioners will be transferred to that parish, and St. Stanislaus will also assume all of St. Theresa's financial assets and liabilities.

Meanwhile, St. Bridget's Parish will move into the space at 14 Mark St. being vacated by St. Theresa's. St. Bridget's voted in April to purchase the St. Theresa's

property because fundraising efforts could not meet projected repair costs for its current building, located at 175 St. Bridget's Drive.

Father Anthony Mugavero, St. Bridget's pastor, said the transfer to St. Theresa's, originally set for late June, has been pushed back to early September. He explained that the parish must first upgrade parking, heating and access for the handicapped during the summer, and also make changes to the church interior.

As the June 8 Mass at St. Theresa's neared its conclusion, Father John Mulligan, diocesan vicar general, proclaimed the decree of closing. Father Mitch Zygodlo, administrator of St. Theresa's and St. Stanislaus, then handed the St. Theresa's key to Father Mugavero. While doing

so, Father Zygodlo implored Father Mugavero "to take good care of this beautiful church, rectory and property."

Although the St. Theresa's building will be renamed St. Bridget's, Father Mugavero emphasized to the congregation that "you are always welcome here."

The Mass was followed by a festive reception in the church hall, where many adults flocked to a table full of group photographs from past first Communion classes and adult clubs. The pictures were displayed under a banner proclaiming, "St. Theresa's Church welcomes you."

Deacon Mielcarek and Norm Babij, friends since childhood, noted their mothers standing near each other in a 1937 photo of the Mothers' Club.

"The church was an extension of our families," Babij said. "Everyone was very active; we had dances all the time. I forget a lot of stuff, but I remember everything that happened in this church."

"We lived here. Norm and I probably know every nook and cranny and cubbyhole in this place," Deacon Mielcarek added.

On the hall's other side, Florence Wolkonowski reminisced as she served punch to a flock of small children.

"Some people have not seen each other for a long time. That's where the happy feeling is," said Wolkonowski, 70, who was born around the same time the parish was founded. Wolkonowski also noted that her two late brothers-in-law, Fathers Manuel and Lawrence Wolkonowski, were among the four priests to be ordained out of St. Theresa's.

Wolkonowski maintained a smile as she greeted the children. However, she quietly remarked that the termination of St. Theresa's "is extremely sad."

"I love this parish," she said.

## Defying embargo, activists try to mail Baghdad medicines

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In a public protest at the Kenneth B. Keating Federal Building June 6, Father Paul English, CSB, made it clear that he was "outraged" by U.S.-supported United Nations economic sanctions on Iraq.

What outraged him is their reported ill effect on the health and well-being of Iraq's citizens.

"It's frustrating that our government chooses to maintain an embargo when even the simplest things would save the lives of thousands and thousands of children and adults," said the priest, who serves as director of campus ministry at St. John Fisher College.

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Like other critics of the embargo, Father English said the sanctions do little to punish the Iraqi regime's leaders. Rather, they deprive innocent Iraqi citizens of medicines and other supplies, thus leading to a general deterioration of the Iraqi nation, he said.

To protest the sanctions, Father English joined 10 other area peace activists who attempted to mail a package of children's medicines to Baghdad, Iraq, the morning of June 6, in defiance of U.S. postal regulations.

Among the activists were members of the Catholic peace group Pax Christi and the Catholic Worker movement, as well as the administrator of Corpus Christi Parish, Father Jim Callan.

Calling themselves "Rochester Voices for Iraqi Children," the activists took the package to the post office located in the federal building at 100 State St.

Tom Malthaner, a Corpus Christi parishioner, attempted to mail the package but was politely refused by a postal employee. The postal employee told Malthaner she could not send the package because regulations do not permit the mailing of any packages that weigh more than 12 ounces to Iraq.

Postal employees also told the *Catholic Courier* that, under the current regula-

tions, no materials of value may be mailed to Iraq; they said personal letters to Iraq would generally be the only items likely to have a chance of being mailed from the United States.

After Malthaner was not allowed to mail the package, the protesters pulled out signs decrying the U.N. sanctions. Quoting from information they said came from U.N. reports, the activists said up to 4,500 children under the age of 5 are dying each month in Iraq due to a shortage of medicines as well as other needed materials. Such materials include items necessary to maintain Iraq's sanitation systems and food supplies, the activists said.

The activists spoke for several minutes with the postal employees before leaving the federal building to leaflet passersby on State Street.

One of the post office employees, Mike LaMarca, a parishioner at St. Theodore's in Gates, expressed mixed views of the activists' attempt to mail the package.

"I agree with their attempt to educate people," he said. "But we've got just as many sick and innocent children in America."

To obtain the U.S. government's perspective on the sanctions, the *Courier* made phone calls to the U.S. mission at the UN, but was unable to secure any interviews by deadline June 9. Also, the State Department's press office declined to arrange a phone interview with an official qualified to speak on the issue.

However, according to several press reports, the United States continues to support the sanctions because the Iraqi government has not fully complied with the terms for lifting them. Those terms include eradication of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and an end to smuggling arms into the country.

The Rochester protest came just before 24 similar protests slated to take place

June 10 in various U.S. cities, according to Kathy Kelly, a coordinator of Voices In The Wilderness, an ad hoc national coalition of peace activists.

The United Nations was to vote June 10 to renew a "food-for-oil" deal made last year with Iraq in which the country was allowed to sell \$1 billion in oil every six months in exchange for food. However, the United Nations has already approved the renewed deal, she said. She added that the food provided to Iraq under the deal is far from adequate.

In a phone interview from her Chicago home, Kelly, a longtime veteran of the Catholic Worker movement, said Malthaner will travel to Iraq along with Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton in September on behalf of her group to deliver medicines.

She added that such trips are illegal and that her group has been warned by the State Department that members may face fines and prison terms — for up to 12 years — for taking medicines and other supplies to Iraq. Nonetheless, she and other "Voices" delegates have made six trips in the past several months in defiance of the U.S. government, she said, and the government has done nothing to stop or punish them.

"We actually think the government doesn't want to come near us," she said, noting she's sent letters to federal authorities explaining her activities. "They don't seem to want to take the bait."

Kelly said she'd gladly risk imprisonment for defying the U.S. government after having witnessed the suffering of Iraqi children in unsanitary hospitals last March, and having interviewed several Iraqis about the dire effects of shortages on their lives.

"If I spend 12 years in prison, I'll trade that for adding 12 years to the life of an Iraqi kid," she said.

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