

U.S.-Iraqi controversy sparks prayer, protest

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The threat of a U.S. war on Iraq provoked Catholics throughout the Rochester Diocese into prayer and protest, especially over the Feb. 20-22 weekend.

Late Feb. 22 came word that war apparently was staved off when U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein reached an agreement allowing the United Nations to inspect Iraqi weapon-building sites. President Clinton accepted the deal — conditionally — Feb. 23.

Prior to the agreement, prayer vigils were held by a number of Rochester-area churches and religious communities. The ecumenical effort was sponsored by the Greater Rochester Community of Churches.

"Who's to say (the pact) is not a direct response to prayer? All I know is, something positive happened," said Sister Sharon Bailey, SSJ, justice-and-peace coordinator for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester.

Sister Bailey attended weekend vigils both at the SSJ motherhouse and at Corpus Christi Church in Rochester. Meanwhile, the Rochester Sisters of Mercy hosted weekend vigils in their motherhouse chapel and at the Mercy Prayer Center.

In addition, the Sisters of St. Joseph conducted a letter-writing and phone campaign to government offices late in the week of Feb. 15-21 to protest the possibility of war. This crusade was led by Msgr.

William Shannon, a retired diocesan priest who resides at the SSJ motherhouse.

Parishes in other parts of the diocese also expressed concern. For instance, at the Catholic Communities of St. Anne and St. Gregory in Palmyra/Marion, the two churches were open Feb. 20-22, in accordance with the Greater Rochester Community of Churches' suggestion.

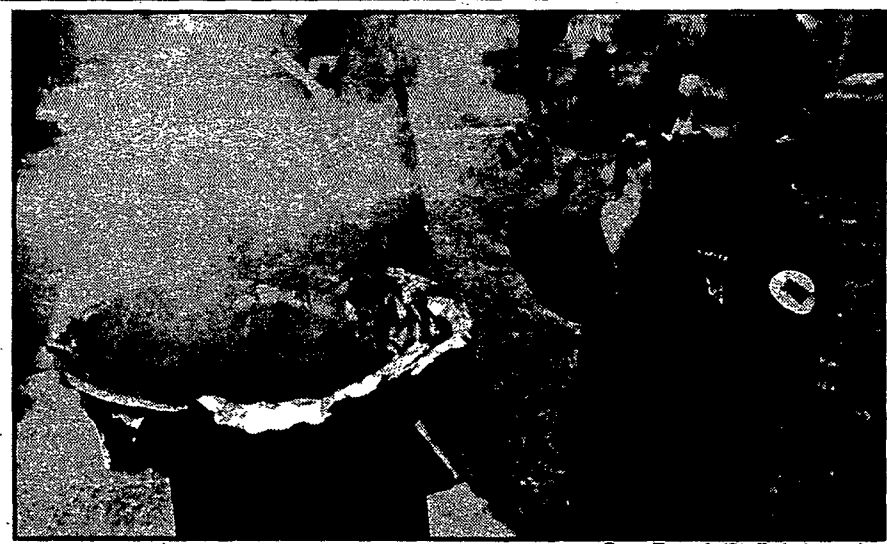
Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier last week urged pastors and parish social-ministry directors to continue to support church teachings about war. Catholic Charities has also joined with Peaceworks, an ecumenical group from Elmira, in urging residents to direct e-mail and phone calls protesting war to the White House.

"The church condemns the killing of innocents to achieve any kind of end," said Kathleen Dubel, justice-and-peace coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier.

Dubel also said that Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, had raised awareness of U.S.-Iraqi tensions by denouncing the potential war during recent lectures at Cornell University and Apalachin's St. Margaret Mary Church.

At a Feb. 17 press conference in the diocesan Pastoral Center, Bishop Matthew H. Clark stated his opposition to U.S. military involvement in a potential war.

"I strongly oppose military intervention in Iraq unless every other possibility is totally exhausted," Bishop Clark said during



Greg Francia/Staff photographer

Hot palms

David Sackett, 8, warms his hands as palms are burned Feb. 22 at St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's Church, East Bloomfield. Churches traditionally ask parishioners to bring their palms from last year's Palm Sunday to create ashes for Ash Wednesday, which this year was Feb. 25.

the conference.

The bishop added that he supports lifting the U.S.-supported U.N. embargo on Iraq because the Catholic patriarch of Iraq has stated that the embargo is only hurting innocent civilians, particularly children.

The tentative peace struck early this week has apparently not caused diocesan Catholics to dismiss the threat of war. Judith Nichols, pastoral associate at Auburn's Sacred Heart Church, said that the U.S.-Iraq flap has spurred interest in a March 27-29 retreat on nonviolence at

her parish.

The retreat, "The Way of the Non-Violent Jesus," will be led by Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, an Eastern Rite priest from Massachusetts. He founded the Study and Practice of Christian Nonviolence Center at the University of Notre Dame, is a co-founder of Pax Christi USA and was a Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

In addition, Dubel noted that Pax Christi USA asked for Catholics to remember the Iraqi crisis as part of their normally planned Ash Wednesday fasting on Feb. 25.

Obituary

Father Robert L. Collins, 57; pastor of Livonia church

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When Father Robert L. Collins celebrated his first Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Livonia, he immediately won over the Mass-goers with his homily, recalled Sue Drexel, the parish's youth ministry coordinator.

"He said: 'My name is Father Bob Collins, and I'm so glad to be here I feel like Tickle Me Elmo,'" Drexel said with a laugh.

Pastor of St. Joseph's and its mission church, St. William's in Conesus, since late 1996, Father Collins died at Strong Memorial Hospital Feb. 18, 1998. He was 57.

Chris Coniglio, faith formation coordinator at St. Joseph's, added that Father Collins was known both for his holiness and his ability to joke.

"He'd do Mass so seriously," she said. "Then he'd come out with one line that would just blow people away."

Drexel and Coniglio were among friends and relatives at a reception at St. Thomas

More Parish Rectory following the priest's funeral Mass Feb. 23 at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Father Collins had been suffering from a pre-leukemia condition. Last September, the priest received a transfusion of bone-marrow-producing blood cells from his brother, Joe Collins, of Barrington, R.I. Joe said the transfusion worked, but that his brother's immune system was so weakened that an infection led to his demise.

He recalled that his brother had wanted to be a priest even when he was young.

"It's rare for people to know what they want to do from a young age," Joe Collins said. "He always had that desire, that kindness, to touch people."

Father Collins volunteered regularly at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, a Catholic Worker house in Rochester, his sister Eileen Collins said.

"He was always interested in being a priest," she said. "The priesthood offered him a lot of opportunity to meet people and do good."

Father Collins was baptized at Holy Rosary Parish in Rochester and confirmed at Sacred Heart Cathedral. He attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, and was ordained a priest June 5, 1966.

He was an assistant pastor at St. Monica's Church, Rochester, from 1966 to 1970, when he was named diocesan director of family life. Among his other positions in the 1970s was a stint as diocesan director of religious education, a chaplaincy at Monroe Community College and the rectorship at Becket Hall in Rochester.

In 1985, he was named pastor of St. Thomas More, a position he held until he went to St. Joseph's and St. William's.

Father Sean M. Garrity, temporary administrator since October at the parishes, said Father Collins made a big impact on them in the short time he was their pastor.

"I felt he was a quiet, caring, warm man, definitely full of hope," Father Garrity said. "He was just a very positive, forward-looking person."

Marilynne Lipshutz, a friend of the fam-

ily, spent many hours by his side in the months before he died.

"It was an honor," she said. "In the 30-plus years that I knew him, I never heard him say anything negative about anyone, and that's unusual because I knew there were people who angered him."

"He never held a grudge," Peg Hynes, pastoral administrator at St. Joseph's, said. "You might disagree with him, but once it was settled, it would pass."

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7:30 p.m.	Holy Family Church	889 Jay St., Rochester	716-328-3110
7:30 p.m.	St. Basilios Church	15 Whelan St., Rochester	716-271-1488
MONDAY			
7:30 p.m.	St. Jude's Church	4100 Lyell Rd., Rochester	716-241-4322
WEDNESDAY			
7:30 p.m.	Holy Family Home School Assoc.	889 Jay St., Rochester	716-328-4800
10:00 a.m.	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church		
12:30 p.m.	Bingo Palace	341 E. Ridge Road	716-266-2232
SATURDAY			
7:30 p.m.	Good Shepherd Church	3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester	716-334-3518
8:00 p.m.	St. Thomas the Apostle Church	41 Colebrook Dr., Rochester	716-226-2943

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