

# To Life! To Life! To Life!

## Nobel nominee calls church to nonviolence

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Nothing undermines the church's consistent ethic of life more than the church itself, according to Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, a Byzantine Catholic priest who has devoted much of his life to teaching Gospel-based nonviolence.

Jesus clearly taught that overcoming evil was only possible by doing good, maintained Father McCarthy, who was nominated in 1992 for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts on behalf of nonviolence.

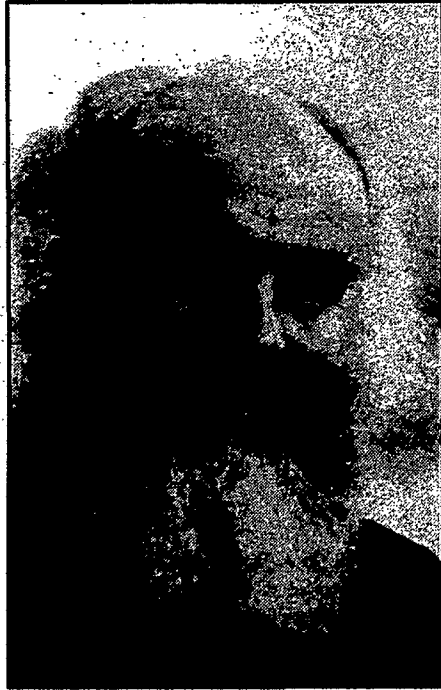
However, the priest said, Christians, including many Catholics, have done just the opposite, tolerating and even embracing killing through war, capital punishment and abortion, turning Christ's counsels to nonviolence on their heads.

"There is no question that the Jesus of the Gospels teaches a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies," said Father McCarthy during an interview with the *Catholic Courier* at the Greater Rochester International Airport on Sept. 25.

Father McCarthy had flown into town from his home in Massachusetts where he serves as acting rector of St. Gregory the Theologian Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Newton. The priest was slated to lead a weekend Christian conference on nonviolence at the State University of New York College at Geneseo.

About a dozen people attended the conference Sept. 25-27, according to Father James Hewes, chaplain of the Newman Catholic Community at Geneseo, which sponsored the event.

Father McCarthy is also slated to lead a mission on nonviolence at Holy Spirit



Church in Penfield. The priest will lead mission sessions 7-9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6, and 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7. He will also celebrate 8:30 a.m. Mass at Holy Spirit Nov. 7. The mission is co-sponsored by the parishes of Holy Spirit and Holy Trinity, St. Rita's and St. Paul's of Webster.

The Byzantine priest's talks are being paid for in part with funds from a Diocese of Rochester Consistent Life Ethic Grant.

An absolutist when it comes to nonviolence, Father McCarthy, a co-founder of the Catholic peace group Pax Christi USA, stressed that no true Christian, in his opinion, can ever seek an abortion, fight in a war, support the death penalty

or justify any other kind of killing.

He added that he believed campaigns against such evils as abortion and the death penalty are destined to fail because activists on all sides refuse to agree to oppose *all* killing, and not simply that which they find most abhorrent.

"Once you can say 'I decide who lives and who dies,' then it's only a matter of whose ox is being gored from what angle," he said.

In the priest's opinion, Christians are not even allowed to defend their families with violence.

"You resist evil by doing good to the person doing evil to you," he said, adding, rhetorically: "Would there even be a Gospel if, on the cross, Jesus called down curses on evil?"

As a Byzantine priest, Father McCarthy is allowed to be married, and he and his wife, Mary, have had 13 children together. One of his children, Teresea Benedicta a Cruce, nearly died when she was a small child after accidentally ingesting a toxic amount of Tylenol tablets in 1987.

Father McCarthy, his family and friends, all prayed to Blessed Edith Stein, a German Carmelite nun killed at Auschwitz in 1942, for intercession on his daughter's behalf. The child experienced what her doctors later termed a miraculous recovery with no after-effects. His daughter's case was examined by the Vatican, and her cure was proclaimed a miracle, paving the way for Stein's canonization as a saint on Sunday, Oct. 11. Father McCarthy said he will be present at the canonization ceremony in Rome.

The priest speaks of Stein as if he knew her personally, and he noted her life has profoundly influenced his own dedica-

tion to nonviolence. Stein was an Orthodox Jew, and a brilliant scholar, who converted to Catholicism, he said. She was arrested and taken to Auschwitz because of her Jewish origin, he said.

Father McCarthy honored Stein in his recent book *August 9*, titled for the date Stein was killed. It's also the date Nagasaki, Japan, suffered an atomic bombing in 1945, as well as the date Franz Jagerstatter, an Austrian Catholic, was executed by the Nazis for refusing induction into the German army. In addition, Aug. 9 was the date Father McCarthy was ordained in 1981, he said, acknowledging that at the time of his ordination, he was unaware the date had so much significance.

Stein, Jagerstatter and the city of Nagasaki were all victims of Christians who thought it was all right to kill, Father McCarthy said, pointing out that no non-Christians flew the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, which just happened to be the Japanese city with the largest Christian population.

These victims of violence are examples of how, for too long, Father McCarthy said, Christians have given their loyalty to states that wish them to kill instead of to the Christ who calls them to love their enemies. He added that Christians in the first 300 years of the early church wouldn't even allow soldiers to join until they had renounced violence. He called the church to come back to its roots on this matter, rejecting the church's current teaching that Christians may participate in defensive wars as long as they fulfill just war criteria.

"The fact that Christians have done things in the past does not validate them in the present," he said.

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(application is valid only if fully completed and signed by nominator)

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**References:**

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The CLE Committee will contact all nominees to request they sign a CLE commitment statement and grant permission for us to nominate them for the Vita CLE award.  
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