

## Activists decry Mateo capital punishment trial

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Approximately 40 people launched a series of protests outside the Monroe County Hall of Justice Nov. 12 as the trial of Angel Mateo began. His is the first capital punishment case to be conducted in Monroe County since 1952.

Demonstrators circled silently near the Hall of Justice steps, displaying signs with such sayings as "Thou Shalt Not Kill," "The Death Penalty Does Not Deter," and "Why Kill to Show Killing is Wrong?"

The 30-minute protest began at noon and ended with a prayer led by Father Anthony Mugavero, pastor of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester. Father Mugavero recited the Prayer of St. Francis and concluded the service by expressing hope "that mercy will prevail."

Mateo, 29, is charged with first-degree murder in the Nov. 2, 1996, kidnapping and slaying of Juan Rodriguez-Matos. If he is convicted, Mateo's jury must then determine whether he would receive life imprisonment, or death by lethal injection.

Mateo is also charged in three 1995 murders in Rochester. None of those charges carry a potential death penalty conviction.

The protests are being coordinated by an interfaith group, Reconciliation Network: Don't Kill in My Name. According to co-organizer Suzanne Schnittman, the network planned to continue to stage noontime protests at the Hall of Justice each Friday for the duration of the trial, which was expected to last three to five weeks. Rabbi Raphael Adler, first-year leader of Temple Beth El in Rochester, was scheduled to lead the prayer at the Nov. 20 protest.

Since the death penalty was reinstated in New York state in September 1995, the Reconciliation Network has demonstrated on the second Friday of each month at the Liberty Pole in Rochester. Normal participation for those protests, Schnittman said, is 15 to 20 people. In addition to the 40 people who turned out for the Mateo trial's opening day, 25 demonstrated the following day at the Hall of Justice.

Schnittman said that local activists are reacting strongly to the reality that the issue of capital punishment is hitting closer



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Mary Bolte, left, and Jann Armantrout, march in a protest outside the Monroe County Hall of Justice on the first day of the Angel Mateo capital punishment trial, Nov. 12. About 40 protesters participated.

to home.

"You can talk about it like it's out there somewhere else, but it's not out there anymore. This county has the machinery to execute somebody in our name," said Schnittman, who also serves as coordinator of the diocesan Consistent Life Ethic office.

Sister Grace Miller, RSM, noted that the jury selection — 10 whites and two blacks, nine suburban residents and three city residents — doesn't seem to favor Mateo, a Hispanic city resident.

"I really fear for his life," said Sister Miller, who serves as director of the House of Mercy in Rochester. She attended the Nov. 12 protest with about 15 staff members, volunteers and clients from the House of Mercy — an inner-city outreach for poor and homeless people.

Sister Miller added that juror profiles

in a Nov. 12 Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* article revealed that one of the jurors has a son who is a police officer, and that another juror said she firmly believes in the death penalty.

"This is not justice," Sister Miller commented.

Father Mugavero said that he lent his support to the demonstrations because the death penalty goes against "everything the Catholic Church is speaking to in terms of the consistent life ethic."

"It speaks to me of vengeance. It's not a deterrent based on what the statistics show," Father Mugavero commented.

Father Mugavero remarked that all criminals should be given another chance, no matter how checkered their histories.

"Those who work in prison ministry know that people can change," Father Mugavero said. "It's just so obvious to me ...

any life is of infinite value in the eyes of God. We, as citizens, have an obligation to protect and defend that dignity."

In the three years since the death penalty was restored in this state, one person has been sentenced to die: Darrel K. Harris received a sentence June 6 in Brooklyn of death by lethal injection. He is still waiting on death row.

### Obituary

#### Sister Madeline Therese Kelso, SSJ, longtime educator

Sister Madeline Therese Kelso, SSJ, died Oct. 26, 1998, at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in Pittsford.

A native of Brockport, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1943. A graduate of Brockport High School and Brockport Normal School, she earned her master's degree in education from the University of Rochester. She also attended Boston University for specialization in reading.

Sister Madeline Therese taught at Holy Rosary School in Rochester for 12 years and at Christ the King, Irondequoit, for four years. From 1962 to 1990, she worked at Nazareth College, teaching speech and elementary education, and serving as dean of students for three years and as associate professor and coordinator of student teaching for more than 20 years.

She was chairperson of the Pi State World Fellowship of Delta Kappa Gamma, a member of the International Delta Kappa Gamma World Fellowship Committee and president of Eta Chapter (Delta Kappa Gamma), a professional women teachers' organization.

Msgr. William Shannon celebrated her funeral liturgy in the motherhouse chapel Oct. 29.

She is survived by three sisters, Eileen (Jack) Hale of San Diego, Calif.; Betty (Paul) Rayburn of Penfield; and Ruth Anne (Leo) Kuhn of Clarkson; nieces and nephews; and congregational sisters.

Contributions may be made in her memory to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

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