

DIOCESAN NEWS

Churches help refugees adjust to life after war

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — War may have ended in Kosovo, but life in the United States is just beginning for a number of the ethnic Albanians who've lost their homes to the strife.

As of Monday, June 21, six Kosovar families consisting of 47 individuals have come to the Rochester area through the auspices of Catholic Family Center, according to Jim Delaney, CFC's refugee program manager. These refugees are among the 20,000 Kosovars the United States agreed to take during the war.

Two such families are being resettled with the help of 20 volunteers at St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt St. Formerly living in a refugee camp in Macedonia, which borders Kosovo, the families arrived in Rochester June 15.

One family — the Ilazis — consists of Qahil Ilazi, his wife, Qamile, their five children, and Qahil's two cousins, brothers Zeqir and Fejzi. The Ilazis will be temporarily living at the parish rectory, according to Father William Spilly, pastor.

The other family — the Sahitis — consists of Sahit Sahiti, his wife, Sala, and their six children. They will stay temporarily at a neighboring house owned by a parishioner, Father Spilly said. Both families are looking for permanent housing.

In interviews at the rectory on Thursday, June 17, both families told horrific tales of abuse at the hands of the Yugoslav military. Many times, family members broke into tears relating their accounts.

Speaking in German and translated by Dick Kurz, a St. John's parishioner who co-leads one of two parish teams assigned to the families, Fejzi Ilazi told the story of his family's expulsion from Kosovo.

He reported that three days after NATO warplanes began bombing Yugoslavia, seven Serbian police officers came to his house in a small Kosovo village. At gunpoint, the Serbs told him and his brother and the rest of the Ilazis — who lived next door — to leave their homes, which the Serbs then burned.

"We thought the Serbs were going to shoot us," Fejzi said, adding that his mother, father and sister were



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

St. John the Evangelist Church parishioners Rita O'Hara (left) and Judy Boyd greet Besarta Ilazi, 10 (left center), and Kadrie Ilazi, 8, after the Kosovar refugees arrived at Greater Rochester International Airport June 15.

not home at the time and have not been seen since.

Walking for several hours through deep snow over hills with no roads, the Ilazis escaped to Macedonia and within days wound up at a refugee camp. That same refugee camp — Stenkovec II — was also the temporary home of the Sahitis, who are from Ferizaj, a city

of 100,000 people.

Speaking in Albanian and translated by Tony Vulaj, a parishioner at Rochester's Holy Rosary Church, Sala Sahiti said Serb authorities began expelling ethnic Albanians from her city before the NATO bombing began. On March 24, she and her children fled the city. Meanwhile, her husband, a truck driver who delivers bread, was not permitted by the Serbs to leave his company's headquarters in Ferizaj, south of the Kosovo's capital, Pristina, for two weeks.

However, in a twist of fate, a wave of refugees from Pristina eventually overwhelmed Ferizaj. The Serbs told Sahiti to "leave or else," he said, and he hitched a ride on a truck carrying refugees into Macedonia. He spoke by phone with his wife's brother in Switzerland, who told him where his wife and children were, and he eventually reunited with them in the camp.

Although both families are glad the war is over, neither expressed interest in going back to Kosovo, or living again with the Serbs who drove them out.

"If NATO wasn't there, the Serbs would eat us," Sahiti said.

Delaney added that CFC is expected to resettle a total of 125 Kosovar refugees, including the ones currently here. Several Catholic and non-Catholic churches in Auburn, Webster, Penfield, Clifton Springs and Rochester have or will be helping CFC out through material donations and volunteers, he said.

He reported, though, that CFC is currently stretched to its limit because, in addition to the Kosovars, there are 220 refugees from other countries that CFC must resettle this year.

Delaney has only two employees, and 100 volunteers to help him, but he said many of the volunteers have been putting in 80-hour weeks lately. He is currently seeking monetary donations to hire some part-time staff to help him get through the current crisis.

Donors can send checks to: Catholic Family Center, 25 Franklin St., Sibley Tower Building, Rochester, N.Y. 14604-1007. Mark the memo section of your check with "Refugee Dept."

Churches and individuals interested in volunteering to help resettle refugees can call Delaney at 716/262-7074.

Sister

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However, Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan chancellor, said in late February that the community had crossed the line into schism and had, in effect, excommunicated themselves from the Catholic Church.

Sister St. Peter told the *Catholic Courier* that she hasn't asked for Sister Henninger to completely remove herself from the New Faith Community, but to abandon such public roles as preaching.

Sister St. Peter said she cannot anticipate how long the removal process may take, but that she hopes a resolution can be reached through additional discussions between Sister Henninger and congregational administrators.

"We're hoping and praying for a reconciliation," said Sister St. Peter, who completes an eight-year term as congregational president June 27.

However, Sister Henninger said she won't lessen her involvement with the New Faith Community — even if refusing to do so means removal from the order.

"I cannot turn my back on the people I've worked with the past 20 years," she said.

She added that "staying in the church, and trying to change it, doesn't work."

Canon 694 of the Revised Code of Canon Law states that a religious institute such as the Sisters of St. Joseph may seek to dismiss a member who has "notoriously abandoned the Catholic faith." Canon 697 states that the major superior must warn the member in writing "with an explicit threat of subsequent dismissal unless the member reforms."

If the member does not reform, the superior is to proceed to a second warning. Actual dismissal cannot take place until it has been confirmed by the Holy See.

Father McKenna emphasized that this procedure is a governance issue within the Sisters of St. Joseph.

"This is purely internal and has nothing to do with the bishop and the Diocese of

Rochester," he said. Father McKenna explained that the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester is a pontifical institute that answers to the Holy See rather than to the diocese in which its members serve.

Sister Henninger said she was not surprised by the June 8 letter and that she holds no animosity toward Sister St. Peter.

"I feel like she's caught in the middle," Sister Henninger said. "We're not the problem. The problem is the structure in the church."

Meanwhile, Father Callan expressed disappointment that Sister St. Peter seemingly did not defend Sister Henninger more vigorously.

"I believe she dropped the ball right at this historic moment, when she could have stood up to the Vatican," Father Callan said.

Sister Henninger, a former teacher and principal, became pastoral associate at Corpus Christi in 1977, during Father Callan's first year as administrator. In 1986 she became coordinator of Recovery House, a program of Corpus Christi's Dimitri House. The program, which served men recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, was closed by Corpus Christi Church after Sister Henninger was fired last December.

Sister St. Peter said she had offered to have Sister Henninger create a ministry similar to Recovery House through the Sisters of St. Joseph, but that Sister Henninger preferred operating such a ministry through the New Faith Community.

"We cannot mission her to a church that is in schism," Sister St. Peter said.

Sister Henninger said she expects to be funded by the New Faith Community for a new ministry.

The New Faith Community has approximately 1,000 members, Sister Henninger said. Its offices are located at Rochester's Salem United Church of Christ, where two weekend services and a Thursday service are held. The community is also using Emmanuel Baptist Church, Downtown United Presbyterian Church and Hochstein Music School for services.

The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS OF A PRIEST

We need them in life's early morning,
We need them again at its close;
We feel their warm clasp of true friendship,
We seek them when tasting life's woes;

And when we are taking life's partner,
Other hands may prepare us a feast,
But the hands that will bless and unite us
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

When we come to this world, we are sinful,
The greatest as well as the least;
And the hands that make us pure as angels,
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy,
For the Host which their fingers caress;
When can a poor sinner do better
Than ask Him to guide them and bless?

And when we are tempted and wander
To pathways of shame and of sin,
'Tis the hand of a priest will absolve us
Not, once, but again and again.

When the hour of death comes upon us,
May our courage and strength be increased
By seeing raised over us in blessing
The beautiful hands of a priest.

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering, Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

July, 1999

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Look for the August MPRP Calendar in the July 29th Courier. | | | | Revs. 1 John Dugan, CSB | 2 John Lee, CSB | 3 Bishop Matthew H. Clark |
| 4 Pope John Paul II | 5 Sabbatical Priests | 6 Thomas W. Burr | 7 Msgr. George Cocuzzi | 8 Bruce F. Ammering | 9 Robert L. Belligotti | 10 Edward J. Foy |
| 11 Terence K. Fleming | 12 John D. Dillon | 13 Gennaro J. Ventura | 14 Richard R. Brickler | 15 Francis J. Erb | 16 Peter Enyan- Boadu | 17 Sebastian A. Falcone |
| 18 Joseph Sheehan, O.C.A.M. | 19 Norman Tanck, C.S.B. | 20 Robert J. Donovan | 21 Louis Nhlen Vu, CMC | 22 Raymond H. Fleming | 23 David N. Gramkee | 24 George H. Hill Jr. |
| 25 Michael Mayer | 26 James Cronin, OSB | 27 Eugene H. McFarland | 28 James Dolan, S.J. | 29 Leo Hetzler, CSB | 30 Vocations | 31 Seminarians |

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