

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Protesters commemorate priests slain in 1989

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

An annual mass protest outside the U.S. Army School of the Americas in Georgia marked the 10th anniversary of the assassination of six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter in El Salvador by a group of soldiers that included SOA graduates.

Among those arrested at the protest was John Honeck, a parishioner at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Brockport.

The turnout for the Nov. 21 protest at Fort Benning, Ga., where the School of the Americas has its headquarters, was nearly double that of 1998, according to Lisa Chen, spokeswoman for SOA Watch, which sponsored the protest. The demonstration was the culmination of several events held Nov. 19-21 aimed at shutting down the school.

The SOA trains Latin American military personnel. Graduates of the school have been linked to human rights violations in their countries, and critics have charged that the school has taught repressive tactics later used against not only insurgents but innocent civilians and Catholic Church workers.

But the school's defenders claim that only a small percentage of the school's alumni have violated human rights, and that the SOA plays a crucial role in professionalizing Latin American soldiers.

Last year, 7,000 people went to the SOA rally, with 2,300 of them risking arrest by crossing the line onto the military base. This year, 12,000 people went — including 20 activists from the Diocese of Rochester, and six students from Nazareth College in Rochester — with 4,408 by SOA Watch's count risking arrest.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

Fifteen people held a protest vigil against the School of Americas outside U.S. Rep. John LaFalce's Spencerport office Nov. 16. Megan Honeck, above, along with the other protesters, held portraits and crosses in memory of the eight people killed in El Salvador in 1989.

In all, 65 people were given "ban-and-bar" orders forbidding them from such trespass in the future, and another 23 were arrested for having violated a previous order, according to Chen. Ban-and-bar orders were issued against those convicted of trespass at the fort, and penalize pro-

testers through fines and imprisonment if they use the civil disobedience tactic again.

Honeck, who was among those 23, told the *Catholic Courier* that an army general told the arrestees that their cases would be examined by the local federal magistrate, who would have to decide whether or not to pursue them.

Honeck crossed the line in 1997 and in 1998, but has not been imprisoned or fined for his actions. He said he faces a possible \$5,000 fine and up to six months in jail for violating his ban-and-bar order.

"I just thought it was a continuation of witnessing against SOA," he said of violating his order.

Honeck was also part of a group of 15 demonstrators who held a protest vigil on Nov. 16 at the Spencerport office of U.S. Rep. John LaFalce. The demonstrators want LaFalce to end his congressional support for

SOA. Congressional attempts to close it have grown closer to success each year, including this year's successful House vote to cut funding. The Senate took no action on that provision, and the House action was squelched in a House-Senate conference committee.

The Fort Benning protest takes place each year near the Nov. 16 anniversary date of the Jesuit murders; most of the Salvadoran military figures linked to the killings were trained at the School of the Americas. In the early-morning hours of Nov. 16, 1989, Jesuit Fathers Ignacio Elacuria — then rector of Central American University — Martin Baro; Armando Lopez, Joaquin Lopez Lopez, Segundo Montes and Juan Ramon Medrano were dragged from their beds and shot dead by an elite army unit. Their housekeeper, Elba Ramos, 42, and her daughter, Cecilia, 16, were also murdered.

This year, more than 135 U.S. bishops, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Bishop Joseph P. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, president of the bishops' twin conferences, have signed a resolution asking the U.S. government to close the SOA. More than 50 Latin American bishops have signed a similar resolution.

Closing the SOA was discussed at the U.S. bishops' general fall meeting, held Nov. 15-18 in Washington. On the meeting's last day, Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark, N.J., outgoing chairman of the International Policy Committee, noted that the U.S. Army announced a day earlier that it would close the old school and reopen it as an institution that would have a more academic and less military curriculum and that would recruit civilian as well as military students.

"The International Policy Committee has not come to a consensus on this issue..." Archbishop McCarrick said. Because of this, he suggested that the bishops "wait and see what this new school is going to look like and see then whether we should take a stand or not."

Includes Catholic News Service reports.

## Rochester parish set to kick off sesquicentennial celebration

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

With the theme "We've Come This Far By Faith," Immaculate Conception Church in Rochester is set to begin a lengthy series of events commemorating its 150th anniversary.

Bennie Brass, chair of the anniversary committee, expects the series of activities to energize the Immaculate Conception community as a millennium begins.

"The times in which we live, the news is

not always good. This gives us something to pull our head up, especially for our youth," Brass remarked.

Immaculate Conception, located at 445 Frederick Douglass St. in Rochester's Corn Hill section, will kick off its sesquicentennial milestone with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The 7 p.m. liturgy will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. A reception is due to follow.

Opening festivities will continue into that weekend with a Homecoming Dinner

Dance in the school hall, 50 Glasgow St., from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Dec. 11.

And on Dec. 12, at 6 p.m., students from Rochester's School of the Arts will perform a free concert of classical music in Immaculate Conception Church.

All of these events are open to the public.

Immaculate Conception will carry its celebration into the year 2000 by attaching a sesquicentennial theme to the following events: workshops in January; a family fun night in February; a musical performed by parishioners in April; and a gospel music festival in May.

Brass said that his committee is striving to contact a wide range of folks with Immaculate Conception roots: priests who served the parish; former parishioners; couples who were married in the church; and former students of Immaculate Conception School, which closed in 1974. Anyone is welcome to take part in the festivities, Brass emphasized.

Immaculate Conception Parish was founded in 1849 to serve a growing number of Irish Catholic immigrants on Rochester's southwest side. By the time of its 100th anniversary, the parish featured numerous ethnic groups.

In recent decades, urban-renewal led to the demolition of numerous buildings around Immaculate Conception, with townhomes built in their place. However, the church itself has stood proudly at the same location where it was built in 1864.

As of 1997, approximately two-thirds of Immaculate Conception's 275-family parish were black — making it the largest African-American parish in the diocese.

The parish's administrator, Father Michael Upson, has served at Immaculate Conception since 1992.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** For ticket information on the Dec. 11 Immaculate Conception Homecoming Dinner Dance, call 716/325-3893.

### Recognizing

★ Our Lady of Mercy High School has received an unrestricted, \$100,000 four-year grant from the B. Thomas Gollisano Foundation.

★ Bishop Matthew H. Clark Award has been established in the bishop's honor by the diocesan board of Catholic Charities. Bishop Clark received the first such award Oct. 2 during the Catholic Charities USA annual conference in Rochester. The award will go annually to a staff member or volunteer who models exemplary commitment to using his/her talents and resources in service of others; to building an agency which safeguards human life and dignity; to promoting justice and peace which is animated by charity. Martin Birmingham Jr., board chairman, and Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, made the presentation.

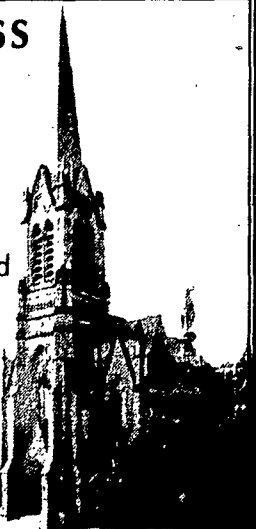
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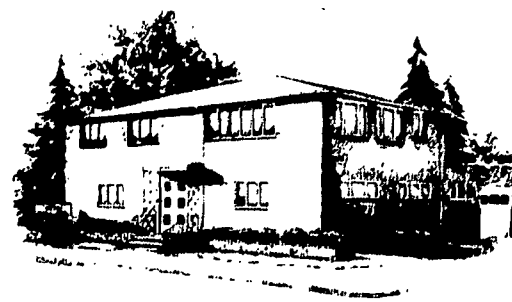
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