

## CONTINUED...

## Catholics

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"I do not take the activity of getting arrested lightly, because I have a responsibility to teach to youth," said Doughty, one of a handful of diocesan Catholics recently arrested for civil disobedience at U.S. government facilities.

When asked why he twice found it necessary to break the law when U.S. citizens can redress their grievances through letter-writing campaigns to Congress and other legal means, Doughty pointed out that he had spent two years talking and writing to U.S. and U.N. officials, and gotten nowhere. Hence, he said, he felt compelled to commit civil disobedience because the White House was not open to responding to the viewpoint of sanctions critics.

"Unless you've got \$2,000 and can rent the Lincoln bedroom for an evening, you really don't have a lot of recourse," he said.

Doughty willingly trespassed and was arrested Feb. 14 on the steps of the building that houses offices of the U.S. mission to the United Nations. He was protesting U.S. support for economic sanctions the U.N. imposed against Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Doughty contended that his faith caused him to act against the sanctions, which even the United Nations acknowledges have contributed to the deaths of 1 million Iraqis by fostering malnutrition and disease.

"I consider it a Christian obligation to speak on this, and I just can't remain silent," he said.

## At wits' end

Critics of the sanctions against Iraq include Pope John Paul II as well as Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The bishop is one of more than 50 U.S. bishops who signed a



1998 letter to President Bill Clinton, asking that the United States support lifting of the sanctions.

The United States has refused to lift Iraqi sanctions, arguing that the Iraqi government has not fully complied with the terms that ended the war, including accounting for and dismantling weapons of mass destruction. However, critics contend that the sanctions only punish innocent civilians, don't harm the country's rulers, and have destroyed Iraq as a livable society.

Protesting the sanctions caused Doughty to break the law again on Feb. 26 when he was arrested along with several other activists at an Air National Guard base outside of Syracuse. Doughty and the others went under the base fence carrying food and medicine for Iraq that they wanted to give to pilots slated to fly there. But the activists were immediately arrested and detained for more than 16 hours. The outcome of both the New York

and Syracuse cases is still pending.

Doughty had visited Iraq in April 1999 as part of a delegation sponsored by Voices In The Wilderness, a Chicago-based group devoted to ending the sanctions. He said he saw several small, skinny children with reddish hair, which is a sign of malnutrition among generally dark-haired Iraqis. Everywhere he went there were signs of devastation, he said, noting that the hospitals he visited didn't even have electric lights, much less the medicine needed to treat their patients.

"There's just death everywhere over there," he said.

## God and country

Another civilly disobedient diocesan Catholic is John Honeck, who belongs to Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Brockport. Honeck, married with three children, has worked in Catholic social outreach and has participated in protests against abortion and U.S. military policy.

Currently, he's awaiting sentencing along with 23 other activists who crossed onto the School of the Americas property in Georgia on Nov. 21. He could be sent to federal prison for six months and be forced to pay a \$5,000 fine.

The SOA has trained tens of thousands of Latin American soldiers in counter-insurgency techniques, and a number of its graduates have been implicated in killings of both nonviolent political activists and church leaders, including Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador in 1980 and Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedara in 1998.

The school's defenders claim its training has helped to curb human-rights abuses among Latin America's military forces, but SOA critics claim the school actually contributes to the problem and have long called for its closing.

Like Doughty, Honeck said he has participated in such legal means of protest as letter-writing campaigns to get the SOA closed. But he felt he simply had to put his freedom on the line even though he might lose his job and be separated from his family.

"I don't think we're called as Catholics to obey something that goes against what we consider to be the teachings of Jesus," he said. "I think we have to question what our government does, and does that serve building up God's reign on earth."

He added that members of his parish and other people in the country he's met have offered to support his family throughout his legal battle, and that he is ready and willing to pay the price for his violation of the law by going to jail. In this sense, he said, he is sharing the lot of poor people in Latin America he believes he is defending with his actions.

"I think you have to put your trust at some point in God and say, 'We'll get through this.'"

## What's the use?

Tony Bezila is married to Jan Bezila, coordinator of Pax Christi of Rochester and the Upstate Region of New York State, a Catholic peace movement that has chapters in Syracuse and Buffalo. His wife participated in civil disobedience actions against the Iraqi sanctions in New York City Feb. 14 and at the Air National Guard base in Syracuse March 11 and is awaiting the outcome of her arrests in both cases.

Although he sympathizes with his wife's actions, Tony Bezila admits he cannot always understand how Jan can remain active in peace movements when so little seems to result from her actions.

"How can you continue to do it when nothing ever comes of it?" he asked her during an interview in her Rochester home. The couple attends St. Monica's Church.

Jan countered that protests helped to end the Vietnam War, and speculated that peace groups' continuing criticism of U.S. policy in Latin America during the 1980s may have kept the federal government

from launching a full-scale invasion of such countries as El Salvador and Nicaragua.

"We don't know what we have prevented," she said, though she stressed that Christians need to bear witness to what they believe regardless of the results.

Bezila has spent three decades working on social-justice issues. She has protested abortion and nuclear weapons, and has worked against world hunger as well. Her Pax Christi group hosts a monthly Mass for peace outside the National Guard Armory on Rochester's Culver Road and meets monthly for Scripture reading and reflection.

Like Bezila, Clare Grady (pictured at left), a member of the Catholic Worker movement in Ithaca, has struggled to count the costs and effectiveness of her civil disobedience. A parishioner at Immaculate Conception parish, Grady initially had intended to avoid being arrested February 26 at the Air National Guard base in Syracuse because she was awaiting the outcome of her arrest with Bezila and Doughty on Feb. 14 in New York City.

After witnessing such activists as the elderly Jerry Berrigan, brother to famed protesters Father Daniel Berrigan, SJ, and Philip Berrigan, crawl under the base fence illegally, however, she decided she had to put her body on the line one more time. Had a local prison ministry group not bailed her out of jail, the 41-year-old mother of two might have spent a week and a half penned up in Syracuse, she said.

"Maybe we have to step out of the comfort zone," she reasoned. Having visited Iraq where she saw the results of the continual U.S. bombing and the U.N. sanctions, she said that her country is only compounding the agony of a people already oppressed by a ruthless government.

"We are giving them what I call an extra dose of suffering," she said. "What kind of policy is this that we are giving our consent to?"

Jesus lost his life because he questioned the law as it was exercised by the authorities of his time, she said, and Christians are still called to the same kind of sacrifice.

"He does not mince words," she said of Christ. "Carry your cross, pick up your cross."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Pax Christi is promoting an upcoming visit of Denis Halliday, former United Nations secretary-general, to Rochester. In 1997, Halliday served as U.N. monitor for the Iraqi Oil for Food program, which was set up to allow Iraq to exchange its petroleum resources for food supplies. But he resigned from his post calling the program inhumane and ineffective. Halliday is currently calling for the lifting of the Iraqi sanctions, and will speak at Downtown United Presbyterian Church at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 28; at the Islamic Center, Saturday, April 29; and at the First Unitarian Church on Sunday, April 30. For information on these Rochester appearances, call Barbara Whitman at 716/244-6893.

## Diocese sets Christ Mass

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preside over the annual Holy Week Christ Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Tuesday, April 18, at 7:30 p.m. Representatives from parishes throughout the diocese will be on hand for the liturgy whose theme is "All Are Welcome - No Exclusion." Hispanic Catholics, members of a baptismal preparation team and those who work in healing ministry will present the oils to be blessed. Bishop Clark will bless the Oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick and consecrate the Sacred Christ. Following the liturgy, the oils will then be distributed to parishes and used at Easter celebrations and throughout the year.

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