

Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer  
**Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Monroe County District Attorney Howard Rehn exchange greetings at the Monroe County Hall of Justice June 21.**

# Bishop present at capital trial

By Rob Cullivan  
 Staff writer

ROCHESTER — After a month-long trial that was the target of death-penalty protests — and which drew a visit from Bishop Matthew H. Clark to the courtroom — jurors declined June 23 to give the death penalty to Jose Julian Santiago. He had been convicted June 8 of first- and second-degree murder.

Instead of death by lethal injection, the Monroe County Court jury opted to give Santiago life imprisonment without parole, an option supported by Jann K. Armantrout, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester.

"I am pleased by the jury's decision and know that Bishop Clark will be as well," Armantrout said in a press state-

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ment issued June 23. "The cycle of violence in our community is disrupted by the jury's sentence of life imprisonment. For this, we are profoundly grateful."

Santiago was prosecuted for the execution-style slayings of Drequan Scrivens, 2, and Zyron Scrivens, 14, nephew and uncle, both shot and stabbed after their family was robbed last year in their city home. Santiago was also convicted of attempted first-degree murder for wounding three of the children's relatives who were also shot and stabbed.

On June 21, Bishop Clark visited the courtroom while the jury was listening

to Santiago's uncle testify about the impoverished life Santiago experienced as a child growing up in Puerto Rico. The diocese had released a statement indicating that the bishop would attend to show both his support for the victims' family, and to note the Catholic Church's opposition to the death penalty. He held a brief press conference outside the courtroom.

"It seems to me in this instance, as in so many ways, we solve problems by destroying life instead of finding ways to solve problems together," the bishop said of the death penalty.

In April, the diocese endorsed a call for a moratorium on executions in New York state that has garnered support from several area religious congregations and other groups.

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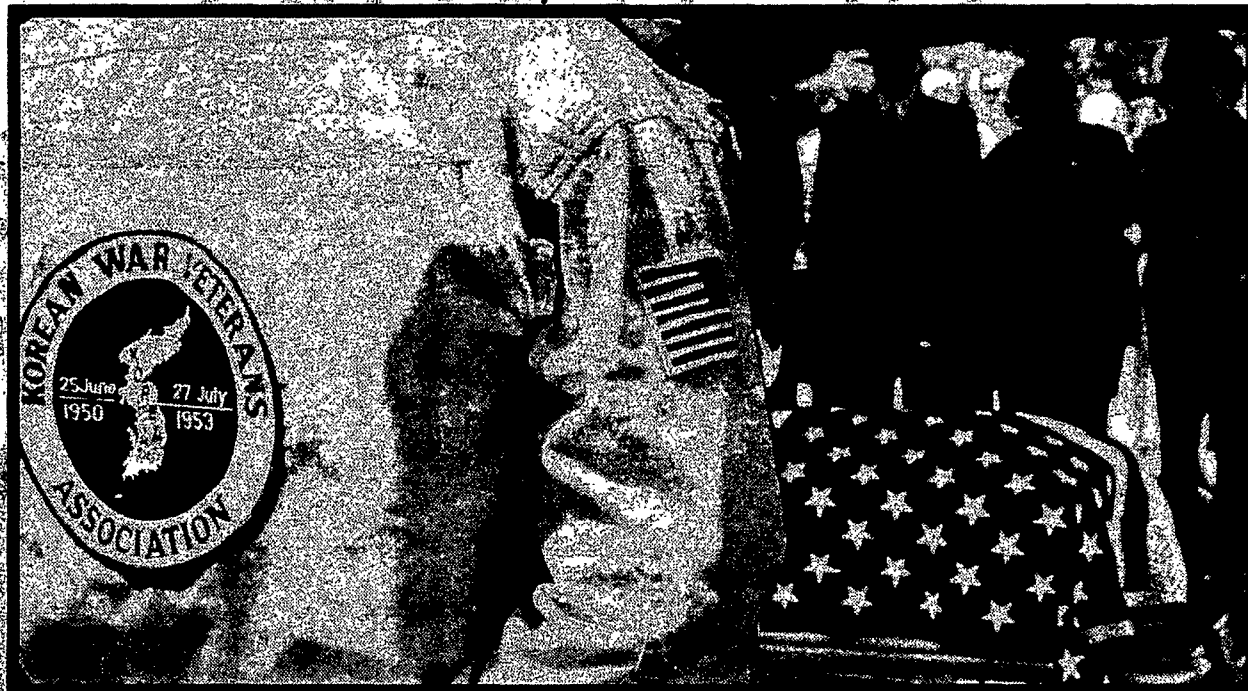


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## A soldier to the end

By Mike Latona



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer  
**Family members mourn during Steve Salerno's June 20 funeral at Rochester's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. From left are daughter Kathy, son Stephen Jr., wife Angela, and daughter Laurie.**

**T**hough June 15 was the day after Flag Day, an American flag still waved outside Steve Salerno's apartment building in the town of Greece. Mr. Salerno said he displayed the flag so often that when it wasn't flying, neighbors wanted to know why.

"To some people it means nothing. That American flag, it means a lot of things to me," Mr. Salerno said that day, in an interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

"His kids put up their own flags," Mr. Salerno's wife Angela added, "because they knew how much he loved that."

Hanging on the Salerno's apartment entrance was a welcome sign in the image of Uncle Sam. Inside, Mr. Salerno's office walls were covered with newspaper articles from the 1950s, detailing his experiences as a prisoner of war in the Korean War. One framed exhibit held his citations and medals, including the Purple Heart.

Mr. Salerno had suffered through nearly 2½ years as a POW, watching many of his Army buddies die from squalid living conditions. After returning home, he suffered physical and psychological difficulties for many years.

But in recent years, Mr. Salerno told the *Courier*, he had lived an energetic life, enjoying his family and leisure activities despite having a heart condition. And he was looking forward to joining his fellow Korean War veterans on June 24 — one day before the 50th anniversary of the war's beginning — at Pittsford's White Haven Memorial Park, home of a Korean War monument for Rochester-area veterans. In fact, Mr. Salerno had been designated to present a new bench in honor of the war's POWs.

"He was going to put all his medals and badges on his shirt for the commemoration," said a close friend, Peter Fantigrossi. "Steve was so proud that this was going to be his day."

He did not live to see the day.

Less than 48 hours after his interview with the *Courier*, and exactly one week before the memorial service, Mr. Salerno died in his sleep from congestive heart

failure. He was 68 years old.

Even though Mr. Salerno lived for nearly 50 years after the war, his wife said his death was connected to being a POW. She explained that he had developed beriberi while



**Steve Salerno on Aug. 15, 1953, the day he was released by the Chinese.**

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