

# a Young

## Minister: Iraqis suffering unfairly

BRIGHTON — With his clean-cut look and university sweatshirt, John Doughty looks more like a man on campus than a Catholic social activist.

Yet, this polite, well-spoken 33-year-old traveled to Iraq in April 1999 to witness what he considered to be the lethal effects of U.S.-supported U.N. economics sanctions on its people. He returned with a passionate desire to tell his fellow Catholics and other citizens why their enemies in the Persian Gulf War deserve a chance at a normal life again.

Activists like Doughty blame the sanctions, which were first imposed before the war, for creating conditions that have led to the deaths of more than 1 million Iraqis, mostly children under the age of 5. The sanctions have been kept in place primarily because Iraq's regime has not lived up to its agreements regarding the dismantling and inspection of its weapons of mass destruction, according to U.S. officials.

"The only reason our government is able to keep this position and policy is because the U.S. citizenry are apathetic about it," Doughty said during an interview at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish where he serves as youth minister.

Doughty also serves St. Anne Parish in Rochester as youth minister, and the two parishes combine their youth programs. In addition to his youth ministry work, he attends St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester where he is pursuing a master's degree in divinity.

Doughty was part of a group made up mostly of Catholic Workers who traveled to Iraq along with Chicagoan Kathy Kelly, leader of Voices In The Wilderness, an anti-sanctions group. The tour group's journey was chronicled by *National Catholic Reporter*, as well as the Associated Press, and Doughty went as a then-Catholic worker from St. Francis Farm in Pulaski, N.Y. The farm provides outreach services to the rural poor, and Doughty's duties there included carpentry work on the homes of area residents.

Doughty has talked about his experiences in Iraq to audiences at churches and schools, but as a private citizen, not as a representative of his employers. As he sees it, the people who live in Iraq are mostly innocent bystanders caught between the U.S. government's desire to bend Saddam Hussein to its will and the Iraqi leader's refusal to comply with that desire.

"What about these 21 million people who live between this, whose children are dying?" he asked rhetorically.

While in Iraq, Doughty visited several different sites, including hospitals suffering equipment and medicine shortages that he attributed to the effect of the sanctions. The Gulf War devastated Iraq, he noted, basically destroying its economic infrastructure, and the country has yet to rebuild itself. Schools lack supplies, clean drinking water is scarce, unemployment and underemployment is widespread, and many children lack such simple items as shoes.

Hence, he said he disagrees with



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Youth ministers John Doughty (right) and Dennis Reno at the end of a SALT retreat April 20 at Holy Family Church, Rochester.

### STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN

U.S. officials who contend that Iraqis have access to humanitarian aid from the West to help them meet their needs. Food aid, he said, for example, misses the mark for a nation of people who are daily forced to live with the fear of disease from doing things like washing their dishes in water contaminated by sewage.

"It's a much bigger issue than 'Did you get 1,200 calories today,'" he said.

He also visited with several foreign officials, including members of the U.N. delegation overseeing sanctions implementation, who said they believed the sanctions were serving only to punish the average Iraqi citizen and not the Iraqi regime. On this note, one of his most memorable visits was with the papal nuncio, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, he said. Doughty maintained that the sanctions, as well as occasional air raids by U.S. and British warplanes, were only serving to strengthen Islamic fundamentalists in the country by fueling anti-Western sentiment.

The nuncio told Doughty and his group that while he agreed that sanctions should be in place to contain the weapons trade, he felt the sanctions were not targeting the real villains — the arms dealers themselves.

Doughty's activism against the sanctions was the primary reason he was given a Vita Award by the Diocese of Rochester at the sixth annual Celebration of Life Dinner April 18 in Henrietta. The award, given as well to four other activists, recognizes people who promote the church's consistent ethic of life, which opposes abortion,

economic injustice, euthanasia, war and the death penalty.

Working to end the sanctions isn't the only business on Doughty's agenda. He recently began coordinating the diocese's new Service Action Learning Team (SALT) program, which takes teenage Catholics on retreats to engage in various service projects (featured in On The Move story on facing page). And, of course, as a youth minister, Doughty works to evangelize the young people of the two parishes he serves.

"I like their brute honesty," Doughty said of teens. "They read something in the Scriptures, and if they don't think you're doing it, they tell you they think you're a phony."

Doughty himself said he was drawn to work for the church, in part, because of his own desire to live an authentic Christian life. Doughty said he tries to live a life of Christian simplicity. For example, he said, he picks up household items at garage sales, buys clothes at thrift stores, sees dollar movies for fun and clips coupons.

A native of Greene, N.Y., near Binghamton, Doughty is the youngest of seven children born to Bev and Jim Doughty.

As a youth minister, Doughty said he's found young people to have a wide range of expressions when it comes to their faith. Some teenagers are devout and unsure of where they stand with the church. He encourages his young charges to keep asking questions of the church rather than giving up on it, especially if they find Catholics don't always practice what their church preaches.

"I tell them that they may be the voice the church needs as a community."

## Events

For information for events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3228 ext. 375 or at 1-800-388-7177 ext. 375, or visit the Odyssey Web site at <http://www.ggw.org/odyssey/>.

● **Thursdays in May:** Contraception from 8-11 p.m. on May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 at Covenant United Methodist Church, Culver Rd. and Parsells Ave., Rochester. \$6.

● **Saturday, May 5:** Tour of Seneca Park Zoo, Rochester. Meet near ticket office, 2222 St. Paul St., at 1:30 p.m. \$5. Group will go to Don Pablo's on Ridge Road to celebrate Cinco de Mayo at 4:30 p.m. RSVP by May 2.

● **Tuesdays in May:** Swing dancing, 7:30-10 p.m., May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 at Dancencounters, 28 Atlantic Ave., Rochester. \$6.

● **Thursday, May 17:** Dinner at Woody's II, 2758 West Henrietta Road, 7 p.m. RSVP by May 16.

● **Saturday, May 19:** Lilac Festival, Rochester. Meet at 11:30 a.m. in Parking Lot J in front of Building 9 of Monroe Community College, 1000 E. Henrietta Road, Rochester. Location is subject to change so it is important to RSVP. Shuttle service provided to get to the festival.

● **Sunday, May 20:** 11 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 1089 Joseph Ave., Rochester. Meet at 10:45 a.m. in the front hall of chapel. Brunch at East Ridge Family Restaurant, 1975 E. Ridge Road, afterwards.

● **Saturday, May 26:** Bowling fundraiser for American Diabetes Association at Dewey Garden Lanes, 7:30 p.m. In memory of Cara Cassata, Odyssey member who died this year. There will also be a 50/50 raffle and a Chinese Auction to help out the cause.

● **June 1-3:** Fourth Annual Weekend Retreat at Camp Casowasco. Cost is \$95, \$90 if you register by May 19. Non-refundable deposit of \$35 is required upon registration. Call the hotline for reservations and a registration form. Final deadline is May 28.

● **Saturday, June 2:** Volunteers needed for Special Olympics at the Rochester Institute of Technology, 1 Lomb Memorial Drive, Henrietta. 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

● **Saturday, June 16:** Odyssey picnic, location TBA.

● **Summer Book Group:** Group will meet twice a month from June through August to examine *Mary Magdalene: Myth or Metaphor* by Susan Haskins. Register before May 25.

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