

## NEWS

## Church leaders plead case for refugees

By Agostino Bono  
Catholic News Service

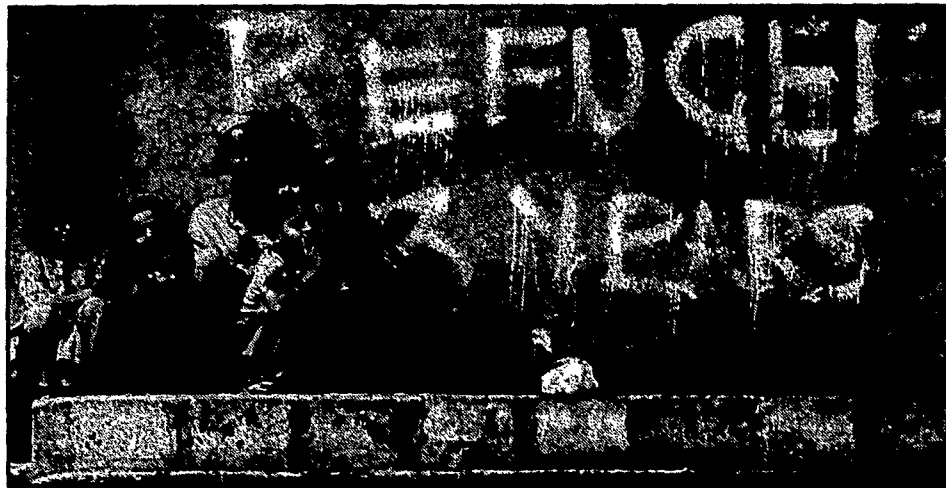
WASHINGTON, D.C. — Security concerns over terrorism must not hinder the U.S. government's pledge to admit 70,000 refugees this year, an official of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops testified before a Senate subcommittee hearing Feb. 12.

Tens of thousands of refugees already have been interviewed or identified, yet processing has been bogged down since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, said Anastasia Brown, assistant director of processing operations for the U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services. She asked that added personnel be committed to do the more rigorous processing of applications put into effect after Sept. 11.

Due to a slowdown in admissions procedures, the U.S. Department of State has stated that only 45-50,000 refugees will be admitted to this country this year, far lower than the 70,000 authorized by President George W. Bush last November.

Speaking on behalf of the bishops' conference, Brown was one of five experts testifying Feb. 12 at a hearing of the Immigration Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee. James Ziglar, Immigration and Naturalization Service commissioner, told the Senate subcommittee that his agency is committed to admitting the 70,000 refugees authorized by President Bush for fiscal year 2002, which began last October. But the security risks of taking in potential terrorists as well as safety concerns for government officials doing on-site investigations and for U.S. embassies where most of the applicant interviews are held have "resulted in significant processing delays," he said.

In the Diocese of Rochester, Catholic Family Center has called on parishes and congregations to petition their elected federal officials to clear the logjam in the refugee stream, according to Jim Delaney, assistant director of CFC's Department of Refugee, Immigration and Employment Services. Delaney sent out a letter pleading the pro-refugee case Feb. 1 to organizations, congregations and volunteer leaders of local congregation-based teams that help CFC resettle refugees in the Monroe County area.



Reuters/CNS

An Afghan refugee family sits on the steps of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees office in Islamabad, Pakistan, Oct. 4. The U.S. bishops are calling on the federal government to admit more such refugees to the United States.

"While we understand, appreciate and support the need for strengthening security procedures, we believe that the focus should be on non-immigrant visa holders, and not upon defenseless refugees," Delaney wrote. "In our experience, none of us can imagine a terrorist trying to enter the country as a refugee. (She or he) would have to be nuts, especially when a student visa ... is so much easier to obtain."

Delaney added that the current delay in refugee admissions primarily harms women and children.

"(A)s a result of the government's focus on refugees, thousands of deserving refugees remain in harm's way, many of them women-at-risk cases and desperate families fleeing bloody conflicts in their homelands."

Brown made the following recommendations to speed processing:

- More staff for fingerprinting of refugees and to review family-based claims so that a decision can be made within six months as to whether applicants are legitimate relatives seeking reunification with their families.
- Making FBI security reviews of applicants a higher Justice Department priority.
- Establishing more ports of entry for refugees.

CFC is always looking for parishes and volunteers to help the agency resettle refugees, Delaney said. A parish interested

in sponsoring a refugee family needs to supply five to eight people to form a resettlement team. CFC will provide on-site training and ongoing guidance throughout the resettlement period. The team's commitment to monitor and follow-up with the refugees extends no longer than six months after their arrival.

Parishes can also help by forming "hospitality teams" to clean and prepare apartments for newly arrived refugees. Additionally, CFC also seeks individual volunteers to do such things as drive refugees to appointments, Delaney said.

For information on how you or your parish can help resettle refugees, call Jim Delaney at 585/262-7074.

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Continents reporting by Rob Cullivan in Rochester.

## Vito F. Santangelo; veteran, usher

Vito F. Santangelo, an usher for 40 years at Rochester's Most Precious Blood Parish, died Jan. 19, 2002. He was 83.

Mr. Santangelo grew up in Rochester's St. Francis of Assisi Parish. A World War II Army veteran, he was among the first to invade Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Silver Star.

Mr. Santangelo was retired from the United States Post Office.

His funeral Mass took place Jan. 23 at Most Precious Blood Church. Interment

was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

He is survived by his wife, Rose; children, Janet (John) Gubiotti and Linda (Ken) Parnett; grandchildren, Tracy and Trish Gubiotti and Michelle Parnett; sister-in-law, Christine Santangelo; brothers-in-law, Joseph Papanone, Carl Musto and Nunzio Musto; and several nieces, nephews and friends.

Donations in Mr. Santangelo's memory may be made to the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 15, 200 Atlantic Ave., Studio I, Lynbrook, N.Y. 11503.

## Obituaries

Sr. Kirby, SSJ;  
teacher, clerk

Sister of St. Joseph Helen Louise Kirby, a longtime teacher and office assistant, died Jan. 31, 2002, at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. She was 87.

Sister Kirby grew up in St. John the Evangelist Parish in Spencerport and attended Nazareth Normal High School, Nazareth Normal School and Nazareth College. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1929 and professed her final vows in 1935.

Sister Kirby taught in parochial schools in the Diocese of Rochester for 27 years, then served as clerical assistant at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira for 23 years and administrative assistant at the SSJ Motherhouse for 16 years.

She is survived by two nieces, Karen Golton and Michele Cacic; grandnieces and grandnephews; and her sisters in the congregation of St. Joseph.

Her funeral Mass took place Feb. 2 at the SSJ Motherhouse chapel. Msgr. William Shannon served as celebrant and was assisted by Msgr. Emmett Murphy and Father Bruce Ammering.

Donations in Sister Kirby's memory can be made to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, 4095 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14618-9798.

— Mike Latona

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