

DIOCESAN NEWS

Father Della Pietra's CD benefits migrant ministry

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Father Doug Della Pietra wants his first-ever CD, *The Table*, to benefit the people who put food on his table — and everyone else's.

At least half the proceeds from the priest's album will be donated to Interdiocesan Hispanic Migrant Ministry, a joint effort of the Rochester and Buffalo dioceses to minister to Hispanic migrant workers and their families.

Currently parochial vicar at St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua, Father Della Pietra will become pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta on June 25. Between his priestly duties, Father Della Pietra has been recording *The Table*, a collection of spiritual songs and instrumentals. He said he was inspired to use the CD to raise funds for migrant ministry after spending time jogging near some friends' cottage on Lake Ontario in Sudus.

"I would go for a run down these back roads and see the migrants picking apples," the 33-year-old priest said. "They looked over and smiled, and I would smile, and there was this sense of appreciation for their joyful labor and their work."

Life isn't always joyful for migrants, however, he stressed, noting on the inside cover of his album that these workers leave poverty in their homelands to work for low wages in the United States. Additionally, some live in poor housing, and all are unprotected by the labor laws that shelter most U.S. workers. He urges his CD's listeners to consider direct donations to migrant ministry.

Father Della Pietra started recording *The Table* in May 2001 at Finger Lakes Multimedia in Canandaigua. The priest has been playing guitar since 1987, and composed his first song for the album, "The Spirit's Breath," while on retreat in 1998. The album is a quiet showcase of his guitar and piano playing as well as his mellow baritone voice.

"The music would be very difficult for a congregation to kind of sing along with," he said. "It's more of a meditative piece of music."

Some of the tunes echo the Psalms or the Song of Songs in their lyrical structure, although the musical style is contemporary folk and New Age. In secular terms, Father Della Pietra would be placed in the singer-songwriter category, appealing to listeners who like their music to be rooted in acoustic instrumentation.

Particularly striking are some of his lyrics, most especially those on the CD's title track. In "The Table," the priest admits



that there are certain guests he wouldn't want at the Lord's Supper. He talks about his feelings as he recalls a dream he had about sitting at a table with Jesus and his guests.

"I looked around at all the guests, some strangers to receive. If it were up to me, I'd ask many to leave. Dressed in shabby clothes, a sore to my sight. Their names are anger, sadness, loneliness and fright," he sings.

"This song arises out of ... an experience in my life when I was engulfed in the seemingly overwhelming tide of some 'negative' feelings," Father Della Pietra observed in an article on his personal Web site. He added that Christ invited him to realize the "guests" actually lived in the priest's own heart.

"He calls me to accept everything about myself. Being a gracious host is to love thyself," Father Della Pietra sings.

The Table is currently available at the following parishes: St. Mary's, Auburn; St. Mary's, Canandaigua; All Saints, Corning; St. Bridget's, East Bloomfield; and St. Patrick's in Victor. The CD can also be found at several stores and retreat centers in the diocese. For information, visit Father Della Pietra's Web site at www.spiritsbreath.com, or e-mail him at FatherDougMusic@spiritsbreath.com.

The Table has already earned kudos from area local music aficionados, including Mitzi Collins, president of Sampler Records Ltd. in Rochester. A well-known area folk music performer, Collins is also a member of the faculty of the Community Education Department at Rochester's Eastman School of Music and music director at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Rochester. Collins had these words of praise for *The Table*.

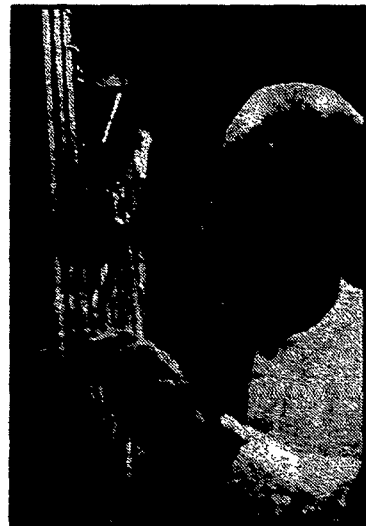
"The balance between his warm voice and the accompaniment of guitar and synthesizer is excellent — important, because it is the lyrics that listeners will want to ponder and listen to again and again," she said. "These are thoughtful songs, all composed and performed by (Father) Della Pietra, focusing on a personal relationship with Jesus and with finding a way of understanding one's self in relationship to God and the world. There is variety in his melodies and accompaniments, but the entire recording keeps a pleasingly consistent sound."



Karin von Volgtlander/Staff photographer

Congregation celebrates 145th

The Sisters of Mercy celebrated 145 years of ministry in the Diocese of Rochester during a community open house June 9 at their motherhouse in Brighton. Above, Sister Dorothy Loeb explains the congregation's history to her brother-in-law, Richard Reinhardt, as they walk down "Heritage Path" at the motherhouse. At right, harpist Terrance Keach performs in the motherhouse chapel.



Opera soloist to perform at benefit

Opera tenor Kevin Connors will perform a benefit concert at Our Lady of Mercy High School on Friday, June 21, to raise money for the school's scholarship fund.

A native of East Rochester and former parishioner at St. Jerome Parish in that community, Connors is a resident soloist with the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Germany. His concert will not only raise funds for the high school, but will also help celebrate the jubilee of his aunt, Sister Nancy Whitley, who has been a Sister of Mercy for 50 years.

The fundraiser will begin at 8 p.m. in the school's auditorium, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester. Ticket prices range from \$20 to \$25 per person, and patron tickets are \$250 per couple. Tickets may be reserved by calling the school's advancement office at 585/288-2610. The per-

formance will include a special tribute to Dr. James and Janice Maxwell, who regularly donate to the school and are leaders of the school's capital campaign.

Proceeds will fund scholarships for young women who, for financial reasons, would not otherwise be able to attend the school. Sister Whitley, a Mercy graduate, said it is important that young people are able to receive the kind of education they desire.

She also said she wanted the celebration to focus not just on her, but also on the community that has been so special to her. That is why her nephew traveled to Rochester from Germany to give the performance.

"I (wanted) to do something to help people in the community," Sister Whitley said.

— Jennifer Burke

Recognizing

★ Dr. Harry Murray, a professor of sociology at Nazareth College, Rochester, has been named a finalist for Catholic Charities USA's 2002 National Volunteer of the Year Award.

Since 1994, Murray has primarily served the homeless population of Monroe County by volunteering for Catholic Family Center's Homeless and Housing Services advisory board, serving as a residential counselor, working to raise funds, and mowing lawns at shelters. He has also helped to create a program for children as a joint effort between CFC and Nazareth's art department. He has organized students to volunteer for special projects and to conduct studies on homelessness that have led, among other things, to CFC's decision to open a second shelter for women and children this year.

Murray also serves on the board of directors of the Judicial Process Commission, an advocacy and civil liberties group, and was named CFC's 1999 Volunteer of the Year.



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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)
Vol. 113 No. 35, June 13, 2002

Published weekly except the first Thursday in January and the last Thursday in December. Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1136 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624, 585/529-9530. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624.



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