

DIOCESAN NEWS

Priest continues battle to close military school

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GATES — According to Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois, the United States is aiding terrorists even while it says it's fighting a war on terrorism.

"President Bush said that we've got to go after those terrorists wherever they exist. And we said, 'What better place to start than Fort Benning, Georgia,'" Father Bourgeois told a group of nearly 100 people gathered July 22 at Gates Presbyterian Church.

Fort Benning is where the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation — previously known as the United States Army School of the Americas — is based. Father Bourgeois long has charged that by training soldiers of Latin American countries, the school encourages the mistreatment and even deaths of innocent people who live in these countries. His outspokenness has netted him four years in federal prisons.

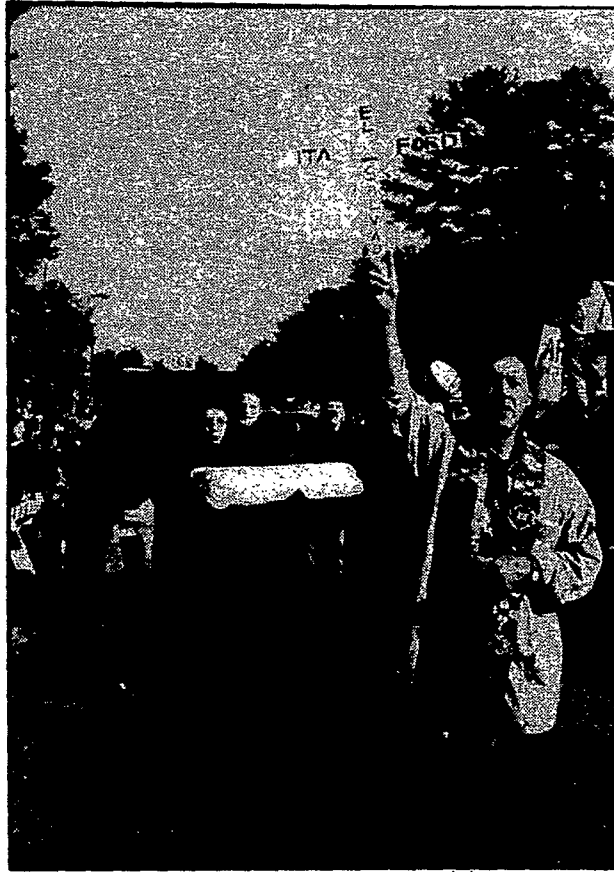
Father Bourgeois remarked that officials at the institute warned him not to stage his annual protest last November, saying it would be inappropriate during wartime. But from the priest's point of view, "It is more important than ever to be there."

Others must have agreed. Father Bourgeois said a crowd of 10,000 people turned out at Fort Benning's entrance; 80 of them were arrested.

The priest's July 22 visit to Gates was sponsored by the Rochester Committee on Latin America. He was introduced by John Honeck, a parishioner at Church of the Nativity in Brockport, who is among those who have been arrested for marching at Fort Benning. "Here in Rochester there are a lot of people involved in this issue," Father Bourgeois noted.

Father Bourgeois said his concern for the oppressed was heightened during a stint as a Navy officer in Vietnam, for which he earned a Purple Heart. He later did missionary service in a Bolivian slum for five years, and was ordained a Maryknoll priest in 1972.

The School of the Americas caught Father Bourgeois's attention after a 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests and two women in El Salvador by soldiers who were later proven to have trained at Fort Benning. Up until that point, Father Bourgeois said, much of America wasn't



Liz Quirin/CNS

Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA Watch, leads the annual demonstration past the gates of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning, Ga., last Nov. 18.

aware of the institute's inner workings even though it was — and continues to be — funded by U.S. tax dollars.

"We had to do research on a school we knew so little about," he said.

What he found, he said, were repeated cases in which natives of Latin American countries "come to a point where they realize they can no longer live the way they

are living," and ask the government for better health care, education and working conditions. And that's when military trained by School of the Americas — named School of Assassins by its detractors — have caused the greatest harm, he maintained. "The men with guns are there to silence them," he said, adding that the system is designed "to keep the rich rich and the poor poor." Father Bourgeois stated that the United States supports such activity because of its interest in these countries' natural resources, especially oil.

Although School of the Americas changed its name in January 2001, Father Bourgeois doesn't feel its priorities have changed: "I am happy to say we have not been fooled by that."

Since 1990 Father Bourgeois has lived in a tiny apartment across from the main entrance gate to Fort Benning. It was there that he established SOA Watch, which he still operates today. The movement has grown to several thousand people, and Father Bourgeois was the subject of a 1998 Public Broadcasting System documentary "Father Roy: Inside the School of Assassins."

Father Bourgeois says he is encouraged by the fact that many high-school and college-aged people are joining SOA Watch. Although it began as a campaign involving mostly Catholics, he said SOA Watch now includes many Protestant denominations as well. "The movement became very diverse," he remarked.

Father Bourgeois encouraged the July 22 participants to join him at Fort Benning for SOA Watch's annual protest Nov. 15-17, 2002. He also called for a heightened publicity campaign in hopes of getting HR 1810 passed. The bill, introduced last year in Congress, calls for the closing of Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation as well the as establishment of a joint congressional task force to monitor more closely the Department of Defense's role in training of military personnel from Latin American nations.

Following his talk at Gates Presbyterian, Father Bourgeois greeted his supporters with hearty handshakes and hugs, and a youthful appearance that belies his 63 years. "This protesting keeps you young, man," he laughed.

EDITORS' NOTE: For more details about SOA Watch and its activities, go to www.soaw.org.

Obituaries

Father David Gramke; was pastor in Elmira, Seneca Falls

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Father David Gramke, a diocesan priest for 36 years — including the past 10 years as pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in Seneca Falls — died July 31, 2002, at Guthrie Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre, Pa. He had suffered a massive stroke at his Cayuga Lake cottage one day earlier. Father Gramke was 62 years old.

"I think of him as a wonderful priest whom people loved," said Father Daniel Holland, a close friend and pastor of Chili's St. Pius Tenth Parish.

A Rochester native, Father Gramke grew up in Blessed Sacrament Parish. He attended Blessed Sacrament School, St. Andrew's Seminary and St. Bernard's Seminary, and was ordained in 1966 by

Bishop James E. Kearney. He served as assisting priest at the following parishes: Immaculate Conception, Ithaca (1966-71); Our Lady of Lourdes, Brighton (1971-74); St. Mary's, Auburn (1974); and St. Louis, Pittsford (1975-79).

From 1979-82, he was chaplain of Elmira Correctional Facility. His first pastorate began in 1982 at St. John the Baptist and St. Cecilia parishes in Elmira. In 1990 he also became pastor of St. Peter and Paul in Elmira, and the three-church cluster became known as Eastside Catholic Parish.

Father Holland, who served as homilist for Father Gramke's funeral Mass, noted that he and Father Gramke lived in the same rectory while they were both stationed in Elmira. "It certainly became a very close friendship in the last 20 years," he said.

Father Holland said that Father Gramke helped foster strong youth-ministry programs at the parishes where he served. Regarding Father Gramke's prison work, he added, "He did a terrific job at the prison. He was able to relate to both the staff and the prisoners, which is not easy."

Father Holland called Father Gramke "a great preacher; he always preached a short sermon but always had a good story." Father Holland added that this worked to his own advantage more than once: "One of my great joys is that I would call him on a Saturday night and say 'Dave, I need a story.' And he'd always have one for me."

Sally True, Father Gramke's attorney, said they'd been good friends since his time at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca. "He certainly helped me in adversity, but

it was more than that. I would say it was his uplifting perspective ... his sense of humor was incredible. You always felt better after you'd talked to him," said True, a parishioner at Ithaca's St. Catherine of Siena.

In 1992 Father Gramke became pastor of St. Patrick's in Seneca Falls. He was still pastor there at the time of his death, although he had been placed on administrative leave on June 26, 2002, due to allegations that he had sexually abused a teenage girl once in the late 1970s.

At the time of his death, a diocesan lay advisory panel was reviewing Father Gramke's case. Michael Tedesco, diocesan director of communications, said the panel was waiting to hear from Vatican officials whether the case fell within the norms of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," which was approved by the U.S. bishops in June. Because the only matter at hand was whether Father Gramke could return to active ministry, Tedesco said, the advisory panel has dropped its investigation.

"It's extremely sad. It remains unresolved," Father Holland commented.

"I'm very saddened by the news of Father Gramke's death," Bishop Matthew H. Clark said. "He had a deep love for the people he served and worked very hard to do the best that he could for them."

Father Gramke is survived by his sister, Mary Kay (Kenneth) Mangan; brother, John (Barbara) F. Gramke; and several nieces and nephews.

Bishop Clark presided at his funeral Mass Aug. 5 at St. Patrick's Church. Interment was at St. Columbkille Cemetery in Seneca Falls.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Rev. David N. Gramke Youth Ministry Fund, c/o Seneca Falls Savings Bank, 19 Cayuga St., Seneca Falls, NY 13148.

Father Bruno Cocuzzi; served missions and poor

Rochester native Father Bruno Cocuzzi, an administrator at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery in Brighton, Mass., died July 21, 2002, at the age of 75.

Father Cocuzzi was born Raymond Cocuzzi on Feb. 7, 1927, to Lazarus and Angelina Cocuzzi. He was raised in St. Patrick's Parish, the former cathedral parish of Rochester, and graduated from St. Peter and Paul School and Aquinas Institute.

He served in the U.S. Navy prior to entering the Carmelite novitiate in Brookline, Mass., in 1952. He studied for the priesthood at the College of Our Lady of

Mount Carmel in Washington, D.C., and was ordained in 1956.

Noted for his passion for serving the poor, Father Cocuzzi received a law degree from Boston University in 1973 and spent 15 years living among the poor as a priest/lawyer and providing free legal aid.

He later engaged in fundraising for the Carmelite Nairobi Mission, an international house of studies in Kenya, Africa, serving as mission procurator until last year. His mission appeals would periodically bring him to Rochester where he would say Masses for relatives and friends. In 1998, he celebrated an outdoor Mass at Towpath Pavilion in Greece Canal Park at the request of friends from St. Jude's Parish in Gates. That became an annual event, the last Mass being held in June 2001.

Father Cocuzzi is survived by his brothers, Msgr. George Cocuzzi of Rochester and Dominic Cocuzzi of Arizona; his sisters, Agnes (Abelo) Tomasso and Anne (Christopher) Renda, both of Rochester; and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of the Presentation Church in Brighton, Mass., on July 25 with burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery, West Roxbury, Mass.

A memorial Mass will be held Saturday, Aug. 31, at St. Theodore Church in Rochester.

Memorial donations to the Carmelite Nairobi Mission in Kenya may be sent to the Mission Procurator, P.O. Box 270136, Hartford, WI 53027. Father Cocuzzi's Web site may be viewed at www.westel.com.com/users/theroux.

— Lou Litzberger