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16 PAGES

Inside



Cardinal Law at Vatican to review Boston woes

Newly released files reveal more priest abuse — Page 3

Ethics board will not investigate complaint

Lawyer had challenged cathedral vote — Page 4

St. Stanislaus Church receives \$25,000 grant

Funds will help to restore cupola, domes — Page 5



Filipino families meet for rosary recitation

Gatherings help to foster their faith — Page 9

Youth groups perform holiday service projects

Teens contribute time, gifts to charities — Page 10



Apostle of the airwaves

In a sense, Msgr. Joseph Cirrincione's death Nov. 21, at the age of 92, was appropriately timed. Just one month earlier, Pope John Paul II had released *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, an apostolic letter imploring Catholics to regard the period through October 2003 as the Year of the Rosary.

For Msgr. Cirrincione, the rosary was the special focus every year — every night, for that matter.

His fervent devotion has been the main reason that Family Rosary for Peace has aired continuously in the Diocese of Rochester and surrounding areas since 1950. Tapes of the program are currently carried on three Rochester-based radio stations.

"I was thinking of all the people who ever heard the radio show. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were able to assemble them all in one place, and asked them how it touched them and maybe even changed their lives?" Bishop Matthew H. Clark mused to the congregation at Msgr. Cirrincione's funeral Mass Nov. 25 at Rochester's Holy Apostles Church.

'VERY, VERY INFLUENTIAL'

In 1948, Father Cirrincione (he became a monsignor in 1966) first combined radio and religion by broadcasting a well-received series about Our Lady of Fatima on WSAY AM. Two years later, following the popularity of Father Patrick Peyton's international rosary crusades, Father Cirrincione began the Family Rosary for Peace in Rochester.

Dedicated to achieving world peace and the conversion of Russia, the show aired live from WSAY's studios its first two weeks before moving to the parish center at St. Francis of Assisi Church, where Father Cirrincione was pastor.

Incredibly, Family Rosary for Peace was meant to be a one-time Lenten initiative. But according to Father Paul Tomasso — who succeeded Msgr. Cirrincione as director of the Family Rosary for Peace in 1998 — not a night has passed without a broadcast in the ensuing 52 years. During that time the sound of Msgr. Cirrincione leading the rosary, along with recitation by a rotating group, has be-

Continued on page 8



File photo

Msgr. Joseph Cirrincione, founder of the Family Rosary for Peace, leads an early broadcast on radio station WSAY.

Story by Mike Latona