

## INTRODUCTION

TO THE CONTINUING  
RETROSPECTIVE OF THIS  
DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER

# 1990-1999

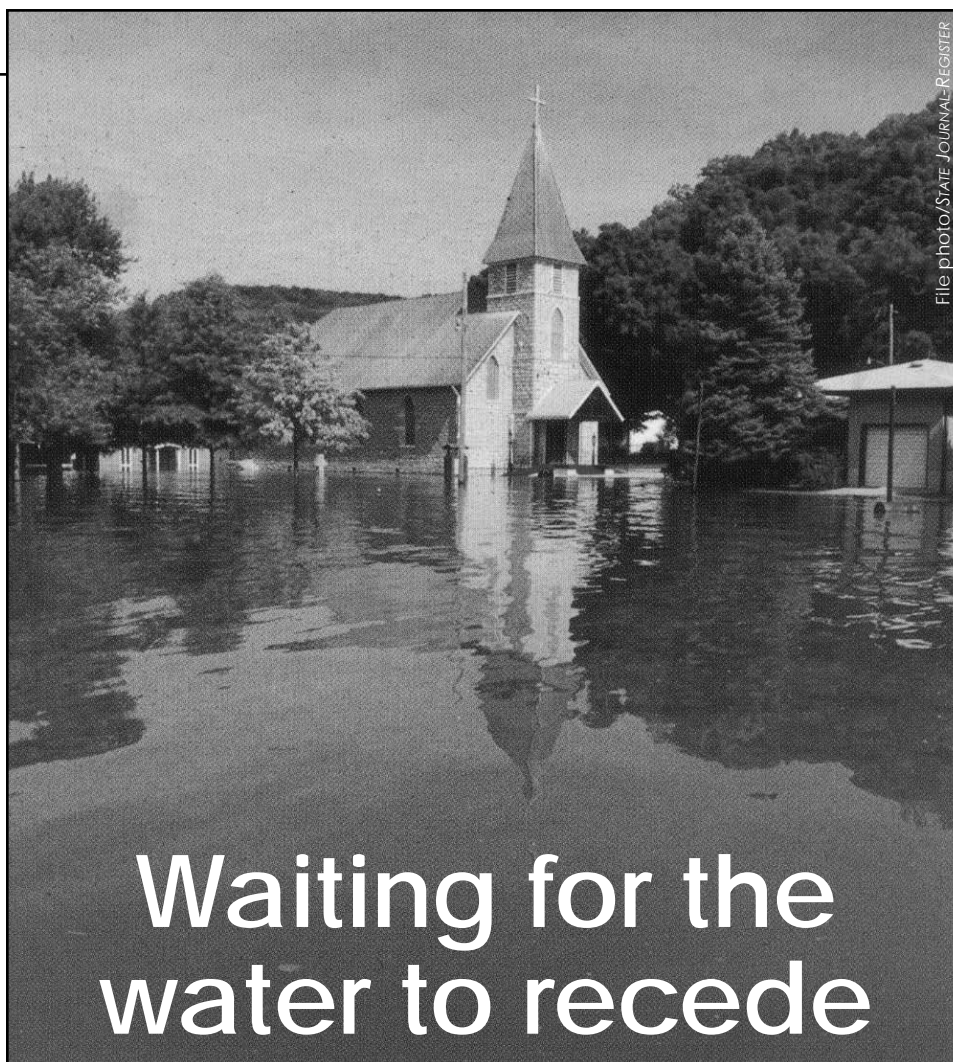
By MICHELE LEVANDOSKI  
Archivist

The 1990s were marked by international turmoil and natural disasters, yet it was also a decade of hope and transition. The Persian Gulf War ended in February of 1991 with the expulsion of Iraq from neighboring Kuwait. Six months later, a failed coup led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, effectively ending the Cold War. The fall of the Iron Curtain allowed Eastern Europe and Russia to rejoin the international community and to participate in the world economy. However, it also led to civil war and genocide in Bosnia.

The United States experienced several major natural disasters during the decade. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew devastated Florida and parts of Louisiana. In 1993, one of the worst natural disasters to hit the United States, the Great Flood of 1993, devastated cities along the Mississippi River, including those in the western part of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The flood caused \$15 billion in damages and forced thousands to evacuate from their homes. Americans responded to these disasters in force, by assisting with clean-up, donating food, clothes and money to assist victims and by providing shelter to those that were driven from their homes. The diocese collected almost a quarter of a million dollars to assist with flood relief and countless Catholics in central Illinois gave freely of their time and resources to assist victims.

The 1990s were also a period of hope and transition for the diocese. In response to the decreasing number of clergy, the diocese created the Institute for Lay Ministry Formation, which provided an avenue for lay persons to become more involved in the church. During the decade, black Catholics sought to find their place in the church, while at the same time maintaining their cultural heritage.

As the century came to a close with both enthusiasm and concerns over the Year 2000, the 1990s was a decade that was at once tumultuous and violent, yet optimistic as people worked cooperatively to assist those in need.



## Waiting for the water to recede

### Grafton parish watches river carry away pews, missalettes and anything else in its way

By DAVE BAKKE  
*Catholic Times*

**GRAFTON** — Pews are floating near the ceiling of St. Patrick Church in Grafton. Except for one that nearly got away.

"We caught one of the pews floating toward the Mississippi," says church trustee Paul Arnold. Though the doors of the church are tied shut, Arnold figured that the pew worked its way out and the current carried it away.

It's just another day in the flood-plagued Springfield diocese. It's a typical day anymore in Grafton, where water crested Tuesday at 38 feet, 20 feet above flood stage, where water is over five feet deep inside St. Patrick Church, three feet deep in the rectory and up to the shingles of the parish hall. Main Street looks like a canal in Venice and boat hulls scrape the top of stop signs. It's a place where boat passengers duck to avoid brushing telephone lines strung between poles.

Residents are finally taking heart that the latest crest will be the last and that flood waters will now begin to recede. But, they've been here before.

"It started to fall last week about 4-5 inches," said LaVern (Bus) Freeman, St. Patrick parishioner. "But then we woke up Sunday morning and the water was up again."

The latest estimate by the Army Corps of Engineers is that the river near Grafton won't be back in its banks for another month. The slow receding process means St. Patrick's fall fundraiser, which the parish depends upon

for operating expenses, is all but washed up for this year. ...

Help is on the way. The diocese has earmarked some of the money it is collecting through its flood relief program to go to St. Patrick. More help will come from flood insurance carried on the church by the diocese. And there's help come from an unexpected source — Toledo, Ohio.

Sister M. Christine Pratt, Rural Life Director for the Diocese of Toledo, is offering to "adopt" St. Patrick. The project would match St. Patrick with a parish in the Toledo diocese. The Ohio parish will resupply all worship materials and catechetical material destroyed by the flood.

Father Eugene Glaub, St. Patrick pastor, said all offers of assistance are welcome, and will be needed.

This week, any visitor to reach the church by boat could see missalettes floating in the church entryway. Inside the darkened sanctuary, the floating pews were stacked atop each other crazily.

Inside the rectory, water was nearly reaching the bulletin board and pictures posted halfway up the wall.

The water, said Arnold, will have to fall 14 feet before the extent of the damage can be assessed.

But, the damage to the people is obvious already. Almost every business is flooded out. Arnold, who owns the local phone company, says if the water had gone up three more inches, phone services would have been destroyed.

"There's not over eight to 10 people from the parish left in town," said Freeman.

*CATHOLIC TIMES, Aug. 8, 1993*

## Bishop Ryan issues statement at conclusion of Persian Gulf War

*Following is the text of a statement Bishop Daniel L. Ryan, issued March 1, 1991, in the form of a letter to the editor of newspapers in our diocese:*

The cessation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf is cause for great rejoicing and for offering to the God of Peace our prayers of heartfelt thanks.

With the loved ones of those who died in battle we mourn the loss of our fallen. We pray that God will comfort the survivors, and will give eternal peace to those who died. We pray also for all our brothers and sisters in the human family who have lost loved ones in battle, whether they were known as our allies or as our enemies.

Our hearts beat with a lighter pulse today because we are not now so afraid for the safety of the brave men and women of our armed forces, who have placed their lives at our service. Along with their families, we thank God for the well-being and pray for their speedy return home.

True peace is, we know, more than the absence of war. With the president of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, we pray that "the same energy that carried out (the war) fix now on other targets."

More important than battle blueprints are the diplomatic plans for peace that have yet to be made and carried out. With other members of the international community we bear the responsibility for planting in our world justice, from which true peace may grow. These diplomatic efforts will have their impact upon many generations to come.

Over the next weeks in parish churches of our diocese I shall be privileged to celebrate the sacraments of holy Eucharist and confirmation. In those churches I shall lead the assembled community in prayers of thanks for the blessings of peace which we have begun to enjoy. With our people I shall beg the Holy Spirit to guide the efforts of all statespersons toward the vision necessary to establish justice in the Persian Gulf, in the Middle East, and in all our world. May the Lord continue to grant us His peace!

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,

*The Most Reverend Daniel L. Ryan  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois*

*CATHOLIC TIMES, March 3, 1991*



## Soviet upheaval continues Church leaders hopeful for religious and political freedom

**ROME (CNS)** — A week of continuing political convulsions in the Soviet Union left church leaders optimistic about the prospects for religious and political freedom, especially in three breakaway Baltic republics.

The Vatican joined several Western nations in officially recognizing Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia Aug. 29 — a move that would have been considered risky and provocative two weeks earlier, but which made sense as the Soviet Union appeared headed toward breakup after a failed military coup. On Sept. 2, President Bush announced the United States was recognizing the independence of the Baltic nations and establishing diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, with the Communist Party virtually swept aside and reform appointments being made by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, the bishop of Moscow and others predicted even brighter days ahead for the church and its pastoral life.

The Vatican had waited patiently for some 50 years for recognize the Baltic states, home of an estimated 3.2 million Catholics.

While Gorbachev appeared ready to concede independence for the Baltic states the situation in the Ukraine — another heavily Catholic Soviet republic — was much less clear. The Ukraine declared its independence in late August, subject to a referendum in December. ...

The collapse of the Communist Party in the birthplace of communism was unanimously hailed by church people in the West.

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the former Vatican secretary of state who negotiated

with communist regimes for decades, said a number of popes — including John Paul II — have helped bury communism. But the world owes a special debt to Gorbachev, he said.

Gorbachev was someone who “understood the situation, who had the courage to denounce it publicly and the energy to change it,” Cardinal Casaroli said. Gorbachev alone among the Soviet officials had the intelligence to understand that “something was changing,” he said.

According to the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, communism's sudden collapse in the Soviet Union was a “sentence” imposed by history: that “scientific materialism has completely failed to meet its objectives.” At the same time, the newspaper warned that Western-style practical materialism — which also tends toward oppression, it said — is still alive and well.

In a separate editorial, the newspaper also cautioned that even as the communist system is being dismantled, the “temptation to violence” is re-emerging occasionally, provoking apprehension and fear. Nationalistic agitation in the wake of communism's defeat requires political intelligence and a willingness to face complex problems that involve minorities and human rights, it said. ...

Archbishop John L. Mays of St. Louis said the changes in the Soviet Union were “absolutely phenomenal” and gave him hope that “democracy and the freedom of the various republics” would be strengthened.

*CATHOLIC TIMES, Sept. 8, 1991*

## Bishop Ryan certifies 49 lay ministers

*Graduates are first to complete course in lay ministry formation*

By **STEVEN SPEARIE**  
*Catholic Times*

**SPRINGFIELD** — Calling the Lay Ministry Formation certification a historic day in the diocese, Bishop Daniel L. Ryan encouraged the 49 recipients to take on the qualities of a high wire walker.

“You need courage and perseverance and that wonderful gift of balance,” said the bishop at a Mass of Thanksgiving for the graduates May 22 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The Institute for Lay Ministry Formation, a cooperation between the diocese and Springfield College in Illinois, held its graduation in conjunction with SCI. The graduates of the institute are the first to complete a two-year course of study.

“We strongly feel we are a pioneer group,” said Mary Courty of Quincy following the ceremony. “It’s been a special two years. I’ve had the opportunity to meet a lot of other people throughout the diocese.”

In addition to regular course work, participants were required to complete a field education project in a particular field. Courty, who works in the fiscal services department at Blessing Hospital in Quincy, specialized in clinical pastoral care.

“Hopefully, I’ve become a better listener. That was really stressed to us.

Perhaps it will help me in the workplace, too (as St. Mary’s Hospital consolidates with Blessing),” said Courty, a parishioner of St. John the Baptist.

Herbert Reisinger of Granite City (Holy Family) believes good things will happen as a result of the program.

“I think the church will feel the results. It is a benefit to the parish,” he says.

Bishop Ryan also likened the journey of the formation program and its graduates to the biblical story of Jonah. The program, he said, went forth into uncharted waters, and “like Jonah, sometimes we wanted to flee. Fortunately most were not swallowed by the whale.”

Jonah got into trouble, said the bishop, “when he sensed a great distance between himself and the people he was called to serve.”

“Jesus Christ remains above all the model for our call to ministry and our understanding of how it might be fulfilled. Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, put no distance between himself and those he served,” he said.

The bishop noted that the day was not only a tribute to the graduates, but also “to the fine cooperation between the diocese and Springfield College in Illinois. ...”

*CATHOLIC TIMES, May 30, 1993*

## Exploring the black Catholic experience

# At African-American Catholic Family Day in Decatur

By **REID MAGNEY**  
*Special to Catholic Times*

**DECATUR** — Many people ask the Lord why he has done something. For Rene Saunches, principal of St. James in Decatur, it is: “Why did you make me black and Catholic in Decatur?”

“Not only am I misunderstood by my church,” she said Saturday, Sept. 10 at African-American Catholic Family Day at St. Thomas Church, “but by the African-American community.”

Approximately 30 people attended the morning conference, which dealt with issues of race and faith. The conference was followed at noon by an African-American style liturgy celebrated by Father Maurice Joseph Nutt, pastor of St. Alphonsus Church in St. Louis. Between

500 and 600 people attended the liturgy.

Participants in the day said it can be difficult for black Catholics, especially in places like Decatur and Springfield where most Catholics are white and most church-going blacks are Protestant.

But, Saunches said, she takes comfort in something Pope John Paul II said during an audience with black Catholics in New Orleans.

“He said the church needs us and we need the church,” she recalled.

But, she added, to be “truly black and authentically Catholic,” black Catholics “need an African-American Catholic community, for our own support and to bring in the unchurched.”

“I’m not talking about starting a black church,” she said. “The kingdom of God is integrated.”

She challenged black Catholics to become more involved in their parishes and especially to contribute financially so the parish “has a record of our support.”

Madonna Aldridge, pastoral associate at St. Joseph Church in E. St. Louis, said African-Americans must realize the connection between their faith and culture. She confessed that when she was young, “I was not aware of the relationship between my race and my faith.”

But, through study, Aldridge learned that many biblical figures were North Africans, Ethiopians and other people of color.

“We are present in the Bible,” she said, “adding that in many translations, blacks were excluded from the Bible.”

“The black experience,” she said, “is an indispensable symbol for discerning

divine activity ... We must share with the larger church our experience for our joy to be complete.” She urged black Catholics to “bring your whole self to church ... make our presence known in the liturgy. It’s OK to clap, stamp your feet or sway. ...”

Eunice Perry of Alton, diocesan coordinator for the National Black Catholic Congress, called African-Americans “an integral part of this church.” She credited Bishop Daniel L. Ryan for helping black Catholics keep the Congress alive.

Because, she said, society is only as strong as its weakest link, she urged the audience “to be involved in somebody’s welfare. We’re responsible and Jesus gave us a commission to be responsible. ...”

*CATHOLIC TIMES, Sept. 18, 1994*