

OBITUARIES

May 7, 1939 — Jan. 8, 2021

James Francis Mang, 81, director of the WNY Peace Center

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NEWS STAFF REPORTER

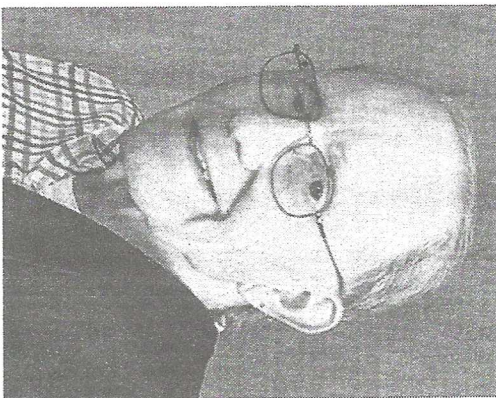
When he was a priest in the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, James Francis Mang's work for peace and social justice got him in hot water with the bishop.

After he was among a group of priests arrested on May 17, 1972, at an anti-war rally in the U.S. Capitol, Buffalo Bishop James A. McNulty suspended him in July, removing his ability to say Mass or preach.

But Mr. Mang's passionate belief in the importance of working for peace led to his eventual departure from the priesthood. "I think I could not *not* do this work," Mr. Mang told *The Buffalo News* in 1997.

After a nine-year struggle with Alzheimer's disease, Mr. Mang died in his home after a brief hospitalization for pneumonia in late December. He was 81.

Mr. Mang, who was a co-founder of the fledgling Western New York Peace Center in 1967, served as its director from 1980 until 2000. He was also a co-founder in 1985 of the Coalition for Economic Justice. He co-founded and served as chair of the Social Justice Committee at St. Joseph University Parish in 1996 and the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee of the Sisters of



St. Joseph in 2003. In 2007, he was a co-founder of the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence, and served as director.

Mr. Mang, the oldest of four children of Frank and Gertrude Rynders Mang, was born and grew up in Kenmore, in the pre-Civil War era family home on Mang Avenue.

After graduating from St. Paul's grammar school, Mr. Mang entered the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary of Buffalo. He studied philosophy at St. Bonaventure University and theology at John Vianney Seminary before being ordained on May 22, 1965.

In the seminary, he discovered the

writings of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. "Everything I studied at the seminary then took on a different light," Mr. Mang told *The News* in 2000.

After spending a year on loan to the Diocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and three months ministering to Puerto Rican migrant workers in the Diocese of Buffalo, Mr. Mang was assigned to work in 1966 as a professor and librarian at the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary.

In 1969, he started speaking out about the rights of women in the church and attended the first Women's Ordination Conference in 1975. In 1970, he informed the Internal Revenue Service that he was withholding 35% of his federal income tax, the amount that was calculated to fund the Vietnam War.

At the time of his suspension after his arrest in Washington, Mr. Mang said that the bishop had "not been pleased with my activity in peace and justice programs."

After suspending Mr. Mang, McNulty became ill and died in September. Mr. Mang was restored to his post in October as one of the late bishop's final wishes. Still, his activities were restricted.

"The bishop wanted me to stay in the rectory," said Mr. Mang. "I was being called to do things because I

was a part of the church and yet I got called on the carpet when I did."

While a priest, he was assigned to Our Lady of Pompeii Church, Our Lady of Lourdes-St. Boniface churches and Nardin Academy.

At the seminary, he met Audrey Noras, who was a secretary there. "She had a major role in my decision-making, along with the deepening call to do peace and social justice work," Mr. Mang said.

In 1977, Mr. Mang's application to leave the priesthood was granted by Bishop Edward Head.

Mr. Mang and Audrey Noras married in January 1978, and for the next 23 years worked together at the Center for Justice of Buffalo and then at the Western New York Peace Center.

During the Vietnam War, he counseled conscientious objectors and helped raise money to rebuild bombed schools, hospitals and churches in Vietnam. He led a prayer service for atomic bomb victims, opposed the creation of new weapons systems and supported a nuclear weapons freeze.

He was arrested in 1985 in a Buffalo protest against U.S. support for Nicaraguan rebels, and in 1986, he protested Trico Products' relocation of work from Buffalo to Mexico. In 1996, Mr. Mang was recognized

for donating more than 20 gallons of blood to the American Red Cross over 21 years.

In 1999, the Mangs became associates with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

After retirement, Mr. Mang was active in St. Joseph University Parish where he served on the Parish Council, the Social Justice Committee and the VOICE Buffalo Committee, as well as being a lector for many years.

In 2001, Mr. Mang was named a Buffalo News Citizen of the Year.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Audrey Mang; a daughter, Patricia Milton; two brothers, Robert and Peter Mang; a sister, Katherine Mang; two grandchildren; two great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 12 in St. Joseph University Church.

In his sermon, the Rev. Richard "Duke" Zajac, a former student of Mr. Mang, said, "Jim's death has left us feeling as if we're all in a dark room and the person with the lantern had just left."

But, Zajac said, if people advocated for social justice, condemned prejudice and bigotry and became "a voice for the voiceless," Mr. Mang "will return with that lantern, because he will be seen living on in us."