

## Prayer, Peace, a Pastor and the President

The President of the United States of America supports campus ministry.

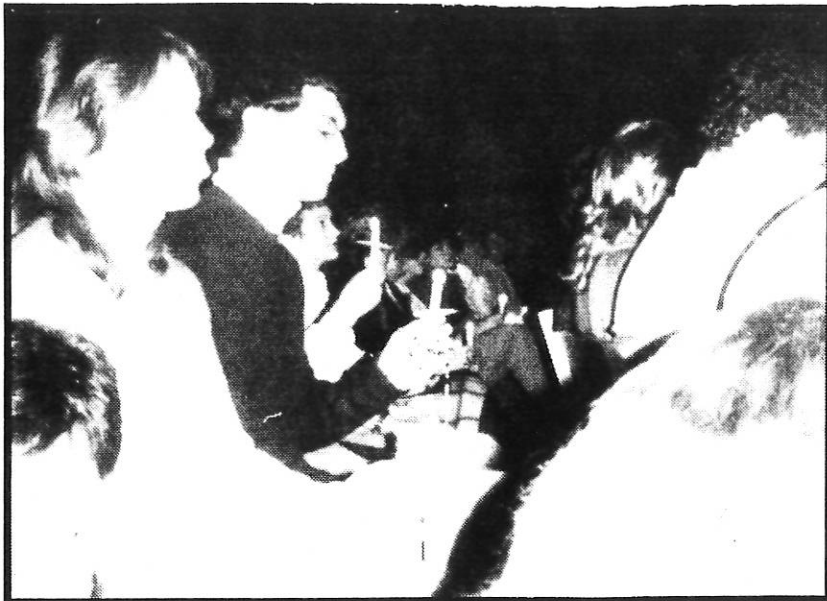
At least that is the conclusion of Rev. Bob Baffa, campus minister at the University of Vermont and Diocesan Director of Campus Ministry for the Burlington Diocese.

And Bob has some compelling reasons for his conclusion.

It all began with prayer. The Catholic Student Association sponsored a twenty-four hour prayer service to coincide with the December Summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Bob Baffa informed the President of the prayer service in a December 1, 1987 letter. "So often we read about protests and demonstrations on College campuses," began Bob's letter. "As you will soon be meeting with Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev we will be with you not in protest but in prayer."

The prayer vigil was well attended by the students, representatives of the local Pax Christi organization and members of the local community. But with the ending of the vigil came the news reports of the success of the summit and the ending of the Fall Semester. The prayer for peace was celebrated in the "diaspora" of the Christmas break.



University of Vermont Students Praying for Peace

And Bob had his Christmas break well planned. After Christmas he went to Philadelphia to visit his family. Then, on January 2, he was one of the campus ministers who attended the National Catholic Student Coalition Leadership Conference at the Wyndham Hotel.

On January 5, 1988 at 11:45 am Bob was in his hotel room getting ready for the NCSC afternoon sessions when the phone rang. "Rev. Baffa, this is the White House. Stand by for President Reagan." And before Bob could catch his breath, he was talking with the President of the United States of America.

Bob can not remember "exact quotes" from the conversation, being taken slightly off guard, but remembers that the President began by apologizing for his delay in responding to Bob's December 1st letter. The President went on to emphasize his personal reliance on prayer, his pleasure over hearing something so positive about college students and his personal support for campus ministry.

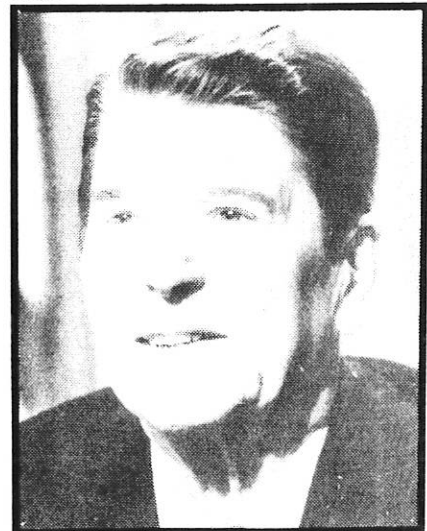
Immediately following his ten minute conversation with the President, Bob received a phone call from his mother. Apparently the White House had first contacted

Bob's campus ministry office at the University of Vermont only to be given Bob's parents number where he was visiting. It was Bob's mother, slightly flustered, no doubt, who forwarded the call to him at the Wyndham Hotel.

When asked about his feelings after receiving the phone call from the President, Bob responded "It goes without saying that I felt honored to be the recipient of such a call." It "certainly shows the President's appreciation of Campus Ministry."



Rev. Robert Baffa



President Ronald Reagan