

# Priest, parish, need help for Central America

By IRENE GENTLE  
*The Champion*

One can only hope that the residents of the tiny Guatemalan village of Teculut'an are not superstitious.

If they are, they may start to wonder at the connection between natural disasters and the arrival of Father Earl Talbot.

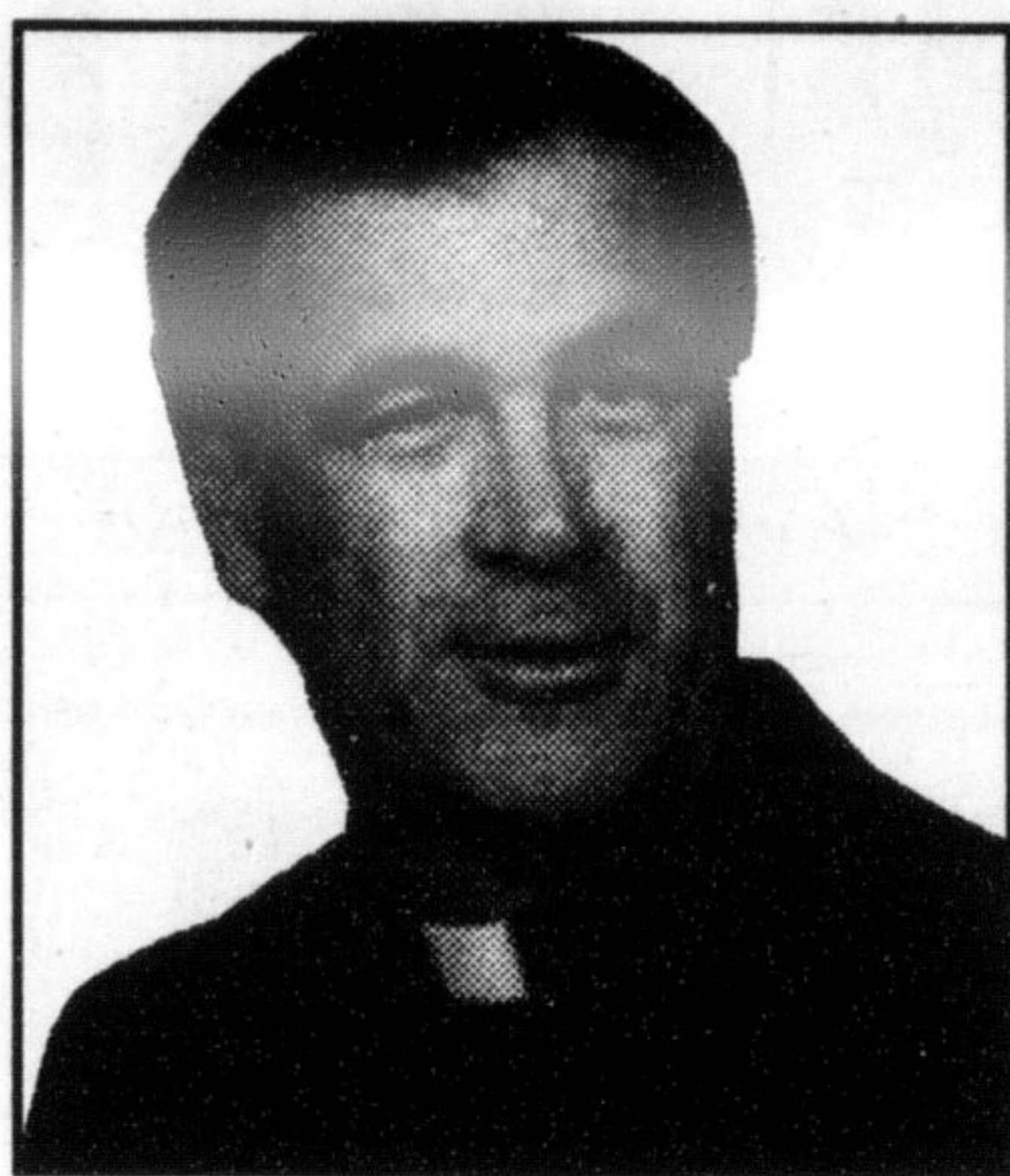
Fr. Talbot first came to the small community in 1976. That was right after the country had been devastated by an earthquake.

Now the Holy Rosary Parish priest is back in the picture, trying to round up aid for the displaced Teculut'an victims of Hurricane Mitch.

"I'm kind of used to the rebuilding thing," he said dryly. "For the five years I was there it was a constant rebuilding."

Fr. Talbot left Guatemala in 1981, but he kept in constant contact with the village that had been adopted by the Diocese of Hamilton, of which Holy Rosary is part.

Since coming to Milton, the priest has arranged three educational trips to the town for



Father Earl Talbot

small groups of Milton residents.

"We don't go there to do any relief work. It's more educa-

tional," he said. "I'm interested in taking a few people who want to learn about the people there."

That may change just a little during Fr. Talbot's fourth Milton-Guatemala foray, scheduled for January of next year.

Then the timing will be perfect to deliver a little aid as well.

"We'll find out what they need and bring it down in January," said Fr. Talbot.

To that end Fr. Talbot will be accepting tax deductible donations for the rebuilding of

Guatemala at Holy Rosary.

"People in that area basically need food and water," he said. "They seem to be okay for clothing."

Shelter is also taken care of for a while. Although Hurricane Mitch flooded many residents out of their homes, the devastation occurred during the area's school break.

That means schools, including one in which 35 Milton families are sponsoring the education of various Guatemalan children, are taking in the homeless.

### Long haul

The hurricane has passed, but high river levels mean the situation is still precarious in Teculut'an.

"They get worried whenever it looks like it's going to rain," said Fr. Talbot. "The river hasn't all receded yet. There still could be some danger."

Even when the flooding is a memory, Fr. Talbot knows from experience the weary years of reconstruction that trail after nature's wreckage.

"Usually it takes 10 years to rebuild after a serious earthquake. It's closer to 15 years there," he said, adding that Hurricane Mitch has caused less damage than the 1976 earthquake. "I've been through that mess. We used to line up

literally for days just to get bags of cement."

While Fr. Talbot's aid is aimed specifically at Guatemala, those wishing to help out Central America can contact the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace by calling 1-800-494-1401.

### All for victims

Fr. Talbot was anxious to point out that 100 per cent of what is donated to Holy Rosary will be received by the people of Guatemala without government intervention.

"We try not to go through the government. For one, they like to have other people do the work and then show up at picture taking time," he said. "We like to do it through another organization, like the church."

People wishing to help can also contact the Salvation Army Central American Emergency Relief Fund. If interested, please send cheques to The Salvation Army Community Relations, at 1645 Warden Ave. suite 101, Toronto, Ontario, M1R 5B3. For credit card donations call 1-888-321-3433.

To donate with the Red Cross please contact your local Red Cross branch or call 1-800-418-1111.

## Wind topples trees

Hydro crews were kept on their toes tending to numerous power outages during last week's wind storm.

More than 25 power failures — mostly due to fallen trees — were reported to Milton Hydro over the course of the evening of November 10 and the next day, said the company's superintendent of operations and engineering Richard Murray.

"It was 95 per cent trees. The wind rooted up trees and the dead tops of trees came down,"

he said.

Most of the outages occurred in more heavily forested areas north of Five Sideroad, Mr. Murray said.

Power was restored in most cases within an hour, he noted, and everything was back in order by 6 p.m. Wednesday.

Much of the work included clearing the downed trees.

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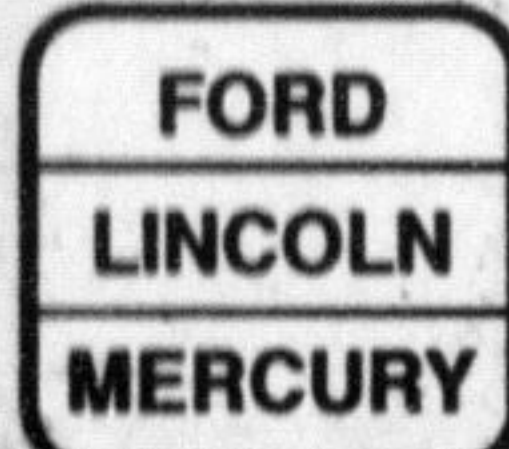
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