

400 St. Louisans Are Counted Among Alabama Marchers

Selma MAR 26 1965

Among the thousands of white and Negro marchers who rallied at the Alabama State Capitol at Montgomery yesterday were more than 400 weary St. Louisans who were there because they "wanted to be counted."

They included Presbyterians and Jews, students and housewives, Catholic priests, nuns, seminarians, and lay people. They included people who paid \$45 to \$65 each for seats on six chartered airplanes and some who scraped together \$17 for the round-trip charter bus fare from St. Louis to Montgomery.

They arrived in Montgomery Thursday in time enough to make the last five miles along Highway 80 with Dr. Martin Luther King and the hardy band who had walked five days from Selma.

Organized by Conference

The huge delegation was organized by the St. Louis Conference on Religion and Race, with the blessings of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leadership and with a lot of help from

church and student groups and many individuals.

Catholic participation alone numbered at least 100 persons, including more than 40 priests, 13 sisters, and several seminarians. Students on the busses came from St. Louis University, Fontbonne College, Webster College, as well as Washington University, Lindenwood College, Missouri University's Normandy Branch, and Concordia and Eden seminaries.

Presbyterian leadership took on the task of filling two of the chartered aircraft, though they signed up people of other faiths.

Sisters, who had made such a dramatic impact on the nation by their appearance at the head of the Selma marchers two weeks earlier, were there in numbers.

At least eight communities were represented in the St. Louis group, but they did not include sisters from two orders which had been specifically asked by Archbishop Thomas J. Toolen of Mobile-Birmingham to remain away from the rally. The two communities, Sisters of Loretto and Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, staff institutions in Archbishop Toolen's archdiocese.

Local Communities

But there were two Religious of the Sacred Heart from Maryville College, a Helper of the Holy Souls, a sister of the Society of St. Joseph of Watertown, N.Y., a Sister of St. Francis, two Mercy sisters, a School Sister of Notre Dame, and two Precious Blood sisters. There was even a Daughter of Charity who was spending her renewal of vows day marching in Alabama.

Sister Mary Beatrice Brown, of Marillac College, was to have participated in her community's renewal of vows at a ceremony at Marillac yesterday. To allow her to renew vows and still catch the early plane to Montgomery, the Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission office arranged for Father Norman H. Christian of St. Peter Parish to celebrate a special pre-dawn Mass at the college, where Sister Beatrice renewed her vows. Then the nun and the priest hurried to the plane for Alabama.

Besides the many diocesan priests on the trip, there were members of several religious communities, including the Jesuits, Mill Hill Fathers, the Servite Fathers, Vincentians, and Resurrectionists. Also along on the pilgrimage were a Jesuit scholastic and two Resurrectionist seminarians.

Paul Hanlon, the executive director of the St. Louis Conference on Religion and Race, said that his office chartered one 90-passenger DC-7 and three DC-3's and the Presbyterian coordinators had chartered two craft. Five

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busses were used for what started out as a student trip — but which eventually attracted as many adults. In all, about 235 signed up for busses and some 250 went by plane.

The Rev. Richard Tombaugh, an Episcopalian priest who was coordinating the bus reservations, said, "We thought we'd have mainly students.

But pretty soon, everybody was calling in. We've got housewives and ministers and everybody on this trip."

This will be the third official trip to Alabama in the past two weeks. Fifty-four clergy, religious and lay people journeyed to Selma by plane on March 10, where they joined the peaceful demonstrations for voting rights. The following Monday, three Catholic priests and a layman represented the Archdiocese of St. Louis at a memorial service for the slain Unitarian minister, the Rev. James Reeb.

This week's trip was arranged after a federal court ordered Alabama authorities to allow a 50-mile march from Selma to the State Capitol.

Father Francis Doyle, the executive secretary of the Archdiocesan Commis-

sion on Human Rights, said that Msgr. Mark Ebner, pastor of St. George Parish, and Msgr. Thomas Durkin, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish, acted as the official heads of the St. Louis Catholic contingent on this week's trip.

Local support and prayers for the St. Louis group of marchers backed up the pilgrims' own efforts.

Sisters of Mercy at Our Lady of Mercy Convent, Frontenac, participated in a Bible Vigil service Wednesday night for the intention of the march's success and sent a pledge with two members of the community and their chaplain, Father Raymond F. Rustige, who went to Alabama. In it they offered their Thursday of service for the recognition of human rights throughout the nation.