

Hail to the Pilgrims

By Father Robert F. McNamara

Photos by Susan McKinney

During the summer months, pilgrimages of the Advance Holy Year were good, but relatively few. The Diocesan Holy Year Committee fully expected that. But now, with the coming of Fall, there are pilgrimages all over the diocese, by foot, by auto, by bicycle!

Most impressive, in a way, was the "Twin Pilgrimage" of the Sisters of Mercy and their friends. The Sisters in the Northern Tier went to Sacred Heart Cathedral at 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 22. At the same hour, those in the Southern Tier presented themselves at Ss. Peter and Paul, the Elmira pilgrimage church. Bishop John E. McCafferty was celebrant and Father Terence Fleming, concelebrant, at the Cathedral, and the present writer read the pilgrimage prayers. In Elmira the concelebrants were Father Edward Foy, pastor, and Father Michael Regan, the latter reading the pilgrimage prayers. In both places there was an identical rite; in both places there was a wonderful spirit. Close to five hundred participated in each church.

Holy Rosary Church, Rochester, had a pilgrimage Sept. 15, with 400-500 in attendance. The pilgrims first gathered for a special service at Holy Rosary, then went to the Cathedral for the official visit. Many went in cars, but a number walked to Sacred Heart. One parishioner, a "wheelchair pilgrim," arranged to be wheeled all the way!

On Sept. 29, some ninety pilgrims, younger and older, drove in pilgrimage from St. Margaret Mary Church, Irondequoit, to St. Thomas the Apostle pilgrimage church on St. Paul Boulevard. The same day, the Tompkins-Tioga region had its Fall pilgrimage service at St. Patrick's Church, Owego. Here the thrust of reconciliation was strong. Members of the Owego Ministerial Association participated, and the pilgrims brought small gifts to symbolize their concern for the needy.

At Christ the King parish, Irondequoit, and Guardian Angels, Henrietta, the emphasis has been on youth. On Sept. 9, the teachers and religious educators of Christ the King led the seventh and eighth grades, close to 100 strong, on a walking pilgrimage of three miles to St. Thomas the Apostle Church (and three miles back!) The children kept strict silence all the way.

Then on Sept. 29, about 25 youngsters from Guardian Angels



Bishop McCafferty joins in the Mercy Sisters' Holy Year pilgrimage. He and their chaplain, Father Terence Fleming, celebrated Mass for them Sept. 22 in the Cathedral.



Students from St. Agnes School, Avon, begin a pilgrimage to St. Columbia's Church, Caledonia, for noon Mass. The pilgrimage took place Friday, Sept. 27.

rode their bicycles in the rain a long five miles to the regional pilgrimage church of St. Louis in Pittsford.

Who says today's kids are not ready to make sacrifices?

By the time this article appears, another youth pilgrimage will have taken place. The diocesan Teen Seminar Movement arranged a march from St. Bernard's Seminary to Sacred Heart Cathedral by the Fall Northwest Region pilgrimage service, with the theme of Mary and the Holy Year accentuated. The Mass televised that morning from Channel 10 was also a Holy Year Mass for "shut-in pilgrims."

More pilgrimages and pilgrimage services are in the offing, characterized by the same inventiveness. For instance, Christ the King Church in Irondequoit is planning a pilgrimage to St. Ann's in Hornell — one of the Southern Tier churches of pilgrimage.

The response to the pilgrim aspect of the Holy Year has been wonderful, even thrilling. The only real problem has been that many of the pilgrims can't recite

the Apostles Creed.

We sincerely hope that other parishes will join in this heart-warming devotional march. But we hope even more that all individual Catholics in the diocese, and all parish councils and societies, will adopt a definite program of reconciliation. Only that will prove that they have truly caught the Holy Year spirit.

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Crowd Fills Owego Church

Owego — A capacity crowd of more than 500 pilgrims from every church in the Tompkins-Tioga Region filled St. Patrick's Church, for the Fall Pilgrimage Holy Year Celebration on Sunday, Sept. 29.

Carrying banners, singing and praying, they marched in procession toward the church, coming from several different directions. An impressive number of young adults had joined their respective delegations, and participated in the presentation of the gifts. Others served as ushers, and 14-year-old Patsy Nicosia of St. Patrick's read the Communion meditation, accompanied by the Singout group. At the roll call each delegation received an ovation, with an especially enthusiastic one accorded the delegation representing the Protestant churches of Owego.

Combined choirs from all the churches led the congregational singing and sang the Gregorian chant: Veni Creator Spiritus during the offertory procession, when all members of the congregation were invited to

come forward in an act of renewal and reconciliation, to present gifts for God's needy. Gifts of food filling four large boxes and generous monetary gifts were later taken to Owego's Open Door Mission which serves the poor of the community.

Concelebrating the Eucharist with co-pastors Fathers Thomas H. Watts and Albert H. Cason were Fathers Albert V. Ryan, Robert Donovan, Bertrand Scully, Joseph Abend, Thomas Cleary, and Elmer Schmidt. Father Schmidt gave the homily, emphasizing the meaning of the theme of reconciliation. A reception for all guests was held in the church hall following the celebration.

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