

# OLPH Celebrates 75 Years

This weekend parishioners at Our Lady of Perpetual Help continue the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the church.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate the Jubilee Mass at 12:15 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 30. The following Saturday, parishioners, former parishioners, and friends will gather at the Arena Party

House, 1335 E. Ridge Rd., for a dinner-dance. Socializing at the Oct. 6 event begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. and dancing to the music of Mario Shabbarrasi.

A Memorial Mass for Msgr. John P. Schellhorn, founder and first pastor of the parish, will be celebrated on Oct. 21. A Mass for all deceased

parishioners will be celebrated on Nov. 11.

The observance will conclude with a Mass on Jan. 27, 1980, the 75th anniversary of the dedication of the Church.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help was formed in 1904 by Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, to accommodate Catholics on the fringes of St. Michael's and Holy Redeemer parishes.

He named Father John Schellhorn, then assistant at St. Michael's, to establish the parish and to be its first pastor. The parish was incorporated on June 20 of that year.

Work was begun almost at once on a combination church/school building. That building was dedicated in January of 1905.

In April of that year, the parish, still in the process of organization, reported that 598 persons attended Sunday Mass.

The school portion of the building opened with an enrollment of 260 pupils in September that year, under the direction of Sister Emerentia, SSJ, and three other sisters.

The first convent for the sisters opened in 1906. Five years later the sisters moved into a new location on Joseph Avenue.

Two years later the parish celebrated the ordination of Father Arthur Florack, the first member of the parish to enter the priesthood.

Throughout this period, the population of the parish was steadily growing and in 1925 construction was begun on a new church building. Bishop Thomas Hickey dedicated the church on May 30, 1926, the 30th anniversary of Father Schellhorn's ordination.

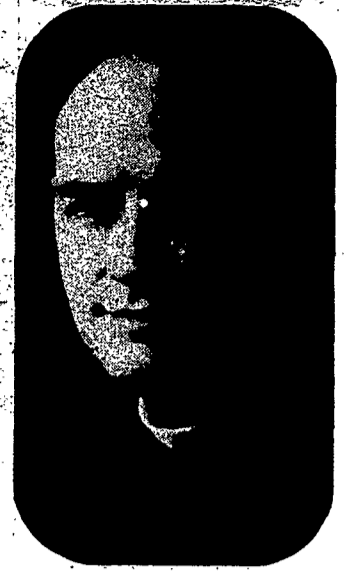
In 1932, Father Schellhorn was named to the Board of Diocesan Consultors and shortly thereafter was elevated to the ranks of the Monsignori by Pope Pius XI.

Four years later, Msgr. Schellhorn was named pastor emeritus of the parish and Father Frank J. Hoefen was appointed to succeed him in the pastorate.

Msgr. Schellhorn died on Sept. 29, 1941. Bishop James E. Kearney celebrated and preached at the Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass on Oct. 2.



MSGR. SCHELLHORN



MSGR. QUINN

On Easter Sunday, 1942, the sisters again moved, this time into a new convent adjacent to the church. The convent serves to this day.

By 1948, Father Hoefen was able to report that the church was free of debt. Two years later work was under way for construction of a new rectory; and on June 17, 1951 Father Hoefen's 40th anniversary of priesthood, the priests moved into the building.

Father Hoefen oversaw the redecoration of the church, a task completed in 1953. The following year the parish celebrated its 50th anniversary.

In 1956 Father Hoefen was named a monsignor.

The parish celebrated the dedication of a new school in 1965. Bishop Kearney presided at the event.

For the past 12 years the parish has been shepherded by Msgr. Richard M. Quinn.

During Msgr. Quinn's reign has come the advent of Saturday evening liturgies, Masses celebrated at the Seneca Tower, the start of a pre-school program, a welcoming of residents of the Hudson Ridge Towers into the congregation, the first ordination to priesthood in the church building, and the installation of a parish council.



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

# 50 Years Marked by St. Francis of Assisi

By Father Robert McNamara

The section of Rochester between Lyell and Maple Avenues was originally a part of "Dutch Town" - the old German district on the west side of Rochester. After World War I, however, Italian families began to settle there in numbers too large to be handled easily from St. Anthony's - Rochester's first Italian national parish, established at Lyell and Plymouth in 1906. Territorially, St. Anthony's parishioners lived within the boundaries of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The Charles House, Rochester's first Catholic settlement house, was set up on the present Broad Street in November, 1917. From about 1926 on, Sunday Mass was also offered there for the convenience of the neighborhood.

In 1929, Bishop John F. O'Hern decided to open a regular chapel in this neighborhood. The Diocese of Rochester purchased the former Ideal Theater, which stood on Whitney Street. This one-story flat-roofed structure was bought for \$12,500 and adapted outside and inside for church purposes at a cost of \$10,750. Bishop O'Hern blessed the new chapel, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, on Aug. 15, 1929.

The bishop appointed an Italian-born priest, Father Adolph L. Gabbani, to take charge of the chapel; and it was he who offered the first Mass there on Aug. 15. Father Gabbani served the congregation until 1935. However, he was not a full-fledged pastor. St. Francis was neither a mission of St. Anthony (although finally given a section of that church's population to care for) nor of any other parish, but a chapel directly under the bishop. That was to change in 1935. A newly ordained Rochester-born priest of Italian ancestry was assigned as assistant to Father Gabbani. One year later, Father Gabbani was named pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Auburn; and the assistant, Father Joseph A. Cirrincione, was left in charge of the Rochester chapel. In this same year, 1935, definite boundaries were assigned to the chapel, making it a territorial parish for the area's Italians. From that time on, to December 1937, Father Cirrincione was officially administrator. It was Edward Mooney, Archbishop-bishop of Rochester who established the parish boundaries. His successor, Bishop James E. Kearney, took the next step shortly after his installation as head of the diocese in November, 1937. On Dec. 7, 1937, he appointed Father Cirrincione pastor. The parish was incorporated according to state law on Feb. 14, 1938, with Rocco Natale and Louis Santangelo as the first lay trustees.

At the time of his appointment, Father Cirrincione was the youngest pastor in the Rochester Diocese. But he would grow old in this assignment, remaining the shepherd of St. Francis of Assisi until he retired after a notable career, in 1977.

Of the many events in the pastorate of Father Cirrincione (who was named a papal chamberlain by Pope Pius XII on May 3, 1966, and accorded the title "Monsignor"), three are especially memorable: the building of the Boys' Center and hall, the opening of the Girls' Center, and the launching of the Family Rosary for Peace.

The Boys' Center came first. Up to 1938, the priests of the parish taught catechetics in the Charles House, the program coordinator, Miss Bertha Martens, having been engaged by the diocese to supervise this work. In 1938, however, ex-



Msgr. Cirrincione during a recent broadcast.

pansion of the programs of the Charles House made it necessary for the parish classes to be transferred to the church. Since the parish had no adequate space for large meetings (the church hall behind St. Francis was very small), Father Cirrincione and his assistant Father John Merklinger began to work toward the erection of a regular parish hall and center.

A project of the sort was a daunting undertaking in a parish that had little available funds, especially during the Great Depression. The dedication of the new Boys' Center and hall on March 9, 1941, was therefore an event for rejoicing, not only in the parish but among interested Rochester Catholics in general.

The Girls' Center was a different type of institution. In late 1945 a house at 401 Orange St. that the parish owned and has used as a rectory from 1931 to 1942 was vacated by tenants that had been renting it. The tailoring firm of Hickey-Freeman contributed funds to equip it as a center in which young women might be taught sewing and tailoring, and prepared to enter the local clothing industry. Bishop Kearney blessed this Girls' Center on Jan. 26, 1946. While the Center continued only a couple of years, it was nevertheless an interesting experiment in cooperation between Church and commerce.

But it was not these projects of parish concern that brought Msgr. Cirrincione into the limelight. It was his establishment of the Family Rosary for Peace in 1950. A devotee of Mary's rosary, Father Cirrincione had conducted a rosary half-hour on radio station WSAY every Sunday evening from January 1948 to September 1949. When the program ceased, a number of Rochester laymen approached several pastors to see if something could not be done to reestablish a radio-rosary on a permanent basis.

The pastor of St. Francis accepted the challenge. After negotiation he reached an agreement with WSAY to give free time for a daily rosary program during Lent 1950 between 10 and 10:30 p.m. Bishop Kearney officially opened the radio rosary on March 5, 1950. After a few days of broadcasting from the studio, Father Cirrincione shifted the rosary "studio" to St. Francis Parish Center. The daily broadcasts continued through the Lenten season, presented as a special feature to commemorate the Holy Year which was being observed internationally in 1950. Other stations in the Diocese (WMBO, WGVA, WELM and WWHG) carried the rosary weekly during the same period.

When Easter came, the free radio time ended. Father Cirrincione kept it going from day-to-day, hoping that the bishop would authorize its continuance on a pay-basis. Bishop Kearney gave this authorization on June 30, 1950, assigning a term of 12 months and forbidding the solicitation of the necessary funds over the air. The promoters therefore resorted to a direct mail campaign of 1200 letters. It brought in enough money to pay for the radio time.

The pastor's special interest in the rosary devotion sprang from his intense interest in the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. On one of his visits to Fatima, in 1948, he secured for his parish a copy of the Lady of Fatima statue enshrined at the site of the apparitions, carved by Jose Thedim, sculptor of the original statue. Before returning to Rochester, Father Cirrincione took his copy of the statue to Rome where it was blessed by Pope Pius XII.

The basic format of the Rosary for Peace has not varied extensively over the years. A layman normally leads the recitation of the beads, and this is followed by a meditation or sermon or, more recently, by a report on news of Catholic interest.

The Rosary for Peace no longer has a direct connection with St. Francis parish. Upon his retirement from the pastorate in 1977, Msgr. Cirrincione, who continues as director of the broadcast, saw to it that the Family-Rosary for Peace was incorporated as an independent project.

St. Francis of Assisi parish experienced its largest growth in the late 1930s. After World War I, a large percentage of its Italian population moved out into the suburbs. Blacks and Spanish-speaking replaced them in the parish neighborhood. Of these, only the Spanish-speaking were extensively Catholic. Most of them were of Puerto Rican background; but others were of Cuban, Chilean or Argentine origin. With the Italian families that remained, these constituted a parish of reduced membership and reduced income.

In 1969, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Divine Child, who had been working with the congregation as parish visitors, etc. since 1955 and had been in residence since 1956, gave up their St. Francis mission and returned to their central house in Buffalo. For some years in the 1970s, St. Patrick's Church on Plymouth Avenue North served as the center for Hispanic ministry in the area west of the Genesee River and north of Main Street. When St. Patrick's was closed in 1977 or 1978, this Spanish-speaking group was deprived of a gathering place. In 1979, however, it was decided to make the 50-year old Italian parish of St. Francis of Assisi the official home of the neighborhood's Hispanic apostolate.