



Thomas Kepner and his mother Frances attend Mass at the magnet parish. Mrs. Kepner commutes from Clifton Springs to teach religion at the Rochester School for the Deaf. She and Tom attend the parish, she said, for her son to have an association with other deaf persons. "They have their own place here," she said. "And they are very proud of it."

# Magnet Parish for Deaf Launches Full Schedule

By John Dash

Last week nearly 70 members of Rochester's deaf community attended the first Mass in what is now the regular weekly schedule for a unique venture into diocesan ministry to the handicapped: the magnet parish for the deaf.

Located at Old St. Mary's Downtown, and headed by Father Thomas Erdle, long known in the diocese for his work among members of the deaf community, principally at the Rochester School for the Deaf and at RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), the parish last week started its regular sacramental schedule.

In an interview last week, Father Erdle acknowledged that the start has been somewhat slow. He was formally named to head the project by Bishop Matthew H. Clark five months ago, but the actual organization has been done slowly and systematically.

Over the summer, Father Erdle said, a number of sessions were held in which



members of the deaf community discerned particular ministries they had to make the parish a go. He said that several meetings were held with the purpose of "getting people involved in various ministerial roles in the deaf community," and of "discovering the needs of the deaf that could be served by the parish."

Such interests emerged as bible study, baby sitting, lecturing, and a youth program for students at the Rochester School for the Deaf and NTID, Father Erdle said.

In addition, the parish is now planning a Christmas party for the last Sunday in Advent.

Father Erdle noted that the parish, which encompasses service to the two schools as well as at St. Mary's, anticipates the

impending ordinations of Ray Fleming and Pat Graybill, Fleming to the priesthood and Graybill to the permanent diaconate. Both men are deaf and both have resolved to work with the deaf community.

Father Erdle also awaits the arrival of Margot VanEtten, the wife of a candidate for the diocesan permanent diaconate, who will act as pastoral assistant.

Ironically, the First Sunday in Advent also marked the second anniversary of the filing of the Task Force on the Hearing Impaired Ministerial Development Plan, which encouraged the parish's development.

The recommendation was made in light of a number of then current statistics which included such data as the presence of 4,880 hearing impaired persons in the greater Rochester area and not including the numbers of deaf at NTID.

Heretofore, the task force report said, the Church at large was negligent in its ministry to the deaf through "failure to adequately instruct the deaf in their faith commitment; insufficient adaptations of the present liturgy to meet the communication needs of the average deaf population; an adequate training of catechists for teaching the deaf; (and) the demise of monolithic simple strong cultural Catholicism."

On the last point, the report stated: "The demise of cultural Catholicism has made the vast majority of deaf Catholics much more prone to proselytism by groups which can fulfill this void through a very concrete and simplistic approach to religion."

"Clearly it is time for the Catholic Church to assess its present efforts and its patterns of communication and community with the deaf. It will be very important to prepare programs which are directed to meet the very special needs of deaf people."

And on the First Sunday of Advent, it seems to have made great progress.

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

## Sermons And Homilies

Dear Father Hohman:

Why is the sermon now called a homily? Why does it seem to have more importance than it used to?

Dear Reader:

There is a difference between a sermon and a homily. A sermon is simply a talk or dissertation on a religious subject with the intention of inspiring, instructing and motivating. A homily is different in this way: it relates primarily and directly to a passage or passages from Sacred Scripture.

It is an attempt to make that passage very real. It attempts to make the

passage real through the shared experiences of the preacher whether his own or one which he has witnessed. The homily has the intention of making the gospel message real in a person's life and experienced in that person's life. Therefore, a homily tends to be much more of a witnessing to the reality of truth which we find in Scripture and that witnessing is in the life of the one who preaches it. It says, "This is my experience in trying to live out what this scripture is saying." It can be either a story of success or a story of failure but nevertheless an experience which leads the listener to relate the scripture to his or her own life. The accent in a homily is away from the purely intellectual and in the direction of the feelings, senses and the experiential.



**RECITAL** — Dr. Barbara Harbach in organ concert, 7 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 29, at The First Congregational Church in Fairport, 26 East Church St. Free.

**NFP CLASSES** — Sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, 7:30 p.m., Friday, Dec. 4, Kearney Building, St. Mary's Hospital. Pre-registration required, call 464-8705.

**DANCE SERIES** — Nikolais Dance Theatre, 8:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, Nov. 27-28, Eastman Theatre. Ticket prices: \$14, \$12, \$9.50, \$8.50.

**"WHAT IS A SYMPHONY?"** — Wendy's/RPO Children's Concert for grades K-7, conducted by Isaiah Jackson, 3 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 29, Eastman Theatre. Tickets: \$2.50.

**CHILDREN'S THEATER** — "Potato People" presented by Theatre Beyond Words, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Friday and Saturday, Nov. 27-28, main auditorium, Nazareth College Arts Center. Tickets, \$3 and available at Nazareth box office, 586-2420.

**THEATER** — Theatre Beyond Words presents "visual theatre" based on silent film, situational comedy and mime, 8:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 28, main auditorium, Nazareth College Arts Center. Tickets: adults, \$10; students, \$8.

**SUNDAY AT NAZARETH** — Dennis and Mary Ellen Monroe perform "When First Unto This Country," a program of traditional American music, 3 p.m., main auditorium, Nazareth College Arts Center. Free.

**CHILDREN'S FILM** — "Mary Poppins," 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Friday, Nov. 27, Eisenhart Auditorium. Admission: adults, \$1; senior citizens and children, \$.50; RMSC members, \$.25.

"YANKEE DOODLE"

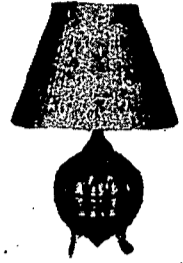
**DANDY** — Children's Theatre on Tour Series continues with a musical biography of George M. Cohan, at 2 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 28, Eisenhart Auditorium.

**HOLIDAY CREATIONS** — Quilting Crafts for Christmas, 1-4:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 29, Rochester Museum and Science Center. Free with general museum admission.



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