

Traditions Abound on Saints' Days

By John Dash

Last week's two big feast days, St. Patrick's Day and St. Joseph's Day, were celebrated throughout the diocese in grand style, each according to its own tradition.

In Auburn, for instance, at Holy Family Church, more than 1,000 people turned out for a seven and a half hour celebration including the traditional boiled ham and cabbage supper, Father Ralph Fraats said last week.

During the entire event live stage entertainment regaled the crowds.

On St. Patrick's Day itself, more than 1,000 crowded into the church designed for 850, Father Fraats said, as Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey celebrated Mass. He was joined at the altar by 13 area priests and was welcomed by Father Fraats, who is both assistant at Holy Family and chaplain of the Auburn Ancient Order of Hibernians.

The bishop in turn "expressed his thanks in the name of the diocese for the many vocations given by the faithful Irish of Auburn to religious life in the service of the Church," Father Fraats said.

"He also encouraged the traditions of the Irish heritage as being an essential ingredient to American culture," the priest added.

"Representatives of Irish organizations and those related to it bore their flags, banners and standards in procession, led by the bagpiper and the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus of Auburn. The Holy Family choir, under the direction of

Merton Talk Scheduled at Mercy High

James Finley, author of "Merton's Palace of Nowhere," will be the guest speaker at the Spring meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Rochester, at 2 p.m., Sunday, April 4, at Our Lady of Mercy High School auditorium.

In a series of informal, yet in-depth, reflections, he will address the topic "Intimacy with God in Prayer: Reflections on the Spirituality of Thomas Merton." Finley plans three presentations separated by brief intervals and followed by a discussion period. Finley lived under the personal guidance of Thomas Merton at the Abbey of Gethsemane. The program will end about 5 p.m. It is co-sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy and the Thomas Merton Society of Rochester. Donations will be accepted at the door.

Cancer Society Needs Drivers

The American Cancer Society is in need of volunteer drivers to transport patients to area hospitals. The volunteers are needed to operate the 12-passenger van afternoons Monday through Friday. Insurance coverage for drivers is provided by the society. Anyone interested in more information should call the Monroe County Unit of the American Cancer Society at 288-1950.

organist Robert Nolan, sang all Irish hymns with the Mass of the Bells, accompanied by the Irish Harpists and Flutists," Father Fraats said.

In addition, he said, arrangements were made for the sake of shut-ins: the Mass was both televised and taped. Persons who are ill and wishing a tape recording of the Mass and a concert of Irish Music which preceded the Mass are asked to call the rectory, (315) 252-9576.

Two days after that celebration, in East Rochester, the Feast of St. Joseph was celebrated with the Italian tradition of the St. Joseph's Table in the home of Inesa Ledonne.

"St. Joseph, the carpenter husband of the Virgin Mary, is one of the best loved saints among the many dear to devout Italians," she said. "He is the patron saint of all hard-working craftsmen and the protector of the family. The feast... is the festival of the simple and the poor."

"I make this St. Joseph's Table for a private intention and thanksgiving for the abundance of graces I have received," she said.

While there is no special menu for the St. Joseph's Table, she said, all the food is homemade and nothing is wasted.

"The food is consumed on the premises, but I do send to the sick, elderly, infirm or needy." The feast lasts for the amount of time it takes to consume the food, she said.

"Some friends offer food for the table for their intentions, others make donations. I make special St. Joseph bread and rolls. Each guest is welcomed to take a roll home

along with fruits (generally apples and oranges) that are on the table.

desserts, and beverages. There is an average of 75 different food items.

"I make many varieties of breads, cookies, cakes, and sfinges (sfinges are a St. Joseph's Day delicacy), also vegetables, casseroles,

"At the end, I am grateful and thank the Lord for my good health to be able to make this special affair possible," Mrs. Ledonne said.



The crowd fills the church at Holy Family's St. Patrick's Day Mass.

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

No Substitute For Catholic School System

Dear Father Hohman,

Isn't it time the Church freed the parents of our area from the burden of financing the Catholic schools? All of the parish membership are "suffering" from this burden, not the least of whom is the pastor and the clergy.

The pastor is so busy as a business administrator that his leadership role in evangelization has been for all practical purposes lost! The parish membership suffers as a result since they are being primarily Church on Sunday morning and financing the school the rest of the time when there are many more relevant activities.

The Catholic schools have been tried and found wanting (not the nuns or teachers or parents, clergy or children, but the SYSTEM). After 100-plus years of the Catholic school system, we are perceived not by our love for our neighbor but as white, racist and sexist. We need a new emphasis, approach to Catholic education, the first part being to free the parents and clergy of believing the Catholic school is the Mission of the Parish when actually it has served its purpose and is now obsolete.

This may be viewed as negative but in fact it provides a great opportunity to be Church in a more realistic way.

(Signed) R.S.

Dear R.S.

I have to admit that in my own thinking I have been going through some of

the problems which you express in your letter. Many others are too, and the resolution of the problem is still quite far off because a large number of people, in fact most of the Church's leadership and many of its staunchest members, believe that there is no substitute for the Catholic school system and that it needs to be maintained and even advanced at great sacrifice. The decision to maintain or to give up on Catholic school education has to be the decision of the entire community.

The questions you ask are legitimate questions and need to be answered honestly by those who are so strong and zealous in their support of the Catholic school system. The principal question which needs to be asked is: Have we produced generations of good Christians or have we produced merely loyal Catholics? That is an extremely painful question as well as being a

judgmental one, and I do not think that there is any reasonable answer available at this stage in history. It is just as easy to say that we have turned out people who are not perceived by love for their neighbor and are white, racist and sexist, as it is to say that the Catholic school system has turned out generations of people who are solidly good Christians albeit human.

I think the only answer to this question will be honesty on the part of all who are examining it, and constant prayer to the Holy Spirit that he may guide us in the outcome of this particular problem. How much sacrifice is possible, feasible and/or advisable is a moot question and it is only corporately that we can decide the matter.

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