

A PARISH IS BORN — AND GROWS UP!

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton — the Second Year Begins

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With the lighting of the new fire on Holy Saturday evening, April 2, the people of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish have come full circle through the year, through one full cycle of the liturgical seasons.

It was on Holy Saturday evening, 1982, that this people of God first gathered in their own, special dwelling place to celebrate the paschal mysteries. Although this new parish in Hamlin was officially established by Bishop Matthew H. Clark on Feb. 10, 1982, this community of faith had no "home," no permanent place of worship at that time. On Ash Wednesday, 1982, the people of the parish did gather to worship together for the very first time as a parish family — and as with the Holy Family so long ago, there was no room for them — as yet — in the town. And so, this first parish gathering was on the outskirts of town in a barn, generously offered for use, so that the pastor and people would have a place out of the bitter cold. Amid stamping, snorting cattle and fussy, fidgety chickens, they celebrated the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the first time as the people of the parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Before the 40 days of Lent were over, a building which could be rented and renovated for use as a home, an interim church for the new parish, had been located in Hamlin. The building chosen was the former Hamlin railroad depot, on Railroad Avenue in the center of town. During the 1982 Lenten season, members of the parish worked tirelessly to clean, renovate and decorate the depot in time for Easter services. Lights were hung and a raised platform, altar and lectern were built out of railroad ties. By Easter vigil, all was ready, and the parish family heard their pastor, Fr. William J. Amann, speak at all the Masses about how appropriate it was that they should be worshipping in a railroad station, since all of our life is a journey toward God, with many "stations" or stages along the way.

At the same time the railroad station was rented, a large, older home on the main street of Hamlin was also found available to rent. And so, 1554 Lake Road became Father Amann's new home, the parish rectory, a place where the pastor and his staff, Deacon Robert O. Solan and Sister Mary Kay Ryan (the Religious Education Coordinator) could meet to discuss parish business. Last April 25, the members of the parish held a "Rectory Shower" for Father Amann, and in one busy, hectic Sunday afternoon, the rectory, already redecorated by members of the parish, was generously furnished with every housekeeping appliance and necessity imaginable — a few of which left Father Amann wondering what he was supposed to do with them!

It did not take very many weekends for the parish to realize that as a family they were already too many for their new home. The number of Masses each weekend was increased from three to four, and still some Masses were standing room only. The parish home must grow, and so by the Fall, an addition was planned. Hopes were high that the addition could be finished in time for the Christmas Masses. Thanks to the unstinting generosity and hard, heavy work of many skillful and competent parishioners, these

hopes were realized, and at Midnight Mass, 1982, the new addition, as yet unpainted and uncarpeted, was made available for use, increasing by 75 seats the capacity of the church. Now as many as 250 persons could worship in comfort at each Mass. Since Christmas, finishing work has continued on the addition and by the Easter vigil services on April 2, the interior was painted, draperies had been hung, and a deep red wall-to-wall carpet had been installed, matching the carpet in the main part of the building and tying the old and the new sections together as an integrated unit.

During the Summer and Fall of 1982, the parish acquired the use of two more buildings in Hamlin — as the parish continued to grow in visibility and vitality in the town. The use of a small, white, two-story, frame building at 1496 Lake Road was donated by a parishioner. This structure has become the Human Development Building, and is used primarily to house the "Interfaith Food and Clothing Center." Its services are available to all the Hamlin community and the surrounding area, without regard to religious affiliation.

The second building is a large structure, originally a church, at the "four corners" in Hamlin — 1703 Lake Road, at Routes 18 and 19. It is now the parish education building. It is there that the Religious Education coordinator, Sister Mary Kay Ryan, SSJ, has her office. The Education Committee meets there regularly. Babysitting services are available in the Education Building during two of the weekend Masses. Pre-school religious education classes are taught here, Religious Education faculty meetings are held in this multi-purpose building, and here, 40 dedicated teachers, under the able direction of Sr. Mary Kay, have developed a vital Religious Education program. The entire program, pre-school through high school, and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, numbers 330 persons. Students in grades kindergarten through eight meet in private homes once a week. At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish, the Religious Education teachers give not only of their time, but also offer their homes to their young pupils. Thirty homes in the parish become centers for sharing and learning about Christ and His Church each week. The high school program meets at various times and in different places depending on the program planned. There are currently 60 pupils in the First Eucharist program and 45 in the First Penance program, both of which are Family Programs. The students are taught by their own parents, supported by the other members of their families and guided by Sr. Mary Kay toward readiness for the reception of these two sacraments. It is anticipated that in 1984, 40 young adults of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish will be confirmed. During the recent Lenten period, 30 members of the parish participated in the "Crossroads to Life" program, meeting in small groups in six host homes at various locations in the parish.

In January 1983, the first Parish Council election took place.

All these visible, tangible signs of growth are a source of joy and optimism and satisfaction for those who are involved in the life of this new parish. But the crowning of its first year as a new parish, growing toward



The outside of the church.



The Human Development building.

maturity, came at the Easter vigil service, when 12 persons were received into this faith community. Five catechumens were baptized, and they, together with seven candidates, were confirmed and received their First Eucharist as Catholics and members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish.

Certainly, committees are necessary and a parish council is basic. There must be structures and buildings, if people are to meet to worship, work and minister to the needs of others. But Jesus did not say, "Meet!" and Jesus did not say, "Build!" Jesus did say, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

NEXT WEEK: The spirit of ecumenism in Hamlin is manifested in the establishment of the "Interfaith Food and Clothing Center" and a community teen center.



The rectory.



Catechumens and candidates ... 12 new members.



The Education Building ... babysitting in progress.