

## At Our Lady of Lourdes

# Series of 'coincidences' develops school chapel from dream to reality

By Teresa A. Parsons

One small room has made a big difference in the daily routine at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Elmira.

Thanks to a dream and a host of what Sister Mary Maywalt calls "more than coincidences," the school now has its own chapel — a former storage room transformed by love, hard work and cooperation.

During a retreat this past summer, the dream took shape in the mind of Sister Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes' principal. She was inspired by reading about Jacob's dream in the Book of Genesis.

"My dream was to have a small chapel for the children," Sister Mary said, describing her vision of it as a colorful, comfortable place. "I thought it would help them to have a sense of God in simple ways, to be in touch with God all the time," she added.

When she returned to school, Sister Mary noticed the storage room across the hall from her office. After some reshuffling of supplies, the room seemed suited to her purpose, but it still looked like an empty storage room. She lacked a design and conceded that "Art is not one of my gifts."

At the same time Sister Mary was praying for divine design intervention, Sister Kay Nicosia was visiting Elmira and staying at Our Lady of Lourdes convent. Sister Mary asked Sister Kay, who is responsible for photography and graphic design in the diocesan Communications Department, to look at the room. Sister Mary's prayers were soon answered with a concept — bright striped curtains reminiscent of Joseph's Coat of Many Colors, rough, wood-paneled walls, a large wooden crate for an altar and two wooden benches amid a multitude of soft pillows for sitting on the floor. Blinds and subtle lighting add to a reflective atmosphere.

The panelling was found by Sister Mary's brother-in-law who knew a farmer with a saw mill. Ray Verschage and Len Daugherty, the school's maintenance man and janitor, installed the panelling, trusting to God rather than experience for the fine results.

Connie Hosker, a school parent, made the

curtains. Many other parents and benefactors contributed donations to the project. Children also donated money — usually the proceeds of chores done at home. In fact, thanks to generous help from all directions, Sister Mary said the whole project cost only about \$1,500.

Sister Mary ran into another contributor, Sister Judy Morgan, while taking a short vacation. The result was a floor-to-ceiling macrame plant hanger under which reposes "the prayer book." There children, teachers and parents can write intentions for others to share in prayer.

The chapel has more than fulfilled Sister Mary's expectations. "It helps them know how close God is," she explained. "It's a different experience of church than many (children) have known before."

One experience new to many children in grades three through six was small-group Masses, celebrated in the chapel during October by Father Fidelis Fosselman, pastor of St. Peter and Paul Church. More Masses are planned during December.

Teachers have also enjoyed the room, both for individual prayer and for faculty enrichment.

Not all of the chapel's uses are planned. At report card time, Sister Mary noticed that children, enroute to her office for individual interviews, were making an extra stop. "I looked across the hall, and they'd be over in the chapel," she said. "It's so touching to see them kneeling in there all alone."

Another student was inspired by the chapel's simple altar to make herself an altar at home for statues and other precious things.

"It's being talked about at home," Sister Mary said, terming that the highest possible praise.

Sister Mary noted one final "coincidence" during the Mass and procession that marked the chapel's official dedication in September. Oddly enough, the reading for that Mass was the same one that originally inspired her on retreat.

"I'm no holy roller," she said, "but this just seems too much to be coincidence. It's really from the hand of God."



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal  
(From left to right): Ziggy Olinski, Michael Overton, Mary Bridget Klantz, Christine Muscarella and Lisa Mullen take advantage of the new chapel by holding an impromptu gathering in its solitude.

### Financial Aid Seminar

Our Lady of Mercy High School will sponsor a seminar on obtaining financial aid for college Wednesday, Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m., at the school, for all Mercy and McQuaid parents.

Maureen Salfi, financial aid assistant at Niagara University, will present helpful hints about filling out financial aid forms, what claims should be made, who should submit forms and what types of aid are available.

### Excerpts from 'Godspell'

The Rochester Association of Performing Arts' Teen Players will present excerpts from "Godspell" at Midtown Plaza Friday, Nov. 29. The free performance begins at 1 p.m. on the mall's second level. At 11:30 a.m. and 2:15 p.m., the Children's Repertory Company will offer scenes from "Snow White Goes West."

## A leading cause of death in people over 65 is ... preventable.

A Message from Senator Tarky Lombardi, Chairman, New York State Senate Health Committee:

"Pneumococcal pneumonia is a dangerous and often fatal disease, especially among senior citizens and those with chronic illnesses. But it can be prevented through a simple inoculation."

"I urge all those over the age of 65, and those with chronic ailments, like diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, kidney or liver problems and sickle cell anemia, to contact your doctor for advice on receiving this vaccine."

Senator Lombardi, Governor Cuomo and medical organizations throughout New York State have joined in the battle against pneumonia.

The pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine is reimbursable under Medicare.

Contact your doctor for more information.

... A public service message from this newspaper and the Empire State Medical, Scientific and Educational Foundation, the New York Physicians Peer Review Organization.



## FEATURED HOMES OF THE WEEK



**MOTIVATED SELLER!**  
Spacious colonial on large wooded lot in Chili! Many custom features including 2 fireplaces - rec. room with skylights - low utility bills & much more. Special finance - see it today! Price reduced to 80's.



**DOUBLE POSSIBILITY**  
This Dewey Avenue home could be a double. It also has fabulous possibilities of being a great home with maintenance free living for any growing family.



Jean Herrera

**Century 21**  
HOME SPIRIT



Robert Malone

EAST 1945 East Ridge Rd. 467-3121  
WEST 2709 Chili Ave. 247-7700