

Melkite parish

Continued from Page 8

Vatican Council and the appointment of a Melkite archbishop for the United States.

Prior to the 1960s, the very existence of Melkite parishes depended on the discretion of local Roman Catholic bishops, some of whom had little interest and even less understanding of other traditions. Relations between Melkite parishes and their local dioceses began to stabilize after an apostolic exarchate (papal representative) was appointed for the Melkites in 1965.

In 1976, a Melkite eparchy or diocese was established for the United States with headquarters in Newton, Mass. Today, the eparchy includes nearly 50 Melkite parishes, serving an estimated 24,218 members scattered throughout 18 states.

The Second Vatican Council, in its "Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches," recognized such Catholic rites as those practiced by the Melkites, Armenians, Ukrainians and Chaldeans as "living witnesses" to the apostolic tradition. The decree further declared that Roman and Eastern rites were "of equal dignity" and challenged Eastern churches to recover their authentic liturgical, legal and spiritual traditions.

Many of the reforms that Vatican II wrought in the Roman Church had been matters of longstanding practice in the Melkite tradition. One instance was the celebration of liturgy in the vernacular. Arabic and Greek were the primary languages of the Melkites' Divine Liturgy as celebrated in the Middle East, explained Father Mark Melone, pastor at St. Nicholas.

But some Melkite churches in the United States began celebrating occasional Masses in English as early as the 1930s. In 1958, St. Nicholas became the first Catholic church in the Diocese of Rochester to formally adopt English as the language of the Mass.

"It was always our tradition to celebrate

the liturgy in the language of the people, wherever we found ourselves," Father Melone said.

Parish councils, a focus on the local church, and the renewal of devotion to the Holy Spirit were other areas in which the Eastern Rite foreshadowed changes of the Second Vatican Council.

Throughout the past 60 years, St. Nicholas has evolved from a congregation of immigrants to what Father Melone termed "an American church of the Eastern Rite." At the same time, he observed, the parish has been invigorated within the past decade by a surge of new immigrants from Lebanon, where the war between Christians and Moslems rages on.

Since the 1960s, St. Nicholas' parishioners have also heeded Vatican II's call to seek out and renew those authentic traditions that have lapsed over the years. Physical vestiges of Latinization that the church gradually absorbed over the years, such as altar railings, statues and kneelers in the pews, were removed. Such spiritual traditions of the Eastern Rite as the Jesus prayer, the writings of the Desert Fathers, and the use of icons for meditative prayer are also coming into wider practice in both Eastern and Roman rites.

A pontifical liturgy like the one that marked the parish's anniversary last month epitomizes what prayer in the Melkite tradition is meant to be — a transcending experience for body and soul. Inside the tiny church, one's senses are enraptured by icons and incense, the clatter of bells and the song of the chanters, the rustle of rich vestments and the sparkle of candlelight on jeweled crowns and crosses.

However, tradition is not preserved merely for its own sake, Father Melone pointed out. "We try to maintain our traditions, not just for the sake of doing something old, but because they are close to the apostolic tradition," he said.

Neighbors



Jerry Buckley, a senior editor for U.S. News and World Report, addressed members of the National Honor Society at Notre Dame High School in Elmira during an induction ceremony earlier this month. His topic was "Reading, Writing and Ignorance."

Twenty new members of the society are: seniors Mel Chapman and Michael Christie; juniors Jennifer Dewey and Anne Eppers; sophomores Elizabeth Bennett, R. Chad Chorney, Renuka Deshmukh, John Fagan, Danny Kung, Laurie Larson, Heather Leljedal, Niklas Mackler, Mary Margaret McWilliams, Kelly Murphy, Divya Narayanan, Maryn Nicholson, Tim Orcutt, Maura Rurak, Peter Snyder and Anthony Wang.

St. Philip Neri Women's Club has chosen Sue Gangarossa as May Queen this year. An active member of the parish and Women's Club for many years, Gangarossa presided over ceremonies in the church and a reception in the church hall on May 26.

Winners were announced last month in Christ the King School's annual Science Fair. First-place awards were presented to: eighth grade — Lisa Tymczyszyn, Courtney Weber and Katie Moriconi; seventh grade — Alice Wolpiuk; sixth grade — Lorraine Budnik.

Cardinal Mooney is one of several area schools that has recently reactivated its forensic league after a hiatus of many years.

Mooney students competed in five local tournaments this year, focusing on three categories: humorous interpretation, oral interpretation and Lincoln/Douglas debate.

Two debaters — seniors Ralph Messura and John Goselin — qualified for the New

York State Tournament last month. Goselin was the only entrant from the Rochester/Bufalo region to qualify for the finals.

Senior Mike Kautzky has also qualified for the National Catholic League Tournament, scheduled on Memorial Day weekend in Buffalo.

Judith Stewart coached this year's debate team members. Robert Smyth coached speech entries.

St. Leo's Council 9641 of the Knights of Columbus has established a scholarship fund this year for graduating seniors who are members of the Hilton parish.

Students who wish to participate this year are required to write an essay on the topic of "Catholic Contributions to America." For more information, contact St. Leo's parish office.

Richard F. Delmonte, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dominic Delmonte of Sacred Heart Parish, Auburn, was ordained to the permanent diaconate June 6 at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Hartford, Conn.

A graduate of St. Mary's and Holy Family schools in Auburn, Delmonte is employed by the Pratt-Whitney Corp. He and his wife, Lorraine, have three sons.

Robert Moldoch's essay on fire prevention has earned first place in a contest sponsored throughout western New York by the Volunteer Firemen's Association. Members of the association presented him with a trophy at a special assembly this month.

A seventh-grade student at St. John of Rochester School in Fairport, Robert is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanly Moldoch.

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General

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THANKS St. Jude, Blessed Mother and Sacred Heart of Jesus for favors received. M.M.

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