

Singers

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at the Seneca Army Depot, she and Tony Rowe met through the group and married in 1979. Meanwhile, Tony's brother, Joseph, joined the group early on as the sound man, monitoring the sound system while the group is singing — an important task, since each of the singers wears a separate microphone and, due to the nature of the music they sing, each of the voices must be kept in balance.

Parsons was the last member to join. Also a graduate of Hobart, he and Tony Rowe had been friends for years. As the group developed, he began to assist with moving and setting up the equipment. Eventually, he expressed an interest in singing three years ago, and successfully auditioned.

Father Eugene Emo, pastor of St. Januarius Parish, first encountered the group during the five years he was stationed at St. Francis DeSales. "They were a very professional group when I got there (in 1982)," he said. "They have evolved to, in terms of repertoire, almost to a professional level."

Three years ago, the group adopted its current name. "I've developed a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart," Tony Rowe explained, noting that he and his wife had even married on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. "I wanted (the group) to be something specifically to honor (Jesus)."

In the process of gelling as a group, the members of the Sacred Heart Singers also have discovered themselves growing spiritually. Lawlor, for example, had been away from the church for a while when she first joined the group. "It's been a tremendous growth," she said. "I feel closer to

God through the music we're doing. The only reason I have come as far as I have has been through prayer."

Puls remarked that "it's hard not to turn your eyes to Jesus when you're singing that complex music. You're looking at the words when you practice them over and over. It's almost like a litany. The whole practice is a prayer."

Raised as an Episcopalian, Parsons, meanwhile, converted to Catholicism in 1981. He had earned a degree in religion at Hobart, and had long enjoyed religious music. Through the group, he discovered a way to communicate his sense of the spiritual to others. "You think back to King David who used to play for King Saul," he commented. "The psalms gave comfort to the people." In the same way today, he added, "music helps the Mass. It helps people spiritually."

Last year, the group left St. Francis DeSales to pursue a new ministry: bringing music to parishes that might have little or

no music for weekend liturgies. "It's going to where there's a need," Tony Rowe said. "It's really wherever He wants us to go."

The response to the group has been positive, Tony Rowe said. The singers have played at nine different parishes, a number of them several times, and on a monthly basis for the Medjugorje services at Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua. Father Emo reported that at St. Januarius, where the group has played repeatedly, "people have asked when they are coming again. Some people have come to Mass twice (on one weekend) just to hear them."

Meanwhile, a businessman in Auburn was so impressed by the singers that he has taped them and is trying to arrange for them to sing at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

"I'd be just as happy playing at St. Isaac Jogues (in Fleming, where the group will be for Easter)," Tony Rowe commented about the proposal. "It's wherever (God) decides. If he wants us to go to St. Patrick's, we'll go."

This decision was carried out efficiently, and the seminary property, turned over to the diocese, was sold to Eastman Kodak. I thus had to bid farewell to what had been my residence and workplace since 1938! Fortunately, the small graduate theology department was preserved. Taking the name St. Bernard's Institute, it became that same year an independent affiliate of the Colgate Rochester cluster on South Goodman Street. Flourishing in its new form, it has won recognition as fulfilling a real need.

Rochester Catholics were saddened, of course, to see the end of the St. Bernard's Seminary they had known, but they also had reason to rejoice at what their support had achieved throughout the years. Between 1893 and 1981 the seminary had trained 2,700 men who had become ordained priests. Most of the Rochester diocesan clergy had studied at St. Bernard's, although a major percentage of the alumni were from other dioceses, not only in the northeast but across the country, and from Canada, Cuba, South America, the Philippines, Asia and Africa as well.

Some 70 priest graduates were members of religious orders. Thus far, 25 alumni have been consecrated bishops, of whom three have become archbishops. Of the 2,000 other former students — sisters, laymen and laywomen — many have reflected great credit on their alma mater.

St. Anne's

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Getting on with that transition is the hope of Arthur J. Delman, a parish council member who supported the school closing. Referring to Monsignor Roche, he said: "The last thing that man wants is to put a lock on the (school) door." Delman referred to Monsignor Roche's experience as diocesan superintendent of schools, from 1959-69, as proof of the pastor's sincere support of the parish school.

Support for the school and support for Monsignor Roche should be two separate issues, according to Peter Blaszkow, a parish council member who abstained from voting on Feb. 13. Blaszkow said the issue of Monsignor Roche's personality and administrative style have merged with the question of the school closing, a mix that should've never occurred. Although he supports keeping the school open another year, he remarked that a vote to keep the school open would have been seen "as a vote against Monsignor Roche."

Monsignor Roche could not be reached for comment.

He and members of the parish council and school board will meet with Father John Mulligan, moderator of the diocesan Pastoral Office, on Monday, March 27, in a closed meeting at St. Anne's. Powell said the meeting will focus on the process by which the school was closed.

School principal Robert J. Edelman said he has been assured by Father Mulligan that the school closing decision is final, and that no chance exists for the school to reopen next year.

Catholic Courier

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