

Tradition, innovation sit side-by-side at St. John's

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The last 10 months have been an exercise in learning for parishioners at St. John the Evangelist.

For the first three Sundays of each month, the parish bulletin included quizzes about various church-related facts. Then, on the fourth Sunday of the month, the Humboldt Street congregation turned in its answers, which were collected for a prize drawing.

Winners received gift certificates from advertisers in the church bulletin, noted Maggie Cavalier, a member of the education subcommittee of the parish's 75th anniversary committee. Cavalier noted that she and her fellow committee members strived to make the quizzes fun for children and adults.

"One of the first ones we did was on the seven sacraments," she said. "We put it in a word-search format, so the kids could participate."

The trivia questions have been popular with young and old parishioners alike, remarked Andrew Melnyk, education subcommittee chairman. He added that one quiz asked contestants to match priests' greetings from the old Latin Mass with the congregation's responses. "A few elderly members of the parish mentioned to me that they enjoyed it," he commented. The old and the new mix well at St. John the Evangelist, where 1,600 families embody the devoutness of pre-Vatican II Catholicism with the freshness of post-Vatican II reforms.

Linda Seitz, co-chairwoman of the social subcommittee, credited the parish's diversity with influencing her decision to convert to Catholicism nine years ago. Her family had joined the parish six years ear-

lier.

Seitz was impressed with the diverse forms of worship within the parish. "I never knew a Catholic church could be so vital," she said.

Seitz also remarked that St. John's charismatic Catholics mix easily with more traditional parishioners. "(There were) people with their hands up ... Right next to these people, you'd hear the banging of the rosary in the pews," she said. "These people were together and accepted each other."

Alice Hauser, a parishioner for 51 years, is one of those who prays the rosary at Mass. About six years ago, Hauser and her late husband, Charles, formed a rosary group at the parish.

"We hadn't had the rosary here for a number of years," Hauser said. "When my husband and I approached Father Peter (Clifford) about having a group, he said, 'Certainly, certainly, yes, go ahead.'"

Currently, 15 to 20 parishioners meet on Wednesday evenings in the chapel to recite the rosary, she said, crediting the group's success to the encouragement of Father Clifford, and his co-pastor, Father Kevin Murphy.

Pointing out that some other parishes don't offer rosary groups, Hauser said, "(Our co-pastors) will listen to you. They don't stand in judgment ... If you want to be conservative, you can be conservative."

Father Clifford remarked that the parish has a history of promoting diversity of worship. At the 11 a.m. Mass, for example, an organist leads the parish choir in a formal celebration that draws older parishioners. On the other hand, many young families prefer the 9:30 a.m. folk music service, the priest said.

Seitz met most of her new friends at the mid-morning folk Mass. "I think it's natural for families to gravitate towards families," she remarked. "We only knew people who went to the 9:30 Mass who had screaming, misbehaving children, and a lot of other people avoided that Mass."

The various age groups within the parish came together at the parish's anniversary picnic last July in Ellison Park. The picnic featured a disc jockey spinning modern tunes alongside a calliope — an old-fashioned instrument whose keyboard operates a series of steam whistles.

Meanwhile, parish teenagers dressed as clowns entertained picnic-goers throughout the day. "The various elements worked together and joined in the celebration," Seitz said.

Bringing some of that festive spirit to invalid Catholics is the job of St. John's eucharistic team ministry. Four teams of four to six parishioners visit nursing homes once a month to distribute the Eucharist.



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

St. John The Evangelist Parish in Rochester celebrated its 75th anniversary this year with a special Mass on Sunday, Sept. 17, at which Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided. Top, Father Kevin Murphy (right), St. John's co-pastor, baptizes four-month-old John Richard Feola Jr. in the church's new baptismal font as the infant's family and godparents look on. Right, Judy Calamia gives her son Matthew to Bishop Clark to be baptized. Left, Father Clifford, Bishop Clark and Father Murphy celebrate Mass.

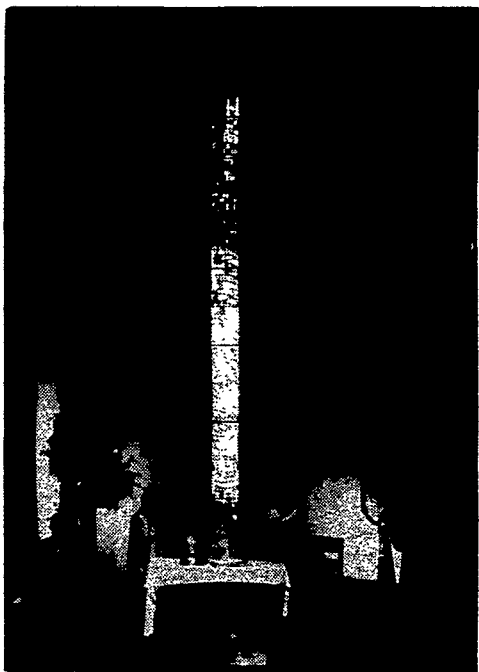


Hauser, who travels to the Blossom Health Care Center on Blossom Road, said the residents welcome the ministers, who also drop in at the Beechwood Nursing Home on Culver Road. "There are many (residents) who have no one to visit them," she said, adding that after receiving the Eucharist, the residents like to talk for

several minutes with the team members. "There's one man there who plays the mouth organ (harmonica), and he wants to play it every time we visit his room."

As Hauser brings the body of Christ to those in their twilight years, Jim and Judy Calamia prepare couples to bring their

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