

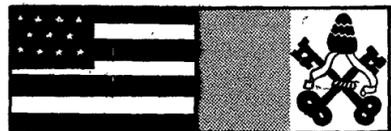
Warmth of communities helped melt ice storm's chill

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Father Robert C. MacNamara, pastor of St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport, invited me to substitute for him from Feb. 21 to March 6. It turned out to be an enlightening two weeks.

My experiences began with the Thursday morning funeral of Father Patrick O'Malley at Holy Cross Church in Rochester. In the afternoon, I reported to Father Donald E. McCarthy, CSB, parochial vicar, for the 5:30 p.m. Mass.

More than one hundred people attended the Mass, which was the third celebration that day. Each celebration was equally well attended. After Mass I settled into Father MacNamara's quarters, which is full of wonderful books. The marvelous supply



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

includes works about the time period of St. John of Rochester, St. Thomas More, and King Henry VIII.

The church, which seats nearly 1,000 people, which combines the auditorium effect of most modern churches with the visibility of the tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament. Bordering the church is the chapel, which seats about 50 people.

The Blessed Sacrament — which is

available for adoration 24 hours each day — is encased in the traditional sunburst monstrance.

I have never seen a more vibrant Catholic community than St. John of Rochester. Father McCarthy gave me the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday. I noticed at one point that the congregation's response became very faint near the back of the church so I asked, "Are you supposed to sing or is this a solo?"

It turned out that the hymn was unfamiliar to many in the congregation, but they boomed out more familiar hymns. The parish has a fine choir and folk group.

At the invitation of the young adult group, Bishop Matthew H. Clark visited the parish on Feb. 27. The forum dealt with the question, "Why be Catholic?" With the exception of a few questions, the program wasn't very exciting to me. The fact that 150 young people attended the forum was a good sign.

Beautiful, balmy weather abounded the second weekend of my visit. Then came Sunday night!! A freezing rain fell, icing tree branches and telephone wires all over the area. The ice broke branches, felled large trees and toppled power and telephone wires. More than 300,000 homes in the Rochester area — including our rectory — were without heat, electricity and telephones. And great stretches of that part of the diocese suffered throughout the week.

Monday unfurled a "beautiful" disaster to behold. The ice on some of the branches was a half-inch thick. Although the devastation was tragic, the trees that survived the storm looked beautiful. Beautifully iced trees, however, do not give comfort to places without heat or light. Many schools, businesses and factories closed for several days. And thousands of people had to seek warmth in shelters throughout the area.

I hit the jackpot. Father McCarthy belongs to the St. John Fisher College faculty community on East Avenue, direct-

ly opposite Maplewood Inn. "Let's go to the Basilians for a hot meal," he said around 5 p.m. that day. So we did just that, and the fathers invited me to stay as their guest for the duration.

I have always been grateful to the Basilians for their fine work at Aquinas Institute and St. John Fisher College. They have long continued to give sundry sacerdotal assistance to many parishes. I always feel very humble before scholars, and I was quite in awe to be in the company of such learned men. Their cordiality made my stay a delight.

An added joy was being with Brother Martin, who along with Father Stephen Mbugua — he lives in residence at St. Catherine's Church in Mendon — became "adopted nephews" of mine when they arrived from Kenya three years ago.

Both men will return to Africa in July. The local church should be grateful to St. John Fisher for providing tuition for them; to the Basilians for providing lodging and food under ideal conditions; and to several area people who have helped these good men. Consider how the training of these men will enhance the church in Africa.

During the two weeks I met with many fine priests in the area and experienced the dynamic spiritual devotion of the people at St. John of Rochester. After leaving Fairport and the Basilians, I spent a day at St. Cecilia's Church, Irondequoit, and another day at Holy Trinity Church, Webster.

I am grateful to Father MacNamara for his invitation to serve at the parish, which was founded 30 years ago by Father John LeVeque. Father Vincent Collins helped develop a strong community in the church's early days. Father Bernard Dollen continued that legacy, and now the community is led by the scholarly Father MacNamara.

Formerly of Hornell and Corning, Father MacNamara is one of the kindest men I know. And I am grateful to the parishioners who edified my soul greatly.

Christ's passion offers promise of the eternal joys Easter brings

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 14:1-15:47; (R1) Isaiah 50:4-7; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

All the readings of Passion Sunday naturally refer to the passion, sufferings and death of Jesus. At the same time, the readings also speak of the ultimate triumph of Jesus — the palm of victory over death or Palm Sunday.

Philip, the deacon, obeyed when he was told by an angel to go to the Gaza road. There, he accosted an Ethiopian eunuch, the treasurer of the queen of the Ethiopians. As Philip neared the official's chariot, he heard the eunuch reading the fourth servant song from the prophet Isaiah (Sunday's first reading is the third servant song from Isaiah). Philip explained that the servant Isaiah was speaking about was Jesus (Acts 8:23-35).

In the first reading, Isaiah foretells that God's servant will be beaten, buffeted and spit upon. But the servant will not run away. Rather with flint-like determination, he will face his persecutors, knowing that in the end he will not be put to shame.

The Responsorial Psalm describes how the servant will be scorned by words and gestures. Regardless, he will praise God and proclaim his name.

Paul speaks of his death on a cross, but in the same passage he tells of his glorious exaltation (R2).

Finally, the Gospel describes his passion and death. The Marcan Gospel, as someone said, is simply a passion narrative with a long introduction. Mark's Gospel is just 16 chapters long, divided neatly into two parts. The first part (Chapters 1-8:26) emphasizes the miracles of Jesus and climaxes in Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah.

The second part emphasizes Jesus' teaching that both the Messiah and his disciples must suffer grievously to effect the triumph of God's cause, and climaxes in the confession of the centurion: "This man was really the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

When our Blessed Lord showed St. Margaret Mary his heart in 1674, it was



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

surmounted by a cross. Margaret Mary said the cross signified that from the first instance of the Incarnation, that is, as soon as the Sacred Heart was formed, the cross was implanted into it. And it was filled with all the sorrow inflicted on it by the humiliations, poverty, pain and scorn his sacred humanity was to endure throughout his life and during his sacred passion.

Jesus knew from the start what awaited him. On the road to Jerusalem for his death, he announced three times that he would suffer, die and then rise on the third day. The apostles were so overwhelmed by the thought of his death that they never seemed to have heard that he also spoke of resurrection.

The Passion begins after the agony of Jesus in the garden with his being "handed over" by Judas to the soldiers (Mark 14:11); and it ends on the cross with his "handing over" his spirit to the church (Jn. 19:30).

Christ suffered on the cross, not because suffering is in itself a value, but because love without restraint requires suffering. What is redemptive in Jesus' sufferings is not his physical death, but the love of Jesus even unto death on a cross. His death reveals how great his love is for us. His love is redemptive and victorious over suffering and death.

So, we must remember that if we bear the crosses of our daily life by lovingly accepting them as Jesus did his, these too will atone for our sins, convert sinners and help the souls in purgatory.

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