

BLACK
CATHOLIC
REVIVAL
JULY 22, 23, 24
ALL ARE WELCOME



Mary Greely Miller and her son, Isaac, were among the 300 people who attended the final night of the Black Catholic Revival July 24.



Father John Judie came down from his pulpit to preach to the people during the three-day revival at St. Augustine's Church in Rochester.



Father Bob Werth (left), pastor of St. Bridget's Church, embraces Will Butts, a member of Newark Church of God, during the last night of the revival.

Priest fires up faithful

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When Father John Judie approaches the pulpit to preach, his soul ticks like a bomb waiting to detonate.

"The power of the Word can excite someone to the point where they want to explode forth," asserted the Louisville, Ky., priest who led last week's three-day Black Catholic Revival.

The revival took place at St. Augustine's Church, 410 Chili Ave., the evenings of Monday, July 22, through Wednesday, July 24. It was sponsored by eight Catholic parishes in the city and the diocesan Office of Black Ministries.

Father Judie's rhythmic preaching sounded more like the style found in certain black Pentecostal or Baptist churches than the delivery of the average Catholic priest. During a July 24 interview with the *Catholic Courier* the New Orleans-born cleric noted a definite purpose underlies his dramatic tone.

"Regardless of how we are taught to act and behave in church, we all experience a hunger and need for spiritual nourish-

ment," Father Judie said. "I find that many people — regardless of culture or race — hunger for the same experience."

That observation points to a continuing theme of Father Judie's revivalist ministry, which he conducts at both Catholic and Protestant churches throughout the country. Although his preaching style suggests an orientation toward African-American Christians, the priest maintained that anyone looking to experience the emotional meaning of Scripture can enjoy revivalist preaching — even those who have never dared to respond "Amen!" when their pastor's point rang true.

"What I'm trying to say is you really should be fed like this in your own Catholic church," Father Judie commented. "My point is that no one style of worship will suit everyone's needs."

Indeed, the revivalist acknowledged that the quiet, reflective atmosphere characteristic of most Catholic worship is just as valuable a form of praising God as the more expressive style found at the Black Catholic Revival.

"The challenge is to provide enough variety of worship experience to suit the needs of everyone," he said.

The racially integrated congregations that greeted Father Judie during his revival here supports his belief that a desire for emotional worship transcends boundaries of culture or color. The revival's rousing gospel music and upbeat homilies attracted as many or more white Catholics as black. Overall attendance for the event was nearly 1,000 people over the three nights.

The revival spirit took hold of Father Robert T. Werth during the July 24 session. Father Werth, pastor of St. Bridget's Parish, offered a reflection on the revival's success and urged the congregation to carry its effects into the following weeks.

"I hope that this revival has given us more courage," Father Werth told the congregation. "We don't have to be defensive about Jesus. We don't have to be defensive about his message."



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Malcolm Hall helps his grandmother, Delaine Hall, hold a candle during the conclusion of the July 24 service.

He also speculated aloud about the possibilities for post-revival cooperation among the sponsoring parishes.

"Why is it that the eight parishes that can come and do it for the revival can't do it at any other time?" he asked, drawing applause from the pews. He urged revival participants to attend each other's churches at least once a month in an effort to break down barriers between the parishes.

In one of his talks, Father Judie emphasized a similar theme. He urged participants to experience the revival beyond the immediate excitement it generated and to let others know about the Gospel.

"It's not all about coming together to church and hooting and hollering if it doesn't mean anything," Father Judie

said. "We can do all kinds of things in the church, but like I said last night, we've got to let the church get into us."

One congregation member echoed the revivalist's sentiments.

St. Bridget's parishioner Juliet Anderson said she attended all three nights of the revival, and liked the change of pace offered by the revival's style of worship. She particularly enjoyed a moment when congregation members took turns standing up to "testify" about the Lord's action in their lives.

"People should get up openly and tell what's on their mind," Anderson said. "When I was young, we used to get so bored (at Mass) we used to clean our purses."



Myra Humphrey, a parishioner of St. Bridget's in Rochester and a member of the Revival Mass Choir, reacts to the lyrics during a hymn.