

# Shrine promotes devotion to Mary

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

GREECE — Many homeowners dream of installing pools or patios in their yards.

Jack Shea decided to remove the pool from his 237 Rye Road property eight or nine years ago because it was getting in the way.

"I thought it was more appropriate to use the space for honoring Our Lady," Shea said.

The parishioner of St. John the Evangelist Church, 2400 Ridge Road W., removed the pool to help make room for the 200 or so people who have biannually attended the rosary and prayer service at the "Wooded Area Shrine" he constructed.

The shrine features statues of Jesus and Mary, surrounded by shrubs and flowers and stones that are shaded beneath trees.

Shea invites people to come pray at his shrine on the Feast of the Sacred Heart (June 26) and the Feast of the Birth of Mary (Sept. 8) each year. In addition to the rosary, the services offer litanies, prayers and talks by priests.

The goal of the services, Shea said, is to share his devotion to both the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Blessed Mother.

sed Mother.

"It's just a labor of love," Shea said. His "labor of love" began back in the 1950s, Shea recalled.

He and his wife, Peggy, were married July 5, 1952, and later purchased their home on Rye Road where they raised their five children.

Shea said he regularly attended Sunday Mass during the early years of his marriage, but after about five years began to think of attending daily Mass.

He hesitated to do so, however, because, "in those days, people didn't do that. I felt kind of self-conscious."

But he did try to get to daily Mass during Lent, when he learned that a fellow parishioner — whom he greatly admired — was attending daily Mass even outside of Lent.

"I was motivated to try," Shea said, noting that he has been able to do so since his early 30s. "I feel blessed our Lord has enabled me to do that."

Shea read about Our Lady of Fatima during that Lent more than 30 years ago, moving him to begin saying the rosary daily. In addition to joining the Blue Army and the Carmelite Lay Order, he began attending different rosary meetings.

He also became inspired to build a shrine in his yard.

"I just had a feeling I wanted to get



Aris Economopoulos/Photo intern Rita Christensen (left) of St. Cecilia's Parish and Fran Leonardo of Christ the King were among the 200 people who attended the outdoor rosary.



These marble statues were imported from Italy for the shrine.

a statue to honor the Sacred Heart," Shea observed.

So approximately 30 years ago, he ordered a Carrara marble statue of Jesus from Italy. He began constructing the venue for the statue, collecting and even cutting stones from his own yard, and planting flowers and shrubs.

The statue arrived several months after it was ordered, and Shea installed it in the shrine. Approximately 12 years ago, he installed the Carrara marble statue of the Blessed Mother.

"Later on, I heard that Our Lord wanted us to give honor to Our Blessed Mother, too, so I felt good about that," Shea said.

The family began to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart at the shrine after it was built. Friends and relatives started to attend as well.

Gradually, the number of people attending grew as news of the service spread by word-of-mouth, Shea said. The numbers exploded about 15 years ago when approximately 200 people began attending, prompting him to remove the pool he had installed in 1969 to accommodate more worshippers.

Shea explained that he became motivated to offer the services because of Our Lady's request at Fatima for people to say the rosary.

"I believe firmly in her call for us to say the rosary," he said.

He is currently preparing the site for a second shrine — one for St. Joseph — in his yard. He has already received the statue for the shrine, which will be ready by the time people arrive for the 7 p.m. service Sept. 8, Shea predicted.


Although he built the shrine and organized the services, Shea said he is not seeking praise for what he has done.

"I don't want to draw attention to myself," he said. "I just do this to promote devotion to the the Lord and the Blessed Mother."



Michael McPadden (left) embraces his mother, Gail, June 26 during the biannual rosary service at the Greece home of Jack Shea.

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