

Parishes find varied ways to ready for Easter

Events educate, inspire faithful

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

Each year during the days leading up to Easter, many parishes plan a variety of special activities — missions, Stations of the Cross, Seder suppers, and collections for the needy through such means as the Lenten Breadbox project or Operation Rice Bowl.

Some parishes, however, add a few twists to their Lenten observances.

At St. Bridget/St. Joseph Church, 15 Church St., East Bloomfield, for example, parishioners collected for the needy — with the help of Easter eggs.

On March 20-21, parishioners selected hollow eggs from a basket in the back of the church. Inside each egg was the name of an area needy child. On Palm Sunday, parishioners donated such children's gifts as summer clothing and toys, supplies and books.

Sixteen-year-old Amy Dredger, youth representative on the parish's Social Ministry Committee, came up with the idea for the collection. As a committee member — and as part of her confirmation program — Dredger took part in the annual Christmas basket program in 1992.

"All during Christmas season she was talking about, 'How come we don't do anything outside the Christmas season, when the need goes throughout the year,'" recalled Rose Anne Dredger, Amy's mother.

So Amy organized the Easter egg program, Rose Anne noted, adding, "It's been a lot of fun, as well as having a good purpose."

Our Mother of Sorrows Church, 5000 Mt. Read Blvd., Rochester, also incorporated "fun" into its Lenten activities — in the form of fun house mirrors.

Mirrors were placed near the church's sacristy. The first mirror made people seem taller; the second made them look shorter. The current mirror is a two-way glass featuring a painting of Jesus' face.

"We were trying to use Lent as a mirror to try to get people to focus on their distorted images of themselves," explained Father David J. Faraone, the church's parochial vicar.

Father Faraone said the mirrors have conveyed such themes as "give me new life through your image," and "help me to see myself through your eyes." These themes have been incorporated into the weekly homilies as



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Jennifer Gruttaduria peers at an image of Jesus painted on a two-way mirror at Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Greece. The mirror, located near the sacristy, was one of several fun house mirrors the parish used during Lent to help people focus on their distorted images of themselves.

well. Parishioners each week also received paper frames with the week's theme printed on them. Parishioners were asked to put the frames on their mirrors at home to serve as reminders throughout Lent.

St. Monica Church, 831 Genesee St., is another parish sending its members home with reminders.

On the first Sunday of Lent, parishioners received small bags of dirt. In subsequent weeks they received cups, watering directions and flower seeds. This Easter Sunday they will bring in the flowers and place them in the sanctuary around the "resurrection tree."

The goal is to symbolize that parishioners "have been through a spiritual journey and it's brought new life in Jesus Christ," observed Joseph "Fitz" Glasgow, parish visitor at St. Monica Parish and the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, of which the parish is part.

Victor's St. Patrick Church also has a "progressive" effort underway. Children in some of the parish's religious education classes made paper footprints. At the beginning of Lent, some of the footprints were placed below the first Station of the Cross inside the church. As each week passed, footprints were added under more of the stations. By Good Friday, the footprints will reach the last station.

"The theme that we're doing this year is following Jesus," noted Deacon

Stephen Carroll, the parish's director of religious education. "The footprints are signs of us being on a journey."

Most of the footprints follow the direction of the stations around the church. But some are going in the opposite direction.

"Anywhere along the journey as we get closer to the cross, there are some of us who want to go no further," Deacon Carroll explained.

While some of these parish activities continue throughout Lent, others are limited to the end of the season, or to Good Friday.

Eighth-grade students at Seton Catholic School, for example, will be performing a "Passion mime" at 8 p.m. Good Friday at Rochester's Our Lady of Lourdes Church, located at Imperial and Rhinecliff drives.

The performance includes narration,

music and pantomime. Students will all wear black clothing and paint their faces white — except for the student playing Jesus, who will be wearing a Superman shirt and red suspenders.

Mary Wilson introduced the performance four years ago when her daughter, Mary Elizabeth, was in the school's eighth grade.

"The kids need an outlet to put into their own feelings what would happen if (the Passion) happened today," Wilson explained.

But beyond attempting to make the Passion contemporary and understandable for children, the performances have helped to bring home Christ's sacrifice to the parish's adult members, Wilson said.

"I've had people say to me, 'For years I've done the Stations of the Cross and gone to this service and that service, and I've never come away with a truer feeling for what happened than I did after the Passion mime,'" Wilson said.

While the performances at Our Lady of Lourdes have already begun to become a tradition, parishioners at Elmira's St. Patrick Church will call on an old tradition this Good Friday.

The parish, located at 604 Park Place, will hold an office of Tenebrae at 7:30 p.m. Good Friday evening. The devotion includes successively extinguishing candles as Scripture passages are read. Finally, the paschal candle will be removed to symbolize Christ's death, and a sound will be heard representing the tomb's closing.

"It offers something else to broaden your experience of Good Friday," said Arlene Siconolfi, the parish's liturgical coordinator. "It's a way of making Good Friday more alive for people."

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