

Church restored to original beauty

Low-key efforts helped fund work

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1059 Joseph Ave., will mark the fruition of extensive renovation to their church's interior with an 11 a.m. Mass of Celebration on Sunday, May 23.

When the parish gathers for the celebration, the church's interior will boast repainted Stations of the Cross and statues; a new baptismal font; new carpeting around the altar and in the aisles; new varnish on the floor space beneath the pews and the pews themselves; marbleized columns; and improved church lighting.

In addition to that work, six murals depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary's life have been reinstalled on the wall behind the altar. Originally part of the church's interior, the murals have sat in storage for 25 years.

The renovation work also included the construction of a new confessional and the church's pipe organ has been repainted gold.

Former and current parishioners pledged \$105,000 toward the refurbishing work, according to Wendel B. Kleehammer, the renovation committee's co-chairman. The parish has received \$102,000 of the pledged funds already, he added.

Renovations to the church, which was built in 1925, focused on restoring the edifice's original beauty, according to Father Neil R. Miller, pastor. The priest noted that most of the church's interior had been painted a solid gold color in the 1960s, rendering its ornate decorative features unimpressive.

"The church wasn't built to be simple and plain, and to do that to this church destroyed the beauty of the



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Father Neil R. Miller, pastor of Rochester's Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, stands underneath some scaffolding set up over the church's altar. Parishioners donated \$105,000 for renovations to the church.

church," Father Miller observed.

The parish hired a consultant, Russ Vacanti of Buffalo, who suggested color patterns on the church's decorative features that were coordinated with the color patterns of its stained-glass windows, Father Miller said.

Swiatek and Sons, a painting company, also located in Buffalo, subsequently painted the various features using Vacanti's recommendations.

After the inner-city parish decided to take up the renovation effort in July 1992, a low-key fundraising drive began in September, Kleehammer said. The actual renovation work started in February, according to Father Miller.

Renovating the church has long been a parishioners' dream, Father Miller explained. He and Kleehammer pointed out that Our Lady of Perpetual

Help Parish draws most of its 450 families from the surrounding low-income neighborhood, making the project's financial success even more meaningful.

"We did not make one phone call to a parishioner," Kleehammer said of the committee's fundraising drive. "We received no major gifts at all — not a gift bigger than \$2,000."

"The committee thought they'd be lucky if they raised \$50,000, or \$70,000," he continued. But after parishioners heard about the drive, committee members received even more than their original goal of \$100,000 which they did not expect to raise.

"When you think of \$102,000 and you know the neighborhood, it gives them credit," Kleehammer said of OLPH parishioners.

Bishop will speak at Fisher graduation

PITTSFORD — Bishop Matthew H. Clark is scheduled to deliver the keynote address at St. John Fisher College's commencement on Saturday, May 22.

The graduation ceremony is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. in the Student Life Center at the college, 3690 East Ave. Prior to his address, Bishop Clark will be presented with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree.

Approximately 575 undergraduate and master's candidates are scheduled to receive degrees.

Also included on the day's agenda will be a baccalaureate Mass at 9 a.m. in the Student Life Center, and a trustees' luncheon at 1 p.m. in the college's Elaine P. Wilson Formal Lounge.

By having the baccalaureate Mass and commencement on the same day, the 45-year-old college is reviving a practice it hadn't observed in approximately 30 years.

Holy Land is seminar topic

Father Thomas Rosica, CSB, will present "The Holy Land — The Fifth Gospel," a seminar for priests, in Albany May 20. The presentation is part of a 10-city tour sponsored by the Israel Government Tourist Office.

A Rochester native who currently lives and works in Jerusalem, Father Rosica will share reflections on how familiarity with the Holy Land can enhance one's understanding of the Gospels.

Father Rosica's touring seminar also will visit Boston, Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., May 13-21.

The Albany seminar is slated to begin at 6 p.m. at the Albany Marriott, 189 Wolf Road.

For information on the seminar, call 518/458-8444.

Regional Synods slated throughout diocese on May 22

ROCHESTER — Synod officials are gearing up for the second set of 11 regional gatherings in preparation for the Rochester diocese's Seventh General Synod in October.

The Regional Synods are scheduled for various venues around the diocese on May 22, when delegates will consider and prioritize recommendations made during parish Synod gatherings held during the weeks of Feb. 28, March 7 and 14.

Those parish sessions focused on Synod themes four through six: meeting the needs of youths, young adults and the elderly; promoting faith development and evangelization; combating racism sexism, poverty, unemployment and the lack of affordable housing and health care.

According to Father Joseph A. Hart, synod director, the upcoming Regional Synods will be similar to those held in December and January except for the snow, he quipped.

A December snowstorm forced the rescheduling of several sessions originally slated for Dec. 12. Those sessions were eventually held in January.

Barring snow, delegates for the upcoming Regional Synods — comprising the same representatives who took part in the regional sessions during the winter — will sort through the recommendations made by Parish Synod participants on themes four through six. The regional delegates will then determine not only which recom-

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mendations should receive priority, but which can be accomplished at a diocesan level in light of practical and canonical limitations.

"People have the right to make recommendations about changes in wording," Father Hart said about the Regional Synods. He added, however, that based on what happened with the recommendations from the first Regional Synods, "It's not an awful lot of changes."

Once delegates at the Regional Synods complete their work, the recommendations will go to writing committees before they are sent on to the agenda committee for final approval in preparation for the General Synod, scheduled for Oct. 1-3.

During the General Synod, delegates — the same representatives who took part in the Regional Synods — will

vote on recommendations. Once approved by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, those recommendations will guide diocesan priorities and programs in the coming years, Father Hart said.

Sites for the May 22 Regional Synods are: Church of Christ the King, 445 Kings Hwy. S.; Holy Cross School, 4488 Lake Ave.; St. Helen School, 310 Hinchey Road; Good Shepherd Church, 3318 E. Henrietta Road; St.

Joseph Church, 43 Gebhardt Road, Penfield; St. Mary Church, 13 North St., Geneseo; St. Mary Church, 32 E. Morris St., Bath; St. Alphonsus Church, 95 E. Genesee St., Auburn; St. Mary of the Lake Church, 901 N. Decatur St., Watkins Glen; Immaculate Conception School, 320 W. Buffalo St., Ithaca; and St. Mary School, 16 Gibson St., Canandaigua.

— Lee Strong

Anti-Catholic book stirs campus

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

BROCKPORT — A comic book charging the Catholic Church with responsibility for the Holocaust — and with planning similar atrocities in the United States — has stirred controversy at the State University of New York College at Brockport.

The comic book's contents and the student group responsible for distributing the literature were the subjects of a noontime open forum in the college's Student Union last week. The May 6 forum, which drew about 35 people, was sponsored by Brockport's RACE team — a group dealing with discrimination issues.

Following the forum, David Beyea, president of Brockport Bible Study, said he gave the comic book, produced

by Chick Publications of Chino, Calif., to a student he refused to identify. Beyea claims the student subsequently gave the comic book to the campus newspaper, *The Stylus*, without his permission. Excerpts from the comic book were then published in the newspaper's April 28 issue.

That edition also contained a letter from Father Joseph R. Catanise, co-chaplain of Newman Oratory of Brockport. In his letter, Father Catanise called for the expulsion of Beyea and his group from campus.

"Mr. Beyea is not a Christian, he is a bigot," Father Catanise wrote in his letter, which also complained that many people are dissuaded from "legitimate inquiry into other faiths" because "they can only see religious extremists such as Mr. Beyea or David

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