

St. Bridget's evangelizes over city's channel



Father Anthony Mugavero (far left) delivers his homily while being videotaped during an Oct. 31. Mass at St. Bridget's Church in Rochester. S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Amid the storefront church services, talk and cultural shows, and children's programming included in the standard fare on Rochester Community Television (Greater Rochester Cablevision's Channel 15), cable subscribers in the City of Rochester can also find a bastion of lively Catholic worship.

The public-access channel has been carrying the weekly Sunday Mass from St. Bridget's Church, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, since January. The one-hour Mass is currently broadcast from 5-6 p.m. on Sundays — though the liturgy shown is the one from the preceding Sunday.

The Mass' viewers enjoy not only the service, but also the Gospel music performed by St. Bridget's choir.

According to Father Anthony Mugavero, pastor, St. Bridget's decision to broadcast the Mass came after someone mentioned the city-funded community channel and suggested that the parish take advantage of it.

After parishioners contacted the

community television service, several took a training course provided by the service. The program went on the air Jan. 10.

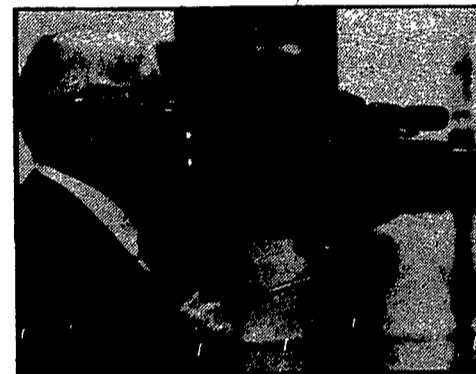
Parishioner Jack Barrows, who owns a video camera, became the service's chief cameraman. He films the 10:30 a.m. Mass each Sunday. During the subsequent week, Father Mugavero or one of the service-trained parishioners transfers the Mass from VHS tape to broadcast tape before editing the liturgy to the one-hour format carried on the channel.

Father Mugavero noted that the Mass has attracted a few people to the inner-city parish since it has hit the airwaves.

"It's kind of like an evangelization tool," the priest remarked.

Rose Barrows, Jack's wife and the parish's administrative assistant, likes the idea that the liturgy is a Gospel Mass. But this and other features also help to make the Mass a long one.

"It's a Gospel Mass, we have a regular Catholic Mass, we have the sign of peace — it goes well over an hour," Rose Barrows noted, adding that this is one of the reasons editing is needed.



Jack Barrows, a St. Bridget's parishioner for 12 years, keeps an eye on the action during the 10:30 a.m. liturgy. Videotaped Masses are broadcast the following Sunday from 5 to 6 p.m. on GRC channel 15 for City of Rochester subscribers.

Father Mugavero noted that the music — along with St. Bridget's longer homilies — enables the Mass to fit in with the other church services broadcast on the channel. "I think it serves a need for some people," he said.

In addition, these features help to set the service apart from the diocesan Mass carried at 7:30 a.m. Sundays on

Rochester's WHEC-TV (Channel 10), the pastor acknowledged. Plus, the time at which the St. Bridget's Mass is shown often works out better for people, he believes.

Father Mugavero added, however, that the time slot for St. Bridget's Mass changes every three months because individuals who produce programs for the community-access channel take part in a lottery to determine broadcast times. Consequently, in the past the Mass has also been offered on Thursdays and Mondays.

Parishioners are still learning how to video and produce the program. They are also limited in where they can put the camera because of the church's layout, Father Mugavero said. Some of the other groups' broadcasting religious services, he noted, "really have it down to a science."

Still, the effort has been worth it, and is a source of pride for the parish, the pastor observed.

"It's a wonderful community service," Father Mugavero said of the community channel. "To be honest, I wish other Catholic churches (in the city) would take advantage of it."

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TV Mass now available in Schuyler County area

WATKINS GLEN — For many Roman Catholics in Schuyler County who are unable to leave their homes, Sunday Mass can now be seen as well as heard.

The 10 a.m. Sunday Mass at Our Lady of the Lake Church, 901 N. Decatur St., can be seen twice weekly on local cable television. This service is videotaped and then shown at both 1 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. Wednesday on Channel 5, a public-access station operated by Finger Lakes Cablevision.

Broadcasts have aired regularly since September and can be seen by cable-television subscribers in Watkins Glen, Odessa, Montour Falls, Dix and Reading.

This marks the first time the 10 a.m. Mass has been available on TV. The service has also aired for several years on WFLR radio in Dundee.

In addition to the Mass, Our Lady of the Lake parishioner Robert Morin, who handles most of the production duties, tags on smaller segments to the broadcasts.

Morin has included Stephen Ministry training sessions and even a recent pet-blessing ceremony with the Mass video.

Father David L. Bonin, who serves as pastor at both Our Lady of the Lake and St. Benedict Church in Odessa, is already detecting a positive reaction to the telecasts.

"People have really been watching Mass, especially the shut-ins," remarked Father Bonin.

The pastor noted that the additional exposure can also be a positive influence for marginal Catholics.

"I think it can be outreach for people who have not come to Catholic services in a while," he said.

Father Bonin added that the television Mass has been so well-received that Our Lady of the Lake recently made a long-term commitment to the broadcasts by purchasing its own video equipment.

—Mike Latona