

Three Elmira churches face challenges as one

Parish Profile

Eastside Catholic Parish



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ELMIRA — Many of today's U.S. cities are experiencing tough economic times.

For the urban area encompassed by the Eastside Catholic Parish, however, economic changes occurred much more rapidly 21 1/2 years ago.

From June 20-23, 1972, a major flood wrought by Hurricane Agnes literally wiped out much of downtown Elmira. Hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed when the Chemung River swelled over its banks.

"The area became impoverished because many of the neighborhoods were just washed away," said Father Patrick L. Connor, who currently serves as the Elmira cluster's pastor.

Joyce Budney added that the economic recovery has been slow.

"We don't have major industries in Elmira to help us pull out of the economic disaster," she said.

Yet despite the flood's adverse aftereffects, along with two phases of clustering in recent years, the three-church Eastside Catholic Parish has retained its longstanding vitality and loyalties.

Budney, for instance, now resides in Horseheads but still continues to attend St. John the Baptist Church, 325 Lake St., where she has been a parishioner for all of her 61 years.

"The young people have kind of left because of the economy, but we see the elderly carry on. However, with the youth groups that have been started, I have great hopes for the strength being continued," Budney commented.

The Eastside Catholic Parish's foun-



S. John Wilkin/Staff Photographer

Father Patrick L. Connor, pastor of Eastside Catholic Parish, stands outside the cluster's office in Elmira.

ation dates back to 1848, when Ss. Peter and Paul Church, located at the corner of Market and High streets, became the city's first Catholic church (see related story).

St. John the Baptist followed in 1866. The cluster's third church, St. Cecilia, 950 Lake St., was founded in 1904.

Father Connor describes both Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Cecilia's as traditionally "geographic" parishes.

St. John the Baptist, meanwhile, is distinguished by its strong German heritage. Budney noted that her great-grandfather, Albert Rohde, helped build that church.

Another interesting historical note was cited by Father Connor, who recounted a tale he has occasionally heard regarding St. Cecilia's.

"Apparently there was a Ku Klux Klan march several years ago, and when they went by the church, I've been told that the cross on the roof toppled right over," said Father Connor, who succeeded Father David N. Gramkee as the cluster's pastor in June of 1992.

On July 1, 1982, St. Cecilia and St. John

Vital Statistics

Name:
Eastside Catholic Parish

Location:
St. Cecilia, 950 Lake St.
St. John the Baptist, 325 Lake St.
Ss. Peter/Paul, Market/High Sts.

Dates founded:
St. Cecilia, 1904
St. John the Baptist, 1866
Ss. Peter and Paul, 1848

Number of families:
1,100.

Significant dates:
1982 - St. Cecilia and St. John become first two diocesan parishes to be served by single pastoral team.
1990 - Ss. Peter and Paul joins St. Cecilia and St. John, forming the current Eastside Catholic Parish.

the Baptist became the first two parishes in the Rochester diocese to be served by one pastoral team. The Eastside Catholic Parish became three churches on Jan. 1, 1990, when Ss. Peter and Paul joined the cluster.

Currently, five weekend Masses are celebrated at the parish. St. John the Baptist has Masses at 5:15 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Sunday; Ss. Peter and Paul offers services at 4 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. Sunday; and St. Cecilia holds a Sunday noon Mass.

Slowly but surely, the clustering concept has taken hold in the 1,100-family Eastside Catholic Parish community.

"The image I use is that I went on a hike. There were some real energetic people who raced to the top of the cliff, others who couldn't go at as fast a pace, and others who were in between," remarked Father Connor. "Different people are going at different paces, but we're all kind of moving together."

"I think all three churches are unique, but we try not to separate the committees," said Michael Campanelli, who began attending St. Cecilia's Church in

CONKLIN & RORICK, INC.



Religious Gift Shop
and
Collectibles

157 N. Main Street
Downtown Elmira
Village Plaza, Horseheads, NY
607 733-2138 / 607 796-5563

NEW LOCATION SOUTHSIDE SUB SHOP II

215 East 14th Street
Elmira Heights, New York
(607) 733-2445



Served Elmira and areas for over 30 years.

J.T. Kennedy Plumbing & Heating Corp., Inc.

Mechanical Contractors
Residential - Commercial - Industrial

tel: (607) 734-5191
fax: (607) 734-5192

Office: 431 L'Amoreaux Pl. Elmira Heights, N.Y. 14903
Mailing: Box 167 Horseheads, N.Y. 14845

ARNOT OGDEN MEDICAL CENTER



Welcomes
Hallna Jandura-Cessna, MD,
Specializing in Internal Medicine.
600 Ivy Street, Suite 208
Elmira, NY 14905
(607) 737-4544

Now accepting new patients in the Elmira area.

600 Roe Avenue Elmira NY 14905

See us for all your Christmas decorating and gift needs

We have a good selection of nativity ornaments

Hours: M-F, 11-9
Sat. 11-5, Sun. 12-5
Exit 56 off Route 17

(607) 734-9547
361 Maple Avenue P.O. Box 548, Elmira, NY 14902



The Grass is Always Greener...

Join Us Wednesdays for:
Irish Night
Every Wednesday
Featuring Music by:
Pat Kane • 7-10 PM

JERUSALEM HILL, ELMIRA • Exit 57 • Route 17 • 732-6728
From E. Church St., go east toward Binghamton bearing right to Jerusalem Hill Rd.