

PARISH FEATURE

From war to Synod, parish played its part

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

SCOTTSVILLE — When the Civil War was raging in the 1860s, a U.S. Army captain urged Father Joseph V. O'Donohoe of St. Mary of the Assumption Church to mount his pulpit on Sundays and recruit Irishmen for the Union cause.

Father O'Donohoe wrote the captain that while he was proud of Irish valor as evidenced in various European conflicts, "as a priest, I could not for a moment forget my sacred calling, and, instead of peace, preach war."

The priest also told the captain that he did nothing to hinder the Army's recruiting efforts in the area, according to St. Mary's Parish history, *For Everything There Is A Season*, written by Glenn J. Kist. Nonetheless, Kist's book notes, rumors that the priest discouraged his fellow Irishmen from enlisting persisted among those who viewed Irish-Catholic immigrants with suspicion.

St. Mary's found itself in hot water again in the 1890s when then-pastor Father Louis A. Lambert, a man with a dubious administrative record, antagonized the sometimes imperious Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid on a regular basis.

For various reasons, neither man thought much of the other for most of their lives. And, by comparison to Father Lambert, individuals who criticize today's diocesan leaders appear positively cordial. At various times over the years, he labeled Bishop McQuaid a religious hypocrite and a *mustela putorius* — a "stinking skunk!"

The two men did reconcile at the end of their lives, Kist records, and their dispute "had little or no impact on the spiritual and physical growth of St. Mary's."

In 1994, a visitor to Scottsville, a village in the Town of Wheatland, finds things have calmed down a bit since the parish's early years. Potential treason and ongoing clerical conflicts have given way to more practical issues. Today's concerns center on Wegmans Food Markets' decision to close the supermarket on Scottsville Road and municipal leaders' plans to ax the local police force.

Some citizens fear losing two such identifying markers may diminish the village's attractiveness to new residents and, subsequently, that of the parish as well.

But Father Daniel P. Tormey feels "Scottsville is too close to Rochester, and too nice a place to just disintegrate."

The pastor noted that his parish, founded in 1841, boasts 500 families looking forward to a future whose outlines are already appearing. In particular, the priest and his staff pointed to three developments that already affect the parish's present and will shape its future.

First off, Father Tormey noted that he will probably be St. Mary's last resident pastor. Like so many parishes affected by the nationwide priests' shortage, he

Parish Profile

St. Mary's,
Scottsville



Vital Statistics

Name: St. Mary of the Assumption Church

Location: 99 Main St., Scottsville
Cornerstone of first church laid: 1853

Significant dates: 1841 — first Catholic Mass celebrated in Scottsville; 1848 — first resident pastor assigned; 1911 — current rectory completed to replace building erected in 1825; 1978 — church refurbishment completed.

said St. Mary's will undoubtedly cluster with other neighboring parishes sometime after he retires next year.

The second development is a significant growth during the last two years in the parish's youth ministry, noted Theresa Fantone, youth minister.

Fantone said she used a lot of "bait and hook" to garner teenagers' interest in youth ministry when she started out. Trips to the beach and outings to hockey games made up some of the earlier youth-ministry gatherings, she explained.

"It's providing interesting experiences for kids, which keeps them coming," she said.

About 75 teens have participated in the parish's youth group, she said, and last August the parish sent a contingent to World Youth Day with Pope John Paul II in Denver, Colo.

"We sent six from the parish, which was really a lot for our first year," she concluded.

A third major trend identified by St. Mary's staff takes a major synodal directive and puts it into practice, according to Deirdre M. Hetzler, pastoral associate.

St. Mary's is home to three small Christian communities, she said, one of which was formed following the 1993 Synod calling on parishes to encourage such enterprises. Another was formed two years ago following a parish retreat, and a third is developing out a men's early morning prayer group, she remarked.

SCCs, long popular in Latin America, are groupings of a handful of parishioners who meet regularly to discuss practical ways of implementing Christian teachings and/or Scripture in their daily lives. For instance, one group at St. Mary's recently examined how to apply



Lauren McFalls/Photo intern

Chris Reinhardt (left) plays with his father's pen during the 10:15 a.m. Mass at Scottsville's St. Mary of the Assumption Church on Feb. 6.

Christian forgiveness to the kind of situations presented by a divorce in the family.

"It's a way of meeting the needs of people, of meeting the need of living the nitty-gritty of life," Hetzler said of the SCCs.

She said she hopes to encourage the establishment of more SCCs at the parish this year.

"It's a way of being church together," she said. "It'll affect the whole church as it has in other countries."

EDITORS' NOTE:
For information on St. Mary's Parish, call 716/889-3100.



Father Daniel Tormey and the altar servers process out of St. Mary of the Assumption Church at the end of the Feb. 6 Mass.

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