

PARISH FEATURE

Together

Continued from page 8

lished an independent parish — St. Agnes — in 1855. In 1862, the pastor of St. Agnes, Father Patrick Lee, was appointed pastor of the the nascent St. Francis Parish in Phelps.

Father Lee served the Catholic community in Phelps even after it was officially dedicated a parish on March 25, 1869, relinquishing responsibility in 1885 when St. Francis gained its first resident pastor, Father John Nelligan.

Meanwhile, St. Felix Parish came into existence when the building that had been used for St. Agnes Parish became too small, leading to the construction of the building at 12 Hibbard Ave., which was dedicated on March 16, 1896. The name of the church and parish was changed in September of that year to St. Felix — in honor of the pastor, Father Felix O'Hanlon.

The paths of the two parishes crossed again in the 1960s and 1970s when Father Francis H. Turner served as St. Felix's pastor from 1960-65, and St. Francis' pastor from 1970-76.

The two parishes were also subject to consideration for clustering in the 1960s, Father Roach reported. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, bishop of Rochester from 1966-69, asked the pastor to see how the people of St. Felix and St. Francis and some other nearby parishes felt about being clustered.

"I told Bishop Sheen they weren't too crazy about amalgamation," Father Roach said. The idea was dropped at the time.

The two parishes' histories, however, contain much more than such links.

Felix Landschoot — named after Father O'Hanlon — noted that Clifton Springs was the site of a health resort in the 19th century. By World War II, Landschoot said, "the spa petered out." But the spa buildings were later made into a senior citizens complex, and a number of the complex's residents attend the parish.

Indeed, Landschoot acknowledged, "I don't see near the young people in the parish that I used to."

Landschoot can recall not only Father O'Hanlon, but also many of the pastors who succeeded him after he died in 1922: Fathers John J. O'Donoghue (1922-24); James M. O'Brien (1924-46);



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Three-year-old Joshua Myers can't wait to get a taste of a meatball during a Feb. 15 pot-luck supper at St. Francis Church in Phelps. Joshua's parents, David and Mary, have been St. Francis parishioners for nine years.

John J. Ganey (1945-46); Emmett T. Dougherty (1946-58); William J. Gaynor (1958-60); Turner (1960-65); and M. Earl Tobin (1965-66).

The history of St. Francis Parish, meanwhile, is marked by a succession of pastors through much of its early years, including: Fathers Nelligan, (1885-91); F. Augustine O'Neill (1891-98) Coleman F. O'Loughlin (1898-1907); and Patrick Madden (1909-19).

Father Madden was succeeded by St. Francis' longest serving pastor, Father Edward J. Simpson, who served the parish until 1967.

Gerry Carroll, a lifelong parishioner of St. Francis, recalled Father Simpson as: "Strict, hard working, strong, but he had a very open heart." Indeed, she recalled that while visiting her husband — who was a patient in a Buffalo hospital — she looked up and "There was Father Simpson. He had made the trip."

Father Simpson also oversaw in 1931 the razing of the so-called "white church" that had served the parish since 1870 and the construction of the current church building. The new church was dedicated Oct. 4, 1931 — the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

When Father Simpson retired, Father William J. Rieffer served as pastor from 1967-70, followed by Father Turner, Monsignor John Duffy (1976-83) and Father Calimeri.

Father Dillon said he is proceeding slowly with the clustering process as the parishes work out

life together after many years of separate existences. "I'm just encouraging them to maintain their autonomy and identity."

Thus the parishes for now are retaining separate parish councils and parish offices.

But they do share a combined religious education program and a common bulletin. Parishioners from both parishes work together in social ministry projects such as the St. Felix clothing cupboard. They also socialize together

on occasion — as evidenced by the Feb. 15 "Fat Tuesday" celebration held at St. Francis Parish.

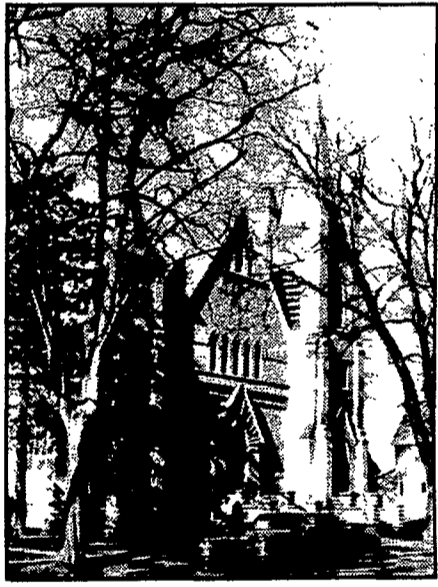
That parishioners' ongoing efforts to face the future together will succeed is perhaps suggested by the action of someone from their past.

Father Calimeri, an Auburn native, bought a house in Phelps and continues to live there in his retirement.

"In the 10 years I was in the area, I got more affirmation than I could use in my entire life," the priest declared.



Marilyn DeRuyter (left) and her mother, Virginia Walters, lead a sing-along at the pot-luck supper's conclusion.



Vital Statistics

Name:
St. Felix Church.

Location:
12 Hibbard Ave.,
Clifton Springs.

Church dedicated:
March 16, 1896.

Incorporated:
Sept. 3, 1896.



**Clifton Springs
Plaza**


462-9055

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