

PARISH FEATURE

Southern Tier cluster puts priority on outreach Ministries mark parish

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

WATKINS GLEN — It didn't take Deacon Michael Mangione long to realize that special things happen within the Catholic Communities of St. Mary of the Lake and St. Benedict.

"I see people who come to Communion with smiles on their faces, and that says a lot," said Deacon Mangione, who arrived at the cluster in 1993.

Father David L. Bonin, pastor, added that his parishioners' spirituality is noticeable in a variety of ways.

"This group plays hard, prays hard and works hard," observed Father Bonin.

The "playing hard" portion is certainly reflected in Father Bonin himself. His

Parish Profile

St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen
St. Benedict, Odessa



181-piece toy clown collection adorns much of the St. Mary of the Lake/St. Benedict rectory, and the pastor and his parishioners appear to take great pleasure in poking good-natured fun at each other.

Meanwhile, "praying and working hard" is evident in the cluster's many ministries:

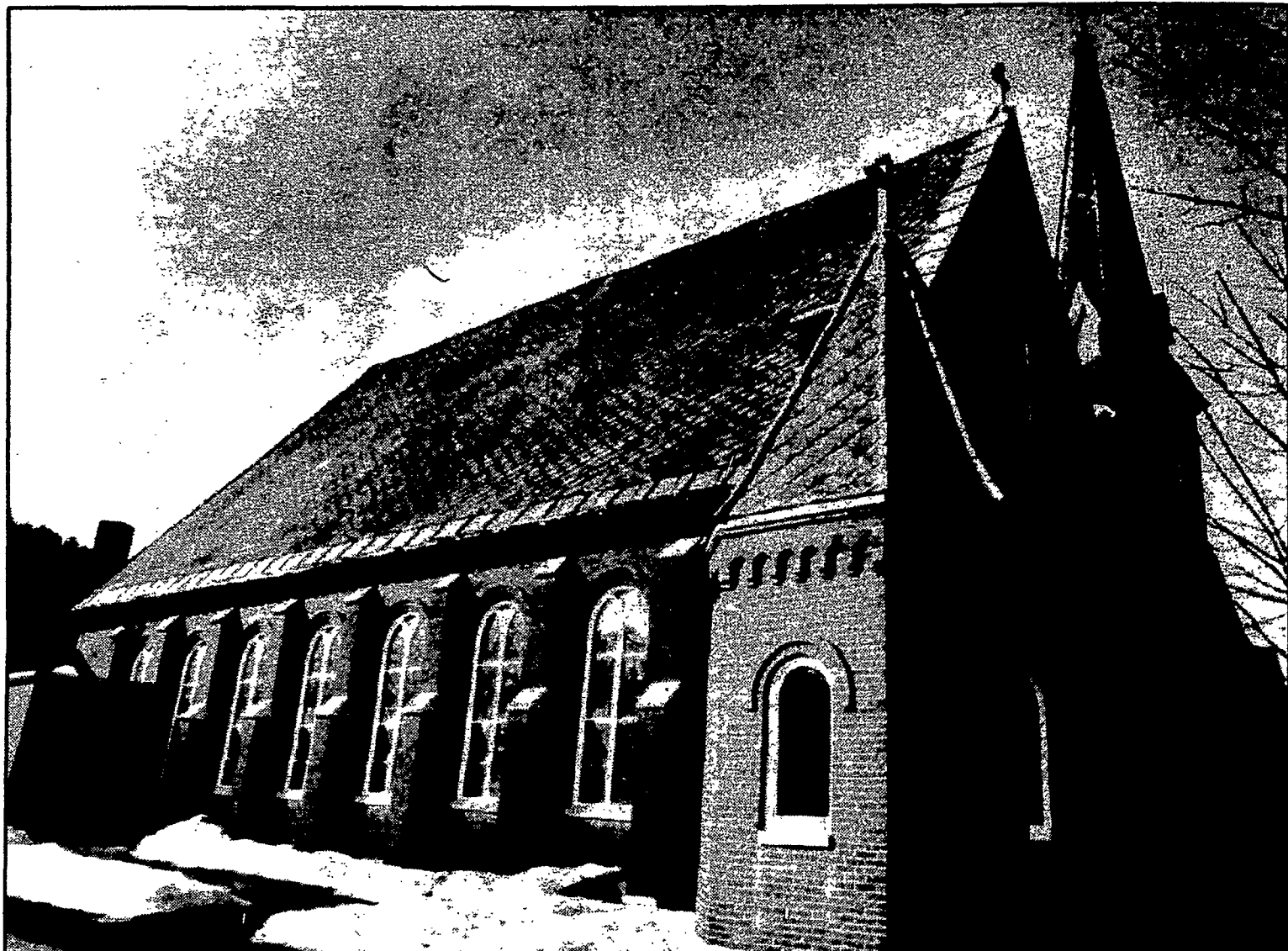
- A Stephen Ministry program was begun in 1993. This lay ministry provides outreach for those experiencing physical or emotional difficulty.

- Several parishioners take part in the Funeral Ministry, as well as the Caring and Sharing Ministry.

- The cluster's youth program is also going strong. Last summer, St. Mary of the Lake/St. Benedict served as host of the first-ever Southern Tier Teen Cruise that began and ended on the southern tip of Seneca Lake which borders downtown Watkins Glen.

- A social-ministry office, located in the parish center at St. Mary of the Lake, houses a community food pantry for Schuyler County residents as well as an illiteracy volunteer program.

Judy Shafer, who serves as pastoral assistant, noted that the cluster's ministries



St. Mary of the Lake Church (above) in Watkins Glen and St. Benedict in Odessa both have many volunteers that make up their numerous ministries. Included in the cluster's outreach ministries are Stephen Ministers (from top left) Glenn Larison, Bill Anderson, Pat Larison, and Marge Johnson. The Stephen Ministers provide outreach for those suffering from physical or emotional difficulties. Other ministries include the Caring and Sharing Ministry, youth program, a food pantry for Schuyler County residents and an illiteracy volunteer program.

Photos by S. John Wilkin
Staff photographer

extend far beyond the cluster's boundaries.

"It's recognized as the parish that belongs to the community," Shafer remarked.

Parish secretary Kathy Decker used the plight of impoverished residents in outlying rural areas to illustrate the value of services provided by St. Mary of the Lake/St. Benedict.

"We have numerous calls every single day, and they need the number of the social ministry office," said Decker.

The parish has served as a vital force in Schuyler County ever since St. Mary of the Lake, located at 901 N. Decatur St. in Watkins Glen, was established in 1846. St. Benedict, located seven miles away at 304 Speedway St. in the village of Odessa, was formed in 1948. The two parishes were clustered when Father Bonin arrived in 1989.

The title of St. Mary of the Lake is actually older than the village name of Watkins Glen, which in the mid-1800s

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