

FEATURE

*Livingston parishioners value faith, study, youth***Parish Profile**St. Patrick's,
Mt. MorrisBy Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

MT. MORRIS — Most diocesan Catholics might not realize it, but they pay tribute to the hometown of one their parishes every time they recite the pledge of allegiance.

The pledge was written by Francis Belamy of Mount Morris, a fact noted by historical markers visible to drivers traveling into town.

Those markers do not note, however, that Mount Morris is also home to one of the diocese's oldest parishes: St. Patrick's, 46 Stanley St. The parish was recently in the news because it will be clustered with Holy Angels Parish in Nunda this summer. Both parishes will share Father Daniel J. Condon as pastor.

As far back as 1838, a Father Maguire is recorded in the parish history as having celebrated Mass in various private homes and other buildings for Irish Catholics building the Genesee Valley Canal. These immigrants later formed the original families of St. Patrick's, which saw its first church built in 1850.

The parish history also includes information from an 1858 parish ledger that highlighted some interesting facts about the fledgling Catholic community:

The Sunday plate collection averaged \$1.

A special penny collection occasionally increased the collection to \$2.

James O'Connell built a confessional for the same amount of money garnered on average by the penny collection.

Horse and buggy hire was an outstanding monthly expense.

Construction of the current church began in 1869, and Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid dedicated the building in 1874. Among a variety of other decorative features, the church's interior is adorned with a reproduction of Raphael's "Transfiguration," and a stained-glass portrait of St. Patrick with the church building cradled in his arms.

The parish patron's famed evangelical zeal seems to have found a home in Tony Gerace, who spends much of his time in retirement bringing the Eucharist to the sick and the home-bound.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Father Daniel Condon (right), pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Mt. Morris, was busy during the Easter vigil April 2 with five confirmations and baptisms — including that of 12-year-old Michael Rivera.



Music minister Chad Donovan directs the St. Patrick's Choir during the April 2 Easter vigil.

The 80-year-old parishioner attends daily Mass and makes about 27 communion calls a week to Catholics in Mt. Morris, Dansville and even Rochester.

"I've always liked to be near the church and near to God," he said. "I wish I was 30 years younger. I think I could do more."

Donna Palermo, the parish's secretary and bookkeeper, shared Gerace's enthusiasm for his faith.

"I could be working at Xerox," she said. "But I just enjoyed working here. It's a very comfortable place to work. I do

something for the church."

Michele Donovan, a parish lector and choir member, also likes to do something for the church — particularly lecturing — but feels a lot less comfortable than Palermo.

"It is very difficult for me," she said of reading at Mass for the past 25 years. "My heart pounds, my hands shake."

Nonetheless, her faith steels her for the effort.

"It's important for me to be close to the Lord," she said.

Being close to her children motivat-

Vital Statistics

Name: St. Patrick's Church

Location: 46 Stanley St.,
Mount Morris

Number of families: 475

Significant dates:

Incorporated on Aug. 20, 1870; parish school was dedicated on Sept. 3, 1911; neighboring parish, Assumption, amalgamated with St. Patrick's in 1961.

ed Dolores Scura to teach at the former parish school from 1957-69. Since then, she has been active in a number of parish activities, and, like Donovan, serves as lector.

Scura believes that St. Patrick's combines the best of the old pre-Vatican II church — Benedictions, novenas and eucharistic expositions — with the best of the post-Vatican II era.

"It's alive and well and thriving," she said of her parish.

Scura noted, however, that it was

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