

Monastery marks 50 years in Elmira

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ELMIRA — This was one event proving that members of a cloistered society can still enjoy strong ties with the outside world.

Perhaps nobody put that thought forth better than Sister Mary Clare Russer, OP, when she offered her feelings about the 50th-anniversary celebration held on the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen grounds.

"I'm enjoying this. I love parties," exclaimed Sister Russer.

The 83-year-old Sister Russer is one of two remaining original members of the eight Order of Preachers women religious who settled at the monastery, located at 1310 W. Church St., a half-century ago.

Sister Russer, along with other founding member Sister Maria Consolata Siracuse, OP, and 13 other Dominican sisters, took part in the jubilee celebration held last Saturday, Aug. 13. Approximately 300 people attended a Mass celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark and an ensuing luncheon.

Daily and weekend Masses have traditionally signified these cloistered sisters' only direct contact with the public, although an exception was made when the monastery's doors were opened for its 50th anniversary.

"One of the things we wanted to express by doing this was our closeness to the community," remarked Sister David Marie Beikirch, OP, the monastery's prioress.

That warm gesture was reciprocated by the many visitors who packed the chapel. One of those in attendance, Joseph Bucci, has attended Mass at the monastery for several years along with his wife and seven children. Bucci noted that last August, his daughter Lisa Anne's wedding was the first ever to be performed in the monastery chapel.

"She always said she wanted to be married there," Bucci remarked.

In addition to their Masses, the sisters have been well known in Chemung County over the years through the vari-

ous activities they have performed to support the monastery financially. In the 1960s they baked and sold cookies, and in the 1970s they printed a number of local parish bulletins.

Those fundraisers have since been replaced by a gift shop at the monastery, which opened in 1983 and remains busy today.

Bucci acknowledged that the sisters perform less-publicized charitable acts as well, providing food to area families who can't make it on their own.

"They help needy people in a very quiet way," he said.

Sister Mary Agnes Daly, OP, who has resided at the Monastery of Mary the Queen since 1948, pointed out that her congregation also spends a considerable amount of time in solemn prayer sessions.

"The phone rings all the time with people requesting prayers," remarked Sister Daly.

Sister Beikirch pointed out that this type of commitment might be the Dominican sisters' most important service of all to the public.

"Their faith is encouraged because they know we are praying for them," she said.

During his sermon, Bishop Clark acknowledged that the Dominican sisters "not only do a tremendous service, but offer us a great reminder of the challenge of Christian life that we all share."

The Dominican sisters often receive the same kind of support they offer. They enjoy close associations with the Benedictine priests at Mount Saviour Monastery in nearby Pine City, who have frequently celebrated Mass at the Monastery of Mary the Queen. Further assistance has come from the Cistercians of the Strict Observance in Piffard, Livingston County, who have supplied the Dominican sisters with their famous



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Sister Mary Reginald Becerra, OP, right, shares the sign of peace with Patricia Austin during the Aug. 13 Mass marking the Dominican sisters' 50th anniversary at Elmira's Monastery of Mary the Queen.

Monk's Bread.

The number of sisters living at Monastery of Mary of Queen has fluctuated over the years, rising from the original eight to 21 at the time of the monastery's 25th anniversary in 1969. Among the 15 sisters currently residing on Church Street, Sister Daly noted that several have transferred from other Dominican monasteries around the country.

However, Sister Daly expressed concern over a recent dropoff in young women pursuing this type of vocation, and noted that the monastery has attempted to increase its numbers by advertising in various Catholic publications.

Despite the changes which have occurred among the congregation during the past 50 years, Sister Russer remarked that the time has seemed to pass by quickly.

"I don't feel the years at all," she said.



Sister Mary Clare Russer, OP, one of the monastery's two remaining original members, enjoys a talk with Father John DeSocio, director of seminarians for the diocese.

Sister reflects on hospital service, life

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Sister Eileen Kinnarney speaks about her vow to serve the sick and poor with an almost casual air. It is a commitment she was inspired to make as a young nurse working side by side with the Daughters of Charity, providing health care to South Boston's low-income neighborhoods during the 1940s.

"That seemed to me a nice way to spend my life," commented the former chairwoman of the board of directors of St. Mary's Hospital, 89 Genesee St.

Since 1951, the 72-year-old Daughter of Charity has directed hospitals in the District of Columbia and Maine. She has also served as a leader of her religious order.

Sister Kinnarney resigned her position as chairwoman of the St. Mary's board earlier this year, but will continue to serve as vice president of the hospital's mission integration until the end of this month. She will then move to Germantown, Pa., where she will serve as pastoral associate of St. Vincent's Church.

St. Mary's board has already appoint-

ed Sister Marie Burns, a veteran of hospital boards throughout New York and Connecticut, to serve as chairwoman. A native of Trenton, N.J., Sister Burns most recently served as chairwoman of the board at Buffalo's Daughters of Charity Hospital.

As vice president of mission integration, Sister Kinnarney saw the institution of an ongoing orientation program that teaches the hospital's mission and values to employees as her most significant accomplishment since she joined St. Mary's in 1987.

Every Monday, Sister Kinnarney has instructed new employees in what she calls St. Mary's five core values. She noted that each employee is given a card that defines the values as follows:

- *Respect* — A high regard for each person's worth.
- *Quality Service* — Excellence in duty or work performed for others.
- *Simplicity* — Honesty, integrity, and straightforwardness.
- *Advocacy for the Poor* — Supporting the cause of those who lack resources for a reasonable quality of life.
- *Inventiveness to Infinity* — Boundless creativity.

Employees are evaluated regularly on

how they carry out the hospital's mission and values in their own departments, she noted.

In addition to educating new employees on how to practically apply these values in their positions, Sister Kinnarney has also met with the hospital's administrators on a regular basis to reinforce implementation of the core values throughout St. Mary's.

Patrick Madden, St. Mary's president, noted that Sister Kinnarney's stewardship of the mission and values program has benefited St. Mary's greatly.

"I just can't say enough about her," Madden said. "She really represents the Catholic values, and, especially, the values of the Daughters of Charity, very well. We're going to really miss her."

Ironically, Sister Kinnarney noted that she almost backed into her life as a Daughter of Charity. Although she had always wanted to work with the sick and poor, she thought the nursing career she was pursuing in the late 1940s would be enough. However, by 1951, in addition to having become a nurse, she joined the Daughters of Charity.

"That's what a vocation is," she noted. "I believe in it as a call from God and something you have to follow."

Puerto Rican priest to lead Hispanic event

ROCHESTER — The annual Hispanic *Mision* is slated for Aug. 22-27 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1089 Joseph Ave.

Father Feliciano Rodriguez, a priest from the Diocese of Caguas, Puerto Rico, will preach during the *Mision*, which will take place each evening from 7 to 9 p.m.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark is scheduled to participate in the evening festivities on Tuesday, Aug. 23.

Funded by the Thanks Giving Appeal, the mission is sponsored by the diocese's Spanish Apostolate.

St. Josaphat's to host Ukrainian arts festival

IRONDEQUOIT — St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church will host its 22nd annual Ukrainian Arts & Crafts Festival on its parish grounds at 940 Ridge Road E., starting at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 18. The festival will open at 6 p.m. again the following night, and at 1 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday.

Festival proceeds will benefit the parish and its school. For information, call 716/266-2255.

Correction

The wrong caption appeared under a photo accompanying last week's page 3 story on the Worker Ownership-Resource Center in Elmira. The caption should have described Lauraly Clark receiving a certificate of completion from Kevin Hennessy. Clark is hoping to open her own craft shop.

We regret the error.