

Fairport parish's faith is academic

Parish Profile
St. John of Rochester, Fairport



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

FAIRPORT — Father James E. Boyle characterizes St. John of Rochester Church as "very much an education parish."

Which only seems fitting, since Masses were celebrated in a school building for 20 of the 33-year-old parish's first 21 years.

And also because St. John of Rochester derives its title from St. John Fisher, the English patron saint for whom the church's neighboring college — located just one exit to the northwest off Interstate 490 — is also named.

Father Boyle, who has served as pastor since 1992, notes other ways in which the education tag applies to St. John of Rochester Church.

"We were very involved in the synod process, and we'll be hiring a staff person to be faith-formation director," said Father Boyle, referring to the diocesan Synod's priority on Catholic moral education.

Barbara Hunt, who has served on the parish's Christian Formation committee and was also a synod representative, stated that "definitely, there's a priority on adult education" at St. John of Rochester.

"We just have a lot of interested people in this parish," Hunt said. "We have so many talented, dedicated people, it's incredible. We just want to move ahead with the Synod and implement it."

In addition, the parish's religious-education program ministers to a staggering 800 children while there are 100 youths in the current confirmation class.

Meanwhile, St. John of Rochester School, which draws mostly students from Monroe County's southeast section, houses 200 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 6.

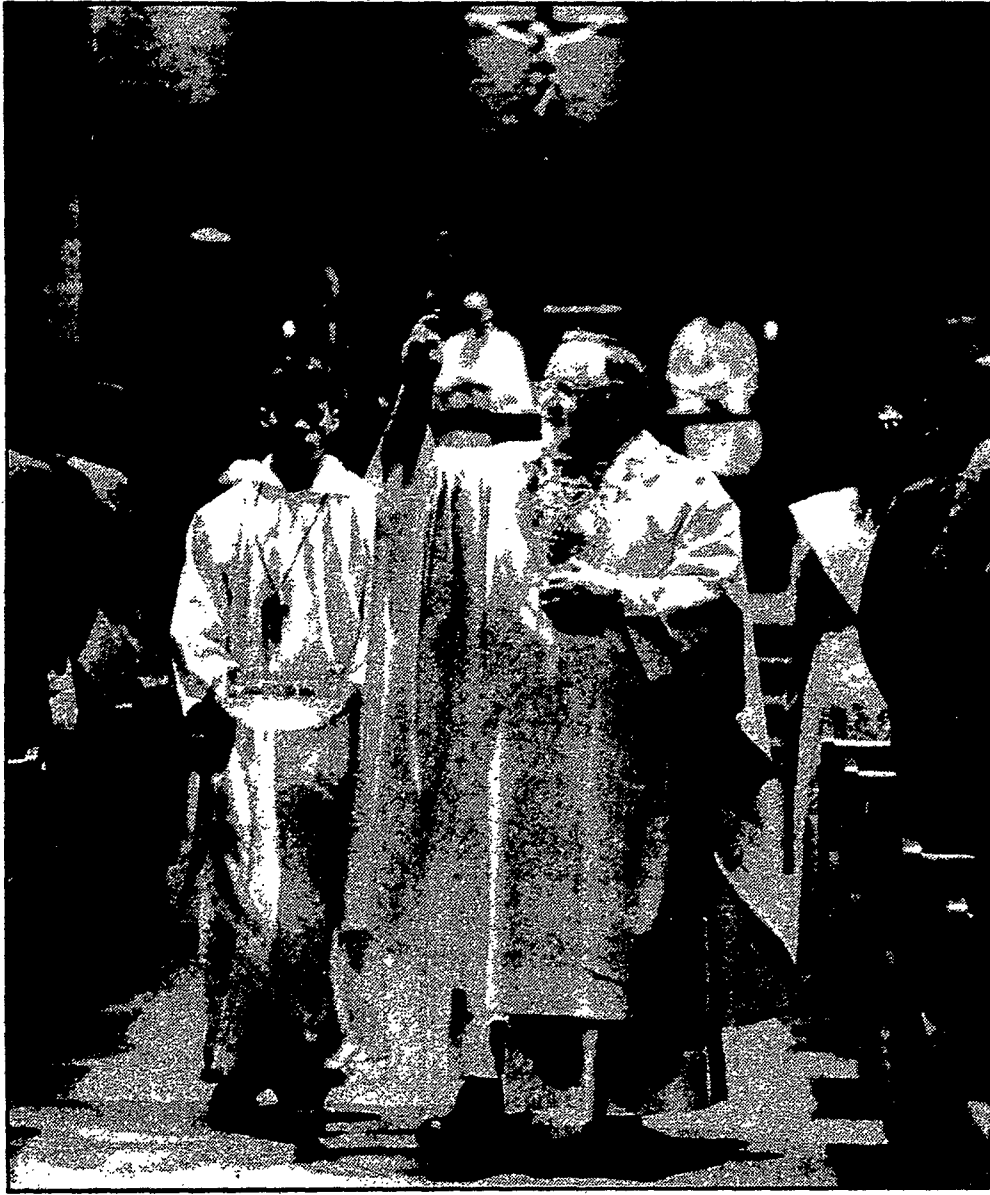
Some of these statistics reflect the vastness of St. John's membership. Not only is this one of the newest diocesan parishes, but at 2,300 families, it is also one of the largest.

The greatest learning to take place at St. John's over the years, perhaps, was how to continue meeting the needs of Catholics in a rapidly growing suburban community.

St. John of Rochester was established by the late Bishop James E. Kearney in 1962. The parish's original facility was a far cry from today's structure; Mass was first held in a temporary 50-seat chapel in Bushnell's Basin. At the time, much of the town of Perinton — in which the village of Fairport is located — still consisted of farmland.

"The sub-divisions were just starting to be built," recalled Jane Rector, parish secretary, an original St. John's parishioner.

The combined school/chapel opened



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Father James E. Boyle, pastor of Fairport's St. John of Rochester Church, blesses the congregation with holy water as he celebrates the parish's Easter Vigil Mass April 15.

SNAPSHOTS

St. John of Rochester Church, 18 Wickford Way, Fairport
Phone: 716/248-5993
Incorporated: 1962
Pastor: **Father James E. Boyle**
Parochial Vicar:
Father Brian C. Cool
In Residence:
Father Michael C. Hogan
School Principal: **Marilyn Tripp**
Parish Council President:
Douglas Seward
Religious-Education Coordinator:
Judy Swagler
Youth Minister:
Maryellen Bashaw
Musical Director: **Sue Portland**
Secretary: **Jane Rector**

in 1963 on the parish's current 11-acre complex located at 18 Wickford Way — a stone's throw from the busy Route 31 overpass at I-490.

St. John's spacious, stylish, circular church building was finally opened in 1983. And five years ago, a perpetual-adoration area was added in the adjoining daily-Mass chapel.

The parish's newest structure is a "ministry building" connected to the church's west end. This 5,400-square-foot facility, which cost \$750,000, was

dedicated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark earlier this month. It houses a large meeting room as well as parish offices formerly located in the rectory.

Father Boyle explained that the ministry building was added for the many parishioners who come to St. John's for functions other than just Mass.

"The Paris Opera House has as much space for congregating as for seating, with the theory that people come as much for community as they do for music," said Father Boyle, who also served as St. John's parochial vicar from 1970-73.

Similarly, he explained, "The church today is saying that our relationship with God is much more 'horizontal' than in the past. We're celebrating the kingdom with one another a lot more."

Parishioner Earl Knab, who headed the ministry building's construction committee, joked that St. John's ongoing expansion may soon create a need for additional parking.

"It would have to be underground," he observed.

Father Boyle pointed out that although programs at St. John's are plentiful for middle-aged adults and young children, the parish also attempts to serve the needs of teenagers — through part-time youth minister Maryellen Bashaw — and senior citizens.

"We have to make sure it's not just the nuclear family bringing up the gifts," the pastor said.

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