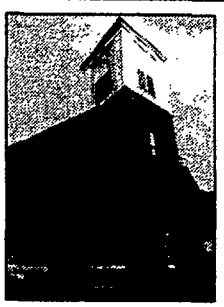


Parish has remained sturdy amid village's changes

Parish Profile

St. Jerome's,
East
Rochester



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

EAST ROCHESTER — A photograph of St. Jerome's Church, taken shortly after it was built in 1906, reveals a lonely structure housed along a dirt road.

Indeed, when St. Jerome's was founded, the village of East Rochester was less than 10 years old. In ensuing decades the community became an industrial hub, providing employment for a wave of Italian, Polish and Irish immigrants.

Although this industrial era has passed, much of East Rochester has stayed loyal to those roots while also adapting to modern times. A perfect symbol of this spirit is the St. Jerome's structure, which still stands proudly at its original site on the corner of West Commercial and South Garfield streets.

"There's no questioning its importance as a landmark for the Catholic people in this community," said Father Albert L. Delmonte, pastor.

Nick Urzetta represents one of many East Rochester families that have helped St. Jerome's thrive for several generations. He has been a parishioner since his father moved to the village in 1917.

Yet Urzetta noted that East Rochester now exists in a much more expansive society.

"At one time we had four of five generations of family living here in town. Then the kids got married, they went to work at Kodak, and Kodak would transfer them," Urzetta said.

Terry Reeder pointed out, however, that St. Jerome's welcoming attitude toward newcomers has helped the parish maintain its solid membership.

Twelve years ago, Reeder recalled, she and her husband Jay were looking to settle with their children, Evan and Vincent, in "a place where people know each other; where they can be a part of each other's lives."

"We loved St. Jerome's and the small-town feel of East Rochester. The people made a real point to make you feel welcome," recalled Reeder, the parish's religious-education coordinator.

Margaret Della Pietra, a St. Jerome's parishioner since 1927, uses the Second Vatican Council as an example of the parish's openness to change.

"I think that some people were against it, but the majority of them accepted it," said Della Pietra, a eucharistic minister and social-ministry committee member at St. Jerome's.

Some of the parish's traditional aspects could be attributed to the relatively few pastors throughout its history: Father Delmonte is only St. Jerome's sixth pastor in 90 years.

St. Jerome's was led for the first half of this span by founding pastor Father Bernard J. Gefell, who retained that posi-



Diane Moulton (far right), religious education administrator at St. Jerome's Church, leads the children's Liturgy of the Word Aug. 20.

tion from 1905 until his death in 1950. Subsequent pastors have included the late Father Roy B. Morphy, 1950-65; Father Anthony Calimeri, 1965-83; the late Father Nick Arioli, C.P.P.S., 1983-86; and the late Father Richard Masciangelo, C.P.P.S., 1986-94.

Father Delmonte is on his second tour of duty at St. Jerome's. He was a weekend assistant there in the early 1970s before returning as pastor last summer.

In between Father Delmonte's assignments, the church underwent a major renovation in 1991. This followed other large-scale architectural changes in 1951 and 1969.

Additional key developments in parish history occurred in 1948, when a building for youth athletic events was erected; and 1955, when the parish school was opened. The two adjoining structures are located two blocks south of the church.

Currently the youth building serves as the parish center, and the school — which closed in 1986 — houses religious-education classes as well as a day-care program and the Sisters of St. Joseph-run Trinity Montessori School. According to Reeder, 300 children are enrolled in religious education.

As Father Delmonte sets his sights on the future, he is hoping the parish can make considerable strides by way of a planned census this fall — the first in approximately 20 years. Through the census, Father Delmonte aims to increase current parish enrollment which he estimates at 1,000 to 1,200 families.

"We want to reach out to those who have become disenfranchised," the pastor said. "The census is going to reveal a lot of needs."

Father Delmonte and pastoral associate Sister Clare Brown, SSJ, are intent on

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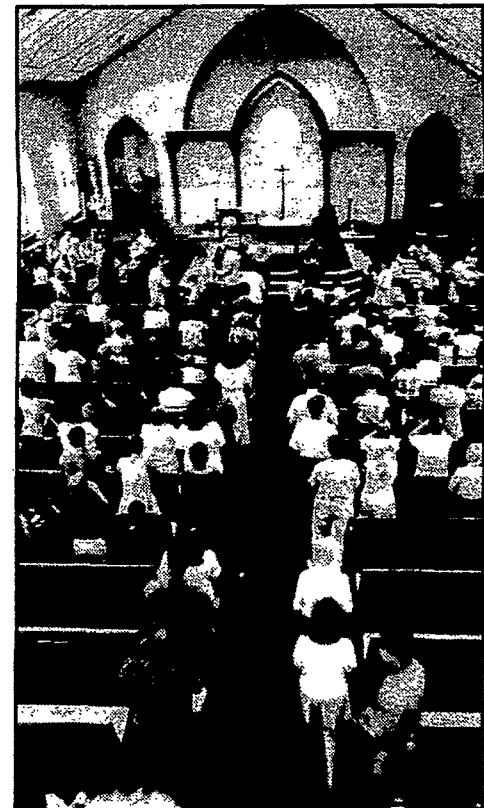
St. Jerome's Church
207 S. Garfield St., East Rochester
Phone: 716/586-3231
Founded: 1905
Church dedicated: 1906
Ministerial staff:
Pastor:
Father Albert L. Delmonte
Pastoral Associate:
Sister Clare Brown, SSJ
Business Manager:
Marge Mitrano
Secretary:
Kristin Brooks
Religious-Education Coordinator:
Terry Reeder
Religious-Education Administrator:
Diane Moulton
Music Director:
Teresa Galbier

offering programs to fit those needs. The ultimate goal: total family involvement in the parish.

"You see the difference in the children whose parents are involved," noted Sister Brown, who just arrived at St. Jerome's last month.

"If adults are active in the working life of the parish, it'll do wonders for their kids," Father Delmonte agreed.

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Parishioners at East Rochester's St. Jerome's Church receive holy Communion Aug. 20.

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