

# Helping hands enable Dryden parish to thrive

**Parish Profile**  
Holy Cross,  
Dryden



By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

DRYDEN — Although he holds the title of priest administrator at Holy Cross Church, Father John H. Hayes rarely finds he must exert his authority in that role.

As Father Hayes began his ministry in Dryden this past spring, he discovered a laity which had already proven itself quite adept at overseeing many aspects of the parish's operation.

"When I sat down with the parish council and finance committee, I said, 'Look, I don't have to hold your hand. You know what you're doing,'" Father Hayes said. "That's what makes it so easy for me to come here, realizing how well they could handle it."

Holy Cross parishioners "have a great willingness to grow," he added.

"They don't get caught up in the past. They have a great respect for it, but they look to the future," added the priest administrator, who is serving the Tompkins County parish at the same time he's working toward his master's degree in counseling at Syracuse University.

An illustration of the parish's support was evident in the building of the parish center — dedicated to founding pastor Father Thomas K. Cleary — which opened in 1992. The project's \$125,000, seven-year mortgage was paid off last December, three years ahead of schedule.

More recently, parishioners' willingness to help out was reflected one August weekend when approximately 50 people helped repaint various sections of the church.

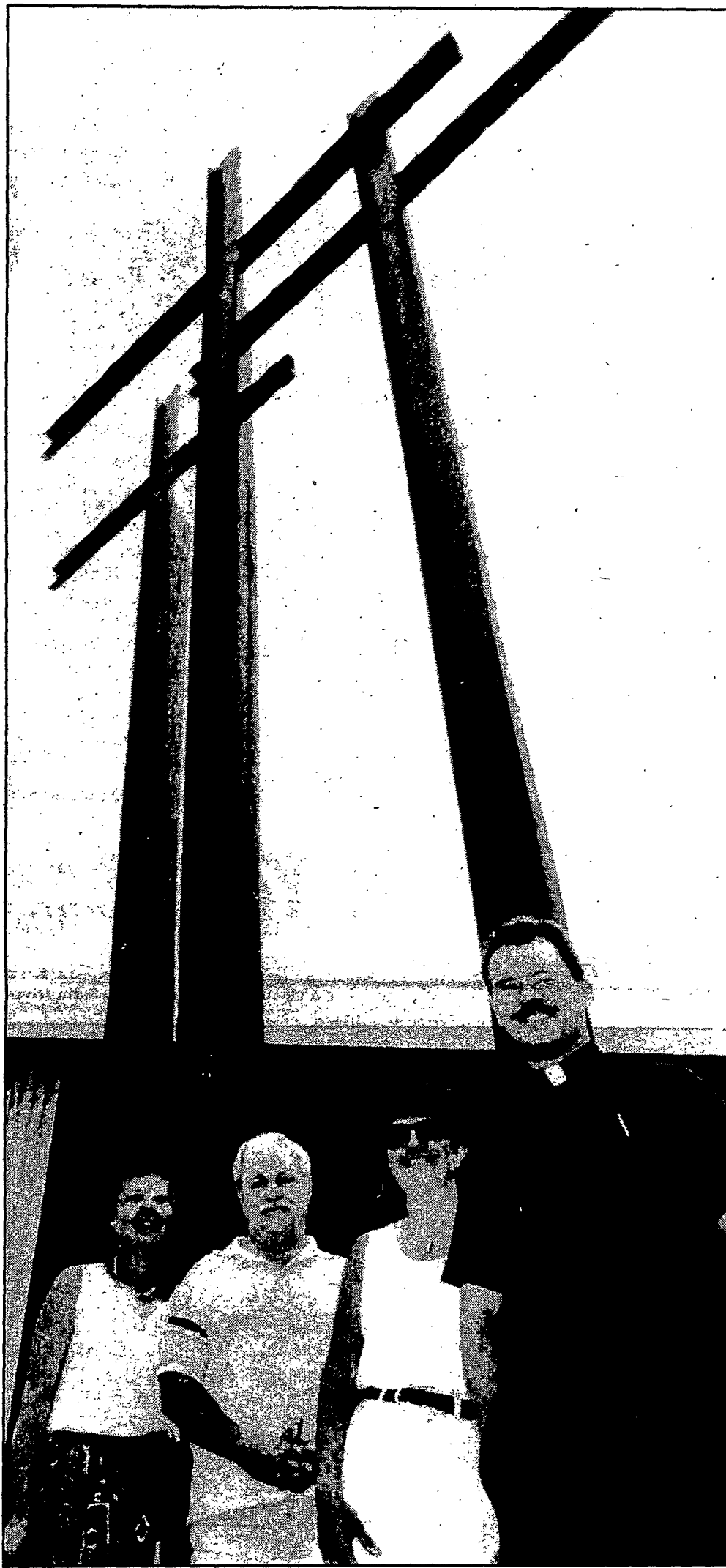
This project was timely, due to a big celebration for the parish this coming weekend marking the 25th anniversary of the church building's dedication. Father Hayes will celebrate a special liturgy at the 10 a.m. Mass Sunday, Sept. 17, and a 4 p.m. banquet will follow in Cleary Hall. More than 250 people are expected to attend the dinner, organizers said.

According to Holy Cross parishioner Frank Howser, who oversaw the church's construction 25 years ago, the parish's can-do attitude was as prevalent then as it is today.

"We had a very talented building committee," recalled Howser. "We didn't even have an architect design the church; we did it ourselves because we had the talent to do it."

"It was the most wonderful thing of my life to see our first church go up, piece by piece," he added.

Formulation of the current parish began in 1950, when the Dryden



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Holy Cross staff members (from left): Barbara Ivers, religious-education coordinator; Lee McGill, custodian; Sue Bierl, secretary/bookkeeper; and Father John H. Hayes, priest administrator.

## SNAPSHOTS

**Holy Cross Church**  
375 S. George Road, Dryden

Phone:  
607/844-8314

Parish incorporated:  
1962

Present church dedicated:  
1970

**Ministerial staff:**

Priest administrator:

**Father John H. Hayes**

Religious Education Coordinator:

**Barbara Ivers**

Secretary/Bookkeeper:

**Susan Bierl**

Youth Ministers:

**Lois Fahey, Jenny Derksen**

Catholic Mission was founded. Father Cleary celebrated the mission's first Mass at the Christ Chapel on the grounds of the George Junior Republic in Dryden.

Holy Cross Parish was incorporated in 1962, and its church was dedicated eight years later on Sept. 13, 1970. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan celebrated the dedication Mass, held in conjunction with the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Father Cleary continued as pastor of Holy Cross until his retirement in 1985 — a span of 35 years. He died in 1989.

Current parish membership totals approximately 350 families from a wide range of backgrounds. Although situated in a rural community, Holy Cross is also located just off Route 13, less than 10 miles from the bustling city of Ithaca.

"We have college professors and farmers, the whole gamut," said Sue Bierl, who serves as parish secretary and bookkeeper.

"We've got people coming from all over, from a lot of little towns," Father Hayes said.

"That's the strength of the parish — its diversity," remarked Barb Ivers, religious education coordinator. She noted that 180 children are currently enrolled in the parish's religious-education program.

Despite the vast area from which the parish draws, Holy Cross manages to maintain a strong sense of community.

"Everybody knows each other," Bierl said.

"If somebody doesn't get an answer here, they call me at home," Ivers added.

And, as far as Father Hayes is concerned, the parish's most common denominator will always be its unified and willing spirit.

"The people have been wonderful. They're great, great people," Father Hayes observed. "You don't have to ask twice for anything."



**TOMPKINS  
COUNTY  
TRUST  
COMPANY**

The Commons, PO Box 460  
Ithaca, New York 14851  
(607) 273-3210

Congratulations  
on your 25th!

**1<sup>st</sup>**  
**NATIONAL**  
**BANK**  
of DRYDEN

Member FDIC

### Best Wishes to the People of Holy Cross Parish

The following businesses  
and organizations extend  
their gratitude to Holy Cross Parish

◆  
**Brooklyn Diner**

1 West Main Street, Dryden  
607-844-9920

◆  
**Dryden-Agway Pro Hardware**  
59 West Main Street, Dryden  
607-844-8663

◆  
**Park-It Market**

24 Main Street, Freeville  
607-844-4751

◆  
**Joan Portzline Real Estate**

PO Box 164, Harford  
607-844-4219

◆  
**Specialty Trophies & Awards**  
62 West Main Street, Dryden  
607-844-8810

**"Best Wishes"**

**Perkins Funeral Home**

P.O. Box 22-0022  
Dryden, NY 13053  
(716) 844-8161