



Four-year-old Edwin Pabon peeks playfully out from behind a pew during the noon Spanish Mass held at St. Francis of Assisi Church Sept. 24.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer



Myrdna and Pablo Vargas served as acolytes for the Sept. 24 Spanish Mass.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## SNAPSHOTS



**St. Francis of Assisi/Ss. Peter and Paul Parish Cluster, Rochester**

St. Francis Church,  
77 Whitney St.  
Phone:  
716/436-6693  
Ss. Peter and Paul Church, 720  
Main St. W.  
Phone: 716/436-3110  
**Pastoral Team**

**Pastor:**  
Father David P. Reid, SS.CC.  
**Parish Coordinator:**  
Dolores Mary Brien (St. Francis)  
**Pastoral Associate:**  
Barbara Classen  
(Ss. Peter and Paul)  
**Youth and Spanish Apostolate:**  
Deacon Carlos Vargas  
**Religious Education and Spanish Apostolate:**  
Brunilda Martinez  
**Music:**  
Adam Lange-Pearson

percent of the parish's membership serves as lectors.

But it is for such ministries as its daily soup kitchen — St. Peter's Kitchen — that the parish is probably most well-known.

According to Michael Ruggiero, the soup kitchen's director, St. Peter's draws volunteers from about 40 colleges and church groups. Anywhere from 200 to 400 people eat at the kitchen on a daily basis, he said, adding that some eventually volunteer themselves and even join the

parish.

"It's a clear presence in the neighborhood," Ruggiero said of St. Peter's Kitchen. "It tells people that the parish is committed not only to the specific needs, but to the economic needs of the neighborhood."

The parish's rectory is home to a day care center and Head Start, a federally funded program for pre-schoolers, according to Ute Barber, director. She added that 68 families participate in the program, which also provides such services as parental job training and health care screenings.

Founded in 1929, St. Francis of Assisi has also served the city's poor for years — first as a parish home to Italian immigrants who had moved to the city's German section known as "Dutchtown," and today as one of the diocese's key centers of Hispanic ministry.

In addition to its senior citizens, about 200 Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Chileans, Mexicans and Cubans also call the parish home, according to Deacon Carlos Vargas. He added that St. Francis offers both a noon Mass in Spanish on Sundays, and various bilingual liturgies throughout the year.

Among his duties the deacon listed the blessing of newly bought homes of Hispanics, a tradition increasingly carried out by deacons like himself as opposed to priests who are not as plentifully available to the community as they were in the past.

"It is a belief of ours that a home is not ready to live in until it's blessed," the deacon said.

Both parishes share a music director and are creating an intercultural youth ministry, according to Brunilda Martinez, the religious education coordinator who also works on St. Francis of Assisi's Spanish Apostolate along with Deacon Vargas.

Just as Ss. Peter and Paul is distinguished by its social outreach, St. Francis has long served the poor of its neighbor-

hood. St. Francis rents out its church basement to a consortium of agencies, including an offshoot of diocesan Catholic Charities, Charles Settlement House, which provides a variety of social services to the community.

Gail Blanchard, Charles House's executive director, also belongs to St. Francis, and serves on its parish council. She noted that the parish recently assisted a Cuban immigrant family her agency was helping to stay in the parish rectory.

In fact, Blanchard credited the parish's combination of social vision and personal touch for convincing her to join the congregation in 1986. She had worked at Charles House since 1969, and had gradually warmed to the notion that St. Francis was her real spiritual home.

"I think the connectedness with the parish made me realize that that's where I needed to be," she said.

Indeed, both Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Francis of Assisi draw an unusual proportion of their membership from beyond their neighborhoods, according to

members of both congregations.

Father Reid pointed out that Ss. Peter and Paul draws about 75 percent of its congregation from locales outside the parish's boundaries.

Meanwhile, at St. Francis of Assisi, about half the senior citizen parishioners, many first- or second-generation Italians and Germans, could attend churches in suburban communities, yet prefer to drive into the city to attend their longtime parish.

"They don't mind passing five churches to come home to St. Francis," observed Dolores Mary Brien, parish coordinator.

Phyllis Burruto, a parish council member who has belonged to St. Francis since its founding, added that she found her fellow parishioners warm and friendly. During the sign of peace at Mass, for example, worshippers are more likely to exchange sincere hugs than proffer limp handshakes, she said.

"I think that's what makes us all come back to St. Francis," Burruto said.

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