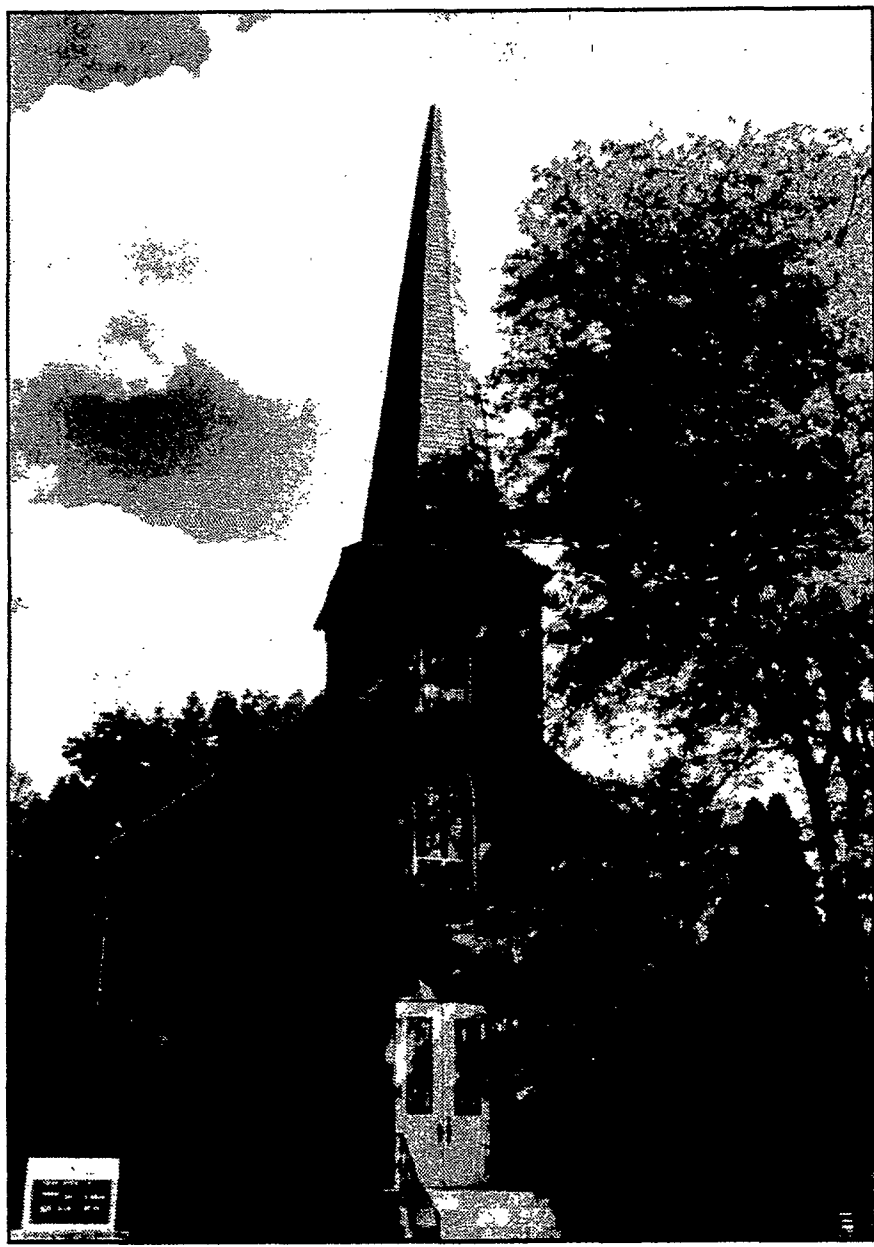


PARISH PROFILE

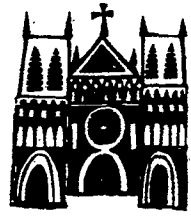


S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Above, members of St. Joachim's Parish — (from left) Father Stephen Kraus, pastor; Nancy Spencer, parishioner; Sally Stuckey, secretary; and Sister Virginia McGlynn, SSND, pastoral associate and religious-education coordinator — stand with a statue of their parish's patron saint. At left, the Canisteo church became a sister parish to St. Mary's, Rexville, in 1932.

Canisteo parish combines friendliness and faith

Parish Profile St. Joachim, Canisteo and St. Mary, Rexville



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

CANISTEO — If you need to see someone quickly at the St. Joachim's Church rectory, don't try knocking at the front door as your first option.

Instead, check the side entrance leading into the kitchen area. There's a good chance you'll find parishioners and staff members gathered around the table in that room, engaging in lively banter and laughter — even when it's not meal time.

"It's the Irish in us," joked Sally Stuckey, the parish secretary.

"This kitchen table is the site of a lot of things. This is my office," added Father Steven R. Kraus, St. Joachim's pastor.

The comfortable, casual setting is symbolic of St. Joachim's 240-family community, Father Kraus said.

"People here are genuine. I like that you can talk with them and laugh with them and joke with them and cry with them," he remarked.

This Steuben County parish was incorporated in 1880 as a mission of St. Ann's Church in Hornell, located five miles to the north. In 1932, St. Joachim's and St. Mary's Church in Rexville — located 15 miles to the south — became sister churches and began sharing the same pastor.

That policy still exists today, with Father Kraus ministering to both St. Joachim's and St. Mary's. Also serving

in dual capacities are Stuckey and Sister Virginia McGlynn, SSND, pastoral associate and religious-education coordinator.

With the exception of a 1960s addition to the front, St. Joachim's red-brick church has changed little in appearance from the time it was dedicated 115 years ago. A parish center building was also created in the 1960s.

The appeal of living in this scenic community could best be summed up in a recent conversation between longtime parishioner Nancy Spencer and Sister McGlynn, who arrived at St. Joachim's last month after serving at Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester.

Spencer noted that she moved to Canisteo in 1948 to get two years' teaching experience, but wound up never leaving.

"I can see why you stayed," said Sister McGlynn, who said she greatly enjoys the colorful, hilly terrain surrounding this Southern Tier village.

Another pleasing aspect of church life in Canisteo is the community's strong ecumenical bond — an attitude

Spencer noted. "When I first came here, oh, you never would have never heard of it. No way. But I think people have become broader; now the Council of Churches just accepts people for what they are," Spencer remarked.

This ecumenism is also reflected in the service of Sister Conleth Kennedy, RSM, who operates the Steuben County Rural Ministry. Although not directly connected with St. Joachim's, her storefront ministry is located not far from the church and is supported by all the Canisteo churches as well as private donations.

Within the St. Joachim's parish, Father Kraus notes a diverse makeup.

"We have a real smattering of professionals — retired farmers, doctors, lawyers, teachers," said Father Kraus.

Teenagers are also encouraged to become active in parish life by serving as lectors and eucharistic minis-

ters, he added.

Although this part of the Southern Tier has struggled economically in recent decades due to a declining railroad industry, Father Kraus said St. Joachim's — as well as St. Mary's — has been buoyed by the intense devotion of parishioners.

"One of the outstanding things about both parishes is that we struggle to be the church, because of the fact that we are small. But we do that very well," Father Kraus commented. "We've got a lot of generous people who make that happen. There's no excess money, luxury or frills, but we work very hard."

SNAPSHOTS

St. Joachim & St. Mary Churches

Phone: 607/698-4034

Ministerial staff:

Pastor: Father Stephen R. Kraus

Pastoral Associate/Religious Ed. Coordinator:

Sister Virginia McGlynn, SSND

Secretary: Sally Stuckey

St. Joachim Church

32 W. Main St., Canisteo

Incorporated: 1880

Youth Director: Bill Argay

Parish Council President: Richard Geile

St. Mary's Church

Church St., Rexville

Incorporated: 1845

Parish Council President: Kerry O'Brien

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