

PARISH PROFILE

Democratic air envelops youngest parish in diocese

Volunteering soul of church

Parish Profile

Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — Church of the Transfiguration celebrated its first Masses in a 19th-century barn.

After that, the parish transported its altar back and forth between Christ Clarion Church on Thornell Road and Jo-Mor's Movie Theater in Eastview Mall in Victor for different Masses. In 1985 the parish found a permanent home on Bloomfield Road.

According to Willard Steane, the parish's property manager, the altar was transported about in a rusty old station wagon.

"The joke was that if you wanted to know where Mass was, go down to the corner and follow the wagon," he said with a smile.

The current church and adjacent office building were completed about two years ago, although the rectory — also a site for early Masses — is located on another road in Pittsford.

Just as his 12-year-old parish had a somewhat unusual beginning, Father Gerald J. Appelby pastors Transfiguration with a slightly different approach than other diocesan pastors.

"When I became pastor, I told the parishioners that I would do three things," Father Appelby said. "I will preach the Gospel. I will preside over the sacraments. And I will enable the ministries of everyone else."

To that end, Father Appelby has emphasized a democratic, lay-dominated approach to parish life, he said. He noted that about 600 people — almost one-third to one-half of those attending weekly Mass — volunteer for some sort of parish activity.

For example:

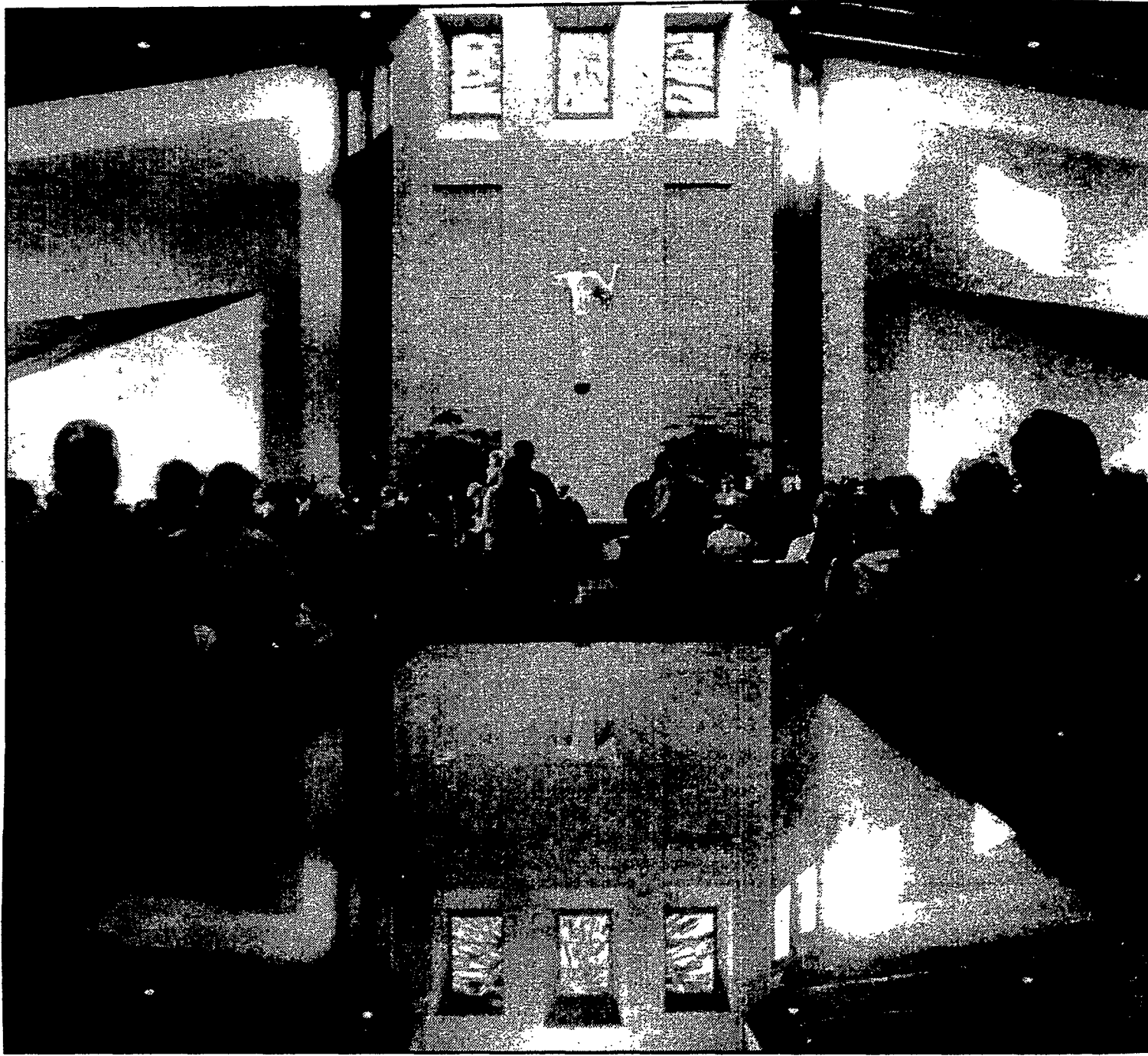
* Seventy-eight parishioners volunteer to teach religious education to 800 elementary school students, according to Mary Presutti, minister of Christian formation and coordinator of education ministries.

* Seventy to 80 men volunteer to work in Kentucky each year with the region's rural poor, according to Sandra Damico, general parish secretary.

* Forty-five parishioners volunteer to welcome new members of Transfiguration by presenting them with loaves of bread at their homes, Father Appelby said.

Furthermore, the parish itself boasts democracy at its most extensive level, Father Appelby explained. Indeed, the parish community council may be the largest in the diocese — simply because *everyone* in the parish belongs to it. Some parishioners are elected to oversee the "town meetings" that characterize parish council activity, but all decisions are reached by democratic consensus, Father Appelby noted.

"The only purpose of the elected representatives is to guarantee that there is a



Parishioners of Church of the Transfiguration receive Communion during the 9:30 a.m. celebration of the Eucharist at the 12-year-old Pittsford parish Nov. 5.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer



Bob Sherwood provided a comfortable headrest for his 11-month-old son Andrew during the 9:30 Mass Nov. 5.

quorum," he said.

Just as the representatives exist only to serve, not oversee, parish decision-making, the parish features a number of programs designed to emphasize the need for members to serve one another, staff members explained.

For example, the parish offers an employment network of volunteer professionals who lend a hand to Transfiguration members looking for a new job or dealing with the loss of a job.

Additionally, 40 parishioners oversee

"Care 'N' Share" groups, which provide parishioners in geographically divided regions of the parish with support in such times of need as family illness, death, or stress, staff members said.

The parish also offers programs for the widowed, the separated and the divorced because, ultimately, Transfiguration wants to be a parish where Catholics who have been away from the church can come home, staff members said. Father Appelby emphasized that, noting that about one-fifth of

SNAPSHOT

Church of the Transfiguration
50 W. Bloomfield Road, Pittsford
Phone: 716/248-2427

Founded: 1983

No. of Households:

More than 800

Ministerial Staff (partial listing):

Pastor:

Father Gerald J. Appelby

Parish Deacons:

Michael Piehler, Larry Casey

Coordinator of Worship and Prayer

Ministries:

Mary Lou Stotz

Music Minister:

Sue Wallace

Minister of Christian Formation &

Coordinator of Education

Ministries:

Mary Presutti

Religious Education Administrator:

Nancy Lynch

Youth Minister:

Maureen Piles

Coordinator of Human Service

Ministries:

Kathi Piehler

General Parish Secretary:

Sandra Damico

the parish's members came back to the Catholic church through their experience at Transfiguration.

Steane added that above the main door leading to the church is a quote from St. Peter who exclaimed at Christ's Transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

"We like to feel that that's a welcoming statement to all who come here," Steane said.

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