

# SPIRITUALITY

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## Prayer center promotes reflection for all

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

GREECE — The Borromeo Prayer Center can have a powerful effect on all who enter its doors — even those making brief, casual visits.

Patricia Scouten, prayer center administrator, recalls stirring conversations with service people who have come simply to install a phone or repair an appliance.

"They pull up a chair and start telling you about the wonderful things in their lives," Scouten said. "If they'd come to my home, that wouldn't have happened."

The easy opportunity to reflect is a key component of Borromeo Prayer Center, said its director, Father Francis E. Blighton. Accessibility for Monroe County residents is another plus, he noted, due to the fact that most retreat facilities in the diocese are located outside the county.

Borromeo Prayer Center, on the other hand, is on the grounds of St. Charles Borromeo Church. It's conveniently located off a main thoroughfare, Dewey Avenue, but the building is set back far enough that visitors are immune to traffic noise.

"The idea is that you can find God in your neighborhood, in your business place, and in the course of your daily life," said Father Blighton, who also serves as parochial vicar at St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

Borromeo Prayer Center is one of the few parish-based prayer facilities in the United States, Father Blighton said. Housed in a former convent that had been vacated several years earlier, it began offering a full slate of programs in 1992. The center's success was recently acknowledged by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who dedicated the building and its ministry this past Sept. 24.

The three-story structure contains several large and small meeting rooms; kitchen facilities; bedrooms; and a sun room. It can provide overnight accom-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Father Francis Blighton (center), director of St. Charles Borromeo Prayer Center, leads a discussion group in the retreat house, which was dedicated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark Sept. 24.

modations for up to 38 people.

Not only is the center parish-funded, but much of the furniture in this handsomely equipped facility was donated by parishioners. The St. Charles community also assists in upkeep of the building.

Nearly 20 groups and programs within St. Charles Borromeo Parish, such as Pre-Cana, youth ministry and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, make regular use of the center. Seasonal events are also offered: currently, 5:30 p.m. Masses are held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout Advent.

Other diocesan parishes and groups utilize Borromeo Prayer Center as well. Regular programs include Engaged Encounter; spiritual sessions for deacons; and certification training for diocesan youth ministry.

Ecumenical groups, along with community organizations as diverse as Boy Scouts of America and Overeaters Anonymous, are additional Borromeo Prayer Center participants.

Yet Scouten emphasized that one

does not need to be enrolled in a program to use the prayer center; anyone who wishes a few moments of quiet worship is also welcome.

People can also benefit from this ministry without traveling to St. Charles. Scouten and Father Blighton frequently visit diocesan parishes to lead programs offered through the prayer center.

Father Blighton said his ministry's programs emphasize group sharing.

"My conviction is that spiritual growth happens in the community, not just off by itself," he commented.

Through this process, Father Blighton said, participants can discover ways God is already working in their lives that they may never have recognized otherwise. This can create spiritual contentment in a world bent on materialistic gain, the priest added.

"Society says you'll be happy when you get what you want," Father Blighton stated.

"But here, it's wanting what you have."

## SENIOR FEATURE

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Volunteer Kelly Volkmuth with St. Ann's Home Resident Mildred Neidinger

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