

PARISH PROFILE

Rochester church reaches out to its neighborhood

Parish Profile

St. Andrew's,
Rochester



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In this northeast section of the city, it's not enough for people to go to church.

The church must also go to the people. "If we just come to celebrate — to the exclusion of the neighborhood in which we're living — we're not being like Christ," explained Father Timothy E. Horan, pastor of St. Andrew's Church. "If you want to get to know St. Andrew's, you can't separate her from the neighborhood or the community."

A large banner draped across the church entrance — containing the words "Beacon of Hope" — reflects St. Andrew's increasing emphasis on outreach to its inner-city neighborhood.

This mission took wings during a parish census launched two years ago. Rather than simply visit the homes of Catholics, teams of St. Andrew's parishioners expanded their efforts and began to stop at every residence.

"It started as a census, and moved to evangelization," parishioner Margaret Oberst explained.

Oberst added that canvassers have visited more than 1,200 homes and will continue their mission until all 4,000 residences within parish boundaries have been covered.

"There are a growing number of people who have never been taught about Jesus Christ. We don't want them to go through life in this city without having had the opportunity," Father Horan remarked.

One of the canvassers, Lucille Klingler, said her teams take a friendly, inviting approach as they encourage people to become involved at St. Andrew's. In nearly all cases, she acknowledged, residents have been happy to chat.

"We tell them why we're there, and they listen. I don't think I've had more than three refusals out of all the doors I've knocked on," Klingler remarked.

The fruits of these efforts are noticeable at Sunday Masses, Oberst noted.

"I can look out and see the people whose doors I've knocked on," she said.

Neighborhood canvassing is one of several outreach programs associated with this 850-family parish. For instance, Oberst serves as chairperson for the St. Andrew's Area Food Cupboard on North Street. In addition, the Andrews Center — a facility for children waiting to be placed in foster homes — began at St. Andrew's Church in 1973. The service now operates at St. James Church in Irondequoit.

On church grounds, the former convent at St. Andrew's is now known as Freedom House. This facility, operated by Catholic Family Center, serves as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center for men.

In addition, the diocesan elementary school located at St. Andrew's has an enrollment of 215 children in grades K-6 as well as a pre-kindergarten program. Ac-



Children from St. Andrew's School in Rochester perform a song for the congregation at the 11 a.m. Mass Feb. 11. The children sang at the Mass in honor of Catholic Schools Week. S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

SNAPSHOTS

St. Andrew's Church
923 Portland Ave., Rochester
716/342-8686
Established: 1914
Registered families: 850
Ministerial staff:
Pastor: Father Timothy E. Horan
Parish deacon: William Schmitz
Pastoral associate:
Sister Anne Marie Lennon, RSM
Religious education coordinator:
Joanne Sharpe
Parish secretaries:
Marie Cunningham, Joan Limpert
Parish council president:
Carolyn O'Neill
Youth minister: Patrick Francis
St. Andrew's School principal:
Sister Mary Alice O'Brien, RSM



Glen Lisi plays guitar and sings as part of the St. Andrew's music ensemble during the Feb. 11 Mass.

ording to Father Horan, approximately 50 percent of these students are non-parishioners.

Other youth-oriented programs include a religious education program and youth group. St. Andrew's is also the proud sponsor of Boy Scout Troop #70 which has operated continuously for 61 years.

Ironically, the original St. Andrew's Church — dedicated in 1914 — was surrounded not by city buildings, but by farm land. However, the rapidly growing community dictated that a new church be erected on the grounds in 1926.

As St. Andrew's evolved into a city parish, its founding pastor remained a constant. Msgr. George W. Eckl guided the parish for its first 51 years until his retirement in 1965. He continued to reside at St. Andrew's, and remained actively involved in the parish into his 90s. He died

in 1977 at the age of 99.

Carolyn O'Neill, parish council president, noted that Msgr. Eckl's influence is still strong in 1996.

"Even people who didn't know him have heard about him," she said.

Parishioner Joseph Placious added that Msgr. Eckl is an inspiration for those involved in the current parish canvassing project.

"He was the first evangelist, because he would walk the neighborhood. And he would always have candy for the kids," Placious recalled.

Msgr. Eckl's devotion to the community has been maintained under the direction of Father Horan, William Schmitz, the parish deacon, and Sister Anne Marie Lennon, RSM, the pastoral associate. Father Horan is hopeful that the parish's current efforts will form a strong

base for future generations of St. Andrew's worshippers.

"We're not interested in just hanging on. We're interested in thriving," remarked Father Horan, the pastor since 1993.

Although Placious termed the St. Andrew's neighborhood as "an area in transition," parishioner Mary Ellen Heyman noted that many young faces are making regular appearances at St. Andrew's.

"We have a lot of families coming for Eucharist and penance services," Heyman said.

Heyman's observation indicates that the St. Andrew's "Beacon of Hope" is indeed a strong one.

"Everywhere we turn, we see reinforcement that we're on the right road," O'Neill commented.

"It makes you proud. You want to pop your buttons," Klingler concluded.

KIDS ANSWERS

Answers from Page 12

Genesis	Jonah
Hosea	Titus
Thessalonians	Esther
Joshua	John
Joel	Hebrews
Ruth	Job

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