

# PARISH PROFILE

## Community growing in several new directions

**Parish Profile**  
St. Salome,  
Irondequoit



By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — Mary Van Houten only wanted a part-time job playing music for St. Salome's Parish early last year. But after tickling the ivories at a number of Masses, Van Houten decided in June to accept a position as the church's full-time music director.

"I just fell in love with the place and decided to stay there," Van Houten said.

Van Houten plays all types of arrangements for the parishes' liturgies, drawing from diverse compositions ranging from those written in the classical era to those written by today's "New Age" tunesmiths.

"It hasn't been anything kind of wacky," she stressed.

She praised St. Salome's parishioners for their willingness to let her experiment, and their eagerness to acclaim her approach to the piano.

"It's nice that they notice, and that they continue to notice and support me," she said.

She added that she and her sister-in-law, Paula Van Houten, oversee three choirs at the parish: a full choir that specializes in contemporary church music; a traditional choir that sings older songs; and a junior choir consisting of children in grades four through eight.

According to St. Salome's pastor, Father William G. Darling, it's no surprise that the congregation has embraced their current music director. The parishioners have exhibited an invigorating willingness to accept new ideas, he commented.

"I think (parishioners) handle things well, but they don't understand how well they handle things," he said.

To illustrate his point, the pastor noted that St. Salome's recently changed its Mass schedule, eliminating one weekend Mass so that attendance would increase at the three liturgies still to be offered. In particular, the schedule change has increased the number of worshippers who come to the parish's 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass, which, by all accounts, is the focal point of St. Salome's liturgical life.

"I think that went rather smoothly," he said of the change. "If you have a church that seats 600, and you have 125 people at the Mass, it's kind of depressing to go into a church that's mostly empty. Now, there's 350 to 400 people at the 10:30 Mass."

He added that the parish may begin to schedule new programs in between and after the 8 and 10:30 a.m. Masses on Sunday.

St. Salome's already offers a rich variety of liturgical experiences, according to Christine Coniglio, religious education coordinator. Parish teenagers teach approximately 50 pre-school children about the Bible during the 10:30 Mass, while 20 to 50 elementary school children attend a children's Liturgy of the Word at the same time, she said.

In addition to its Sunday catechetical offerings, St. Salome's teaches religious



Maura (right) and Francine Mann lead the children's Liturgy of the Word during the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Salome's Church March 10.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

education to about 100 elementary-age children during the week, Coniglio said.

She added that the parish is embarking on a new youth ministry program aimed at junior high and high school students. For example, on the weekend of March 2-3, the parish invited Johan Engstrom, youth ministry coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Brighton, to conduct a "lock-in" for 20 seventh- and eighth-graders, she said. The lock-in was an overnight catechetical session that ended with a morning Mass, she explained.

On Friday, March 22, young people will join their elders to put on the Social Ministry Committee's annual Soup Supper at 6 p.m., according to Carol Lebbon, a committee member.

The Rev. Kenneth Fox of the Open Door Mission in Rochester, which serves the homeless and the poor, will speak at the supper, whose proceeds will benefit Operation Rice Bowl. Operation Rice Bowl is a Lenten anti-hunger program that aids the U.S. bishops' overseas agency, Catholic Relief Services, as well as diocesan anti-hunger efforts. About 100 parishioners will help the committee put on the supper this year, she said.

Lebbon pointed out that St. Salome's has a long history of social action, having extended itself to resettle refugees in the area, and to raise funds for agencies helping homeless mothers and their children,



Father William Darling, pastor of St. Salome's, greets Cooper, a future guide dog, after Mass. It was Cooper's first time to Mass with his trainer, Bev Bloss.

families of the terminally ill, and such parish soup kitchens as the ones operated by St. Philip Neri and St. Andrew's parishes in Rochester.

The committee has also educated the parish on the diocesan synodal goal of promoting the consistent life ethic, which opposes abortion, war, the death penalty, poverty and euthanasia, she noted. For example, the parish recently participated in a diocesan drive to send cards to New York State legislators asking them to support a bill requiring that parents of minors be notified when their daughters seek abortions, she explained.

The committee enables St. Salome's parishioners to make their mark in the world as carriers of Christ's concern for people, Lebbon commented.

"It's a way to help and serve," she said

### SNAPSHOTS

**St. Salome's Church**  
4282 Culver Road, Irondequoit  
716/323-1160

Established: 1908

No. of families: 750

Ministerial staff:

Pastor: **Father William G. Darling**

Pastoral Associate: **Sister Ann**

**Louise Hentges, SSMN**

Religious Education Coordinator:

**Christine Coniglio**

Director of Music:

**Mary Van Houten**

of the committee's work. "It's our call to be a Christ-like figure."

About 20 people recently signed up to help their fellow parishioners as part of a new program at St. Salome's called "Helping Hands," according to Sister Ann Louise Hentges, a member of the order of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, and the parish's pastoral associate.

Helping Hands members will provide comfort and assistance to families suffering such losses as a death in the family, Sister Hentges said. It's reflective of the parishioners' desire to be there for one another, she concluded.

"The parish is very friendly and welcoming," she observed. "People know each other. They are very supportive of each other and reach out to the wider community."

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