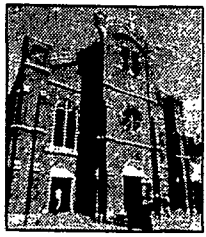


PARISH PROFILE

Rural community gives faith to new generation

Parish Profile

St. Rose,
Lima



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

LIMA — On May 30, his 99th birthday, Joe Keenan sat in the rectory at St. Rose Parish and recalled how people traveled to Mass back before paved highways and gas-powered vehicles were common in rural areas.

In particular, the parish's former sexton recalled how Father Simon FitzSimons, pastor of St. Rose from 1884 to 1912, had to divide his time between the parish and its mission, St. Paul, in West Bloomfield.

"Father FitzSimons would say Mass here and rush on horse and buggy to West Bloomfield," Keenan said.

Those days are gone, noted Keenan and St. Rose's pastor, Father James F. Doyle. Both pointed out that Lima's farm-dominated past is fading behind its growing identity as a bedroom community of Rochester.

"The carpetbaggers are coming in and taking over," Keenan joked.

Indeed, only two farming families belong to the parish now, Father Doyle, 72, said. He added that 250 families call the parish, founded in 1842, their spiritual home.

Actually, Father Doyle is quite happy that St. Rose is beginning to attract younger families from Lima and the surrounding communities that dot the border between Monroe and Livingston counties. He pointed out that a few years back he was getting concerned that the parish membership was getting a little long in the tooth, a concern shared by Jean LaBore, the parish's director of lectors and its 12-member choir.

"I've noticed that we do have younger families," LaBore said in a phone interview. "That's good because that's a lot of the life of your community."

When asked why he thought new families were attracted to the parish, Father Doyle speculated that the parish's rural charm was enhanced by the length of its Sunday Masses, which go no longer than 45 minutes. He observed that in an era of liturgical reform that has resulted in Masses as long as 90 minutes in some parishes, St. Rose has continued to appeal to Catholics who believe that brevity is the soul of liturgy.

"I wouldn't say that we rush our services, but we get them out in a reasonable time," he said.

That doesn't mean the parish doesn't believe in the Second Vatican Council's call for a healthy amount of lay participation in the Mass, according to the parish's ministerial volunteers.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Jennifer Neenan, a parishioner at St. Rose Church, takes up the collection during the May 25 Mass at the Lima parish.

For example, LaBore pointed out that St. Rose has been able to maintain an active choir for decades now because its membership is open to anyone in the parish, regardless of age.

"If you can't sing, we'll put you in the back row, and you can just move your mouth," she said jokingly.

On a more serious note, LaBore pointed out that music increases the level of participation among parishioners at the Mass.

"It seems you're really more involved in the service," she said of singing.

Cathy Bauer has been more involved with the Mass ever since the parish began using female eucharistic ministers about a decade ago, she said. Her husband, Robert, directs the parish's eucharistic ministers.

"I think it's really a special privilege," she said of distributing the Eucharist. "It's a real gift to be able to bring the Body and Blood of Christ to someone."

But, given the growing shortage of priests, the future of the consecration of the Eucharist that Bauer and other ministers distribute each Sunday has become cloudy, according to Father Doyle and others.

Anticipating the effects of a clergy shortage on the parish's future liturgical life, Father Doyle has called on the parishioners to learn about and help him out with the Mass as much as possible, said Barbara Sheenan, a parish religion education teacher. Sheenan was present with Father Doyle and Keenan for the May 30 rectory interview.

"Father's been grooming us for quite a while," Sheenan said.

Indeed, Father Doyle was quite ill dur-

SNAPSHOTS

St. Rose, Lima
1985 Lake Ave., Lima
Phone: 716/624-1005
Pastor: Father James F. Doyle
Ministry directors:
Religious Education and Youth Ministry: Christina Preston
Eucharistic Ministers: Robert Bauer
Altar Ministry: Mary Ingalsbe
Choir and Lectors: Jean LaBore
Social Ministry: Marise Lipa
Finance and Buildings: Ted Zornow, Thomas Crego
Ushers: David Shaffer
Cemetery Board: John Collins Jr., Ted Zornow, Don Harrigan, Paul Neenan
Synod: Sharon Neenan

ing a Mass last December, and noted that he could not have completed the service without the aid of trained parishioners.

"I struggled through the Mass," he recalled. "I had to whisper the prayers of the Mass."

Father Doyle emphasized that he also wants to leave a legacy of religious education to his lay charges. It's people like Sheenan and several other volunteer catechists who are grooming the parish's younger generation to run with the faith, he noted.

"If you don't have an educated people in the church, they're going to fall away," Father Doyle said. "You have two parents working now. The time they spend with the children is diminished now, so you need a good (religion) teacher."

Between its two Sunday Masses, St. Rose offers 50-minute catechism classes to 75 children in grades kindergarten through eight, according to Christina A. Preston, religious education coordinator. The parish has made an effort to implement the No. 1 diocesan synod priority of lifelong faith formation, she said, noting she is working with other parishioners to create a youth group for about 10 to 15 interested teenagers.

Preston added that between eight and 10 young adults in the parish hope to hold a forum soon on ethics in the workplace. Trying to reach young adults represents a broader effort to train parishioners in the church's teachings in an ongoing basis, she said. Preston pointed to the growing number of parish families headed by young adults as fertile ground for catechesis.

"Because of the changing demographics in the parish, we think this is a real opportune time to branch off in this direction," Preston concluded.

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