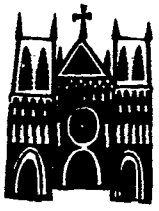


PARISH PROFILE

Faith community encompasses several groups

Parish Profile
St. Mark's,
Greece



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GREECE — If one value seems to predominate among active parishioners at St. Mark's Church, it's the value of reaching out to others.

"If you're in a jam, they're there to help you out," Mary M. Chatterton, pastoral assistant, said of the parish's 1,200 families.

The parish has grown rapidly since its founding in 1964, and members have paid close attention to continuing growth, according to Father Thomas Erdle, pastor. They completed a new church three years ago for \$1.6 million — primarily in anticipation that the parish's population would double by 2010.

Chatterton and Father Erdle listed several St. Mark's ministries and groups already addressing the needs of as many people at the parish as possible. The parish's staff and volunteers make several overtures on behalf of participation to St. Mark's members, Chatterton and Father Erdle explained. Opportunities for involvement range from education for those who want to study Scripture to assistance for those unable to hear the Mass, they said.

Parishioner Jo-Ann Koch, who teaches at the Rochester School for the Deaf, uses her sign language skills to interpret the 10 a.m. Mass each week for the 10 or so worshipers who are unable to hear.

"I feel it's really important that each and every person feel they are a part of it," she said of the Mass.

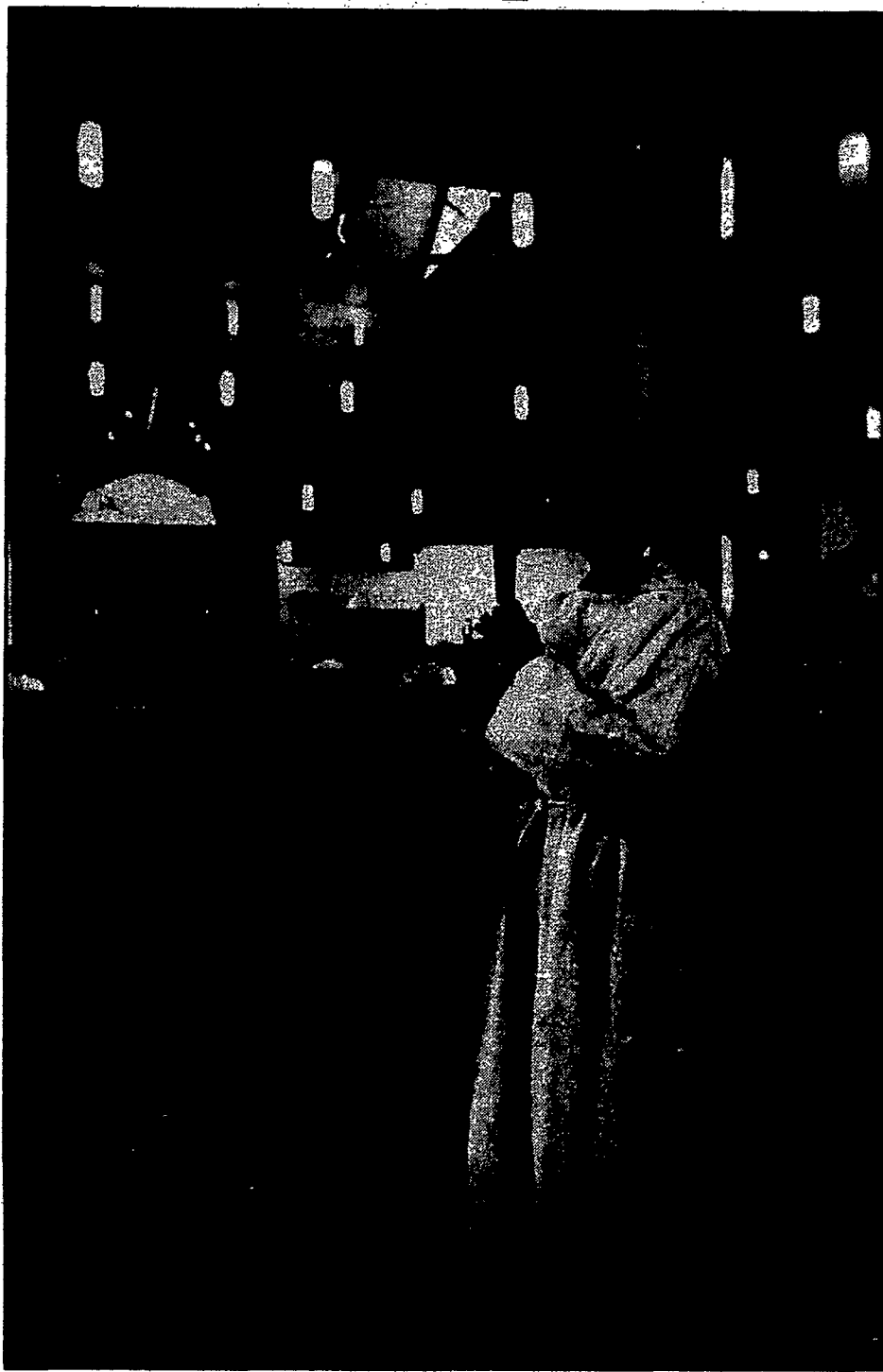
Meanwhile, Joseph Ilardo, the parish's music supervisor for the last three years, emphasized that he has tried to get as many parishioners as possible to make music at St. Mark's. The parish features a contemporary choir, a traditional choir, a children's choir, and a six-member cantor group, he said. Yet that's not all there is or will be.

Teenagers at the parish have approached Ilardo about forming a teen choir, and children's choir members from grades three to five will attend a daily music camp at the parish from July 29 to Aug. 2, he said.

"I have 20 dynamic young singers," he said of the youngsters attending music camp. "They've really developed nicely. They show a really exciting sense of professionalism."

Debora Litwiller, liaison from the Boy Scouts of America to St. Mark's, knows all about setting high standards for youngsters. With her own teenage son involved in parish-based Scouting, Litwiller has seen firsthand the value of reaching out to young boys in need of structured parish-centered activity.

"I think (Scouting) brings full circle the sense of fellowship and church and religion and service," she said. "It gives the boys a more well-rounded sense of what



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer
Altar server Anthony Attoma of St. Mark's Church, Greece, awaits Father Thomas Erdle, pastor, as the congregation prepares for the noon Mass on July 14.

life is all about as they get older."

Getting young people involved in the church can make the difference between whether or not they remain Catholic, according to Benjamin A. O'Connor, a graduate last June of McQuaid Jesuit High School in Brighton.

In the past four years, O'Connor said he has gone from being a teenager relatively uninterested in the church or community service to an active parishioner who serves as president of the youth group. He added that the youth group has served a similar purpose for the teenagers who belong to it.

"Many of them, if it wasn't for the youth group, wouldn't even be here," he said.

Quite possibly the teenagers find in youth group what Chuck Territo said he found in St. Mark's 60-member men's group — camaraderie and Christian fellowship.

The men's group meets for dinner at the parish the first Tuesday of every month, save July and August, Territo said, and after dinner and group business, the

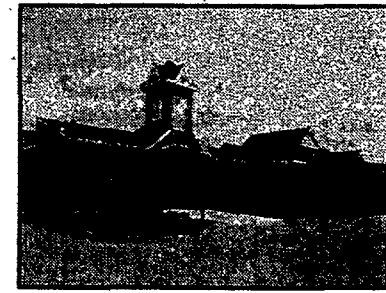
men socialize and often play card games. But the men don't meet solely for their own pleasure, he emphasized. Territo listed numerous activities the men's group undertakes to benefit the parish.

This year, for example, the men's group will take the parish's altar servers to Seabreeze Park in Irondequoit, an amusement park on Lake Ontario, Territo said. Men's group members also raise money for parish activities and have volunteered at area soup kitchens, he added.

Social ministry is an important part of life at St. Mark's, according to Norma Johnston, chairwoman of the parish's social ministry committee. Organized charity helps to focus parishioners' concern for others, she said.

"Most of the parishioners want to help the poor, but they don't always know how to do so," she said.

The committee gives parishioners an outlet for charitable impulses by holding food and clothing collection drives for area soup kitchens and clothing outlets, she said. Parishioners have also raised money for the such Catholic anti-hunger



SNAPSHOTS

St. Mark's Church
54 Kuhn Road, Greece
Founded in 1964
Phone: 716/225-3710
Ministerial staff:
Pastor: **Father Thomas Erdle**
Deacon **James Chatterton**
Deacon **Thomas Kluchko**
Pastoral assistant:
Mary M. Chatterton
Music supervisor: **Joseph Ilardo**
Organist: **Don Meminger**
Religious education secretary:
Paula Schroth
Parish pastoral council president:
Roy Dilcher

efforts as Operation Rice Bowl, which fights hunger both abroad and here in the United States, Johnston said.

In addition to hands-on charitable efforts, the social ministry committee boasts a political action component, she said, noting that the committee oversaw a recent parishwide letter-writing campaign to government leaders on the partial-birth abortion issue.

But none of this work would mean anything, were it not for the parishioners' devotion to Christ, according to Johnston. She pointed out her committee sponsors a monthly day of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Various committee members take turns praying before the exposed host for an hour each, she said.

Father Erdle pointed out that the parishioners, in general, show a keen interest in the Eucharist — about 40 people show up for daily Mass on a regular basis.

"The parishioners have a deep faith and generosity," the pastor said. "I see that especially in their devotion to the Eucharist."

Johnston chalked up her interest in the Eucharist to her interest in social ministry. Meditating in the presence of Christ makes her better able to serve others, she said.

"I don't think you can give if you don't constantly refresh yourself," she said.



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