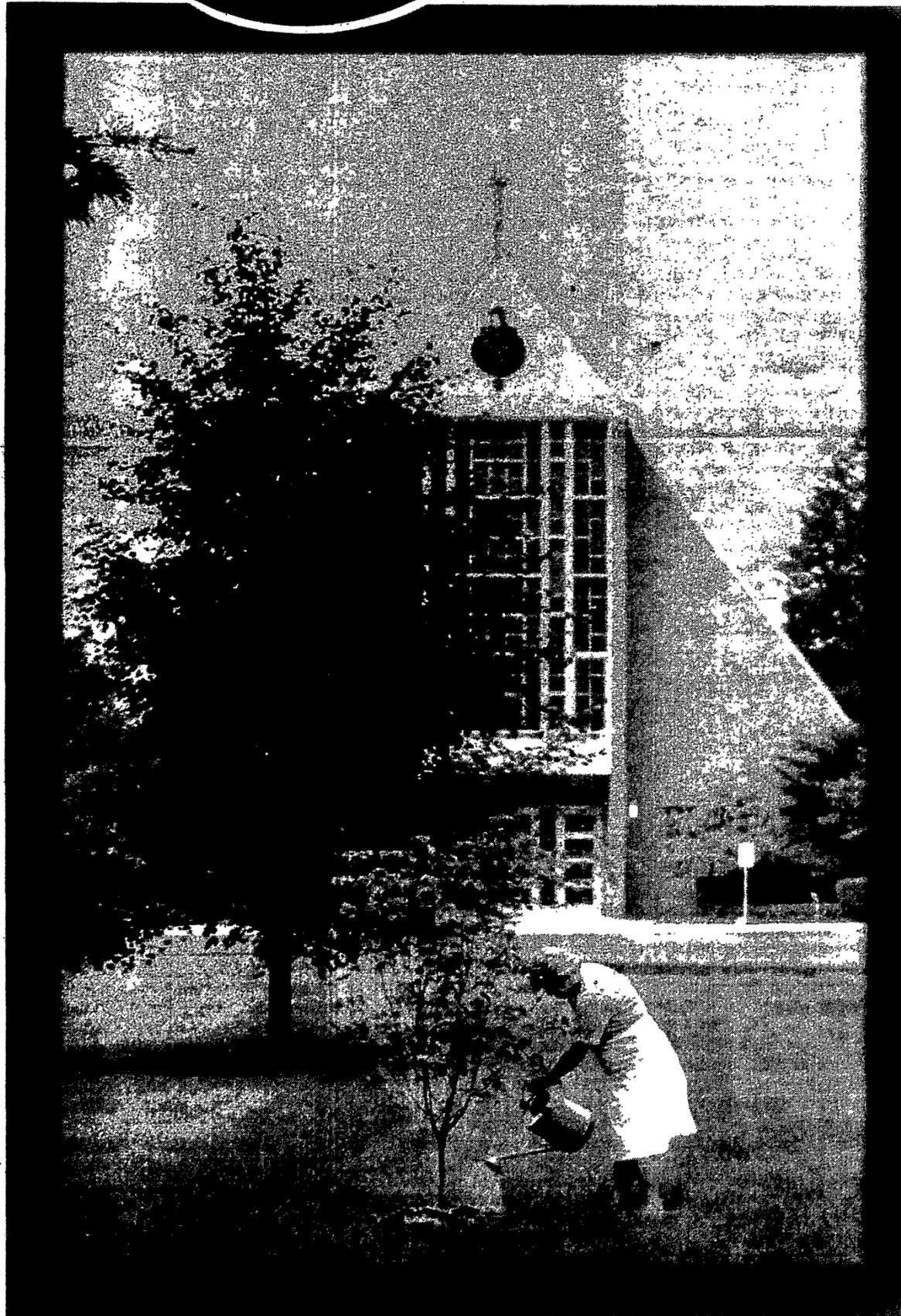




# Catholic Courier

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# Renew



Renew coordinator Diane Waterstreet of St. Thomas More Church, Rochester, waters the tree planted by the parish in the spirit of Renew. Renew uses a tree as one of its symbols.

## Hopes grow for spiritual rejuvenation

Parishioners at St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls say they feel:

- closer to God
- stronger in their faith
- more appreciative of life and more caring about others
- more comfortable talking about God
- better able to read the Bible.

They attribute these changes to Renew, a program for parish renewal begun in the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., in 1978, which has spread to 125 U.S. dioceses.

Joyce Sinicropi, a Renew coordinator at the parish, said parishioners expressed those sentiments in a survey after the church's first sessions of the program in the fall of 1995 — making it one of an estimated 11,000 parishes that have undertaken Renew.

"The spirit of God moves in it," said her co-coordinator, John Kelly. "You bring a lot of people together and suddenly you're thinking, 'Why do I believe the things I do? Why is the Gospel important to me? Why is it important for me to have a personal relationship with Jesus?'"

This fall, and in the fall and Lenten seasons for the next two years, 25 parishes in the Diocese of Rochester will center homilies, prayers, small group meetings, even parish dinners, on five Renew themes — the Lord's call, our response, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, discipleship and evangelism.

They've spent most of the year preparing — forming steering committees, training group leaders, and reading Scripture, with the help of Renew's international office in Plainfield, N.J.

The sudden spread of Renew in the diocese is due in part to the promotional efforts of Msgr. Thomas Kleissler, Renew's co-founder and director. After receiving an invitation from a parish in a diocese, he generally contacts other area parishes about the program, as he did in the Rochester Diocese.

Those promotional efforts are aided by word-of-mouth reports from people who have encountered the program.

"We've talked so much amongst ourselves, when we talk to someone else, we say, 'What do you mean, you don't know about it?'" said Julie Aldridge, co-coordinator of Renew at St. Ambrose Church.

"People are still sort of mystified," commented Father William J. Cosgrove, pastor of St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville. He added that he himself is a bit cautious. "A lot still aren't quite comprehending where we are going with this."

Given the number of parishes introducing it, by the end of the year hundreds, if not thousands, of diocesan parishioners will know about Renew.

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STORY BY STAFF WRITER KATHLEEN SCHWAR • PHOTOGRAPH BY STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER MATTHEW SCOTT