

FEATURE

Parishioners share Catholic, community spirit

Parish Profile

St. John the Evangelist, Clyde
St. Patrick's, Savannah



By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

CLYDE — "Church" for Catholics in the southeastern Wayne County communities of Savannah and Clyde means much more than just the buildings where they celebrate Mass.

Parishioners of St. John the Evangelist in Clyde and its mission church for nearly all of a 121-year existence, St. Patrick's of Savannah, have always tried to live out their faith and make a difference in the community at large.

And they don't dodge difficult circumstances. The Catholics who support a neighboring United Methodist church's supper also are there for families of all faiths who suffer tragic circumstances — whether it be a murder, suicide, or otherwise untimely death, all of which the community has suffered in the past year.

Such outreaches by parishioners may not officially be linked to church. However, said Joseph Kolczynski of St. Patrick's, the people of the area "look forward to leadership from either church (Catholic or Methodist)."

"And we don't draw lines on Catholics and such," said Kolczynski, St. Patrick's pastoral council president, and who is retired from 40 years of school administration.

"No matter how tiresome, we try to keep things going," said Agnes "Aggie" Arliss of St. Patrick's.

As a longtime Altar and Rosary Society member, Arliss has learned that all the society's eight members need do is ask for help and it will be there.

"You get on the phone and call — 'Could you make this? Do this? Cook this?' And they will," Arliss said. "You end up reaching out to pretty much the whole parish, and they will do what you ask."

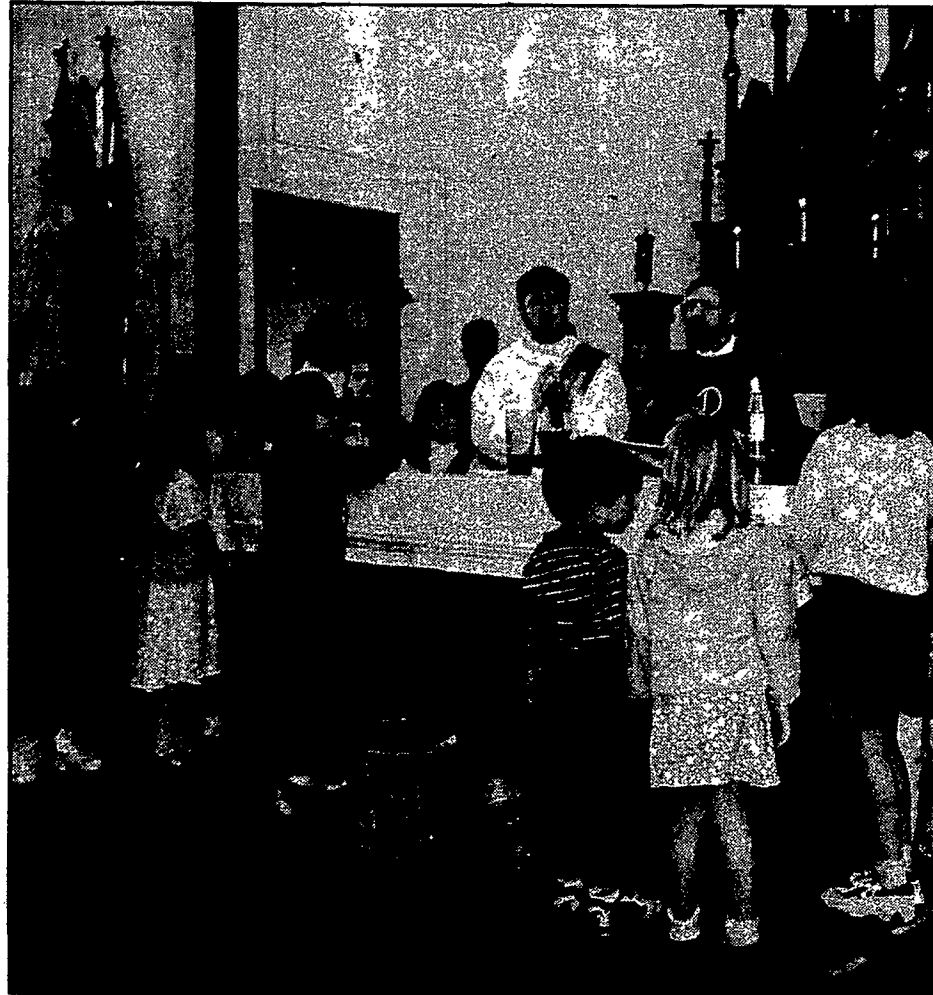
That includes myriads of receptions, sales, purchases, donations, memorials and other projects the society has taken on — which, for Arliss, are done between responsibilities for four handicapped adults in her own residence, a family care home.

Kolczynski noted that especially during community crises, parishioners are quick to take food and send money, and offer other help.

Small churches have traditionally relied upon their own talents to meet their communities' needs, he said, which is why Synod discussions on developing specific ministries to certain populations sounded familiar.

"But we're moving ahead with Synod recommendations and hopefully, I guess there will be better lines of communication, understanding. I think it will help develop communication between parishioners, the hierarchy and so forth."

Father Leo Reinhardt and the local



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer
In the spirit of Catechetical Sunday Sept. 15, Father Leo Reinhardt invited the children of the parish to gather around the altar during the Eucharist at the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church, Clyde.

Methodist minister, Kolczynski noted, help the high school's staff crisis intervention team. Clyde-Savannah Central High School lost several youth and adults last year to death, including to suicide, accidents and disease.

The tragedies struck even closer, when St. John's parishioners Mary and Randy DeLisio lost their 16-year-old son Andy to leukemia last spring.

"When Andy was sick you couldn't ask for a better place to be (than the parishes)," Mary recalled. "He received thousands and thousands of cards, gifts. Many came to see him. They made dinner for us, planted flowers for us, anything to keep our lives comfortable as possible while we were going through it."

DeLisio said she was drawn to the Catholic Church 17 years ago, converting after involvement in Lutheran and Methodist denominations, because of its traditions and rituals.

"It's a big family celebration to me when we celebrate the Eucharist," DeLisio said. "It's like sitting down at dinner. It's a very comfortable feeling to me."

As faith formation administrator for the parishes, she and other parishioners are working to make their younger members, in particular, comfortable with church.

The churches have begun a "father-son altar servers" program, for example, through which fathers who were altar boys join their sons in serving. The program includes other family combinations: two girls serve with their uncle, for example.

After all, the churches have a "highly trained corps" of servers, noted Bob Mon-

temorano, who has served with his son, Robby, 10. Many of the adults learned to serve while attending St. John the Evangelist School, and remember those times as happy experiences, he said.

"We used to do it day in and day out at parochial school," he said. "Most of us still sit around and talk about the old days. Easter Benediction was a big thing for us, the vigil — that was it."

Montemorano thought of the idea after Father Reinhardt issued an appeal for more volunteers. The parish "jumped right on it," he said. "The parish seems to get a kick out of seeing the team up there working."

Father Reinhardt "wants everybody to be involved," he noted. "He has a lot of intensity in his convictions and a lot of it seems to rub off."

As further incentive for church involvement, St. Patrick's awards a \$200 scholarship to any graduating high school senior who is active at St. Patrick's and who applies for the scholarship.

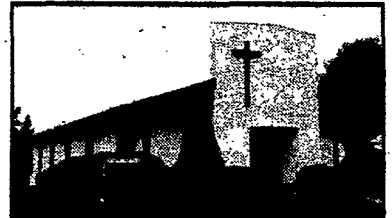
St. John's and St. Patrick's will be working even more closely together in the coming years, according to Father Reinhardt. In response to the diocesan Synod, he has overseen the creation of synod implementation, social ministry, liturgy and lifelong faith formation committees.

When he came four years ago, he said, St. John's, now with nearly 500 registered families, had a pastoral council, two strong committees — finance and cemetery — the Catholic Daughters of the Americas and the Holy Name Society; St. Patrick's, which has 68 registered families, had just the Altar and Rosary Society and the pastoral council.

SNAPSHOTS



St. John the Evangelist
114 Sodus St., Clyde, 315/923-3941



St. Patrick
Grand Avenue, Savannah

Ministerial Staff:

Pastor:

Father Leo J. Reinhardt

Faith Formation Administrator:

Mary DeLisio

Secretary:

Gloria Garofono

Deacon:

Gregory J. Kiley (St. John's)

Pastoral council president:

Joseph Kolczynski (St. Patrick's)

The committees should help the two churches pull closer together, he said. If a program is offered, it will be for both, he said.

That probably wouldn't have stopped one former parishioner from visiting both churches the same day, anyway.

Rosa Iocco, who died in 1973, is said to have walked her way into Ripley's "Believe It or Not" fame. According to St. Patrick's Centennial of Faith historical booklet, Iocco walked the equivalent of three times around the earth in 20 years between church and home.

Living west of the village of Savannah, Iocco walked to Clyde for daily Mass; she walked to the Catholic churches in both Clyde and Savannah on days when both celebrated Mass.

She might have walked even more, had not her neighbors been so anxious to help out.

"We would pick her up and give her a ride back to Savannah," Arliss recalled. "Everybody gave her rides."



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