

FEATURE

Community wealthy in generosity of its volunteers

Parish Profile

Our Lady Of Mercy, Greece

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GREECE — Our Lady of Mercy Church may seem just another center of diocesan life, but it's far more to Rose Anuskiewicz, a member of the parish's Resurrection Choir that sings at funeral Masses.

"I hope we never close Our Lady of Mercy because Our Lady of Mercy is my second home," she said.

A parish of 900 families that will celebrate its 40th year in 1998 hardly seems in danger of closing. Headed by its new pastor, Father Stan Kacprzak, Our Lady of Mercy boasts a number of ministries to both the community and its own members.

Father Kacprzak, who has also served at the Greece parishes of Our Mother of Sorrows and St. John the Evangelist, came to Our Lady of Mercy in December. He spoke highly of his new parish.

"What I'm doing this first year is seeing what's here — which is a wealth of community and generosity," he said.

Indeed, the parish's Social Ministry Committee oversees a score of activities ranging from raising funds for various diocesan and parish charitable efforts to collecting food, clothing and money for several social ministry programs located in the diocese.

"I just think it's a very giving parish," said Sandy Reiss, who co-chairs the committee with Helen Mercier. "When we ask for something, we have a tremendous response."

Our Lady of Mercy parishioners are also generous to one another. That sense of giving shows in volunteer commitment to the parish's music program, overseen by Music Director Janet Andrychuk-Tedesco. In addition to the 15-member Resurrection Choir, she works with a 15-member Adult Choir and a 20-member Children's Choir whose members are in grades one through five.

Anuskiewicz is one of several senior cit-



Matthew Scott/Staff Photographer

From left, Marissa Zercie and Allison Beebe, both 11, rehearse a liturgical dance placing an "Alleluia" banner away in a box for Lent, for Mardi Gras Feb. 11 at Our Lady of Mercy Church.

izens who volunteer to sing at parishioners' funerals, Andrychuk-Tedesco said.

"Some of them say they can't sing, but come so that they can be there for the people," the music director said.

But not only can Anuskiewicz sing, she said that her motivation to do so was to please others and the Lord.

"We get a lot of satisfaction because the members of the family of the deceased get spiritual help," she said. "Somehow, you're helping them with their loss."

Although 10-year-old Erin Blind sings at more upbeat occasions, the member of the Children's Choir expressed many of the same motivations for singing that Anuskiewicz did.

"I like singing, and I like rejoicing about God," Erin said. "Janet's really nice, and she makes choir fun."

Like singing, religious education involves both adults and children at Our Lady of Mercy, according to Sister Kathryn Wahl, RSM, religious education coordinator. Sister Wahl also served as temporary administrator of the parish for 4½ months last year following the departure of former pastor Father William Lum.

Sister Wahl pointed out that while 85 chil-

dren attend Thursday night religious education classes, 60 children and adults participate in an alternative catechetical program called "F.I.R.E.," or Family Intergenerational Religious Education. Students seem to like the F.I.R.E. approach because it involves their parents, she said.

"It becomes a family celebration, a family experience," Sister Wahl commented. "It's not 'something I do in school.' It's 'something I'm living with my family.'"

Sue DiCicco apparently agreed with Sister Wahl. Along with her husband, Gary, Sue leads six families, including her son, Alan, 6, and her daughter, Breanna, 8, in a first holy Communion class on Tuesday evenings. The DiCiccos prepare lesson plans every week for the families, who then discuss what they've learned with their children, outside of class.

"I find it's much more meaningful to the children that we're there," she said of her and her husband's presence in the class. "It's brought us closer together as a family."

Pamela Thomas, who joined the parish two years ago, found a parallel satisfaction as a member of the Women's Spirituality Group, which is overseen by Roni Antenucci, a pastoral associate. The group

SNAPSHOT

Our Lady of Mercy Church
36 Armstrong Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14616
Phone: 716/865-0775

Pastoral Staff:

Pastor:

Father Stanley Kacprzak

Pastoral associates:

Patricia Boyce, Roni Antenucci

Religious-education coordinator:

Sister Kathryn Wahl, RSM

Music director:

Janet Andrychuk-Tedesco

Support staff:

Secretary/Finance:

Kathleen Merritt

Religious education secretary:

Gerry Sauter

Maintenance supervisor:

David Shufelt

meets once a month to discuss scriptural passages and a variety of issues, according to Thomas and Antenucci.

"There's such value for women to come together because it's so rare for them to get any kind of affirmation for what they do," Antenucci said.

Thomas said she participated in the group especially because it gave her a chance to discuss the Bible with others. She explained that the group uses visualization exercises to imagine scriptural events.

"The main focus is the Scripture and taking yourself away for a little while and actually becoming a participant in the life of Christ," she said. "You can actually picture yourself there."

Just as the women's group educates Thomas, Pastoral Associate Patricia Boyce said the parish tries to reach all its adults through its adult education programs.

"We have assumed through so many years that your faith is formed when you're young, but adults need nourishment," she said.

Boyce said that she herself has been nourished by working at the parish.

"I love the opportunity to be involved with this community," she said. "To be able to talk about where God is in people's lives. I think I get more than I give."

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