

# FEATURE

## City church works to live meaning of its name

**Parish Profile**  
Holy Family,  
Rochester



By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Jesus said that God's kingdom belongs to children, a statement that likely rings true to Dale Cornell, whose faith has been reawakened by her boy Brandon, who's 8, and her girl, Megan, who's 7.

About a year and half ago, Cornell joined Holy Family Church, a parish that claims 760 families, many of them consisting of older Catholics, but a growing number of them with young children like the Cornells. Cornell said she has been reacquainting herself with her faith by attending catechetical meetings with her kids.

"Having my children put me in a position where they had questions that I had no answers for," Cornell said.

Cornell's family is one of 10 that attend a monthly meeting at the parish designed to connect generations through the faith, said Alice Miller Nation, Holy Family's director of Christian formation. Family members share a meal, study Scripture and participate in various activities each time they meet, she said. Cornell's son, Brandon, said he likes going to the monthly meetings.

"It helps me learn a lot of religious stuff," Brandon said.

Holy Family's staff would like all the parish's families to learn "a lot of religious stuff." Through its homilies, activities and educational programs, the parish tries to live up to its name not only by honoring the Holy Family — Jesus, Mary and Joseph — but all families as holy, staff members said.

Holy Family boasts a number of third- and fourth-generation families, said Deacon Patrick Shanley, the parish's pastoral administrator, who noted the church's roots in Rochester's German and Italian communities. However, the parish now also has a number of families from several different ethnic and racial groups, he said, adding that many are headed by single parents. Deacon Shanley and Miller Nation credited the increasing number of "non-traditional" families at the parish to Holy Family's welcoming, non-judgmental atmosphere.

"We let their kids cry in church, and we don't ask many questions," Miller Nation said. "We let them come to their center of spirituality on their own."

Phyllis Johnson has been able to find her spiritual center at the parish by starting an Adult Enrichment Group that meets twice a month between the end of the 8:45 a.m. Sunday Mass and the beginning of the 11 a.m. Mass. Johnson's 13-year-old son, Joseph, attends catechism classes at that time. Rather than sit around waiting for him, Johnson and a handful of other adults, also waiting for their children who are in class, use the time to study the Mass readings for that week and discuss them, she said.

"It would be great for adults who don't even have children or whose children are grown up," she said of the program.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Following the Holy Thursday Mass March 27, Auxiliary Bishop Dennis Hickey censes the Blessed Sacrament. Parishioners' feet were also washed as part of the service. Ryan Nation (below), held by his mother Alice Miller Nation, enjoys having Jeanne Shanley wash his feet.

Holy Family also offers its young people plenty of social, recreational and spiritual activities, according to the staff.

For example, Frank DiFilippo has served as a part-time youth minister overseeing Youth Quest, a six-member youth group that meets every other Sunday afternoon to study and discuss Scripture, he said.

Meanwhile, the parish has a recreation hall regularly used both by its older members and its young people, according to Celeste Short, the hall manager. Every other Friday, the hall is opened to young people in the neighborhood who can use its pool and foosball tables, jukebox and four bowling lanes, and a gym upstairs, she said.

"It's a great place," Short said of the hall, which is also home to bowling leagues and senior citizens' groups. "It's an asset to us definitely."

"They just want to have a safe place to play," DiFilippo said of the 15 to 20 youth who use the hall every other Friday.

In addition to opening itself up to young people, the parish has long extended its financial support to its members through its credit union, which has 560 members, according to Sam Gaudino, president.

The union offers a variety of credit services to Holy Family members, but membership is also open to families from southwestern Rochester parishes that send their children to Holy Family's diocesan school, he said.

The parish's friendliness even extends to those who no longer live in southwestern Rochester, said Debbie DiFilippo, the parish's religious education coordinator, who is married to Frank.

"Even when families move out of the neighborhood, they often come back to the parish, often for liturgies," she said.

That's a fact confirmed by Deacon Shan-



ley, who said 45 percent of the parish's families reside outside the parish boundaries, many in suburban municipalities.

And Holy Family is well aware of the world that exists outside its boundaries, according to Jeanne Shanley, the parish's director of social ministry, who is married to Deacon Shanley.

Jeanne Shanley listed more than a dozen events and activities she coordinates each year designed to enlarge parishioners' concerns about others. They range from baby showers designed to help unwed mothers to poster contests stressing environmental awareness.

She added that through bulletin announcements and homilies, the parish has stressed that Catholics must attempt to embody Christ's call to love one another in their voting patterns and political activity.

### SNAPSHOT

Holy Family Church  
415 Ames St.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14611  
716/328-3110

Established: 1864

Ministerial Staff:

Pastoral administrator:  
Deacon Patrick Shanley

Parish deacon:

Deacon Angelo Coccia

Director of Christian formation:

Alice Miller Nation

Religious education coordinator:

Debbie DiFilippo

Director of social ministry:

Jeanne Shanley

Office staff:

Eileen Messmer

Organist:

Seung-Hee Cho

School principal:

Sister Lorraine Burns, SSND

In residence:

Aux. Bishop Dennis W. Hickey,  
Father Louis Sirianni

"(Christ) didn't hesitate to get involved in issues that were political," she said, pointing to Jesus' constant questioning of the leaders of his day. "He set us an example."

From politics to pool tables, it's this fertile soil of social and spiritual life at Holy Family that keeps people like Pauline Tobin, a volunteer cook, rooted to the parish.

"I like everything here," she said. "It's an active parish."

*Congratulations to Holy Family Parish from the following businesses:*

*Antonetta's Restaurant*  
1160 Jay Street  
Rochester • 716-328-1830

*Hair Net Salon*  
764 Jay Street  
Rochester • 716-235-2418

*Liederkrantz Club*  
507 Maple Street  
Rochester • 716-436-5284

*Westside Florist & Maurizio's Tux Shop*  
1954 Lyell Avenue  
Rochester • 716-254-5220