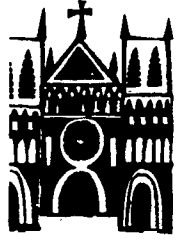


## FEATURE

## St. Michael's parishioners extend helping hands

**Parish Profile**  
St. Michael,  
Lyons



By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

LYONS — St. Michael Church has all the modern comforts, including air-conditioning in the summer, an elevator and cushioned pews. It has newly-restored stained glass windows, and a recently remodeled interior, with special places for such treasured statues as a 500-year-old Annunciation statue of Mary from Italy.

"We are giving people a good place to meet, a good solid foundation literally," its buildings and grounds overseer, Philip Paliotti, said.

But while he strives to present parishioners a safe and comfortable place to worship, that doesn't mean the parishioners live sheltered lives in this Wayne County seat.

The 350-family parish is actively involved in working for the betterment of the community at large. Last fall, for example, it began tithing 2 percent of its collections to the Mercy Fund.

The money goes to the Lyons inter-church food cupboard at the Presbyterian Church and to the inter-church thrift shop. It helps feed people and provide them with other assistance such as money for gas.

The decision to tithe came about as a result of the fact that Wayne County hosts more than 5,000 temporary workers during harvesting season, Father William M. Barrett noted. And outside of harvest season a lot of the workers remain in the county seat and need help getting by.

"Father Barrett came to the council and asked us to set aside 1 percent of our budget to help," Dan LaGasse, pastoral council president, recalled. "The council said, 'Well that doesn't give us very much; how about 2 percent?'"

The proposal went to the finance committee, which readily endorsed it.

To further assist the farmworkers, as well as permanent residents, the parish also will help hire a Hispanic minister to be shared by several area Catholic churches beginning this summer.

"You just have to marshal your resources and do what you can do," Father Barrett said.

He added that the parish often works with other denominations because "we need each other. Lyons is sort of small and we are quite interrelated in many things we do for the community."

To help make each other's activities successful, the various churches help fund each other's plays and shows, and also attend each other's fundraising suppers.

Some St. Michael's parishioners also have participated in an ecumenical eight-week training program on diversity, aimed at lessening racism in the community; some went on to help form "50th Cousins of Lyons," an organization to continue the dialogue. The church's folk group (consisting mostly of the same mu-



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

**Father William Barrett visits with Theresa Cassavino, a St. Michael's parishioner and resident at the Wayne County Nursing Home, before celebrating Mass at the home April 11.**

sicians for the past 30 years) sang at one of the 50th Cousins' projects, an anti-racism event at the Lyons Junior-Senior High School last fall.

On April 6 several area churches, both black and white, gathered to worship and sing together at Grace Episcopal Church.

"We said, 'It's a long journey and maybe this is one step,'" Father Barrett said after attending that service.

Every July the parish participates in another ecumenical service during "Peppermint Days." William Maddock, historian for the church, explained that the late H.G. Hotchkiss is credited with growing peppermint and manufacturing peppermint oil for years there, making Lyons the peppermint capital of the world.

Another benefactor, Myron Charles Taylor, a Lyons native who died in 1959, continues to support St. Michael's and other local churches through gifts from his investments. For St. Michael's, it adds up to about \$8,000 a year, according to Joanne Gutschow, religious education administrator.

The late Taylor, an Episcopalian, served as the envoy of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman to Pope Pius XII during and immediately after World War II.

Within the St. Michael's community itself, the parish has formed a social life committee, headed by Amy and Joe DeTorio, as a means of helping draw parishioners closer together. In addition to dinners and other events, parishioners can count on a coffee hour after Sunday Mass, with time to catch up on each other's news. Meanwhile, several of the two dozen members who attend daily Mass also enjoy going out afterwards for coffee together.

"The group has come to be very close to one another," said LaGasse, who manages his own business but often makes time to attend daily Mass.

Youth join in Sunday Masses as lectors and servers, and discussion has begun about their serving as eucharistic ministers and ushers, Father Barrett said. One of their newer customs is striking a Leonardo

da Vinci's "Last Supper" pose during the Holy Thursday Mass. Each disciple takes his place at a long table and after Jesus declares that one of them will betray him, they appear stunned, asking, "Is it I, Lord?"

"They hold it a few minutes and people take pictures," Father Barrett said. Then he washes the youths' feet and returns to the Mass.

No matter what age, parishioners of ages at St. Michael's feel a sense of ownership, Maddock said.

"People are kept advised and appraised of what's going on, whether physical or spiritual," he noted.

This is done, for example, in a state-of-the-finance talk given periodically by LaGasse, and an annual parish meeting. Church representatives also have been involved in the diocesan strategic planning process, grouped with representatives from churches in eastern Wayne and northern Cayuga counties.

Maddock noted the collaboration recalls for him the days when Weedsport, Clyde, Newark and Sodus Point Catholic churches were missions of St. Michael's, and when St. Michael's, in turn, was a mission of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Clyde.

"It's harkening back to when all the

## SNAPSHOT



**St. Michael Church**  
Phelps and Holley streets  
Lyons, NY 14489  
315/946-4182

**Ministerial staff:**

**Pastor:**

**Father William M. Barrett**

**Folk choir:**

**Patty Youngman**

**Religious education administrator:**

**Joanne Gutschow**

**Parish pastoral council president:**

**Daniel LaGasse**

churches were affiliated together as mission churches," he said. Today, he added, "We're all separate and distinct but part of the bigger picture."

St. Michael's now must work through whatever changes the diocesan long-range plan and the future bring.

"We've been given a challenge ... Probably it's a challenge for every church in the diocese," LaGasse said. "Why not be positive about it and look at change as an opportunity for growth in our faith?"

The teamwork developed throughout St. Michael's could only help meet that challenge. Numerous representatives, ministers, teachers and other volunteers work together to keep the church going, Father Barrett noted in the Jan. 5 bulletin. There he devoted a long column to such people, from the women who plant the flowers in spring, to the men who vacuum the church every Wednesday.

"As you can see, it takes many hands to keep our parish in good running order, and we are extremely lucky to have so many who are willing to give of their time and talent," Father Barrett wrote.

## Upcoming Supplements

**TRAVEL & PILGRIMAGES**

Publication Date: May 15 - Deadline: May 1

As readers look ahead to summer plans, this supplement will tempt them with choice locations while serving as a planning guide for domestic and foreign journeys. In addition to offering tips for choosing sites and making arrangements, this supplement will highlight shrines and other religious sites of special interest to Catholic travelers.

**GRADUATION**

Publication Date: June 12 - Deadline: May 29

(Bonus distribution to graduating students)

A look at the high school Class of '97 as its members prepare for life after high school. In addition to the annual listing of graduates' names, this special supplement also will contain feature articles on selected graduates, with special emphasis on their expectations and plans for the future.

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