

FEATURE

Volunteers are backbone of 29-year-old Gates parish

Parish Profile

St. Jude's, Gates



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GATES — Before there was even a building in which to worship, the spirit of volunteerism at St. Jude the Apostle Parish was evident.

"People with their talents converted a dairy barn into a church. We established not only a church, but a parish — and that tradition has continued," said founding pastor Father John J. Steger, the only pastor in St. Jude's 29-year history. "Our wealth is in the generosity of our volunteers."

Jim Budd, a founding parishioner who assisted in construction of the original St. Jude's, recalled that Father Steger "was right there with us when we mixed concrete. He was right next to us with a wheelbarrow."

The parish has grown so quickly that a new church building and gymnasium were opened in 1993 on the same campus. Currently, parish membership totals approximately 1,400 families, according to Judy Russell, who serves as St. Jude's parish assistant and religious-education director.

Russell added that St. Jude's has managed to maintain a high level of intimacy despite its quick expansion.

"We're not just a church. It's a family," Russell said.

"People are always drawn in by the warmth, and the very loving atmosphere," added Dodie Mickelson, a St. Jude's parishioner for the past 20 years.

Meanwhile, Ted Proia, a parishioner since 1992, said he was drawn to St. Jude's because of its adherence to traditional Catholic teachings.

"We have a strong devotion to Mary and the Eucharist, to the Holy Father and the magisterium," Proia said. "This is truly a Catholic church."

"This is a very, very traditional parish with traditional Catholic values," Russell agreed.

The parish sponsors a large Knights of Columbus council, which was established in 1993. St. Jude's has also been renowned



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Katie Stanton, Cheri Ayers and Cathie Ayers (left to right) are among the youngest members of the St. Jude's family folk group, which was formed last year.

for its extensive involvement in pro-life activities. This influence extends from the parish's pastor, who was director of Gates-Ogden Right to Life while he was an assistant pastor at St. Theodore's Church in Gates. Father Steger — who turns 71 this month — has now served for 43 consecutive years in the town of Gates, having been at St. Theodore's from 1954 to 1968.

Mickelson noted that the St. Jude's community is very active in weekday devotions. She said that the daily 9 a.m. Mass is well attended, and that the parish also participates in several other prayer gatherings during the week.

"The parishioners feel comfortable asking for special devotions," Mickelson said.

"The church is always open," Budd remarked. "The activity of the parishioners is great."

Set back off Lyell Road, this impressive

structure seats 850 people, whereas the original St. Jude's seating capacity was 325. The building also features stained-glass windows from the former St. Patrick's Cathedral, as well as several artifacts that were transported from the original structure.

Another noticeable aspect of the new St. Jude's building is its Shrine Shop. Located near the church entrance, it offers religious items and is open seven days a week.

Russell noted that the Shrine Shop is a non-profit business and is staffed by volunteers. "To us, it's like a ministry rather than a money-making thing," she said.

The original St. Jude's structure, situated near the entrance of the parish campus, is still being put to good use as well. St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, a Melkite Greek Catholic parish, is utilizing the fa-

SNAPSHOT



St. Jude the Apostle Church
4100 Lyell Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14606
716/247-4322

Ministerial staff:

Pastor:

Father John J. Steger

Assisting priest:

Father L. James Callan

Religious education director/pastoral assistant:

Judith Ann Russell

Parish secretary:

Jackie Feeney

Religious education secretary:

Margaret Brown

Choir director:

Yolanda Ascione

Youth directors:

Roxanne Gammariello, Suzanne Stanton

Head of trustees and auditors:

Don Kuhman

cility for weekend liturgies while construction continues on a new St. Nicholas building on Spencerport Road in Gates.

In addition, the St. Jude's campus features an eight-room catechetical center. Plans are also underway to construct a new faith formation center at St. Jude's. Father Steger noted that 80 percent of the funds to complete this project have already been secured.

Another example of the parish's ongoing growth has been the establishment of the Steger Housing Development Corporation, through which a senior-citizen apartment complex was opened in 1995 across the street from St. Jude's.

Father Steger acknowledged that parishioners have been generous with their donations throughout St. Jude's history. He noted that St. Jude's has only held one fundraising drive during that time.

"And that was mandated by the diocese for the building of the new church," Father Steger remarked.

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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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