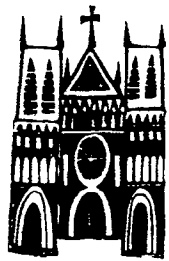


FEATURE

Cathedral parish boasts diverse, lively community

Parish Profile

Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Lynn Kershner recently completed four years as implementation coordinator of the diocesan Synod at Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish.

Of the four goals the 1993 Synod selected as diocesan priorities, the consistent life ethic — which equally opposes abortion, poverty, war, the death penalty and euthanasia — seemed to attract the most interest at his parish, Kershner said. Nearly every parish bulletin contains some information about the ethic, he explained.

"I think it was just easier to identify with that particular goal," Kershner said of his parish and the consistent life ethic. "It was ... the reverence for life, the needy, the poor, the marginalized which we see more and more in our society and our neighborhood."

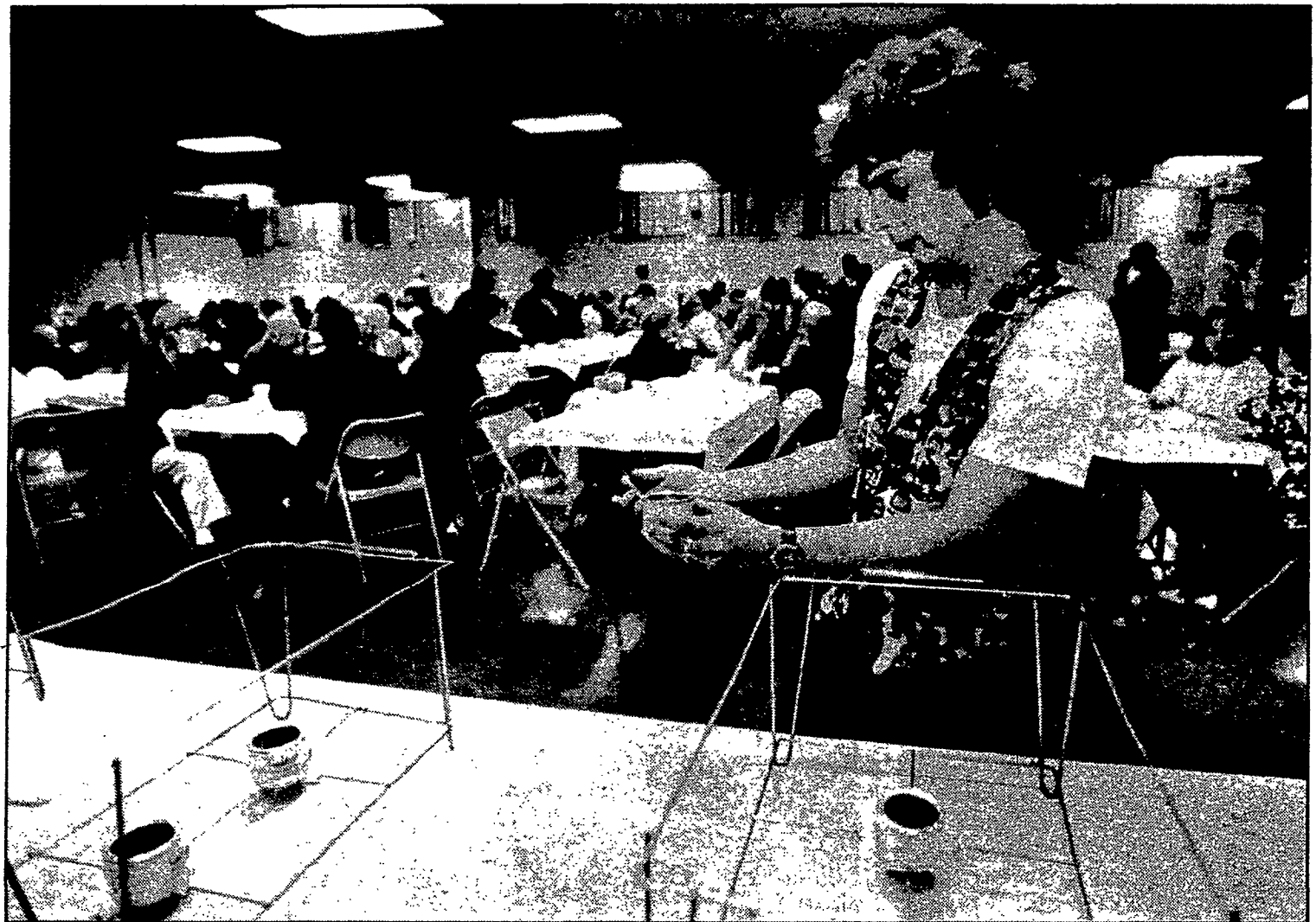
Maybe Sacred Heart parishioners identify with the consistent life ethic because there's so much life to revere at the parish. Just ask Father Thomas P. Mull, administrative pastor, who estimates 160 baptisms take place at the parish each year — as well as 100 funerals.

"It's one of these parishes that covers the circumference of ages," he said.

As pastoral visitor, Sister Joan Hilbert, RSM, works primarily with the senior portion of that circle. Not only does she regularly visit the parish's homebound members, she also hosts a weekly senior club on Friday afternoons that offers liturgies, health talks and lectures to its members, she said.

"For many of them, that's the highlight of their week, to get out and socialize with their peers," she said of the club.

Two thousand registered individuals and families call Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish their Catholic home, according to Father Mull. Ann Tuttle, who shares secretarial duties with Peggy Best and Sister Mary Sharon Heilman, SSJ, meets many of those parishioners when they come to the rectory looking for everything from Mass cards for the dead to information on baptisms for newborns. A mother and



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Sue Sanford lights a food warmer for a liturgical ministry appreciation dinner Nov. 1, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

grandmother herself, Tuttle said she particularly likes meeting the young couples who come to her desk for matrimonial information.

"You just feel happy for them," she said.

About 70 percent of the parishioners come from within the boundaries of the parish, Father Mull observed.

A 1986 parish history noted Sacred Heart was founded in 1911 when Bishop Thomas F. Hickey was leader of the Rochester Diocese. Sacred Heart became the diocese's temporary cathedral in 1937 when St. Patrick's Cathedral was sold to Eastman Kodak Company. Pope Pius XII named it Rochester's permanent cathedral in 1952. Since then, its canonical pastors have been the diocese's head bishops, with a priest serving as rector. However, under Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the title of rector was changed to administrative pastor, Father Mull said.

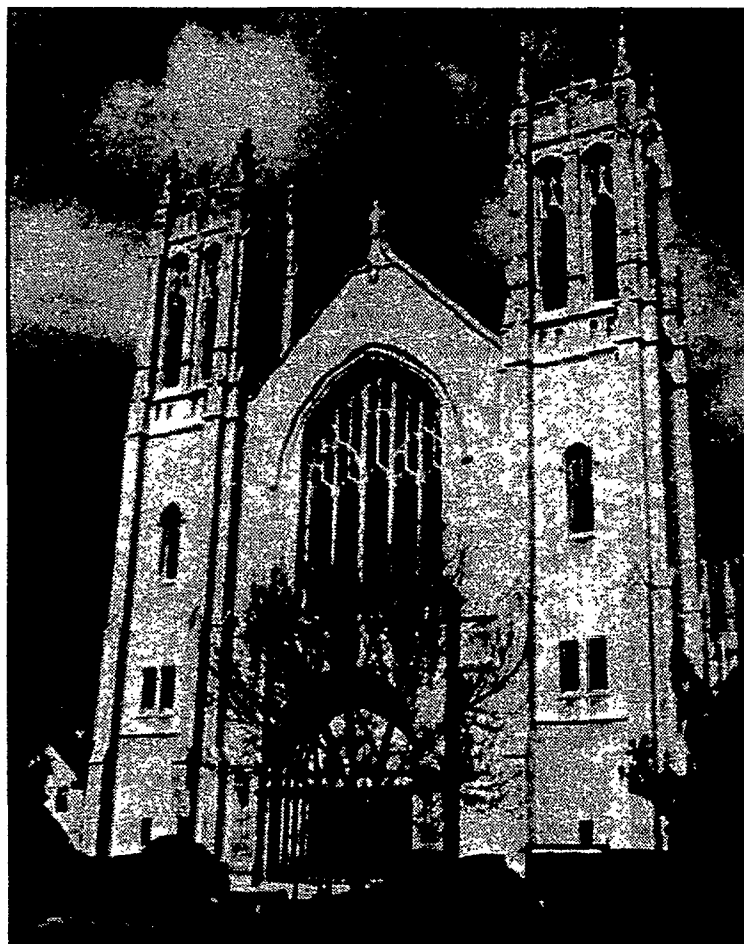
Probably one of the best known groups at the parish is the 30-member volunteer adult choir, headed by Dr. J. William Greene, who is also Sacred Heart's organist. A few years ago, the choir traveled to Rome to perform for Pope John Paul II. The choir annually welcomes dignitaries, including the city's mayor and Bishop Clark, to its "Lessons and Carols," a Christmas season performance slated for 3 p.m. Dec. 14 this year.

Greene noted that the adult choir must practice at least five hours a week, as well as sing regularly at weekend Masses and various parish events. All for free, he added.

"Unlike some large churches, we are still able to do a level of quality of music that's on level with churches that do pay," he said.

Greene's musical groups at the parish include a hand bell choir and a children's choir.

Indeed, almost every age group can find some part of the parish devoted to it, if the parish's organization directory is



put into it."

Michael Coniff would seem to agree with that sentiment. An active member of the school committee, Coniff and his wife, Marlene, and their five children have belonged to Sacred Heart for 18 years. He added that two of his children have graduated from Sacred Heart School, and that three currently attend it.

"I send my kids there because I feel it's very difficult for parents, on their own, to instill moral values in their children without the church," he said. "I personally feel the Catholic school is the best way to do that."

Sister Stephanie Riley, SSJ, school principal, said her diocesan school is an integral part of the parish. For example, she noted that students regularly write letters to the parish's shut-ins.

"The people who built the school, and support the school, still feel they have a link to the school," she said.

She added that she cooperates with Patricia DiFabio, the parish's director of Christian formation, who oversees religious education of parish children not in the Catholic school system.

Both women pointed out that the school and religious education teachers collaborate on sacramental preparation programs, and that certain school sports programs are also open to all the parish's kids, not just the school students.

DiFabio added that Sacred Heart also offers opportunities for group Bible study to adult parishioners and has hosted several adult education sessions as well. Kershner said that Sacred Heart is looking at cooperating with such neighboring parishes as Holy Rosary and Most Precious Blood on adult education initiatives.

Whatever the years ahead hold for Sacred Heart, it seems to be one parish that relishes the future.

"It's a very vibrant parish," Sorg concluded. "It's a very large parish, and there's so many different facets."

SNAPSHOT

Sacred Heart Cathedral
296 Flower City Park
Rochester, N.Y. 14615
716/254-3221

Parish Staff:

Pastor: **Bishop Matthew H. Clark**
Administrative pastor:

Father Thomas P. Mull
In residence:

Father Timothy T. Brown
Deacon: **Michael Krupiarz**

School principal:
Sister Stephanie Riley, SSJ

Pastoral visitor:
Sister Joan Hilbert, RSM

Organist/Choirmaster:
Dr. J. William Greene

Christian formation director:
Patricia DiFabio

Religious education administrator:
Ann Premo

RCIA coordinator:
Susanna M. Weatherholt

Parish council president:
Linda Sorg

any indication.

A diocesan elementary school with 450 students is located on parish grounds as well as a day program for senior citizens operated by St. Ann's Home in Rochester. Meanwhile, 200 children receive catechetical instruction at the parish, which also boasts a 35-member youth group. The parish is home to such groups as the Catholic War Veterans and the Cub Scouts, as well as the Legion of Mary and the Men's Retreat League.

"We do try to involve people in different things," said Linda Sorg, parish council president.

Sorg added that the parish council has consulted with the diocese to present a sacrificial giving program in January 1998. The campaign asks parishioners to assess how much of their "time, talent and treasure" they can give to a parish, Sorg commented.

"We want people to reflect on it more, and pray about it," she said. "I think you have to give. The parish is whatever you