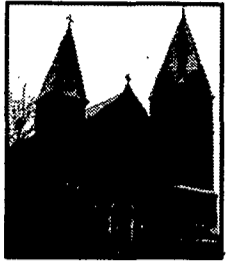


## FEATURE

## A multitude of ministries matter at Holy Trinity

## Parish Profile

Holy Trinity, Webster

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

WEBSTER — Harry Ceranowicz acknowledges he had certain hopes after retiring four years ago.

"I really expected to go to a friendlier climate," he said.

Yet here he and his wife Ann remain, attending Holy Trinity Church and pitching in, for instance, to coordinate its DOVE program. DOVE volunteers transport people to appointments, run errands, and provide companionship and respite care.

"The reason we're here is the parish," Harry said, adding they had a hard time letting go, having been members for nearly 40 years.

The Ceranowiczes are two of the regulars at the 7:30 a.m. Sunday Mass. Others include Wilbur "Deke" Beh, Asher and Rita Borton, Ena and Andrew McKenna and Pam Schultz, who all gathered recently at the church for an interview.

"We all have our pews," Schultz, the parish bookkeeper/secretary, observed with a laugh.

It's comforting to see the regulars in their pews, parishioners said, especially having experienced times when people come and go, especially since Xerox Corp. established itself nearby.

"We used to go in church and know everybody in church," Beh recalled of the pre-Xerox years.

Yet, such old-time parishioners make newcomers feel welcome, noted Helen Waytowich, who arrived nine years ago.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Theresa and Tony Graff fill out Christmas wish stars as part of Holy Trinity's Christmas Star program. Holy Trinity parishioners collect wish forms from six area parishes, 12 needy families per parish.

"I find them to be friendly people," she said of her church family. She's been gathering historical material about the parish since volunteering for the job.

Holy Trinity was incorporated in 1861 by Redemptorist priests for German and Irish immigrants in Webster, Ontario, Penfield and Walworth. The immigrants were mostly farmers.

Andrew McKenna likes to think of Holy Trinity as "the mother church" for the area. St. Rita Church, West Webster, was incorporated in 1950; Holy Spirit, Penfield, in 1965; and St. Paul's Church, Webster, in 1967. St. Mary's of the Lake Church was built earlier as a mission church under a Fairport priest, but was placed under Holy Trinity apparently in 1877 until 1915.

Holy Trinity is home to 1,771 families. A survey shows nearly one-quarter of its 5,600 people are between the ages 30 and 44, but the remaining people are spread fairly evenly among seven other age brackets, with the exception of the 1 percent in the 85-100 age bracket.

"We're looked on as a welcoming community," said Ena McKenna, "and we're not quite as liberal as some of the other churches, but not as staid either. We have people who can express their way of worship and not be condemned, they are accepted. It's nice to have that in a parish that used to be very conservative."

For example, many parishioners hold hands or raise their hands during Mass, she said. "Yet some don't, and fit in too."

Father Thomas Nellis, pastor, added, "The people participate in the liturgy and they listen during the homily, God bless them. You can tell very well whether they're with you or not."



Stars like this are placed on a tree at Holy Trinity and families buy gifts for people in need.

The people are spiritual, he said.

"It's a tangible feeling," the pastor remarked. "People don't come in and gossip and talk. They're focused on the liturgy at that time."

Parishioners are serious about their commitments, whether it be consistent life ethic projects, the Stephen Ministry, the Corpus Christi Ministry that takes the Eucharist to sick or homebound parishioners, or other ministries of the multitude the parish is involved in, he said.

"There's a good foundation of spirituality," he said, noting that parishioners observe a 24-hour Eucharistic adoration every Thursday-Friday at the church, for example. And they go off on retreats for spiritual direction, or spend time in spiritual programs, Father Nellis noted.

Further, the pastor said, parishioners typically are involved in numerous community, not to mention church, activities. He pointed to Joe Obbie as just one example, noting he has been active in the Knights of Columbus, community theater, the church choir, Cursillo, jail ministry,

and much more. "He wears you out thinking about all he does," the priest said.

While Asher Borton fondly remembered the "pre-television" days of dances and parties at the church, which helped raise money to pay off debts, he observed that nowadays many church-centered activities benefit social ministry.

"We serve the community, not just the parish," Harry added.

Needs of the Webster community keep parishioners so busy they can't respond as often to requests for help from Rochester, noted Judy Kiehl, pastoral associate. They also contribute clothing and food to the Come-Unity Center in Wayne County.

When St. Bridget's Parish relocated recently, Holy Trinity assisted in helping move statues and other items. The parish has been developing a sister relationship with St. Bridget's, occasionally exchanging choirs and pastors, for example.

The parish also has strongly supported Holy Trinity School, established simultaneously with the church.

About 80 percent of the 250 students, pre-K through sixth grade, are from the parish, according to Principal Mary Lou Kime.

"We say we are part of the Holy Trinity family," she said, noting that while it is now a diocesan school, it and the parish work closely together.

The school helped Mary and Mark Nicholson narrow their search for a new house nearly 10 years ago, as their family grew. Today they have six children.

"We wouldn't belong to a church that didn't have a school. We really believe in the whole circle of church — family — school, each supporting the other and helping the kids grow," Mary said.

She recalled that when "Baby Number 6" arrived, "I didn't cook for a month. People I barely knew were bringing food, huge baskets of apples, cookies."

When her mother died in October in Florida, she said, "They didn't know my mother, but it was the same thing. We got meals, cards. There was so much support. The parish staff took the time to write notes and letters."

Such caring, she said, "has really made me more conscious of being sensitive to other people's needs as well."

She and several other mothers meet about every six weeks as a small Christian community, focusing on outreach, prayer and support. For Christmas they've "adopted" a family to present with a basket.

Her husband Mark also is active in the parish. He heads the parish council, serves with Mary in the marriage preparation program and has a "sport ministry" of coaching third-grade basketball.

"I immediately loved the place when we did get here," Mark said. "I'm not sure what did it, but it was like you had found home."

## SNAPSHOT

Holy Trinity Church  
1460 Ridge Road  
Webster, N.Y. 14580  
716/265-1616

## Ministerial Staff:

Pastor: Father Thomas F. Nellis

Deacon: Leo E. Kester

Office moderator:

Mary Ann Penlon

Pastoral associate: Judith Kiehl

Principal: Mary Lou Kime

Director of faith formation:

Thomas O'Brien

Religious education coordinator:

Veronica Zawacki

The advertising deadline  
for the December 25th  
issue of the  
Catholic Courier is  
Tuesday December 16.

