

FEATURE

City parish expands ministry in its neighborhood

Parish Profile

Holy Rosary
Rochester



By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When Father Lawrence V. Murphy arrived in 1993 as pastor of Holy Rosary Church, he had a mission: getting the parish to adapt to the needs of its environment.

"We would like to think of ourselves as a neighborhood type of program, even for people who don't go to church here," Father Murphy said. "I've often said about inner-city churches that unless we're reaching out to the neighborhood, we're only serving a few people."

"Father Murphy's biggest gift was to take the spirit within us, and challenge us to take it out there," said Rose Davis, pastoral associate.

A prime example of this ever-spreading spirit will be on display Good Friday, April 10, when Holy Rosary joins neighboring churches for an ecumenical cross walk. The cross walks, Davis noted, serve to acknowledge the good and bad in this northwest Rochester neighborhood. Participants have prayed in front of drug houses, as well as in front of fledgling businesses "as a sign of hope."

Holy Rosary's ecumenical interest is seen in other efforts as well. For instance, parishioners take part in collaborative programs with Grace United Methodist Church and Lake Avenue Baptist Church to address such area social-ministry issues as hunger, public safety and trash



Greg Francis/Staff photographer
Brittany Murty, 11, plays Ping-Pong while other youths play a game of basketball March 6 at Holy Rosary School. Holy Rosary sponsors a drop-in center for youths in fifth-seventh grades on the first and third Fridays of the month. Board games, story telling, crafts and pizza are often a part of the activities.

removal.

There is even a diocesan Thanks Giving Appeal-sponsored ministry housed at Grace United Methodist: the Shalom Family Center, which offers tutoring for students from Holy Rosary School and City School 34.

"This is one of the first ecumenical things the diocese has funded," Father Murphy remarked.

Focus on neighborhood youth is also evident through the "drop-in" program located in the Holy Rosary School gym. According to Judy Borrelli, Holy Rosary religious-education coordinator, the program offers recreational activities and also teaches baking and craft skills to children in grades five through seven.

In addition, Holy Rosary proudly hosts a complimentary hot dog roast each

summer. Deacon James Fitch noted that the free hot dogs are a welcome option for low-income residents who attend.

"For a lot of people, that might be the best meal they had that week," Deacon Fitch remarked.

Holy Rosary's current outreach efforts reflect a much different attitude than when Grace Hall, 76, was growing up.

"I remember going to a Girl Scout meeting at a Baptist church, and my grandmother had a fit," said Hall. She has belonged to Holy Rosary, which was founded in 1889, since her childhood.

Hall also noted that the neighborhood has featured a growing ethnic blend in recent generations. However, she said, she welcomes her neighbors' racial diversity.

"I consider them some of the flowers in God's garden. And flowers should be a

SNAPSHOT

Holy Rosary Church
414 Lexington Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14613
716/458-4422

Parish staff:
Pastor:

Father Lawrence V. Murphy
Pastoral associate: **Rose Davis**

Parish deacon:

Deacon James Fitch

Parish minister:

Sister Carole Proia, SSJ

Religious education administrator:

Judy Borrelli

Administrative secretary:

Peggy Kelly

Music ministers:

Jean Thibodeau, David Taylor

Children's choir director:

Mary Carol Maloney

Holy Rosary School principal:

Mary Beth Fuehrer

Parish pastoral council chair:

Ed Walsh

lot of different colors," Hall commented.

Borrelli said that some Holy Rosary members were concerned that these outreach efforts stood in stark contrast with longstanding parish customs.

"Naturally you hear from some people that that shouldn't be where our thrust is. But that's very, very few people," Borrelli said.

And Peggy Kelly, administrative secretary, added that parishioners can preserve their parish identity while also reaching out to the neighborhood.

"The people are very dedicated to Holy Rosary," Kelly said.

One such person is Hall, who said she has repeatedly opted against moving out to the suburbs.

"It's my church, I'm planted here and I don't want to go away from it," Hall said.

Even though its membership has dropped in recent years to its current total of 520 families, parish officials stressed that Holy Rosary will maintain its vitality as the millennium draws closer. One encouraging sign is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults group, whose 19 members will be initiated at the Easter Vigil liturgy April 11.

Active participation appears to come from all age levels. Many of the parish's senior citizens are also involved in neighborhood associations, Deacon Fitch noted, while Father Murphy said that high-school curriculum is included in the parish's current religious-education program for the first time in many years.

"They want more (religious education). It comes from them," Father Murphy said of the high-schoolers.

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APRIL BINGO CALENDAR

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT & CALL FOR HOLIDAY CANCELLATIONS

BINGO

SUNDAY

7:30 p.m. Holy Family Church 280 Jay St., Rochester 716-255-2116

7:30 p.m. St. Boniface Church 15 Walnut St., Rochester 716-271-1488

WEDNESDAY

7:30 p.m. Holy Family Home Social Assoc. 280 Jay St., Rochester 716-255-2116

10:00 a.m. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church 716-255-2116

12:30 p.m. Bingo Palace, 341 E. Ridge Road 716-255-2222

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