

DIOCESAN NEWS

St. Mary's in Corning to celebrate 150th year

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

When St. Mary's Church was founded in 1848, it was the first Catholic parish in Corning and served mostly Irish immigrant railroad workers.

Times have changed over the past 150 years: The Corning area has grown to include four Catholic churches; the city's glass industry serves as a chief source of employment; and the neighborhood in which the parish is located is now more of a melting pot.

Yet from its perch at 155 State St., St. Mary's remains a distinct feature in the section of Corning still known as "Irish Hill" or "Catholic Hill," according to Father Michael Conboy.

"It's still looked upon as the mother church, and the others are looked upon as the three daughters," said Father Conboy, pastor of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community since 1996. This

Southern Tier cluster, formed in 1990, includes St. Mary's, St. Patrick's and St. Vincent de Paul in Corning as well as Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post.

St. Mary's proud heritage will be noted this Sunday, Sept. 20, with a 150th-anniversary celebration. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preside at the 9 a.m. Mass that day, with a breakfast to follow.

One of the celebration's highlights will be the presentation of a stained-glass window to the Rochester Sisters of Mercy, in thanksgiving for their many years of service at St. Mary's and St. Vincent de Paul churches.

The window depicts Mother Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy. Members of the congregation served continuously in Corning from 1867 until last year, Father Conboy observed. The window had been part of the convent located at St. Vincent de Paul Church. The convent is currently being rented to Kinship Family and Youth Services, Inc., a social

service agency.

St. Mary's current church building, which was dedicated in 1870, holds sentimental appeal for a great many worshippers, noted Sister Joan Cawley, SSJ, moderator of St. Mary's.

"People like to have their weddings at St. Mary's because it reminds them of the traditional Catholic church. People come in and say, 'Ahhh, a real church,'" Sister Cawley remarked.

Father Conboy added that St. Mary's is the site of the Corning-Painted Post cluster's annual Easter Vigil liturgy. The mother church is also noted for its Miraculous Medal Novena, which will begin Oct. 5 this year and be held for nine consecutive Mondays leading up to the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"The people come from all over for that," Father Conboy said.

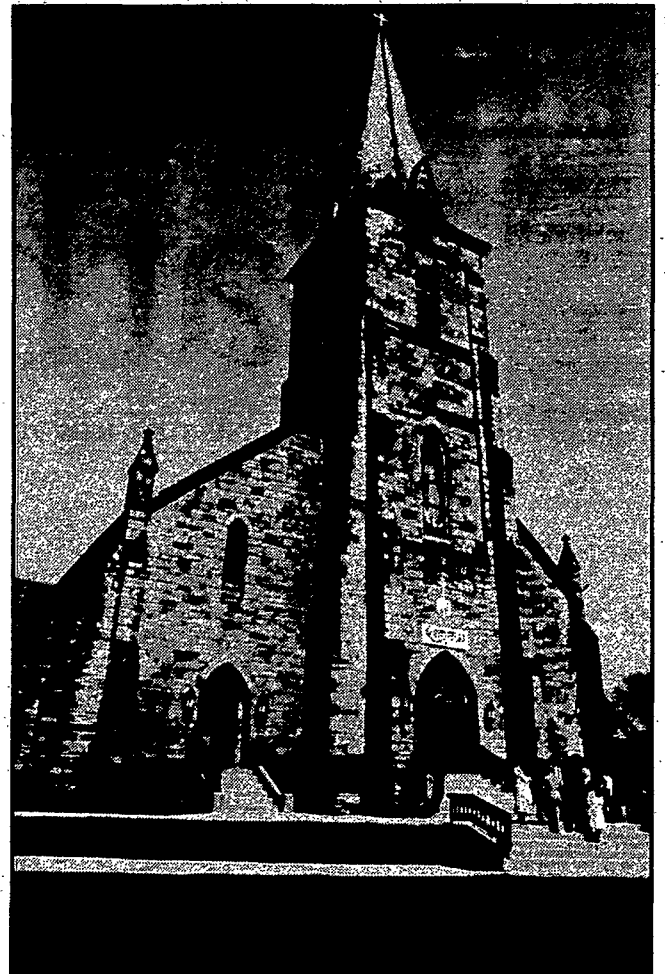
The Miraculous Medal Novena was begun by Father Thomas Brennan, a priest at St. Mary's for 43 years. Father Brennan was St. Mary's pastor from 1953 until his 1975 retirement, and he continued to live at the church rectory until his death in 1996 at the age of 91.

Although he cannot attend the 150th-anniversary jubilee, Father Robert McNamara, diocesan archivist, said that the jubilee holds special meaning for him. A native St. Mary's parishioner, Father McNamara wrote an extensive parish history,

A Century of Grace, for St. Mary's centennial celebration 50 years ago.

Father McNamara, who now resides at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Irondequoit, said that more than 1,000 copies of *A Century of Grace* were printed. The book was the first of many parish histories that Father McNamara has written.

"I sharpened my claws on that one. It took me over 10 years to do it," Father McNamara remarked.



File Photo

Notice

"Along the Way" does not appear this week due to Bishop Matthew H. Clark's attendance at meetings of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C. The column will return next week.

Correction

In the Sept. 10 edition of the *Catholic Courier*, a page 3 story headlined "Father Callan will serve temporarily in Elmira" incorrectly stated that Mary Ramerman, pastoral associate at Corpus Christi Church, Rochester, held up a chalice during the consecration at a Sept. 6 Mass. Ramerman actually held up the chalice prior to the consecration and before Communion was distributed. We regret the error.

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