

## Hundreds turn out for church's 150th jubilee

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — More than 400 people attended a Mass and reception celebrating the 150th anniversary of Our Lady of Victory Church on Sept. 27.

Along with the church's pastor, Father Winfried M. Kellner, Bishop Matthew H. Clark concelebrated Masses in Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 26 and 11 a.m. Sept. 27.

(Our Lady of Victory's congregation merged with neighboring St. Joseph's Church congregation in 1975 after St. Joseph's church building was destroyed in a fire.)

"It was a very lovely celebration of a parish that's very much alive," Bishop Clark said following the Sunday Mass in Our Lady of Victory. "The people have a sense of God's blessings for 150 years."

Dorothy Louis documented those blessings in two 350-page histories that were on display in the back of the church. One history documented the church from its founding in 1848 up until 1998, while the other told the history of the church's school from 1863 to its closing in 1947.

In her parish history, Louis noted that Our Lady of Victory was founded to serve a community of 300 French Canadians in Rochester, and was originally named "St. Mary's French Catholic Church." Originally located at the corner of Ely Street and Minerva Place, the church moved to its current location on Pleasant Street in the 1860s. The parish was renamed in 1868 "Notre Dame des Victoires" after Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

In 1879, according to Louis' history, Our Lady of Victory welcomed one of its best-known pastors, Father Alphonse A. Note-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

**Bishop Matthew Clark gives a "high five" to Breanna Rehberg, 17 months, after 11 a.m. Mass Sept. 27 at Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church. With Breanna is her father Bob, who was married at the church. The church is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.**

baert, a Redemptorist. Father Notebaert's grandnephew, Richard Notebaert, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church in Livonia, drove up from Lakeville to attend the Sunday reception.

Notebaert, 78, recalled that his great-uncle was fond of the many parishioners who came from Belgium and the Netherlands beginning in the late 1870s.

"Whenever they came over from the old country, he would help them with banking, anything they needed getting settled," Notebaert said.

He also recalled that his great-uncle was a compassionate priest who was dedicated not only to his parishioners, but to the downtrodden street people he would meet in the city.



**Loretta Toolan, right, chats with Father Winfried Kellner, pastor, after the Sept. 27 Mass.**

At the anniversary celebration, several people shared their experiences of Our Lady of Victory with the *Catholic Courier*. In attendance were Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson Jr., and U.S. Rep. Louise Slaughter.

Sister Jeanne Agnes Michaud, SSJ, serves as the archivist for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, and pointed out that her parents grew up in the parish and were married there. She added that Father Notebaert was her mother's spiritual counselor.

"I more or less think I got my own vocation through the piety he instilled in my mother," Sister Michaud said.

Sister Teresa Auberger, SSJ, taught at the parish's school from 1940 to 1943, and attended the festivities with her sister, Helen Brown, a parishioner at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Rochester.

"It was my first mission," Sister Auberger recalled of her years at Our Lady of Victory. "It was a small school, and the children were lovely."

Also attending the reception was Father Thomas Loftus, the last Redemptorist priest to be pastor of the parish, from 1990 to 1996, when the Redemptorists left it. Currently serving as a pastor of a Baltimore church, Father Loftus remembered why he liked serving Our Lady of Victory.

"I had many a pleasant memory of my six years here," he said, "the friendliness of the people, the respect they had."

Father Loftus' successor, Father Kellner, a diocesan priest, said he hoped the high turnout at the Sunday festivities would bode well for the parish.

"It's the biggest crowd since I've been here," he said of the celebration. "Maybe it will pump more life into the center of the city. Seeing something good happen makes (people) want to come back again."

## St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira celebrates 90th anniversary

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ELMIRA — St. Joseph's Hospital has prioritized service to the general community over its 90-year history. And on a recent Tuesday afternoon, a jam-packed hospital lobby reflected how much the public apparently values these efforts.

A line of adults awaiting free blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, pulmonary checks and diabetic risk screenings extended clear across the entrance area. These services draw consistently high turnouts, said Sister Marie Castagnaro, SSJ, the hospital's president and chief executive officer.

"We just always have a crowd," she commented.

On this particular day, those in line could pass the time by viewing a photo display along the wall, showing various stages of St. Joseph's history: the six founding

nuns from 1908; flood damage from 1972; the nursing school's final graduating class from 1988; and the "Care-A-Van" mobile health unit from 1996.

The photos were posted to highlight St. Joseph's 90th-anniversary commemoration week, which took place Sept. 19-26. The celebration concluded with an ecumenical prayer service and fireworks display Sept. 26 at Dunn Field.

St. Joseph's was the first hospital to be owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Today, Sister Castagnaro noted, it is still the only hospital owned and operated by the congregation.

Sister Castagnaro added that her order's outreach to the underprivileged is reflected in the hospital's ministry.

"To the poor, the disenfranchised, the uninsured, the under-insured — we are a caring organization," Sister Castagnaro commented. "Treating people with respect, honesty, love, joy, dignity — that's

who we are as Sisters of St. Joseph, and it's been the foundation. To treat all people as Jesus would have treated them, that mission was set in place 90 years ago."

The 255-bed hospital is completing two major projects as its anniversary year nears conclusion. A three-story health center office building is scheduled to be completed in December, and a 40-bed expansion of the hospital's skilled nursing facility will be finished by late October.

Sister Castagnaro said that these changes have made St. Joseph's a positive force in the revitalization of Elmira's east side, which has recovered slowly from the flood of 1972 that damaged or destroyed many area homes and businesses.

"It's something that's said to folks, 'Hey, we're doing something here,'" Sister Castagnaro said. "The area really is beginning to pick up and sparkle."

St. Joseph's has also expanded its services in and around Chemung County, she



added. The Care-A-Van program enables St. Joseph's to address medical needs in rural sections, and the hospital has increased its offerings of educational lectures.

In recent years, Sister Castagnaro said, St. Joseph's has collaborated more frequently with other area health agencies. She said that her order will operate the hospital "as long as we have Sisters of St. Joseph who are able and capable," but added that the order is declining in numbers and only four Sisters of St. Joseph are currently employed at the hospital.

The hospital took steps to cement its Catholic identity by becoming a full member of the Carondelet Health System in April 1997. Due to this affiliation with a national Catholic system, Sister Castagnaro said that future St. Joseph's administrators "may not be Catholic, but they will have to commit to the values of the Sisters of St. Joseph."

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