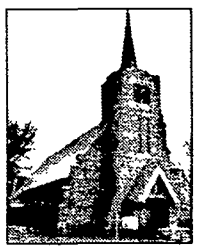


# PARISH PROFILE

## Spencerport parishioners keep pace with changes

### Parish Profile

St. John's,  
Spencerport



By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

SPENCERPORT — Mary Rene Smith, Monica McKinney and Katherine Anne Vincent can lay claim to being part of a special chapter in the 132-year history of St. John the Evangelist Church: In 1927, they became charter students of the parish school.

The school, now operated by the diocese, is a fixture at this western Monroe County parish. However, Smith, McKinney and Vincent have noticed that other aspects of parish life have changed. For instance, the days of pew rental are long gone.

"Each family had a pew with its name on it," McKinney recalled.

"I'll tell you, a lot of people were put out if you sat in their seat," Vincent added.

And though St. John the Evangelist now welcomes female lectors and altar servers, Smith said such a policy would have been unacceptable when she was a child.

"I guess about the only woman (involved in a role at Sunday Mass) would be the organist," Smith remarked.

St. John's, according to parishioner Hedy McGarry, has traditionally endeavored to evolve along with the rest of the Catholic Church. This was fairly evident, she remarked, with the implementation of Second Vatican Council recommendations in the late 1960s.

"I think the people here are very flexible, and they took to (Vatican II) quite easily. Even then, I think people were willing listen to some of the new changes," said McGarry, a parishioner since 1955.

Shirley Curatolo, religious education coordinator, noted that this effort is ongoing, saying that the parish is currently compiling a review to determine "how well we can keep implementing Vatican II."

Under Father William Michatek, pastor since 1994, St. John's has worked hard to carry out Vatican II's emphasis on empowerment of the laity, Curatolo said. The parish staff now plays a large part in decision-making — a necessary step, she said. "in case someday we don't have a pastor."

Several parishioners have also served on committees for the Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium process. St. John's belongs to the Northwest Monroe group that began implementation of a



Abby Curatolo, lower right, and others pray after planning a trip for 47 members of St. John the Evangelist Church's youth group to the National Catholic Youth Conference in November. The meeting was in the rectory's youth room Feb. 10.

five-year plan in July 1998. The planning group's eight faith communities, Curatolo said, are working to collaborate on such programs as baptismal preparation, and also to hold special regional prayer services.

Social ministry is another parish group that works with the larger community. Father Michatek pointed out that the ministry's involvement with Interact — a

countywide ecumenical action group — helped to secure land in the southern part of Spencerport on which senior housing will be built.

"Social ministry is very active, very proactive here," Father Michatek said.

The 1,450-family parish is also quite proactive in ministry to young people. As well it should be: According to Youth Minister Sue Versluys, a whopping 38.6 percent of the parish population is under the age of 20.

That statistic is reflected in Versluys' program. Approximately 160 children in grades seven through 12 are involved with youth ministry. Additionally, Curatolo said, more than 400 children in grades



Melissa Weise, left, and Charlene Husser, with hands tied together, practice a teamwork activity during the trip planning meeting.

Greg Francis/Staff photographer

one-eight attend religious education classes.

Youths receive substantial support at the adult level, Versluys pointed out. Most of the parish committees, she said, contain "adults who will advocate for youth, asking 'But what about the kids, but what about the kids?'"

Curatolo said that children are welcomed with open arms for liturgical ministry at St. John's.

"Through the rite of baptism, and not by age, they have a place in the parish," Curatolo remarked.

"It's extremely common to see them as Communion ministers and lectors," said Roberta Hossenlopp, parish council

### SNAPSHOT

St. John the Evangelist Church  
55 Martha St.  
Spencerport, N.Y. 14559  
Founded: 1867  
Phone: 716/352-5481  
Fax: 716/352-3759

#### Ministerial staff:

Pastor:  
Father William C. Michatek

Deacon:  
Larry VanEtten

Religious education coordinator:  
Shirley Curatolo

Youth minister:  
Sue Versluys

Parish council chairperson:  
Roberta Hossenlopp

Secretary:  
Bonnie O'Brien

Bookkeeper:  
Suzy Wilcox

In residence:  
Father Paul G. Wohlrab

In residence:  
Father M. Gerard Hafner

St. John's School principal:  
Linda Boone

chairperson.

This development pleases some of St. John's longtime parishioners, including Vincent, who called it "refreshing."

"It shows that these children are going to be going to Mass," McKinney remarked.

Kathy Cammilleri, a mother of six, said that emphasis on younger people has led her into a number of parish-based volunteer roles.

"That's why I'm so devoted here, because I know my children will be here to carry it on," she said. "My kids are involved in church almost every night. It's an answer to prayers for parents who get involved in parishes with an active youth ministry."

Father Michatek said that parishioners of all ages found satisfaction in the Renew program, which began in late 1996 and ended this past Advent. The intensive spiritual renewal process spawned a number of small Christian communities; in fact, Hossenlopp said that 13 small groups have continued to meet since Renew concluded.

Father Michatek commented that Renew served to draw the entire parish closer together.

"It's really helped here," the pastor said.

McGarry will vouch for that, saying Renew gave her a feeling of connectedness.

"I really feel that this is my family here," she said.

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