

PARISH PROFILE

'Small, quiet, peaceful parish' marks 125 years

Parish Profile
St. Anthony,
Groton



By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

GROTON — Well before daily Mass at noon, parishioners arrive at St. Anthony Church, off Route 38 and south of Owasco Lake. More than a dozen or so attend daily Mass on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

"This is a sincere, devout community," commented Virginia Shafer, attending June 10 with her husband, Fred. "We've always been parishioners."

Fred began to get specific about how long "always" was, but Virginia stopped him short. "Over 60 years," she interjected.

"It's just a joyful parish to be in," Betty Doppel observed. "We have an excellent pastor (Father Bernard Carges). He follows the pope. ... Father this past Lent had our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament exposed after daily Mass on Wednesday till the 7 o'clock evening Mass. I think that's a treasure."

The modern stucco church, built in 1974-75, is just north of the village of Groton. It replaced a 100-year-old church in the village.

Some parishioners admit they are still getting used to church life in the '90s.

"We were born here," said Katherine Bishop, who has attended St. Anthony with her husband, Richard, 70 years or better. She still misses Mass in Latin.



Steve Cardinal (from left), Karen Zirbeo and Barbara O'Sullivan join in song during Mass at St. Anthony's, Groton, Sunday June 20. Parishioners praised the "sincere, devout" nature of the community, which this year marks its 125th anniversary as a parish.

The first Mass in Groton is said to have been celebrated in the home of John Carey, whose descendants are still loyal parishioners. It was celebrated by Father James Tuohey, who served settlers through the 1860s.

Officially founded in 1874, St. Anthony's marks its 125th anniversary this year.

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Father Bernard Carges prays with parishioners at the beginning of the June 20 Mass. He has been pastor of the parish for two years.

It is unlikely the parish will paint the town red, however.

"This is a very small, quiet, peaceful parish," Father Carges said. He arrived two years ago, after long pastorates of Father William E. Hays, Father Joseph McNamara and then Father Robert Egan.

"I always had my eye on this place," Father Carges added, citing the parish's layout as one reason. "I can get anyplace in the building complex in 5 seconds."

"This is probably the neatest, finest planned church and rectory in the whole area," Frank Leone asserted.

The church, parish hall, nursery, daily chapel, offices and rectory are linked in a kind of horseshoe. Many of the rooms have sliding doors that open into a courtyard that features a garden and statue of Mary.

"Parents like to take first Communion pictures of their children out there," Father Carges noted.

The parish gardeners are an active group. And while parish ministers for Mass are never lacking, there has been a need for volunteers in other programs. So last fall people were offered a list of opportunities.

"We had a very good response," said Roberta Van Slyke, religious education coordinator. She added the social life activities were a popular choice.

SNAPSHOT

St. Anthony Church
312 Locke Road
Groton, NY 13073
607/898-5135
Ministerial Staff:
Pastor:

Father Bernard Carges
Religious education coordinator:
Roberta Van Slyke
Secretary: Pam Senter
Musical director:
Muriel Bartlett
Parish Council chairman:
Richard Morse

Among social activities planned for the more than 300 registered parish families is a church picnic in July. Parish Council member Francis Neville and his wife, Norma, have offered a place to gather, at a cabin they own near the church.

Some parishioners also volunteer with such ecumenical efforts as a community Thanksgiving dinner and a food program.

"People are so busy nowadays," acknowledged Van Slyke, who nevertheless had pushed for recruiting volunteers.

"For the education program to be successful, you need to have an active parish," she said. "It's a big part of the education of children, to see adults active in parish life in all kinds of ways."

Parishioners also realize that the pastor can't do everything — especially because in July he will begin serving Holy Cross Parish in Freeville, as well. The two churches will increasingly collaborate.

Youths, also, have responded well to St. Anthony's volunteer-recruitment project.

One catechist assistant, 14-year-old Angela Pericozzi, suggested a prayer service for religious-education students. Soon every class assistant was involved. During the April service, they taught songs, made Holy Land maps and talked about Jesus' life, Angela said.

The parish offers a variety of religious education offerings and family events as well, she said.

"We have lot of church family gatherings, like Christmas, an Easter egg hunt, liturgy every Sunday. Kids get to know each other more through these things, so it's not like jumping in without knowing anybody," she said. "We have a lot of fun."