

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Couple celebrates 50 years, lifetime of service

By Liza R. Mugnolo
Editorial intern

ROCHESTER — The Jubilee Year 2000 marks a significant year especially for Anthony and Jean DiGiovanni, who celebrate their golden wedding anniversary.

The DiGiovannis renewed their wedding vows at Ss. Peter and Paul's Church on July 23. Father Paul Tomasso, former pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul's and close friend to the couple, presided. The guest list included the DiGiovannis' family, many of the original members from their wedding party and any parishioners who wanted to come.

The couple has belonged to Ss. Peter and Paul's throughout their 50 years of marriage and, through the parish, has devoted their lives to ministry outreach.

"They are wonderful people," remarked Craig Bullock, pastoral administrator. Somewhat apologizing for using an overused term, he said, "They are really like pillars of Saints Peter and Paul in the best sense of that."

They really have the "right spirit" and energy, he said. "Though they aren't young anymore, they're always there willing to do anything."

Those who frequent this inner-city parish know Tony and Jean's friendly faces well. The couple, who live in Hilton, show up at Ss. Peter and Paul's at least three times during the week to help fulfill the parish's mission of reaching out to the less fortunate.

"I think the fact that they are enriching their lives through service brings enrichment to their marriage," Sister Barbara Kuhn, SSJ, commented. "It's a great way to contribute."

Sister Kuhn directs the 18-year-old St. Peter's Kitchen; one of several Ss. Peter



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Father Paul Tomasso blesses Tony and Jean DiGiovanni during the renewal of their wedding vows at Ss. Peter and Paul's Church in Rochester on July 23, marking the DiGiovanni's 50th wedding anniversary.

and Paul's ministries and an operation that Jean frequently volunteers for. During an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Jean dished out lunch to as many as 200 people in the basement of the former St. Augustine School building, where Tony had attended school as a child.

Not one day goes by that the St. Peter's Kitchen doesn't receive food supplies from Tony, who delivers goods all the way from their home in Hilton. He acquires the food through donations from the Hilton Big M, Wegmans grocery and any surplus from St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. Tony also supplies breads and

other food items for the St. Paul's table on Sundays, an after-church ministry that provides baskets for needy members of the community.

Jean also works the hospitality table after Masses, where she serves foods and beverages to church visitors. She also oversees the liturgy committee and eucharistic ministry, which involves weekly planning and scheduling for the church.

Tony is the "unofficial welcomer of new people," Bullock said. "Tony makes people feel warm and welcome. He remembers their names."

"He's there an hour before every Mass,

funeral and wedding, setting up, putting up mikes, taking care of everything."

Both serve on the finance committee and, Tony said, there are "very generous people — if they can't give their time, they give their money."

Every Thursday the DiGiovannis faithfully attend the parish's healing service, a ceremony meant to bless less fortunate people of the community.

"We pray for people and for each other," Jean said. "We bring our prayers in for people who need consolation."

The retired Rochester firefighter and former legal secretary have four children, Gina, Mark, Connie and Andrea, two of whom are parishioners at Ss. Peter and Paul's. They also have six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Raised on the west side of the city, Tony has belonged to Ss. Peter and Paul's since he was a boy, an outreach parish for as long as he can remember. Originally from Binghamton, Jean had converted to Catholicism before meeting Tony in Rochester just one year later. The couple was introduced at a friend's wedding, which took place at the former American Legion House on Dewey Avenue.

According to the DiGiovannis, their marriage success is no secret — raising their family and serving their neighbors together has been the key to their celebrating 50 years together, which Tony added are "all good memories."

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