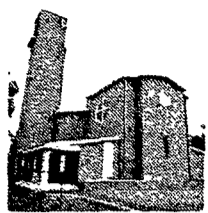


PARISH PROFILE

Church community shares good fortune with others

Parish Profile

St. Louis,
Pittsford



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — One of the most fateful moments in Lisa Magguilli's life took place a few years back when she met a pasta-cooking priest named Father James A. Schwartz, pastor of St. Louis Parish since 1993.

"When I went to join St. Louis, Father was inside cooking spaghetti, and he got 'on in,' and signed me up right into the parish census," she recalled. Magguilli, with three small children, Magguilli has become one of the most active members of this suburban community's congregation, founded by Irish Catholic immigrants in 1884. She has served as a woman of the parish council and the parish's ethnic committee and currently is the lifelong faith formation minister. She lectures at the church and serves with her husband, Larry, in the marriage preparation program. "You know that you have to live out your faith every day," Magguilli said when asked how her husband and she are so involved at St. Louis.

With 1,880 families, St. Louis is one of the larger parishes in the Diocese of Rochester. It has been in the news this year in a long battle with the Village of Pittsford over expanding and renovating its buildings. The parish was set to present the plan to parishioners this week, but the parish council next week, before taking it to the village.

"Hopefully, this plan, that has been passed down considerably from the first one, addresses everybody's concerns, and we'll be able to move forward," said Patricia Spinelli, who co-chairs the parish's expansion implementation committee with Parish Council Chairman Greg Huether. She and her husband, Peter, also serve as St. Louis representatives to the Pittsford-Mendon Catholic Communities, a covenant effort of the parishes of St. Louis, Transfiguration and Nazareth College in Pittsford and St. Catherine's in Mendon.

Not only is St. Louis one of the diocese's largest parishes, it's also one of the most affluent, the spiritual home of several area corporate executives and other professionals, according to Father Schwartz. He and some of the parishioners noted that St. Louis members are well aware of their Christian responsibility to share their wealth with others, and the parish tithes 10



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Francesca Raycraft teaches "Seasons of Faith" at St. Louis Church. Patrick Huntress (from left), Timmy Raycraft and Christopher Duffy began learning to make the sign of the cross on Sept. 24. Children from preschool age up to fifth grade attend the class, offered during the middle of Mass.

percent of its weekly collections to support various charities and less affluent congregations. The parish also raises funds for numerous outreach efforts, among them an orphanage in the impoverished Caribbean nation of Haiti.

Colleen Knauf, who attends the church with her husband, James, exemplifies the desire of St. Louis parishioners to share good fortune with others. A couple of years ago, she befriended a refugee family being resettled in the Rochester area by Catholic Family Center and the parish, and learned that many such families came to the United States with literally nothing more than the clothing on their members' backs. For one such family, she collected sheets, towels and various other household items to help them as they settled in Rochester.

"I thought 'If I could do this, I could ask everybody on this side of town to do this because we all have surplus,'" she said.

Since then, Knauf has worked with CFC to create "Saint's Place," a joint program of the parish and the Catholic Charities agency to provide refugee families with clothing, household items and furniture. Saint's Place has helped more than 700 refugees, she said, adding that she is currently hoping to find someone who can donate an empty warehouse to house donated goods. She added that her work through Saint's Place has opened her eyes to the suffering of refugees, many of whom have fled civil wars and political terror.

"We are actually saving lives," she said with emotion in her voice. "We are saving

human lives."

Despite Pittsford's reputation for being the home of Rochester's wealthy elite, enabling it to give to others, Father Schwartz also pointed out that the parish supports an ecumenical food cupboard in town.

"You think everyone in Pittsford has a ton of money, and you wouldn't need a food cupboard," he said. "But the fact is that there are people in Pittsford who need food."

And just as the parish ministers to those who are not its members, St. Louis members also minister to themselves. For example, Bea Hack coordinates the children's choir, as well as two bell choirs for the parish, one for adults and one for children. In particular, the adult bell choir serves as an escape into a musical world for its members who include dentists and doctors, she said.

"For them it's therapy to come to bell choir," she said. "They're in intense work all day long, and when they come, it's completely different for them."

The parish also makes sure not to forget its homebound members, according to Sister Judith Ann Kenrick, RSM, pastoral associate for pastoral care. Sister Kenrick oversees the work of dozens of volunteers, like Spinelli, pastoral committee chairwoman, who visit parishioners homebound or in hospices. Sister Kenrick also oversees other efforts to help parishioners in spiritual need. For example, Stephen Ministry volunteers reach out to people in crisis because of illness, death, job loss or other challenges, she said.

Again and again, parish staff and volunteers highlighted St. Louis' various efforts to make its members feel they have a spiritual home in the parish. Their efforts inspired Larry McKnight, a former Presbyterian, to go through the parish's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in 1996 and adopt the Catholicism of his wife, Debbie. The couple has three small children, and co-chairs the parish's hospitality committee. Larry said he became interested in his wife's faith when he would occasionally go to church with her on Sundays.

"When I missed a few Sundays, I found I truly missed coming here," he said.

He added that he also converted to set a good example to their children, Marissa, 6, Matthew, 4, and Brian, 2.

"I didn't want to be in a position where I told my kids 'Religion is important, but not for dad,'" McKnight said.

Setting a good example is also important when teaching children sports, according to Greg Farrell, who attends St. Louis with his wife, Mary Jo, and their three girls. Farrell coordinates such parish sports pro-

grams as the parish's Catholic Youth Organization soccer and basketball teams, as well as an adult basketball program. Farrell noted that in an era where some parents have made headlines for publicly harassing and even attacking their children's coaches and referees, St. Louis stresses to parents the need to teach good sportsmanship by being good sports themselves.

"There is one coach," he said. "Having 16 people yell at him doesn't help him do his job."

There may be one coach on the court or the field, but several parishioners credited the delegatory leadership style of Father Schwartz as being the key to the parish's high level of lay participation. Having worked with him in parish council meetings, Huether said he has been impressed by Father Schwartz's ability to listen rather than dictate to parishioners.

"It is not in any sense his imprint or his way only," Huether said. "He doesn't set a personal agenda that everybody has to fall in line with."

SNAPSHOT

St. Louis Parish
64 S. Main St.
Pittsford, NY 14534-1986
Phone: 716/586-5675

Ministerial staff:

Pastor: **Father James A. Schwartz**
Pastoral associate for social justice,
Christian formation:

Deacon Thomas Driscoll
Pastoral associate for pastoral care:

Sister Judith Ann Kenrick, RSM
Pastoral associate for liturgy,
liturgical music: **Stephanie Honz**

Coordinator of evangelization,
RCIA: **Gail DeVoria**

Coordinator of young adult
ministry: **Deacon John Payne**

Youth minister: **Christine Berl**
Coordinator of children's choir,
bell choir: **Bea Hack**

Operations manager:

Sally Schrecker

Secretary/bookkeeper:

Birdie Proctor

Secretary: **Bernadette Eilertsen**

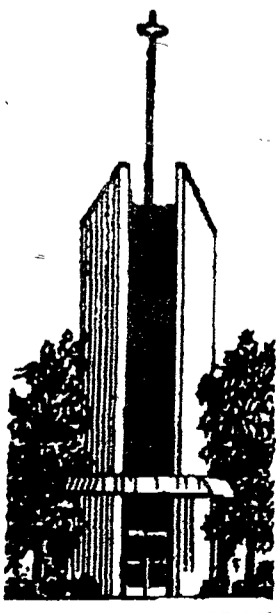
Parish Council chairman:

Greg Huether

In residence:

Msgr. Gerard Krieg
Father Raymond Booth

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