



Linda Jeanne Rivers

Appeal helps restore phone service

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

When she was in her 20s, "Sarah" said, she earned upwards of \$50,000 per year as a licensed cosmetologist. It was nothing for her, she said, to drop several hundred dollars during a shopping spree. She had a four-year college degree and a thriving career; she even drove a company car.

She had no idea how drastically her fortunes would turn.

"People don't grow up saying, 'I'm going to get poor,'" remarked Sarah, now 40.

Following the end of her second turbulent marriage, Sarah and her 6-year-old son "Dylan" (she asked that their real names not be used) are now on their own — and struggling to make ends meet. The fact that she had to go for public assistance, Sarah



Christmas Appeal

said, was very demoralizing to her.

Sarah copes with depression and other medical difficulties. To make matters more challenging, her son has symptoms of Tourette's syndrome. Though he is high-functioning, she explained, Dylan is prone to emotional outbursts and other behavioral problems. At times, Sarah said, it takes her three hours to get him dressed.

Between her own medical conditions and the special care that Dylan requires, Sarah is currently unable to hold down a job. Child support from her second husband — the father of Dylan — has not arrived consistently, and her other public assistance doesn't cover all the bills. Finances recently became so dire that she fell behind

on her phone bill, and her service was cut off.

"If you're trying to do it all and you can't, where can you go?" she said.

Fortunately for Sarah, she got a timely assist from the Catholic Charities/Catholic Courier Christmas Appeal. This fall, she received \$46 from the Christmas Appeal, which helped her pay back charges and get phone service restored.

This was not the first time, Sarah noted, that the Catholic Charities office in her region has assisted her and Dylan. For instance, she said, staff members have served as advocates so that she and Dylan can remain in their townhouse, and Dylan can continue receiving special care and education. They live about 35 miles outside of Rochester.

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Parish renovation stories

Second of two parts

It was just a little model made from foam core and paper, but it paved the way for a smooth renovation at Rochester's St. Ambrose Church, according to Father Michael Schramel, pastor.

"This is one of the best things we ever did," Father Schramel said, pointing to the church model in the rectory dining room. "The model sat in here about a year. About a year later the parish council said, 'What are we going to do about it.' I said, 'I've been waiting for you to ask that question.'"

Several diocesan churches have been renovated to better accommodate liturgical changes made since the Second Vatican Council. Christ the King Parish in Irondequoit, designed to be a school gym 40 years ago, completed a renovation this year. And St. Theodore's Parish in Gates completed one just before Christmas two years ago.

While the U.S. bishops in November issued new guidelines, "Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship," they do not have any universal blueprint for church renovation, the bishops note.

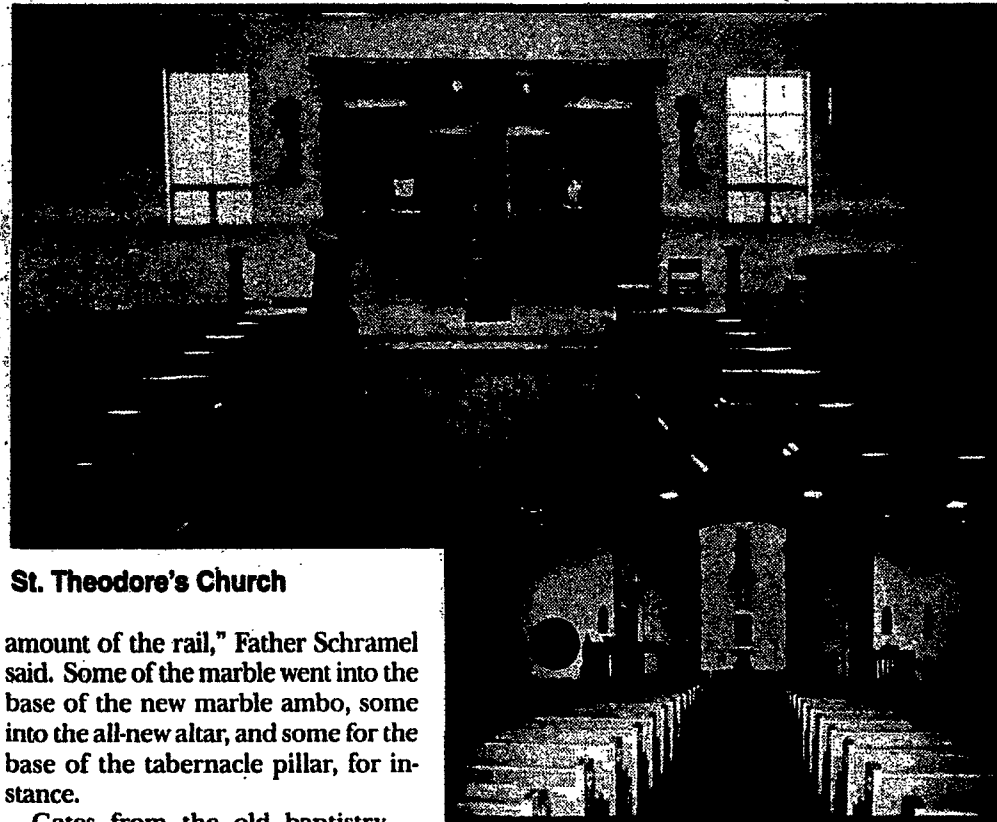
Renovating a church is "one of the most significant and formative experiences in the life of a parish community," their document states, and parish involvement is critical. It adds, "(A)n open assessment of the local needs, coupled with education about the liturgical rites, can go far toward drawing a parish together ... In principle, the community deserves to hear how the renovation will enhance their ability to pray with solemnity, beauty, and dignity."

Renovating parishes in the Rochester Diocese have attempted to provide just such information. At St. Ambrose, bulletin inserts and "town" meetings addressed concerns.

"Each step along the way, the parish council would give affirmation to the next step," Father Schramel said, explaining that the process began four years ago. And parishioners had a say in the plans.

Parishioners pointed out, for example, that people had sacrificed substantially to donate the cost of black Belgian marble for the church's high altar, and white marble for the altar rail, the baptismal font, and a free-standing altar. The architects, LaBella Associates, then figured out a way to preserve that precious marble in their design.

"We used every square inch of both altars in highly visible places, and a substantial



St. Theodore's Church

amount of the rail," Father Schramel said. Some of the marble went into the base of the new marble ambo, some into the all-new altar, and some for the base of the tabernacle pillar, for instance.

Gates from the old baptistry — which was made into a daily Mass chapel — were to be placed between the narthex gathering space and liturgical space. The new narthex may be used for funeral or first Communion receptions. Audio speakers also were installed there for parents who may need to walk with their restless children. "It's a wonderful walking space," the pastor said.

The altar and refinished pews were moved closer to each other to create a greater sense of connectedness, the pastor noted. Side pews now slant toward the altar. All new lights are being added, and an audio system for the hearing-impaired. The church, including its altar, will be fully handicap accessible. And two reconciliation rooms replace four confessionals.

The renovation also moved the tabernacle from the rear, high altar to its own chapel to the right of the sanctuary.

"What I suggested was this (chapel) creates a much more reverent space for it," Father Schramel said.

The church's cornerstone dates to 1959, he noted. "It was built with the old liturgy in mind, where the priest's back was to the people, and the theology went along with that — you heard Mass, attended Mass, you

watched the act of the priest."

Father Thomas Burr recalled serving at St. Ambrose in the early 1970s. "I remember that church was one of the most modern churches in Rochester at the time, but I found it difficult to preach, the way the seating was laid out," he said, noting the long rows and transepts to his side.

"They're doing a major renovation there now; I'm glad," he said, adding that the changes should enhance the worship. Father Burr now is pastor of St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads. Built 1979, its design features pews in a fan shape about the altar, bringing parishioners closer.

"As a presider it is a wonderful place for liturgy. ... I do feel the difference personally as a presider," he said. "I know a number of people who visit our church comment on how nice it is to be closer to the altar."

Christ the King

The high side windows of Christ the King remain a testimony to the building's original purpose, to serve as a school gym once a separate church building could be built. The windows would be fairly safe from errant

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STORY BY KATHLEEN SCHWAR • PHOTOS BY ANDREA DIXON