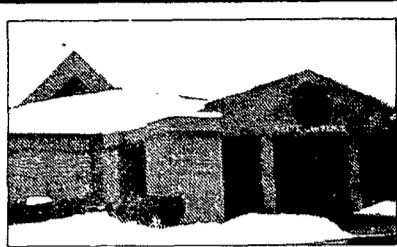


PARISH PROFILE

Greece parish, 3,200 families strong, is still growing



Parish Profile
St. Lawrence, Greece

By **Mike Latona**
Staff writer

GREECE — When Eloise Martin began teaching at St. Lawrence School 31 years ago, she said, driving home was a piece of cake.

"All I know is, you pulled out of the parking lot and never looked left or right. Because there wasn't a car in sight," said Martin, who still teaches at the school. "Now, you just sit there (and wait)."

Perhaps this is a slight exaggeration, but it's certainly true that the area around St. Lawrence Church has seen drastic change during the parish's 42-year history. With housing tracts eating up miles of open land, St. Lawrence's membership has risen by a staggering 2,000 families since 1992. At 3,204 registered families, St. Lawrence is now one of the three largest parishes in the Rochester Diocese.

Statistics reflect a very young St. Lawrence membership. Pat Glogowski, parish secretary, noted that nearly 700 students are enrolled in the religious-education program. There were 124 young people confirmed in October, with 158 more scheduled for first Communion in May. More than 800 baptisms have been performed in the past five years, and St. Lawrence School is filled to capacity.

However, at its founding in 1959, St. Lawrence was a 400-family parish and its campus was surrounded by farms and woods. Father Donald Haycock, CSC, who has served at the parish since 1962, recalls that many area roads in those days were one-lane. Martin added that it wasn't unusual to see horses wandering onto the St. Lawrence property.

First-year Masses were held at the Greece Town Hall. The church, a reconstruction of the old St. Anne Church in Rochester, opened its doors in late 1960. Charlie and LuAn Koch, both charter parishioners, recalled that Father Edward A. Shamon, founding pastor, went door-to-door rounding up volunteers to help in the construction effort.

"Everyone was building," Charlie Koch said.

St. Lawrence School opened in 1963. The parish grew steadily until the mid-1980s, when growth began to genuinely skyrocket.

"You saw the tracts go up and you knew you were going to have to put a new church up. And nobody put up a fight about it," said Father Frank Falletta, St. Lawrence's pastor since 1984.

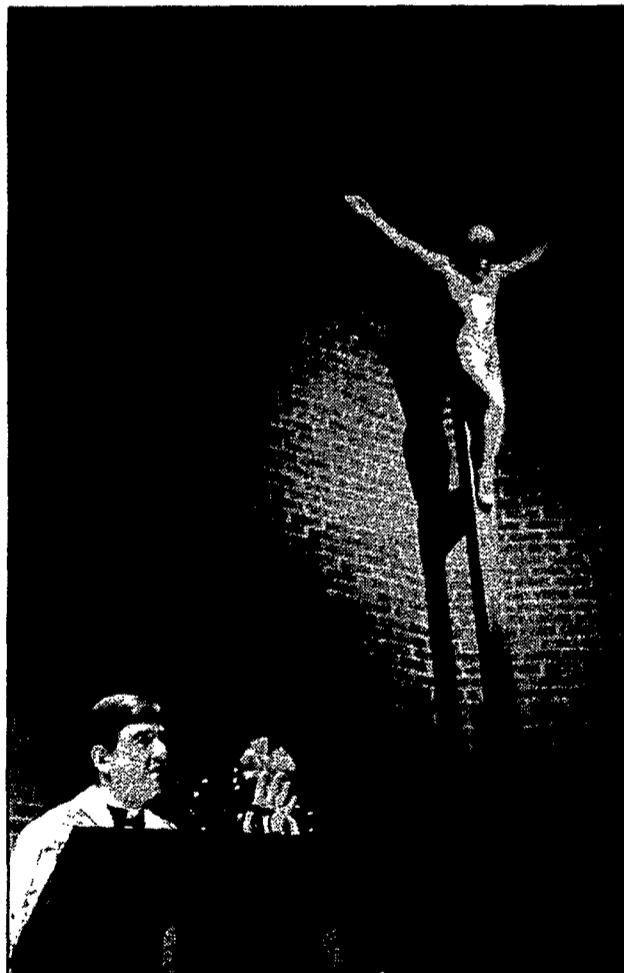
A parish center opened at St. Lawrence in 1988, and the new church was completed in 1989. Only five years after that, an addition was made to the church.

Although young families are prevalent at St. Lawrence, Father Haycock also noted that the parish's ministry to senior citizens is on the rise. He observed that new



David Wallace/Photo intern

(From left) altar boys Cory Hall, 12, and James Grotke, 12, place their hands over their hearts in prayer at a "Jubilee 2000" service, marking the end of the Great Year of the Jubilee 2000, at St. Lawrence Church in Greece Jan. 7.



Father Michael J. Volino leads the "Jubilee 2000" service.

senior living facilities "are cropping up all over the place."

As for the near future, Father Falletta remarked, "All we see is more and more growth." He said the church's capacity will max out in two to three years. The northwest Monroe County planning group — a coalition of eight faith communities including St. Lawrence — has considered formulation of a new parish

west of St. Lawrence, although Father Falletta said there's been no formal movement on the matter.

St. Lawrence's pastorates have remained quite stable amid the changes. The only pastors prior to Father Falletta were Father Shamon (1959-62) and Father John A. Murphy (1962-84). Father Shamon died in 1980, and Father Murphy in 1991.

Actually, Father Haycock — at nearly 40 years — has the longest tenure of any St. Lawrence priest. He served as part-time assistant while teaching at Cardinal Mooney High School, and came to St. Lawrence as full-time parochial vicar when Mooney closed in 1989.

"Members of the parish built an extension to the rectory for me. Father Falletta has always been jealous of it; he calls it the penthouse," Father Haycock joked.

Parishioner Nancy Kalb views the low turnover of clergy as a major plus for the parish. "For me, there's such a comfort level in the stability of our priests. I don't know if I would have become as involved," said Kalb, who is chairperson of the Parish Life Committee and also volunteers for RCIA, fundraising, religious education and lecturing. Kalb noted that the Parish Life Committee sponsors St. Joseph's Tables; craft sales; coffee hours; and a "Bid & Barbecue" fundraiser.

St. Lawrence's other activities and committees include Bible study; human development; Marian Prayer Group; Scouting; and a sports program. In addition, a very active youth group draws 40 to 45 junior-high students, and 20 teens at the senior-high level. Donna Gray, youth minister, said the youth group "does one service project and one social event a month — sometimes an Amerks (hockey) game, or a haunted hayride."

Gray added that young volunteers are so enthusiastic about community service, she has to turn people away. That desire

to volunteer is pervasive throughout St. Lawrence, LuAn Koch noted.

"It started with Father Shamon, and it's here still," she said.

"There are people begging to be on the committees, because they have so much fun," her husband added.

"We couldn't handle what we're doing without volunteers," Glogowski commented. "They're in every, every department. There are hundreds."

Because of this, Glogowski is confident that St. Lawrence's programs can accommodate future growth. "We just have to feed more people — and we do," she said.

In a place as large as St. Lawrence, Father Falletta observed, it's virtually impossible for parishioners to embrace every aspect of the parish. Instead, he said, they're better off finding a segment they can fit into comfortably.

"When you use the word 'community,' you have to break it down. What unites them all, hopefully, is the liturgical community," the pastor said.

SNAPSHOT

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Religious education coordinator:
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Virginia Wright
Youth minister:
Donna Gray
Business manager:
Alex DiPasquale
Parish council chair:
Gary Valentine
St. Lawrence School principal:
Joseph Holleran

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