

FEATURE

Parish trips offer fellowship, funds, needed breaks

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

As a child Carole Proia traveled a lot with her family, to places from Quebec to Florida. When she became a Sister of St. Joseph 40 years ago, she figured she was willingly giving up those trips.

But in the past 14 years, she has gone on more than 50 day and overnight trips and cruised the Caribbean three times. In fact, she arranged the trips herself, for Holy Rosary parishioners and as fundraisers for the Sisters of St. Joseph, respectively. On the morning after Easter, she will leave for Sicily, in charge of about 45 people from as far as Florida and New Jersey.

"I never thought in a million years I'd be getting into this," she said.

"I love her trips," said Mabel Shaw, a Holy Rosary parishioner who has gone on more than 50 of the bus trips. "We have a lot of fun, for one thing. She's a wonderful tour guide. That's really not the appropriate name for her — she's really more than a tour guide. She is a friend to everyone."

Sister Proia has been arranging bus trips since 1987 for Holy Rosary, where she is a parish minister and administrative assistant for the school. In exchange for her work, First Choice Travel in Batavia allows her to travel free of charge.

"I try to make it a ministry for the people," she said. "People like traveling with people from Holy Rosary. They are warm, outgoing people. This was the main purpose of it. We make very little."

She has seen widows minister to each other through the trips and help each other through their grief, she said.

"We are in the inner city here. There were a lot of people who lived alone and really had no place to go. They didn't drive. We thought it might be nice to start these trips, to give them something to look forward to, to get them out," she said. "So many of them have hard lives. This is a way to bring them joy."

Shaw, a widow, said that her children insist she take advantage of the trips.

"When it gets time, they give me money and say 'It's for your trips,' Christmas, Easter, whenever they fell like giving me anything," she said. When friends and family planning to attend her 85th birthday party a year ago asked for gift ideas, her children suggested money for her trips.

Shaw is looking forward to a trip in June to Frankenmuth and Mackinac Island, Mich.

"I'm going to go as long as I can," she said. "Everybody will say, Mabel are you going on such and such a trip this year? I go. ... I get so much pleasure out of these trips."

While the Holy Rosary trips aren't meant to be fundraisers, participants on the cruises contribute an extra \$75 as a donation to the Sisters of St. Joseph. The cruises average 42-44 people and are arranged through Empire Travel.

Five years ago Sister Proia, a former teacher, principal, counselor and social worker, was asked if she would arrange fundraiser cruises for the Sisters of St. Joseph.



David Wallace/Photo intern
Sister Carole Proia, SSJ, shares a story of a past trip to Italy with Christine Marx and Ellie Geckeler, parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Brighton, during an April 5 planning meeting for a tour of southern Italy this month. The tour group, organized by Sister Proia and consisting of parishioners throughout the diocese, gathered at the Sisters of St. Joseph motherhouse.

"Sister Mary Anne Laurer went to a workshop in St. Louis and learned that sisters were doing cruises as fundraisers," Sister Proia said, referring to the congregation's director of development. "She called me in and asked if I'd like to do that."

"I enjoy it. I love it. It is neat seeing people happy."

St. Leo's travel agency

When Father John Glogowski came to St. Leo's in Hilton, parish secretary Betty Murphy recalled, "He said people that pray together will pray together."

The two have led numerous trips, including those to Israel, Ireland and Oberammergau, Germany. But trips like one to see the Lion King in Toronto last year made the parish \$1,000 toward its roof fund, she said, through arrangements with All Seasons Travel & Cruise Center, Brockport.

The parish now is planning a trip to Gettysburg battlefields; Hershey, Pa.; a tour of the Amish countryside; "Noah" at the Millennium Theater in Lancaster, Pa.; "and shopping, of course" from Aug. 24-26.

"We're kind of like St. Leo's travel agency," Murphy said. "It creates a closeness, like our own small Christian community on wheels."

"When people know there's a cause," she added, "to them it's just frosting on the cake."

Working with St. Leo's is Ralph Parmelee, owner of All Seasons and a parishioner at Church of the Nativity in Brockport. He is also arranging a trip for Nativity to see "The Sound of Music" Oct. 6 in Stratford, Ontario.

Parmelee said he helps numerous not-for-profit organizations including Boy Scout troops and the Knights of Columbus arrange trips as fundraisers. He provides each organization with a contract specifying what it will make.

"It's a nice program because they use the money maybe for the roof fund, the building fund or whatever," he said. "People like doing it that way."

Meanwhile, the people involved in such trips come back to do business with him, he explained.

He also is working on a pilgrimage to Ireland next year under Deacon Tom Beck and a second pilgrimage to Fatima under Father Peter Enyan-Boadu.

Have your tickets ready

Parishioners in other parts of the dio-

cese are packing their bags, too.

Father Brian Cool will lead a tour across Ireland July 16-27. Walks, golf, shopping and sightseeing are planned in Donegal, Sligo, Waterford, Galway and Limerick. The price is \$2,069. Father Cool may be reached at 716/275-8523.

Deacon Bob Cyrana will lead a 10-day trip to the Holy Land sometime within the year. Mass or prayer services will be a part of the pilgrimage, which includes the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem, the Garden of Gethsemane, Nazareth, Caesarea and Galilee. He toured the Holy Land in December in preparation, and said, "It was a trip I'll never forget."

It was a good time to visit, Deacon Cyrana said. Although concerns about violence are keeping the tourist population down, he noted the quiet he experienced.

"I was on Mount Nebo, where Moses saw the Holy Land and I was there basically by myself," he said. Anyone interested may call the St. Felix/St. Francis cluster office in Clifton Springs, 315/462-2961.

St. Alphonsus Parish in Auburn is planning a trip to Massachusetts June 12. Stops will include Richardson's Candy Kitchen, lunch at the Deerfield Inn, the New England Candle Co. and Yankee Candle Co. Cost is \$57.

"We're just doing this as a lark, as a fel-

lowship, a get-together," said Marie Venaglia, director of Christian formation at St. Alphonsus. "Like me, a lot of the people are getting older and we don't want to drive anywhere." After announcing her first trip, "Travel Niagara," which include a wineries stop May 15, the bus was half-full in a week. Venaglia may be reached at 315/253-6147.

Trips are a reward for the ordinary, everyday trials people endure, Sister Proia said.

"If you can give them a break from that, why not?"

EDITORS' NOTE: Among the trips still open is a pilgrimage to the shrines of Quebec and a visit to Maine Aug. 6-11, escorted by Sister Proia and Bob Dasch, from Holy Rosary Church. Price range is \$385-645 depending upon the number of people per room.

The next cruise for the Sisters of St. Joseph is March 3-9, 2002, on the new Costa Atlantica to the western Caribbean. Price is \$1,274-1,574. Contact Sister Proia at 716/865-9861.

Also open is a trip to Gettysburg, Hershey, Amish country and "Noah" at the Millennium Theater in Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 24-26, led by St. Leo's Church. Price range is \$257-375. Call Betty Murphy at 716/392-2710. The parish also is planning to see "The Sound of Music" in Stratford, Ontario, Oct. 13.

Florida guide locates churches

Catholic travelers to Florida who want to attend Mass often have difficulty finding churches near their vacation or business destinations. The Florida Catholic's Web site has addressed this problem with a user-friendly map feature providing links to all Florida cities and churches.

A click on any part of the Florida map will create a list of cities in that part of the state. Users can then choose their destination city from that list. Once a city is selected, a chart of all churches in that city is displayed. Each church listing includes the church address, phone number, Mass times, location map and Web site or e-mail if available. Church and Mass time information can be printed out.

Travelers can find the information they need either prior to arriving in Florida or, if they have an Internet con-

nection at a hotel, while visiting.

Florida residents who travel around the state can also use the Travel Guide to find churches, Mass times and attraction information when visiting unfamiliar locations.

Additional aids can be found on the Travel Guide page. These include tourist attractions throughout the state, a currency conversion chart, a currency delivery service by Chase Bank, a foreign language translator with audio pronunciation examples and the U.S. Census data on Florida. An online hotel/motel reservation service is also provided.

Visit the Catholic Travel Guide to Florida at www.thefloridacatholic.org. Click on the Directories link on the top of every page and then select Florida Travel Guide. The Site Search feature, on each page, can also be used to find the Travel Guide.

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