

FEATURE

Devotion to city will continue for Father Murphy

It's been said that "You can take a boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." Perhaps, but Father Lawrence Murphy is one country boy who has found urban ministry to be his true passion.

"I've always had an inner love for the city. I don't know where it comes from, because I come from a small town," said Father Murphy, a native of Newark, Wayne County.

Father Murphy has served since 1993 as pastor of Rochester's Holy Rosary Parish, and for the last year has been pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish as well. Both churches are on Rochester's northwest side.

During his time at Holy Rosary, Father Murphy, his staff and parishioners have strongly supported parish community-outreach efforts, in an attempt to address the crime and poverty that exists in that neighborhood. In building toward this goal, Father Murphy has also helped foster a strong ecumenical bond with area churches.

"I'm energized by the people in the city," said Father Murphy, who will turn 70 on June 28.

Father Murphy's home parish is St. Michael's in Newark. He attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries and was ordained May 31, 1958, at Sacred Heart Cathedral by Bishop James E. Kearney.

He served as assistant priest at St. John the Evangelist, Greece (1958-62) and Sacred Heart Cathedral (1962-65) before taking on numerous positions as a spiritual director, diocesan vocations director and teacher over the next six years.

He returned to parish duty in 1971, assisting at St. Mary's, Rochester. He also performed chaplaincy duties at Genesee and Highland hospitals in the early 1970s before



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

becoming full-time chaplain at Genesee in 1972 — a position that he held for the next 13 years.

Due to his long-standing ties at Genesee, Father Murphy expressed regret at the

Father Murphy has served on the Priests' Council as well as the Priest Personnel Board.

Though he is officially retiring, Father Murphy will not become a total stranger to his current neighborhood. He's moving "just up the road," he said, to Sacred Heart Cathedral, where he will provide sacramental assistance.

Sacred Heart, along with Holy Rosary and Most Precious Blood, form the Flower City Park-Lexington pastoral planning group.

"I look upon this as a new level, not being put out to pasture," Father Murphy said.

"I'll do things at my own pace. I love hospital calls and being with people in times of crisis."

A celebration for Father Murphy is scheduled for Sunday, June 24. He will celebrate the 9:30 a.m. Mass at Holy Rosary and 11:15 a.m. Mass at Most Precious Blood, then return to Holy Rosary where a 12:30 p.m. public reception in his honor will take place in the school basement.

—Mike Latona

Southern Tier priest plans to remain loyal to his roots

Father Thomas Watts is a Southern Tier priest through and through. In his 44 years of priestly service — all in parishes — Father Watts has logged only seven years outside the Tier.

In fact, for the past dozen years, Father Watts has served as pastor of his childhood parish, St. James in Waverly, Tioga County. He has also served concurrently at St. Pius X in Van Etten, Chemung County, during that entire time.

"I have enjoyed being in the parishes very much. I enjoy being with people at important parts of their lives — baptisms, marriages, funerals," said Father Watts, 70. "I like people of all ages, really."

Father Watts attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. He was ordained June 15, 1957, at St. Ann's Church in Hornell by Auxiliary Bishop Lawrence B. Casey.

He served as assistant at the following parishes: St. Mary's, Corning (1957-61); St. Rita's, Webster (1961-65); St. Charles Borromeo, Elmira Heights (1965-67); St. Patrick's, Mount Morris (1967-70); and St. Patrick's, Owego (1970-73).

Father Watts became co-pastor of St. Patrick's, Owego, in 1973, and its sole pastor in 1985. His 17-year affiliation with St. Patrick's ended in 1987 when he became pastor of St. Benedict's, Odessa, and St. Pius X, Van Etten. Two years later, Father Watts shifted from St. Benedict's to St. James in Waverly

while retaining his pastorate at St. Pius X. Father Watts noted that he's among only a handful of diocesan priests to serve in his home parish, as he's done in Waverly. He has enjoyed his pastorate in Van Etten as well, remarking, "They're a very close-knit parish. They really take hold of their community."

Father Watts said he never sought to be

anything but a parish priest. The only downside, he remarked, was having to say good-bye to parish communities whenever he has changed assignments.

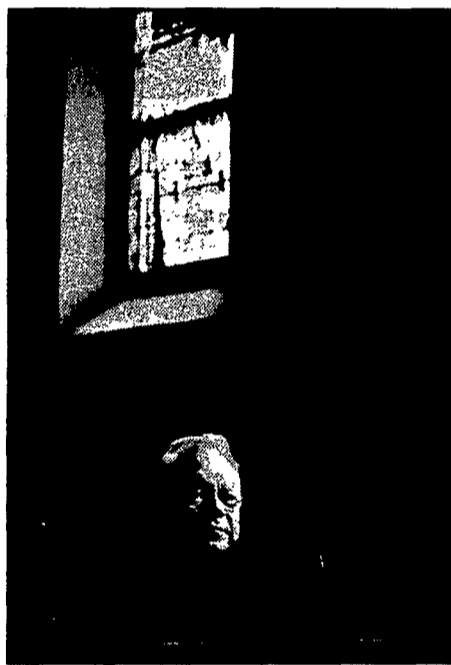
Chances are, Father Watts will still have a strong presence in the Southern Tier during his retirement. He plans to live in his family homestead, just across the Pennsylvania border, so that he can stay close to his 100-year-old mother who resides in a nursing facility. Father Watts noted that he's more than happy to offer sacramental as-

sistance wherever needed.

"I would very much like to be as active a priest as possible," he said. "I've told the priests in our area that I'm available."

A retirement celebration for Father Watts will take place Sunday, June 10. The festivities will begin with a 10:30 Mass at St. James followed by a brunch at Beeman's Restaurant in Sayre, Pa., adjacent to Waverly. Call St. James Parish at 607/565-2014 for brunch reservations.

—Mike Latona



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Remember: "It ain't over til it's over."
—Yogi Berra

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