



Photo courtesy of Rochester Fire Department

Firefighters battle a fire that wrecked the former St. Lucy's Church.

Church fire saddens community

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The church at 247 Troup St. had not housed Catholic services for more than 25 years. Even so, one former St. Lucy parishioner described herself as "devastated" by news that an early morning fire had destroyed the edifice July 1.

"It was a sad day. It felt like something was missing, that you'd lost somebody," said Toni Vito, who grew up in St. Lucy's and graduated from the parish school in 1947.

St. Lucy's Catholic Church closed in 1975. Since that time, the building had been known as the Lily of the Valley Church of God in Christ.

Lt. Dan McBride, public information officer for the City of Rochester Fire De-

partment, said investigators initially thought the fire began in the church basement, but now say it likely started on the first floor. The damage was so extensive that the structure's remaining walls were knocked down. McBride said firefighters managed only to salvage the church's bell and cross.

He added that the fire's cause remained under investigation as of July 9. Though arson had not been ruled out, "There's nothing consistent that would point toward that it was intentionally set," McBride said. "There's a likelihood we'll never know the cause."

Rev. William Everett, the church's 12th-year pastor, said Lily of the Valley plans to rebuild on, or near, the same site. The 125-member congregation has moved most of its services to the Swan Building, 584 Jef-

erson Ave.

The ravaged church was dedicated in 1913, one year after St. Lucy's Parish was founded to serve the families of Italian immigrants. St. Lucy's established a school that year as well, and opened a convent for Sisters of St. Joseph in 1945.

Vito said the parish was noticeably tight-knit, remarking, "Everyone did for one another. Everyone was family."

Due to declining numbers, St. Lucy's School was closed in 1973 and the parish followed suit two years later. At that time the church building was purchased by Lily of the Valley, a mostly African-American congregation.

Vito said Lily of the Valley left much of the church's design intact from the St. Lucy's days, and that church members

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All the diocese's presidents

Her passion is obvious, even as she speaks of revising organizational structure, streamlining governance and anticipating new bylaws.

Maribeth Mancini, the diocese's director of evangelization and catechesis, was installed in May as president of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership.

"I love working with my professional peers around the country to advance the catechetical agenda at the national and diocesan level," she said. "It's so exciting."

Mancini has plenty of company among diocesan leaders selected to lead national Catholic organizations: Father John DeSocio, assistant to the bishop for vocations and priestly formation, is vice president of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors; Karen Franz, general manager/editor of the *Catholic Courier*, is president of the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada; Mary Ellen Lopata is president of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries; Father Kevin McKenna, former chancellor, is president-elect of the Canon Law Society of America and will assume the presidency in October; and Joan Workmaster, diocesan liturgy director, is vice chair of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions board of directors. And from 1992-1999, Father Robert J. Kennedy was chairman of the board of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

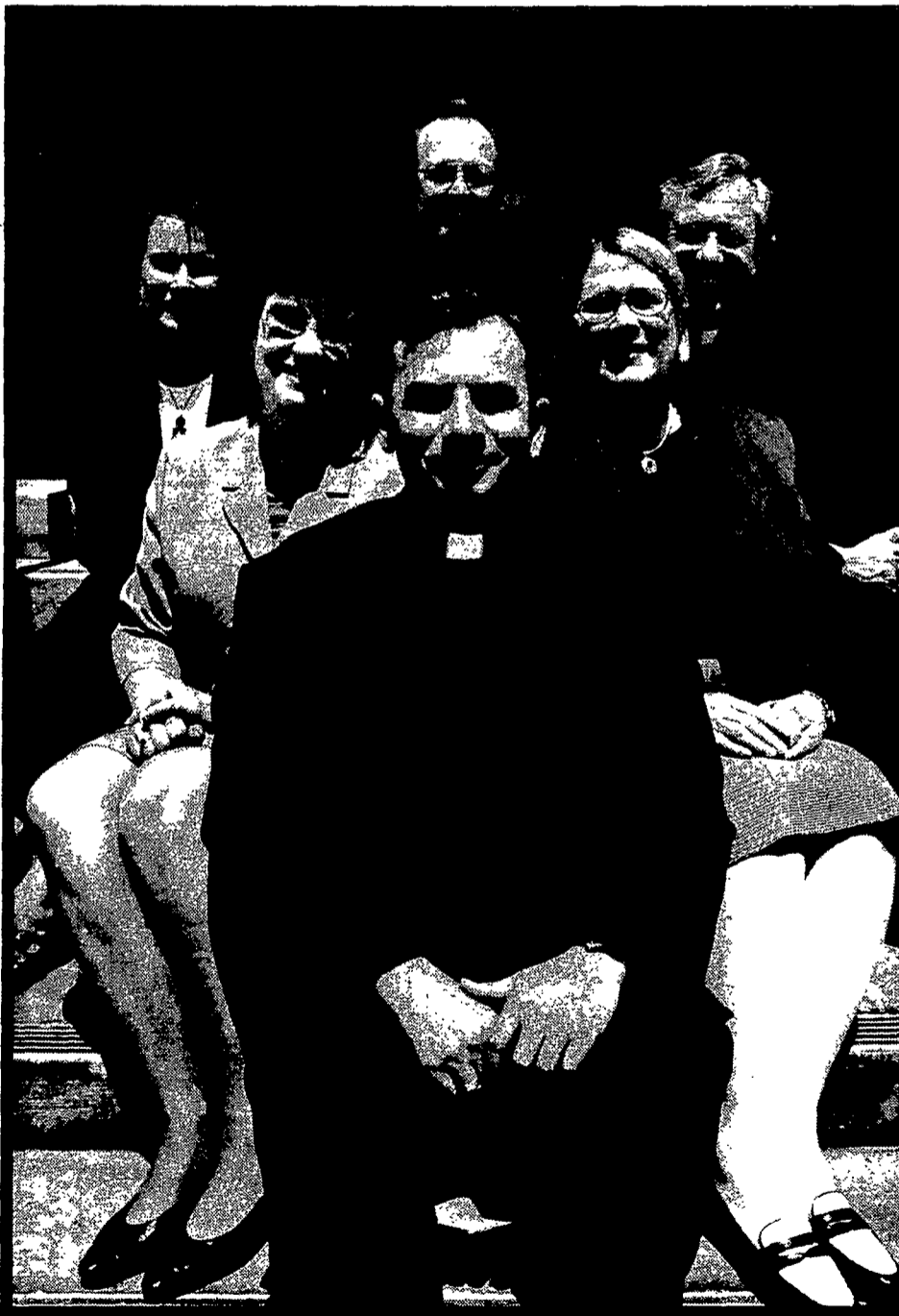
"That's quite a list," Bishop Matthew H. Clark responded after hearing it. He noted it denotes a "strong representation of folks at the national leadership level" for a diocese of Rochester's size — 360,000 Catholics.

"I'm very pleased they are recognized for their ability and commitment in those respective fields," he added.

Msgr. Philip J. Murnion of the National Pastoral Life Center, said the number of Rochester diocesans in national leadership is "probably a tribute to the diocesan climate, in which efforts and participation in the larger church is something that's appreciated in that diocese. Some don't think there is as much to be gained from the larger church, and go it alone on their own devices."

While serving in national leadership brings a certain honor to the diocese — as

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Gathered on the front steps of the diocesan Pastoral Center are six of the eight diocesan leaders who hold key positions with national Catholic organizations. Clockwise from top are Father Kevin McKenna, Father Robert Kennedy, Maribeth Mancini, Father John DeSocio, Karen Franz, and Mary Ellen Lopata. Absent from the photo are Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Joan Workmaster.

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