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Saints

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Help (Rochester), Our Lady of Good Counsel (Rochester) and Our Mother of Sorrows (Greece).

Mary's husband, Joseph, is the patron of seven diocesan parishes. St. Patrick is even more pervasive in the diocese; his name represents 12 parishes.

St. Michael and St. John the Evangelist are each the patron of five parishes. In addition, four are named for the mother of Mary: Two are spelled St. Ann (Hornell and Owasco) and the others add an "e" to the end of that name (Rochester and Palmyra). Father Frank Lioi, pastor of St. Anne in Rochester, explained that Anne is the French spelling of Ann.

A parish is permitted to have two patron saints if those saints' feast is celebrated on the same day, such as Ss. Peter and Paul (Rochester and Elmira), who are honored on June 29. Two saints' names may also be used in the form of a combined title after a church has been closed: Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph, Rochester, was created in 1975 when St. Joseph's Church, destroyed by fire the previous year, joined with neighboring Our Lady of Victory. And St. Joseph in Bloomfield, upon closing in 1990, merged with St. Bridget to form St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's.

Ethnic ties often extend to a parish's patron saint, Father McNamara said. Parishes named St. Patrick's were likely settled by Irish immigrants, and Italian parishes were named for saints from their homeland as well: St. Lucy's (Retsof and formerly Rochester); St. Philip Neri (Rochester); and St. Anthony of Padua (Rochester and Elmira). The same holds true for Polish parishes: St. Casimir (Elmira) and St. Stanislaus (Rochester and Bradford).

The canonization of a saint, such as Elizabeth Ann Seton, has frequently led to the naming of a new parish. Father McNama-

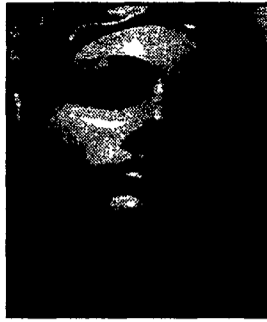
ra pointed out that St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher were both canonized in 1935; parishes by those names were formed in 1953 (St. Thomas More, Brighton) and 1962 (St. John of Rochester, Perinton, named for St. John Fisher). Another saint, Pius X, had parishes named for him in Van Etten and Chili around the time of his 1954 canonization.

Founding pastors, Father McNamara said, have sometimes chosen a patron saint who has a connection with their own names. St. Ignatius Loyola in Hornell, for instance, was founded in 1931 by Father Ignatius X. Cameron, himself a Hornell native. Father McNamara also observed that three of the five St. Michael's churches in the diocese are not far apart (Newark, Lyons and Penn Yan), so it's probably no coincidence that Father Michael Gilbride was serving at each when they were established in the mid-1800s.

Lay people's names can also play into the naming process. St. Salome's in Irondequoit honors Mrs. Salome Boucher, who donated the land on which the parish's first church was built. Meanwhile, a 1982 history of Irondequoit's St. Thomas the Apostle Church notes that its founding pastor, Father John F. Muckle, in 1922 "chose the name Thomas in honor of his father's patron saint. Which of the several St. Thomases Father Muckle had in mind is not clear. It was his immediate successor, Msgr. Richard Burns, who picked St. Thomas the Apostle."

While bishops and pastors have historically determined a parish's name, Father Elmer McDonald decided to include founding parishioners when a new parish in North Chili was being named in 1968.

"We were in the midst of Vatican II and I was very concerned about the involvement of the people," Father McDonald



said. A parish meeting of 350 people yielded 52 names. The list was narrowed down to five, and St. Christopher was the top choice. (St. Jude, another "finalist," became the name of a parish in Gates that also opened that year.)

Father McDonald explained that St. Christopher, as the patron saint of travelers, was appropriate because the church is located on the outskirts of Monroe County, where many commuted regularly to Buffalo.

However, Father McDonald said with a chuckle, he was surprised to discover that Bishop Fulton J. Sheen didn't take too kindly to his delegating ways.

"I didn't know that bishops named parishes. He said, 'Are you trying to be the bishop and the pastor?' He wasn't too excited about it, but later he did say 'Well, you're right, people should be able to name a parish,'" said the now-retired Father McDonald, who led St. Christopher until 1975.

But a year after the parish was founded, the reformed Roman Calendar dropped St. Christopher, along with several other saints, because the church doubted that legends about these people were true. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the only proven information about St. Christopher is that he was a third-century martyr. However, St. Christopher was not stripped of his sainthood and the fledgling parish in North Chili retained its name.

Ongoing devotion

Statues and paintings of patron saints are evident at numerous diocesan churches. Father McNamara said that the patron saint, ideally, is also honored in liturgy.

"The feast of each parish patron is supposed to be celebrated. A special Mass in their honor is a prerequisite," he said, adding that a devotional such as a rosary would also be appropriate on the feast day.

Every July 3, the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, a celebration takes place at St. Thomas, the Irondequoit church where Fa-

ther McNamara resides.

"I always make a big thing of it and have a nice coffee social after Mass," said Father Robert Bradley, St. Thomas' pastor.

Few celebrations are as elaborate as at St. Anne, Rochester. Ever since the church opened in 1930, a nine-day novena has preceded the feast of St. Anne on July 26.

"The novena draws people from all over Monroe County, not just our parish," Father Lioi said. "Many people have been coming for 30 to 35 years."

Father Amann, who remained in Hamlin until his 1998 retirement, said he found ways to acknowledge his parish's patron saint throughout the year. "In my homilies I would say 'Elizabeth Ann Seton would do this and do that,'" he said. Father Amann added that a parishioner, Cheryl McElhaten, even wrote a song in the saint's honor.

In recent years the diocese has seen a growing number of clusters, as well as groups of parishes that were canonically suppressed for the purpose of forming a single new parish. With these developments have come such new parish titles as All Saints, which encompasses St. Mary's, St. Vincent de Paul and Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Corning-Painted Post area; and the Holy Family Catholic Community cluster, which includes St. Mary, Dansville, St. Pius V, Cohocton, St. Joseph, Wayland, and Sacred Heart, Perkinsville.

William Pickett, diocesan director of planning, said parishioners in these areas, in keeping with the current status of their community, should use the new parish titles to identify their affiliation. Yet he said this doesn't signify a total dismissal of an individual church's original patron saint.

"The important thing is to focus on the saint, not that there was a parish once named that," Pickett said.

Saints' statues that appear on Page 1 were taken at the following parishes where they are patrons (clockwise from upper left): St. Cecilia, Irondequoit; St. Thomas More, Brighton; St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen; St. Michael, Rochester; St. John of Rochester, Perinton; St. Anne, Rochester; St. Ambrose, Rochester; St. Casimir, Elmira (inset); and St. Anthony of Padua, Rochester.

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