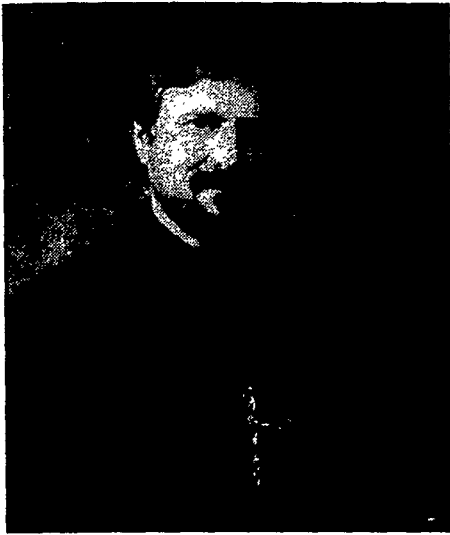


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Bishop Peter Hickman

Continued from previous page

degrees from Protestant theological institutes in California. A former Baptist minister who was trained in an evangelical seminary, he joined the Old Catholic Church in 1982. He was ordained a priest in 1984, and consecrated a bishop in 1996 through the bishops of the Ecumenical Communion of Catholic and Apostolic Churches.

His St. Matthew Church is a 300-member parish located in an Orange, Calif., shopping center. As bishop of the Diocese of Ecumenical and Old Catholic Faith Communities, Bishop Hickman presides over seven parishes and three missions in California, Minnesota, New Mexico and Colorado.

According to its Web site, St. Matthew offers Catholic spirituality and tradition to "the many people who for some reason have felt excluded from other churches." The Web site also notes that St. Matthew welcomes people who may no longer receive sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church due to divorce or remarriage; who

are of other Christian faiths but excluded from Roman Catholic sacraments; and who disagree with church teachings on women's ordination, artificial contraception and priestly celibacy.

Bishop Hickman will ordain Ramerman a deacon on Nov. 15, two days before her priestly ordination. She will become the 24th priest in his diocese and the second female one. Bishop Hickman will return to Rochester in April 2002 to ordain Spiritus Christi's Denise Donato a deacon.

While Ramerman and Donato will be considered clergy of Bishop Hickman's diocese, they will remain stationed at Spiritus Christi. The Spiritus Christi community currently is independent of his diocese, "but that could change," Bishop Hickman said, noting that his diocese shares many of Spiritus Christi's ideals.

In a 1999 article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Bishop Hickman acknowledged that "the Old Catholic movement has become a refuge for every kind of Catholic schismatic for all kinds of different reasons. ... One of the difficulties we've had is to properly identify ourselves."

And yet, for all their differences with Rome, Old Catholics are unwilling to part with the word "Catholic." This naturally causes confusion.

"It's hard to get your mind around a church that calls itself 'Catholic' (but isn't)," Father Condon said.

Still, Father Roberson allowed, "They're free to do what they wish; nobody's got a copyright on the word 'Catholic'. There's no control over that sort of thing."

Father Hart said the Rochester Diocese has no grievances with the Old Catholic Church. "It's like other Protestant churches who have found peace and faith in good conscience," he said.

"It's sad only because you need this 'Catholic' name in order to make some kind of statement," Father Hart added. "Without it, who would pay attention at all?"

Church has 93-year history

St. Casimir Polish National Church was founded on Ernst Street, in the heart of Rochester's Polish community, in 1908 by approximately 150 families who had broken off from St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church. St. Casimir's current facility, located at 500 Simpson Road in Irondequoit, was dedicated in 1977.

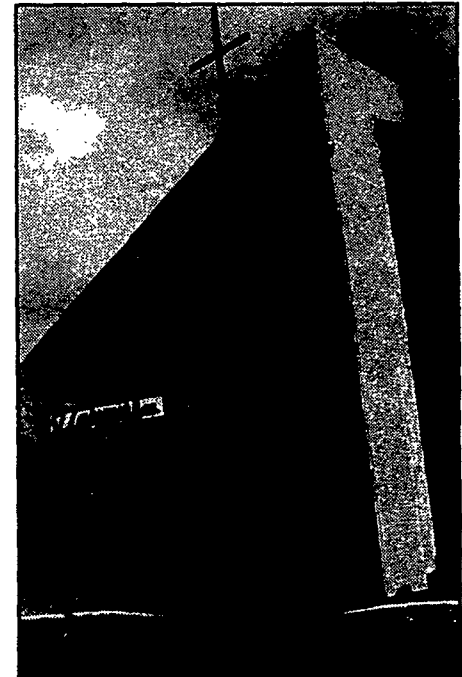
According to Father Joseph Frankovich, pastor, parish membership is still 150 families. Parishioners are mostly of Polish descent and "predominately elderly," he said.

St. Casimir belongs to the Polish National Diocese of Buffalo-Pittsburgh, based in Lancaster, Pa. The national church's headquarters are in Scranton, Pa.

Although the Polish National Church has parishes in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Syracuse, Lancaster and Binghamton, St. Casimir is the only one within the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester. Most Polish National Catholic parishes are in the Northeast or the Chicago and Milwaukee areas.

Father Frankovich, who was ordained a Polish National Catholic priest in 1981, has been pastor at St. Casimir for four years. Though not a member of the Roman Catholic diocese, he said St. Casimir has a friendly relationship with area Roman Catholic parishes and that he often socializes with pastors from those parishes.

"Ecumenically we work very closely together. A big highlight for our 90th anniversary (in 1998) was when Bishop Hickey was here and addressed the congregation," Father Frankovich said, referring to the late Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester.



Karin von Volgtlander/Photo intern

St. Casimir's Polish National Catholic Church in Irondequoit.

Married priests are permitted in the Polish National Catholic Church; female priests are not. The same lectionary is used by both Polish National Catholics and Roman Catholics, although the wording of liturgical prayers often varies. Eucharist is given by intinction — hosts are dipped in wine and placed on the tongue.

Although Polish National Catholics may receive Eucharist in Roman Catholic churches under certain circumstances, Roman Catholics are not permitted to receive sacraments through the Polish National Church except in danger of death.

— Mike Latona

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Taken From The Photo Of The 1897 Supreme Council Meeting Held In New Haven, Connecticut ©KOFCC

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