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Adoration

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locations known as "centers": Sacred Heart Cathedral, Blessed Sacrament, Holy Name of Jesus, Christ the King (formerly St. Andrew's), St. John of Rochester, St. Helen's and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all in Monroe County; St. Mary in Canandaigua; and St. Joseph in Wayland.

Most centers extend their affiliation to nearby parishes as well; for instance, Sacred Heart also has members from Greece's St. Charles Borromeo and St. John the Evangelist, as well as Rochester's Holy Cross. Of the approximately 450 members in the society, slightly more than half are consistently active, said Don Karal, executive secretary.

Members of all these centers come together twice per year: for Mass and dinner in the fall, and for a concert and Holy Hour that will take place this year on Palm Sunday, March 24. The event will begin at 3 p.m. at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

In addition to the Rochester society, two nocturnal adoration centers are located in the Southern Tier. One meets at St. Vincent de Paul in Corning, and another involves numerous parishes in Elmira.

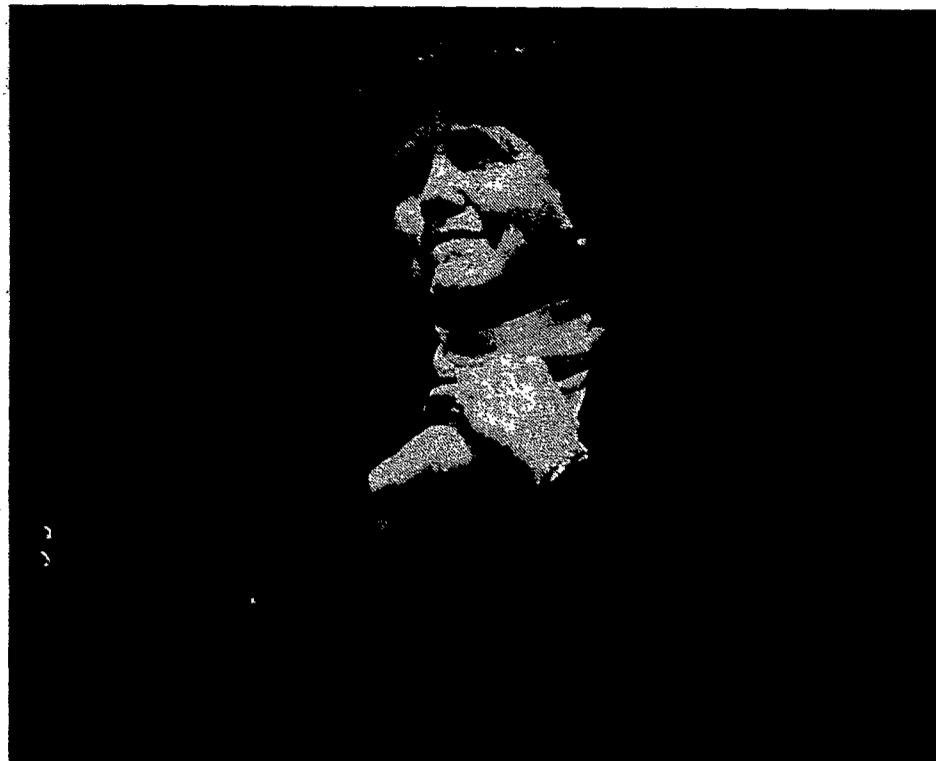
McGill, a parishioner in the St. Anthony/St. Casimir cluster, said nearly 70 individuals meet on the last Saturday of each month from 8-9 p.m., usually at Elmira's St. Anthony Church.

The people from such centers are affiliated with the national Nocturnal Adoration Society, which is based in New York City. According to Karal, nocturnal adoration began in Europe in the early 19th century and came to the United States toward the end of that century. It was first instituted in the Rochester Diocese in 1928, at the former St. Patrick's Cathedral.

In addition to nocturnal adoration, many parishes offer adoration for varying lengths of time on designated days. Among them are Irondequoit's St. Thomas the Apostle, every Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Henrietta's Guardian Angels, every Friday from noon to 10 p.m.; St. Mary's, Waterloo, every Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Brighton's Our Lady Queen of Peace, on first Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Perpetual

There is no starting or ending hour for perpetual adoration: with the Easter Triduum being the only exception, this form of adoration is constant. The Eucharist is never to be exposed unless at least one person is in the room at all times, except in extreme cases. To ensure this continuity, each



Judy Shanshan prays during her hour of perpetual adoration March 13 at St. John of Rochester Church, Perinton.

adorer commits to a designated hour once per week.

"Seven days a week, 24 hours a day, Jesus is never left alone," said Sgro from Elmira. "The chapel is always open to those who want to visit him."

The five diocesan parishes offering perpetual adoration are St. Casimir, St. John of Rochester, St. Joseph in Rush, St. Stephen in Geneva and St. Theodore in Gates. All five programs were established in the early 1990s — a reflection of growing interest in this type of devotion since the Second Vatican Council, said Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy.

Workmaster said perpetual adoration was actually designed for religious communities, but that no such community in the Rochester Diocese practices it.

Approval of the local bishop is required in order for exposition to take place at parishes. In addition, "The diocesan bishop alone determines the pastoral appropriateness of perpetual exposition in his diocese, and accordingly may permit it or not and may limit the number of places where it takes place," according to a 1998 statement by the diocesan Department of Legal Services.

Perpetual adoration differs from nocturnal adoration not only in its scheduling, but also in its style of prayer.

"The focus of nocturnal adoration is the people come and pray together," Father Mull said, "whereas perpetual adoration,

you probably have one or two go in, bring their rosaries, and bring their prayers." Prayers are made silently.

Father Mull added that nocturnal adoration "almost always takes place in the church proper" and never during Mass. Yet perpetual adoration is conducted in a separate chapel to comply with the document "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass," issued in 1973 by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship. The directive states that exposition may not take place in view of a congregation during Mass.

St. Casimir's perpetual adoration chapel is located in the church basement. It was constructed and opened in 1992 with the guidance of Father Joseph DeLuca, a priest of the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament. According to Sgro, Father DeLuca was ordained strictly for the purpose of establishing perpetual adoration at parishes around the country.

"It is a beautiful little chapel. And the people who signed up with it, stayed with it," said Father Eugene Weis, who was pastor of St. Casimir's at the time. Sgro estimates that 375 adorers are currently involved with the chapel.

Not long after its establishment, a blizzard blew through Elmira and made the chapel — located in St. Casimir's basement — inaccessible. But this obstacle didn't deter the adorers, Father Weis recalled.

"We brought the Eucharist via my four-wheel Jeep to a house in the neighborhood, and three or four people would come. So we had adoration, but not on site," said Father Weis, currently pastor at St. Mary's in Waterloo.

Another example of exceptional commitment to perpetual adoration is Shanshan at St. John of Rochester. In addition to her regular 7 p.m. Sunday slot at St. John of Rochester, she said, "I pretty much cover any time of the day and night, wherever there's a need." She was quick to point out that other adorers at the chapel make similar sacrifices.

Often, people from neighboring parishes help fill up the time slots at perpetual adoration chapels. Such is the case at St. Joseph's in Rush, a modestly sized parish, where Nancy Ferrari is coordinator for perpetual adoration.

"It is hard for a small community, but we rely on other parishes. We certainly are blessed," Ferrari remarked, saying that approximately 150 adorers are connected to St. Joseph's.

Similar support for perpetual adoration is welcomed at St. Stephen's in Geneva, where the list of adorers numbers about 250 people.

"They're from all over the place. So many people have expressed Thanksgiving that Jesus is there," said Marcella Walczak, head coordinator for perpetual adoration.

Challenges

On the other hand, simply having a large number of adorers doesn't ensure the availability of at least one adorer every hour of the day. For instance, a recent notice in the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva's bulletin asked for people to fill numerous time slots at St. Stephen's, mostly between midnight and 4 a.m.

This example is one reason Workmaster is slow to support perpetual adoration chapels operated by parishes, rather than religious communities. Though she admires the commitment involved, she said, "This really was not intended for the parish community. The church envisions lots of folks being present, and that's not what's happening at these places."

Workmaster added that she favors a less stringent type of devotion, such as nocturnal adoration, for those wishing to begin adoration at a parish. "Those are the things we can handle," she said.

Workmaster also observed that both perpetual and nocturnal adoration involve an increasingly aging population. Father Mull said this is the chief reason that the hours have been reduced in recent years for centers in the Rochester Nocturnal Adoration Society.

"Sacred Heart was the last to change. Up until May 2000, they went all night," said Father Mull, who spent 18 years at Sacred Heart before moving to St. Mary's, Canandaigua, in 2000. "Many of the people were older, and they didn't mind getting up during the night — but having to go into the city at 3 or 4 in the morning made them nervous."

Karal, a parishioner at Brighton's Our Lady Queen of Peace, said he's been involved in nocturnal adoration for 40 years, ever since his father got him involved. Karal hopes to see this tradition likewise passed to future generations.

"What we would like is to get the younger people in this," Karal said, noting that signs of hope exist. "I saw a resurgence after Sept. 11 with younger people at Blessed Sacrament. We would love to get more people, by contacting the centers involved, to give it a try." He added that "a lot depends on the administrator promoting it."

"I think you find in many cases, a sort of resurgence among younger people for the devotions you knew 30 or 40 years ago. That interest does seem to be there, and seems to be growing," Father Mull said. "But the numbers have certainly gone down in my time as a priest. At St. Andrew's (where he served in the mid-1970s) we went all through the night, with 25 to 30 people there each hour. You can see that's declined."

Rewards

Shanshan, on the other hand, feels that perpetual adoration is so vital that she and other adorers at St. John of Rochester will persevere regardless of the challenge or inconvenience.

"We all feel the same. It isn't anything we're doing — God is allowing it to happen," she said. "This is the real presence of our Lord." Shanshan asserted that "people, in their upbringing, have not been given this importance. It's a continuation of the Mass. We have to recognize that this is truly God with us."

Sgro, meanwhile, is convinced that the prayers offered up by perpetual adorers at St. Casimir's have resulted in miraculous healings, such as the case of a stroke victim who was not expected to walk again but was walking a short time later.

"We have tremendous testimony about cancer cures," Sgro added.

"You have certain causes," Karal said. "One for the (Rochester) Nocturnal Adoration Society was the conversion of Russia. Many of us in the society feel our prayers may have been responsible. Right now we're praying at Blessed Sacrament Church for the end of terrorism."

"The graces and blessings people say they've received — it's phenomenal, just phenomenal," added Rush's Ferrari.

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