

Prayer, service define lay group

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

A chance conversation on a plane ride, along with the leadership of the late Msgr. Joseph Cirrincione (see related story on page 1), helped form one of the most enduring lay organizations in the Rochester Diocese.

The Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, established in 1948, carries on today as the Lay Carmelites of Rochester, a group dedicated to prayer and service.

"Our life will go on in eternity, but we must work here right now," said Anne Pankiw, director.

Current membership totals nearly 150. Candidates must be at least 17 years of age, and can be either single or married. After a formation period of two to three years, candidates become professed as Lay Carmelites based on a commitment to adopt such disciplines as chastity according to their current state in life; reception of daily Eucharist; morning

and evening prayer; daily rosary; a firmer devotion to contemplative prayer; and attendance at annual days of recollection.

The Lay Carmelites meet on the second Sunday of the month at Irondequoit's Church of Christ the King. These gatherings, drawing members from as far away as Marion and Shortsville, include formation classes, rosary recitation, Mass and a community meeting. On these days, members wear their scapulars — small brown wool replicas of the Carmelite religious habit. Pankiw explained that the scapular should only be worn when a significant group of Lay Carmelites is assembled, such as at the monthly meeting or the funeral of a fellow member.

Volunteerism is another staple of the Lay Carmelites, from hospital



Jason Rearick/Catholic Courier

Nancy Fine (left), a member of the Lay Carmelites of Rochester, works with Ruth Macaluso, who is studying to become a Lay Carmelite, at Irondequoit's Christ the King Church Dec. 8.

visits to their association with Mount Carmel House, a home for the dying. Established in 1984 through the efforts of two Lay Carmelites, Rose and Raoul Grossi, Mount Carmel House is located at 4 Planet St. in Rochester.

The Lay Carmelites take their promises seriously, said Carmelite Father Jack Healy. "I would say they could even put some of the priests to shame. I've always been amazed at how dedicated they are," said Father Healy, 59, who recently celebrated his 30th anniversary as the group's spiritual director.

According to a history written in 1988, the group began in 1948 after Rochesterian Joe Benn met Carmelite Father Howard Rafferty, Chicago provincial director of the Third Order of Carmelites, on a plane trip. From there, Benn and his friend Rudy Schwenzer asked Msgr. Cirrincione — then Father Cirrin-

cione — about starting a chapter in Rochester. Father Cirrincione became director as membership quickly grew to nearly 400, and he kept that role until 1956 when the group became known as the Our Lady of Victory Chapter. The name changed again in 1969, from Third Order of Carmelites to Lay Carmelites.

Father Healy said the Lay Carmelites are a solid draw for many people who have retired and/or whose children are grown. However, Pankiw said she is also pleased by the recent trend of young-adult members. In addition to a diversified age range, "We are a cross-section of the community as far as education and background," said Pankiw, 71, a parishioner of St. Josaphat in Irondequoit.

Editor's note: For details about the Lay Carmelites of Rochester, contact Anne Pankiw at 585/271-6033.

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