

Auburn Catholics celebrate church

St. Alphonsus marks 150 years of life in faith

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

AUBURN — Sister of St. Joseph Walter Anne O'Malley said that nothing would stop her from attending the 150th anniversary celebration of St. Alphonsus Parish.

She said she cherished the support she received over the years from the school parents of St. Alphonsus, which is among the Auburn parishes that sends children to St. Joseph's, a diocesan elementary school located on the parish grounds. Sister O'Malley retired as principal of St. Joseph in 1998.

"I would've come if I had to crawl just to show (the St. Alphonsus parents) thank you," she said.

Sister O'Malley was among about 250 people who attended an anniversary celebration at the Holiday Inn ballroom on the afternoon of May 4, one day shy of the parish's founding date in 1853.

Rita Bishop, a parishioner for 48 years, noted that she volunteers at the parish's business office, helping out with filing, copying documents and answering the phone. Bishop said she has always enjoyed belonging to St. Alphonsus.

"I like the church, I like the priest, I like the whole setup," she said.

Father Louis A. Vasile, an Auburn

native and pastor at St. Alphonsus for the last five years, stood at the entrance to the ballroom, greeting the dozens of parishioners filing in on Sunday afternoon.

"It's really wonderful coming back here," he said of serving St. Alphonsus, which he added is spiritual home to about 1,000 individuals and families.

One such family is the Camardos, headed by Nancy and Joe Camardo. Nancy is vice chairwoman of the parish council and also serves on the school parents advisory committee to St. Joseph's. Her husband has also served on parish council. The couple sees volunteering as a duty, she noted.

"I just believe that everyone has a responsibility to use the gifts that God gave them and help perpetuate the Catholic community," she said.

Inside the ballroom, Father P.J. Ryan, pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Hamlin, served as toastmaster for the dinner, and noted he attended St. Alphonsus for the first 10 years of his life. An adopted child, Father Ryan said that St. Alphonsus' pastor from 1924-58, the late Msgr. Frederick G. Straub, helped his parents adopt him through Catholic Charities, and also inspired him to become a priest.

"He was not only a priest, he was a community leader," Father Ryan said of Msgr. Straub.

Msgr. Straub was part of the rich



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrates Mass May 4 at St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn as part of the church's 150th anniversary celebration.

history of St. Alphonsus, which was founded by German Catholics, according to a parish history outlined by Chris Pinckney. Copies of her history outline were distributed at the May 4 dinner. Through her research, Pinckney said she was struck by the "great loyalty" evidenced by the St. Alphonsus parishioners, a spirit still alive today, she added.

"I love the friendliness, and you feel like one of the family," she said.

She and her husband, Leo, have both served as eucharistic ministers at the parish where they were married 60 years ago June 21. The couple have also visited nursing home residents on behalf of the parish, Leo said, a ministry shared by Jon and Ann Robson, parishioners for 20 years. Like the Pinckneys, the Rob-

sons visit nursing home residents, distributing the Eucharist, praying with residents and listening to their concerns.

Sitting next to the Robsons at the dinner were Scott and Diane LaRue, whose sons, James and Ryan, attend St. Joseph's School. Diane is a substitute teacher at the school and also works on its public relations and fundraising. Her husband is president of the board of the Auburn-area Catholic Youth Organization. The LaRues said they wanted to model community involvement for their children.

"I think you have to give back a little of what you've got, and I also think it's important to share values," Diane said.

Like the LaRues, Karen Mahoney, parish council chairwoman, also believes in working with the young, and noted that the parish has encouraged its children to send such things as candies, socks and hygiene items to the troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. She added that the parish also encourages its teenagers to volunteer at the St. Alphonsus food pantry, which is run by Susan and Charlie Norton.

Charlie Norton said the pantry is supported by Catholics and non-Catholics alike in the Auburn community, and distributes food to about 12 families a day, seven days a week. He added that his friends warned him he would "burn out" when he began administering the food pantry 18 years ago.

"I don't know how you can burn out when you do something like that," he said of his work.

Norton's spirit is one shared by many St. Alphonsus parishioners, Jon Robson concluded.

"Faith is believing in things you cannot see, and this parish is doing that always," he said.

Fetus was murder victim, poll says

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A large majority of Americans polled by Fox News/Opinion Dynamics believe that a double-murder charge was appropriate in the case of Scott Peterson, who is accused of killing his wife, Laci, and their unborn child, Conner.

In a survey of 900 registered voters, 84 percent said that, if convicted, Peterson should face "two counts of homicide for murdering both his wife and unborn son." Only 7 percent said he should be charged with one count of homicide for murdering his wife; 8 percent were not sure; and 1 percent said he should be charged with something else.

The poll "speaks to the heart of the issue addressed by the Unborn Victims of Violence Act," a bill pending before Congress that would recognize as a legal victim any unborn

children injured or killed during commission of a federal crime, the National Right to Life Committee said in an April 28 statement.

The legislation passed the House in 1999 and 2001 but has never been taken up in the Senate.

Twenty-six states, including California but not New York, have enacted laws recognizing unborn victims of some violent crime, during some or all of the period of prenatal development.

Scott Peterson was charged April 21 in Stanislaus County, Calif., with the murder of Laci and Conner Peterson. She was eight months pregnant when she was killed.

The national debate has spurred a campaign by Feminists for Life of New York, an activist group that includes several Catholics from the Rochester Diocese. From April 25-

30, they conducted a statewide tour lobbying for approval in New York of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. The act was set for vote by the state Senate Codes Committee on May 6, with the possibility of a full Senate vote on May 7.

Brighton's Carol Crossed, a Feminists for Life member, said the Fox News poll's significant support of double-murder charges for Scott Peterson is a positive step toward protecting the rights of all unborn children. Crossed said many of the same people who consider themselves pro-choice were likely included in the 84-percent figure.

"This is elevating the level of confusion, which is necessary for clear thinking," Crossed said.

Contains reporting by Mike Latona in Rochester.

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