

# Revival rocks St. Bridget's

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — Father Tony Mugavero said his Aug. 14 excursion to the PGA Championship was generally pleasurable, except for one glitch: Upon locating a food tent, he discovered it was reserved for golfing fans with more exclusive passes than his own.

On the other hand, Father Mugavero emphasized, no one was denied access last weekend to the tent at St. Bridget's Church. The inner-city parish, where he is pastor, hosted a three-day tent revival in its parking lot Aug. 15-17 — the same days as the PGA tournament's final three rounds at Oak Hill Country Club, 10 miles across Rochester in the town of Pittsford.

"We are saints and we are sinners, but we are all the body of Christ," Father Mugavero said during the 10:30 a.m. Mass Aug. 17.

The liturgy, celebrated under ideal weather conditions, began with nearly 125 people crowding into the balloon-adorned tent area. Over the next several minutes a few dozen more folks came upon the scene and were greeted warmly by parish volunteers, even as they strode in late.

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad. Isn't it great to be outside with each other?" Father Mugavero remarked, draw-

ing cheers and clapping.

Father Mugavero and the St. Bridget's Gospel Choir kept the volume cranked up throughout Mass, causing passers-by on Mark Street to crane their necks, slow down and in some cases even stop to participate. During his lengthy homily, Father Mugavero spoke — and sometimes shouted — about our need to remember that the Eucharist represents our deepest connection with Christ.

He also worked in another PGA reference, observing that golf's most recognizable star, Tiger Woods, is in excellent physical condition, handsome and taller in person than he appears on television. "I would like to be in shape, good-looking and standing tall in Christ," Father Mugavero remarked.

The tent revival had begun on Friday evening with Mass celebrating the Feast of the Assumption at 6 p.m., followed by an ice-cream social. Saturday's events included a three-hour observance of quiet prayer, preaching by Father Mugavero on the Ten Commandments, music from the



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Rochester's St. Bridget's Church hosted a tent revival in its parking lot Aug. 15-17. Above, St. Bridget's Gospel Choir members Kathleen Culhane (left), Marilyn Bellamy, Bob Antonitis and Stan Rose get things moving Aug. 16. Below, Father Tony Mugavero and 7-year-old Darius Walker listen to the choir.



gospel choir, dancing, and more ice cream. Sunday's closing-Mass festivities were topped off by a picnic and additional tunes from the gospel choir.

According to Mary Dwelley, one of

the revival's coordinators, the event was attended by a solid mix of St. Bridget's parishioners as well as many unchurched people from the surrounding neighborhood — including a woman who wanted to make a fresh start in her life and give herself over to Jesus.

"Some amazing things happened," said Dwelley, who serves as St. Bridget's religious-education and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults coordinator.

This year's revival expanded upon the annual one-day neighborhood jubilees St. Bridget's has presented in recent summers. Earl Carroll, a St. Bridget's parishioner who attended the revival all three days, said he likes the idea of an occasional alternative atmosphere.

"It gives you an open feeling. You're not cramped in; you're free," said Carroll, who was accompanied at the closing Mass by his 9-year-old grandson, Ashton Chung.

St. Bridget's revival served as a prelude to its 150th anniversary in 2004. The parish has been located in the former St. Theresa's Church near the corner of Mark Street and Hudson Avenue since 1997, when it moved from its previous location on St. Bridget's Drive. St. Bridget's has one of the largest African American populations of any diocesan parish.

Carroll, who is African American, said he is pleased by St. Bridget's emphasis on including people of all ethnic and economic backgrounds, saying too many churches — both Catholic and non-Catholic — are exclusive along these lines.

"There's all this prejudice. It shouldn't be like that, it should be universal," Carroll stated.

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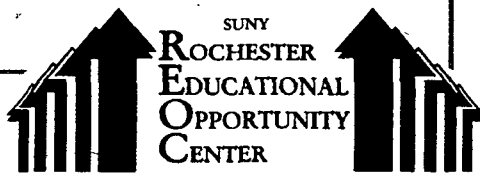
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