

Parishes pair up on faith formation

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

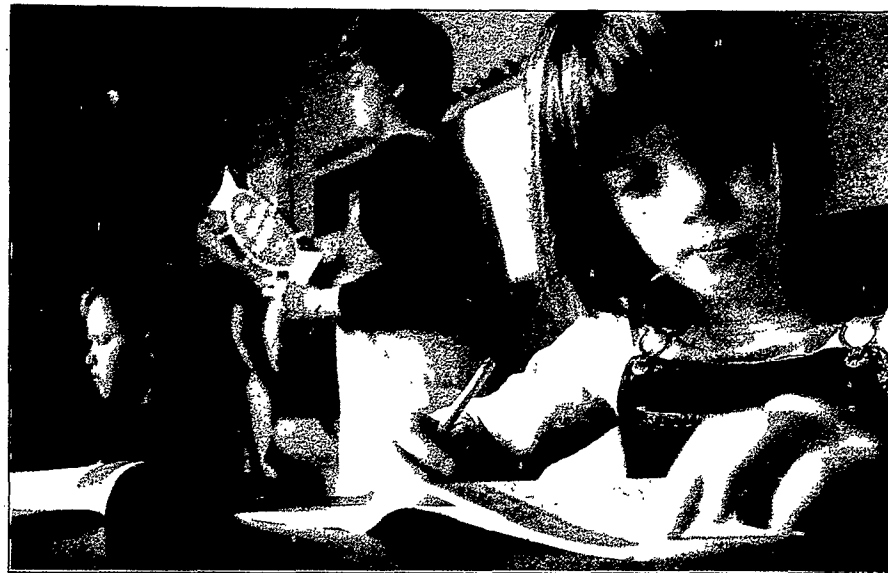
LIMA — One parish brought the administrators, its neighbor provided the ideal building. The result: a merger of faith-formation programs for St. Paul of the Cross Parish in Honeoye Falls and St. Rose Parish in Lima.

Judi Cuffney and Ellen Hallinen, longtime coleaders of faith formation at St. Paul of the Cross, have expanded their roles following the announcement last spring by Christine Preston — who served in a similar capacity at St. Rose — that she was retiring. After discussions with Father Lawrence Gross, pastor of both St. Paul and St. Rose, the decision was made to combine programs.

"It just seemed like the natural thing," Hallinen said. She noted that the two parishes straddling the Monroe-Livingston county border — which she said lie apart by "four miles from driveway to driveway" — were already sharing sacramental-preparation programs as well as their pastor.

In mid-September, grades pre-K through 5 began classes in the St. Rose building. Having this facility was crucial, Cuffney and Hallinen said, because the bulk of the two parishes' 170 school-aged faith-formation participants are in the lower grades but no suitable multiclassroom facility existed at St. Paul of the Cross.

Before the influx of St. Paul students arrived at St. Rose, however, a massive makeover was done on the former school building, which had closed as a parish school in 1969 and



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Eight-year-old Josephine Sheftic-Harvey concentrates on a workbook assignment Sept. 28 in her third-grade religious-education class in the former school building at Lima's St. Rose Church.

had since been used for faith formation.

Cuffney and Hallinen led several volunteers in sprucing up the two-story, 109-year-old structure. Many hours were devoted over the summer toward painting and floor refinishing, as well as upgrading telephones, electrical facilities and windows. In addition, numerous items such as tables, shelves, desks, curtains, rugs, blackboards and bulletin boards were either brought over from St. Paul of the Cross or purchased new.

A particularly noticeable addition is a large wall mural bearing the statement, "He will hold you in the palm of his hand" and depicting a hand reaching out of the sky toward

an angel. This colorful piece of artwork was created by Tom Willerton, a St. Paul parishioner.

Parishioners contributed cash as well as supplies toward the renovation. In fact, Cuffney and Hallinen said, those who offered to donate paint also got to select whatever colors they wanted for a particular

classroom — provided they also agreed to do the painting.

Along with the merger of the younger grades at St. Rose, all other aspects of faith formation have become a joint effort of the two parishes as well. They include an adult program at St. Rose; a family program at St. Paul; and a combined offering for grades 6-8 at St. Paul.

Cuffney and Hallinen said the transition is now going smoothly, although all the former St. Rose catechists decided not to continue under the new model. New volunteers from that parish have already stepped forward and many veterans from St. Paul have remained with the program, they said.

"Oftentimes people are resistant to change. But change can be a good thing," Cuffney remarked. For example, young students appear to enjoy the combined classes: "The kids all know each other from school," Hallinen said.

Cuffney and Hallinen give special credit to Father Gross — who became pastor of St. Paul in 1995 and added St. Rose to his pastorate two years ago — for promoting increased collaboration.

"He's been working really, really hard to do that," Hallinen said.

Daily & Sunday Scripture Readings
are now listed on page 3.

GENERAL

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