

'A quiet place' for 25 years

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

About 160 people attended a liturgy Oct. 5 celebrating the 25th anniversary of Rochester's Mercy Prayer Center, located at 65 Highland Avenue. The liturgy took place at Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Brighton.

The prayer center is a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, and its slogan is "a quiet place." In its quarter-century of existence, the center has served thousands of Catholics and non-Catholics seeking to hear the voice of God in their lives, and hoping to find peace in the midst of an often turbulent world, according to Sister Jody Kearney, RSM, the center's director.

"I think people need to have a place where they can freely speak about the importance of God in their lives," Sister Kearney said. "The normal circles people run in doesn't allow people to do that."

The Oct. 5 liturgy honored the center's four founders: Mercy Sisters Maureen Flood, Margaret Mary Mattle, Virginia Wilson and Mary Mercy Basler. The liturgy also highlighted the center's volunteers as well as its programs, including the "19th Annotation," a 30-week retreat based on the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The famed exercises, developed by Society of Jesus founder St. Ignatius Loyola, offer users a systematic approach to developing their spirituality. The 19th Annotation has been offered at the center for several years. Among its features is the use of "prayer guides," people who help retreat participants discern how God is speaking to them in their lives.

William Pickett, diocesan director of pastoral planning, participated in the 19th Annotation retreat from September 2002 to May 2003, and praised it in the center's most recent newsletter.

"Aided by the weekly teachings, small group discussions, and my wonderful prayer guide, ... Jesus began to emerge for me as a person with whom I developed a wonderful relationship," Pickett wrote. "The (Ignatian) Exercises have enabled me to open to the presence of Jesus in my life and to be open to wherever he might be leading me."

The prayer center offers a variety



Lella Navidi/Catholic Courier

A group of women gather at Rochester's Mercy Prayer Center Nov. 4 for faith sharing and prayer. The center celebrated its 25th anniversary Oct. 5.

of other services as well, including overnight retreats, one-on-one spiritual direction, faith-sharing discussion groups, massage therapy and yoga. The public can use the center's chapel for personal prayer time, Sister Kearney said, and the center has also hosted various guests over the years, including out-of-town families with relatives receiving medical care at local facilities. The center is ecumenical and has hosted activities for both Catholics and non-Catholics, she said.

Sister Kearney added that outreach is an important part of the center's life, and she noted that it offers scholarships to people unable to afford the costs of attending its programs. The center has also served as a temporary residence for people in transitional situations, and collects school supplies for low-income children at St. Monica's School in Rochester.

Frederick O'Toole, a lay associate of the Sisters of Mercy, volunteers at the center and has presented workshops there. He noted that the center is a refuge from the often hectic life he leads as a financial planner.

"It gives me an anchor every week," he said of his work at Mercy Prayer Center. "This is a very wonderful place to help me stay centered in my spirituality."

Kathleen Rimlinger is also a center volunteer, and has served as a prayer guide.

"It's a spiritual home for me, and it really helps to keep balance in my life," she said.

In addition to its six-member staff, the center depends on about 75 volunteers to do its work, Sister Kearney said. Last year, the center served about 2,000 people, she said. She added that she and the center's staff and volunteers are motivated to do their work by the opportunity it presents to aid people in relating to God.

"I find it exciting, speaking on God's action in their life," she said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For information on Mercy Prayer Center, call 585/473-6893, or visit www.mercyprayercenter.org.

STUDENTS MAKE QUILTS TO RAISE MONEY FOR UPSTATE GUIDE DOGS

Students in third, fourth and fifth grade at St. Mary's School in Canandaigua are making quilts to raise money for Upstate Guide Dogs.

Each student will have a role in the creation of a quilt. They will bring in a fabric of their choice, and measure, cut and sew their squares before hand quilting the squares together. Each grade will be responsible for making one quilt.

The quilts will be raffled, and the winners will be drawn on Jan. 30 during the school's third annual Business Carnival. Raffle tickets may be purchased for \$1 each or six tickets for \$5.

Upstate Guide Dogs, located in East Bloomfield, is an organization that recruits families to raise puppies that will become guide dogs for the blind or visually impaired. The quilting project will help raise money for the training expenses of a dog the students have sponsored and named Amity Amen.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Mary Zappia Cowles during school hours at 585/394-4300.

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