

Woman marks century with parish

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Very few people can say they've been members of the same parish for 100 years, but it's a claim that Theresa Kowalski Kierecki of Irondequoit can easily make. She was baptized in 1903 by Father Teofil Szadzinski, the first pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, and has been a member of the parish ever since.

"It was my second home," she said of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church.

Kierecki was born on Oct. 17, 1903, to Josef and Magdalena Kowalski, who had emigrated from a German-occupied town in Poland in 1891. She was the youngest of the couple's eight children, and grew up in the Hudson Avenue area around St. Stanislaus. She attended St. Stanislaus School and remembers being taught in Polish until seventh grade.

Kierecki finished her schooling quickly, skipping fourth grade and moving straight from third to fifth. She graduated at 13, and began working full time at Wollensak Optical



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Theresa Kowalski Kierecki stands Nov. 4 in her bedroom at her daughter's Irondequoit home, where she lives. Kierecki, who turned 100 Oct. 17, has been a St. Stanislaus Kostka parishioner since her baptism in 1903.

Co.'s factory on North Clinton Avenue, where she helped make camera lenses and shutters for \$8 a week.

Kierecki stayed involved with her

parish even after she graduated from St. Stanislaus School. As a teenager, she was a member of the parish choir. After choir practice, a young man named Stanislaus Kierecki would often take her and some of the other girls to Batavia for ice cream.

"He had so many girls chasing him. I think he was the only young man in the area that had a car. All the girls wanted to sit in the front seat with the guy," she recalled.

She had actually known Stanislaus Kierecki for a number of years. He was a friend of her brother, Jimmy, and he often gave Jimmy presents to give to her. Kierecki said she "didn't care for the guy" at first, but Stanislaus Kierecki eventually changed her mind, and the two began dating.

Kierecki's future husband proposed to her inside St. Stanislaus Church one day before choir practice. She had knelt down to pray when someone joined her on the kneeler.

"I looked and it was him, my hus-

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band to be, and he took the diamond ring and put it on my finger, and we got engaged," Kierecki said.

Kierecki and her husband had two children and were married until his death in 1959. Through it all, Kierecki stayed involved with her parish, belonging to all of the ladies' societies at St. Stanislaus and serving as president of its Holy Rosary Society from 1971 until 1995. She remains an honorary member of the society, and in October members of the society gave her a birthday party.

According to Barbara Smagin, Kierecki's daughter, one of the high points of Kierecki's birthday was the dedication of a rosary in her honor. St. Stanislaus Parish held a special Mass for Kierecki, with a reception afterward. During the Mass, they blessed the 20-decade crystal rosary, which was installed in the arms of the church's Blessed Mother statue.

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