

Brighton parish marks jubilee year

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

BRIGHTON — Our Lady of Lourdes Parish completed celebrating its 75th anniversary with ceremonial lowering of its jubilee banner during Masses the weekend of Dec. 27-28.

The parish also recently enjoyed a visit from Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who celebrated a Nov. 23 Mass in honor of the anniversary.

Our Lady of Lourdes at 75 is a vibrant parish that combines a dedication to faith with a penchant for fun. For example, David Dowd, a 16-year-old senior high youth-group member, acknowledged that he's played euchre with the group for such high stakes as M&M's and gummy candy.

When the group is not gambling on parish property, it's engaged in more serious pursuits, such as discussing spiritual and historical topics on Sunday nights, he said. He added that the group has played a role in bolstering his faith.

"It kind of makes me want to go to church because I want to see my friends from youth group," he said.

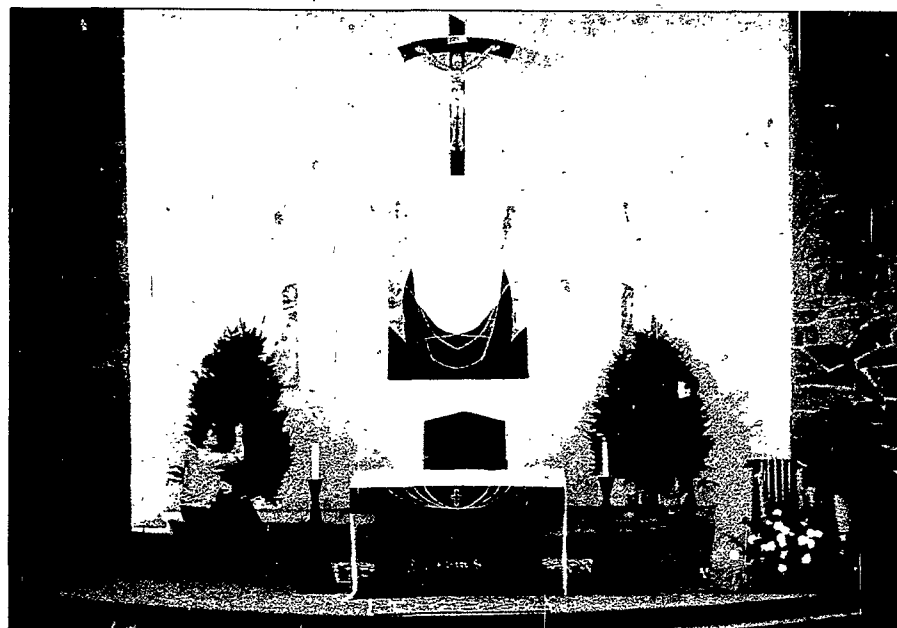
David belongs to a parish that is home to 750 registered families, and that was founded Aug. 1, 1928, to accommodate the growing population of Brighton. Several celebrations marked the anniversary year, including Masses and receptions in June highlighting the 40th ordination anniversary of Father John L. O'Connor, pastor since 1980.

Father O'Connor noted that he is continually inspired to serve his parishioners' spiritual needs.

"I am invigorated by the celebration of the sacraments, especially a baptism, a funeral, a wedding, where you're really touching the family," he said.

RECOGNIZING

• Local Catholic-school students were recently honored by Rochester Museum and Science Center and M&T Bank. Eleven-year-old **Amanda Domagola** of **Good Shepherd School** in Henrietta and 10-year-old **Eugene Walker** of Rochester's **Corpus Christi School** were named among the 10 winners of the 2003-04 M&T Bank RMSC Young Visionaries Awards. As winners, they received a year of programs at the RMSC, a one-year membership for their families, and behind-the-scenes tours and internship opportunities at the museum. They also received a \$1,000 savings bond and the chance to be featured on WRWB-



Lauren Long/Catholic Courier

Wade Cook (left) and his son, Brendan, position freshly cut Christmas trees Dec. 21 in the sanctuary of Brighton's Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. A special Mass on Dec. 27, Holy Family Sunday, concluded the parish's year-long 75th-anniversary celebration.

Lourdes' pastoral minister, Sister of Mercy Sheila Geraghty, added that she sees the eucharistic sacrament as an opportunity to both serve and be served by her parishioners. For example, she said, she often brings the Eucharist to the parish's shut-ins, who are always grateful.

"I'm bringing the Lord to them, but I come away saying they're bringing the Lord to me," Sister Geraghty said. "I have, many times, walked away with tears in my eyes because of what they've said."

For those who are able to attend Mass at the church, Lourdes offers a varied musical ministry directed by Kathryn Weider, staff members said.

TV Rochester's WB 16. Two students from Brighton's **Sienna Catholic Academy** were chosen as Young Visionaries finalists. Twelve-year-old **Mary Boyle** and 13-year-old **Kathleen Fluharty** each received free family memberships to the RMSC.

• **Knights of Columbus Council 277** in Ithaca recently presented awards to three students at Ithaca's **Immaculate Conception School**. All of the seventh- and eighth-graders in the school wrote an essay about the rosary's meaning in the development of faith. Eighth-grader **Andrew Florino** won first place, seventh-grader **Kate Kamaromi** won second place and eighth-grader **Caitlin Schickel** won third place.

Lourdes boasts an adult choir, children's choir, boys' choir, girls' choir, bell choir and "resurrection" choir for funerals. Suzanne Regan, director of religious education, said she's particularly impressed by the quality of the young people's singing.

"I don't know where all these beautiful voices come from, but they're really good," she said.

Of more questionable value is Father O'Connor's dancing, which was videotaped when he went to the African village of Kowak, Tanzania, according to Miriam Barragan, who serves as a hospitality minister at the parish with her husband, Salvador. Miriam accompanied Father O'Connor and a group of parishioners to

Kowak in the fall of 2002 to visit Lourdes' twin parish of St. Brigit's. There she witnessed the pastor cutting a rug at a lively village celebration. When asked whether he was a good dancer, she was diplomatic.

"It's hard to get the rhythm with the drums," she said.

However, what's not to be questioned is Lourdes' commitment to St. Brigit's, which is a mission administered by the Maryknoll Society. According to the parish history, the Tanzanian parish has received tens of thousands of dollars from Lourdes since 1992. The mission includes St. Brigit's Church, a health clinic, a school, two convents and houses for teachers. The poor parish has reciprocated Lourdes' generosity by sending a number of gifts, including an African creche displayed at Christmastime, and has also hosted such visitors as Father O'Connor and Barragan.

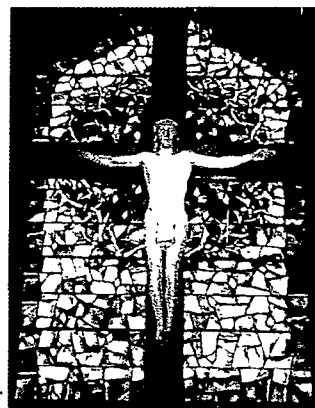
"You don't have enough words to explain your experience," Barragan said of her gracious Tanzanian hosts. "They have no electricity, no running water. But you know something? They have big, huge smiles."

Meanwhile, the parish itself continues to develop new ministries, according to staff members like Don Smith, youth-ministry coordinator. He noted, for example, that a group of adults with whom he worked to prepare confirmation candidates enjoyed the experience so much that they formed a small Christian community that still meets regularly. It's that kind of ongoing growth of the parish that makes him want to come to work, he added.

"It's very heartening for me," he said. "It makes me feel like I'm in this for the right reasons."

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