

Father Weis to stay busy

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

If Roman collars were blue instead of white, they'd be a perfect fit on Father Eugene R. Weis.

The 68-year-old priest has always reveled in rolling up his sleeves and jumping into the action, whether it be priestly ministry, playing softball or fighting fires.

"My feeling is, priests shouldn't be up on pedestals. They should be getting their hands dirty, just like the rest of the community," explained Father Weis, who will retire June 29 from his six-year pastorate at St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo.

Father Weis grew up in Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Parish. He attended Blessed Sacrament School, St. Andrew's Seminary and St. Bernard's Seminary before being ordained June 2, 1962, by Bishop James E. Kearney at Sacred Heart Cathedral. He then served as assistant at Our Mother of Sorrows, Greece (1962-68); Holy Apostles, Rochester (1968-72); St. Salome's, Irondequoit (1972-74); and St. John the Evangelist, Greece (1974-77).

His first pastorate was at St. John the Evangelist, Newark Valley/St. Francis of Assisi, Catatunk (1977-82). He was then pastor at St. Anne's, Palmyra (1982-86); St. Casimir's, Elmira (1987-94); and St. Patrick's, Owego (1994-97) before coming to Waterloo in 1998.

Hands-on ministry has been a huge priority for Father Weis. He has served as spiritual leader for more than 20 Cursillo weekends and nearly 100 Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends.

"Whatever we can do to bolster and strengthen family life, that's been a big motivator for me," he said of his Marriage Encounter ministry.

Among his other activities, Father Weis played in adult softball leagues until he was 60 and even drove a large school bus while serving at Our Mother of Sorrows. "Excitement excites me," he chuckled.

This is especially true with firefighting; Father Weis estimates that he has answered 1,000 calls. "It's helped keep my sanity. The adrenaline goes off with the alarm, and you've come back helping the com-

munity," said Father Weis, who still drives a truck for the Waterloo Fire Department.

A retirement dinner for the St. Mary's pastor will take place Sunday afternoon, June 13, at the Waterloo Holiday Inn. Reservations can be made by calling St. Mary's at 315/539-2944. There will also be a reception at the St. Mary's School gymnasium Saturday, June 19, from 6 to 8 p.m. (no reservation or cost required).

"Waterloo has been good to me. Leaving here is not what I'm looking forward to, it's being a priest without being an administrator," Father Weis said.

Father Weis plans to spend his summers living at St. Casimir's Church in Elmira, not far from Seneca Lake where he will spend time on his boat "The Otherweis." The rest of the year he will reside at St. Timothy's Parish in The Villages, a sprawling retirement community located between Orlando and Ocala, Fla.

Though Father Weis will retire from firefighting — "it's getting



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harder and harder to jump into the trucks," he remarked — he will provide sacramental assistance in the Southern Tier as well as in Florida while also staying involved in Marriage Encounter. These plans will allow him to continue what, thus far, has been a very satisfying vocation.

"There's no other life I would have had. I never felt called to any other life," Father Weis said. "I've never been a celebrity seeker or anything like that, just a humble parish priest."

Retiring priest enjoyed serving all over diocese

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

IRONDEQUOIT — Father John Lynch, who turned 70 April 18, has served in every region of the Diocese of Rochester, and said he enjoyed all of his almost 44 years of priesthood.

"I felt fortunate to have a wide variety of pastoral experiences," he said. "There wasn't one particular area of pastoral ministry that I found more enriching than others."

Pastor of St. James Parish since 1995, Father Lynch will retire at the end of June and move to St. Anne's Parish in Rochester, where he will be priest-in-residence. He'll celebrate his last Sunday Mass at St. James on June 27, and will be feted later that day during a dinner at the Daisy Flour Mill on Blossom Road in Brighton.

A native of Seneca Falls, Father Lynch grew up in Rochester and attended St. Monica's School and Aquinas Institute as well as St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. An aunt, Sister of St. Joseph Adriano Lynch, who taught in several diocesan schools, influenced his choice of the priesthood, he said.

"I just saw the dedication and unselfishness in her life, and I thought that to become a priest would be a similar form of service to the Lord



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and to the people, too," Father Lynch said. "When I went into the seminary, I decided to give it an honest effort. It seemed an important way of life."

Father Lynch said he contemplated the cost of giving up the chance at marriage and family, but decided he wanted to meet the needs of the church, particularly its sacramental needs. He noted that he was grateful for the privilege of hearing confessions over the years.

"I have seen people ... that were mired in sin for many years experience the forgiveness of the Lord and a peaceful conscience," he said.

He added that he also enjoyed celebrating the Mass because it gave people "the opportunity of publicly worshipping and receiving the Lord in his precious blood and body through the reception of Holy Communion."

After his ordination in 1960, Father Lynch served as assistant pastor in the following parishes: St. Mary's, Corning, from 1960-62; Mt. Carmel, Rochester, from 1962-66; and St. James, Irondequoit, from 1966-67. From 1967-74, he served on the diocesan Tribunal, an experience that allowed him to aid Catholics seeking annulments, he said. He noted that he worked to dispel misconceptions Catholics had about the annulment process, as well as the insecurities people had about their own failed marriages.

"The fact that they were involved in a marriage that failed was not automatically a sign that they were morally weak or morally improper," he said, noting that some people experienced guilt or a sense of unworthiness when they sought an annulment. On the contrary, he noted, spouses, through no fault of their own, might have seen their mar-

riages fail because their partners were alcoholics or drug abusers.

In a somewhat similar fashion, Father Lynch said he enjoyed pastorally counseling people because the problems they shared with him were often occasioned by a deeper, inner conflict that he could help them discover.

In 1974, Father Lynch spent a half-year as assistant pastor of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Brockport. The same year, he was named assistant pastor of St. Jerome's Parish in East Rochester. Then, in 1977, he was named assistant pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Elmira Heights.

Father Lynch was named to his first pastorate, overseeing the parishes of St. Stanislaus in Bradford and St. Joseph's in Campbell, in 1979. In 1982, the priest was named to another pastorate, overseeing the parishes of St. Theresa's in Stanley and St. Mary's in Rushville. He held this pastorate until he came to St. James.

Looking back over his decades of service to the diocese, Father Lynch said he would recommend the priestly life to any young man contemplating it.

"I found the life very fulfilling and enriching, and I'm sure many, many others would as well."