

NEWS RELEASE

Date: April 11, 2005

Contact: Mike Morgan, 323-2265
Emily Petronio, 467-2236

St. Cecilia's Church: Not Your Average "Sunday Morning" Parish

St. Cecilia's Church
2732 Culver Road
Rochester, NY 14622
(585) 467-4286
www.stceciliasonline.org

At age 56, St. Cecilia Catholic Church may be an aging baby-boomer, but it's got the heart of a 20 year old.

From religious education classes for children to the "Young at Heart" seniors' social group...from the youth ministry that's adopted a migrant shelter to the Bereavement Group that helps members cope with the loss of loved ones, St. Cecilia's is a Catholic church that's alive and kicking.

One clear sign of the church's vibrancy is its Newcomb Friendship Center, a newly built parish center completed last fall that serves as a focal point for parish and community activity. The center is a popular site for guest speakers, workshops, and social events of all kinds. The Mercy Center with the Aging is currently holding a series of workshops for caregivers of the elderly at the Newcomb Center. And St. Cecilia's own parishioners are launching their new cook book, *A Dash of This and a Scoop of That*, at the Center April 17. The cookbook includes more than a 100 recipes contributed by parishioners and is being sold to raise funds for parish youth programs and for Gilda's Club, a national organization dedicated to cancer research.

The active nature of St. Cecilia's parish is characterized by its pastor, Father Kevin McKenna. The former Chancellor of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester and president of the Canon Law Society of America, Father McKenna is the author of six books, the most recent of which was published this year. *You Did It for Me: Care of Your Neighbor as a Spiritual Practice* offers the example of Jesus and His life of prayer and action for social justice as the norm for Christian life. It includes profiles of local people, including parishioners of St. Cecilia's, who live lives in accordance with Jesus' example. Proceeds from the book sales will benefit the Irondequoit Senior Ministries.

Pastor of St. Cecilia's since 2000, Father McKenna often punctuates his sermons with references to "his" Toronto Blue Jays.

St. Cecilia's Youth Ministry is led by Sara Schmerbeck. A newly remodeled Youth Center in the basement of the church is the location for regular meetings of the church's youth group. As one of its outreach activities, the youth group has adopted the Migrant Shelter in Sodus, which is sponsored by Catholic Charities and houses migrant families working in upstate New York. St. Cecilia's youth helped renovate the shelter, removing walls and designing and decorating the new facility. The Youth Ministry is also helping supply the shelter with appliances and kitchen supplies.

A variety of other activities also demonstrate the living spirit of St. Cecilia's, clearly not your average "Sunday morning" parish:

- § A "Vocations Blessing Cup" makes its way from family to family, each of whom bring the cup into their homes for a week at a time, set it in a place of honor at their tables, and pray for priestly vocations.
- § The Stewardship Committee holds monthly "Welcoming Sunday" coffee hour to welcome new members into the parish family.
- § The Mitten Club, led by Ministry Coordinator Sister Cathy Solan, knits and crochets handmade items for economically disadvantaged families at Christmas and throughout the year.
- § The Ladies Guild and Men's Club meet regularly to host social events, hear guest speakers, and undertake service activities.
- § Members of the "Disciples in Mission" group hold Bible study and discussion.
- § Pastor Emeritus Rev. Walter Cushing (retired) opens his extensive DVD collection to parishioners as an informal "lending library."
- § The "Circle of Friends" bereavement group lends spiritual and social support to one another as they deal with the loss of loved ones.
- § The "Young at Heart" senior citizens' group meets monthly for social activities and fellowship.

As a mission statement says, "St. Cecilia Catholic Church is a united, caring Christian community providing opportunities for worship, faith formation and social involvement. We reach out to those in need and encouraging all to actively participate in the life of the Church by sharing God's gift of time, talent and treasure."

#