

St. Pius X celebrates 50th anniversary

Steve Spurrier has been a member of St. Pius X, Rodgers Forge, since the day he was baptized, some 44 years ago. Now married with three children he is active in marriage preparatory classes, coaching sports teams in the parish and school and playing the drums for the group “40 more days” which helps celebrate Sunday Masses. This parish and the people who fill it have become like family to him.

“We are there all the time,” said Mr. Spurrier who is a lector at the parish “It’s basically our life.”

On March 11, the parishioners of St. Pius X with Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar, will celebrate 50 years as a parish and faith community. Carol Pacione, pastoral life director for the some 1,325 registered parishioners, said the first Mass at St. Pius X was celebrated in the middle of a snow storm and people walked to get to the dedication.

“It’s a very friendly parish where people truly care about each other,” said Mrs. Pacione who has been working for the parish for nearly four years. “It truly is a parish of people committed to the parish as a faith community and as a place they draw their spiritual strength.”

Father Gerard Francik, director of the Office of Vocations for the archdiocese, and Father Richard Hilgartner, chaplain and director of campus ministry at Mount St. Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, grew up in St. Pius X and attended the school before joining the priesthood. According to Mr. Spurrier, both priests would play the organ in church and then come back to celebrate Mass around Christmas or on special occasions.

Father Hilgartner’s parents, Dick and Mary Lee, have been a part of the St. Pius community for 38 years. They raised their three children in the parish and school and have served as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion as well as on the parish council and finance committee.

"We were very involved with the parish when the kids were in school, I felt like it was my second job," said Mrs. Hilgartner with a laugh. "A big part of what they (her children) have become today is from the education they received at the school and the nurturing from the parish,"

Mrs. Pacione said the parish is in the midst of a capital campaign to renovate some of the school and the lower and upper sections of the church. The parish tries to stay attentive to what Christ would have them do, said Mrs. Pacione.

Polly Connor remembers as a Girl Scout she came to St. Pius to take a test for a medal she wanted to receive. Now years later she, her husband John and their four children are active members of the parish.

"Our church is a living and vibrant community and we are becoming more diverse," said Mrs. Connor who has been a parishioner since 1974. "We need to look forward toward the future and make changes that need to be made and build on traditions."

Mr. Spurrier said St. Pius is the backbone of his family's life and if they didn't have this community there would be a void in their lives.

"It's not a chore to be there and that transcends down to our kids," said Mr. Spurrier. "It builds a stronger family and I'm looking forward for them to become more involved in the future."