Blessed Marianne Parish in Rochester, N.Y., may be the first

By Darlene J.M. dela Cruz
Hawaii Catholic Herald

A little more than an hour’s drive from the area where Blessed Marianne Cole grew up, a group of three upstate New York churches have recently come together to form what may be the first parish named after the future Franciscan saint.

The Parish of Blessed Marianne Cope in the Diocese of Rochester announced its new name last month.

“The people who suggested Blessed Marianne did so because she was a ‘local saint,’” said parish administrator Barbara Swiecki. “We as a parish seemed to model her charisms.”

Blessed Marianne left Syracuse, N.Y., where she was a hospital administrator, in 1853, in response to a request to care for leprosy patients in Hawaii. She died in Kailua, Kona, Hawaii, in 1882, and was canonized in 2005.

The Parish of Blessed Marianne Cope is the result of roughly 10 years of planning and a wave of parish mergers in the Rochester diocese. According to Swiecki, the new “parish” is made up of three Catholic churches that lie on the same road, seven miles apart from north to south. These worship sites were formerly the Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta, N.Y., Guardian Angels Church in Rochester and St. Joseph Church in the town of Rush.

Clustering of the churches officially took place in 2010. All three church sites remained open with weekday and weekend Mass services at the time. They were collectively called the Rush-Henrietta Catholic Community.

Instead of being headed by a pastor, Swiecki, a lay woman, was appointed by Rochester Bishop Matthew Clark to be the parish administrator of the merged parishes. Swiecki said she is responsible for “the pastoral, temporal and spiritual care of the parish.” Two assistant priests—one retired and the other full-time—and several deacons handle the community’s sacramental needs.

Swiecki said that this past year, the Rush-Henrietta pastoral council petitioned its bishop to establish the clustered community as a single parish. Permission was granted on April 12, 2012.

Parishioners were asked to suggest names for the new parish. Blessed Marianne Cope was among those submitted to the bishop for consideration. Swiecki said many parishioners had a fond affection for Blessed Marianne because of her involvement in the care of the lepers in Hawaii and her Franciscan order’s establishment in Syracuse, not far from the parish.

“(The parishioners) have responded with great joy,” Swiecki said. “After we were named, many came to tell me that they have gone to nursing school at the hospital she (Blessed Marianne) founded, and several said they have been praying to her and for her canonization for quite some time.”

Since taking on the name of Blessed Marianne Cope, the parish has provided continuous catechesis on the life of the saintly nun. Swiecki and other parish leaders have written a series of thoughtful reflections about Blessed Marianne in the parish bulletin. A newsletter is being planned with more information about the saint in the fall. Parishioners are also finding their own ways to learn more about Blessed Marianne.

“I just got a letter from a parishioner who said she asked a friend of hers who was a Maryknoll sister and she found connections to Blessed Marianne through her,” Swiecki said.

Swiecki noted in the May 13 parish bulletin that there are several exciting events coming up for the parish. They will be taking a trip to the Blessed Marianne Cope Shrine and Museum, located in the St. Anthony Convent of the Bishops of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities in Syracuse. While there, Swiecki will be inquiring about the possibility of obtaining some relics for the parish.

They will also be planning a parish celebration for Blessed Marianne’s canonization on Oct. 21.

The mainland also has two parishes named after St. Damien—one in Pontiac, Mich., named in 2009, the other in Ocean City, N.J., named in 2011. Both, like Blessed Marianne Parish in Rochester, are the result of the merging of three parishes.

---

Recently-arrived Dominican assigned to St. John the Baptist

By Sister Malia Dominica Wong, OP
Special to the Herald

Hawaii welcomes a new religious sister to the community at St. John the Baptist School in Kailua.

Dominican Sister of the Most Holy Rosary Sister Malia Dominica Wong recently arrived in the islands from the Philippines.

Her last assignment was music teacher and music director at St. Jerome Academy in Duwenz, Philippines.

Dominican Sister M. Dina Damas
Born in Digo, Capiz, the seventh of 11 children, she is 16 years progressed... Sister Dina likes music, cooking and reading fiction and looks forward to a successful mission in Hawaii. “It’s nice to meet people who are very welcoming and good,” she said. “It helps with the cultural adaptation.”

Christ the King’s new grotto remembers innocent lives lost

By Carol Ursua and Jasmine Higa
Special to the Herald

Christ the King Church in Kahului, Maui, has built a public shrine for the anonymous victims of abortion and other assaults against human life. The pastor, La Salee Father Efren Tomas, blessed the parish’s pro-life grotto on March 7.

Within the grotto, which stands in the area in front of the church, is a statue of Our Blessed Mother standing in protection of all innocent lives who died unjustly. A plaque in front of the statue is engraved with the inscription, “May — Protection of ALL Life. Hope, Peace & Love.”

The shrine reflects the urging of blessed John Paul II, who said, “Love life, cherish life, defend life, from conception to natural death.”

The grotto was erected with the help of the Maui chapter of the Knights of Columbus, various businesses and parishioners. Christ the King pro-life co-chairwoman Elvira Beding coordinated the project. She was assisted by chairwoman Kristie Casipusan and committee members Anita Fernandez, Audrey Guerrero and Gayle Chai.

Those present at the blessing submitted names of the unborn children and lifted their prayers for all of them as the church bells rang in their memory. The parish invites everyone to visit the grotto and experience healing and love of life, God’s most precious gift to the world which he loved and created.

---

We have a saint!

Saint Marianne Cope

THE LEGACY CONTINUES WITH YOU. Journey with us and experience what it’s like to live a prayerful, Franciscan life together in community, as you serve people in need.

For more information, please contact one of our vacation ministers:

Sister Joan Collins 315.654.7983, jcollins@sosf.org
Sister Rosemary Hendry 315.654.7004, rhendry@sosf.org

Sisters of St. Francis of St. Joseph
www.sosf.org

Celebrating the Oct. 21, 2012 canonization of St. Marianne Cope — beloved mother ofouted