

Bellevue parish known for its “intentional spirit of welcoming”

Faith formation, outreach to people in need locally and overseas are among hallmarks of St. Madeleine Sophie community

BELLEVUE
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

The people of St. Madeleine Sophie Parish point to the Gospel of Luke where it asks in Chapter 24: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us as we walked along the way?”

Parishioners note that they began their “walk along the way with Jesus” in June 1968 with the formation of the parish by Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly. This came “under the title and associated in spirit” with St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, who formed the Society of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in France in 1800, focusing on the education of women.

Today, the parish has approximately 1,400 registered households.

“One of the strengths of the parish has been a commitment to the renewal prompted by the (Vatican II) council,” said Father James Picton, pastor since 2000. He noted that the parish is committed to Catholic social teachings, citing programs that seek to help the needy.

He said the parish is known for its “longstanding commitment to adult faith formation,” as well as the “engagement of parishioners in Christian service.” He said that, as in the early years, members of the parish are mostly white-collar workers, but the ethnic makeup is much more diverse.

Parishioner Michael Kranz, past grand knight of St. Madeleine Sophie Knights of Columbus Council 10664, said the parish is known for its outreach. “There is support for families, for all people and anyone in need,” he said. “And there is a lot of support for people who have lost loved ones.”

Kranz joined the Knights council five years ago, about a year after becoming a parish member. He did so, he said, for fellowship with other men of the parish community, and to volunteer through the Knights’ various programs and projects.

Schools supplies to Iraq

He said one effort by the Knights this past school year has been to support a

16-year-old boy who collected more than 1,000 pounds of school supplies for children in Iraq. The youth, Rahul Brito, undertook the deed as his Eagle Scout project. His father, Francis, is a fellow Knight with Kranz. “I’m very proud of him,” Francis Brito said of his son.

“I wanted to do something different — and I wanted to make a difference,” Rahul said of his project. He said he is grateful to the Knights for raising funds related to the project’s shipping and other expenses.

Another Knights’ effort, Kranz noted, was the purchase and installation of fencing around the play gym of St. Madeleine Sophie School — which in June ended its third school year. The PK-8 school, which opened with 41 students in September 2005, will have an enrollment of 150 this September.

“We have a school with excellent teachers,” said Sharon Glenn, a longtime parish volunteer. “People in the community are willing to help one another — and it’s a diverse community.” She said the parish community has grown to include people of Filipino, Korean and other Asian descent. As in the early years, Glenn, said, the Caucasian families remain a mix of European ancestries.

According to a brief history of the parish, St. Madeleine Sophie’s first parishioners and pastor, Father Jarlath Heneghan, shared a great vision for ministry, to which they gave significant expression on “a magnificent campus” by bringing to reality in 1971 the present church, offices, social hall and religious education classrooms.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart have a convent and school within the parish’s southern Bellevue boundaries. Before the church building was constructed in 1971, Sunday Masses were celebrated at Tyee Junior High School.

The church property was acquired on a sloping site of about 10 acres, with an existing house, which became Father Heneghan’s residence. Masses began in the church building on April 4, 1971, Palm Sunday.

In 1977, Father Heneghan was succeeded as pastor by Father Gerald Mayovsky. Father Kurt Woellner, Father William Harris and several priests of the Society of Jesus assisted. The lay staff also was expanded, and the parish became known for outstanding faith formation programs for children and teens.

In the years that followed, a Blessed

St. Madeleine Sophie Parish



Fr. James Picton

Established: 1968

Pastor: Rev. James Picton

Registered Households: Approximately 1,400

Address: 4400 130th Place S.E.
Bellevue, WA 98006

Telephone: (425) 747-6770

40th Anniversary Mass: Sunday, Sept. 28,
11 a.m., with Archbishop Alex J. Brunett

Pastors:

Rev. Jarlath Heneghan, 1968

Rev. Gerald Mayovsky, 1977

Rev. George Rink, 1990

Rev. John Renggli, 1997

Rev. James Picton, 2000-present

Sacrament Chapel and Reconciliation Chapel were incorporated into the sanctuary area, and the parish debt was retired.

“Strong pastoral ministries”

In 1990, Father George Rink became pastor; there were no other priests available to assist, and so Father Rink placed even more emphasis on developing trained volunteers and staff.

Father Rink, 77, is now semi-retired and living in Federal Way — sometimes celebrating Mass for several Pierce and King county parishes. “We were very ac-

tive in caring for the community,” he said in a telephone interview. “The pastoral ministries were very strong.” He cited in particular the outstanding works of the youth ministry and the Knights of Columbus.

Parishioners say their parish has developed well-coordinated programs and activities for faith formation for adults, youths and children, as well as outreach programs with an “intentional spirit of welcoming,” by inviting and accepting all people and providing occasions for them to recognize and use their gifts and talents.