

Kendall Park parish promotes vocations at 25th anniversary celebration

By Joanne Ward
Editor-in-Chief

When Father Edmund A. Luciano III was a child, Chaire Schuller, a member of St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish, would observe him praying at Mass in the gym with his family. She said she knew in her heart that he would become a priest and he did.

Father Luciano is just one of many vocations that have come from the Kendall Park parish, so when the parishioners of St. Augustine were to celebrate a special milestone in their history – the 25th anniversary of the dedication of its church – their pastor, Father Robert G. Lynam, decided to use the occasion to promote vocations.

Sept. 23 was the actual day that the new St. Augustine of Canterbury Church was dedicated. This year, the day fell on a Tuesday. Students and faculty of the parish's school marked the anniversary by re-enacting what had taken place 25 years earlier. With songs of praise, they processed from their gym to the front of the church. There, Father Lynam presided over the re-enactment of the Rite of Dedication. Then the students went through the doors which were opened for the first time in 1989 by Bishop Edward T. Hughes.

Inside, the processional began with students carrying up relics of the True Cross, St. Gregory the Great, who sent St. Augustine to England; St. John Paul II, and St. Padre Pio. Religious Teachers Filippini Sister Barbara O'Kane, vice principal of St. Augustine School who is also a vocation from the parish, carried the relic of St. Lucy Filippini, foundress of her order.

One by one the relics were placed in the reliquaries by the baptismal font. Earlier in the day, Father Lynam had explained to the students how each relic was connected in some way to the parish.

Father Luciano then celebrated Mass and gave the homily; Father Lynam concelebrated.

Five days later, the entire parish of St. Augustine of Canterbury came together to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church at a noon Mass.

This liturgy began with the blessing of the memorial with the cross from the



Above, vocations nurtured at St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish are acknowledged by worshipers at Mass Sept. 28. From left, Deacon James A. Tesoriero, Deacon Denis Mayer, Father Edmund A. Luciano III, Religious Teachers Filippini, Sister Barbara O'Kane, Seminarian Thomas Lanza, Deacon Richard McCarron and Deacon-candidate James Rivera. Right, parishioner Cathy Lakarosky, who rescued the cross from the original church and recently returned to the parish, stands at the memorial for it.

— Mike Ehrmann, Ed Koskey, Joanne Ward photos

original church built in 1952. Filling in for Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski, who was ill, Father Lynam prayed, "As we look upon the cross, let us call to mind that on it Christ brought to completion the sacrament of his love for the Church ... Let us take part with all our hearts in the blessing of this memorial so that we may grasp the mystery of the cross more clearly and experience its power more deeply."

Before the cross was blessed, all prayed, "May your people who have erected this memorial of the cross that stood upon the first Church of this parish, find in it protection and strength; may they shoulder their own crosses in the spirit of the Gospel until their journey ends."

Father Lynam celebrated the Mass that followed, and Father Luciano gave the homily he had given to the parish's students.

He began by speaking about the church's anniversary. "We're celebrating this place. We're not celebrating the fact that this parish community built it although we are thankful for the people that made that happen. We're celebrating what happens in it [the church]," he said.

Then he provided the history of the significance and importance of Mount Sinai, the temple, and a church. He explained how they all were signs that God dwelled with his people. They were a place where God's presence was recognized. "This place, too, is a place where we can come and find God," he asserted.

Calling attention to the many images, relics, statues and stained glass windows of the saints in the church Father Luciano said, "When we are in this particular place, something miraculous happens. As we celebrate the liturgy these people [the saints], and our beloved, who have gone before us, are here. They are present because the veil between heaven and earth is open. In this place heaven and earth meet in the liturgy."

Focusing on vocations Father Luciano said that just as the saints are companions for us, so too are those individuals who have answered the call to serve God here



and now. He whispered a quick prayer, for seminarian Thomas Lanza, who will be ordained next year, and Sister Barbara as well as Christian Charity Sister Celice Marie Gonzalez, who like Lanza and Sister Barbara, is a vocation from St. Augustine.

"The Gospel is proclaimed from here because we encounter God here and we are changed here," Father Luciano concluded. "We are changed to be more like the one who was willing to lay down his life on the cross. We are changed to be like our companions that are with us this day giving thanks because the promises of God are fulfilled, and his love is made present here so that in a very real and profound way we take him with us and make him present out there."

Maureen Quigley, president of the Home School Association at St. Augustine of Canterbury, contributed to this story.



Father Robert G. Lynam blesses a memorial with the cross from the original St. Augustine of Canterbury Church. Left, in a procession, Religious Teachers Filippini Sister Barbara O'Kane carries a relic of St. Lucy Filippini, foundress of her order; students carry relics of the True Cross, St. Gregory the Great, St. John Paul II and St. Padre Pio.