



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Danielle Phillips, Linda Phillips, Karen Ratti, Ruben Guzzonato, Father John Ebbesmier, and Clarita Caswell, left to right, are helping organize St. Joachim and St. Anne Catholic Church's 50th anniversary celebration.

# Local parish enjoys 50 years

## Saint Joachim & Saint Anne in midst of 4-day anniversary celebration

**JEFF DEMPSEY**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Saint Joachim & Saint Anne Parish celebrates an impressive milestone this weekend as the church marks its 50th year in service to the Catholic community of Sun City and Youngtown.

The Rev. John Ebbesmier said the church staff and parishioners have been looking forward to the festivities.

"We've been planning this for something like a year," he said. "So we actually decided to break it down over four days."

The celebration began Thursday night with a St. Patrick's Day potluck. The featured event will be Sunday's noon Mass, when Ebbesmier will be joined by Bishop Thomas Olmsted of the Diocese of Phoenix. Several priests and former bishop Thomas O'Brien also will be in attendance.

"It's going to be very nice, very simple and I hope not too hectic," Ebbesmier said. Saint Joachim & Saint

Anne got its start in 1957, when the Saint Anne's Guild was formed to discuss the need for a Catholic church in Youngtown.

In 1959, the renamed Youngtown Catholic Society moved forward with plans to build a church.

"The first Mass was actually held Oct. 16, 1960 in the Youngtown Clubhouse," Ebbesmier said. "It wasn't until March 18, 1961 that we had our first Mass here. That's what we're celebrating this weekend."

Clarita Caswell has

**SEE PARISH, A5**



DAVE MARTINEZ/DAILY NEWS-SUN

St. Joachim and St. Anne Catholic Church is celebrating its 50th anniversary on Sunday. The worship center was founded in 1961 and serves the cities of Youngtown and Sun City.

## PARISH

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worked at the church for much of its history.

"I've been here forever," she said.

Caswell and the other staff members have been working long hours to get ready for the celebration and will continue to do so until it is over. Still, nobody is complaining.

"It's so exciting," she said. "We're the oldest Catholic church in Sun City. This is so important for us."

Ebbesmier said he is particularly proud of the efforts Saint Joachim & Saint Anne has made to welcome and embrace the children and young families of Youngtown and the surrounding community, in effect embracing the church's roots.

"The church has really responded well to the young families who have joined us," he said. "That is a change very much for the better."

Ebbesmier said he, too, is looking forward to Sunday's Mass, which he referred to as a celebration.

"Fifty years of faith, that's what we're celebrating here. And the start of the next 50 years to come," he said.

Saint Joachim & Saint Anne Parish is at 11625 N. 111th Ave. in Sun City. For information, call 623-972-1179.

Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or [jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com](mailto:jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com).

St Joachim & St Anne Catholic

# Quilt preserves parish history

By RUTHANN HOGUE  
Staff writer

Rosary beads, puffy paint and a St. Mary's medal are among items that adorn a new 25-square quilt hanging in the foyer of St. Joachim and St. Anne Catholic Church in Sun City.

The quilt, protected by a glass case, was created one square at a time. Each organization within the parish contributed a square with an original design.

The Living Rosary and Rosary Makers groups each created squares with strings of rosary beads attached. Home Bound used sprays of wheat and painted grapes to signify the bread and wine of communion they bring to the shut in.

On the Men's Club square are paintings symbolizing bingo, a trip to Laughlin and picnics.

Some squares, due to human error, wound up more ornate than originally intended. The Social Club square, for example, features iron-on decorations. One of the corners of one of the appliques was accidentally singed with a hot iron.

"So they got some extra decoration," said Jean Nawrocki, who pieced the quilt together on her sewing machine.

The printed mock-lace border was replaced with real white lace. Painted-on flowers were replaced with pink buds made of silky ribbon.

"Actually, the lace and the rose buds added quite a bit," Nawrocki said.

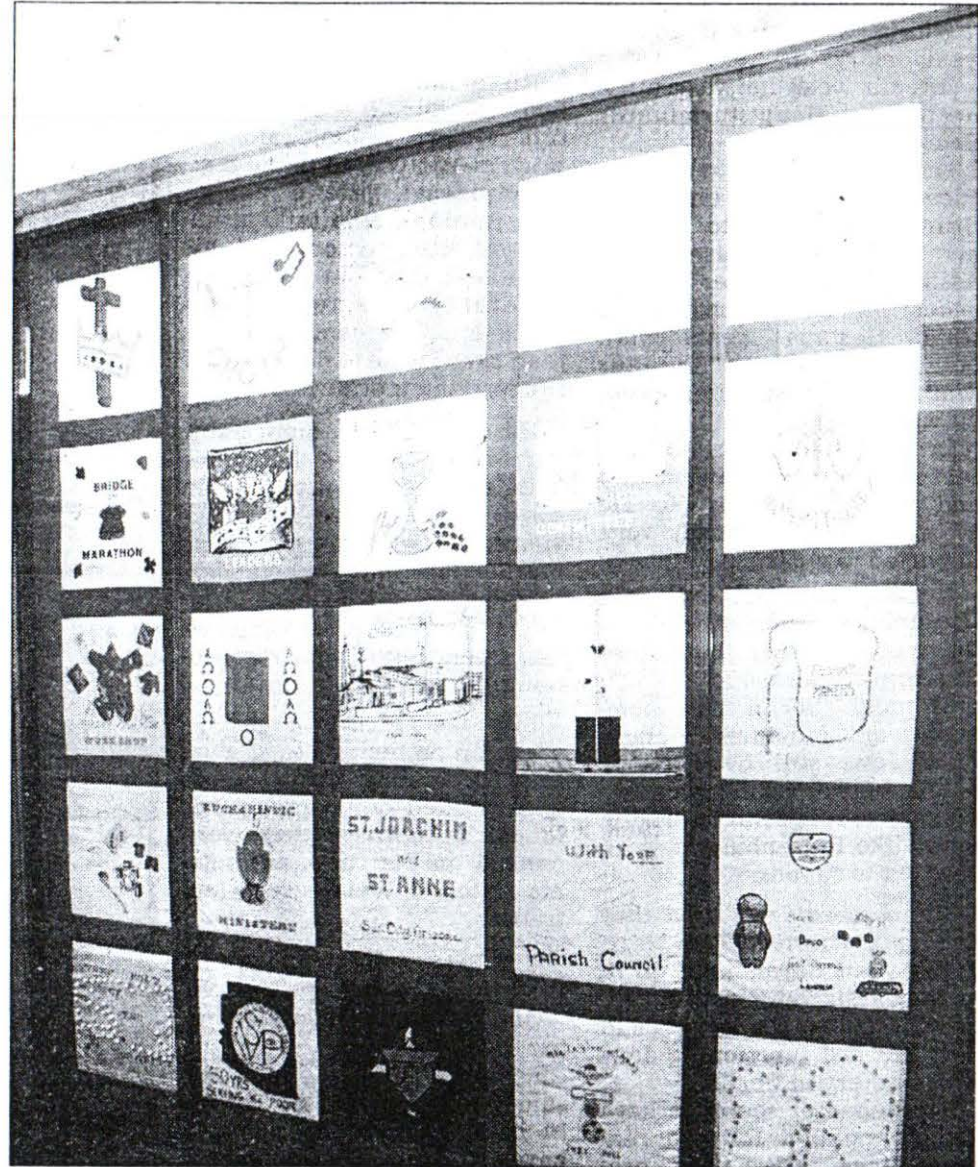
Nawrocki created the square for the Mission Sewing Group and two others. A tiny quilt made from strips of cloth represent the baby quilts and lap cloths created by the sewing group. She also made two squares to fill in the top left and right corners, using Catholic motifs for her inspiration.

The purpose of the quilt is to preserve the history of the Catholic church. It opened in Sun City in 1961. It is a tangible, visible memorial to those who serve now, and an invitation for others to become involved.

"We want to show them that there are all these groups within the parish that they could belong to, and volunteer their service," Nawrocki said. "And if they have a talent, then they can find one that fulfills that talent."

The quilt was the brainchild of Phyllis Provost. She was head of the church council when the idea was conceived last spring.

The quilt will be blessed on Sunday before the 10 a.m. Mass.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

A quilt representing the various organizations within the St. Joachim and St. Anne Catholic Church will be blessed before Mass this Sunday. Jean Nawrocki and members of her quilting group finished the project.



# Moving across town

## Sun City church welcomes new pastor

By P. ATWOOD WILLIAMS  
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The Rev. Frank P. Simlik will celebrate his first Mass at 8 a.m. Saturday as the new pastor of the Church of St. Joachim and St. Anne, 11625 N. 111th Ave. Receptions for the newly assigned priest will follow each Mass on Saturday and Sunday.

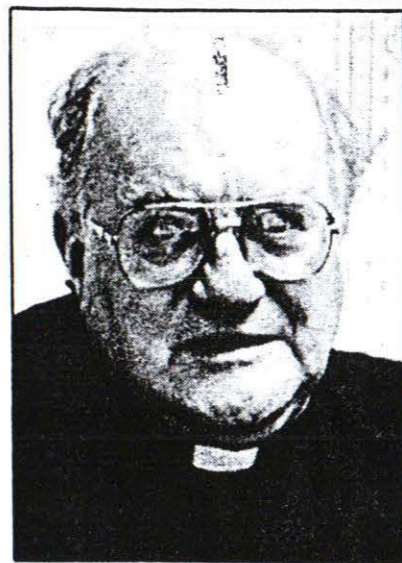
"People will wonder 'who is this guy, how long are his sermons and is he any good?' " the 63-year-old priest said.

Simlik smiled and then promised to keep his sermons under 45 minutes.

He is a former instructor of Greek and Hebrew at the House of Studies for the Dominican Fathers in River Forest, Ill. He later taught logic and religion in a high school in Fenwick Park, Ill.

Of Czech ancestry, he and his sister, also a member of a Dominican order, were raised in Chicago. They attended Blessed Agnes of Bohemia Elementary School, where Simlik says he was only an average student and mischievous as were all the boys.

He rode the elevated train and walked down Michigan Avenue to attend the Quigley Seminary on the fringes of the entertainment district at Chestnut and Rush streets from 1940 to 1945 and then attended the Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis for two years.



'People will wonder, who is this guy, how long are his sermons and is he any good?'

The Rev. Frank P. Simlik

His classical education includes four years of Latin and three of Greek.

"We had to be able to read the New Testament in Greek and translate it into Latin," he said. Next, he studied philosophy with the Dominican Fathers in River Forest and finished theological studies at St. Rose Lima Priory in Dubuque, Iowa, for two years. He completed his work at St. Thomas Aquinas University in Rome and was ordained there Feb. 14, 1954. He was the first member of his immediate family to enter a religious life.

Following his ordination, he taught for 15 years in River Forest before the classical curriculum was modified, and he

moved to Fenwick Park to teach at the high school. Simlik then moved to Arizona in 1973 to be closer to his mother in Phoenix.

Today, she lives with his sister, a Dominican nun serving as hospital chaplain in Austin, Texas.

Simlik spent three years as pastor at St. Thomas The Apostle in Phoenix and nine at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Tempe. Since 1985 he has been pastor of St. Joan of Arc at 38th Street and Greenway in Phoenix.

In Tempe, he was responsible for the financial management of the church's elementary school. At St. Joan of Arc, there was a very large religious education program involving 600 students.

He also helped to reduce the church's \$1.5 million debt by \$600,000.

Also during his tenure at St. Joan of Arc, his church assisted the poor — fulfilling about 600 requests a year for food and others for assistance paying for prescriptions, rent and utilities from parish residents in low-cost housing.

"This is very important work, the outreach of the church to the poor," says Simlik.

"Father Frank is both business and people-oriented," says Bryan Hightower, president of the Parish Council at St. Joan of Arc Church, a parish of 2,000.

Hightower believes that being a person who combines both business and people skills is unique and says that "Father Frank" supported activities of all types including their senior adult program.

"No matter how busy he was, he attended every function of this group. With his support, life was made much easier," said Hightower.

Simlik considers his basic responsibility to bring God to the people and people to God. He has been told that members of St. Joachim and St. Anne parish have a deep faith.

And he says he asked for the assignment in Sun City.

"I'm coming out here to be with people my own age."

**NEWCOMER** — The Rev. Frank P. Simlik assumes the duties on Saturday as pastor of the Church of St. Joachim and St. Anne. He says he is coming to a parish in Sun City to be with people his own age.

# Many changes occur in church's 26-year history

By CAROL ANNE GAINER  
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — St. Joachim and St. Anne Catholic Church has gone through a number of changes in its 26-year history.

When it was founded on March 20, 1961, it was known only as St. Joachim, said the Rev. Martin C. Kelly, current pastor. It was part of the Diocese of Tucson, which was headed by Bishop Green, who appointed the Rev. Palmer Plourde as St. Joachim's first pastor.

In 1969, the church became part of the Diocese of Phoenix. Six years later, Plourde (who died in 1978) retired, requesting that Kelly be named his successor.

Originally from Ireland, Kelly was then pastor of St. Daniel's Church in Scottsdale. So when he was appointed pastor of St. Joachim's in August, 1975, "I had adjustments to make," he said. "Previously, I was in an area that had children and a parochial school. And now I had to appeal to all elderly people."

While their needs aren't so different from young parishioners, he said, "we older people begin to think about the future and our deaths and about getting closer to Christ."

As a contemporary, Kelly feels he can relate better to the parishioners. "We were brought up at the same time when religion was in black and white."

He also finds them admirable church members.

"They're a real example to young people in their practice of religion," he said. "And many of them are active in our ministry: as lectors, eucharistic ministers — They help the priests distribute Holy Communion and take Holy Communion to the homebound — and cantors."

To serve the estimated 1,400 parishioners in Sun City, Youngtown and Country Meadows, Kelly is assisted by associate pastors Aloysius McCaughey and Harry O'Donnell, and pastoral associate Jean Waiss ("who handles the entire field of liturgy with the ministry," Kelly said).

They also serve those parishioners unable to attend church. Mass is held every Friday at Good Shepherd Retirement Center in Peoria, every Wednesday with Holy Communion at Baptist Village in Youngtown, and Camelot Manor and Sun Valley Lodge in Sun City.

Other than that, Kelly said, St. Joachim is the same as other

Catholic churches. "Our purpose is to seek Christ in our fellow man, in everybody."

His role remains the same, too. "I want to be of service and help them (parishioners) grow in holiness and grow closer to Christ."

To do so, the church has kept up with the changes made by Vatican Council II.

"When I was a priest in 1948 (when he was ordained), services were in Latin and the priest's back was to the people. Now services are said in English, the priest faces the people and many of the parishioners are involved in the service."

Vatican Council II also gave Kelly the incentive to change the church's name.

"You see, the feast of St. Joachim occurs in August and St. Anne in July. The saints were husband and wife, the parents of Mary. So Vatican Council II made it one feast day.

"And because they (the saints) were the grandparents of Jesus, the parishioners are all grandparents of Jesus. So I went to Bishop James Rausch, then bishop of Phoenix, to get the name of the church changed canonically."

In 1978, St. Joachim officially became St. Joachim and St. Anne

Catholic Church. In celebration, its interior was completely remodeled and a statue of St. Anne was added next to the one of St.

Joachim outside the front of the church.

Regular Masses are 8 a.m., 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through

Friday (plus a 5:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday); 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Sunday.



The Rev. Martin C. Kelly stands before statues of saints Joachim and Anne. Kelly has

been the pastor of the 26-year-old Sun City church since 1975. (News-Sun photo)

# NEWS - SUN

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## Catholic Parish Formed

### Founding Pastor Named

St. Joachim Parish, believed the first Catholic parish in the United States with that name, has been established for the Sun City-Youngtown area by the Diocese of Tucson, with Father Palm-er H. Plourde as founding pastor.

Father Plourde said the parish will extend roughly from Peoria to Wickenburg although not including those two cities.

He reported that four lots have been purchased adjacent to the 1.87-acre plot already obtained in Sun City for a church and rec-tory site. The property faces 111th Avenue at Duluth Avenue.

FATHER PLOURDE said the additional ground "will give us more ingress and egress to the property, especially for parking."

"We are planning for about a 500-seat church," he said, "but we need an architect and plans, and it may take two or three months for us to get under way."

El Mirage, which has been a mission of Glendale, now is a mission of St. Joachim Parish. The mission church was built during Father Plourde's service as Glendale pastor, 1951-55. Dur-ing his tenure he also built Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, convent, and administration build-ing in Glendale.

He was transferred in 1955 to South Phoenix, where he built the large new St. Catherine's Church which seats 800 on the ground floor and 200 in the choir-loft.

ABOUT 1½ YEARS ago he re-turned to New Hampshire be-cause of the illness of his father. His father died in January, and Father Plourde came back to the Valley 2½ weeks ago to receive his new assignment. Now 52, he was born at Nashua, N. H.

"I'm very happy to be here and to work with the people from this area," he said. "It's a unique parish, perhaps the most unique in the United States. I think it is going to be very interesting."

Father Plourde is staying in Youngtown with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sisterman. He will re-main there throughout the sum-mer while the Sistermans are visiting in St. Paul, Minn.

# First Catholic parish formed

(March 30, 1960)

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