St. Fabian

Groundbreaking is first step to expansion

Though peace of mind is likely a hard-won possession in their busy four-child household, Farmington Hills residents Charlie and Hene Audette can at least breathe a sigh of relief about middle school plans for their sixth-grader, son Chaz, 10. With a major school expansion under way at St. Fabian Catholie Church in Farmington Hills, the Audettes consider themselves fortunate Chaz will now be able to continue his education there through eighth grade.

Established in 1965, St. Fabian School has offered only first through sixth-grade education to this point. Parishioners for nine years, the Audettes regard the expansion as good news.

"I'm very excited," llene said. "We've been trying to get it (grades seven and eight) since (oldest daughter) Catherine was a fifth-grader. The school just wasn't complete without seventh and eight) just wasn't complete without seventh and eight

just wasn't complete without seventh and eighth grade."

grade."
Seventh grade as well as kindergarten should be in place by fall 1999. Many see this as a nice alternative for those parents who desire parochial education through grade eight. At the end of sixth

grade, many St. Fabian parents in the past have had to acramble to find less-than-plentiful Catholic middle school accommodations for their children. When asked if their daughter, Catherine, currently a freshman at North Farmington High, and second daughter, Lauren, now at Dunckel Middle School, would have attended St. Fabian had there been grades seven and eight, Audette responded: "Absolutely, no question." Youngest daughter, Christine, 9 and in fourth grade at St. Fabian, will also benefit from the expanded grades.

On Saturday, Sept. 26, the Rev. Brian Chabala, pastor of St. Fabian since February 1996, conducted a "Blessing of the Earth and Groundbreaking" ceremony under a banner proclaiming, 'Sharing Our Faith, Building Our Future." Present for the event were Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi; the regional vicar, the Rev. Gerald McEahill, former St. Fabian pastor, the Rev. Norbert Kendzierski; interim administrator of St. Fabian, the Rev. John West, members of the expansion campaign as well as several hundred parish members.

Turning the earth



a higher authority than the mayor. Chabala related that the expansion effort was "conceived to address many needs of a growing St. Fabian. It quickly became clear ... it would touch every aspect of life in the parish." Chabala described the expansion as "comprehensive, involving the whole parish, not merely the school. We will be adding additional classrooms to accommodate kindergarten through eighth grade, new and more spacious offices for the Christian Formation Program, a large youth center with recreational facilities, and a full-size activity center."

The expansion brochure also describes plans for a computer center, state-of-the-art technology systems, media center and cafetorium. Renovations to the current gym and kitchen facilities are planned. The church itself will not be touched. Total expansion is around 40,000 square feet.

Current parish corrollment is 2,200 families, while St. Fabian School has 315 students. Chabala said, "We will max out at around five hundred students. The classrooms of each grade."

Associated with the project are architectural and engineering firm Giffels Hoyem Bass inc. of Troy, and the Barton Malow Co. of Southfield is the builder. Fertunately for St. Fabian, and a "built-in" advantage is the fact that many of the expansion's "key players" from these companies — as Chabala refers to them — are parishioners with children who attend St. Fabian School.

Was the parish receptive to such a vast — and at least temporarily disruptive — change? Apparently so, as the Expansion Campaign raised \$4.1 million in three months of fund-raising, With a projected cost of \$7 million, the remaining funds will be obtained from the Archdicaces of Detroit. Chabala states, "A hallmark of this campaign was the everwhelming acceptuince by the parish. It was time—there hald been no expansion since 1981." Phase 1, including the classrooms and new gym is projected



Welcome: The Rev. Brian Chabala introduces invited

to be completed by August 1999. Phase 2, which involves renovation of the gym and social hall will follow sometime later.

Spiritual life

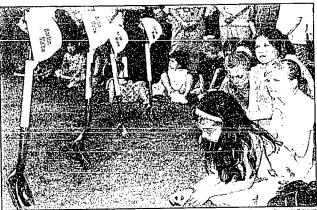
Spiritual life
Chabala believes there is a return to spirituality as well as greater interest in parochial education. saying "People today are searching for spiritual life for themselves and their children. Parents are looking for schools that will impart values, morals and respect for authority. We can provide it."
He added, "The family must work with the child with respect to teaching values as pastors and all parochial principals depend upon the cooperation of parents. We try to instill these things, but if they are not reinforced, lived, and encouraged by the family, they don't take root."

Ilene Audette concurs when citing what she believes are some advantages of parochial education. "Kids may not hear the message from me ... but at school and church, these things are validated. It's important that a common thread runs through one's faith life, community and family life."

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Mother of a St. Fabian first-grader and prospective kindergartner, Patty McNecee states her "reasons for sending Mickey there have changed since he started. I like the focus on reading and the discipline. But I got more than I expected." She adds "We couldn't do it without Father Brian," a sentiment echoed by everyone involved in the project.

Families interested in Catholic elementary education at St. Fabian school, located on 12 Mile just west of Orchard Lake Road, can call 553-2750.



Awalting action: Children line up along the shovel line waiting for the groundbreak

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