



SHARON LEMICK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Farewell to the job: When the Rev. Stephen Anthony enters the sanctuary at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church, he pauses, crosses himself and kisses an icon. He is celebrating his 70th birthday and his retirement from the parish in Farmington Hills.

Priest from page 1A

place Anthony on July 1. Anthony will officially retire Aug. 31. Mountain wants to relocate closer to his family in Chicago, Anthony said. He is married to Olga and has two sons, Chris Timothy, 8, and Stefanus, 5.

About 400 people attended the retirement celebration on June 12. Anthony's 70th birthday was at Laurel Manor in Livonia. The party was organized by Demetra Mohs, whose family was one of the parish founders. She described Anthony as a caring person.

"I'm grateful to God that I've survived this far in a very stressful occupation," Anthony said. "It's a 24-hour-a-day job. I've always described the life of a priest as a series of interruptions."

His family survived because they took mini-vacations, Anthony said. He's annually taken the entire month of July off, booking no weddings or baptisms.

"I've always told my parishioners not to pick the month of July to pass on," Anthony joked. "So far,

they've been pretty good about it."

Although the Greek Orthodox Church is similar to the Roman Catholic faith, Greek Orthodox priests are allowed to marry before ordination but not after, Anthony said. Married priests do not rise above the rank of priesthood.

Because Anthony's married with a family, he never has problems giving advice. His family provides constructive criticism, Anthony said. "They're the ones who tell you: 'KISS — Keep it short.'"

Because he was married with a family, Anthony believed he was better able to relate to many of the problems of married people.

The Greek Orthodox Church has much in common with the Roman Catholic church, Anthony said.

A priest's assignments to parishes are somewhat permanent because it's a costly proposition to relocate entire families, he added.

"Our ministry has become more involved, more demanding and with less clout," Anthony said. "People find it very easy to absent them-

selves from Sunday services as well as other directives of the church."

His fondest memories are when he first came to the city. He recalls when a little ringbearer asked him, following a wedding ceremony: "Father, why does it take so long to get married in the Greek Orthodox Church?"

"Demetri, we do this on purpose," Anthony responded. "You do?" the surprised little boy said.

"Yes," Anthony said, "so they won't come back."

Recently, a young man in his 20s, who was a former altar boy was on assignment in Japan. He asked for a copy of "Gethsemane" which Anthony annually dedicates to his altar boys on Holy Thursday as they kneel before him. The prayer tells about the garden of despair everyone must pass at one time.

"I said to my self, there's a young man of a very impressionable age who remembered his roots," Anthony said.

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Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-640)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Economic News Agency, 10000 W. 10th Ave., Suite 100, Farmington, MI 48335-1010. Second class postage paid at Farmington, MI. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Observer & Economic News Agency, 10000 W. 10th Ave., Suite 100, Farmington, MI 48335-1010.

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