

BELIEFS & Values

Cardinal dedicates new Catholic church

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Members of St. Jerome Catholic Church in Detroit began their search for a new spiritual home in Oakland County in 1991. But when war broke out in their homelands of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, parishioners began funneling their much-needed dollars toward medical and financial aid for those suffering abroad.

"We all knew those people needed help," said the Rev. Joseph Galic, pastor of the former Detroit congregation for seven years.

For parishioners, the dream for a new church seemed years away — until former Bloomfield Hills resident Lucille Drazek Prepopole, who now resides in Florida, pledged \$1 million to the project with the stipulation that the new church be named after St. Lucy on behalf of her grandmother.

With the forming of the build-

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Lorraine Drozdowski
St. Lucy of Troy parishioner

ing committee in 1992 came plans for a new structure that would reflect the heritage and culture of its people. When rezoning approval came from the city of Troy on the Feast of the Holy Cross, Galic requested that the city's fifth Roman Catholic church take on a cross-shaped design. The theme soon dominated the white brick building, as Jerusalem crosses appeared on circular windows and wooden entrance doors.

Built in a Mediterranean style at a cost of \$3.2 million, the facility houses a 450-seat sanctuary, social hall, classrooms, offices, a library, a rectory, and a special chapel for perpetual adoration. The church was designed by Brown and Associates

Architects, Inc. in Bloomfield Hills and constructed by Jonna Construction Co., which has offices in Bloomfield Hills, Troy and West Bloomfield.

The transition from the old to the new was made by parishioners when St. Jerome Church was closed on June 30 and St. Lucy Church was officially opened on July 1.

"It's a new church, but the community has stayed the same," said Galic.

Once inside the copper-roofed church, longtime members are reminded of their Detroit roots by the altar, tabernacle, baptismal font, statues and Stations of the Cross, which once stood inside St. Jerome Church on Eight Mile and Woodward.

Sentimental sculptures, artwork and paintings of their homeland now adorn the new foyers and social hall.

"The whole complex is so peaceful, so beautiful," said Galic, who hails from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Ben and Lorraine Drozdowski of Troy were among a crowd of 650 individuals who attended the dedication of St. Lucy Catholic Church and the installation of the Rev. Joseph Galic, O.F.M., as pastor by Cardinal Adam Malda on Sept. 8. The ceremony featured a Croatian choir from St. Francis Catholic Church in Windsor, Canada, and an English choir from St. Lucy Catholic Church in St. Clair Shores.

"It was my first experience with a dedication of a church and I found everything so meaningful," said Lorraine Drozdowski.

The Drozdowskis, who are of Polish descent, joined the St. Jerome/St. Lucy congregation three years ago after visiting the Medjugorje shrine in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where apparitions of the Blessed Mother are said to be taking place.

The apparitions led us to St. Jerome, and we did a lot of praying on Eight Mile," said Lorraine Drozdowski, who is a nurse.

Today, Drozdowski is a pro-life representative on the parish council. She is also active in the Wednesday evening prayer group, which begins with the praying of the rosary and continues with Mass, perpetual adoration and confession.

St. Jerome/St. Lucy parish was founded by Croatian immigrants in 1924, and made its home in two Detroit locations before moving to Oakland County.

Today, a Croatian or Bosnian-Herzegovinian heritage is shared by two-thirds of the 300 families.

"Here, in this community, we are praying and hoping that we are able to respond to every need, which we couldn't do before," said the Franciscan priest. "In this new place, everyone can be satisfied and find



PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

A dream fulfilled: The Rev. Joseph Galic sits in the cross-shaped sanctuary of St. Lucy Catholic Church, surrounded by Croatian artifacts from the 72-year-old parish's former Detroit home.

what they are looking for."

Since the Croatian-American church opened in Troy, Sunday attendance has doubled at the 11:30 a.m. English liturgy. The church also offers a Croatian liturgy at 10 a.m. Sundays and English liturgy, 5 p.m. Saturday. Church members held their first Croatian festival on parish grounds in August, and hope to

eventually begin classes to teach the culture of the Croatian people. But the priest of 30 years is quick to point out that the opportunities at St. Lucy Church are open to all people. "The gifts of God are given not for us to keep but to share with others," added Galic. "We're at a stage where we can extend our hands to everyone."

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