

## **New church built in Pembroke Pines**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

If you build it, they will come.

In fact, they are already coming. That's why Saint Maximilian Kolbe Roman Catholic Church in Pembroke Pines is constructing a new 22,000 square foot Religious Education building.

"We have over 30 active ministries that now have to meet in kitchens and the chapel and other spaces because there just isn't room for them," explained Father Jeff McCormick who has served as the church's priest for the past two years.

"We have four choirs, classes for the Rite of Initiation for Adults and the Rite of Initiation for teenagers, high school and middle school youth groups, confirmation classes, large first communion classes," the priest said, listing just a few of the groups that are competing for space in the congregation's crowded quarters.

"We have around 4,000 families," explained Marie Marino, the church's bookkeeper. "And, we have no place to hold religious education classes for our 1,000 students."

Fr. McCormick said that the building is almost done and the church hopes to begin using it by August. "They are finishing the parking lot now and inside they are working on the electricity and installing doors and cabinets," he said.

But, the priest said, there have been a number of delays and taking occupancy is behind schedule.

"It won't be a Sunday-only use building," he explained. "We will also use it for our preschool."

The building will contain two offices and a number of classrooms, five of which will be used for the preschool.

The new building will also be used for adult education according to Maryann Hotchkiss of Pembroke Pines who is the parish's Director of Religious Education. "We will be offering classes for inquirers and those who are looking at the possibility of conversion," she explained. "We also will have opportunities for what we call 'cradle Catholics,' people who were born in the church but for whatever reason did not ever take first communion or confirmation."

Hotchkiss said that the church also wants to offer continuing education classes for adults, but up to now, hasn't had the space to add additional opportunities.

Youth are an important part of the congregation's programs, Hotchkiss indicated. "We have Life Teen" programs for high school students which involves a mass at 6 p.m. on

Sunday with teens serving as Lectors, a teen choir and a band. It's pretty contemporary," she said.

The emphasis of the teen's programs is "social, spiritual and service," Hotchkiss explained.

McCormick said that the classrooms are being built with permanent walls because the church could not get permission from the city to build moveable walls for safety code reasons.

"We have been renting space from Pembroke Lakes Elementary School to accommodate our programs," McCormick said. "The parish is growing such that we need to expand.

The church recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Celebrations featured former CNN International correspondent Marina Kolbe, the niece of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, as a featured speaker.

The Saint was best known for offering to trade places with a prisoner of war in a German concentration camp in Poland. The prisoner was scheduled to be put to death, and Kolbe stepped in.

"The man who was spared lived a long life and Saint Maximilian Kolbe was the first saint to be canonized by Pope John Paul II," McCormick said.

The parish draws its members from a diversity of people, McCormick explained. "Century Village (a retirement complex) is in our area so we draw a large number of people from there."

"We also have a lot of families and singles," added Marino. "If anything, having all ages makes the church better. It's a wonderful mix."

While the church offers a Spanish mass each week, McCormick said that the majority of parishioners are English-speaking. "We have a lot of English-speaking people with Spanish surnames," he said.

"It's a beautiful church," Marino said. "It's a family."

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