



Third-grade teacher Karen Clayton observes students (left to right, Ryan deMayo, Christi Magda and Joseph Hennessey) greet visitors.



Co-pastor Father Robert F. Condrion greets sixth-graders Victoria Schuchmann and Caitlin Malloy on way to class.

## Steeped in spirituality and service

Although the parochial elementary school was built almost a century ago in 1910, it is a hi-tech bastion of advanced, state-of-the-art teaching.

There are 30 work stations in the computer lab, used by both students and teachers for class instruction. Principal Kathleen Molner said that the computer software and curriculum were updated in 2004.

Earlier this year, 12 laptops were provided to the teachers to prepare lessons and communicate by e-mail with parents, frequently about homework assignments.

Mrs. Molnar joked that no student can get beyond the reach of the electronic media.

"There is no escaping homework," she said.

Students also are required to maintain a daily homework journal, which parents can review.

"And if we think students haven't completed their homework, we will request that parents sign the journals," she said. "And we have had no problems with parents objecting to signing."

There's a reason that Mrs. Molnar seems to know the ins and outs of teaching at the school better than anyone else; She graduated from the school in 1965, returned as a teacher in 1973 and was named principal in 1989. It's been her life.

"A life of love and service," Mrs. Molnar said.

Father Robert F. Condrion said he considers Mrs. Molnar the finest principal one can find.

He added, "The school is the crown jewel of the parish. It is as good as or better than any of the public schools."

Mrs. Molnar reported that enrollment was up to 264 students, a significant increase from 200 just a few years ago.

The school has adopted a unique spirit that results in what resembles a cheerleading response whenever a visitor enters a classroom. Co-pastor Father George P. Burnett introduced

it several years ago. In voices that that seem to echo loud enough to reach Bridgeport or Waterbury, they chant, "We are the best students in the whole world and have the best smiles."

One would be hard-pressed to disagree.

The parish is also in the forefront of religious education with its Generations of Faith program in addition to its first Communion and confirmation preparation programs.

Christine Ring, director of the Generations of Faith Program, said even though this is the first year for

parish spent more than \$500,000 restoring the organ, built in 1929, to its original brilliance. The parish has more dimensions to its ministries than its school and religious education, including a bereavement group, a group that prepares meals for the local shelter, Miraculous Medal Novenas and a Holy Hour for vocations, to name a few.

Norma Travis, head of the parish nurse ministry, has been a member of the parish for 80 years. She has six nurses assisting her at blood pressure screenings and in advising and helping parishioners about how to get the health care they need. Listening to several parishioners talk about the energy of the parish, she said, "They are right. There is spirituality and a strong sense of service here."

Anthony J. Burke has been organist and choir director at Assumption for seven years. He currently is producing "Hello Dolly" for a school performance May 13-14. He also teaches music at the school.

Mr. Burke and his wife, Sarah, joined the parish not only because of his job, but because they found the parish an exciting place to be.

"There is a great respect for the music I play, from the parishioners and the priests," he said. "And the organ is spectacular."

He added, "It can probably match the beauty of the music from any organ anywhere. It is one of the centerpiece that make the church so grand."

Parishioner and trustee Dan Hogan agreed that the organ is marvelous. He said it is the twin of the one installed at the Atlantic City Convention Center.

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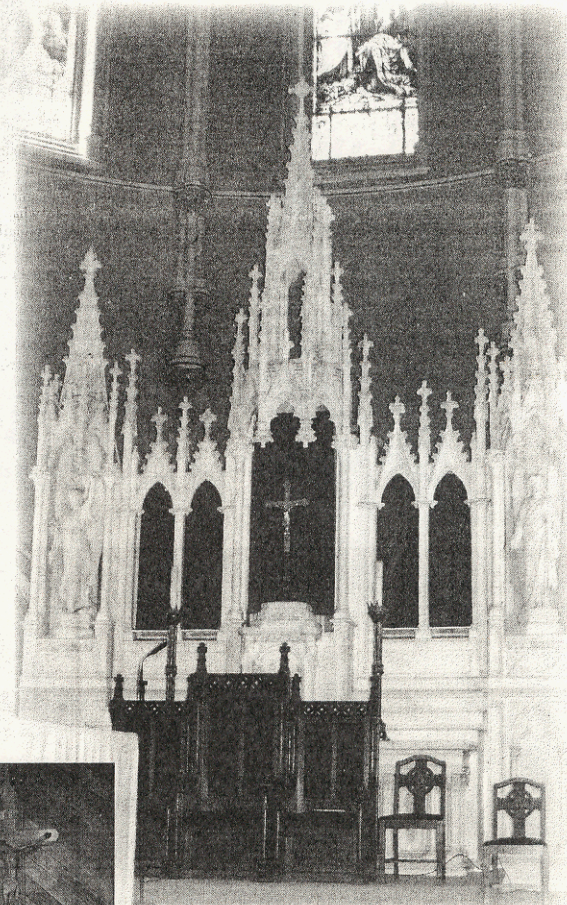
the program, it has become an outstanding success with more than 280 parents and students involved.

The program meets once a month in three repeated sessions, Saturday, Sunday and a weekday, to accommodate the large turnout. Parents and children have a choice but must indicate the day of attendance.

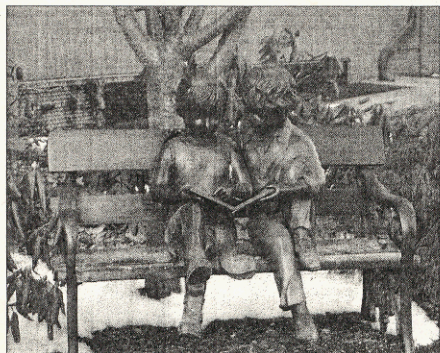
Mrs. Ring said the sessions focus on the liturgy, how to develop a deeper understanding of the weekly readings, how to listen to and apply the word of God as it is proclaimed each Sunday and how to develop an appreciation of the Scriptures in our daily lives.

"When we conducted the session on marriage, the parents were amazed how their children responded to the three-hour meetings," said Mrs. Ring.

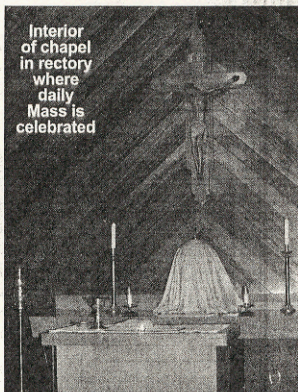
She added that the youngsters were the ones who first said that commitment in marriage does not begin at the altar and that marriage



Interior of Assumption Church



Statue of two students in front of the entrance to the school



Interior of chapel in rector where daily Mass is celebrated

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