

## LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

*For Our Children and the Future*

# HISTORIC FRENCH LICK CHURCH GETS FACELIFT AS TOURISM GROWS

Our Lady of the Springs Church in French Lick had fallen into disrepair—not from storm damage or faulty construction or neglect, but simply from old age. Built in 1887, time had taken its toll. But now, effort is underway to refurbish the church.

Why the renovation, and why now? The parish's new administrator, Father John M. Hall, reports there is a hint of growth in the parish membership of just over 100 households. Simultaneously, an increase in the number of visitors is expected as a result of heightened economic development activity in French Lick. These changes are expected to trigger an increase in both the volume of tourists visiting the historic church and the number of Catholics attending Mass. "Our goal is to preserve what has been given us," he explained.

The church, with a capacity of 150, features wooden interior walls and ceiling above a tile floor. Also being renovated are the rectory and the 50's-era Macke Hall (used for gymnasium activities and classrooms, with its kitchen serving up food for countless fish fries, parish dinners and the annual Pumpkin Fall Festival).

The work is being done through two Saint Francis Xavier Home Mission Fund grants provided by the United Catholic Appeal in 2005 and 2006. "The Home Missions grants are vital," Father Hall explained. "They support parishes that need assistance to carry on their work and to care for buildings and grounds." An upcoming effort will raise funds for the Legacy for Our Mission campaign, he added.

Beyond its physical requirements, Father Hall said, the parish has two ongoing needs: an education program for youth—vital in an area with no Catholic schools—and adult education programs that are interesting and will encourage attendance.

Our Lady of the Springs is nestled in the rolling hills of Orange County, which counts only 19,000 residents, has



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little industry and ranks as one of the poorest in the state. "This area is financially challenged," Father Hall explained. "We need to help people keep going."

In June, Father Hall was appointed administrator of Our Lady of the Springs and its smaller sister parish, Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Church in nearby Paoli. But he is no stranger to either parish, having served as pastor of both from 1989 to 2001. Father Hall manages both parishes, but relies upon Father Joseph Moriarty of nearby Saint Meinrad Archabbey to administer sacraments to parishioners. Father Hall's appointment as administrator came just one year after the untimely death of Father Justin Martin who had assumed the duties of pastor at Our Lady of the Springs in July 2005.

Father Hall also continues to serve as pastor of St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville, where he was appointed in 2005. How does he do it? "I try to keep everything organized, and I rely on the telephone and a very capable staff," he

admitted. And he's on the road a lot. It's 80 miles to French Lick and another 10 to Paoli, a trip he makes two or three times a month. "It's not really an unusual workload," he observed. "Several other priests in the archdiocese carry similar responsibilities. A lot of us are stretched thin."

As the renovation project moves into high gear, parishioners express their support: "It's important to maintain the church, just like a house," commented Donna Rode, bookkeeper for both parishes. "We need to do this to keep Our Lady of the Springs a viable parish."

### A MUCH-NEEDED FACELIFT

The following items are scheduled to be completed this summer at Our Lady of the Springs:

- Macke Hall—sandblasting and exterior painting
- Handicap Ramp—construction of concrete ramp with hand rail, replacing an older wooden ramp connecting the walkway to the church
- Rectory front porch—construction.

Other renovation work will include:

- Reinforcement of the church—work on a beam to provide structural support
- Sidewalks—constructing additional walkways
- Restrooms—making existing facilities handicap-accessible
- Macke Hall—interior painting, replacement of doors and windows, and creation of rooms for religious education classes
- Church steps—replacement of the 20-plus steps leading to the church.

*Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as Home Missions. By contributing to the Legacy for Our Mission campaign through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to Home Missions and distributed to parishes such as Our Lady of the Springs in French Lick.*