

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto, cs 11/02/08

OUR CATHOLIC DIVERSITY

Our little historic church is treasured by parishioners and visitors. On October 18-19, St. Anthony's was one of 120 sites in W.N.Y. and Southern Ontario to participate in the 7th Doors Open Niagara. The international project showcased the artistic and historic value of our church. Visitors appreciated guided tours of the church and the photographic exhibit *Journey of Hope* on the settlement and development of the Italian community in WNY. In October, 120 Boy Scouts from the Greater Niagara Frontier also visited St. Anthony's, the first stop in their 10 Commandments Hike during which priests/ministers of 10 places of worship spoke about the Laws God gave to Moses. Later 20 students from Houghton College enjoyed a guided tour of our church after attending the Latin mass. Fifteen members of the Niagara Frontier Industry Education Council, Inc. (NFIEC) also visited our church for its architecture and the role it played and is playing in the community. All are non-Catholic institutions.

Some time ago, the principal of a Catholic elementary school dismissed the suggestion to have her students visit our St. Anthony's by saying: "Oh, all those saints!" Then, correcting herself, she said "We do not have Italian students in our school, anyway!" Besides the fact that there are Italian American students in that school, are saints an "Italian thing"? In this age of "diversity" and "inclusiveness", a bit of catholicity and orthodoxy would not hurt. At St. Anthony's, we also have the statue of St. Patrick, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, a picture of St. John Newman, a large medallion of Ven. Catherine McAuley as a "Spiritual Mother" of the Italian community, and a statue of Mother Cabrini, the first canonized American saint, who prayed in our church. We are the only church in the diocese where Sunday masses are celebrated in English, Italian and Latin, and other languages are used in our ministry during the week. It has been said that, although St. Anthony's has a unique Italian flare (our parish was established to serve the real needs of Catholics which are not met by the territorial churches), its healthy ethnic identity in the one Catholic faith, has enabled its parishioners to reach out to other ethnic communities in many practical ways. Linguistic, cultural hospitality and service has been the distinctive charisma of the Scalabrini Fathers who have founded and are staffing this small parish with a big heart. From their reaction, people who attend our liturgical and social functions are not only welcome, but feel welcome and part of a family. There are other ways to be welcoming and inclusive than through a welcoming committee.