

Holy Cross Father Ken likes job variety, people

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff

In just a couple of weeks, it'll be Father Ken Misklewicz's (pronounced Mis-ka-vich) first anniversary with the Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church.

It was June 13, 1985 when the 39-year-old former teacher joined Father Dave Cote at Holy Cross, replacing the departed Father Con O'Mahoney as associate pastor.

A warm friendly man, Father Ken has an easy smile and comfortable manner. He wears the traditional black shirt and suit with the white collar, a uniform that Father Ken says makes getting dressed an easy matter in the morning.

"I like best the variety involved in the work," he says of parish work. "Very rarely is it exactly the same, mainly because you're working with people."

As the priest says, in his new career, he rarely has a chance to get bored.

Holy Cross is Father Ken's first full-time job as parish priest. Before that he filled in at the Hamilton and Guelph parishes before coming to Georgetown.

It was after seven years of teaching Grade 8 pupils at a Catholic School in the town of Seaford, between Stratford and Goderich, that Father Ken decided to go back to university.

He spent four years studying theology at St. Peters Seminary in London, Ontario, a school connected with the University of Western Ontario.

"It was a big decision, but you go into it with the idea you're going to find out," Father Ken said. It isn't until the last year that students make the final plunge.

For Father Ken, it was strange to be on the other side of the desk during those four years, and stranger still when he learned one of his teachers was a fellow pupil from his earlier university days.

"We remembered each other, and he was a good teacher, one of the best, so that made it enjoyable," he laughed.

As a parish priest, Father Ken still gets into the classroom fairly often. He likes the less formal way he can visit with students. There's no longer a lesson plan tucked under his arm, nor a long night of marking ahead. Father Ken likes that.

"Now I stay up late doing other things," he laughed, referring to the many evening meetings Holy Cross parishioners hold. "For some groups, it's just being there as a sign of connection with the parish. If I'm asked for advice I give it."

That's also part of his job, giving guidance.

At least once during the day, he celebrates mass at Holy Cross. That's followed by prayer, and a visit to one of the Catholic schools in town.

"Right now we're concentrating on visiting the Grade 8's because they're getting ready for confirmation," Father Ken said.

He enjoys the school visits because they allow children to get to know their priest in a different way than seeing him in the church setting.



Father Ken Misklewicz

Father Ken prepared the Grade 2's for their first confession and first communion so they won't be frightened for it and the confession will be more like a friendly chat, he said.

"The Grade 2's are so open and friendly; some of them come up and give me a hug. That's nice. It shows they're not afraid of me, and it will help in the coming years," Father Ken said.

There are times when being a parish priest can be emotionally draining, and he needs time alone.

"I sometimes find that difficult, because you're on call all the time and there are times when you need a break or a rest and some people don't understand. Most people are very good about it," Father Ken

said. "It can be pretty demanding in time and energy."

Once a week, Father Ken makes a trip to the Georgetown District Memorial Hospital and visits Catholics staying there. Some are familiar faces, while others are new to him. They all appreciate the visit, especially the older ones who have chronic illnesses and have been in hospital for a long time.

"But the most important part of the day for me is when I celebrate mass. If I don't celebrate mass, there's something missing from my day, because that's what I'm ordained to do. Everything else comes after it in importance, otherwise I'd be no different from a teacher or social worker in what I do," Father Ken said.

Fostering a reward for mother of three

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article by Sheridan College journalism student Angela Blackburn describes some of the rewards and challenges of fostering adolescents in the Halton community. For more information on fostering, please call the Foster Care Department at the Halton Children's Aid Society at 844-8211 or 878-2375.

Carol Colsh can't imagine having an executive position that would be more challenging or rewarding than fostering teenagers.

"You really need good communication and negotiating skills, commitment and respect - for yourself and others," says the Oakville mother of three, who has opened her home to eight foster children during the past six years.

"I enjoy working with teenagers... they have their own views, so it's important to listen to them, and work closely with them in teaching how to cope with life's problems," Mrs. Colsh says, adding teens require an abundance of emotional and mental support.

Mrs. Colsh credits her banker husband, Wilbert, and their three children - Kevin, 18, Cindy, 17, and Ron, 15 - with making fostering a true family experience.

"When we went into fostering, we did it as a family," she stresses. "My children are my biggest support system and my cheering section," says Mrs. Colsh. At present, the Colshes have three foster teens living in their home. Mrs. Colsh admits fostering is sometimes difficult, but adds: "It's like any job, it's difficult at times, but you work it out and know there are good times ahead."

Often a so-called 'honeymoon period' occurs, meaning foster children are on their best behavior due to the trauma of entering a new home. However, Mrs. Colsh says she's only had one child on the honeymoon period. "The rest have come in with a real bang and I like it that way. We both know where we stand."

"You have to get them to come out of themselves. Some teens need to be assured that they are good people and that they have good stuff in them," Mrs. Colsh says.

"There is a big need for foster parents for teens and also for parents who will take teenagers in on the Independence Program," notes Mrs. Colsh, who has one child from the program who works full-time.

The Independence Program is for children who have been CAS wards and are of legal age. "It eases kids out into society in a pleasant way by giving them the back up of a family if they need it but also allows them to be independent," she explains.

The Colshes have had one foster child since he was nine - he's now 15. A CAS ward goes to court every three months, at which time his stay in a foster home is adjusted until he returns to his natural parents. Crown wards do not return to their parents.

Foster parents often work with natural parents, as well. "The goal of CAS is to solve problems and reunite families," notes Mrs. Colsh, adding although she is sad to see a child leave, most strongly desire to return to their natural parents.

Mrs. Colsh says there's a lot of support for foster parents. "You never have to fear being left alone to cope...the social workers I have had have been just super fantastic. They are quick to respond and extremely helpful."

Foster parents should be committed, caring, flexible and must really like children, and be willing to hang in there - but you don't have to be super perfect," says Mrs. Colsh.

"I think there are a lot of people out there who should give fostering a try. It's not as hard as you think it is. We always hear so many negative things about fostering, but there are also a lot of good things about fostering," Mrs. Colsh says.

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