

Children bringing parents to church to hear popular priest

From page 1.

"He has his jeans on and gets his knees dirty," long-time parishioner Colin Whitebread said. "He's always asking, 'What can I do to help?'"

Fr. Lorenzo has a way of drawing his parishioners in with his sense of humour. As he puts it, "You will be dead in a couple of years if you don't have a sense of humour. You really need to smile — it takes some of the stress out."

As a priest, he's a comforting presence at each end of human existence and everything in between. Parishioners walk into the church to discuss their problems and triumphs with him.

He'll sit right down on the classroom floor with the youngsters when talking to students at St. Mark or St. Brigid, Whitchurch-Stouffville's Catholic schools. He'll work with them to prepare them for First Communion or Confirmation.

Even during his early years as he was growing up in

the Philippines, he was part of youth ministries and was

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Father Lorenzo,
St. Mark Church

trying to help the people he saw around him.

He's very open to all kinds

of people, Mr. Whitebread said, and he has a real sense that faith should evolve through outreach.

Gifted with a rich singing voice, Fr. Lorenzo developed a love of music early on and sang in his church choir during his high school years. He still enjoys singing Frank Sinatra and Celine Dion tunes.

He comes from a background where people are very devotional and want to share their faith and help in their communities.

In the Philippines, where

he attended seminary, there are usually two or three priests in every Catholic church, whereas there might just be one in Canadian churches.

He studied at the St. Augustine Seminary in San Pablo for two years before continuing his theological studies in Rome for about a year and a half, with the added benefit of being able to speak Italian fluently. He then taught high school for three years.

He immigrated to Canada in 1989 and was ordained in 1999 by Cardinal Aloisius Ambrozic. He was at three churches, Guardian Angels in Orillia, Our Lady of the Airways in Mississauga and St. Barnabas in Scarborough, before coming to St. Mark Catholic Church, which has a membership of about 1,500.

"My job is to lead, to teach and to sanctify the parish family," Fr. Lorenzo said.

He wants to have youth more involved in the church and tap into the talents of all parishioners for the good of the church family and entire community, Mr. Whitebread said.

"When a priest becomes a pastor, the direction of his life is not upwards; the direction is sideways. Not that I grow fat," Fr. Lorenzo with a little smile. "But my direction is sideways to form a cross."

"There is no point in doing things if we are not inspired by our Lord. Otherwise we are just doing it for personal gain," he said. "As long as we follow Jesus, that's the foundation of what we do here at St. Mark's."

He would like to see parishioners spreading the faith in their own homes, to their neighbours and then the larger community.

His homilies keep the congregation spellbound, according to parishioner Josie Schwarzli.



LORENZO SALANDANAN: Father officially installed as pastor at St. Mark Church Sunday.

"You know he is speaking directly to you," she said. "No one's mind drifts when he is speaking — never."

He's so popular with the youngsters at school, that several of them are asking their parents to take them to church.

At St. Mark, Fr. Lorenzo said, people are concerned about the church and their faith in God and generously support the church's outreach efforts locally and around the world.

Fr. Lorenzo shows great gratitude to the priests who have led St. Mark's before him.

"When I began my pastoral responsibilities at St. Mark in September as an administrator, I did so with a keen awareness of the tremendous history of the parish, of the giants of my brother priests, Fr. James Adams and Fr. Leslie Tamas, who have preceded me," he said.

"Each of them has given to our parish community the best they could and each has left his mark upon St. Mark's family. I now stand upon their shoulders. To each of them, I extend my heartfelt gratitude."

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Radio station gets CRTC hearing

WhistleRadio, Stouffville's fledgling radio station, will receive a Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission hearing Sept. 11.

The CRTC will meet in Gatineau, Que., to decide if the low-frequency radio station will receive a licence to operate in Stouffville.

Stouffville resident Jim Priebe, who initiated the local project more than a year ago, is hoping for a decision in three months.

The station has been broadcasting over the Internet, featuring live coverage of Stouffville Spirit junior hockey and recordings of concerts.

Highlights of the application can be found at www.whistleradio.com/page32.html

To write a letter of support, e-mail jim@whistleradio.com or phone 905-640-6429.

The radio station bills itself as being by local residents for local residents.

— Hannelore Volpe

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