

'People-oriented' priest brought new enthusiasm



LESLIE TAMAS: Retired priest of 50 years returns to Stouffville parish to assist when requested.

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"He affected people," she said. "He brought a new enthusiasm when he came."

That exuberance translated into Father Tamas establishing the Catholic Women's League at St. Mark's, the Knights of Columbus, Children's Liturgy and the Saturday evening folk choir mass.

He also introduced female alter servers to the parish.

"I jumped on (that) because it's a good idea. They're equal ... they're not second-class citizens," he said.

Aiding people is why Father Tamas became a priest.

"The most gratifying thing was helping people. I'm very people-oriented," he said.

Father Tamas first heard the call of the church during the high mass and red vestments at Pentecost when he was six years old.

"I was interested in the solemnity, the choir. ... I was very moved," he said.

In 1953, at the age of 13, Father Tamas entered a minor seminary in Szeged, Hungary. Shortly thereafter, it was shut down.

"The communists didn't believe

in God and closed (the seminaries) down," Father Tamas said.

For the next two years, Father Tamas worked as a labourer in the loading docks of a transportation company, but knew it was not for him. In 1956, the Hungarian Revolution took place, which was a revolt by the Hungarian people against the ruling Communist Party.

It was during the revolt that Father Tamas made the 15 km journey, alone and on foot, to a refugee camp in Vienna.

"It's a lonely experience. You never know if you are going to make it or not," he said.

Prior to coming to Stouffville, Father Tamas was an associate pastor in Midland, then moved to parishes in Toronto before a brief stay in Brampton in 1977.

A year later, Father Tamas was assigned to Holy Family Parish in Bolton where he was tasked with building the parish's first church.

Father Tamas retired in September 2005 on the advice of his doctors, but he still helps out at St. Mark's and other parishes when requested. He lives in Markham.

For more information on the anniversary celebration, contact Teresa Kusatz at 905-640-4183.

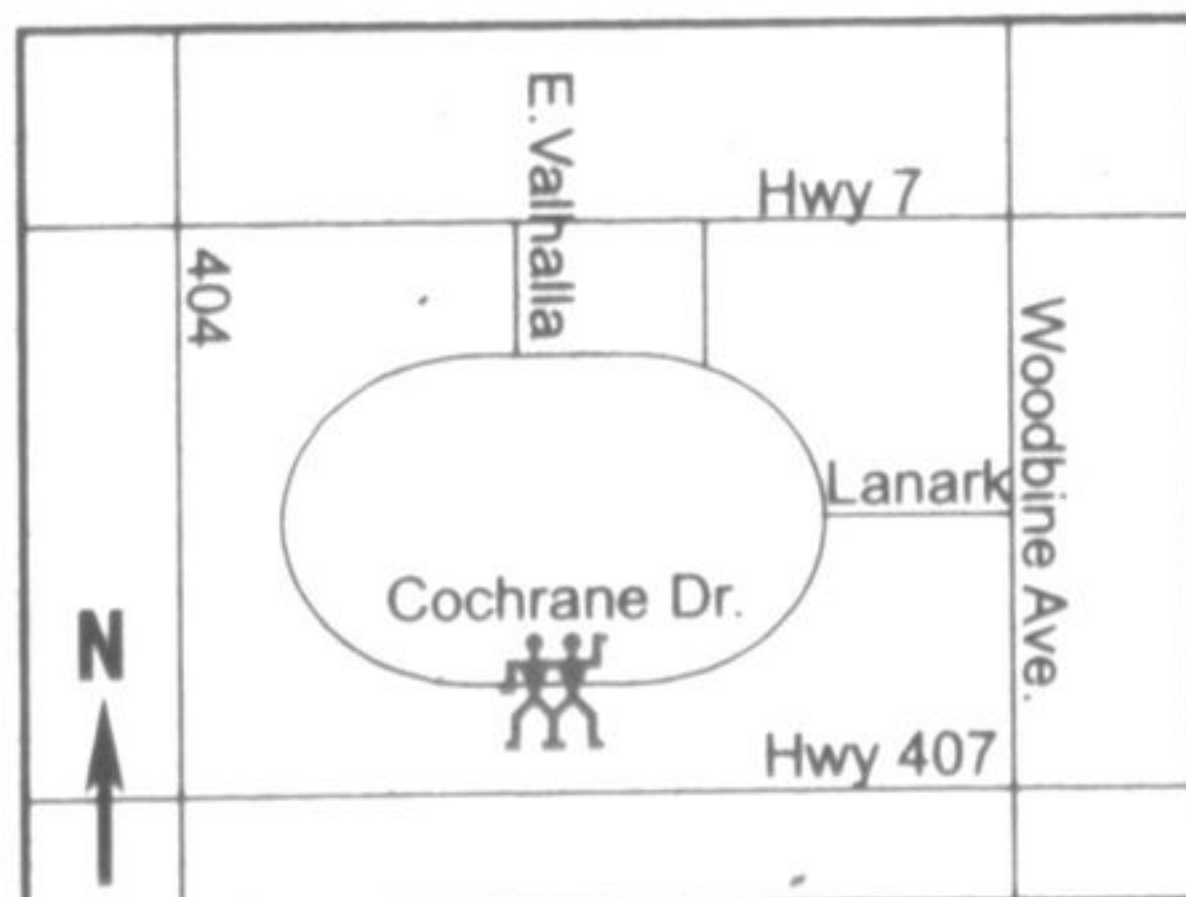
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