

## The "Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry" The Holy Spirit makes fast work with a paintbrush

By PAT HENNESSY

It was 97 degrees out and the humidity was through the roof. But nothing daunted the painters on the rectory roof, others on high ladders, and still others hard at work at ground level.

Under direction from the "Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry" of Brookfield, members of Saint Ann Parish in Bridgeport were giving their rectory a much-needed facelift. During the "Rectory Painting Gymboree," they slapped two coats of paint on the thirsty walls of the rectory, repaired the flashing around the chimney, and moved on to do the gymnasium and corridors of Saint Ann School.

### Volunteers

"When all was said and done, we had 67 volunteers," says Father Peter Towsley, Saint Ann's pastor. "The youngest was ten years old; the oldest were in their eighties."

Directing Saint Ann's volunteers was "Boss Man" Peter Brady and his experienced team. A member of Saint Joseph Parish in Brookfield, Brady started the Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry in 1999.

"I was sitting at Mass wondering what I should do after retirement, and our pastor at the time, Father Larry Carroll, started talking about Saint Peter and how he led and motivated people. I felt he was talking straight to me. The Holy Spirit was telling me that my name is Peter, too, and my strengths are communication, motivation, and organization. I'd done those things for 38 years working at Nestle, and that's what I can use to help others."

### Ministry

"Pete knows how to energize and motivate people," says Msgr. Carroll, who is now pastor of Saint Pius X Parish in Fairfield. "Volunteer programs are all good," he told me, "but I want this to flow out of the faith experience. I want this to be a ministry."

The ministry began simply, with "Rake and Bake" projects. With a nucleus including his wife, Carol, and their three daughters, a group of volunteers began raking the leaves at the homes of seniors in the parish. In return, the seniors baked treats for the volunteers, and everyone gathered afterwards for a party.

"Pete wanted the seniors to be part of the project, so they didn't have to feel they were getting a handout," recalls Msgr. Carroll.

With the parish community as its base, the ministry flourished. This year 1,035 volunteers gathered at Brookfield High School for a blessing from

their pastor before fanning out to clear 73 lawns. As they have from the start, clients brought desserts for the Sharing Table after a meal with volunteers.

Once Brady took early retirement from Nestle, he devoted himself full-time to his new



BOSS MAN Peter Brady brings energy and organizational skills to the Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry.

ministry, offering home repairs for seniors, the widowed, single mothers, and those handicapped or unemployed, and helping out at area parishes.

That's where Father Towsley first met him. "When I was a parochial vicar at Saint

Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield, Peter coordinated a parish painting project for us," he says. "It saved the parish thousands of dollars."

### State Treasure

Now a registered non-profit organization, Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry has close to 300 clients, and can call on more than three times that number of volunteers. For all he has done, Brady has received Governor M. Jodi Rell's "State Treasure Award" in 2002, and the Knights of Columbus' Knight of the Year in Connecticut in 2004, among more than half a dozen other honors.

"I'm just a conduit," Brady says. "The credit goes to all the volunteers. I have a dream team of 16 gentlemen who work with me during the week, and professional contractors help us with discounts or sometimes no charge at all. Our volunteers can't wait for the next job. It's incredible."

For the "Painting Gymboree" at Saint Ann's, Brady came and spoke to parishioners the weekend before the project. He found scores of volunteers eager to turn out for the day.

"It's a parish builder, it's fun, it's a morale builder," says Father Towsley. "It's something



VOLUNTEERS AT SAINT ANN PARISH IN BRIDGEPORT donned red T-shirts during their "Rectory Painting Gymboree," a reminder that their work to renew the parish was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(PHOTOS BY CLAUDETTE PILOTTI)

that everybody can be proud of. The rectory was in drastic need of a paint job. We put the final caulking on the chimney at 9:18 at night, at last light."

### Savings

As in all ministry projects, volunteers provided food, and the elderly who couldn't get up on ladders brought soda and refreshments. With Brady's hand to guide them, the volunteers at Saint Ann have saved their parish about \$10,000 in painting costs.

Through the summer's heat and into the cooler months to come, the Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry continues. Volunteers build handicapped ramps, drive seniors to doctor's

appointments, and take shut-ins out for a meal and companionship. This year they did a whole-house makeover for a single mother, including a new roof, gutters, tree removal, a new driveway, and new paint inside and out.

That's a long distance from the simple crew of family and friends that began the ministry. But from Brady's point of view, the work remains under the control of the Holy Spirit.

"The Lord takes care of me. I couldn't do it alone," he says. "I leave it all in His hands."

(For more information on the Handy Dandy Handyman Ministry, visit [www.hdhm.org](http://www.hdhm.org), or e-mail [peterbrady@hdhm.org](mailto:peterbrady@hdhm.org).)

# PARISH GUIDE

Pastors, join us! Please call Ralph: 416-1462

## ST. MATTHEW PARISH

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We Joyfully Celebrate  
Our 50th Anniversary!

Msgr. Walter C. Orłowski, KCHS, *Pastor*  
Fr. Tomi Thomas, IMS, *Parochial Vicar*  
Msgr. Kevin T. Royal, *In Residence* • Dr. David M. Sochacki, *Deacon*

### DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Monday: 8:00 a.m. & 7:30 p.m. (Novena Mass)  
Tuesday-Friday: 7:00 a.m. & 12:10 p.m.

### WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 p.m.  
Sunday: 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., (Family Mass with Youth Choir),  
10:30 a.m., (with Parish Choir), 12:00 Noon & 5:00 p.m.

### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saturday: 3:30 - 4:00 p.m.

### EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

First Fridays: 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. in the chapel

## SAINT JOHN

the Evangelist

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Msgr. Stephen M. DiGiovanni, *Pastor*  
Rev. Terrence P. Walsh, *Parochial Vicar*  
Rev. Albert D. Audette, Jr., *In Residence*  
Scott Turkington, *Organist & Choirmaster*

### MASSES

Monday through Saturday: 8:00 am, 12:10 pm  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 pm  
Sunday: 7:30 am, 10:00 am (Family Mass),  
12 Noon (Solemn Sung Mass), 6:00 pm (French & Creole)

### CONFESSIONS

Monday-Friday: 30 minutes before Mass  
Saturday: 3:00-4:00 pm  
Sunday: 7:00-7:30 am, 9:30-10:00 am, 11:30 am-Noon

### HOUSE BLESSINGS

In honor of the Year of Saint Paul,  
Saint John's priests offer to visit every home  
in the parish to confer a House Blessing.  
To schedule a visit, please call 324-1553, ext. 21