

Addition

Good Hart church to become shrine

BY FRED GRAY
NEWS-REVIEW STAFF WRITER

GOOD HART — The fate of St. Ignatius Church of Good Hart, one of five small Northern Michigan parishes targeted for closure next year, shines brighter than that of the others — it will likely be resurrected as a shrine to Frederic Baraga, Northern Michigan's first Roman Catholic bishop.

Bishop Patrick Cooney of the Gaylord diocese said Monday that while St. Ignatius will still be closed as a Catholic parish, he is "open to having St. Ignatius become a shrine, particularly because of the historical connection with Bishop Baraga, whose cause for canonization is currently in Rome."

As a shrine no Masses would be celebrated in the church, but the property would continue to be owned by the diocese, said spokesperson Candace Neff.

The other parishes already targeted for closing are Holy Cross of Cross Village, St. Nicholas of Lark's Lake, St. Clement of Pellston and St. Mary's of Burt Lake.

Richard and Stephanie Guyor, 60-year-old retired school teachers who look after the church a half mile north of their home on the Lake Michigan shore, couldn't be more pleased with the prospect of St. Ignatius becoming a shrine.

Stephanie said that as a shrine, St. Ignatius would become a spiritual center of the community where "anyone can stop and go in and reflect on their life and their relationship with God regardless of their religious persuasion."

"The comments from most people — that it's serene, beautiful and peaceful — sun it up," Stephanie said, adding: "When it becomes a



FRED GRAY/NEWS-REVIEW
Richard and Stephanie Guyor stand inside St. Ignatius Church of Good Hart, which they have helped restore.

First bishop

FREDERIC BARAGA arrived in New York from Europe in 1830 and traveled to the territory that later became Michigan, founding his first mission among the Ojibwas from 1831 to 1833 along the shore of Lake Michigan near Harbor Springs. He served as bishop in Northern Michigan from 1853 until his death in 1869.

shrine for Bishop Baraga, it will have a dual purpose — it will serve for personal meditation and it will honor Bishop Baraga's efforts to

bring Christianity to this area." The Guyors are working with a local scholar to have the church designated a national landmark.

Richard said Bishop Cooney may believe he will be giving something back to the people of the five parishes by making St. Ignatius a shrine.

"I don't think the people of Cross Village or the other parishes are necessarily going to see that as big concession," Richard said. "But we're happy that St. Ignatius will be preserved as a shrine."

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TUESDAY

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Pillars from Heaven

AMATEUR STONE mason Richard Guyor constructed two pillars in front of St. Ignatius Church, which he says are notable for the legendary hand-painted sign suspended between them, and two extraordinary rocks embedded within them.

A PERFECT quartz cross cuts through the middle of one stone, while a second features the shadowy face of Christ.

"**THEY'RE JUST** amazing," Guyor says. "To me, it was like those rocks were meant to be found."

adding that the association uses the church for their annual meeting.

Four concerts are planned for next summer, including one with a Bay View artist and another with singer and musician Charlie Katz, who lives in Good Hart.

"This summer we had a baritone, who had performed at Carnegie Hall, in concert with a trumpeter and Carolyn Sutherland on the keyboard," Richard said. "It's hard to describe how melodious it was with the acoustics of the tin walls and ceiling."

The church, which seats about 120 people, is open from the first trillium blossom through the fall color season, or mid-May through mid-October.

For more information, e-mail Stephanie at sguyor@hotmail.com or to make a contribution make the check out to the St. Ignatius Restoration Fund and send it to the Greater Good Hart Association, Good Hart, Mich. 49737.

Fred Gray can be contacted at 439-9374, or fggray@petoskeynews.com.

CHURCH: It will be made a shrine to Bishop Baraga

FROM PAGE A1

The first St. Ignatius was built as a mission in 1741, and when it burned in 1825, a second church of the same name was built nearby by Native Americans. After that succumbed to flames in 1889, the present church was built, this time with tin-type walls and ceiling the parishioners hoped would thwart another fire.

"The beauty of this building is that it has drawn people together to work on something. No one is asked to do things, they just volunteer. It speaks much for people wanting to help with it because they just volunteer out of the goodness of their heart," Stephanie said.

The beaded glass light fixtures that hang from the ceiling, for example, were made some 50 years ago by a local fifth-grade school class, and the cast iron railing at the entrance was donated by a downstate couple who were married in the church, Stephanie said.

Richard, a stone mason by avocation, patched up the foundation in the '70s and '80s and built two large stone pillars in front of the church from which hangs a legendary sign woodburned and painted by a Native American.

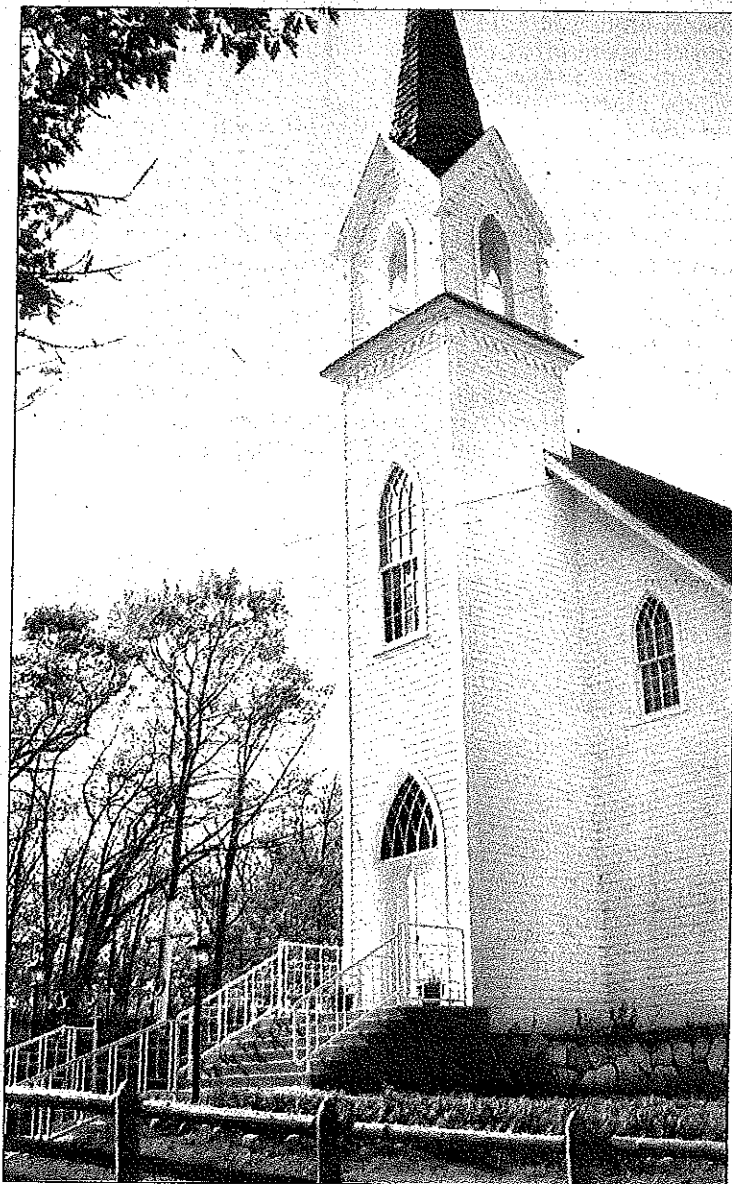
"Everybody in the community has a love affair now for the church. We have a list of people who signed up in the spring to open and close the church for a week, or even two weeks. Every morning they open it up by 10 o'clock and close it at sundown," Richard said.

The graveyard that surrounds three sides of the church is the resting place of hundreds of Native Americans whose graves are marked by simple white crosses.

Richard said that when the diocese sold the parish's beachfront property several years ago to Friendship and Readmond townships for \$950,000, he thought there would finally be enough money to properly restore the church.

But he said the bishop made it clear that St. Ignatius, and the money from the sale of the beach property, belonged to the diocese, not to the parish.

"The bishop said he would put on a new roof for us, but then we were on our own, and the parishioners would have to cover everything else," he said.



FRED GRAY/NEWS-REVIEW

St. Ignatius Church of Good Hart is to become a shrine to Bishop Frederic Baraga, Northern Michigan's first Roman Catholic bishop.

that he would make St. Ignatius a shrine before they continued their efforts.

"We need the support of non-

Catholics in the area. There is no community building in the area other than the Good Hart General Store," Richard said,

"The trouble was, there weren't any parishioners. We didn't have the draw because we didn't have the Sunday Masses that we needed; we had Saturday night Masses that were poorly attended because everyone was out partying.

"Anyway, we took the main roof down to four walls and the steeple, refinished the roof, and put up a whole new truss system. That was about \$90,000. Then we painted the church, inside and out, for another \$10,000.

"We convinced the bishop to pay for half the painting, and he gave us about \$95,000 in all. It paid for the roof and half of the painting, but we had to raise the rest."

The Guyors put in a new floor, but it was damaged by rain while the roof was being repaired.

Asked about their role in preserving the church, Stephanie said: "We've been parishioners since 1973 and we saw a need and started doing it."

She said Joe Nelson of Cross Village, deacon of both St. Ignatius and Holy Cross, allows them to organize the work that needs to be done.

"He just backs and supports us. We do all the leg work; he has all the authority," she said. "He has trusted us. He says, 'What you're doing makes sense. Go ahead. Get involved with the community, have concerts.'"

"It's like having a boss that says, 'Go ahead, run with it.' We don't have any authority other than we are very committed."

Nelson said that when the church becomes a shrine, "maintenance and restoration will continue, the cost of which will be shared by the diocese and local interested residents, whether they are Catholic or not."

The Guyors have joined with the Greater Good Hart Association to hold a concert series they call "Middle Village Music," as well as weddings and community events at the church, during the summer season.

"Shortly after we started, the association offered to partner with us, promote the church in their newsletter, set up a subcommittee for its restoration, help with the concerts and share in the revenues," Stephanie said.

She said the association's board is waiting for an agree-

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