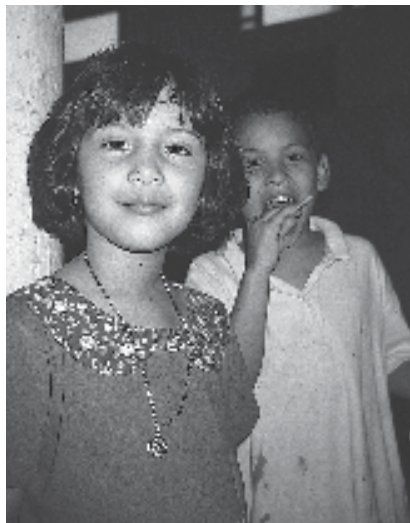




# St. Procopius

## Making A Difference



The grade school at St. Procopius reaches out to the children of Pilsen at a time in their lives when they most need guidance.

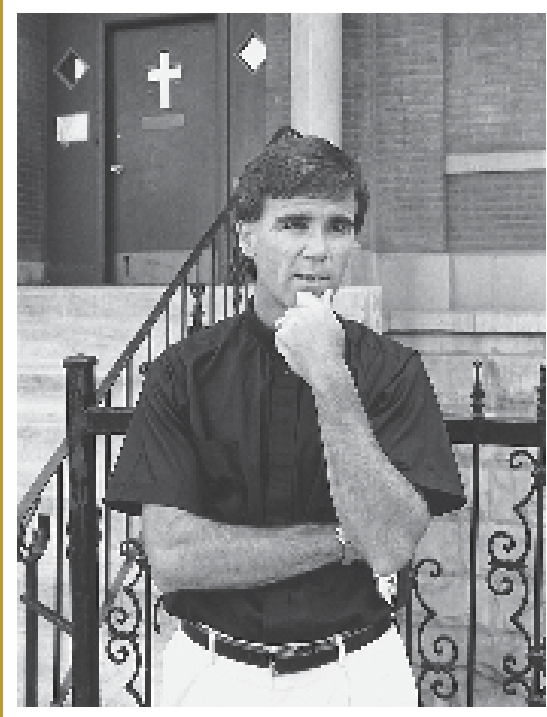
**W**HEN A SMALL group of Jesuits assumed responsibility for St. Procopius Parish in Chicago a few years ago, they were faced with a big challenge. They saw all there was to be done. Where in the world did they start?

"I keep coming back to education," says Fr. James Gartland, SJ, pastor of the parish, located in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. "My philosophy is that if we educate as many people as we can here, we can help them make their lives better so they can, in turn, make the neighborhood better."

St. Procopius is the newest ministry of the Chicago Province. Taken over from the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1992, the parish includes a church, grade school, and a youth center.

Fr. Gartland, who has been pastor for a year, says that plans are underway to extend the reach of the parish further into the lives of the parishioners there.

"It's only natural that the people here come to us for help," says Fr. Gartland. "Latinos think of the Church as one of the only institutions they can count on. They turn to us for almost everything. I've had a mother



Fr. James Gartland, pastor at St. Procopius, thinks the key to changing the lives of the people in Pilsen is education.

bring her son to me, throw up her hands and say, 'Talk to him!' It's a big responsibility.

"Since the people here are primarily Mexican, they generally come here with large, intact families. Then the pressures of adjustment to living here can tear the families apart. The parents can't understand what's happened to their children. We hear about all sorts of things, all kinds of problems I never knew existed."

Fr. Thomas Hoffman, SJ, associate pastor, agrees. "Our parishioners see us as God's representatives, and it's overwhelming. Yet we also have to learn to say no, and I try to do it tenderly. People come to me because they don't know where else to turn, so I keep them in my heart even when I have to turn them away."

### **Where to start?**

Because there is so much to do and so many people to help, the Jesuits at the parish are forced to wear several different hats. During his tenure at the parish, Mr. Sean O'Sullivan, SJ, a seminarian who recently left the parish to begin his theology studies, was responsible for youth ministry, was the co-director of religious education, worked

with social services, and organized many a fundraising and food drive.

"I was one of the first Jesuits here," Mr. O'Sullivan says. "It was important that we establish ourselves in the parish—that the people feel comfortable with the Jesuits. So that entailed a lot of going out into the neighborhood, making friends with the people, just letting them know we're here."

Fr. Hoffman's job sounds like a laundry list as well. "I help with the liturgy committee, a widow's group, a youth group, a pre-baptism class. I taught sixth grade religion last year, taught English to a group of men at night, coordinated a novena group and helped them organize their street festival..."

Not to mention celebrating the sacraments, visiting the sick—doing the usual things priests do in parishes.

"Right now, I feel like I'm still in the survey mode," Fr. Hoffman says. "Where do we start? There's just so much need."

With demands on the Jesuits day and night, seven days a week, there's the danger of becoming over-extended. Fr. Gartland says, "It's really important to get time away. I take at least one day off a week where I sleep, exercise, and just take time for myself. It can

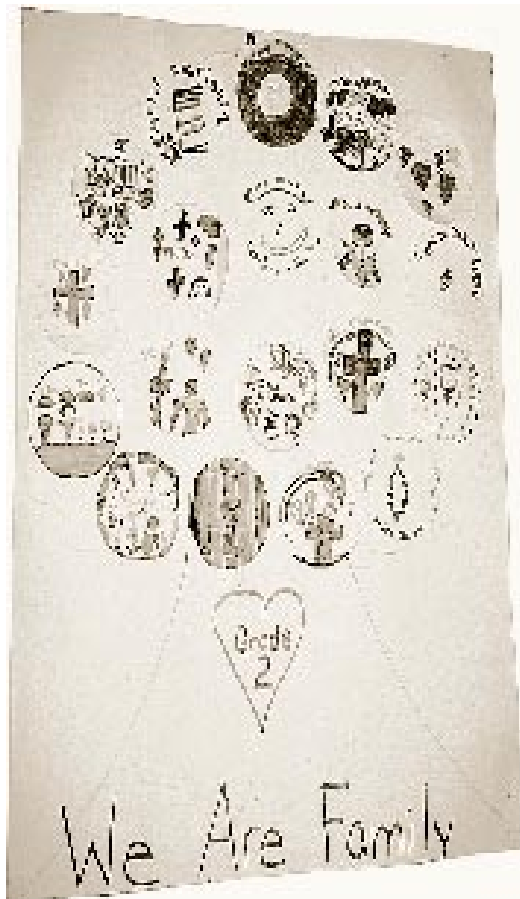
*Education is the focus of the Jesuit mission, and the school at St. Procopius is a bright spot.*



More than 200 students are educated at St. Procopius School.



St. Procopius also offers an after-school program that provides a safe, quiet place for students to do their homework and get extra tutoring.



get crazy, and you really need to get some perspective."

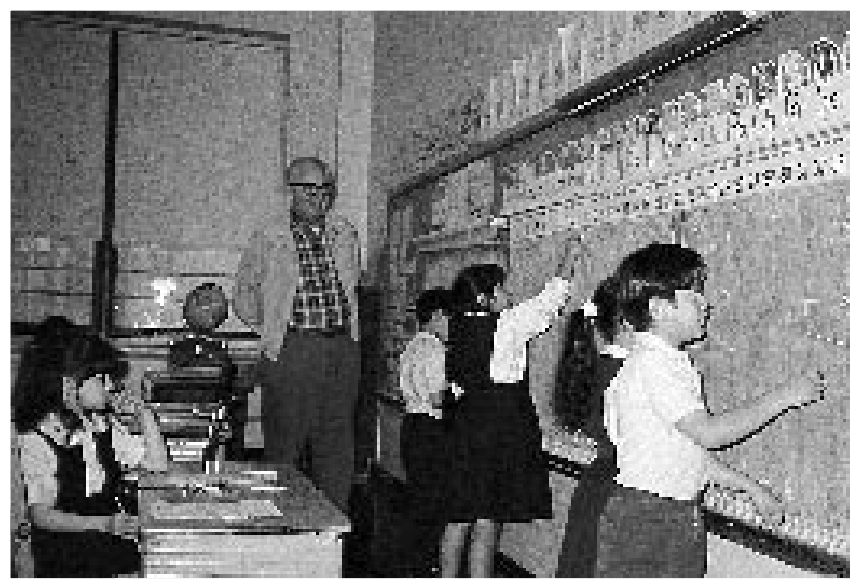
Mr. O'Sullivan recalls, "One time I was talking about my assignment here to one of my friends and I kept saying, 'I have to do this, and I have to do this, and we need this...' and finally my friend said to me, 'Hey, you can't do everything! What's most important?'"

"Sometimes I wish I was Superman. I've been able to do a lot, but there's so much more—and when you see how much more there really is to do, it's sad. But we do what we can."

### Need for education

Education is the focus of the Jesuit mission, and the school at St. Procopius is a bright spot. Because children of grade school age are highly vulnerable to the challenges of living in an urban neighborhood, it's important to try to make a difference in their lives as soon as possible.

Fr. John P. Foley, SJ, was assigned to St. Procopius in 1995 after serving for 34 years in Peru. He came back to the United States when Fr. Bradley Schaeffer, provincial of the Chicago Province, asked for Jesuits experienced in Spanish speaking education to help



Fr. John Foley, SJ, returned from 34 years in Peru to become co-principal of St. Procopius.

at St. Procopius. His duties include being co-principal in the grade school in the fall.

"I'm co-principal with Karen Beeman-Gaete, who was born in Mexico and who is perfectly bilingual," Fr. Foley says. "I'm working as principal there to guarantee the Jesuit tradition continues in the grade school."

Fr. Foley is also one of several Jesuits on a task force that is currently exploring the possibility of expanding the Jesuits' involvement into a high school in Pilsen. Fr. Theodore Munz, SJ, provincial assistant for social ministry and secondary education and a member of the task force, points out that there are currently 10,000 high school-aged kids living in the Pilsen area.

"The need is so incredible," Fr. Munz says. "The opportunity for education is pretty limited the way it is now, and that's how we can really make a difference. There's no building, no money; there are families who can't afford a private education for their children. It's quite a challenge."

The task force is examining several options for potential funding for both tuition and the school building itself.

By networking with area businesses and civic leaders, the Jesuits are carefully study-



### New Director Named

Mr. Tadas Kulbis (right) recently joined the staff of the Jesuit Development Office in Chicago as director of major gifts. He will divide his time between the work of the Chicago Province, including the ministry of St. Procopius, and the work of the Lithuanian Province, which has a Jesuit community in Chicago.

Mr. Kulbis, a Lithuanian American, will work closely with Fr. Antanas Saulaitis (pictured left), superior of the Lithuanian Jesuit Community

in Chicago to raise money and support for the rapidly growing Church in that Eastern European country. He will also work for the Jesuit Partnership, Jesuit Seminary Association, Senior Jesuit Program, and Jesuit International Missions.

Formerly the assistant director of development programs at Loyola University Chicago, Mr. Kulbis, his wife and their son live in Park Ridge, Illinois.

ing how they can best begin to address and eventually help to solve the critical education problems in the Pilsen area of Chicago.

### **Beyond the classroom**

In the time they've been there, the Jesuits have placed much emphasis on the youth program at the parish. By renovating a former convent, the parish now offers a "School After School" program where the students in the neighborhood can complete their homework assignments, receive tutoring, work on computers, and improve their English skills. Sr. Judy Murphy, OSB, directs this new and important component of the education project for Pilsen.

**The parish at St. Procopius reaches out to young and old, offering them programs and services to help them make their lives better.**



Students from St. Ignatius College Prep and Illinois Benedictine College came to St. Procopius to tutor those students who need it. The tutors then went back to their schools and had fundraisers for St. Procopius: the resulting money helped to renovate the youth center.

There is also a need for adult education. "If they want to get anywhere, they have to learn English," Fr. Gartland says. "Our parishioners can stay here in the neighborhood and not learn to speak any English, working odd jobs or doing service work. But by learning English, they're able to expand their scope outside of the neighborhood and get better paying jobs. They also need to know English in order to become citizens."

The social services offered by St. Procopius extend to a food pantry, a clothes bank, and even an occasional shipment of furniture.

"St. Elizabeth Seton, our sharing parish, had a small-appliance day where they gathered up old toasters, coffee makers, and the like from their parishioners," says Mr. O'Sullivan. "We filled a 22-foot truck with appliances and gave them out to the people here. They also had an after-Christmas clothing drive. If someone got an article of clothing for Christmas, he was asked to donate another, older garment. They also helped us prepare 250 food baskets before Thanksgiving."

Fr. Gartland says, "There's just so many things these people need. We try to take each person and situation as it comes. We evaluate it, see if we can help and if it's beyond our means, we refer them to an agency or institution who can help."

The parish also tries to offer adult education programs that deal with issues like prevention programs for better health, basic legal information about the residents' rights and obligations, and parenting and communication skills to help keep the families together.

The most important thing the Jesuits can do is to let the people know they are there for them. "My favorite part of my job," says Fr. Hoffman, "is walking the streets. I see the kids in groups, talk to them; I see someone who missed a meeting, I fill him or her in on it; I see someone who has an ice cream cart, I get an ice cream and talk to him...there is such a wonderful variety of people."

# JESUIT TRANSITIONS



## The future

Looking ahead when there's so much to be done today, in the here and now, is difficult, but the Jesuits are hopeful for the future of Pilsen and St. Procopius.

"I'd like to see the people here begin to take more ownership of the neighborhood," says Fr. Gartland. "If we can help educate them and help them make a better life for themselves, then we're on the right track."

Fr. Hoffman says, "In 10 years, I'd hope people would stay in the neighborhood and make it better. I'd like to see the community stay intact and work with and for each other. The problem now is, once someone does well here, he moves out. We need to try to stem that tide.

"But the faith of the people here gives us so much strength in our mission. If they believe, how can we not?"

**Fr. Bernard Knoth** has been named president of Loyola University of New Orleans. Fr. Knoth was formerly the dean of freshmen at Georgetown University.

**J. Peter Carey**, formerly the director of the Cincinnati Development Office, was appointed pastoral coordinator of Milford Spiritual Center in Milford, Ohio.

On Saturday, August 12, three Chicago Province novices, **James Collins**, **Hugh Green**, and **Gilbert Martinez**, pronounced their first vows at Gesu Church in Detroit. All three men will continue their studies at Loyola University of Chicago in the fall.

**Fr. Denis Dirscherl**, retired air force chaplain, has been awarded the Legion of Merit by the president of the United States for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services." The award was for duty at Wright Patterson Air Force Base from August 1991 to May 1994.

During a recent National Catholic Education Association convention in Cincinnati, Tabor Publishing highlighted two new books by Chicago Province Jesuits that can be used for high school religious education programs. **Fr. Mark Link's** Path Through Catholicism and **Fr. John Powell's** Path Through Christian Living were featured.

The Holy Family Preservation Society, headed by **Fr. George Lane**, recently received the 1995 Richard H. Driehaus Preservation Project of the Year award for the rescue and restoration of Holy Family Church.

**Fr. Louis Lipps** received the 1995 Diocesan Award from the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky. Bishop Kendrick Williams cited Fr. Lipps' years of service in the diocese, especially his ministry with women religious—183 sisters from 57 congregations scattered throughout 40 counties in rural Kentucky.

**Fr. Thomas Florek** pronounced his final vows on April 21 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Chicago.

Three Chicago Province Jesuits were recently named superiors of their Chicago-area communities: **Fr. John P. Foley**, recently returned from 34 years in Peru, is superior of the Jesuit community at St. Procopius Parish; **Fr. James Gschwend** is superior of the Clark Street Jesuit Community; and **Fr. Philip Chmielewski** was appointed superior of the Woodlawn Jesuit Community.

**Fr. John Costello**, formerly director of development for the Chicago Province, was named provincial assistant for development and public information.