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# July 1 Mass to mark merger of two Decatur parishes

## New parish will be called Ss. James and Patrick Parish

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Staff writer

**DECATUR** — Two of the oldest parishes in Decatur will merge on July 1 into Ss. James and Patrick Parish. St. James Parish and St. Patrick Parish, whose respective churches are located within seven blocks of each other in downtown Decatur, will symbolically be linked together on Sunday, at a Mass which will begin at St. Patrick at 9 a.m., with the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word. Everyone will then process out of St. Patrick, walk down Martin Luther King to Clay Street to St. James, where the Mass will continue with the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Closing Rites. The Mass celebrant is Father Jeff Grant, pastor of the new parish. Father Grant has served as pastor at St. Patrick since 2003, and last year became pastor of St. James as well, where he served as a sacramental priest, and then priest-moderator, prior to being named pastor.

"My wish for our new parish is for a spirit of cooperation among the good people who have made up both parishes," said Father Grant. "I pray our community will be a warm parish that welcomes all. I hope we will listen to the Holy Spirit and allow that Spirit to guide us. When you have worked through difficult things together in a loving way, the bond of unity increases. I think you will find the parish of Ss. James and Patrick



St. James Church, left, and St. Patrick Church, right, will be the two worship centers for the new Ss. James and Patrick Parish of Decatur.

to be a strong and vibrant community."

After Mass, tours will be given of the churches, parish offices, and schools, with members of the parish council on hand at both locations to guide and answer questions. Refreshments will also be available at both locations, which will remain open until 1 p.m. Shuttles will run between the churches to get people to and from their cars.

St. Patrick was Decatur's first Catholic Church. It was founded in 1853 in response to the growing number of Irish Catholics who worked on the construction of the Great Western Railroad. Decatur's first missionary priest, Father Michael Pendergast, began celebrating Mass twice a month in a residence on West Main Street. In 1857, construction of a permanent church began on West Prairie Street,

on land purchased for \$1. In 1863 the first brick church was dedicated at the corner of Jackson and North streets. It was later renovated to serve as a parochial school. The present church, which was completed in 1910, has undergone many renovations since its construction.

The first St. James Church was built in 1877, under the guidance of Rev. Joseph Spaeth, who was sent to Decatur as a newly ordained priest, to establish a church for 16 German families who requested it. In addition to building a new church and starting a new school, Father Spaeth also played a significant role in the establishment of then-neighbor St. Mary's Hospital. In 1911, construction began for a new church building to accommodate the more than 125 families. George P. Stauduhar, a Rock Island architect, designed a German Gothic structure for St. James. He specialized in Catholic church construction, including the new St. Patrick's Church in Decatur. St. James was dedicated on June 23, 1912.

Although undergoing several renovations throughout the years, the 14 Stations of the Cross in the church today are from the original church built in 1877. The church has numerous stained glass windows, and a 34-foot hand-carved basswood altar, which was especially designed for St. James, as a gift from the Knights of Columbus.

Father Jeff Grant became pastor of both parishes in September 2006, when Sister Glenda Bourgeois, who had shepherded St. James Parish for several years, completed her service as parish life coordinator.

## CCHD grants benefit local anti-poverty programs

On June 9, Bishop George J. Lucas and Sister Jane Boos, SSND, director of the Office for Social Concerns, announced the recipients of the 2007 Catholic Campaign for Human Development local grants. Recipients of the awards gathered at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Springfield for a luncheon, fellowship and to hear a program of Christian music shared by members of the Faith Fellowship M.B. Church in Decatur.

A total of \$22,000 was awarded in local grants. Recipients are:

- Highland Area Christian Service Ministry for their Stand By Me Program, which is designed to teach and support people needing assistance from governmental agencies. Eunice Hediger is the project director.

- Faith Fellowship M.B. Church's program in Decatur, which was developed to drive out drug dealers and criminals and clean up neighborhoods. The program is called Faith Fellowship Neighborhood Group and is headed by Rev. Wayne Dunning.

- Veronica's Veil, an outreach program at St. Mary Church in Paris, makes the intergenerational connection between elementary school PSR students and individuals who are confined (due to age or infirmity) to nursing homes or private residences with prayer blankets. Sue Sheeran is the project director.

- The Coalition for People in Need, Inc. in Charleston assists clients with job retraining and transportation. This need was identified

by area ministers in response to factory closings. Jenny Chase is the project director.

- The Mattoon Area PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) Community Organization, directed by John Heldman, provides emergency shelter and job-skills training for 200 people per year.

- St. Francis Clinic in Beardstown is a rural health clinic in a medically underserved area and has a high percentage of Spanish-speaking patients. This Catholic Charities program, headed by Steve Roach, will supply an interpreter at the clinic.

- OUR PLACE Youth Center in Vandalia provides a safe haven for young people to socialize, learn and connect with the community.

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Children from the Faith Fellowship M.B. Church in Decatur provided a program of Christian music during the June 9 Catholic Campaign for Human Development awards luncheon.