

# It's Friday night fish fry time

## Catholic East Elementary School

2480 N. Cramer St., Milwaukee

Willy Thorn

Special to your Catholic Herald

East side denizens claim there's only one spot for the "quintessential church fish fry" and "the bar none best fish fry around."

The "Heavenly Fish Fry" at Catholic East Elementary – on the campus of SS. Peter and Paul Parish, 2480 N. Cramer St., lays claim to a secret, ancient time-tested recipe. The fish fry, which has filled bellies for decades, has been averaging 450-500 diners every Friday night this year, down slightly from its average of 550 last year.

The slight decrease in attendance has proven to be a blessing for Repairers of the Breach, according to fish fry coordinator Sarah Parlier, as the parish has donated the extra fish to the day-time homeless shelter.

But while the fish is great, and the service is better, what keeps the hungry Lenten penitent coming – week after week, year after year – are the atmosphere, energy and community.

Make no mistake about it though, "this is the best fish in town," said Parlier, a mother of seven who is known as "Mother Fish Fry" to her fellow volunteers. "It's an old recipe from the Five and Ten, a spot just off Water Street – where Brocach (Irish pub) now stands. The owner was a parishioner – Grandma Something (Ludyen) who developed a secret milk bath in the 1930s. It keeps the fish moist inside, yet crisp outside. Believe it or not, the milk bath actually made my



**ABOVE:** The cod on the menu at the Catholic East Elementary School fish fry is prepared using a special milk bath.

**RIGHT:** Fr. Mike Michalski, back to the camera, visits with some of the diners at the Friday, April 1 fish fry at Catholic East Elementary School. The school hosts five fish fries during Lent each year.

(Catholic Herald photos by Willy Thorn)



skin soft ... though the dish soap undid a lot of that."

The Five and Ten served its fish fry until it closed 10 years ago.

The parish fish fry officially began in 1983.

Local flavor includes actor/comedian John McGivern, Alderman Nic Kovac and Bishop Richard J. Sklba who are frequent diners. The real draw for many, though, is dining with fellow fish fry aficionados, sharing beer with friends, reuniting with alums of Catholic East Elementary and meeting neighbors from the five Milwaukee parishes the school serves – the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Old St. Mary, Our Lady of Divine Providence, SS. Peter and Paul, and Three Holy Women.

It's not hard to see why the fish fry is so popular. Folks lined up banquet style, beneath walls plastered with art pieces; simple themes, thick paint, bright bold colors, large signatures and extra glitter. The clinking of silverware on plates and hubbub and buzz of conversation and fellowship. Frs. Michael Michalski and Tim Kitzke drift through the crowd, and according to parishioner Lynn Charnitz, Fr. Kitzke

### If you want to go

4 to 7 p.m.

Remaining date: Friday, April 15

Adults - \$9; Seniors - \$8;

Children - \$5; Carryouts - \$8

Menu: baked or fried cod, baked potato or French fries, coleslaw, applesauce, bread and butter, dessert and coffee. Beer, wine, milk and soda are available for purchase. For more info:

<http://www.mycatholiceast.org/>  
and click on Heavenly Fish Fry.

"often pretends to help in the kitchen."

Student servers hustle in the kitchen, dart to-and-fro with beverages, and totter around with giant metal serving trays of bakery and desserts.

"We all love seeing the students as well as the parents involved in serving, cooking, cleaning," wrote Janet Cleary, SS. Peter and Paul parishioner and parish council member, in recommending that your Catholic Herald feature the fish fry. "I encourage you to trek over to the East Side to check it out. You will not be disappointed."

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