

Holy Spirit to honor veterans July 4

BY WENDY FOSTER

For Sun-Times Media

The true significance of the Fourth of July has nothing to do with two-for-one sales or barbecues. This was the thought behind the planning of a special worship service honoring veterans on Independence Day at Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Naperville.

The annual tribute is in its third year.

"It feels like we're doing the right thing on the Fourth of July for first time in our lives," said Luann Coyne, who sings for the service in the church choir. "You can stand up at a parade when the veterans march past, but this is a special way to honor and thank them."

Robert Jankowski who initiated the practice at Holy Spirit, refuses to take credit for the general idea of an Independence Day service honoring veterans.

"This comes from my former church in LaGrange. They'd been doing this for 30 years in a manner of speaking. They'd have standing room only," Jankowski said. "I didn't start it, I'm just spreading the idea from one church to another."

Jankowski said that the service at Holy Spirit is a respectful way to celebrate our nation's birth.

"We would not have an Independence Day without veterans," he said.

Jankowski believes that veterans are not acknowledged adequately.

"There's a brief one or two lines in the history books," he said. "There's no concept or feeling about the men and



The Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Honor Guard was part of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church Independence Day worship service in 2012. | SUBMITTED

AT A GLANCE

Holy Spirit Catholic Community, 2003 Hassert Blvd., near 111th Street and Book Road in Naperville, will host its third annual Mass and recognition service for past and present members of the armed services at 8 a.m. July 4. The community is encouraged to attend.

women who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. We decided to celebrate this on Independence Day."

Holy Spirit's Knights of Columbus chapter assists with the event.

"They'll come in full regalia," Coyne said. "Last year we also had a color guard."

The Independence Day Mass and recognition service begins at 8 a.m. to conclude in time for people to go on to area parades.

The service includes a traditional

Mass followed by individual recognition of every branch of the Armed Services. A brief monologue is given acknowledging each branch, with a nod to its history and progress. The choir will sing the official song for the specific branch, with the respective vets standing and saluting.

The inaugural year, Coyne recalls a World War II Air Force veteran's attendance.

"He could hardly walk, but he stood and saluted," she said. "It was so moving. He stood so straight and was so proud. It was a picture perfect salute. God only knows what he was thinking."

Jankowski hopes that more than 100 veterans from throughout the area will attend this year.

"We open our doors to everyone, regardless of their faith or religious beliefs — that doesn't matter," he said. "And we hope they bring their family and friends. It's a great way to start the Fourth of July."