

# The History of Our Parish

Immaculate Conception  
Montclair, NJ, USA

Weekly Series of Articles - 150th Anniversary  
Michael Farrelly

Weekly Series of Articles - 150th Anniversary  
Michael Farrelly

## Week 1

Immaculate Conception began as a mission parish. We did not have a church or any priests of our own. There was no rectory, nor was there a parochial school. All that existed was the desire of our Catholic ancestors to practice their faith. What was to become our parish was part of a much larger parish, St. Peter's, Belleville, founded in 1838. It not only served Belleville. It covered parts of Newark, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, West Bloomfield (as Montclair was called in those days), Cedar Grove and Verona, which were collectively known as Caldwell back then. The towns that we now know as Caldwell were called Horseneck. The faithful had to somehow get from all those areas to the small church on William St. in Belleville every Sunday. Some had horses and wagons. Most of them walked. It continued that way until 1853, when St. Peter's got a dynamic new pastor, Rev. John Hogan.

Fr. Hogan immediately started making improvements to St Peter's. He did something else. He started saying Mass closer to the middle of the parish, in Montclair. He came to Montclair every other week, celebrating Mass in people's houses or in the Washington School (long gone) on Glenridge Ave. (called The Old Road in the 1850s - the town of Glen Ridge had not yet come into being). Fr. Hogan longed for a church and a full-time priest to serve the Bloomfields (everything West of Belleville). His 1854 annual report to the diocese mentioned that there were about 60 Catholic families in the Bloomfields. He lamented that there was no church, no school and that he could only get here every second week. In the spring of 1856 Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley, first Bishop of Newark and nephew of St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, gave Fr. Hogan permission to build a church. He purchased a lot on Washington St at Elm St. in Montclair, and hired a local contractor, Moses Cadmus, to build a wood frame church. The cornerstone was laid on August 4, 1856. We mark the beginning of our parish from that date. The finished church was dedicated on November 29, 1857.

Fr. Hogan only got part of his wish. He did not obtain a priest to serve the new church until 1864. He continued to serve St. Peter's every day and to come to Montclair on Sundays. Our parish did not receive a full-time priest until February 1864, when Rev. Titus Joslin was appointed resident pastor. Fr. Hogan passed away in 1867. His grave may be found in the cemetery alongside St. Peter's Church.

## Week 2

Our first church, the one built in 1856, was only large enough to accommodate about 430 people. Located on Washington St. near Elm, it was situated about where the parking lot behind St. Vincent's Nursing Home is now. In a way, St. Vincent's was an outgrowth of our first church. The Sisters of Charity taught in that church, and in the rectory that was later built adjacent to it. Initially, there was no need for a rectory because the pastor, Fr. Hogan, didn't live here. Subsequent to the completion of our current church, the Sisters of Charity took over the old church building and used it as an orphanage. In time the orphanage became a hospital also run by the Sisters of Charity. That fledgling hospital developed into the hospital that many of us still remember, St. Vincent's Hospital. St. Vincent's Hospital closed and the buildings became a nursing home. The nursing home moved out. The buildings are now waiting to be demolished to make way for a new public school.

Our parish assumed a mortgage of \$1000 to build the first church. That was all the small parish of about 60 families could afford. It took until 1863 to pay off the mortgage. The church remained closed during the week. It was only opened on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation when Father Hogan could get here to say Mass. The nuns didn't actually start teaching here until 1881. In the early days there were only Catechism classes taught by volunteers in the basement of the old church. The parish continued to grow, however. In 1859 Fr. Hogan reported that there were about 450 parishioners. By the 1860s that number had blossomed to about 700.

Nothing remains of the old church. Nothing that is, except a statue of Mary the Immaculate Conception. It had been over the entrance to the old church. It sits above the northeast stairs to Madonna Hall today. It was brought here by IC parishioners who wanted to stay in touch with the past when they moved to the church on North Fullerton. It remains our link with many of the people and things that have made up our parish over the last 150 years.

### Week 3

In the 1860's our first pastor, Fr. John Hogan, finished the church on Washington St. In Montclair. He attempted, unsuccessfully, to purchase land for a cemetery. He also tried to build a school, but the parish did not have the population nor the funding to support one. He had to content himself with Catechism classes taught by volunteers. In January of 1864 he reported to Bishop Bailey on the lack of a school, but that there was no debt (the mortgage of \$1000 to build the church had been paid).

In February 1864 the bishop appointed our first full time, resident pastor, Father Titus Joslyn.

Father Joslyn was born into a Protestant family. He converted and studied with the Jesuits at St. Joseph's Seminary. Upon completion of his studies, he served as a priest in the Archdiocese of New York for a time. He was assigned to the Diocese of Newark (It had not achieved the status of an archdiocese at the time). He was an assistant in Hoboken before he came here.

Father Joslyn's early improvements included the acquisition of additional land so a small cemetery could be located behind the church. He also purchased or built a small rectory. The records are not entirely clear on that point. He then bought a horse and a wagon, and instituted a campaign to build a bell tower. The bell tower with two bells was dedicated in 1867. The larger bell was dubbed St. Nicholas, while the smaller bell was known as St. Michael. He oversaw the founding of the Rosary Altar Society in 1865. The Society can lay claim to being the oldest organization in the parish next to the parish itself. The records mention a teacher's salary. It is not clear as to who the teacher was or where classes were held.

The parish had grown to about 950 people by 1873. Father Joslyn found it necessary to build a small addition to the church. Our parish continued to grow.

## Week 4

Our first resident pastor, Father Titus Joslyn, served the parish for 10 years, from 1864 to 1874. In 1868 an event that proven to be a major one for the town occurred. A second railroad was commissioned. Citizens of Bloomfield, satisfied with the original railroad, were not interested in paying for a new one. Citizens of West Bloomfield, desirous of the new railroad, seceded from Bloomfield and voted to become Montclair. Bonds were issued for the construction of the new line, which the brand new town guaranteed. The New York, Montclair and Greenwood Lake Railroad Company agreed to build and run the line. The effect was not immediate, but the improved access to New York brought an influx of new people, many of them Catholic. The population of the town and of the parish swelled.

Father Joslyn was never robustly healthy. He retired from active service and moved back to New York. He was replaced by Father Alphonsus Steets in September of 1874.

Father Steets was born in Newark, in 1847. He was ordained by Bishop Bailey in 1871. He served as an assistant at St. Patrick's Pro-cathedral (the church that served as the diocesan cathedral before Sacred Heart Cathedral was built) for three years before coming to Immaculate Conception.

Father Steets set about building a rectory. It must be noted that the house Father Joslyn lived in was secured by family money and not by parish funds. It reverted to Father Joslyn's brother, Dr. Benjamin Joslyn and his wife, Sarah, when Titus retired. Dr Joslyn never lived in it, but Sarah did, after Benjamin had died.

Father Steets built a brick and stone rectory behind the church, near what is now Fulton Street. The rectory served the parish and later the Sisters of Charity, who administered St. Vincent's, for many years. It was torn down when the "new" convent was built, sometime in the mid-twentieth century. Father Steets also built a stable for the parish horse and wagon. The 1870s were a time of financial "panic". Parish finances suffered.

Father Steets was obliged to discontinue the school the Father Joslyn had started. However, Catechism classes were getting larger. Parish reports to the diocese noted that there were 275 children receiving instruction. The parish population had grown to over 1000 parishioners.

## Week 5

Our third pastor, Father Alphonsus Steets, only served the parish for 5 years, 1874 to 1879, before succumbing to tuberculosis. Bishop Corrigan, the second bishop of Newark, being sensitive to the Father Steet's uncertain health, assigned several assistants to help him run the parish. Chief among these was Father Bernard Ter Worte, who later built St. John's Church in Jersey City. Father Ter Worte was effectively the administrator of the parish. Father Steets was also assisted by Father Joseph Ruesing and Father Francis O'Reilly. Even though Father Steets was only here a short while, several important changes germinated during his tenure.

In 1878 Father Steets or Father Ter Worte began saying mass once a month in private homes in Caldwell much like Father Hogan had done 3 decades before in Montclair. In this way they planted the seeds that were to become St Aloysius Parish in Caldwell and Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Verona. In 1878 Father Steets raised over \$4,000.00 to buy property on Bloomfield Ave. in Bloomfield. He gave the lot, which came with a house, to the Catholics of Bloomfield when it was announced that they were to have a parish of their own and a new pastor, Father Joseph Nardiello. Sacred Heart Parish in Bloomfield was created in 1879. Nardiello Hall on State Street still serves Sacred Heart Parish.

The creation of a new parish in Bloomfield put the old church on Washington St. at the eastern extreme of the parish. Thoughts of moving the church to a more central location can be traced back to this time. Late in 1878 Bishop Corrigan reassigned Father Ter Worte and assigned Father Joseph Mendl to replace him. Father Mendl went on to become one of the pastors who had monumental impact on our parish. In January of 1879 Father Steets was admitted to St. Michael's Hospital in Newark. He passed away on March 16. He was mourned by Protestant clergy and Catholics alike. He was regarded by all as a gentleman and a good citizen.

Father Mendl was not the bishop's first choice to succeed Father Steets. He offered the position to Father Thebaud, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Elizabeth. However, Father Thebaud decided to stay in Elizabeth. The bishop named Father Mendl as our 4<sup>th</sup> pastor (3<sup>rd</sup> resident pastor). Thus began one of the most dynamic periods in our parish history.

## Week 6

Fr. Joseph Francis Mendl, our fourth pastor, arrived to assist Fr. Steets just in time to say Mass on Christmas Day 1878. He became pastor after Fr. Steets passed away in March 1879, and served the parish until his own death 28 years later. Unquestionably, Fr. Mendl was the right person to shepherd our parish through a period of phenomenal growth, although he was not Bishop Corrigan's first choice to be pastor of Immaculate Conception. Born in 1843 in Innsbruck, Austria, Fr. Mendl was educated at the gymnasium in Brixen and studied theology at Innsbruck's renowned Imperial University. Ordained in 1865, he served one year as an assistant pastor as the youngest priest in his home diocese. In 1866 he volunteered to be a chaplain in the Austrian army and acquitted himself with honor in the Austro-Prussian War, being promoted to the rank of Captain. At the end of hostilities, Mendl returned to his diocese to serve two more years as an assistant pastor before being assigned as Prefect of Discipline at the American College in Louvain, Belgium, a seminary then preparing European students for service in the United States. It is impossible to know if his experiences in Austria and Belgium shaped him, or if it was just his nature, but his passion for education and his authoritarian manner were attributes that helped Fr. Mendl to be such an effective pastor here later on.

The 1870s and 80s saw a flood of immigration to the United States, especially from central and southern Europe, and many of the newcomers were Catholic. Fr. Mendl came to America in 1871 and was accepted by the Diocese of Newark. In 1872 he became assistant pastor at the German-language St. Peter's Parish in Newark, and soon was named pastor of St. Paul's Church in Jersey City. He served there until December 1878, when he arrived at the rectory at Elm and Fulton Streets in Montclair.

## Week 7

By 1880 the Washington St. Church, which had been built to accommodate 430 people (with a small amount of extra space added by Father Joslyn) was crammed with 1400 parishioners. Father Mendl took on \$16,000 debt and built a gallery which could hold another 300 people. There were 220 children in catechetical school. Father Mendl desperately wanted to build a bigger church and to build a school for the children. He asked Bishop Corrigan for permission to buy property for a new church and for a school, but it was not a very rich parish at the time. The majority of parishioners were common laborers, who didn't earn very much. The receipts for the entire year of 1880 only amounted to \$7000, not nearly enough to fund the expansion. Bishop Wigger, successor to Bishop Corrigan, formally told Father Mendl that it was not yet time to build new facilities. Father Mendl did not let this little roadblock stand in the way of his dream for a school.

In 1881 he arranged to move back into the house Father Joslyn built and invited six Sisters of Charity from St. Elizabeth's in Madison to use the rectory on Fulton St. as a convent. They set up an elementary school. The lower grades met in the basement of the church, with curtains hanging between the classes. The upper grades met in various rooms in the convent. The school day began with Mass. Father Mendl was a constant presence in the school. He acted as disciplinarian. He handed out report cards, usually reviewing them first. He praised exemplary students. He sometimes meted out punishment to those he felt were not living up to their abilities. There was not much thought given to the student's psychological state in those days.

The school consisted of 6 levels, which corresponded to present day 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The 1<sup>st</sup> level was the Primer. It was similar to first grade and was usually taught by a lay parishioner. The First Reader was similar 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The Fifth Reader was akin to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and was the highest grade attainable. At the end of the Fifth Reader children either went on to the Montclair Public School System or, if their families could not afford to educate them further, they went to work.

Father Mendl was glad to finally have a parochial school associated with the parish. He was not overjoyed with the makeshift nature of the classrooms, and envisioned a real school. He maintained that vision. It motivated him in the coming years.

## Week 8

As the 1880s drew to a close, our parish had grown to 1500 members. There were over 300 children enrolled in the school, and it was becoming painfully obvious that the little church on Washington St. was inadequate. Since the entire town of Bloomfield had been removed from the parish when Sacred Heart was formed, the old church no longer had the advantage of being near the geographical center. The nature of the parish had changed as well. More and more parishioners had become prosperous and had moved away from “Irishtown” as the area around Washington St. had been called. Wealthy Catholic families had moved to Montclair from New York. They were settling in the western portions of town, up on the hill. Father Mendl decided, once again, to secure land for a new church. He wanted the land to be more centrally located. He also wanted proximity to Montclair Center, the town’s transportation hub. He proposed a new land acquisition to Bishop Wigger, and this time he approved.

In 1890 Father Mendl tried to buy a parcel of land on South Fullerton near the old First Congregational Church (the Congregational Church that is on South Fullerton now was built in 1915 after a fire completely destroyed the old church.). That property deal fell through. Father Mendl then enlisted the aid of Francis D. Cowley, a New York businessman with a keen understanding of suburban real estate. Francis approached Theodore and George Carter about part of their property at the corner of North Fullerton and Munn. After a successful negotiation, the Carters agreed to sell the land for \$16,620. Francis was to turn the property over to the parish for the purchase price and a tiny fee, if the parishioners agreed. On Dec. 8, 1891, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a meeting was held, and a quorum was obtained. The vote to buy the property was nearly unanimous.

The Carters owned a significant chunk of the block adjacent to the old First Methodist Church (the present Methodist church was built in 1902, just south of the old church). George Carter had a huge house on the site where the YMCA now stands. That house was demolished to make room for the “Y”. Theodore Carter’s house, built in 1874, is still stands at 14 Munn St. Father Mendl purchased an additional lot at the corner of Munn and Park Streets, with the intent of using it for expansion, most likely a school. Then, true to his fiscally conservative leanings, he set about trying to reduce the parish debt. The annual fair, held just before Christmas 1891, raised over \$2500 towards relocation of the church.

## Week 9

With property in hand, Fr. Mendl set about building a new church, contracting with the prominent New York City architects Schickel and Ditmars to design the edifice. Other well-known churches to the firm's credit include St. Ignatius Loyola on Park Ave., New York, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn. Later they would submit designs for Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark; though their designs were not selected, Isaac Ditmars eventually became the cathedral's supervising architect. Fr. Mendl worked closely with William Schickel, who was a German. Together they envisioned a brownstone church in German Gothic style, much like the churches they knew from their homelands. A rendering of their design that appeared in *The Montclair Times* and in Henry Whittemore's 1893 *History of Montclair* does not look anything like our present church. Had it been built, it would have appeared more like St. John's Church in Orange. The projected cost was \$75,000; Fr. Mendl intended to put in the foundation and then suspend construction for a season until there were sufficient funds to build the superstructure. As it turned out, construction of the walls would be postponed for far longer than just one season, and the church would end up looking much different from the initial plans.

Ground was broken for the new church in the spring of 1892. Work continued through the summer, and the cornerstone was blessed by Bishop Wigger and put into place on October 21. After two sides of the foundation walls had been laid, town engineer Jesse Lockwood reviewed the plans and determined that the intended brownstone foundation would not be strong enough to support the building as designed. The foundation was completed in granite: a quick walk around the church today reveals the difference. The south side of the church has a brownstone foundation; on the north side, with the bell tower, the foundation is comprised of granite blocks. With this change and the gradual realization that \$75,000 was an unrealistically low estimate, Fr. Mendl decided to put a roof over the foundation and use the basement as a temporary church. The basement church was dedicated on Memorial Day 1893, while the old church on Washington St. was to be remodeled as a school.

The basement church was not an unpleasant place; it was big enough to hold about 1,000 people. The roof was low and a bit confining, but not unattractive, though the space was relatively dark. The altar area was located in what is now the Madonna Hall kitchen. High in the walls there were windows of opaque colored glass; most were removed during the creation of Madonna Hall in the 1950s, but a few remain and can be seen along the west side of the church, along the rear driveway wall. During the Madonna Hall renovation, the original windows may be re-installed. Immaculate Conception's parishioners would worship in the basement church for 16 years.

## Week 10

Building the basement church left the parish facilities divided: the church was on North Fullerton Ave., while the rectory, convent and old church (now a school) were still on Washington St. Fr. Mendl planned to cluster everything around the new church, but he had more immediate problems. In 1894 the Diocese notified him that the burial ground behind the original church was no longer adequate. Fr. Mendl purchased 35 acres from George and Rosina DaCunha in Upper Montclair, adjacent to Mount Hebron Cemetery (originally the property of Thomas and Caroline Van Riper, whose mansion at 848 Valley Road still stands as part of Montclair State University). George DaCunha was a local architect, very involved with the town and with his own St. Luke's Episcopal Church on South Fullerton Ave., where he is memorialized by Tiffany stained-glass windows.

As noted by longtime IC parishioner Kathleen Maher Cocca in the bulletin a few weeks ago, most Immaculate parishioners at the time thought Fr. Mendl was 'mad', locating the parish cemetery so far out in 'the country', but he was, to say the least, a hard man to argue with. Remains were disinterred and most were re-buried at the new cemetery, which was blessed by Bishop Wigger on May 29, 1895. (Some families, angry over Fr. Mendl's decision to sell burial rights (at half-price!) to those whose relatives had already been interred in the original burial ground, chose to have remains buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Bloomfield, administered by Sacred Heart Parish.)

Meanwhile, Montclair and our parish continued to grow. Most Catholics in the north end of town walked to church on North Fullerton Ave., as they had to the old church on Washington St.. But by 1896 there were enough Catholics in Upper Montclair to consider building a church there. Fr. Mendl bought an acre of land at Lorraine and Inwood Aves. so that a mission chapel could be built - the start of St. Cassian's Parish. Bishop Wigger dedicated the new chapel on July 4, 1896. Like Immaculate Conception, in its early years St. Cassian's did not have a resident priest: priests from various places, including those assisting Fr. Mendl, said Mass there on Sundays and holy days.

In 1897, Fr. Mendl moved a step closer to having the entire parish 'plant' consolidated at its new, more central, site. Envisioning the erection of a new school building, he bought a lot on Munn St., between North Fullerton Ave. and Cottage Pl., which included a frame house that became a convent for the Sisters of Charity who had begun teaching at the parish in 1881. Also in 1897, Fr. Mendl reached an agreement with the Sisters' indomitable superior, Mother Mary Xavier, to sell all the parish holdings on Washington St. to the congregation for use as a foundling asylum and to care for needy children while their parents worked. Later the Sisters would open St. Vincent's Hospital on the site. Fr. Mendl used the \$20,000 proceeds of the sale to fund the move of the remaining parish facilities.

## Week 11

In 1898 Fr. Mendl added a new rectory to the expanding parish 'plant' on North Fullerton Ave. An ornate wooden building, it stood where the present rectory stands, just south of the basement church. In 1899 he added the 'crown jewel', buying a lot at the corner of Munn St. and Cottage Pl. and breaking ground for the school he had long dreamed of. On May 16 the cornerstone was set in place: Msgr. Doane, Vicar General of the diocese, presided, and Jesuit Fr. Van Rensselaer preached on "Christian Education". Construction proceeded rapidly and the building was finished by August. On August 27 Bishop Wigger dedicated the new school, which was ready for the opening of classes in September. Mother Alexandrine was the first principal in the new building, supervising 450 students and 10 teachers. The building was named Tegakwita Hall in honor of then-Venerable (now Blessed) Kateri Tegakwita, the first Native American proposed for sainthood. Born in 1656 into the Turtle clan of the Mohawk tribe in what is now northern New York State, she was orphaned when her parents died in an outbreak of smallpox that left Kateri partially blind and badly scarred. She was living in the care of an uncle when Jesuit missionaries visited her village; she was captivated by their teachings, although the Mohawk elders were bitterly opposed to Christianity, and secretly began to study the Gospel. Her uncle reluctantly allowed her to be baptized at age 20, on the condition that she not leave the village. She maintained a Christian life of extraordinary charity and extreme sacrifice in the face of open hostility from her tribe. Eventually, for her own protection, she fled to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, a village for Christian Indians near what is now Caughnawaga, Canada, close to Montreal. There she impressed everyone, fellow villagers and missionaries alike, with her humble sanctity; under the direction of her Jesuit spiritual director, she took a private vow of virginity. Never in robust health, Kateri died at age 24. In 1980 she was beatified by Pope John Paul II. It may be supposed that Fr. Mendl learned of Kateri through his own Jesuit professors at Innsbruck and saw the school-naming as an opportunity to promote her story. When our parish elementary school finally closed in 1997, the association with Blessed Kateri was maintained by naming our Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds 'Tegakwita Academy'.

## Week 12

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the arrival of many Italian immigrants to Montclair, drawn by employment opportunities in laying water and sewer pipes as the town expanded. Many settled in the Fourth Ward, especially in the vicinity of Pine Street. In 1903, Fr. William Carlin was assigned by Bishop John J. O'Connor to assist Fr. Mendl at Immaculate Conception. Because he spoke Italian, Fr. Carlin spent most of his time ministering to the burgeoning Italian population. By 1907 Fr. Peter Paul Lisa was sent to Montclair for the purpose of creating a parish and building a church for the Italian community. This was the beginning of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, which celebrates its own centenary next year. Thus another parish was born from our own. But before Mount Carmel was founded, Italians who attended Immaculate Conception made their influence felt in an important way to impact a decision that affects us today. In 1906, the 27<sup>th</sup> year of his pastorate, Fr. Mendl decided to finish the church building. He realized that, due to growth of the parish in the interim, a larger church was needed than the one planned in 1892. He engaged the architectural firm of Schickel and Ditmars to design the new church. Italian parishioners, in particular, did not appreciate the original dark, Gothic design: they wanted a basilica-style church such as they knew in Italy. Fr. Mendl directed the architects to select another model, and they chose the great Roman Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls as their inspiration. This monumental structure stood on the site of an ancient church built where tradition said St. Paul had been martyred, "outside the walls" of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century city. This original basilica was destroyed by fire in 1823; for decades afterward, money and gifts poured in from all over the world to construct a beautiful new basilica in its place. Many consider this second St. Paul's, one of Rome's four major basilicas, to be one of the world's most beautiful churches. Schickel and Ditmars pleased many parishioners by incorporating design elements from St. Paul's in the plans for Immaculate Conception. On March 17, 1906, an artist's rendering of the new church appeared in *The Montclair Times*. It is the church that we now know and love, with one exception: the rendering shows clocks on all four sides of the bell tower. Although clocks were never installed, a close inspection of the tower today reveals four small holes where clock drives were intended to be fitted. They have been filled, but the outline of each hole can still be seen about 2/3 of the way up the tower. The actual St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls does not have a bell tower attached to the front of the church; Schickel and Ditmars adapted "La Giralda", the famous minaret/bell tower of the Cathedral of Seville, Spain, as the model for our beautiful tower.

## Week 13

By 1907 Fr. Mendl was in his 28<sup>th</sup> year as Pastor of Immaculate Conception and could look back on many accomplishments: he had expanded the original church and converted it into a school, then sold it to the Sisters of Charity for a foundling asylum. He returned the rectory built by Fr. Joslin to the Joslin family and gave the rectory built by Fr. Steets to the Sisters of Charity as part of the package for the asylum. He began the new church on No. Fullerton Ave. and built a new rectory alongside it, as well as the new school on Munn St. and a new convent for the teaching Sisters. He had moved the parish cemetery to Upper Montclair. During his tenure the parish had grown considerably, with St. Cassian's already spun off and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel about to be created.

Early on Saturday, March 16, 1907, the day before his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fr. Mendl's heart failed and he passed away. Montclair physician and Immaculate Conception parishioner Dr. Martin Synott had attended him through the night and was with him when he died. (Coincidentally, Dr. Synott's brother, Fr. Joseph Synott, had served as an assistant at Immaculate and later was president of Seton Hall College.) Three days later, on the feast of St. Joseph, Fr. Mendl's body was brought to the basement church, where hundreds of people, parishioners and non-parishioners alike, came to pay their respects. Because of his authoritarian manner, many people had jokingly call Fr. Mendl "the Bishop of Montclair" when they thought he couldn't hear them, but at this time there was nothing but the most profound respect for him.

The Solemn High Funeral Mass was offered by Fr. Stecher, dean of the German-born diocesan clergy, aided by Fr. Nardiello, pastor of Sacred Heart in Bloomfield; Fr. Wallace, chancellor of the diocese, was master of ceremonies. Bishop John J. O'Connor was present, along with 50 priests of the diocese. In a most unusual move for the time, all of Montclair's Protestant clergy came to honor a colleague, and every place of business in town closed during the funeral. Over 1,500 people jammed the basement church. Members of the parish's oldest families served as pallbearers and ushers, among them the ancestors of some current members: a list shows the names Synott, Carey, Adams, Crawley, Carr, O'Reilly, Wallace, Holman, Blondel, Hughes, Durr, Arens, O'Neill, Feeney, Leddy, Gallagher, Courter, Lynch, Shanagher, Cranley, Crogan and Gannon.

Fittingly, Fr. Mendl was buried in a circular plot in the main road at Immaculate Conception Cemetery. A plain wooden cross marked his grave, later replaced with a large Celtic-style monument. In 1912 several town parks were being created and there was a move to name one behind the Maple St. School for Fr. Mendl: most vocal advocate was Fr. William Brothers, our sixth pastor. Mayor Ernest Hinck agreed, but the area instead became Glenfield Park. However, a street that intersects with No. Fullerton Ave. near Watchung School was named Mendl Terrace in tribute to the great priest's influence on Montclair. But his finest memorial, of course, would always be the magnificent church he had dreamed of and planned for, and which would be completed soon after his death.

## Week 14

The contract to build the church had been awarded before March, 1907, to the E. M. Waldron Co. of Newark, the same firm that built Sacred Heart Cathedral and, later, Montclair's combined Municipal Building and Fire Department on Bloomfield Ave. Work on the church walls was well underway when Fr. Mendl died and Bishop O'Connor appointed Fr. Daniel McCarthy as IC's fourth resident pastor. Ordained in 1874, Fr. McCarthy had served at Holy Cross Church, Harrison and St. John's in Paterson before going as pastor in 1889 to St. Rose of Lima Parish in Short Hills. There the small church and small parish suited Fr. McCarthy, who suffered from chronic poor health. It was his home for 18 years, until he accepted the assignment to Montclair with reluctance, realizing that he was taking on a large parish in the midst of a major construction project.

Summoning up all his energy, Fr. McCarthy oversaw completion of the church superstructure. The walls and roof were complete by the end of the summer, with the bell tower still under construction. On September 6, 1907, four bells arrived from the Meneely Co. of Troy, New York, one of the premier bell-making foundries in the world, founded in 1825 and famous for making replicas of the Liberty Bell, including a 13,000-lb. oversize reproduction made for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. That bell incorporated in itself little bits of American history, using metal from George Washington's surveying chain, the gun barrel from one of Thomas Jefferson's muskets, and door hinges from Abraham Lincoln's Springfield, Illinois house in the alloy mix. The bells for Immaculate Conception cost \$3,600 and are composed of 78% Lake Superior copper and 22% zinc, Meneely's signature formula. The largest bell weighs 3,000 lbs. and produces a "D" tone; next largest is a "G", at 1,190 lbs., then a "B-flat" at 810 lbs.; last is a "C" at 540 lbs. They can produce the familiar "Westminster chime" - perhaps intended for use with the never-installed clocks? - but today are programmed to play the Angelus daily at 7:00 AM, 12:00 Noon and 6:00 PM, a peal before the start of each Sunday Mass and on special occasions (such as the news of the election of Pope Benedict XVI), and a solemn toll for funeral liturgies and events such as the death of Pope John Paul II or the commemoration of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Waldron Co. used a derrick to lift the bells 120 ft. for installation in the tower by the Meneely Co., and then completed the tower. By 1908, with the exterior of the church finished, Fr. McCarthy awarded the interior plastering contract to John W. Parker & Co. of New York. H. Lawyer, the interior construction superintendent, had 30 men working for him and estimated it would take two months to finish the plastering. Fr. McCarthy, however, would not remain at Immaculate long enough to see the interior completed.

## Week 15

On February 28, 1908 The Montclair Times carried startling news: Fr. McCarthy, pastor at Immaculate for only a year, had sent a letter of resignation to Bishop O'Connor, citing ill health as his reason. He had come to realize that the construction of the new church, and the effort to pay for it, was too much for a man in his condition. He asked the bishop to assign a younger, stronger man "to take charge of such an important parish". The bishop assigned Fr. McCarthy to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Ridgewood and, on March 11, 1908, selected Fr. William A. Brothers as the fifth resident pastor of Immaculate Conception. Born in West Orange in 1868, Fr. Brothers studied at St. John's School in Orange, St. Charles College in Maryland, and the seminary at Seton Hall. Ordained in 1893, he served as a curate at St. John's in Paterson and at St. Patrick's in Elizabethport, and in 1899 became pastor of St. Lawrence Church in Weehawken, where he built a convent, tackled a substantial debt that had accumulated, and left the parish in good financial shape. He was then chosen to organize a new parish, St. Agnes in Paterson, after which he came to Montclair.

He proved to be the right man at the right time. Aggressive and challenging, he was unhappy with the way the interior columns of the church were turning out and ordered the contractors to correct them. It should be noted that the pillars in our church are not true marble columns: structural steel supports the building, the beams embedded in brick and covered in a highly-polished, colored plaster in a technique called 'scagliola' - the 'g' is silent - developed by 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florentine monks to mimic genuine marble. Plaster is mixed with powders made from pigments, glue and dried, crushed selenite, which has a scaly appearance - hence the word 'scagliola', from 'scaglia' or scale. Applied in swirling layers, the plaster is then polished. The booklet printed for the dedication of our church mistakenly described the columns as made of Sienna marble.

Aside from this corrective work, the Parker Co. did a wonderful job on our church interior, which boasts a wealth of ornamental detail. Intertwined grapevines on the arches between the interior columns remind us of the wine that is consecrated at each Mass to become the Blood of Jesus Christ. Heads of the four Evangelists peer down from the dome above the tabernacle area - Matthew symbolized by an angel, Mark by a lion, Luke by an ox and John by an eagle; lilies are placed in the ribs above and below the faces of the Evangelists. Because they are such a pure white, lilies have come to symbolize purity and are often used in art to symbolize Jesus and Mary, and they have also become associated with the Gospels. But, though the Parker Co. can be credited with creating a beautiful place of worship, they did not meet their projected completion date. Another year went by before the church was completely finished.

## Week 16

Building and decorating the new church was expensive. The exterior cost \$125,000 and the interior \$60,000. This amount (the equivalent of several million dollars today) did not include several major items donated by parishioners. The baptismal font and altar rail were donated, as were the original main and side altars. The stained-glass windows and original organ were purchased with funds that were raised separately. The baptismal font (currently placed in the center of the church) was made by the Gorham Silver Co. which, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had an ecclesiastical arts division. Our font was carved from Carrara or statuary marble, which is quarried in Tuscany, especially from the vicinity of Pietrasanta. Because it is so clean and has so little veining, Carrara marble has been used for centuries to make statues and altars. Our font is adorned with graceful carved lilies, which symbolize new life in Jesus. Like many baptismal fonts, ours has 8 sides, suggesting a 'full week' of 8 days, representing the seven days of Creation plus the 8<sup>th</sup> 'new day' of life in Christ. The font was originally placed in the baptistry at the back of church, which is now the Memorial Chapel, where the stained-glass window depicts Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus about being 'born again' to new life.

The original high altar has been modified in successive adaptation to changes in liturgical practice. It is now the centerpiece of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where the reserved Eucharist is kept in the tabernacle. The chapel separates the altar of reservation from the altar of sacrifice, affording a private place to worship Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The original side altars were dismantled but are soon to be fashioned into a new altar of sacrifice, replacing the current altar, which is of a different color marble and was installed in the first round of liturgical changes to permit the celebration of Mass 'facing the people'. The new altar will incorporate the scrolled side pieces that originally supported the original high altar mensa, or tabletop, and will harmonize better with the rest of the white marble sanctuary appointments. The four marble statues of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Anthony of Padua, originally placed across the front of the sanctuary, have been moved: three of the statues are arrayed along the rear south wall, with the statue of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, occupying the apse to the right of the sanctuary. Two years of research have failed to reveal who made the original altars, but it is suspected they were provided by the Benziger Co., a Swiss publishing concern that came to produce all types of religious articles, from chalices to altars. Benziger had a studio in Pietrasanta so they could produce statues, altars and altar rails. The American branch of the firm is still in business, but no longer makes religious items, concentrating once again on publishing. Louis G. Benziger was a parishioner of Immaculate Conception between 1912 and 1920: we can imagine that he would have looked proudly upon his company's handiwork - or that he frowned upon something made by a competitor! Funds for the high altar were given by an anonymous donor: it cost \$5,000, or the price of a good-size house in 1908. Anonymous donors also provided the side altars at a cost of \$1,000 each. The altars were in place when the church was dedicated in 1909, but the altar rail, stained-glass windows, Stations of the Cross and original organ were not: they were yet to come, as the Church of the Immaculate Conception was slowly completed.

## Week 17

In August of 1908 Father Brothers was assured by the contractors that new church would be ready for occupancy by October 1. Father Brothers, who had experience in these matters, did not bother to schedule the dedication for that Fall. It's a good thing that he didn't, because the church wasn't ready until September 1909. On Saturday, September 25, 1909 the *Montclair Times* (which used to be published on Saturday) announced that the bishop would dedicate the new church the next day. The *Times* noted that the dedicatory mass would be open to the general public, but remarked that there probably wouldn't be enough room for all who wished to attend. The paper summed up the saga of the church's construction:

“Tomorrow's ceremony will mark the fulfillment of the ambition of the people of the Immaculate Conception parish to worship in an edifice that is of a character worthy of the size and importance of the congregation in Montclair. The realization of the efforts of the members of the congregation has long been deferred. Seventeen years ago the erection of the church was commenced under the direction of the late Rev. Father Mendl...”

The *Times* called the new church “a landmark that is already familiar and much admired”, “truly an architectural delight”. The generosity of the parishioners who made it possible was observed, especially the benefactors who donated the altars, the baptismal font, the altar rail and the stained glass windows. Father Brothers was included among the benefactors since he donated a half year's salary to the building fund. Bishop O'Connor officiated at the dedication. The master of ceremonies was Father Charles Smith, the Chancellor of the diocese. The sermon was delivered by Monsignor Charles Kelly, then the pastor of Our Lady of Grace Church in Hoboken. Mass was celebrated by Father Thomas Mc Laughlin with Father Brothers serving as deacon. Fathers McGeary and Mackinson, both curates here, served as sub-deacons.

Father McLaughlin was a Montclair native. He grew up in our parish. He became a protégé of Father Mendl. He went to Austria to study and was ordained there in 1904. He returned to the United States and rose to prominence. At the time he celebrated our mass of dedication he was the vice president of Seton Hall College. He later became president. Still later he was consecrated as an auxiliary bishop of Newark. The high water mark of his career came in 1937 when he was installed as the first bishop of the new diocese of Paterson. The following week, October 2, 1909 the *Montclair Times* offered a brief description of the new church and reported on the dedication. So many people attended that the crowds overflowed out into the concourse, or loggia as it is called: “Visitors to the new church greatly admired its size and splendor. The interior is chastely decorated, white predominating in the color scheme. The stained glass windows have not yet been placed, translucent glasses taking their places for the present.”

As soon as the new church was dedicated Father Brothers threw himself into the task of reducing the parish debt and securing the items, like the windows and the altar rail that weren't in place when the church was opened.

Week 18

Fr. Brothers was pastor of Immaculate Conception for four years after the church was dedicated. A dynamic, effective pastor, he was very active in keeping up the school and exercised financial restraint and greatly reduced the parish debt. He organized fund drives to purchase stained-glass windows and a fitting organ for the new church: generous by nature, he personally gave large amounts to both those funds. He was an avid golfer, and his caddy on many occasions was a young parishioner, John L. McNulty, who later became a priest. Elevated to the rank of Monsignor, McNulty was named president of Seton Hall College in 1949 and presided over its designation as a University. (His brother, James A. McNulty, also a priest, became the third Bishop of Paterson - the second son of our parish to serve in that post - and later Bishop of Buffalo, NY.)

In the Fall of 1911, Fr. Brothers was in Europe on vacation when he was notified that his mother, Catherine, was very ill. He made plans to return, but it took some time to arrange passage on a ship. As his mother's condition worsened, parishioners started praying that she would live to see her son again. Passionist Fathers from Union City, who often helped at Immaculate, conducted missions day and night, so that concerned parishioners could offer up their prayers. Delayed by bad weather in the North Atlantic, Fr. Brothers' ship arrived at Hoboken on October 9. Driven from quarantine by automobile (still a bit of a novelty in 1911) to his mother's bedside, he was with her when she died, early on October 10. Fr. Brothers celebrated her funeral Mass at his home parish, St. John's, Orange, on October 12.

In 1912, Fr. Cornelius Kane was assigned to Immaculate Conception to help Fr. Brothers. Feeling the need for an athletic outlet for the young men and boys of the parish, he organized a Junior Holy Name Society and set up baseball and basketball teams that, by all accounts, did pretty well!

In late 1913, Fr. Brothers suffered a heart attack. After recuperating in Lakewood, he returned to Montclair. But on December 22, Dr. Synnott was called to the rectory again: Fr. Brothers had had another heart attack and died before Dr. Synnott arrived.

Fr. Brothers' cousin, Fr. George Fitzpatrick, of St. Aloysius Church, Newark, celebrated the funeral Mass, while Fr. Eugene Carroll, Fr. Brothers' closest friend, delivered the eulogy. Bishop O'Connor pronounced the final absolution, and Fr. John McGeary, former assistance at Immaculate and then pastor of St. Casian's Parish, was the master of ceremonies. An honor guard lined Fullerton Avenue as the casket was brought out of the church. There was to be a procession all the way to the cemetery, but heavy rain made it impossible. Fr. Brothers was buried in St. John's Cemetery, Orange, with his family, in the place where he grew up and where he had celebrated his First Mass.

## Week 19

Fr. Joseph J. Gately was chosen to succeed Fr. Brothers as pastor. An experienced priest who had served in various parishes, he brought a mature vision to Immaculate Conception. Born in New York in 1870, he attended St. Peter's College in Jersey City and then Seton Hall. He studied theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary there and was ordained by Bishop Wigger in 1893. Fr. Gately served at St. Henry's Church, Bayonne, until 1895, when he was assigned to St. Michael's in Newark. After a few months he was sent to St. John's in Orange, and in 1897 was brought back to Newark to serve at St. Patrick's, which was the cathedral of the Diocese until the Basilica of the Sacred Heart was finished. In 1900 Fr. Gately became pastor at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Bayonne, and in 1909 he was named Chaplain of the College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, a position he held until he was named pastor of Immaculate Conception in February 1914.

The first order of business facing Fr. Gately was installation of the stained-glass windows and the Stations of the Cross. The church had been dedicated without them five years earlier. Parishioners had been raising money for the windows and the Stations for years. They were actually ordered by Fr. Brothers and were delivered to the U.S. from Europe just before he died. It fell to Fr. Brothers' successor to have them installed. Our windows and the Stations of the Cross are remarkable works, which inspire us and help us to shape a mental picture of the life and death of Our Savior, Jesus Christ. But even though they are wonderful to look at, they are not just beautiful images. Stained-glass windows depicting events in the life of Christ, and Stations of the Cross depicting His Passion, began to appear in churches in the Middle Ages as a means of instructing the faithful who, for the most part, could not read. They became a visual Catechism, speaking a language of images and symbols, the purpose being to help the faithful form correct ideas about the Scriptures and Church teaching. Our windows and Stations are filled with many of these symbols. There is no way in these short history passages to discuss every symbol in every window: we will discuss a few of the symbols in the next few weeks.

Briefly, the windows and the Stations were made by Mayer and Co. of Munich, Germany, a firm started in 1847 by Joseph Gabriel Mayer. Joseph's son-in-law, F. X. Zettler, moved the company into the fabrication of stained glass, and it quickly became famous for its work, continuing to produce fine religious art and still in business today, although it has divided and opened up branches in the U.S. Other artists were attracted to Bavaria, and people began to refer to Munich and the "Munich School" as a premier source for ecclesiastical art. In 1892, Pope Leo XIII conveyed the title of "Pontifical Institute of Christian Art" on the Mayer and Zettler companies. The Mayer and Co. mark appears on only one of our windows (a similar mark was removed at some point from the Stations), that depicting St. Bonaventure in the clerestory below the ceiling on the north side of the church. The mark, under the saint's feet, says simply "Mayer & Co. - Munich-New York" - but those few words tell much about the exceptional quality and distinctive artistry of our magnificent windows and Stations.

## Week 20

The front page of the *Montclair Times* for April 18, 1914 featured grand pictures of four of our stained-glass windows, depicting the Nativity, the Holy Family, the Resurrection and the Marriage Feast at Cana. The article proclaimed that “Art in the highest and best form is embodied in the beautiful stained glass windows that have just been placed in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on North Fullerton Ave. The windows, which were made by Mayer & Co. of Munich and No. 118 Madison Avenue, New York City, complete the adornment of one of the handsomest church edifices in New Jersey and reflect the good taste and artistic judgment of the late Rev. William A. Brothers, who as the predecessor of the present rector, Rev. Father Joseph J. Gately, made the selections of the subjects that are so splendidly portrayed. The colorings of the windows are gorgeous and so wonderfully contrasted and blended that the eye is never offended...”

The seven-column-wide article went on to describe the windows and how they were made. It listed the contributors to the fund, which was considered a memorial to Father Mendl: “Father William A. Brothers, James Trainor Estate, Joseph Nolan, Mary Nolan, E. M. Waldron (the contractor who erected the church), Mrs. Catherine Kelly, John Blondel (who owned a local coal and fuel company and was active in Montclair politics), Michel LeBrun (a noted architect who designed, among other things, the Met Life Building and North Mountain Avenue’s *Evergreens*), Misses Mary and Catherine Higgins, Harry Connolly, T. Albaeus Adams (businessman, chairman of the N.J. Interstate Bridge and Tunnel Commission, often called ‘the father of the Holland Tunnel’), Peter Lynch, John Shanagher, Mrs. Margaret Maloney, Thomas Oliver, Mrs. Otto Schaefer, Mrs. George Huver, John Budelman, James McGarry, Paul MacMahon, Louis Benziger (of Benziger Brothers), the Ancient Order of Hibernians, several parish organizations and ‘A Friend’.”

The article named key events in Jesus’ life that are depicted in the windows and listed the saints that are honored in the upper level. The *Times* article described three windows in the choir loft, but these windows cannot be seen from inside the church. In 1916 the back wall of the organ chest was put up in front of them. They can be seen from outside, just over the roof of the front *loggia*, but the figures are indiscernible. Because of the organ chest, light does not shine through these mystery windows in either direction. Looking up at the choir loft, it is impossible to tell that the windows are there. Looking at the front of the church outside, the windows are architecturally symmetrical and contribute to the beauty of the edifice, but they are just dark glass panels. To complicate the issue, the reporter made a mistake and mislabeled one of the windows. The Mayer Co. still has access to our records and was able to provide the correct information. The identity of the saints on these windows will be revealed in a future history segment. Stay tuned!

## Week 21

There was a long-standing tradition in the Catholic Church that every Catholic should make an effort to visit the Holy Land and see the places where Jesus lived and died. St. Francis made such a pilgrimage; he wanted to take part in the tradition and to effect a peace between European and Muslim armies during the Fifth Crusade. He realized that a trip to the Holy Land was beyond the means of most medieval Catholics. He is credited with the idea of creating images, the “Stations of the Cross”, that conveyed a sense of ‘being there’ to the many faithful for whom the trip was not possible. Therefore the Stations of the Cross are reasonably accurate depictions of actual places in Jerusalem, even though the people shown in our particular renderings have decidedly European features. There was no such convention in stained glass. The people and places in our windows (and in many other windows) are European, although some of the people are dressed in clothes meant to suggest the clothes worn by Palestinians in the 1st century. Close inspection of our windows reveals that the fabrics portrayed are richly brocaded and far too elegant to have been worn by people at the time of Christ - too elegant even to have been worn by royalty at the time! In fact they are probably too rich to have been worn by most of the Europeans and Americans looking reverently at stained-glass windows in their respective churches. Stained glass was meant to teach the principles of the Scriptures and of the Church. It faithfully represented the lessons found in the Scriptures. It was not considered important to show life as it actually was in Jesus’ world. Our windows were probably designed by Franz Borgias Mayer, son of the founder (Mayer Co. records are not clear on this). Franz was a traditionalist who preferred the classic images found in stained-glass windows of churches built during the Middle Ages in Europe.

Looking at our Nativity window, we see that the stable is made of stone, which would not have been the material of choice in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Judea. A stable would probably have been made from dried mud bricks. It is a separate building, which would also not have been likely in Bethlehem when Christ was born. The shepherds are dressed in European-style garb. One shepherd boy holds bagpipes, which may have been played by European shepherds, but would have been unheard of by shepherds in the hills around Bethlehem. At the top of the window there are three cherubs and the rays of light from the Star of Bethlehem, although the Star itself is obscured by a fanciful, ornate border. Mary is shown in a blue outer garment, which is the color most often associated with her. Her long white dress is textured with fleurs-de-lis, stylized representations of lilies, which symbolize her purity. Jesus is swaddled in a white blanket with a star pattern in it. In our other windows Jesus is shown with a white tunic, but the pattern shows no longer the promise of the Star, but His looming destiny with the Cross. In the background of the Nativity scene is a dark European-style fortress or castle. This is King Herod’s castle, and reminds us of Herod’s profound jealousy of “the newborn King of the Jews”. Herod would kill all young boys Jesus’ age in the environs of Bethlehem, in an effort to prevent the boy from ever growing up and aspiring to Herod’s throne. Herod was only the first person to have misunderstood Christ’s mission and the meaning of the Kingdom He was to rule.

## Week 22

The Holy Family window shows Mary, Joseph and the young Jesus at home, engaged in the same types of activities that a Nazarene family (or, for that matter, any family) might be involved in. The house and the articles in it look more like they come from Europe in the Middle Ages than from 1st-century Galilee. Tradition holds that Joseph was a carpenter: he is shown with an axe in his hand and carpenter's tools on the wall behind him. He is talking to Mary, while Jesus listens attentively and helps Joseph by picking up wood chips from the floor. Mary is spinning, probably wool. In the language of stained glass and church symbols, there are flowers near each family member that have come to represent them. Near Jesus is a vase of lilies, which symbolize purity and have long been associated with Jesus, pure in a sense beyond our comprehension, and with Mary, who was a lifelong virgin. Because the lilies are near Jesus, white roses are placed near Mary to symbolize her purity. There is a columbine near Joseph: columbines have petals that resemble a dove in flight. There are non-scriptural stories about Joseph explaining that he was chosen by the high priest to be Mary's husband from a group of eligible men. It is said that God showed favor on Joseph by causing flowers to sprout from his walking staff as the high priest walked by. For that reason, he is often shown with flowers on his staff. Some traditions go on to say that a dove sprang from the flowers on Joseph's staff, making columbines the perfect flowers to symbolize him.

There is something odd in the Holy Family window. On the window sill behind the family is an object that is probably part of a branch. However, it looks very much like a small brown and white cat sunning itself. In the ancient language of religious symbols, a cat represents the devil. Far from being an innocent part of a scene of domestic tranquility, a cat would be considered sacrilegious in a picture of the Holy Family. A stained-glass artist would never put the image of an actual cat in such a scene. There are no records explaining our windows: we can only speculate, but might it be possible that the artist wanted to portray the impending battle between good and evil that was to be Jesus' mission on earth?

Another window full of religious symbols is the window where Jesus is announcing the Beatitudes to a group of onlookers. Jesus is at the center of the window, preaching. His raised hand shows us that He is making a point; everyone is looking at Him, listening to His words. There is a man in front who is not looking directly at Jesus, but is holding his hands as if in rapture or in a prayer of thanksgiving at the sound of Jesus' voice. At Jesus' feet are some small yellow flowers: the petals are indistinct, but the leaves are definitely those of a calendula plant. Like sunflowers, calendulas turn to face the sun: these flowers have turned to face Jesus. The lesson: His words are like the sun, bringing light and warmth into our lives! Another odd thing occurs in this window. It is hard to make out, but in the lower left quadrant there appears to be a detached foot in a sandal. If it is a foot, it would belong to someone who was facing away from Jesus. The artist probably realized the mistake and tried to obscure the foot by coloring it over with white and red hues. A casual onlooker would never notice the foot, but it can be made out with careful study. More on the windows - soon!

## Week 23

Our stained-glass windows show a great deal of vegetation and foliage, some of it conforming to the ancient language of religious symbols, and some of it decorative background, cleverly designed to draw the viewer's eye to the central figures. Even though the plants are drawn in detail, and each window is framed by elaborate borders, every color and object is placed in such a way as to highlight the important features (usually the figures of Jesus, His family or His followers, at some major point in His life). Despite the bright colors associated with the central images, the most prominent color cast by our windows is from the background: the overall effect is a light green. Green floor tiles were installed in the church during the 1994 restoration to compliment this hue. It can only be supposed that the 3 "mystery windows", hidden by the organ in the choir loft, follow the same pattern.

The "Garden of Gethsemane" window shows Jesus praying at some distance from Peter, James and John, who are asleep, as described in Chapter 22 of St. Luke's Gospel: the passage is cited at the bottom of the window. According to Luke, Jesus went to the garden to pray on the night He was betrayed. Stars show that it is night; a gate shows us that the scene is taking place in a garden. Jesus' tunic is brocaded with crosses, indicating the manner of His impending death. An angel is bringing the "cup of suffering" to Jesus: Luke says that Jesus was aware of the fate that was about to befall Him. He prays to His Father, "'If you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but Yours be done.' And to strengthen Him, an angel from heaven appeared to Him..." Jesus' outstretched hands show that He is accepting His Father's will.

Peter is shown leaning on the sword that he will later use to strike the High Priest's servant. Peter's crossed toes and the awkward way John is holding his hand are meant to show the involuntary motions that accompany sleep: the three disciples found it impossible to stay awake and pray with Jesus. There are two small yellow flowers near the base of the window: in artistic perspective they are nowhere near Jesus, but geometrically they are directly below His eyes. It is possible that these flowers are small chrysanthemums, which symbolize courage: if so, they represent the courage Jesus displayed by accepting death on the cross. More likely, they represent Jesus' tears falling from His face, hitting the ground and splattering.

There is a blue flower off to the side of the scene. It is obviously there for a reason, although the reason is not clear to us now. It appears in other Mayer of Munich windows in other churches. In some descriptions it is thought to be a coffee plant. Is there some suggestion that if the apostles had drunk coffee that night they would have been able to stay awake? The flower looks like a forget-me-not, even though a real one would be much smaller. There is a legend that God went walking through the Garden of Eden not long after it was created. He walked by a lowly forget-me-not and asked its name. The tiny flower trembled before the Creator and whispered that it forgot its name. God replied that He would never forget the flower. It is possible that the artist was recalling that legend and using it to bracket the story of salvation. The Garden of Eden was where we lost our innocence and were marked by original sin; the Gethesemane is the garden where Jesus' suffering began, the suffering that was to redeem us from original sin.

## Week 24

The upper windows, depicting images of various saints, contain elements that are meant to symbolize each particular saint. For instance, St. Bonaventure, a scholar, is shown reading a book in one hand while holding a book in the other. This shows his love of learning. He wrote significant theological treatises and is considered a “Doctor” of the Church. In Paris he was a classmate of St. Thomas Aquinas, another great Doctor of the Church (St. Thomas is represented in another window). St. Bonaventure was a Franciscan, who eventually became General of the Order. Famed for his humility, he was nominated to become the Archbishop of York, but he refused the honor. Later Pope Gregory X personally asked him to become the Archbishop of Albano. Bonaventure could not refuse the personal invitation. Pope Gregory elevated him to the rank of cardinal. For this reason he is shown wearing red, the color associated with cardinals, but wearing only a simple cassock and surplice. The cassock and surplice, not worn much now, are the informal garb of a priest performing sacraments. To highlight his humility Bonaventure is shown informally rather than in formal robes such as those worn by Saints Alphonsus and Malachy (who were both archbishops) in their respective windows. We can only imagine what symbols are held by the saints in our 3 “mystery” windows, the ones hidden by the organ pipes in our choir loft.

The “Mayer of Munich” mark is at the base of the Bonaventure window. The Mayer Company also made our Stations of the Cross. They were installed in 1914 at the same time our windows were installed, during Father Gately’s pastorate. Mayer Company records show that a small “Mayer & Co.” tag would have been at the base of one of the stations. That tag was once at the base of our first station (Jesus being condemned to death by Pilate). For some reason our tag is missing. A small indentation in the lower right hand corner indicates where the tag would have been. There would be no way of knowing who made our stations if it weren’t for the careful record keeping of the Mayer Company.

The Stations of the Cross are meant to give a sense of actually being there with Christ during His final hours. Our stations are lifelike and are painted in very lifelike colors, in a technique known as polychrome. They were designed by a famous religious artist, Joseph Knabl. Joseph was born in the Tyrol in 1819. He apprenticed as a wood carver. His statue, the “Coronation of the Virgin” on the high altar at Frauenkirche is considered a masterpiece. He was recognized for his work and became a teacher of the art. In 1859 he was given the chair of ecclesiastical sculpture at the Academy of Munich. In Munich he became associated with Mayer and Co., designing many religious articles for them. Unknown artisans followed his designs and crafted our stations. He was known for the graceful way he portrayed fabrics and the way they draped various objects. Above each of our stations are two angels facing a small object in the center. It is easy to see that the angels adore this object - a human heart with a bit of fabric draped over it. The heart represents Jesus’ great passion. He loved us so much that he was willing to become human like us and to sacrifice himself on the cross for our sake.

Week 25

After installing the stained glass windows and the Stations of the Cross in 1914, Father Gately set about the next great project, finding and installing an organ capable of stirring the souls of all who worshiped in the magnificent new church. The organ fund had been started during Father Brother's pastorate. By 1916 (7 years after the church was dedicated) Father Gately found a worthy instrument. He selected an organ by the Austin Organ Co. of Hartford Connecticut.

Austin Organ Co. records show that our organ, Opus 639 (the 639th organ produced by the company), was made with 3 manuals and 44 ranks, with ranks basically denoting the size of the organ. Preston Dibble, our current Director of Music, counted 34 ranks. Perhaps the Austin Co. records simply show the maximum number of pipes that our organ could accommodate. To put this in perspective, there are 2,142 pipes in our organ. This number would be less than the number of pipes that the world's largest organs have. The world's largest organ, The Wanamaker Organ, in Philadelphia, has 28,000 pipes. However, our organ has significantly more pipes than most of the other churches in Montclair have (800 - 1500). The gold colored pipes that are visible in the choir loft and to the left of the sanctuary are dummies, concealing the working pipes.

Our organ features a "universal air chest", which was patented by the Austin Co. They still incorporate it into the organs they make today. It is a superior means of delivering a steady stream of air to the pipes. Air was supplied by a 7 1/2 horsepower electric motor driving a series of steel fans. The original motor was located in a sound proof closet above the organ, in the bell tower, as is the current motor. The console in the choir loft is not the original console. It was installed in the 1950s to replace the original console. The console in the choir area at the front of the church was made by the Peragallo Co and installed during the renovations of the 1990s.

One unfortunate thing that happened when the organ was installed was that three stained glass windows in the choir loft were completely covered up by the organ pipes. The identity of the saints in these windows will be revealed next week. A hint for those who care to guess the identities before then – The saints pictured in those windows are associated with music as well as other, more saintly activities. One of the saints (the one in the window closest to the rectory) is shown with unique headgear. The headgear has a distinctive shape. That shape is outlined by some of the lead seams that join the various pieces of glass. The saint in the middle window is shown (as she often is) holding a musical object. This object is also outlined by lead seams. Because the organ pipes block light from the church (as well as from the sun) the windows in the choir loft cannot be illuminated from the inside. However, certain light combinations sometimes provide a miniscule crack of illumination, which can be seen from the outside. The person in the window closest to Munn Street is wearing a crown.

The brand new organ was dedicated at an inaugural concert on Thursday, September 28, 1916. Professor Firman Swinnen, our first Music Director, performed that night. More about the concert next week.

## Week 26

On September 23, 1916, The Montclair Times described the concert that was to take place the following Thursday at Immaculate Conception. The article listed the pieces that were to be played, described the new organ and gave a profile of the organist. The concert was to open with “Gallia” by Gounod, with the organ to be accompanied by a chorus and soloists. Bach’s “Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor” was the next piece, followed by three selections by the organist: “Chant Seraphique”, “The Storm” and “Tarantelle”. A choral piece, “Hear my prayer” by Mendelssohn, was next, with the same composer’s “Sixth Sonata” then being played. After the sonata, Dvorak’s “Humoresque” and Rubenstein’s “Russian Patrol” would lead to the finale, Widor’s “Fifth Symphony”, featuring its famous toccata. An ambitious program, indeed, and one designed to demonstrate the capacities of the new organ. The organist, Firman Swinnen, was born in Belgium, learned the organ while still a child and was giving concerts by the age of 7. He entered the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp at 16, and at 20 attained “First Diploma”. He went on to study at the School of Church Organists at Malines. He was noted for his ability to memorize the music he was to play, and he was also a composer. After giving a series of several hundred concerts in England, Swinnen came to Montclair to be music director here.

Fr. Gately put a lot of effort into positioning the organ. The fact that the organ case covered up three stained-glass windows could not be helped: the position was chosen because it best suited the acoustics of the church. And what do those hidden windows depict? The figures obscured by the organ pipes are Pope St. Gregory the Great, St. Cecilia and King David. The three share a musical theme, as befits their location in the choir loft. Although he may never have written any chants himself, tradition holds that St. Gregory (540-604) developed the form for Gregorian chant, which has been sung in Catholic churches for centuries. Depicted in the window closest to the rectory; he is wearing the tiara or triple crown worn by popes to symbolize their authority. Its distinctive shape is outlined by lead seams that hold that particular piece of glass in place. St. Cecilia, it is said, sang to God with an inner voice and is the patroness of sacred music. That may be why she is shown in the center window. She is depicted holding a small organ; some traditions credit her with inventing the organ. She was martyred for the faith in the 3rd century, defending her virginity rather than submitting to marriage with a pagan suitor. Surviving suffocation by steam, she was then struck in the neck three times with an axe: still she did not die, but lingered for another three days. Many traditions credit King David with composing the Psalms, which were originally meant to be sung. The Bible describes David playing the harp: in the window closest to Munn St., seams of lead outline the harp David holds. Although we cannot see the figures in these windows from either outside or inside our church, we might be able to get an idea of what they looked like: Mayer of Munich also provided the windows for the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Seton Hall University. Gregory, Cecilia and David grace the choir loft in that chapel, too.

In 1916, Belgium was engulfed in World War I. Firman Swinnen had brothers who were involved in the conflict, including one who was a prisoner of the Germans. Immaculate Conception was also touched by the war: 550 parishioners were taken into the armed services, and 12 gave their lives. Fr. William Maguire, an assistant rector during Fr. Gately’s pastorate, volunteered to be a chaplain. As Captain Maguire, he was still in the Navy on December 7, 1941: he was at Pearl Harbor and described the horrific events of that day in his book, *Rig for Church*.

## Week 27

Installing the stained-glass windows, the Stations of the Cross and the organ were major events. Fr. Gately also had the responsibility of running the parish from day to day, along with trying to reduce the parish debt. 'Pew rental', weekly collections and a bowling alley in the basement of Tegakwita Hall brought in funds on a regular basis, but Fr. Gately planned a number of additional money-raising events every year. There were card parties before Lent and an annual play after Lent. There was a festival every November that usually ended with the raffle of a new car. The program for the 1919 festival proclaimed that there would be a movie on Saturday, November 22 - "Daddy Long Legs", a silent film starring screen legend Mary Pickford. Monday, November 24 was the night for euchre, a popular card game. On Tuesday there was to be a matinee for the children, featuring Gilbert Gerard, a mimic, and Irish Night for the adults later on. Jack Pickford, Mary's brother, starred in another film, "Bill Apperson's Boy" on Wednesday. Thursday was "Home Talent Night", and on Friday a farce called "Buying a Suit for Jimmie" was performed by volunteers who called themselves the Tegajkwita Dramatic Circle. Prizes were to be awarded on Saturday. With all these efforts, Fr. Gately succeeded in reducing the parish by debt by \$55,000 during his tenure.

In 1922 Fr. Gately purchased a house on the north corner of Munn and Park Sts. (where the school parking lot is now). He refurbished the house for use by the Sisters of Charity who taught in the parish school. It served as the convent until 1929. Among the priests who assisted Fr. Gately during his ten years as pastor were, besides Frs. Kane and Maguire who were mentioned in previous segments, Frs. Woods, Noonan, Robotti, Muredoch, Friel, Fitzgerald, Rolbiecki, Curry and Quinn. In the spring of 1923, Fr. Gately suffered a heart attack. His condition worsened and he was expected to die at any minute, but during the Easter season he seemed to get better. He entrusted the running of the parish to Fr. Curry and went to Atlantic City to recuperate. At the end of the summer he returned to resume his duties, but on October 18 he contracted pneumonia. This was too much for his weakened constitution, and he died on October 22.

A Solemn High Funeral Mass was offered on October 26, 1923. Fr. Thomas Mulhall, of St. Anne's Church, Jersey City was celebrant. The deacons were Fr. William Keyes and Fr. John McGearry, who had been a curate at Immaculate Conception before becoming pastor of St. Cassian's in Upper Montclair, which had been formed from our parish in 1896. Another former curate, Fr. John Woods, pastor of St. Mary's Church, Dumont, was Master of Ceremonies. Msgr. Thomas McLaughlin, who had grown up in Immaculate Conception parish and was then President of Seton Hall College, delivered the homily. Msgr. McLaughlin, as was mentioned in previous segments, later became the first Bishop of Paterson. Howard McConnell, the Mayor of Montclair, Town Commissioners James Hanan, Charles Phillips, John Picken and John Barclay and Police Chief Edward Reilly were Honorary Pallbearers.

Fr. Thomas Curry administered the parish until another pastor was chosen. No one knew it at the time, but Immaculate Conception was about to go through another period of growth and change.

Week 28

On February 10, 1924 The Montclair Times announced that Bishop O'Connor has appointed Fr. Edward M. Farrell to be the seventh Pastor of Immaculate Conception. Small of stature, Fr. Farrell's size belied the energy he was to bring to the parish. Born in 1877 in North Pownal, Vermont, he had attended St. Joseph's Grammar and High Schools in North Adams, Massachusetts. It was there that he became convinced of the value of a solid Catholic education - a conviction that he carried with him through the rest of his life. No doubt, it influenced the way he approached his job at all the parishes he served, most especially our own. Fr. Farrell graduated cum laude from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, then entered the seminary in Rochester, New York. Transferring to Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall in South Orange, he was ordained for the Diocese of Newark in 1904.

While teaching in Seton Hall's secondary department for two years, he also played the organ and was Professor of Music at Seton Hall College. In 1906 he was assigned to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Newark, where he was involved in the building of the present combination church and school on Clinton Ave. and Van Ness Sts. in 1913. In 1914, after eight years in Newark, Fr. Farrell was transferred to Our Lady, Help of Christians Parish in East Orange, where, as Acting Pastor, he completed the construction of that beautiful church on Main St. He was then assigned to All Saints' Parish in Jersey City, but was not to remain there long. He returned to Newark, serving briefly at St. Rose of Lima Parish. But his administrative abilities had not gone unnoticed: it was apparent to all with whom he came in contact that he had superior organizational skills. In 1918 he was asked to be Pastor of St. Michael's Parish in Netcong, where he reduced the parish debt while doubling the seating capacity of the church and building a parochial school. He also tended to the Mission of Our Lady of the Lake in Mount Arlington and built a second Mission, St. Joseph, in Hopatcong. Clearly, Fr. Farrell's accomplishments before he came to Immaculate Conception were a good indication of the way he would conduct his affairs here.

Fr. Farrell's record at Immaculate is impressive. During a tenure that was second only to that of Fr. Mendl in length, he improved the physical plant and built the majority of the buildings we use today. But he was first a shepherd to his flock, and the spiritual welfare of the parish was always his primary concern. Older parishioners remember his involvement in every phase of parish life. They recall his steely resolve, but he had a sense of humor that they remember as well. He reportedly had a deep and resonant voice and, though not many parishioners who can remember his sermons, an interview between Fr. Eugene Gallagher (who served here under Fr. Farrell for 14 years) and Dr. George L. A. Riley, author of the parish centennial history, *A Century of Catholicism*, noted that Fr. Farrell's preaching appealed to Catholics and non-Catholics alike. His sermons had a clear, literary style that was highly polished. Within a few years of his arrival, Fr. Farrell was known as the spiritual leader to many within the confines of the parish and to many outside it.

## Week 29

Fr. Farrell did not rush into a building campaign at Immaculate Conception. He first had to acclimate himself to life in Montclair. His report to the diocese at the end of 1925 noted that the parish had grown to 3,169 members; there were 510 students in the school, taught by 13 Sisters of Charity and 1 lay teacher under the direction of Sr. Mary Inezita. There were 73 infant baptisms that year, 4 adult baptisms, 36 marriages and 25 deaths. Frs. Thomas Curry and John Buchmann were his assistants. One complicated but practical matter he had to deal with was the purchase of sacramental wine. The Volstead Act, passed in 1919, and the subsequent 18th Amendment to the Constitution (ratified in 1920), made the manufacture, sale and transport of alcoholic beverages illegal. Like every pastor of his day, Fr. Farrell had to apply for permission to buy wine for Mass. He had to send applications to the diocese, which then applied to the federal government. Also like every pastor, he faced the never-ending problem of raising money. He continued the traditions of plays during the Easter season and a festival in late autumn, but he wasn't quite as enthusiastic about these events as his predecessors had been. All the while he was planning bigger things.

Two years before Fr. Farrell's arrival at Immaculate, Fr. Gately had bought a house on Park St., probably to prevent it from being sold to another owner who would then encroach on school grounds. In 1922 he moved the Sisters from the old convent - a wood-frame house on Munn St. - to the house on Park St., slightly larger, but still not ideal for use as a convent. This was the first issue that Fr. Farrell wanted to address. He and the parish trustees, Daniel Meehan and William Fitzgerald, received authorization for the parish to obtain a loan of \$75,000. Fr. Farrell had the John F. Kelly architectural firm of Passaic draw up plans for a new convent. Put out to bid, a contract was awarded on December 12, 1925 to the Eyrich and Ward Co. to build the new convent. Construction did not start immediately: It wasn't until 1928 that the frame house on Munn St. was razed and the white brick convent built. In 1929 the Sisters moved in, and the frame house on Park St. was torn down to provide a playground for the school. Used exclusively as the parish convent until 1987, the building at 1 Munn St. now serves multiple purposes as the Parish Center, housing parish offices, meeting rooms, our Tegakwita Academy Pre-K, and a residence for Sr. Cora Marie.

True to his conviction that the parish should offer the opportunity for a full Catholic education, Fr. Farrell inaugurated a high school in 1925. Mother Alexandrine of the Sisters of Charity was chosen to be the first principal. Since there was no high school building, the first class of 15 students had to meet in the basement of the church, then known as "Gately Hall" in honor of the previous pastor. During the next school year the inaugural class moved to the auditorium of Tegakwita Hall. A classroom was outfitted in Tegakwita Hall for the class when they became juniors. It wasn't until 1929 that they had a building to call their own. That was Fr. Farrell's next big move.

## Week 30

(This week's reminiscences about Msgr. Farrell's tenure as pastor were submitted by parishioner Alice Fleming Deisler.)

“ Years ago, our Immaculate Conception Parish was indeed blessed by the arrival of Fr. Edward M. Farrell to assume the pastorate. Fr. Farrell was a New Englander by birth and Jesuit-educated at Holy Cross College. After his professorship at Seton Hall College, he became our spiritual leader. He was a splendid administrator, but his years here were primarily marked by his priestliness and his dedication to excellence in education. He reached out to each parishioner, both young and old, with sincere interest and affection.

“ Our brother Ed (Msgr. Edward J. Fleming) considered it a real honor to serve Fr. Farrell's Mass daily, and walked from our home on Valley Road, near Edgemont Park, each morning. Father was an inspiration to so many young girls and boys that many of them went on to enter the convent or study for the priesthood. My family was thrilled when our brother, Ed, was awarded the Monsignor Farrell Full Scholarship, as was our older brother, Joe. Ed went on to Seton Hall, while Joe continued studies in medicine at Georgetown. Ed was chosen by Fr. Farrell and the Seminary faculty to prepare for the priesthood at the North American College in Rome. Because World War II was in progress, this Roman College closed, and Ed completed his studies at Catholic University in Washington, DC. He was ordained a priest on June 3, 1944, and offered his First Mass on June 4 at Immaculate. Msgr. Farrell and Fr. Hamilton, from Seton Hall, served as principal speakers, and Msgr. Farrell presented Ed with his personal chalice, that he might never forget the Eucharist is the heart of Catholicism and the soul of his priesthood.

“ Fr. Farrell so loved the schools that he provided them with the best teachers. Generations of alumni will always remember Elizabeth M. Caton, a master teacher, who taught so many Montclairites with her extraordinary skills. Even today, through the grace of God, we have Sr. Maureen Crowley to carry on this tradition. Fr. Farrell had fifteen nuns teaching and living in the beautiful convent he built. One evening, pointing to the convent, Fr. Farrell said to my mother, Agnes Fleming, ‘Can you imagine fifteen women living under one roof in peace and harmony?’ I also recall helping my 5th-grade teacher, Sr. Agnes Sophia, who was the church sacristan. Each Monday, she assigned me the task of cleaning the vigil lights in the church basement. There might have been a motive in my helping - thinking it would elevate my grades! Ed vividly recalls when Fr. Farrell, after Mass, thoughtfully presented him with four round-trip tickets to New York so that he could bring me to the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Father suggested our older twin brothers, Tim and Tom, might escort us that day. I shall never forget the dancing elephants and the tight-rope walkers!”

## Week 31

On January 4, 1927, Fr. Farrell and parish Trustees Meehan and Fitzgerald approached the Diocese of Newark for permission to obtain another loan. It took some time to receive permission and to find a suitable lender. They borrowed \$300,000 from the Montclair Trust Co. on October 4, 1928, to supplement the parish building fund and allow Fr. Farrell to erect the high school he had long dreamed of. (The Montclair Trust Co. was founded in 1909; the E.M. Waldron Co., the contractors who built our church, also built offices for the Trust Co. at the corner of No. Fullerton and Bloom-field Aves. in 1910. The original building has been enlarged and now houses Chase Bank.)

While financing for the high school was being arranged, Fr. Farrell had the architectural firm of Fanning and Shaw, of Paterson, draw up building plans. It was important that the design of the new school fit in with the Italianate styles of the church and of the convent that was being planned at the same time. It was to be built of the same type of white brick. On December 5, 1927, Fr. Farrell selected the D.W. McGee Construction Co. as general contractors for the high school. Work began almost immediately. The corner-stone was placed in May 1928, and on January 21, 1929 the building was dedicated "to the greater honor and glory of God, to the spread of Christian truth and morality and to the promotion of civic virtue." A dedication dinner followed later that evening in the newly-built gymnasium. Most Rev. Thomas J. Walsh, the fifth Bishop of Newark, Msgr. John Duffy, the Vicar General of the Diocese, and a host of notable guests attended. Bishop Walsh returned to Montclair exactly five months later to dedicate the completed High School.

There were only 9 members of the High School's first graduating class, who had been able to study in the new building for only a few months. It was their lot to have had classes in a number of places during the first few years (1925-1929) while the new building was being planned and built. They dedicated the first volume of the High School's yearbook, Immaculata, to Fr. Farrell. The first graduates were Cecile Bernard, Frank J. Connell, John F. Daly, Catherine V. Fay, Pauline Morzillo, Katherine D. Murphy, Josephine G. Pesce, Mary R. Reagan and Dorothy F. Reilly. By 1933, there were over 900 students in Immaculate's elementary and high schools.

Fr. Farrell was able to raise some additional capital by selling a small piece of the parish cemetery, approximately two acres of the original 1895 purchase situated on the east side of Grove St. Even then Grove St. was busy enough to make the cemetery's use of those two acres impractical. Also, the Montclair Water Co. had run a water main along Grove St. on the east side. It was close enough to the road to be given a "public use" right of way, but it prevented an efficient layout of grave sites. No one was ever buried on that side of Grove St., and houses occupy the property now.

## Week 32

Father Farrell was first and foremost concerned with the spiritual well being of the parish. He was also dedicated to the men and women who served the parish as priests or nuns. He knew that the Sisters of Charity were going to need a bigger convent when he was finished with the high school so he built one (it now functions as the parish offices). Likewise, he suspected that there would be a time when more priests served the parish. In 1927 he engaged Fanning and Shaw to design a new rectory and DW McGee to build it. These were the same firms he would also use to construct the new high school. He and his fellow priests temporarily moved into nearby apartments while the old, wood frame rectory was torn down and the new, white brick rectory was built. Beaver Engineering was contracted to do the electrical work. TN Keigher installed the plumbing and heating. Late in 1927 the EM Janssen Co. of Hawthorne was hired to do the painting. The rectory was finished in 1929.

Father Farrell took an active interest in promoting vocations. Several young men became priests during his tenure as pastor or shortly thereafter. Alice Fleming Deisler wrote about the interest Father Farrell took in her brother. Monsignor Edward Fleming was ordained in 1944 and retired many years later as the executive vice president of Seton Hall. James and John McNulty, both parishioners, celebrated their first Masses at Immaculate in 1925. James went on to become the third Bishop of Paterson. John became the first president of Seton Hall University. Montclair native, Robert Grady, graduated from Immaculate Conception Grammar School in 1938. He was ordained in 1949. Robert Lennon, another Montclairite, who graduated from IC while Father Farrell was pastor, was ordained in 1950. What follows is a short list of parishioners and IC graduates who were influenced by Father Farrell and who either became priests or became brothers: Michael Reilly, Charles McTague (ordained in 1947), James Reilly (ordained in 1948), Thomas Lennon, Thomas Adams, George Kaine, John Tierney, Charles Taylor, Robert Hostler.

Father Farrell was faced with a dilemma. There was serious concern that the school that Father Mendl had struggled so hard to build 38 years earlier was a firetrap. Father Farrell considered tearing Tegakwita Hall down and erecting a brand new school, but a large number of parishioners couldn't bear to part with Father Mendl's legacy. Father Farrell decided to replace the wooden portions of the building. Wooden stairways and floors were removed and replaced by steel supports and terrazzo. Father Eugene Gallagher, who came to the parish in 1930 to assist Father Farrell, supervised the modernization of Tegakwita Hall. Sister Mary Inezita was the grammar school principal at the time. Father Farrell's devotion to the students at the schools was intense. Paul McLaughlin, a former Montclair Councilman and a graduate of the high school in 1937 gave testimony to Father Farrell's involvement in a pamphlet celebrating the 100th anniversary of our schools in 1981, "Father Farrell took a very active part in the teaching and guidance of the students. As one who was a student during eight years of Father Farrell's administration, I can witness to the fact that he was a very visible shepherd who had a remarkable influence on the pupils." Another person who influenced the students during those years was Elizabeth Caton, who taught 6th grade for 39 years, from 1922 to 1961.

The upgrade of the grammar school was the last big building project that Father Farrell was to undertake. However, it was far from the last big problem he had to face.

## Week 33

With the approval of the Diocese, Fr. Farrell borrowed over \$500,000 to fund the building campaign. The convent, rectory, high school and renovation of the grammar school were improvements that added enormous value to the parish and have enabled us to prosper ever since. The 1920s - and especially the late '20s - were prosperous times, and these projects seemed like wise investments. However, trouble was brewing that was far beyond most people's comprehension. On October 29, 1929, after a furious burst of investors buying stocks on margin, the stock market crashed, precipitating the longest and most devastating depression in U.S. history. Fr. Farrell found himself owing all that money in times when businesses and banks were closing, when people were losing their means of livelihood. Possibly because of his sturdy New England upbringing, he never lost faith. He gritted his teeth and went on with the business of running the parish.

One of the first things Fr. Farrell did was to refinance. On January 2, 1932, he and Parish Trustees Patrick Durr and James O'Hara sought permission from Bishop Walsh to float loans from other sources at a lower rate of interest and to retire the \$300,000 mortgage held by the Montclair Trust Co. Permission was granted, and Fr. Farrell was able to obtain loans from other parishes and cemeteries. On March 17, St. Patrick's Day, he returned the note held by the Trust Co. with payment for the full amount. (It is said that he cheerfully signed the check in green ink to mark the occasion!) Loans between parishes seemed to be how most of them got through the Great Depression. Immaculate Conception was even able to make some small loans to other churches, loaning \$10,000 to our mother parish, St. Peter's in Belleville, in 1933 and \$15,000 to Our Lady of Sorrows, South Orange, in 1936. There were several loans to and from the diocesan seminary. Fr. Farrell fought with the Diocese to get the parish assessment reduced: on January 10, 1933, he sent a letter to Bishop Walsh asking him to lower the assessment owing to a loss of \$28,000 in revenue. In 1935 he argued with the Vicar General, Msgr. Thomas H. McLaughlin, about an apparent 'double tax' on the high school. Msgr. McLaughlin was a native son of Immaculate; having grown up in Montclair, and mentored by Fr. Brothers, he was named the first Bishop of Paterson in 1937.

Fr. Farrell did everything he could to reduce the parish debt, and eventually paid off about half. Amazingly, even in desperate times he was able to find the resources to help parishioners who were in need. A 1932 report noted that Immaculate was assisting 18 families and 35 individuals. He put people to work landscaping the cemetery. In 1939 he purchased an orbronz (copper-plated zinc) group of statues depicting the Crucifixion and had it placed on a prominent ridge in the cemetery. It was cast by the DaPrato Co., famous for its statuary, who also fabricated the marble statue of the Sacred Heart in church. The Crucifixion group now looks out over Fr. Farrell's final resting place at the cemetery.

Immaculate was even able to make some small purchases of property during the Depression. In 1932 Fr. Farrell bought two lots on North Fullerton Ave., directly in front of the new High School; the lots serve as a playground/parking lot now. In 1940 Fr. Farrell bought a lot and house on Orange Rd. from the estate of Margaret Mansfield for \$12,750. It now serves as the High School athletic field, named Codey Field in honor of the late parishioner and avid High School supporter Frank J. Codey.

## Week 34

With the completion of the new high school came the advent of a more formal athletic program. Fr. Farrell and his assistant, Fr. Gallagher, encouraged high school sports. The first team to compete was the basketball team. A former Notre Dame basketball star, Gerald Griffin, was hired in 1929 to coach the varsity team, and in 1932 they won the Group II Championship of the N.J. State Interscholastic Athletic Association. Team captain Tom Treacy went on to basketball fame at his coach's alma mater, Notre Dame. Baseball and football were introduced in 1939, when Joseph Lennon was hired to coach those sports, the first in a dynasty of Lennons who either played for and/or coached IC teams for many years. That same year, the baseball team won the Parochial Championship.

In 1938 Fr. Farrell suffered a stroke that affected his right side. His right leg became lame and he could achieve only partial movement with his right arm. True to his stoic nature, Fr. Farrell persevered, gradually resuming his duties as pastor. He began walking despite a limp and taught himself to type with only his left hand. In May 1941, Pope Pius XII elevated Fr. Farrell to the rank of Monsignor, the first time one of our pastors was so honored. Over 800 people attended the special services held on Sunday evening, June 4, when Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh (the Diocese of Newark had become an Archdiocese in 1937), conferred the papal honor. Among those present were Msgr. James A. Hughes, chancellor of the Archdiocese, and native sons Bishop Thomas H. McLaughlin of Paterson and Frs. James A. McNulty (himself later the Bishop of Paterson) and John L. McNulty, brothers who often came home to Montclair for such occasions. Also attending were Frs. William Landers and John J. Brown of St. Cassian's Parish, and Fr. Thomas W. Powers, who would return to Immaculate Conception many years later as pastor.

Within six months of this memorable occasion, the nation was plunged into the upheaval of World War II. Over a thousand young men and women from the parish served in that terrible conflict, and thirty made the supreme sacrifice, giving their lives for their country. Fr. Edward Slattery, of Newark, was assigned intermittently to Immaculate Conception during his preparation for the priesthood. He came here permanently after his ordination in 1939. After the outbreak of war, he volunteered for the Chaplain corps. He entered the Navy as a lieutenant in 1942 and remained in the service until the late 1950s, retiring with the rank of Commander. Fr. Edward A. Synan came to the parish after his ordination in 1942 and became a Chaplain in the Army in 1944.

For twenty years Msgr. Farrell guided the parish with a mixture of stony resolve and good humor. He tended to the physical, spiritual and educational needs of the faithful, giving us buildings that have long proved their worth, and did it all while overcoming physical and financial hardships. In September 1944 he became ill and was taken to St. Vincent's Hospital, built on the site of our first church. Msgr. Farrell died on October 13. The Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by Newark Auxiliary Bishop Thomas A. Boland (later Archbishop of Newark), with Archbishop Walsh presiding and Bishops McLaughlin and McNulty attending. Fr. Michael Corr, of Blessed Sacrament Church in East Orange, who had known Msgr. Farrell since he came to New Jersey, served as deacon of the Mass. The funeral procession brought Msgr. Farrell's body to Immaculate Conception Cemetery, where he had employed so many out-of-work parishioners during the Depression. He was laid to rest on the side of the hill just below the Crucifixion group of statues that he had purchased only five years earlier.

Week 35

By 1944, the grand building campaigns at Immaculate were complete. Pastors and parishioners now found themselves with the less glorious, but no less expensive, problem of maintaining the buildings that had been erected. With the passing of Msgr. Farrell in 1944, Fr. Eugene Gallagher, his long-time friend and assistant, administered the parish: one issue he faced was the rectory furnace, changing it from labor-intensive coal to oil heat.

In March 1945, Archbishop Walsh appointed Fr. John A. Munley to be the eighth pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish. Born in Pittstown, PA, Fr. Munley graduated from St. Thomas College in Scranton and attended St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, NY. He was ordained on May 16, 1918 and his first priestly assignment was to Our Lady Help of Christians Church in East Orange. He arrived there at just about the same time Fr. Farrell was leaving to take over St. Michael's Parish in Netcong. Fr. Munley served in East Orange until 1921, when he was transferred to St. Henry's in Bayonne. In 1937, he was appointed pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Hillsdale, where he remained until his appointment to Montclair. Fr. Munley's first Mass at Immaculate was offered on March 18, and the next day by a gala welcome reception was held in the High School gym. Theodore Osbahr chaired the reception committee, and Music Director Prof. E. Boyd Smack led the parish glee club in song, while many parish organizations came out in force to say hello to the new pastor.

Fr. Munley, by all accounts, was a deeply spiritual man. It is reported that he also was very concerned with social justice and the welfare of all people. He saw a great need for religion to counter evil in the world, especially the perceived evil of Communism. He paid special attention to the spiritual needs of returning servicemen and -women, who had experienced the evil of World War II.

Although it was before Fr. Munley's time, a few sentences are needed to acknowledge an evil of which Immaculate was no less guilty than other institutions in Montclair - racial segregation. Montclair was segregated and suffered from institutionalized racism, just as most U.S. towns did, in the South and in the North. There are no records of how African-Americans were treated in our original church, but there are verbal testimonies that they were not allowed to attend Mass in the finished church on North Fullerton Ave. They had to wait downstairs in the pews (still there from the days when the basement was the sanctuary) until after Mass, when a priest would bring Communion to them. In response to this treatment, a group of eight African-American families met in the basement of the church to start a parish of their own in 1931. They bought a house on Elm St. that was the original St. Peter Claver Church, a mission associated with Holy Spirit Parish in Orange. Fr. Cornelius Ahern celebrated Mass there on weekends and holy days. In 1939 the present St. Peter Claver Church building was started on Elmwood Ave., and it became a self-sustaining parish in 1973. It is important not to forget this sinful injustice as an aspect of our history, to ask forgiveness of God and of those who were victimized by it, and to acknowledge the blessing of greater understanding and mutual respect in more recent decades. Immaculate Conception owes much to its African-American parishioners, past and present.

Fr. Munley was faced with the large debt from construction of the high school, the convent, the rectory and the renovation of the grammar school, and he had to maintain those buildings. Future segments will discuss specific problems he encountered. One thing he did - taken for granted now, but probably seen at the time by many parishioners as the single most important change in parish history - was to install cushioned pads on the hard wooden kneelers in the pews and on the marble step at the altar rail. Progress indeed!

## Week 36

One of the first things Fr. Munley did was to organize a Guard of Honor, a group of parish men who showed people to their seats in church, managed the collections at Mass and helped out in many ways during various liturgies. Michael McDermott was the first president. The famed post-war Baby Boom was beginning, and the parish grew to 4,600 households. Masses were starting to get a little hectic: on Easter Sunday in 1947, 3,500 people attended Mass!

An extra freshman class was added to the High School in 1945. Fr. Munley asked Mother Elenita of the Sisters of Charity of Convent Station for additional Sisters to teach. Sister Pauline was the principal of both schools from 1939 to 1945, followed by Sister Grace Benigna, who administered both schools from 1945 to 1951. Sister Mary Cecelia held the same position from 1951 to 1954. During his tenure as Pastor, Fr. Munley made improvements to the schools: he had all the classrooms repainted, had book-cases installed and put in P.A. systems. He purchased all new office equipment, bought new chairs for the grammar school assembly room and doubled the seating capacity of the stands at Codey Field. Under his guidance the school library purchased several encyclopedias and catalogued all the books. A Miss Prevost, on loan from the Newark Public Library, directed that operation. A Kindergarten was started at the grammar school in 1952.

The church interior had been painted in one shade of white when it was dedicated in 1909 - probably to save money. Much of the intricate detail was lost to view, camouflaged by the monochrome. In 1949 Fr. Munley had Gonippo Raggi & Sons of East Orange repaint the interior in shades of beige, highlighted by a very delicate blue. Different colors made the John H. Parker Company's incredible plaster work stand out, and people began to notice the delicate flowers, leaves, grapes and other intricacies that had always been there. Astonishingly, the Raggi Company was able to complete the job in only 90 days.

Fr. Munley also sought to improve the cemetery. In 1946 he bought a statue of the Sorrowful Mother and had it placed on a pedestal on the west slope of the cemetery along Mt. Hebron Road. It was made of orbronz (copper-plated zinc) like the Crucifixion scene, and cost \$2,000; Fr. Munley later added statues of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Anthony of Padua. In 1951 Fr. Munley spent \$8,500 to repair the curbs and sidewalks at the cemetery. Following Fr. Gallagher's lead when, as Administrator, he had converted the rectory to oil heat, Fr. Munley decided to upgrade the church and convent furnaces to eliminate the work of having to shovel coal, and converted them to oil.

Fr. Munley succeeded in retiring the debt generated by Msgr. Farrell's ambitious building program. In December 1946 the parish repaid a \$20,000 loan borrowed from Hudson County Catholic Cemeteries in 1943. On December 28, 1949, a \$40,600 check was sent to Sacred Heart Parish, Bloomfield, to pay off a \$50,000 loan borrowed in 1932. And in 1951 the final payment was made on a loan of \$100,000 given by St. Patrick's Parish, Jersey City, also in 1932.

On September 14, 1951, Immaculate Conception was considerably reduced in geographical size when Msgr. John McClary, Vicar General of the Archdiocese, finalized the boundaries of a new parish to be formed out of Immaculate. Speaking for Archbishop Walsh, the Vicar General determined that the new parish, St. Catherine of Siena, would include the entire Borough of Cedar Grove.

## Week 37

Fr. Munley made a pilgrimage to Rome during the Holy Year of 1950, when he was fortunate enough to have a private audience with Pope Pius XII at the Holy Father's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. He received a special papal blessing to transmit to parishioners back home at Immaculate. He stayed in Europe for two months: he enjoyed the trip and made plans to return. On August 17, 1954, during the special Marian Holy Year, he went back to Europe with a tour organized by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, traveling with the McNulty brothers from Montclair - Bishop James, of Paterson, and Msgr. John, the president of Seton Hall University - and Msgr. James Looney, chancellor of the Archdiocese. Fr. Munley appeared to be in perfect health and planned to stay in Europe for a few more weeks, but God had other plans: on September 22, while still in Italy, Fr. Munley had a massive heart attack and died.

His remains were flown home, and on October 1, 1954, a Solemn High Requiem Mass was celebrated to honor his life, to console his sisters, Agnes and Catherine, and the members of the parish, and to mark the transition of his soul to heaven. Msgr. John Tierney, Prefect of Discipline at Immaculate Conception Seminary and a Montclair native himself, delivered the eulogy which was excerpted in Riley's centennial history of the parish: "The ideal priest devotes himself completely to the spiritual welfare of the souls committed to his care. Fr. Munley was in every sense an ideal priest...The devoted priests and laity of the parish know of Fr. Munley's tender solicitude for the sick and needy of the parish, of his patient and sympathetic understanding of the weaknesses and frailty of human nature...Those of us who look to Immaculate Conception Parish as our 'home parish' give thanks to God for having given to us the blessing of Fr. Munley's priestly ministrations...We who have known and admired him in life will not fail to remember his soul in our prayers. He, we are confident, will not be unmindful of us before the throne of our Heavenly Father. The good which he accomplished while with us will continue on, passing over into eternity itself. For the work of the priest, who is the servant of God, is not measured in time, but rather in the timelessness of eternity...."

Fr. Munley was laid to rest in Immaculate Conception Cemetery on the side of the hill under the Crucifixion scene, not far from where Msgr. Farrell was buried. Fr. John E. McCarthy, who had been assistant pastor at Immaculate since his ordination in 1941, assumed the responsibilities of running the parish until a new pastor could be assigned. Helping him were Frs. Joseph G. Sheehan, who had been at Immaculate since 1948, Thomas E. Davis, who had arrived in 1949. Fr. James A. Carey came to Immaculate Conception at just about the same time the new pastor did. On April 23, 1955, Archbishop Thomas A. Boland announced that Msgr. Thomas H. Powers would be taking over as our pastor. Msgr. Powers had a long and distinguished career which prepared him well for his duties at Immaculate. He also had a personal tie to the parish. His sister, Sister Mary Pauline, had been assigned to the parish and had served as Principal of the grammar and high schools from 1939 to 1945.

Week 38

In his centennial history of the parish, *A Century of Catholicism*, Seton Hall University Professor George Riley outlined Msgr. Powers' career before he arrived at Immaculate. It was repeated verbatim in *The Montclair Times*:

"...Msgr. Powers was born in Summit on Oct. 19, 1899, the son of the late Henry J. and Mary (O'Brien) Powers. He attended St. Teresa's Grammar School in that town and in 1919 was graduated from Summit High School. In the fall of 1919 he entered Seton Hall College and in June of 1923 the Bachelor of Arts degree was conferred upon him. He began the pursuit of his theological studies, and in 1925 received the degree of Master of Arts.

"He was ordained to the priesthood on March 12, 1927 and began his priestly career as the Dean of Men at Seton Hall College, where he also taught Latin and Religion. In September 1936, he was named Student Counselor on the campus, and in 1940 he became the first Director of the Divinity School. On September 26, 1948, Pope Pius XII appointed him a papal chamberlain, with the rank of Very Reverend Monsignor and on March 20, 1950 he was appointed Rector of Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington, succeeding the Most Reverend George W. Ahr, S.T.D., who was installed as the Bishop of Trenton. In June of the same year, Seton Hall University conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws on Monsignor Powers.

"At Darlington as at Seton Hall, his kindly firmness soon became a living legend. On September 15, 1954, His Holiness Pope Pius XII raised Monsignor Powers to the domestic prelacy, with the rank of Right Reverend Monsignor. He remained at Darlington until his appointment as rector of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Thus did Monsignor Powers bring a distinguished record with him as he took charge of his new assignment in Montclair..."

Immaculate was reduced in size geographically when St. Catherine of Siena Parish was created, but not reduced significantly in population. There were still about 4,000 parishioners and almost 1,000 students in the schools. Msgr. Powers had four priests assisting him: Frs. Carey, McCarthy, Sheehan and Davis. Sister Ethna was the Principal of both schools during the 1954-55 school year, with a staff of two parish priests, twelve Sisters of Charity and five lay teachers. There was a librarian and a secretary. Classes were large. The Montclair Department of Health provided a doctor and a nurse. Sister Marie DeLourdes took over in the Fall of 1955, remaining with the parish until 1959. During her administration the schools were separated, and she became Principal of the elementary school only.

On the eve of its 100th anniversary, Msgr. Powers presided over a large parish with buildings that were beginning to age. Times were relatively prosperous: the enormous parish debt had been whittled away, but was not entirely gone. Msgr. Powers noticed that renovations were needed and that the many parish organizations needed a place to hold meetings. He decided to remove the pews from the basement of the church and to create a worthy parish center. A campaign was started with the goal of raising \$300,000. Timothy J. Fleming and Patrick J. Reardon were named honorary executive chairmen. James J. McMahon was chosen to be the general chairman. He was assisted by Raymond E. Galligan and by team chairmen, vice chairmen and team captains too numerous to mention. The campaign team came to a total of 300 parishioners. A kickoff meeting was held on Sunday, Oct. 26, 1956. A letter of approval and a prayer for success from Archbishop Boland was read to open the meeting.

Week 39

This week in honor of Mother's Day we present a reflection from parishioner Ethel O'Mara on her husband's mother, Mary Ann Coghlan O'Mara 1873-1959.

When our priests enter the sanctuary to say daily mass, they pull a cord which rings a bell for everyone to stand and greet our Celebrant. This bell was given to Immaculate Conception Parish in 1959 by the O'Mara Family. It was in memory of their Mother, Mary Ann Coghlan O'Mara.

Mary Ann came to Montclair in the summer of 1888. She said everyone was still talking about the blizzard. Born in County Cavan, Ireland she arrived in Montclair at age 16 years with her parents and four younger brothers. Their church, of course, was on Washington Street. She worked with a dressmaker who made wedding gowns for the wealthy. Mary Ann met and married John W. O'Mara at Immaculate Conception on October 28, 1896. The Reverend Joseph Mendl officiated.

While raising her six children she was always tending to her parents and bachelor brothers. Her world was suddenly shattered when her husband, John, died December 12, 1918 during the flu epidemic. Martin, my husband, was seven years old. The family lived on Portland Place at the time. In those days there were no benefits to help her. She then rented a large house, 44 Elm Street, across from St. Vincent's and took in her bachelor brothers who were all employed to help her through these years. As her own children became of age they went to work to keep the family stable.

During her 70 years of life in Montclair she witnessed many changes in her beloved town and parish. The Church moves from Washington St. to North Fullerton Ave. She was present when the cornerstone was blest. The purchase of the land for the cemetery. The building of the grammar school, high school, convent and rectory. She welcomed the telephone and the automobile. As her children took wings and spread out across our country, she would visit them by train then by air. My husband always said Mother went from jaunting cars to jets.

I treasure her memory and her love for Immaculate Conception Parish. She was alive for the Century Celebration and was very proud and pleased. Mary Ann rests at Immaculate Conception Cemetery along with all her loved ones including Martin John (Chief) O'Mara, my husband.

Week 40

In celebration of the parish's 100th anniversary, Msgr. Powers asked Newark architects Rudolph Kruger and Robert Fava to design a new parish center in the basement of the church. They considered the needs of the parish and decided to make it a flexible-use space. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts were to use the space, as well as many other parish organizations. Plans called for folding partitions, state-of-the-art back then. After consultation with Msgr. Powers and key members of the parish, the architects decided to add a kitchen and restrooms to make the space as multi-functional as possible. Plans also called for dropped ceilings, terrazzo floors, tiled walls for easy maintenance, and reflective, egg-crate louvers under fluorescent lighting to make the space evenly bright. Some structural work was needed: the steel beams that supported the church were to be reinforced, so that two rows of columns running down the center of the basement, on which the church floor upstairs rested, could be removed, allowing for more open space in the basement area. Specifications were completed by December, 1956, and the Bryan Construction Co. of North Arlington was chosen to do the work. The project was essentially complete by the end of 1957, and the newly finished basement was renamed in honor of our patron, the Blessed Mother: what had once been the lower church, then an auditorium known as Gately Hall after our sixth Pastor, would now be called "Madonna Hall."

The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) also used Madonna Hall. Essex County had a particularly active CYO, thanks to Fr. Thomas E. Davis, an assistant pastor at Immaculate Conception since 1949. According to an October 25, 1956 article in *The Montclair Times*, the Essex Co. CYO was so busy they needed a 3-room office at 425 Bloomfield Ave. Fr. Davis had two full-time assistants, Ann Onembo and Robert Larkin, and nine part-time assistants. They oversaw 120 basketball teams, 51 baseball teams, 18 bowling teams and 677 track and field athletes from 20 parishes! The CYO directed numerous social activities, such as journalism contests, oratory and essay competitions, dances, hobby shows, amateur talent nights and participation in WAAT, a low-power local radio station. The CYO ran a summer day camp and a swimming club, and arranged visits to the sick and to people in nursing homes. In 1956 the young men and women of the CYO raised \$13,000 for the March of Dimes. On the spiritual side, the Essex Co. CYO held monthly holy hours and Sunday Communion Breakfasts.

As always, Immaculate Conception's schools needed attention. Msgr. Powers updated the lighting in the High School, and under his direction the Elementary School cafeteria was renovated. The old library was converted into two classrooms, while a new library was built in the former assembly hall on the first floor.

Msgr. Powers also had work done in the Convent (now our Parish Center). He hired Summit Studios, a New York contracting firm that performed all manner of church construction projects, to make the Convent more livable and to renovate its Chapel. Fr. Davis was deeply involved with this project. The Chapel no longer exists, but vestiges of it can be seen in the meeting room/library at the east end of the first floor. The Chapel's Stations of the Cross, carved of lindenwood, are now in storage, but its statues of St. Joseph the Worker and of the Virgin Mary can be seen in the Rectory. Our Blessed Mother is depicted as "Rosa Mystica" or Mystical Rose, one of the titles accorded Mary in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. It was as "Rosa Mystica" that Mary appeared to Pierina Gilli at Montichiari, Italy in 1947. The statue shows Mary holding a rose, a flower long associated with her as a symbol of purity and beauty, but also because the stems of roses bear thorns: Mary, our Mystical Rose, reminds us of her own pain and suffering as Mother of Our Savior, and of her constant intercession for suffering humanity.

Week 41

Msgr. Powers used some of the money raised for the Madonna Hall project for needed work in the church proper. He had the pews and doors, as well as the gold-toned organ pipes in the choir loft, refinished. The visible pipes are dummies, not connected to the air system but serving as a beautiful façade to hide the working pipes. He replaced the original organ console, numbered 639 when built by the Austin Organ Co. of Hartford, CT, and installed with the organ in 1916. The replacement console, also made by the Austin Co., was not new. Numbered 2007, it had been made in 1937 for the West End Collegiate (Reformed) Church in Manhattan. It still can play the loft pipes, but the present console on the main floor of church near the altar, made and installed by the Peragallo Pipe Organ Co. of Paterson during the church restoration of 1995, plays both the loft pipes and a new set of electronic stops added in that restoration. For the 150th anniversary of the parish, the Peragallo Co. is making still further additions and repairs to the organ.

Msgr. Powers had Summit Studios of New York remove the original tabernacle from the high altar and install a new one with a gold-lacquered revolving door, on which the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) symbol is represented. Jesus is often symbolized by a lamb, usually on an altar, ready for sacrifice, holding at times the palm branches of victory, at times a banner with the image of the Cross. Since the time of Abraham, before the development of Jewish ritual, lambs were offered in sacrifice to God, a gift from the flocks that were the people's sustenance. Later, the rites of Passover, marking the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt, featured the sacrifice of a lamb, which typically allows itself to be sheared and even to go to slaughter without fuss. Like a lamb, Jesus went unresisting to His death. Though without sin, He allowed Himself to be sacrificed as a precious offering for our sins. The palm branches or banner and Cross symbolize His victory, showing that Jesus conquered sin and death in His Resurrection. In 1957 Summit Studios removed the sanctuary lamp fixture from its original spot on the wall near the high altar and fashioned the free-standing lamp seen today. This candle burns constantly to remind us of Jesus' abiding Presence in the tabernacle in the Eucharistic Bread, the Blessed Sacrament. It is proper, when passing before the tabernacle in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, to genuflect or bow in reverence.

In 1958 Msgr. Powers bought a lot between North Fullerton Ave. and Cottage Pl., across from the High School. A house on the lot was torn down so the property could be used for parking. It now also contains a 'temporary' classroom structure for the High School. In 1958 Msgr. Powers employed architect Robert Fava again, this time partnered with H. Robley Saunder, to design a 5-space garage for the rectory; built in 1959, it is still used by the parish priests. With the garage finished, the building campaign begun in 1956 for the parish's centenary came to a close. As the momentous decade of the 1960s began, Msgr. Powers, assisted by Frs. John E. McCarthy, Joseph G. Sheehan, Thomas E. Davis and Charles F. Theobald, at last presided over a parish with no construction project underway.

In the summer of 1962 Msgr. Powers became ill. Admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital, then still a general service hospital on Elm St., he died on Saturday, November 17, 1962. Fr. Eugene Gallagher, who had served at Immaculate Conception during the pastorates of Msgr. Farrell and Fr. Munley, celebrated the Requiem Mass. Msgr. Powers was buried not in the parish cemetery on Grove St., but in St. Teresa's Cemetery, Summit, the town where he had grown up.

Fr. John McCarthy was named Administrator of the parish after the death of Msgr. Powers. The great social changes of the 1960s were building, with the civil rights struggle coming to the fore and initiatives like the Peace Corps, created by the nation's first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, attracting the interest of young people and other public-spirited citizens. Change was coming to the Church as well. Shortly after his election in 1959, Pope John XXIII called for an Ecumenical Council to revitalize the Catholic Church. After two years of organization, the Council's first session convened in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on October 11, 1962. Over 3,000 bishops from all over the world participated in the Second Vatican Council (the first Council in almost a century) during its four sessions. Attended by Orthodox Christian and Protestant observers and representatives of Catholic religious and laity, the Council laid the groundwork for a transformation of Catholic life before ending in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. It is impossible to sum up here the effect that "Vatican II" had on the global Church; the ramifications still impact the way we live as Catholics today. Among the issues the Council addressed were: reinforcing the role of Scripture as a source for spiritual renewal; redefining the role of the laity as part of the Mystical Body of Christ; increasing mutual understanding, respect and solidarity among Christians and with members of other religions. In March 1963, Fr. Tom Davis gave a presentation at the First Congregational Church on some of the changes that were coming about as a result of the Council deliberations. It seems quite normal now, but it was unusual for a Catholic priest then to speak at a non-Catholic church. Also in March, the Holy Name Society instituted a new program for the men of the parish. In keeping with the spirit of the Council, opportunities were created for men to become involved in the religious and social life of the parish, and they were encouraged to get involved with political and social reform in the larger community.

On April 3, 1963, Archbishop Boland appointed Msgr. Thomas W. Cunningham to be Immaculate's next pastor. Arriving on Holy Saturday, Msgr. Cunningham had a busy first weekend in the parish, delivering a sermon at all the Easter Masses. Born in Jersey City, Msgr. Cunningham grew up in South Orange, graduated from Seton Hall College and attended the Archdiocesan Seminary at Darlington before his ordination in 1936. He served first as Assistant Pastor at St. John's Parish in Orange (Fr. Brothers' home parish) and in 1940 joined the faculty at Seton Hall as a professor of English. Obtaining an M.A. in English at Fordham University and a doctorate at Yale, Msgr. Cunningham taught for many years, later becoming chairman of the English Department, then Vice President for Instruction and finally, in 1959, Acting President of Seton Hall, where he remained until his assignment to Immaculate Conception. The Trustees of Seton Hall honored him with the Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid Medal for Distinguished Service, named for the first President of Seton Hall; Msgr. Cunningham was one of the Award's first recipients. He wrote many articles and books, most notably *Saints Off Pedestals*, biographies of important saints, portrayed as the human beings they actually were, rather than as the icons they became.

A reception was held to welcome Msgr. Cunningham on May 8, 1963. Speeches were given by Fr. McCarthy, Fr. Joseph Sheehan, and by Msgr. Cunningham's close friend and former IC parishioner Msgr. Edward J. Fleming, at that time Executive Vice President of Seton Hall. Parishioner James J. McMahon was the general chairman of the event: McMahon had recently been made a Knight of St. Gregory by Pope John XXIII, in recognition of his many years of service to the Church, principally as a Knight of Columbus.

Week 43

In September 1963, tragedy struck when Immaculate Conception High School football player Jimmy Pascuiti was injured in a pre-season scrimmage, leaving him severely paralyzed. Parishioners and many Montclair citizens responded decisively. A testimonial dinner was held at the Meadowbrook in Cedar Grove on January 19, 1964, with the dual purpose of honoring baseball legend and IC member Yogi Berra, who had just been named Manager of the New York Yankees, and raising money for Jimmy. Over 1,100 people attended the dinner, and \$24,000 was raised. With characteristic generosity, Yogi insisted that all proceeds be given to Jimmy's rehabilitation fund. An unfortunate effect of the accident was that IC's football program was suspended indefinitely.

On November 22, the country and the world were stunned by the assassination in Dallas of President John F. Kennedy. Immaculate Conception parishioners shared the shock of all Americans, with added feeling over the death of the first Catholic to serve as the nation's Chief Executive. In Rome, the proceedings of the Vatican Council were interrupted as the assembled bishops prayed for the late President, his family and the people of the United States. Pope Paul VI, who had met Mr. Kennedy earlier that year, sent his own condolences and a personal representative to the President's funeral. The Requiem Mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, presided over by Boston archbishop and Kennedy family friend Cardinal Richard Cushing, was televised along with the committal service at Arlington National Cemetery, displaying the Catholic funeral rites to an unprecedented national audience.

1964 was an eventful year at Immaculate. In the summer, Fr. Patrick Acoy, a priest from Ghana, spent six weeks here. Trained in Europe and teaching in Rome, Fr. Acoy arrived in Montclair to learn about the American Catholic parish system by working in one. Msgr. Cunningham, whose career was dedicated to social reform and the new-found ecumenical spirit emanating from the Council in Rome, was his mentor. Later that summer, parishioners began to notice the church bells were not ringing clearly. Msgr. Cunningham discovered that timbers supporting the chimes had deteriorated. The slumping bells were being muffled by contact with their support frames, which had to be shored up. Inspecting further, Monsignor noticed that some of the masonry in the bell tower had come loose. In October he hired the Jung Brothers Co. of Maplewood to make needed repairs. A dramatic photo of the scaffolded tower appeared on the front page of The Montclair Times on October 8.

The biggest event of the year was an Open House held on Sunday, November 22, for the general public. Thomas Langan was the event chairman. Msgr. Cunningham and a welcoming committee met visitors at the door. Patrick Scully, of the Holy Name Society, led tours of the church, and the priests and various parishioners were stationed throughout, to explain the baptismal font, statues, Stations of the Cross, vestments, Confessionals and altars. The tour ended in the Sacristy, where sacred vessels are kept when not in use and where the priests vest for Mass. High School Principal Sr. Miriam Bernard conducted tours of the Convent. Dorothy Cronrath, Marge Van Etten and the Rosary-Altar Society supervised refreshments in Madonna Hall. An Honor Guard, assisted by the CYO, directed the parking of cars.

Approximately 1,400 people braved the cold to visit the church, including many local religious leaders, among them Rabbi Schnitzer of Congregation Shomrei Emunah. A follow-up meeting was held in Madonna Hall the next day to answer questions that the church tour may have raised. This openness was in keeping with the directives of the Second Vatican Council. After years of not communicating with other religions, and vice versa, the Catholic Church was beginning to talk with people of other faiths.

Locally, no one was a more active proponent than Msgr. Cunningham. At year's end, he was invited to write a sermon to be published in The Montclair Times - something that would not have happened before Vatican II. He chose the topic "Presumption" and decried the sin of pride and the presumption of God's mercy without any effort by the sinner to repent. The sermon appeared in the January 14, 1965 issue.

Week 44

On December 20, 1964, Archbishop Boland conferred a singular honor on Msgr. Cunningham. At the Archbishop's request, Pope Paul VI had designated Msgr. Cunningham a 'domestic prelate'. The title denotes that the honoree has a special position in the papal household. At the Vatican, domestic prelates perform specific duties for the Pope; elsewhere, the position is honorary. Msgr. Cunningham was thus elevated to a higher rank and entitled to wear the purple robes and sash of a prelate. A reception for Monsignor was held in Madonna Hall on January 17, 1965.

The High School was also honored in 1965: in April, it was re-accredited by the Middle States Association, not a particularly remarkable accomplishment in itself, but Dr. Bingeman, chairman of the accrediting committee, felt that the report should contain the following declaration: "Nowhere among the dozen or more schools visited by me in the last 18 months has there been a more lucid, complete and total evaluation of the objectives, course integration, community needs and end-results than that prepared by the faculty." Unfortunately, the High School basketball and baseball teams had only lukewarm seasons that year. In other parish news, the Rosary-Altar Society reached its 100th anniversary in May. First pastor Fr. Joslin had organized the society in 1865 to enlist the aid of female parishioners in the spiritual and material activities of the Catholic community. They celebrated with a fashion show, the Fashion Show of Yesteryear. Thirty-five volunteer models wore gowns patterned after clothes worn by women of the parish over the course of a century. The show took place in September. That month, just before he left for the final session of the Vatican Council, Archbishop Boland announced that Monsignor Cunningham was to be the chairman of the Diocesan Ecumenical Study Commission. The commission was to study interfaith relations and to discover ways increase Christian unity. Monsignor was the ideal person for the position. On his own he founded the "Conveners", a local chapter of the Conference on Religion and Race. Four Montclair clergymen convened informally to discuss common issues that affected them all. The group expanded over the years to include other clergy and lay people.

In October Pope Paul VI visited America to deliver a plea for peace at the United Nations. Only a few parishioners were lucky enough to see the Pope in person. Four nuns from each parish were invited to attend a papal mass at Yankee Stadium. Sisters Margaret Cordes, Mary Elena, Mary Hugh and Mary Agnes represented our parish. Lay parishioner, Thomas Langan, also went. Another lay parishioner, John Q Adams, who was active in the ecumenical movement, had tickets for Yankee Stadium, but gave them to the Protestant Council as a good will gesture. He did see the Pope at the Waldorf Astoria however. Monsignor Cunningham had tickets for the stadium, but was sick with a viral infection and could not go. Father Charles Theobald, an associate pastor, saw the Pope at St. Patrick's Cathedral. A Montclair citizen, Thomas McFadden, a manager at Trans World Airlines, was privileged to fly back to Rome with the Pope on the Pope's plane. Although most people were unable to meet Pope Paul, they were able to watch the proceedings on television.

In 1966 Father Theobald was reassigned. His replacement was one Rev. Francis J Burla, a young priest who had just been ordained in 1963. Father Burla recently celebrated his 41st year with us.

Week 45

Vatican Council II produced several momentous decrees and documents which changed Catholic life and still affect the way we practice our faith today. Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in December, 1963, emphasized the importance of liturgy in spiritual formation and expressed a need for more involvement by all Catholics: "...this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit....." While not expressly requiring (or discouraging) the use of local or 'vernacular' languages in the liturgy, it urged "careful" restoration of the liturgy so that "...the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy....." In most countries this was taken to mean that the Mass should be celebrated regularly 'in the language of the people' rather than in Latin. By 1966, as authorized by the U.S. Catholic bishops, parts of the Mass were being celebrated in English at Immaculate Conception, with the Mass fully in English by 1970.

Another world event that impacted life here and throughout our country was U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. Fr. Joseph Sheehan, associate pastor at IC since his ordination in 1948, became increasingly aware of the harsh conditions in South Vietnam due to the war. He gave lectures explaining how the war was affecting the South Vietnamese people and organized a committee to provide relief; they raised \$3,000 in cash and \$15,000 in medical supplies. In 1966 Fr. Sheehan volunteered for the U.S. Army's Chaplain Corps and asked for assignment to Vietnam. He was three years past the cut-off age for military chaplains, but N.J. Senator Harrison Williams helped him get a waiver and he entered the army that year.

More changes soon followed. In 1967, Fr. John McCarthy left IC to form a new parish in Woodcliff Lake, in Bergen County. The new parish was named for our Blessed Mother under the title bestowed at the end of the Second Vatican Council, Our Lady, Mother of the Church. Msgr. Cunningham, with the blessing of the archdiocese and the parish trustees, loaned the new parish \$600,000 to get started; the loan was repaid in full by 1993. Meanwhile, associate pastor Fr. Thomas Davis, at Immaculate since 1949, was appointed campus minister at Montclair State College, where he arranged for the purchase and establishment of the Newman Center, which still serves the campus ministry on Valley Road. Newly-ordained Fr. William Dowd arrived at IC in 1967 to take over some of Fr. Davis' and Fr. McCarthy's responsibilities.

On April 1, 1968, The Montclair Times announced that, in keeping with the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II, Msgr. Cunningham was to chair a conference on Interfaith Dialogue to be held at Seton Hall University on April 23. The conference was to follow the lead of the Council, which not only urged communication with other Christian churches but, in a historic break-through, encouraged talks between Roman Catholics and people of the Jewish, Muslim and other non-Christian religions. The Seton Hall conference was the first of its kind in New Jersey, and Gov. Richard J. Hughes, himself a Catholic, publicly acknowledged the importance of the event: "In these troubled times I can think of no more worthwhile endeavor than this meeting, wherein representatives of the various spiritual communities are coming together for discussion and fellowship." Msgr. Cunningham represented the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark as chairman of the Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Bishop Leland Stark and Archdeacon Henry Biggin represented the Episcopal Diocese, while Sidney Kellner, director of the N.J. Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, represented the AJC; others in attendance were representatives of the N.J. Council of Churches, the N.J. Association of Reformed Rabbis and the Rabbinical Association of Northern New Jersey.

Shortly after promulgating one of Vatican II's first decrees, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Pope Paul VI established the Council for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, a new agency charged with restoring the liturgy of the Mass and Sacraments. Its mission was to restore, rather than change, "the elements that have suffered injury through the accidents of history..." The Council Fathers had directed that the liturgy had to be simplified, to be made more accessible and to incorporate more elements of the Bible. Almost immediately, bishops' conferences from all over the world voted to expand the use of local languages in the liturgy. A series of directives from Rome steadily authorized increasing amounts of the Mass to be said in the vernacular, with the Roman Missal the basis for the authorized translations from Latin. By the time the revised Missal was published in 1970, priests were no longer required to use Latin in any part of the Mass. The revised Rite was commonly known as the "Novus Ordo" because it made changes to the "ordinary" or unvarying portions of the Mass. However, it addressed the entire Rite. Four sections of the Mass were distinguished: the Opening Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites. Three new alternative Eucharistic Prayers ('Canons') were added, and the priest was to read them aloud, instead of quietly to himself. Some of the changes were instituted at Immaculate right away; some took years to be fully implemented.

The Novus Ordo called for the principal altar (the Altar of Sacrifice) to be free-standing, placed away from a wall or reredos (a special wall or backdrop, often very ornate, built behind the altar and tabernacle), in a way that allowed the priest to walk around it and face the congregation while saying Mass. At Immaculate, the original altar mensa, or table-top, was removed from the domed reredos in the sanctuary apse, its place filled with a marble frontal trimmed in gold mosaic tile; a wooden altar table was temporarily used until a marble one (still in use) was constructed. The Novus Ordo provided for lay readers to proclaim the Scriptures at Mass, and eventually for lay ministers to assist in distributing Holy Communion; it also allowed for laity to present the bread and wine during the Offertory and to receive Communion under both species (Sacred Host and Precious Blood) in certain circumstances, but these latter changes did not occur at Immaculate until after Msgr. Cunningham's tenure.

Msgr. Cunningham led the parish through some of the earliest changes that developed from Vatican II. He certainly embraced the spirit of ecumenism that characterized the Council, which, at Pope John XXIII's direction, had as a principal aim the promotion of full Unity among Christians. Msgr. Cunningham represented a new way of approaching the priesthood, typifying a more socially-aware kind of ministry. Before Vatican II, priests were expected to limit their attention to their specific duties. When Monsignor was ordained, it would have been considered unusual for a priest to meet with clergy of other churches and faiths: it would seem odd if a priest didn't do so today. True to his long career at Seton Hall, Msgr. Cunningham was deeply concerned with education, devoting himself to Immaculate's two schools and to the faith-formation of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. In 1971 he received the Coronat Medal from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. In 1977, after 14 years at Immaculate Conception, Msgr. Cunningham retired, given the new title of Pastor Emeritus. He remained at the rectory for a short while, then moved to the Jersey Shore and finally to Florida, where he assisted at various parishes. He died in November, 1992.

Week 47

In 1970 Fr. William J. Gallagher came to Immaculate as an associate pastor. Ordained in 1959, Fr. Gallagher had served as a parish priest and was Chaplain at St. James Hospital, Newark, before his arrival in Montclair.

Football had been suspended at Immaculate Conception High School since 1963, when Jimmy Pascuiti was hurt. In 1969, largely through the efforts of Father Burla, football was reinstated. In 1974, under Coach Jack Jones, the high school football team, the Lions, had a perfect, undefeated season. They went 9 - 0 and won the Big 6 Catholic Conference championship.

On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions, in effect nullifying all laws in the country forbidding or restricting abortion. The Catholic Church immediately opposed the decision and has remained firm in that opposition, seeing the matter as an abandonment of respect for the rights of the unborn. Archbishop Boland re-iterated Catholic teaching for the faithful of the Archdiocese, and in 1976 his successor, Archbishop Peter L. Gerety, addressed a letter to presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, taking issue with the Democratic Party's position on "abortion rights". Locally, members of Immaculate Conception parish protested the opening of abortion clinics in Montclair and the locating of the Planned Parenthood offices on North Fullerton Avenue across from the church. The abortion question continues to be a defining issue for Catholics, and members of Immaculate Conception have been consistent in support of the efforts of Birthright and other pro-life organizations and advocates.

On June 6, 1977 the Montclair Times announced that Rev. Carl A Young, son of Carl B and Louise Young, was going to take over for the retiring Monsignor Cunningham. He was installed by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Francis on June 19 at a ceremony held in our church. Father Young graduated from St. Benedict's Prep in Newark and Seton Hall University. He studied for the priesthood at the diocesan seminary at Darlington. He was ordained on May 30, 1953.

His first assignment was to Holy Family in Union City. He stayed at Holy Family for 19 years. As well as teaching at the high school there, he administered both the grammar school and high school. He was involved in social and athletic programs. He was the executive producer of the annual passion play at Holy Family for 10 years. In 1972 he was reassigned to Little Flower Parish in Berkeley Heights. He remained at Little Flower until he was asked to come to Immaculate. Father Young expressed "great expectations" at being transferred to Montclair. He noted that, "We are living in exciting and challenging times." He hoped to be of assistance to the parishioners of Immaculate in meeting those challenges. It was during his pastorate that most of the changes brought about by Vatican II were enacted.

Early in 1979 the new form of the Sacrament of Penance, renamed the Sacrament of Reconciliation, began to be used at Immaculate. Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic Constitution on Penance, *Paenitemini*, in 1966, calling for increased participation in the sacrament. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, issued during Vatican II, directed that the sacrament be renewed. The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship introduced the new order for the sacrament in 1973. The new rite was inaugurated in the United States on the first Sunday of Lent, 1977. It took a few years for the new rite to reach every American diocese. Father Young penned explanatory letters in several weekly bulletins. A series of talks, entitled “Why Did They Change Confession?” took place during February, 1979. Father Charlie Farrell, who had recently been assigned to Immaculate as an Associate Pastor, moderated the second session. The new rite encouraged communal celebration of the sacrament with the reading of scripture and encouraged individual confessions. The change that was probably most memorable to most people was the option to receive absolution face-to-face with the priest, rather than anonymously, with a screen between the priest and the penitent.

Another Vatican II change was implemented at Immaculate during Father Young’s pastorate. *Immensae Caritatis*, published in 1973, allowed for Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to distribute the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ in special circumstances. At Immaculate the extraordinary ministers started out bringing Communion to the sick. An appeal for donations to purchase special containers to carry the Blessed Sacrament, called pyxes, began to appear in the bulletins. Parishioners were asked to donate in memory of loved ones. The names were engraved in each pyx. Pastoral Ministers, Andrew and Anne Mau, brought Communion to the choir during Mass. The choir was still singing in the choir loft at the time. It was awkward for a priest to leave the front of the church to bring them Communion, or to have them file down from the loft to receive. Later that year, 1979, American Bishops authorized the reception of the Precious Blood as well as the Sacred Host at Mass. Appeals went out for more Extraordinary Ministers. When these changes occurred the people who held distribute Communion were commonly referred to as Eucharistic Ministers. The name could have been construed to mean that these ministers were somehow involved with the act of changing bread and wine into the Precious Body and Blood of Our Lord. Only an ordained priest can do that. It should be understood that these ministers are “extraordinary”, not the “ordinary” ministers of the Eucharist. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be trained and commissioned. They should fully comprehend the sacred nature of their mission.

The post-Vatican II period, as had happened before in the history of the Church, produced negative as well as positive results, as the process of change caused the institutional loyalty of some Catholics to weaken, and some withdrew from active involvement in parish life. Over time, one of the most notable shifts was in the number of people attending Mass weekly. It is estimated that, at the close of Vatican II in 1965, weekly Mass attendance among U.S. Catholics was about 50% - higher than in most places. By comparison, a parish survey at Immaculate Conception in 2002 suggested that weekly attendance then stood at about 30% of parishioners, higher than the national average of 25%, but still well below the pre-conciliar level. Reasons include, besides possible disagreement with the Council's liturgical and other reforms, a general loosening of the sense of obligation, which never formally altered: the obligation of Sunday Mass remains an expectation of Catholics, expressed in one of the six Commandments of the Church. But a relaxation of other previously strictly-maintained norms and customs (head-covering for women, e.g., or abstinence from meat on Fridays, etc.) may have conveyed the impression that Mass attendance was a matter of personal option. There was also a sharp decline in the regularity with which many Catholics availed themselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, despite the reforms of the Rite of Penance that many welcomed (the option of face-to-face Confession, making the confessional less dark and austere, etc.). Another very noticeable change was in the large numbers of priests and religious leaving their ministries or apostolates, many seeking dispensations from their vows in order to marry. This especially affected Catholic schools, which saw a drastic reduction in the number of religious Sisters and Brothers engaged in full-time teaching. Religious life changed forever, as communities heeded the Council's call for a review of their customs and lifestyle in light of their founders' charisms and their relevance for service in the contemporary Church. Numbers of candidates for priesthood and religious life also declined - a trend that is only now showing signs of stabilizing.

Parish life, of course, was affected by these universal conditions of rapid change. In addition to a drop in Mass attendance and sacramental participation, the finances of the parish suffered a serious decline, as the number of contributors lessened and collections failed to keep pace with rising expenses. At Immaculate Conception, Fr. Young had to issue dire warnings about the parish's financial state, primarily as the burden of subsidizing the parish schools increased with the necessary reliance on more lay teachers. The steady rise in tuition led to smaller enrollments of parishioners in the Elementary and High Schools, and significant numbers of non-Catholics, particularly from nearby urban centers with troubled public schools, began to seek admission. The late 1970s and early 1980s were a particularly rough time for parish finances. New forms of financial support were sought, including the donation of funds for common items like candles for the altar and the sanctuary lamp, the hosts and wine for Mass, etc. Previously supplied from general revenues, these became opportunities for honoring a living loved one or for memorializing the deceased. Facing the need for a major re-organization of the parish's financial resources and budgeting process, Fr. Young initiated steps for establishing a parish Finance Council - a development that was mandated throughout the Church by the revised Code of Canon Law in 1983.

Week 50

On November 21, 1981, Immaculate Conception Grammar School celebrated its 100th anniversary. Sr. Sheila Holleran was principal, and a gala was held to recall the school's beginnings, when Fr. Mendl welcomed 6 Sisters of Charity from Convent Station to teach in the basement of the original church on Washington St. Among the honorees at the gala were Miss Elizabeth Caton, who taught at the school for nearly 40 years, and James P. Farrell, who had graduated from the school in 1918. He was vice president of the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation, and through the Foundation Mr. Farrell donated \$50,000 in the form of a matching grant for early childhood education. The parish met the challenge, and a total of \$100,000 was raised. Some of the money was used for early childhood-appropriate equipment, but most went to create an endowment for the James P. Farrell Early Childhood Center, which was designed to give 4- and 5-year-olds an educational head start. The Frueauff Foundation also donated money for a playground in 1991, when Sr. Marianne Sullivan was principal. The Grammar School closed in 1997, after 116 years of educating the children of the parish and the surrounding area. Early childhood education continues at Immaculate at Tegakwita Academy, the parish Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds, located in the Parish Center. The Academy continues to be termed the James P. Early Childhood Center and receives money from the Farrell endowment, but is supported mainly by tuition and additional fund-raising.

One of the most remarkable families associated with the parish high school during Fr. Young's pastorate was the Hackett family of Orange. Mims and Bernice Hackett moved to Orange from Alabama in 1963, with their 5 sons and 1 daughter, all of whom eventually graduated from Immaculate Conception High School. The Hacketts were good students, but they really shone in athletics. Marcus, the oldest, was a parochial all-state star and Essex County Scholar-Athlete award winner in football. He scored over 1000 career points on the basketball team and went on to play football at Syracuse University and earned a spot on the New Jersey Generals in the short-lived United States Football League. His son, Marcus, Jr., is currently a quarterback/wide receiver for the Lions, the ICHS football team. The second Hackett son to excel in sports was Mims, Jr. He was a star in track, football and basketball. He went on to play for William and Mary, although he graduated from Paul Quinn College. He was scouted by the Dallas Cowboys and the Seattle Seahawks, but became a teacher instead, teaching science in Union City for 32 years, and is now a State Assemblyman and the Mayor of Orange. Michael Hackett was also a track/football/basketball star, setting the Parochial B record in the 400-meter event. He was a candidate for the Air Force Academy, but a slight vision problem prevented him from attending. He went instead to William and Mary, often playing opposite his brother Mims. Myron Hackett was captain of his ICHS football team and was a superb runner for the track team; like his brothers, he was also an outstanding basketball player. He played football at Rutgers. Merlin was the youngest Hackett son, a little bigger than his brothers, he played linebacker for the football team and was named to the All-Essex First Team. He was a weight man (shot-put, etc.) for the track and field team. Maleeka Hackett, the family's one daughter, played on the Girls' basketball team and also ran track.

The Girls' basketball team had a good 1982-83 season (a little before Maleeka's time) under Coach Elaine McGrath. Jenny Jenkins, Annie Nolan and Margaret Theobald all have reason to be proud of their performance that year.

Week 51

On December 19, 1982 there was a confluence of Immaculate Conception Music Ministers. Glenn Parker, who was the Music Minister at the time, conducted the annual Christmas concert which featured vocal solos by Peter Gillis, who had been Music Minister, and Randy Hertzog, who was to become Music Minister. The three knew each other because of their association with the Westminster Choir of Princeton. The highlight of the concert was Schubert's Mass in G Major.

Father Young struggled with parish finances and dwindling attendance. He guided us through Vatican II changes and renovated the church, freely donating his own money. He was concerned with conditions at the cemetery. He managed to organize the perpetual care fund and put it firmly on a solid foundation. He initiated plans for a mausoleum. Although he first thought about a mausoleum as early as 1979 it did not come into being until many years later, long after he had moved to another parish. The mausoleum was eventually built. It was dedicated to him when it opened in 1988.

In January 1983 Father Young left Immaculate to become parochial vicar at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Roseland. He stayed in Roseland until he retired and moved to Point Pleasant. He had long endured cardiac ailments and passed away in 1998 at the age of 69. In February 1983 Father James J. Finnerty, who had not been elevated to monsignor yet, became our 13th pastor.

Father Finnerty was born in New York City on April 14, 1929, son of James and Marguerite Finnerty. The family lived in Montclair for 3 years. Father Finnerty graduated from Immaculate Conception Grammar School. He attended Seton Hall Prep.

He studied classical language and philosophy at Seton Hall University. He graduated from the University and went on to the Diocesan Seminary in Mahwah. He was ordained in 1955. His first assignment was Sacred Heart Church in Vailsburg, Newark. He stayed there for 6 years until he was named the Dean of Students at the Seminary. He remained there for 6 years until he was assigned to St. Leo's in Irvington. He was at St. Leo's for 4 years until he became pastor at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Newark. He was at St. Charles for 11 years. Then he came to Immaculate. While at St. Charles he also served as chaplain at Beth Israel Medical Center and chaplain at the Essex County Jail.

Father Finnerty was active in many communities throughout his career before he arrived here. He served two terms on the Priest's Senate. He was a member of the Pastor's Advisory Board. He was a member, then chair, of the Priest's Personnel Board. He chaired the Parish Aid Committee and the Assessment Review Committee. He was involved with Irvington Day Care Center and was on the board of trustees for Kid's Corporation. Just before he came to Montclair he was dean of the Central Newark Deanery. A deanery is a collection of parishes in a geographical area. It provides a venue for parish representatives to discuss a number of common issues.

In a recent interview Monsignor Finnerty, now retired, admitted that when he was a schoolboy at Immaculate Conception Grammar School he snuck upstairs into the attic, where he was never supposed to go, and carved his initials into one of the wood beams.

Week 52

On February 27, 1983 Father Finnerty was installed as pastor. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Francis presided. Father Burla and Father Judge were Associate Pastors. Sister Margaret Tierney, who had grown up in Montclair and who had gone to both the grammar school and high school, was Pastoral Associate. Sister Sheila Holleran was the Grammar School Principal. Sister Marion Scranton was the High School Principal. Marie Sabin was the Director of Religious Education. Glenn Parker was Music Minister. Robert Petrus was Youth Minister. Robert Byrnes was the Cemetery Superintendent and Michael Honan was the Plant Superintendent.

On March 26, 1983 Father Finnerty was elevated to Monsignor. The rank of Monsignor is honorary. It roughly corresponds to the title of "officer" in the military. It doesn't really indicate a priest's level of authority. The local bishop nominates priests for the position. The Pope must approve the list. It is important to remember that a monsignor is first and foremost a priest with all the blessings and all the headaches that go along with being one.

Monsignor Finnerty got involved in the planning of a mausoleum for the cemetery early on. A planning committee was formed. Acme Marble and Construction Co. was hired to do the drawings and specifications. Parish records show that the committee had to make numerous decisions. Notes from a meeting in August 1984 indicate that there were discussions about lining the crypts with zinc. The minutes of that meeting hint at the Monsignor's wit. He asked that the minutes show that there was a twenty minute explanation of what happens to a human body when it decomposes. The committee then voted unanimously never to die.

Monsignor Finnerty and Robert Byrnes convinced the finance committee that the mausoleum would be a profitable operation. Oddly, they had to overcome resistance from the Montclair Township Manager and from the Archdiocesan Cemetery Office, which is why the mausoleum took so long to get built. It took 6 years and was dedicated to Father Young who had the foresight to realize that the cemetery would eventually run out of space without it.

Another issue which faced Monsignor Finnerty was a slight increase in grammar school attendance after years of decline. The parish had to install a temporary classroom. Positioning the classroom became the topic of heated discussion. There was a difference of opinion between the State, the Township, and local residents. The issue was resolved in 1987 after several Montclair Planning Board hearings. Essex County Educational Services provided funding for the classroom, which is still situated in the Tegakwita Parking Lot.

About the same time there was concern about what to do with the convent. The number of nuns living at the convent had dropped. It was becoming a financial drain on the parish to maintain the building as a convent with so few nuns living there. Monsignor Finnerty was approached by Mountainside Hospital about using the space for the rehabilitation of alcoholics. The Hospital was willing to pay for renovations and to pay rent. Monsignor Finnerty's years of association with hospitals and jails had acquainted him with the deleterious effects of alcoholism. He was enthusiastic about the idea. Homes were found for the remaining nuns. The treatment center opened in 1987. It was called "The Haven". It was designed to be a four week "home" for patients who had completed the detoxification program at the hospital. The rent was to go toward reducing the grammar school deficit.

Week 53

In a recent interview Monsignor Finnerty remembered that Bishop Francis outlined the challenges that would face him when he took on the job of being pastor here. The bishop told him that he was going to have to deal with a diminishing number of parishioners, especially young families, with a corresponding loss of revenue. The Bishop warned Monsignor that the schools would close due to a lack of students and to a lack of nuns. The bishop told Monsignor that he could forget major building campaigns; that he would be swamped by the maintenance of existing facilities. The problems at Immaculate weren't much different than the problems that all parishes in the Archdiocese had to contend with. In a way things went pretty much as the Bishop explained, but some things worked out differently.

Monsignor Finnerty related that the number of people attending Mass went up while he was here. Collections increased slightly. The parish met the Archbishop's Annual Appeal goal every year except the first year he served as pastor. The grammar school couldn't support itself financially without income generated by the Haven and by parish subsidies, but the number of students in the grammar school edged a little bit higher under a new principal, Sister Marianne Sullivan who came here in 1989 and stayed for 5 years. A new high school principal, Sister Maureen Crowley, was able to make the high school pay for itself. Sister Maureen is still involved with the High School and has transformed it into a fine educational facility. Both principals worked hard to improve the quality of education at Immaculate. The number of nuns decreased, but lay teachers took their place.

Monsignor Finnerty built the Mausoleum at the cemetery. It was his only sizable building campaign. The cemetery became a profitable enterprise. Most of his work to improve the physical plant was behind the scenes. During his administration the grammar school interior was painted and revitalized. Both schools got new boilers. Sometimes he was told that major renovations were needed, but managed to figure out ways to solve the problems cheaply. For instance, an archdiocesan inspector visited the schools and dictated that the fire alarm systems would have to be taken out and replaced, which certainly would have been an expensive undertaking. Monsignor Finnerty enlisted the aid of a local fireman, who went over every inch of the systems. Both schools were able to meet code with minor modifications. Making an oil delivery one day, the oil company noticed a leak in the underground tank that services both schools. It was estimated that the tank would have to be dug up and hundreds of cubic feet of soil would have to be shipped to a toxic waste dump in Ohio. The estimate came to about \$60,000. Fortunately the tank had been installed with secondary containment, which stopped the spread of oil into the ground. Nine cubic feet of contaminated soil was accepted in Kearny, NJ for a fee of \$14. A generous parishioner donated \$9,000 for a new tank. Monsignor Finnerty ended the interview with the statement that he never worried about finances (and he served in some very poor parishes). He was certain that The Lord would provide all necessary resources.

Father Judge was reassigned to St. Henry's in Bayonne, where he became pastor. Immaculate got a new associate pastor, Father Michael Sheehan. Many parishioners were awed by Father Sheehan's ability to recite the Gospel on any given Sunday verbatim.

Week 54

Encouraged to celebrate Baptism in a public setting once again, churches experimented with temporary solutions: at Immaculate, a metal portable font was used on occasions when Baptism was celebrated at Mass. Eventually pews were removed and the original marble baptismal font was re-located to a point near the center of the church. In the 1995 restoration, the font was moved to its present location, with the addition of pool to accommodate the Baptism of older children and adults in a manner distinct from that for infants. Vatican II also encouraged a renewed method for welcoming adult converts to the Faith, similar to how it was done in the early Church, by admitting adults gradually to the life of the community after sharing faith-experiences with fellow-believers and progressing through stages leading to Baptism. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) was promulgated in 1972, and in 1988 the U.S. Bishops mandated its implementation in America; RCIA at Immaculate began in 1989, and now extends through the year, for adults who are seeking Baptism, those completing their sacramental initiation in Confirmation and Eucharist, and those Christians baptized in other churches who wish to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Msgr. Finnerty connected with young children by using various props and involving kids in his Sunday sermons, especially at the 9:00 (Children's) Mass. He would ask them to volunteer answers to loaded (and sometimes silly) questions in a way that brought his themes home to kids and grown-ups alike. His sermons at other Masses were more traditional in style. The 9:00 AM Mass was often a "guitar Mass" with simple, folk-like hymns. The 11:00 AM Mass was the new version of the old 'High Mass', featuring the Choir accompanied by the organ.

Other than the Mausoleum at Immaculate Conception Cemetery, Msgr. Finnerty's pastorate was not marked by big building projects, but was a time of constant maintenance. Policies started by Fr. Young and continued by Msgr. Finnerty put the parish in better financial shape, although never really operating 'in the black'. Revenues came in from the Cemetery and from renting sections of the Convent to the Archdiocesan CYO Office and the parish-owned house at 18 Cottage Pl. to Catholic Community Services as a counseling center directed by Fr. John M. Morley. In the mid-1980s, Msgr. Finnerty rented the Convent (which then housed only a few Sisters of Charity who were able to be re-located), to Mountainside Hospital for use as a residential alcoholism-treatment facility known as The Haven; the rental income was ear-marked to subsidize the grammar school. The N.J. Department of Transportation bought a corner of the Cemetery property in order to widen the intersection of Grove St. and Mt. Hebron Rd. Of course the parish had (and still has) a lot of buildings and facilities to take care of, and all that work costs money. Although the High School became financially self-sufficient, the elementary school remained a significant drain on the parish budget. Still, Msgr. Finnerty left Immaculate Conception in better financial shape than he found it, above all by attracting young families to start to come back. In June 1991 Msgr. Finnerty asked to be relieved of the pressures of being pastor. Assigned as parochial vicar at St. Andrew Parish in Bayonne, he had what turned out to be just a brief respite before accepting Archbishop McCarrick's urgent request that he become pastor of St. Mary's in downtown Jersey City, a parish with all the usual inner-city problems and the major challenge of two large and vitally important schools. Immaculate did not have to wait long to find out who our new pastor would be.

During the pastorates of Fr. Young and Msgr. Finnerty, the style of celebrating Baptism at Immaculate Conception was adapted to conform with the revised Rite of Baptism decreed in 1969. In the early Church, Christians were baptized in the presence of the whole community because of a keen awareness of their shared identity in Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that Baptism makes us all members of the Body of Christ. "Therefore...we are members of one another...", or, in the words of St. Paul, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." It goes on to say that "The baptized have become 'living stones' to be built into a spiritual house....." Through the centuries, communal Baptism fell into disuse, as most of those being baptized were now infants born to already Christian families. Baptism, as the rite by which one enters the Church, was usually celebrated in a place outside the common areas of most churches and never during Mass. Many churches in Europe have separate

Weekly Series of Articles - 150th Anniversary  
Michael Farrelly

buildings, or 'baptistries', for the celebration of the Sacrament; at Immaculate Conception, as in most churches in the U.S., the baptistry was a room to the side of the entry vestibule (now the Memorial Chapel: It is worth taking the time to visit the Chapel to see its beautiful stained-glass window depicting the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus about being 'born again' to eternal life). Vatican II restored the emphasis on the communal reality of Baptism.

On June 6, 1991 The Montclair Times announced that Archbishop McCarrick had appointed Father Timothy J. Shugrue as pastor to replace Monsignor Finnerty. Monsignor Finnerty went to Bayonne; to St. Andrew's Parish. Father Shugrue came to us from Bayonne, where he had been associate pastor, at St. Mary, Star of the Sea. He was installed as pastor on October 6. Bishop Francis officiated. Father Shugrue became our 13th pastor; counting from the time the parish was officially organized, under Father Joslin, in 1864. It had been a mission church before that, under Father Hogan. The article quoted the enthusiastic new pastor, "...I come with a deep respect for the history of Immaculate Conception and I feel that, together, we will add a new chapter to that history that will honor it and all who have been active in creating it. ... With God's help, Immaculate Conception Parish will continue to be an outstanding unit of this local church of the archdiocese..."

Like so many of our priests, Father Shugrue was a graduate of Seton Hall University. He received an MA in systematic theology at the archdiocesan seminary in Darlington. He was ordained on May 26, 1973. His first assignment was St. Aedan's Parish in Jersey City. He served there until 1978. From 1978 to 1984 Father Shugrue was the student's chaplain at Essex Catholic Boy's High School. Essex Catholic opened in 1957 in the grandiose, old headquarters of the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company on Broadway in Newark, under the direction of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, to provide a high quality, Catholic education for young men. In 1980 Essex Catholic moved to the old East Orange Catholic High building in East Orange. It was later renamed for Bishop Francis, the first African American bishop in the archdiocese. At its peak Essex Catholic had an enrollment of over 2000 students, but the number plummeted and the archdiocese was forced to pump money into the school to keep it going. It closed in 2003 due to low enrollment. In 1979 Father Shugrue directed the permanent deaconate preparation program within the Archdiocese of Newark. In 1982 he took on additional responsibility and was named Director of the Office of the Permanent Deaconate. He continued as director until 1990. While he was working with the deaconate he also served as chaplain at New Jersey Boystown in Kearny. After the deaconate he went to St. Mary's in Bayonne. He was only at St. Mary's for a little while; from January to May 1991.

Just as he is now, Father Shugrue was involved with several other organizations while he carried out the duties of a parish priest, a chaplain and a director. He was on the editorial board of the diocesan newspaper, The Advocate. He served as president of the Senate of Priests. He was a member of the Presbyterial Council. Typically a presbyterial council is made up of priests and bishops who advise the diocesan bishop on matters of pastoral governance. Father Shugrue also served as coordinator of Pro-Life Activities.

One of Father Shugrue's first activities at Immaculate was to come to the aid of an old friend. Monsignor Finnerty, who enjoyed a brief stint as associate pastor at St. Andrew's, was installed as pastor St. Mary's in Jersey City. St. Mary's was in deep financial trouble and in serious need of repair. Monsignor Finnerty appealed to Father Shugrue and the people he knew he could count on. Immaculate parishioners conducted special collections and raised \$10,000 to help out their former pastor. The 1990s turned out to be an eventful chapter in our parish history.

Archdiocesan policy at the time of Fr. Shugrue's appointment required two 'audits' of a parish with the transition to a new pastor. One was of the parish finances, the other was of the condition of the physical plant. No problems were found in the financial audit, but the physical plant study revealed that, after more than 80 years, our church was showing increasing signs of age and wear. The roof leaked, and water was coming in through crumbling mortar in the brick walls. The interior columns were cracked, and pieces of their plaster sheathing (called scagliola, a technique in which plaster is applied to resemble solid marble) had fallen off. It was surmised that the cracking resulted from settling of the church floor after removal of the center support columns in the basement during the creation of Madonna Hall in the 1950s. Strong steel crossbeams had been installed at that time to carry the weight of the floor safely, but constant traffic over 40 years had led to 'stress fractures' of the scagliola sheathing, and there was concern that pieces might be expelled at high pressure and cause injury. The front loggia or portico of the church showed serious deterioration of the decorative metal and terra cotta tile on the outside columns and roofline, and of the copper drains and downspouts. The day after his installation, Fr. Shugrue received an evaluation from the Archdiocese stating that exterior conditions alone required "immediate" correction estimated at a minimum cost of \$300,000, and that the interior columns had to be wrapped in protective plastic sheeting "at once". As architects and engineers reviewed the situation further, it became apparent that the problems were more severe and more extensive than originally known. Eventually, as attention to one problem led to the discovery of others, a thorough restoration of the building was determined to be advisable. Inside, for instance, the church ceiling and upper walls had not been painted since the 1940s, and the wooden wainscoting, 'antiqued' in the 1950s, was noticeably flaking. With mounting estimates of the cost, Archdiocesan policy required that, in cases of such scope, the fundamental purpose of the building had to be considered, and a comprehensive renovation was needed to update the worship space in line with the liturgical directives of Vatican II. Since the work was to be so extensive, it was decided to render the church entirely handicapped-accessible, with a lift for access to both the sanctuary and Madonna Hall, and to install air conditioning to cool the whole building. It was clear that a capital campaign was needed to raise the funds for the project, which took place in two phases, the first focused on the exterior of the church. The campaign began in 1993 and soon had raised \$1,000,000 in pledges and gifts from parishioners and friends.

Local historic preservation architect Herbert Githens was engaged to supervise the restoration project, with Richard Markey, liturgical consultant, directing the liturgical renovation in keeping with Archdiocesan norms and the prescriptions of Canon Law and The General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The West New York Restoration Co. was hired to tackle the exterior work, and the Frankoski Construction Co. of East Orange became the general contractor for the interior phase. It took a little over two years to complete most of the restoration. While repairs were taking place inside the church in 1994-95, Mass was celebrated in Madonna Hall, much as it had been between 1892 and 1909, while the upper church was being built. Services like funerals and weddings were celebrated in various neighboring parishes. Christmas Masses were offered in the High School gymnasium, and Easter services in Madonna Hall. The sanctuary was available for use again in May, 1995, in time for the funeral Mass for Msgr. Edward Larkin, a beloved Sunday assistant at Immaculate Conception after his retirement as pastor of St. Cassian's Parish. Over the next few months several 'finishing touches' were added, including air conditioning, upgrades to the organ, etc. Later that year a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated to mark the substantial completion of the project.

The final cost of the restoration was \$2,000,000. In addition to funds from the capital campaign, and with support from the Archdiocese, the parish received a preservation grant from the N.J. Historic Trust in the amount of \$483,000 for the exterior work. At the start of the project, the parish had reserved funds of \$250,000 on hand, and a bequest from deceased parishioner Katherine Dougherty provided an additional \$250,000, resulting in completion of the job without serious debt. Bronze plaques in the church vestibule and Memorial Chapel (the former baptistry) acknowledge the donors whose generous gifts enabled the parish to restore our church to its exterior magnificence and to renovate our worship

space to meet the needs of the reformed liturgy while preserving the essential elegance of the church interior.

It would be a mistake to think that the church restoration was all that happened during the early 1990s: life continued apace. In January 1993, in response to an Archdiocesan initiative, the “We Care” ministry was formed to help those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Meeting weekly at the rectory for education about the AIDS crisis, prayer for those affected by it and strategizing ways to be of practical assistance, the group participated in the Archdiocesan AIDS network and led several annual AIDS Awareness Sundays at Immaculate, featuring talks in church by group members to inform parishioners about AIDS and invite them to join the developing outreach effort. A major project that still continues was formation of a team of parishioners to supply a weekly meal for residents of the AIDS shelter at St. Bridget’s Community Center in Newark. Organized with the help of the late Jack Sutton, the team, under the guidance of Ethel O’Mara and Grace Reynolds, has numbered between 50 and 80 parishioners who take turns either cooking or delivering a full nourishing meal to the shelter. The We Care group also brought a panel of the AIDS Quilt for display in church on AIDS Awareness Sunday.

In February 1993, Mountainside Hospital closed “The Haven”, its residential alcoholism treatment program that occupied the former parish convent, intending to use the building to consolidate all its outpatient counseling services. But objections from a few neighbors threatened a prolonged struggle for needed zoning variances. Rather than continue paying rent with no assurance of a successful outcome, the Hospital canceled its lease and the parish faced an unexpected loss of \$50,000 that had helped subsidize the grammar school. Also in early 1993, parochial vicar Fr. Michael Sheehan was assigned to direct the Archdiocesan RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) for the Office of Divine Worship. Fr. Richard Francesco, who had been a parochial vicar at St. Mary’s Parish in Nutley and had just completed post-graduate studies in Canon Law at Catholic University, was assigned in June to replace Fr. Sheehan. Others assisting Fr. Shugrue at the time were Fr. Burla, pastoral associates Sr. Margaret Tierney, S.C. (liturgical and social services) and Sr. Anna Tantsits, I.H.M. (catechetics), Daniel Palko (minister of music), Robert Petrus (part-time youth minister) and Joseph Mulford (plant maintenance). Sr. Marianne Sullivan, S.C., was Principal of the grammar school, and Sr. Maureen Crowley, S.C., Principal of the high school. Robert Byrnes was Cemetery Superintendent.

During the summer of 1993, Dorothy Cronrath, President of the Rosary-Altar Society announced that the society would again conduct a “Christ Child Baby Shower” for unwed mothers and their newborns. She appealed to parishioners for baby clothes, diapers and blankets to be given to the new moms, who faced uncertain futures and needed all the help they could get. In the fall, Archbishop McCarrick announced that an Archdiocesan Synod would be convened, to involve representatives of all the parishes in addressing common issues and needs. At Immaculate, meetings of parishioners were held to collect suggestions and comments to be presented at the Synod. Fr. Burla began hosting a weekly discussion group, “Re-Membering Church”, focused on bringing alienated Catholics back to active participation.

In late 1993, national news outlets broke stories about long-term sexual abuse of parishioners by certain priests in different parts of the country. What was most troubling was the revelation that these incidents had been ignored and/or covered up by numerous bishops. The Archdiocese strengthened its existing policies for dealing with such incidents, in line with guidelines from the U.S. Bishops’ Conference. Their effectiveness was evident a decade later: when reports of widespread sexual abuse by priests started in Boston in 2002, almost all the accusations dealt with incidents that had allegedly taken place before 1993.

In March 1994, Sr. Marianne Sullivan retired as Principal of the grammar school for health reasons; Sr. Bea Guider, S.C., then a guidance counselor at the high school, was appointed to replace her. In August 1994, the Montclair Board of Education rented the top floor of the former convent for some of its special ed classes. The rest of the building was occupied by Parents Place, a 'parenting resource center' for pre-schoolers. A high spot of the year for the high school was the football team's undefeated season: the Lions went 11-0, capturing the Conference and State Championships under Coach John Finnegan. The track team also won State titles in 1994. "Coach Finn" had a remarkable career as ICHS Athletic Director: in addition to the fact that the school's sports programs maintained a high level of achievement, John never lost sight of the importance of academics. Named Essex County Coach of the Decade in 1999, he later became football coach at Seton Hall Prep.

Also in 1994, a 'columbarium' was added to the Mausoleum at Immaculate Conception Cemetery: in a pastoral letter to the parish, Fr. Shugrue explained that, with the growing choice of cremation by Catholics and the lifting of the Church's restrictions on the practice (it was seen in earlier times as a way of challenging Catholic belief in the resurrection of the body), there was a need for an appropriate repository for the ashes or 'cremains' of those who chose cremation. (Given our conviction that the body is created by God and serves as a 'temple of the Holy Spirit', the Church strongly discourages keeping ashes at home or spreading them on the ground or scattering them at sea. In Canon Law, a Catholic cemetery is consecrated ground, a 'sacred place' for the repose of the faithful departed, parallel to the 'sacred place' of the church building for the living members of the Church. Ashes may be buried in an existing grave or placed in an individual niche in a columbarium.) In keeping with the beauty of the Mausoleum itself, graced with stained-glass windows of the Resurrection of Christ and the Assumption of Mary, the columbarium was faced with Venetian glass mosaics depicting symbols of the Holy Spirit, St. Joseph, St. Anne and St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The windows and the mosaics were created by artist Cheryl Neuberger, of Vero Beach, Florida, and the project was under the direction of Cemetery Superintendent Robert Byrnes. Proving to be a popular feature, a second columbarium was dedicated in 1995, with mosaic symbols of St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Patrick, framed by an open Book of Life.

A major recommendation of the Archdiocesan Synod was that all parishes should establish, or re-establish, a Pastoral Council. The Archdiocese, in compliance with Canon Law, had long mandated Finance Councils in parishes, comprised of parishioners from varied backgrounds in fiscal management and business experience whom a pastor is to consult in reaching sound financial decisions affecting the parish. Pastoral Councils would help a pastor with the spiritual and social direction of the parish. A Parish Council had been created at Immaculate Conception in the 1970s, but by 1990 had been suspended while the experience was evaluated and new guidelines were considered. With the recommendation of the Synod in 1995, a steering committee was formed to direct the re-establishment of Immaculate's Pastoral Council. Chaired by parishioner Patricia McCarthy, the committee devised "Articles of Understanding" that still govern the work of the Pastoral Council, which meets monthly for consultation with the pastor. (In January the Pastoral Council is scheduled to review the Articles with an eye toward updating them.)

Week 59

{This week we take a break from Mike's column and share with you a submission from Joan Moriarty. Joan's family, the Hughes/McDonalds, have a long history at Immaculate.}

The history of Immaculate Conception has been a part of the Hughes/McDonald family history for at least 140 years. Michael and Jane Mc Donald lived on Park Street and were members of Immaculate Conception parish prior to William Hughes' coming to Montclair in about 1869.

Our great grandfather, William Hughes came to Montclair in 1869 and met and married Annie McDonald of Park Street. The McDonalds were already members of Immaculate Conception. William and Annie had nine children all baptized at Immaculate between 1873 and 1892, and our most recent family Baptism was in November 1998 – a span of 125 years and six generations!

William and Annie bought 513 and 515 Bloomfield Avenue for the William Hughes store. He continued to acquire property at 31 Park Street for his family home and then 33 and 44 Park Street for his sons. William almost completed the block when he acquired the Munn Street property in 1900 from Alice Carter. These houses were sold to three of the sons, including 12 Munn to George G. Hughes Sr. in 1908, and 14 Munn to James Hughes and William Jr. These properties bordered the rectory and the church property.

William was not originally a Catholic, but it is believed that he was actually very instrumental in acquiring the property for the new home of Immaculate Conception's Church, Rectory and Cemetery. William did convert to Catholicism and became an active member of the church after his oldest son came home safely from the Spanish American War. William converted on February 4, 1900 and was baptized at Immaculate.

Immaculate Conception Church has been a focal point for the Hughes family over the last century. Annie Hughes died in 1923 and one of the highlights in her obituary was that she was an active member of Immaculate Conception Church. The Hughes were very active at Immaculate, and had a family representative, as a pallbearer for Fr. Mendl. Bertha and George Hughes are both listed as Charter members of the Montclair Knights of Columbus and Catholic Daughters Court # 499.

Our grandfather, George Hughes Sr., lived at 12 Munn Street and raised five boys. The oldest, George G. Hughes Jr., received the Fr. Mendl scholarship however, went to St. Benedict's so that another candidate could receive the scholarship award. All of the other sons attended Immaculate Conception High School, as did many of their children.

In the late 1950's the family house at 12 Munn was sold to Immaculate Conception. This had been the family home of George G. Hughes Sr. and his family since 1908. Before the demolition this past April, the grandchildren took a picture on the front steps. Some took a nostalgic walk through the house and rekindled memories of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at the family homestead.

Our thanks to Monsignor Shugrue who was very sensitive to the family's feelings during the demolition period, and Joe Mulford who removed the leaded and stained glass windows as well as some of the original doors for us. They will be enjoyed by future generations.

We have enjoyed the "History of Our Parish" column and the Christmas ornament of the church has a special place on our Christmas trees!

Week 60

In 1995, Sr. Anna Tantsits, Pastoral Associate for Catechetics, was granted a sabbatical leave by her religious community, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and resigned from the parish staff. She later worked for the Diocese of Albany and now works with a spirituality resource team in upstate New York. In mid-summer, Sr. Cora Marie McGuire, a Missionary Servant of the Most Blessed Trinity, was hired to shepherd the parish's catechetical programs. A Brooklyn native, Sr. Cora had extensive experience in parish-based ministry in different parts of the country, including service at Christ the King Parish, Jersey City. Sr. Cora continues to direct religious formation activities of the parish, including RCIA and the Sunday CCD program. Another addition to the roster in 1995 was Fr. Louis Pambello, assigned to residence at Immaculate while serving as temporary chaplain at Mountainside and Community Hospitals. Fr. Lou later served Catholic Community Services as a chaplain at the AIDS shelters in Newark and Jersey City. Although not officially assigned to the parish, Fr. Lou has been a great help in many ways over the years, not least by taking part in the Sunday Mass rotation.

1995 was memorable for other reasons also, including installation of a lift for the physically handicapped to access both the church and Madonna Hall; the first-time publication of a photo directory of parishioners; and development of a computer-generated weekly Bulletin. In October, the Montclair Historical Society conducted a tour of the newly-restored church and presented an award to the parish and Fr. Shugrue for "dedication to historic preservation" in the restoration project. The Montclair Chamber of Commerce also recognized the parish's commitment to complete the restoration with respect for the historical and artistic significance of the church building to the entire Montclair community. Also in 1995, Fr. Shugrue was appointed Archdiocesan coordinator for the ministry Courage, a spiritual support outreach for Catholics of homosexual orientation seeking to live in accord with Church teaching.

Finally, though by no means an event exclusive to our parish, one of the most exciting things to happen in 1995 was the October visit of Pope John Paul II to the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, which featured a major address at United Nations headquarters and Papal Masses in Manhattan's Central Park, at Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens and at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, part of the first-ever visit of a Pope to New Jersey. Frs. Shugrue and Francesco were privileged to attend Evening Prayer at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark, at which the Holy Father presided following his private meeting with President Bill Clinton and Mrs. Clinton in the Cathedral rectory. During the visit, the Pope granted a request from Archbishop McCarrick to have the Cathedral, one of the largest and most impressive in the Western Hemisphere, designated as a 'Minor Basilica', Papal recognition of a sanctuary's eminence by virtue of its history, artistic merit and spiritual significance in a setting outside the city of Rome. The following day His Holiness celebrated Mass at Giants Stadium, which was attended by over a hundred IC parishioners who had their names picked for the tickets allotted to the parish: it is hard to forget the "buzz" that surrounded the selection process, and even a persistent, bone-chilling downpour could not dampen the spirits of those who took part in the Papal Mass and experienced the extraordinary magnetism of John Paul II. Archbishop McCarrick delighted in the Pope's comment when they met at the Vatican subsequently: "New Jersey was the best", the Holy Father said, noting with gratitude the enthusiasm and devotion of the thousands who braved terrible weather to share in the Eucharist and welcome the Vicar of Christ to the Garden State.

Week 61

On June 9, 1996, Fr. Burla marked his 30th year at Immaculate, but it was to be no more than a milestone: happily, Fr. Burla remains with us, now in his 42nd year of service to our parish. His is the longest tenure of any priest assigned to Immaculate Conception, far exceeding even Fr. Mendl's 28-year record as pastor.

Throughout the summer of 1996 and into the fall, preservationist Suzanne Duff meticulously restored the Stations of the Cross. Armed with a Q-Tip and a great deal of patience, she removed 80 years of grime from every crevice of the extraordinarily beautiful representations of Jesus' agonized march to Calvary. (It should be noted that the depictions are not the actual 'stations': rather, the wooden cross above each scene is the blessed marker of the stages of the Way of the Cross.) The scenes are of carved wood, covered with plaster that has been delicately painted: in the course of the work, Ms. Duff marveled at the artistry of details like the faint blue veins of the figures. Her thorough cleaning made the Stations shine with their original glory.

On September 15, Fr. Shugrue was elevated to the rank of Chaplain of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, with the title 'Monsignor'. In his weekly letter, the pastor wrote that he considered it "an honor intended for all the members of the parish..." He added that the only title that ever meant anything to him was 'Father', which describes the nature of a priest's relationship with his flock.

On September 28 the Bulletin noted the new ambry in the Munn St. Side aisle at the center of the church, a receptacle for housing the sacred oils used in administering the sacraments. Formerly a small safe behind an elaborate bronze door in the sanctuary wall, the new ambry moved the oils closer to the baptismal font and its glass enclosure (its interior fitted with the polished bronze panel of the original door) permitted people to see the Oil of Catechumens (used during Baptism), Oil of the Sick (used for anointing those with physical or other ailments) and Sacred Chrism (used in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, as well as for consecrating sacred vessels). These oils are blessed annually by the Archbishop during Holy Week and distributed to all the archdiocese's parishes.

On January 5, 1997, a statue of St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton was dedicated. Designed and fashioned by Sr. Margaret Beaudette, of the Sisters of Charity of Mt. St. Vincent, New York, the statue depicts the first American-born saint, the foundress of the American Sisters of Charity in 1809 at Emmitsburg, Maryland, standing behind two children who represent the students of Immaculate Conception Elementary and High Schools and who were modeled on actual students of our schools. The statue suggests that Mother Seton is the inspiration of the Sisters of Charity who, since 1881, have served our parish in the apostolate of Catholic education. It commemorates all the Sisters who have ministered at Immaculate, and is a memorial from their son, Lawrence Codey, to the late Frank J. and Catherine Alworth Codey, long-time parishioners and supporters of our schools. The shrine was completed with the gift of a first-class relic of Mother Seton from Sr. Barbara Brown, a teacher in the Elementary School.

Also in January, in observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Msgr. Shugrue spoke at Montclair's First Lutheran Church, and its pastor, the Rev. Susan Nagle, came to speak at Immaculate. Msgr. Shugrue has consistently participated in the ecumenical and interfaith activities of the Montclair Clergy Association. Modern Catholic involvement in ecumenical (between Christian bodies) and interfaith (relations with non-Christian religious traditions) dialogue received its charter at Vatican II, and was encouraged by Pope John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (Commitment to Ecumenism). IC members were invited to tour the Lutheran church and a similar tour of our church warmly welcomed members of First Lutheran.

Week 62

In February 1997, Fr. Richard Francesco was assigned to serve as Administrator of St. Benedict's Parish in the 'Ironbound' section of Newark. Originally a German-speaking congregation, the parish was now home to a growing Portuguese community, with a large school and a historic church building. Later named Pastor of St. Benedict's, Fr. Richard served there until being appointed Pastor of St. Joseph's Parish, West Orange. It would be several months before Immaculate Conception received a replacement for Fr. Richard.

On June 8, 1997, Msgr. Shugrue sadly announced that Immaculate Conception Elementary School would close at the end of the academic year, as a result of many years of declining enrollment and escalating parish subsidy. Though tuition was high, the costs of an almost all-lay staff and a dwindling number of students, most of whom were not Catholic and nearly all of whom commuted from outside Montclair, made it impossible for the parish to maintain the level of subsidy that was required to insure the kind of quality Catholic education that had been the dream of Fr. Mendl in 1881 and the constant inspiration of generations of Sisters of Charity, lay teachers and loyal families and students. When the school closed, there were fewer than 100 students in Grades Pre-K through 8, and the operating subsidy was projected to be in excess of \$200,000. Most IC students and faculty were able to transfer into other Catholic elementary schools. The elementary school building, which had seen extensive repairs and upgrades in recent years, continued to house the Library and cafeteria for Immaculate Conception High School, and the Pre-K was retained, named Tegakwita Academy in recognition of the 17th-century Native American Blessed Kateri Tegakwita, in whose honor Fr. Mendl had dedicated the building in 1899. It also continued to serve the Sunday morning CCD religious instruction program for young parishioners. The Montclair Board of Education, which had already leased one floor of the former Convent for some of its special education classes, signed a multi-year lease for the use of two floors of the elementary building for its new Renaissance middle-school program. In time, the Renaissance School would occupy three floors of classrooms and utilize Madonna Hall for a daily lunchroom. With the help of the rental income, the parish was able to put a new roof on the school building during the 1997-98 academic year.

Week 63

In June 1997, newly-ordained Fr. Donald Gleeson replaced Fr. Francesco as Parochial Vicar. A graduate of St. John's University with a degree in athletic administration, Fr. Don had, prior to going to the Seminary, worked in marketing for the NJ Devils hockey franchise. With his engaging personality, he was an instant "hit" at IC, especially among the children and youth.

In July 1999, Msgr. Shugrue became president of the Montclair Clergy Association. Involvement in ecumenical activities had been encouraged by Vatican Council II, and Immaculate's pastors as far back as Fr. Munley had worked with other local religious leaders to promote cooperation and collaboration. By the 1990s, members of the Association faced the common problem of a general movement away from organized religion. In his weekly Bulletin column, Msgr. Shugrue wrote "...we will continue to ponder our common responsibility as religious leaders in an increasingly secular society; we will also pursue more and better dialogue on important issues that affect all members of our larger community - like racism, violence and the seeming vacuum in the conduct of personal and public life..." On October 3 the Association sponsored Project Open Doors, as 25 houses of worship, including Immaculate, conducted programs to inform the public of their particular religious traditions.

Msgr. Shugrue had another responsibility in this period, as Director of the Archdiocesan Commission for the Jubilee Year 2000. Pope John Paul II had declared that Catholics would observe the 2,000th anniversary of the Birth of Jesus as the 'Holy Year of the Great Jubilee', a time of renewal in Catholics' relationship with Christ and with each other, and for reconciliation with the world community. The Holy Father set the tone by publicly asking forgiveness for sins and failings of the Church and its members through its 2,000 years of history, and by encouraging the world's lending nations to relieve the burden of debt on struggling third-world countries.

Part of the Church's Jubilee tradition is the practice of pilgrimage, especially to Rome, during the holy year. Pilgrims visit the four 'Patriarchal Basilicas' of Rome, major sanctuaries where the Pope presides as shepherd of the universal Church: they are St. John Lateran, the pope's cathedral as Bishop of Rome; St. Peter's, the first pope's burial place, adjacent to the papal residence in the Vatican; St. Paul's-Outside-the-Walls, burial site of the Apostle Paul; and St. Mary Major, built in the 5th century to commemorate the acknowledgment of the Council of Ephesus acknowledging Mary as Mother of God. Each of these churches has a 'holy door' that is opened by the pope at the start of the holy year to symbolize a time of special access to God's grace, and is sealed again at its conclusion. Pilgrims enter through these doors to obtain the holy year Indulgence, a papal remission of the temporal punishment that is the consequence of sin. In addition to visiting the holy sites, pilgrims must go to Confession and receive Holy Communion worthily. For the Great Jubilee, Pope John Paul invited all dioceses to designate 'pilgrimage churches' to stand in for the great Roman basilicas, so that Catholics could seek the Jubilee Indulgence without traveling to Rome. In the Archdiocese of Newark, the churches selected in Essex County included the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, St. Peter's in Belleville (our mother parish), and our own Immaculate Conception. Archbishop Theodore McCarrick inaugurated the Holy Year on December 26, 1999 by blessing our center front entrance as a 'holy door'; for the duration of the Jubilee, our doors, marked by the papal coat of arms, welcomed pilgrims from neighboring parishes throughout the year.

Week 64

In November 1999, Fr. Burla was seriously hurt in an automobile accident outside the Essex Green Mall in West Orange. Bones in his right ankle and leg were shattered, requiring 12 pins during surgery. He received the Sacrament of Anointing at UMDNJ Hospital in Newark. Thankfully, the Lord allowed him to recover, but not without a series of setbacks and several operations. Over the next four years, Fr. B sustained more fractures of the same leg. He has spoken eloquently about his experiences and of how the Sacrament and parishioners' prayers have helped him. To aid Fr. B's rehab at the rectory, a generous but anonymous 'angel' donated money for installing a handicapped-access ramp to the rectory's side door.

Late in 1999 Fr. Gleeson determined to take a group of young parishioners to World Youth Day, scheduled for August 2000 in Rome with Pope John Paul II and youth from all over the Catholic world. To help fund the trip, in November Fr. Don ran in the Dublin Marathon in Ireland, soliciting pledges for completing segments of the race; he finished the course in good time, and in August he and a team of adult chaperones accompanied members of the parish Youth Group to the week-long gathering with the Holy Father and 2,000,000 young people! Through the Jubilee Year, Immaculate Conception, like other churches of the Archdiocese, displayed at the front portico a banner bearing the Jubilee logo and theme, "Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today and Forever". And, though the designation of pilgrimage churches here at home was a special feature of the Great Jubilee, members of the parish joined a pilgrimage to Rome in February 2000, accompanied by Msgr. Shugrue and Music Director Dan Palko. In addition to stopping at the Roman basilicas, the group visited the shrines of Sts. Francis and Clare at Assisi, and attended Pope John Paul II's General Audience at the Vatican.

In February 2000 it was announced that, with Parents Place due to vacate our former convent building in June, the parish offices would move there from the rectory. As the Parish Center, the building would house an all-purpose room in the basement, individual offices for the pastoral staff and meeting rooms on the 1st floor, Tegakwita Academy Pre-K on the 2nd floor, and an apartment for Sr. Cora Marie on the 3rd floor. After some repairs and upgrades, the move was completed in July.

In April, following the lead of Pope John Paul II, who at the outset of the Jubilee Year had asked forgiveness for any failures and sins committed by the Church and Christians, Msgr. Shugrue publicly asked forgiveness for himself and for any member of the parish staff who may have intentionally or unintentionally done anything to prevent people from coming closer to Christ. He apologized for anything which may have compromised the Church's witness to Christ, and he urged parishioners to forgive each other and to seek the benefits to be derived from the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In other Jubilee-related activities, while the parish youth were in Rome, Msgr. Shugrue, Sr. Margaret and Sr. Cora Marie were with a group of parishioners in Austria and Germany, where a highlight of the trip was attendance at the famous Passion Play produced every ten years at Oberammergau in Bavaria. (Production of the Play at ten-year intervals fulfills a vow made by townspeople in the 17th century in thanksgiving for being spared an outbreak of plague. In 2000 the Passion Play schedule coincided with the Great Jubilee.) Finally, members of IC joined with parishioners of other churches in a special Essex County Jubilee Mass with Archbishop McCarrick at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark, and attended a Convocation on the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching at Seton Hall University.

Week 65

In May 2000, IC High School students placed 4th nationally and 1st among 22 New Jersey schools (public and private) in the National Science Olympiad. Our students gave an impressive display of their knowledge and skills in biology, physics and physical science.

Throughout 2000, 8- to 13-year-old parishioners raised money for various good causes by selling donated food at a refreshment stand outside church on the weekends. The group, named Kidz in Action, adopted causes such as the Soup Kitchen at St. John's Church in Newark. Coincidentally, Immaculate's former pastor, Msgr. Jim Finnerty, had become pastor at St. John's, where the Soup Kitchen feeds several hundred hungry and homeless people daily. The children learned the meaning of charity and were able to teach others by their example. Through their efforts and those of their parents, they raised hundreds of dollars for people in need. They put on a successful Father's Day Brunch, and later in the year brought joy to senior citizens by staging a variety show and caroling at Christmas at the Walpan Home on Christopher St.

2000 was a tough year for Fr. Burla. Besides multiple encounters with injury, he endured the theft of his chalice from church during September. Much more than a monetary loss, it was especially trying because his mother's wedding ring was embedded in the base of the chalice. In a fantastic turn of events, the chalice was recovered: exchanging hands several times after being offered on E-Bay by a "reputable antiques dealer" (who made no attempt to determine if Fr. B, whose name was inscribed on the chalice, had authorized its sale), it was eventually purchased by a Lutheran church in Texas that had no knowledge of the chalice's background and dubious route. The chalice was noticed by an anonymous E-Bay surfer who alerted Fr. Burla that it had shown up, and the Montclair Police were able to track the chalice to the Texas church, which promptly returned it with profuse apologies.

Music Minister Daniel Palko, at Immaculate since 1992, left in August 2000 to accept another position. After a search process that attracted over 60 applicants, it was announced in March 2001 that Christopher McElroy, Organ Scholar at the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King in Liverpool, England, would become the Music Minister at IC. Chris arrived soon after Easter and quickly focused on efforts to develop a children's choir.

2001 saw other major changes in the parish pastoral staff. In June Fr. Gleeson asked for a leave of absence from active ministry, and later that same month Sister of Charity Margaret Tierney, Pastoral Associate at Immaculate for 19 years, became Director of Pastoral Care at St. Catherine/St. Margaret Parish in Spring Lake, NJ. Sr. Margaret, who grew up in the parish, attended its schools and later taught in the Elementary School, had served here for more than 30 years, developing ministries such as hospital visitors and Mary's Pantry, teaching 2nd Grade CCD, training Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, and supervising floral decoration of the church. Though losing these two 'old friends', the parish gained a new friend when Fr. William Sheridan, Spiritual Director at St. Andrew's College Seminary and Campus Minister at Seton Hall University, was assigned as Parochial Vicar at Immaculate.

The Youth Group was particularly active in 2001. In July, accompanied by adult advisers Cathy Mulroe and Amy Chambers, they traveled to Whitley City, Kentucky, to assist at a Vacation Bible School Starting in September, they volunteered to work at the St. John's Soup Kitchen on the first Saturday of every month.

Week 66

On September 11, 2001, in a series of coordinated attacks, a group of 19 Islamic terrorists hijacked four airplanes, flying two of them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and one into the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, apparently brought down as a result of an effort by passengers to take control of the craft from the hijackers. Msgr. Shugrue joined local clergy who offered their services at Montclair Town Hall, where dozens of local residents who worked in New York sought counseling assistance after making their way home amid chaotic disruptions of commuter transit service. Many parishioners were directly affected by the disaster, either personally or through family members. The church remained open late into the night as parishioners and neighbors sought comfort in the wake of the terrible tragedy. Masses on September 12 and on the following Sunday were packed. Through the week, parishioners brought to church enough food, water, protective clothing and other items to fill a trailer-truck for transport to New York, to aid the hundreds of volunteers working in rescue and recovery operations at Ground Zero. Immaculate lost three parishioners among the thousands killed when the Twin Towers were destroyed, incinerated by burning jet fuel and collapsing into a smoldering heap that took months to clear. Over the next few weeks, funeral Masses were offered at Immaculate for parishioners Stephen Roach, Robert Murach and Robert Coll, all employees of the Cantor Fitzgerald financial services firm, whose offices were on the upper floors of the North Tower. We continue to remember them and we pray that their families will feel God's love in the aftermath of the horror that took their husbands, fathers and sons. In a display of patriotic solidarity, Immaculate hung an American flag across the front portico of church for the next year.

USA Today interviewed Monsignor Shugrue in February, 2002. The newspaper was running a series of articles that compared the environment, including the religious environment, of two 'parallel' cities: Montclair and Franklin, Tennessee. One of the original concepts had been to compare how the presidential campaign of 2000 affected people in either city, but, given the overwhelming impact of September 11, the series concentrated instead on how the tragedy influenced religion in Montclair and Franklin. Monsignor was also asked about how the Abortion issue, an ongoing tragedy, affected religious life in Montclair.

Towards the end of 2001 Father Bill and Father Jim Chern (Our Lady of Lourdes, West Orange) initiated a popular discussion group, called Theology on Tap, which continued to meet for years. Father Bill and Father Jim met with young adults in their 20s and 30s at Just Jakes, in Montclair, or at McGurk's, in West Orange, on an alternating basis, to tackle some of the thornier questions young adults have about religion and the Catholic stand on issues. With the promise of "straight talk, hard facts and real answers..." Theology on Tap became something that many young people came to trust and look forward to. Even the Archbishop, Archbishop Myers, came one evening to see what was going on.

On January 19, 2002 another event took place, which was to become a recurring event at IC, The Liturgical Choir of St. Michael's College in Vermont, led by Monsignor's friend, Father Brian Cummings, performed at the 5:30 Mass. Their energetic blend of South American, African and Irish rhythms has brought them back to our doors quite a few times.

On the weekend of April 28, 2002 the Pastoral Council issued a survey, which they had been working on, based on one developed by the Center for Research in the Apostolate (CARA), at Georgetown University. Data collected by the survey was meant to evaluate "current parish life, and effectiveness of ministries" It was intended to help make improvements and plan for future needs.

Week 67

In January 2002, the Catholic Church in the U.S. was rocked by reports published in the Boston Globe of widespread sexual abuse of minors by priests of the Boston Archdiocese, and by allegations that officials of the Archdiocese had routinely ignored or covered up the abuse and re-assigned suspected offenders to other parishes. In the following weeks, similar reports began to surface in dioceses all over the U.S., to be met by a rising tide of outrage from American Catholics. As the scandal worsened, Pope John Paul II summoned leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and American cardinals to the Vatican for consultation. In June, the Conference devoted its entire summer meeting to consideration of the crisis and ways to address it, eventually issuing a Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth that mandated safeguards to insure the welfare of all young people in the care of Church personnel. Stringent requirements were put in place for clergy, religious and lay personnel, to be monitored by a National Review Board composed of lay experts authorized to recommend corrective action. A 'zero-tolerance' criterion was set, and dioceses enacted controversial measures to remove priests from ministry based on 'credible' accusations of inappropriate behavior. Given the legal complexity of dealing with alleged cases dating back decades in at least 50 state jurisdictions, the turmoil has churned on for years and permanently changed the relationship of Catholics, both clergy and laity, with the Church. Meanwhile, in parishes across the country, priests and people struggled to cope with a tidal wave of disillusionment and anger over the abuse of trust and the perception that the Church hierarchy had mishandled the situation, seeming more anxious to protect the Church from legal and financial liability than to address the needs of victims and the criminality of the perpetrators. In late February, Immaculate Conception held a series of open meetings for parishioners to discuss the crisis. The priests of the parish were present for all the meetings, and, in a pattern seen in many places, parishioners then and throughout the year were at pains to affirm our own priests while questioning the possible roots of the problems underlying the scandal. Many expressed thanks for the sessions and for a continuing focus on the crisis, and on the need for repentance and spiritual healing, in the weekly Prayers of the Faithful at Mass.

In September 2002, a new sign announcing our name to the world was installed in the front of church. It is the work of artist Matthew Beneduce-McGrath, who had earlier assisted in lettering our restored Stations of the Cross. The sign is a gift from the Donahue Family, in memory of Joseph Donahue, a longtime parishioner, member of the Finance Council and Parish Trustee.

In October another young "Brit" joined the parish team, as Chris McElroy got an assistant. Stuart McSweeney, a music student from England, arrived to spend his "gap year" - the year between the end of secondary school and the start of college (a common practice in the UK) - as organ intern and assistant with the Children's Choirs.

On Sunday, December 8, Archbishop John J. Myers made his first official visit to the parish since being installed in October, 2001, as Fifth Archbishop of Newark, succeeding Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick, who had been named Archbishop of Washington, DC and soon afterward a Cardinal of the Church. Archbishop Myers, formerly Bishop of Peoria, IL, had actually come to IC before his installation, for the funeral of the brother of U.S. Military Services Archbishop Edwin O'Brien. On his official visit, Archbishop Myers offered the 11:00 AM Mass, extending Christmas greetings to all.

Week 68

For the last year and then some we have been treated to the weekly “History of Our Parish” columns by long time parishioner and Montclair Township Historian Mike Farrelly. We take a break this week from his column (it will return next week, and we are in the home stretch) to have Mike tell you in his own words a little about himself. Without further ado, we turn it over to Mike:

My name is Mike Farrelly. My wife, Loretta, and I met at Montclair State. After we were married we became an Engaged Encounter team couple. We became very close with one of the EE priests: Father Jack Judge, who was chaplain at St. Vincent’s Hospital. Although we visited Immaculate from time to time, we usually attended Mass at St. Vincent’s Hospital Chapel. When the chapel closed Father Judge was reassigned to Immaculate. That’s when we started coming to Mass at IC.

We both taught CCD here for many years after which we became Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist. We distributed Communion at Mass for a long time, but we mostly bring Communion to the sick now. We enjoy sharing our faith experiences with adults, who want to learn about the Catholic Church, as part of the RCIA team. We try to be involved in other ways too. Loretta cooks for the We Care ministry. We host a Why Catholic group. Our children, Kevin and Meredith grew up here. They were involved in too many activities to list in this account. Kevin was an altar server and worked the “front desk” at the Rectory. His Eagle Scout project was to build planters around the temporary class rooms in the Tegakwita parking lot. Meredith sang in the choir and was a member of the Pastoral Council. She was one of the kids privileged to go to World Youth Day 2000 with Father Don.

I am an engineer by trade with a passion for history as a hobby. I worked with the Montclair Township Historian, Royal Shepard for years and became the Township Historian (a volunteer position) when he retired about 4 years ago. Monsignor approached me about putting the history of the parish together for the 150th anniversary. I jumped at the chance. One of the things Monsignor asked me was to find out who made our magnificent stained glass windows and, if possible, to find out which saints are pictured on the three windows hidden behind the organ chest. It took 6 months of research to find out who made the windows; The Mayer Studios of Munich. Amazingly, they are still in business. They still have the records from 90 years ago and were able to fill me in on the mystery saints (Pope St. Gregory, St. Cecelia, King David).

My goal now is to find out who made the original altars. There are no records and I haven’t been able to find any maker’s marks. One of the possible candidates is the Benziger Brothers firm. They are book publishers now. At the turn of the 20th century they made all manner of liturgical items. Louis Benziger was a parishioner at IC between 1912 and 1920. I would love to find out if he sat in the pews gazing proudly at his company’s handiwork, or if he sat there fuming that a competitor got the contract. It has been a joy researching the history of our parish and being able to share it with everyone.

Week 69

On successive Sundays in January, 2003, the Parish Pastoral Council conducted public hearings on issues of concern that had been identified in the parish Survey the previous April. Separate meetings focused on how to develop a strong sense of community; how to enhance religious formation of children and adults; how to improve outreach to the needy and give greater attention to issues of social justice; and how to improve parish facilities. Committees of the Council continued to pull together suggestions in each area, and a number of initiatives were developed. One lasting result has been the weekly Sunday morning coffee hour, which aims to promote community while providing a forum for adult ed presentations and opportunities for hearing about social outreach programs.

The discussion on parish facilities led to the formulation of plans to renovate Madonna Hall as part of the approaching 150th Anniversary of the parish in 2006-2007. Used originally as the sanctuary while the church building was being erected between 1892 and 1907, the basement had later been outfitted as a theater-style auditorium, with a stage area toward which rows of seats sloped down. In 1955, in preparation for the parish centenary, the space was completely re-designed into what became known as 'Madonna Hall'. Changing needs suggested a further re-design to make the space more 'user-friendly', with a major overhaul of its basic systems and updated restroom facilities. (After a 150th Anniversary Capital Campaign that raised \$1.5 million in pledges, work began in 2006 and is set for completion early in 2008.) Meanwhile, in June additional pews were installed in church, replacing several rows of upholstered chairs that had survived the 1993-95 renovation. Needed to accommodate an increase in the number of Sunday worshipers, permanent seating capacity was raised from 325 to approximately 400, with the chairs retained for use on special occasions to boost the total capacity to over 500. Of interest is the fact that our pews are called 'Protestant' pews, designed to be slightly more comfortable for longer periods of sitting that often characterize many Protestant services. 'Catholic' pews, by contrast, have straighter backs, permitting more rows of seating through the length of the church, given the larger number of attendees that is common at Catholic services, at which there is standing and kneeling in addition to sitting. While many appreciate the gentler angle of the pew-backs, some wish we had gone even more 'Protestant' and included cushioned seating!

In December 2003, the parish experienced a remarkable occurrence when parishioner Edith Richter reached 100 years of age. What was special was that Edith was not alone in that rarefied atmosphere: she was our fourth centenarian at the time, joining Anna McCullough, Michael Keaveny and Lillian Hinsberg in our "100-plus Club". As these longtime members celebrated their 100th birthdays, the parish marked the occasion by presenting them with bouquets of red roses. There must be something in the Montclair water or air - or maybe it's our brand of incense? - because we have since marked the 100th birthdays of Marie Degnon and Cora Cestone. All of these faithful parishioners have since gone home to the Lord: Edith later in her 100th year; Marie and Cora at 101; Lillian at 102; Michael at 104; and Anna, our reigning champion, at 107! (We look forward to getting the roses ready for our next centenarian, Charlotte Maher, who, with God's help, will reach that milestone in 2008.) It is wonderful to have so many long-lived and faithful members in our parish family, spanning decades and connecting us with earlier generations of parishioners. They remind us to live the gift of life well and with grateful hearts.

Week 70

In June 2004, following a self-study and strategic planning process under the direction of Meitler Associates, consultants in Catholic education, Immaculate Conception High School became a separate entity from the parish and was incorporated as an independent Catholic high school of the Archdiocese of Newark. Msgr. Shugrue wrote in the weekly Bulletin that the change “recognized a present-day reality” in the High School’s status as a largely self-supporting institution for almost 20 years, and would permit the High School to pursue its future “free from parish oversight”. Sr. Maureen Crowley, S.C., would continue to lead the school as she had for 20 years as Principal, but now as President of ICHS. Succeeding Sister in guiding the academic life of the school would be JoAnn Degnan, its first lay principal. With the approval of parish Trustees Grace Reynolds and Edward Giblin and the support of the Parish Finance Council, the High School’s Board of Trustees and a host of Archdiocesan agencies, Msgr. Shugrue formally proposed the corporate separation. Archbishop Myers gave his consent before the 2004-2005 school year began. Monsignor noted in the Bulletin that the High School would “still be part of the Immaculate Conception family, but minus the operational link.”

In August 2004, with the departure of Organist Chris McElroy to assume the post of Director of Children’s Choirs for the Diocese of Leeds, England, it was announced that Renée Anne Louprette had been chosen from a field of 46 candidates to become our Organist and Director of Music. She had been Music Director at St. Ann’s Church in Avon, CT and dean of the Greater Hartford Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. She had studied in France and had recently won a performance prize in organ with high honors from the National Conservatory of Toulouse. Renée was only with us for a year, moving in August 2005 to New York City and becoming Associate Director of Music at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola.

In November 2004 a new ministry, Mary’s Flower Guild, was formed to provide appropriate floral decoration of the church for Sunday Mass and special occasions. Coordinated by Pastoral Council member Kathy Quinn and bringing together a group of extraordinarily talented and dedicated volunteers, Mary’s Flower Guild has won high praise for their beautiful contributions to our worship. Their first triumph was the Feast of Christ the King, and was followed by a ‘less is more’, but still spectacular, Christmas.

While the process of engaging a new Music Director went forward, news was received of the 100th birthday of a former IC organist, Lucile Shulver, who had served the parish in the 1950s and 60s. At 100, she was still playing piano for fellow residents at an Arizona retirement home! In September, Preston L. Dibble was selected to be our new Music Director, again from a field of over 40 applicants. With a BA in Music Education from Westminster College and a Master’s Degree in Sacred Music from Duquesne University, Preston had served at St. Ferdinand’s Parish in New Castle, PA and for one year at St. Aloysius Parish, Caldwell. With a special interest in children’s choirs, Preston has developed that segment of our music program, expanded the handbell chorus, revitalized a concert program with the Adult Choir and supervised improvements to the church organ. Most recently, he directed the premiere of A Marian Triptych, a work for organ, choir and handbells commissioned for the parish’s 150th anniversary from noted liturgical music composer Dr. Leo Nestor, of Catholic University and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

Week 71

On September 11, 2005 - fourth anniversary of what, since 2001, is one of those days of unforgettable significance - Immaculate Conception's parishioners responded to another human disaster, contributing \$11,000 to a special collection for Catholic Charities to aid relief efforts in the U.S. Gulf region in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Members of the parish responded in other ways, as well, through community-wide appeals issued by various aid networks. In the aftermath of the displacement of people following the destruction of New Orleans, Immaculate Conception High School welcomed a student who came to live with extended family in Newark.

During Lent 2006, along with other parishes of the Archdiocese, Immaculate Conception began a series of home-based discussions called Why Catholic?, a 'journey' through the Catechism of the Catholic Church designed by RENEW International. More than 150 parishioners signed up for the first round of 6-week meetings.

In April, Msgr. Shugrue announced that, after discussions with the Pastoral and Finance Councils, a new staff position was being created, Pastoral Associate for Stewardship and Membership Services, responding to a perceived need for improved means of parish communications and coordination of ministries. Parishioner Jon Bonesteel assumed the new position in May, having earlier served on the Pastoral Council and been an active participant in numerous efforts at parish community enhancement.

In July, bid requests went out for the first phase of the Madonna Hall renovations, to include replacement of the handicapped access lift and the repositioning and upgrading of the restrooms. That involved the removal of the sidewalk outside the Munn St. Door of church so that work could be completed underground. When begun in December, the project required adjustments in restroom access and a closing of the Munn St. Door for several months.

Sunday, August 6, 2006 marked the formal start of the 150th anniversary year with a commemorative Mass. The anniversary observance marked the laying of the cornerstone of the old church on Washington St. on August 4, 1856. The observance was to end on December 8, 2007, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, just after the 150th anniversary of the dedication of the old church in November 1857.

In 2006 Immaculate Conception began participation in a major Archdiocesan effort, New Energies, designed to respond to significant shifts in demographics and challenges from a sharply declining number of priests and religious. To insure adequate pastoral care, the Archdiocese asked all parishes to identify their strengths and challenges in 28 areas of parochial life, with an eye toward collaborating with neighboring parishes in meeting common goals and sharing resources. Immaculate Conception was to partner with Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Peter Claver parishes. Meetings with our 'cluster' were to start in January, 2007.

Week 72

By 2006 the Archdiocese recognized that there had been significant shifts in its defining demographics, with many longtime parishioners moving to other parts of the state and country, and new immigrant populations filling city neighborhoods. Some parishes faced sharply dwindling membership, while others had grown tremendously. Coupled with a serious shortage in the number of priests and religious, the challenges of the situation seemed (and still seem) likely only to increase, so the Archdiocese began to plan for a realignment that would assure adequate pastoral care for the local Catholic community in new configurations. In some cases, it was envisioned that parishes might combine or close, in others that they would share resources in neighboring areas. In a program called “New Energies”, the Archdiocese identified 28 areas that defined viable parish life, and all parishes were asked to conduct a self-study that would allow evaluation of each one’s strengths and challenges and prepare for a discussion of how resources and possibilities might be shared with neighboring parishes. Immaculate Conception was asked to “partner” with St. Peter Claver and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parishes in dialogue based on their respective self-studies. Teams comprised of the pastors and four lay representatives from each parish began meeting in January 2007. In four meetings they discussed how to cooperate with each other, share basic resources and programs, avoid duplication of services and fill in gaps where service and ministry had not been offered.

On March 4, 2007, the weekly Bulletin contained a report on the preliminary New Energies meetings and what the cluster partners proposed to the Archdiocese as its action plan. The report listed several goals that the group felt were real and attainable. They saw a possibility to create a common plan for Evangelization in Montclair, with a focus on developing and promoting a stronger Catholic presence in our town. They saw value in combining Youth Groups. They proposed creating a shared pool of certified catechists. They called for greater combined social justice outreach, including a “healing ministry” and coordinated efforts to promote affordable housing in Montclair. They believed that the three parishes should work toward a united marriage support system that could assist in preparing those engaged to be married and in ongoing support of those already committed in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In the late spring, the Archbishop approved the action plan and the partner parishes prepared to take the next steps in mutual cooperation.

On May 13 the Bulletin sadly announced that Fr. Bill Sheridan was to leave us at the conclusion of a 6-year term. Recognizing his gift for working with young people, the Archbishop had assigned Fr. Bill to campus ministry at Ramapo College in Mahwah. For Fr. Bill, it was a return to a ministry he had conducted successfully at Seton Hall University before coming to Immaculate Conception. Under New Energies guidelines, the Archdiocese plans to allocate one priest for no fewer than 400 families and no more than 1200 in a parish. With Immaculate Conception’s present census of about 1,150 households, this guideline would qualify us for one priest! We were surprised, therefore, and blessed to learn in June that Fr. John J. Korbela was being assigned to Immaculate as a Parochial Vicar. Born in Bayonne, Fr. John had earned a degree in marketing at St. Peter’s College before entering the seminary. Ordained in 1974, he served in several parishes before being assigned as Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in North Bergen. Following a sabbatical at the end of his term there, Fr. John quickly became a well-regarded member of our parish family and pastoral staff.

Week 73

Throughout 2007, various activities highlighted the parish's 150th anniversary, including a series of special musical programs, among them a 'hymn sing' co-sponsored by the Metro-N.J. Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. A special Anniversary edition Parish Photo Directory appeared, and plans began for two major celebrations, a social event and a solemn liturgy of thanksgiving.

Work begun the previous December on the renovation of Madonna Hall continued through 2007; new restrooms were available for use in the Fall, followed by a new elevator replacing the handicapped-access lift. In late August, demolition began on the main area, with the work projected to be completed by the spring of 2008.

In September, Immaculate Conception 'welcomed home' Fr. James Stephen Behrens, who grew up in the parish, was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese in 1974 and later became a Trappist monk at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia. Nationally known as a spiritual author noted for highlighting moments of grace to be found in ordinary circumstances, Fr. Behrens led a 3-night Mission focused on "Growth in the Parish Community". The last weekend in October was especially full of anniversary events: on October 24, Fr. Sheridan departed with a group of pilgrims for France, to visit Lourdes, site of the apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 when Our Lady identified herself as "the Immaculate Conception". Back in Montclair on the next evening, October 25, our two most recent former organists, Renée Anne Louprette and Chris McElroy, returned to join Music Director Preston Dibble in a recital showing the many 'moods' of our church organ, which continues to undergo restoration. And the next day, October 26, IC parishioners joined thousands from the Newark Archdiocese on pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. As the anniversary year neared its climax, the Adult Choir presented the Requiem by Gabriel Fauré on the eve of All Souls' Day, in memory of deceased members of the parish since its founding.

On Saturday, November 10, the 150th Anniversary Gala was held at the Montclair Art Museum. The event, planned by an enthusiastic committee chaired by Mark Demo, was a glittering success, as 400 present and former parishioners joined to celebrate the past and inaugurate the next phase of IC's life. Several priests and Sisters who had served the parish earlier attended the Gala, which featured a video created by Jon Bonesteel, reviewing the 150-year history of the parish. Msgr. Shugrue summed up the spirit of the Gala: "...may we always treasure the gifts of faith, talent and personality God has distributed among us and share them generously with one another."

The anniversary fittingly came to a close on Saturday, December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, with a Mass of Thanksgiving concelebrated by Archbishop John J. Myers and two dozen priests. A central feature of the Mass was the dedication of a 'new' Altar of Sacrifice, constructed from the church's original side altars, retained after the 1995 renovation of the sanctuary. Designed by liturgical consultant Richard Markey and fabricated by the Giovanetti Marble Co., the Altar is a gift in memory of the late Felix and Lillian Hinsberg. A highlight of the Mass was the première of a musical work for organ, Choir and handbells, commissioned by the parish and composed by Dr. Leo Nestor, of Catholic University.

Called A Marian Triptych, the text draws on teachings in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) on the role of the Virgin Mary in salvation history. When, as expected, the piece is published, it will note as the occasion of its composition the 150th Anniversary of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Montclair, New Jersey, celebrated with solemn and joyful gratitude for a century-and-a-half of faith and witness. To which, as we reach the end of these reflections on our parish history, let us all say, "Amen, Amen! Alleluia, Amen!"

Week 74

On October 1, 1921 the Montclair Times published an article which celebrated the life of Miss Nellie Collins who had just passed away. It wasn't an obituary. It was an "appreciation" submitted by someone who had been touched by her life. She had run a successful dressmaking business. Young seamstresses worked for her. She provided housing and food as well as employment. She always had a little extra for needy people in the neighborhood. Her business operated out of a small house on North Fullerton at first, but she found that she needed more space, so she had a large house built at the corner of Valley Road and Montague. It exists to this day. It has an entrance on Valley Road, # 81, and an entrance on Montague, #83.

She never married. She nursed her sick father instead. She ended up nursing several sick relatives and a few non-relatives, who had no one else to take care of them. She was noted for her garden and it was said that she always put flowers in her guest's rooms when they were in bloom.

She was an active member of Immaculate Conception Parish. The article did not mention her age or say if she had lived in Montclair her whole life. Montclair directories, going back to the 1890s, show that she was an adult, living near Montclair Center (probably in the house on North Fullerton). She may have been associated with the parish from the beginning. If so, she would have had memories of the old church on Washington Street. She would have remembered when the parish was officially organized in 1864, with Father Joslin as pastor. She would have remembered Father Steets building the rectory that Father Mendl eventually turned over to the Sisters of Charity for use as a convent. She would have remembered the Sisters starting a school in the church basement in 1881. She may even have been a student there. She would have remembered: the "basement church" on North Fullerton, the cemetery "out in the country" and the "new" school on Munn Street in 1899. She would have mourned Father Mendl when he passed away in 1907 and would have been involved in some way as Father McCarthy and Father Brothers completed the North Fullerton church. She was probably in the crowd when the North Fullerton church was dedicated in 1909. She watched as the stained glass windows were installed in 1914, and would have been among the first to hear the organ that Father Gately installed in 1916. The article made it clear that Immaculate Conception meant a lot to her.

She was not the leader of every group she was involved with. She was a member of the Rosary Altar Society, but not the president. She was not on the executive committee of most events, but she worked in the booths of almost every fund raiser the parish held during her lifetime. Her name keeps appearing in program after program. Like so many parishioners before her and after her, she just wanted to be involved in the life of the parish. Like so many parishioners, her contributions helped build the community that we find ourselves a part of now. We can feel how their lives helped to shape our lives even though we don't always know their names, or very much about them as individuals. Their efforts are manifested in the buildings that we still use. Living or dead, we are all part of the same Body of Christ.

Nellie touches our lives silently each time we celebrate the Mass. She closes this 150th anniversary by helping us to remember the beginning. She donated the crucifix that stands over the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament (the original main altar). She had it inscribed. In the back it reads "for a memory of Father Hogan", the priest who started IC as a mission church 150 years ago. It is easy to think of ourselves as his family. I think he would be proud of us – Thanks to Nellie and to everyone who has made this such a wonderful parish.

Week 75

#### The History of Our Parish

For the last year and change, we have been treated to weekly columns by parishioner and Montclair town historian Mike Farrelly. The series has now come to a close, but we would like to use this space one last time to offer our deep appreciation to him for all the time and effort he spent pulling it all together. Feel free to contact Mike directly on his email address [pmfarrfam@optonline.net](mailto:pmfarrfam@optonline.net).

Thanks Mike!