

# Sacred Heart Church Building

The current church was completed in 1955.

## **YMCA Property**

During this time, the North Borough YMCA had acquired the Odd Fellows Hall. As this was the property best suited for the location of the new church, repeated attempts to purchase the property resulted only in failure. Perseverance was rewarded, however, when in March of 1953, Father Smith succeeded in purchasing the property for the parish.

On April 26, 1951, a drive to raise funds for a new church was inaugurated at a dinner at which Father Francis Clifford, Pastor of St. Scholastica's Church, Aspinwall, gave the address. On July 27, 1953, Casimir Pellegrini, a Pittsburgh architect was commissioned to draw plans for the new church. Initial plans were studied and considered by Father Smith and the church committee, which consisted of Victor Ackerman, Thomas Guehl, Joseph Lang, Herbert Scheller, George Sinclair and James Vaughn. In January 1954, a new committee was elected, consisting of Victor Ackerman, Martin Carroll, Henry Loedding, Paul and Thomas Reilly and Walter Summers.

These men continued the work of their predecessors, critically inspecting the sketches and plans submitted by the architect and making suggestion for changes. The church bell was removed from the steeple of the old church and placed in the tower of the new church on June 1, 1955. The bell was cast by Meneely and Company, West Troy, New York, in 1896 and placed in the old church that same year.

## **Dedication**

The new church was dedicated on Saturday morning, December 10, 1955 at a Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop John F. Dearden who was assisted by Father Aloysius Reilly, O.F.M., the brother of Paul and Thomas Reilly of this parish. The preacher was Father William E. O'Donnel, C.S.Sp., and two former pastors, Father Schiffgens and Father Schenning, were Deacons of Honor. Father Robert N. Puhl, C.S.Sp., a native of our parish, was Deacon and Father Charles C. Behl, C.S.Sp., a former assistant here, was Sub-Deacon. The Master of Ceremonies was Monsignor Jacob C. Shinar assisted by Father William J. Crowley, C.S.Sp.

## **Parish Growth**

The parish continued to grow to well over 600 families and had over 1,900 people, with 350 children in grade school. This necessitated the removal of the stage in the auditorium which also served as a gymnasium and the division of this entire area into three rooms. One of the

rooms was completed and put into service in 1957. Later the other rooms were finished so that there were eight classrooms, an activity room and a library.

Although advised by his doctor that he should take things easier, Father Smith's nature was such that he had to be active at all times and he continued to work long hours. With the help of a substantial legacy, the debt of the parish was paid off only a short time before Father Smith's sudden and unexpected death on September 6, 1958. Father Peter Gross, C.S.Sp., who had come to Sacred Heart Parish in 1948 and who was the acting assistant of the mission in Glenfield, was appointed acting pastor by the Bishop.

On November 1, 1958, Father Vincent G Kmiencinski, a veteran of 33 years of pastoral experience in Bay City, Michigan was appointed pastor of Sacred Heart. It was not long before Father Vincent, as he was best known as, endeared himself to the parishioners, especially the children. Father Vincent, a lover of sports, organized the parish's first Athletic Association and grade school football teams in 1959 and 1960.

Father Gross's manifold duties at St. Mary's in Glenfield required the major part of his time so that the amount of help he could give the pastor was limited. It was necessary to have two visiting priests from Duquesne University every weekend since, in addition to the two Masses at Glenfield and four at Sacred Heart, a mass was said at the mental hospital at Dixmont. One of these visiting priests was Joseph A. Healy, C.S.Sp. The Parishioners soon looked upon Father Healy as a member of the parish and he spent much, if not all, of his free time at Sacred Heart. Hence, when the Bishop requested the parishes throughout the diocese to establish units of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, it was Father Healy who established our official unit on Sunday afternoon, September 13, 1959.

Under Father Vincent, Baccalaureate Services for all graduating high school students of Sacred Heart and St. Mary's churches were held annually. The first of these services was on Sunday, June 12, 1960. The following year, June 11, 1961, Father Healy celebrated the Baccalaureate Mass and Bishop Wright delivered the Sermon.

Under Father Smith there began a cordial atmosphere between the Protestant clergy and non-Catholics within the confines of the parish.

Father frequently was in demand as a speaker for community affairs. Father Vincent continued this work, which was climaxed by a "Good Will Sunday" on February 19, 1961. This included an open house with guided tours of the church and explanations of Church furnishings, Catholic ritual, customs and practices followed by informal discussion and question period. Hundreds of people, Catholic and non-Catholic and members of the Protestant Clergy were present. Since this was the first such event in the diocese, representatives of other parishes came to observe and study the procedure. A second Good Will Sunday was held on April 1, 1962.

The heavy burden on Father Vincent and Father Gross was reduced when Father Leonard Tuozzolo, C.S.Sp., was appointed as assistant pastor in September 1961. Interested in sports

for both the young and old of the parish, Father Tuozzolo soon became a favorite of most of the parishioners.

### **Fr. John Skaj, First Assignment to Sacred Heart**

It was thus a shock when it was announced in August 1964 that Father Tuozzolo was being transferred. A farewell party was given for Father Tuozzolo at which his successor, Father John P. Skaj, C.S.Sp., was introduced to the parishioners. Since the inception of the new Liturgy of the Mass was on November 29, 1964, Father Skaj was instrumental in directing the parishioners and instructing the commentators through the various changes so that Sacred Heart had become a leader and an example for other parishes.

### **Diamond Jubilee**

In 1966, Sacred Heart celebrated its Diamond Jubilee, having 655 registered families comprising 2070 souls. That same year, Father Vincent celebrated his Golden Jubilee in the Priesthood when the whole parish and community came out in multitudes to honor this dearly beloved priest at many occasions held for him by his friends. He was held in such esteem that the Provincial feared an uproar if he retired him at the age of 77. The Solomon's decision was to let Father Vincent stay in the parish when he retired in 1968 for another ten years as Pastor Emeritus, which he spent by remaining very much involved with the parishioners.

Father Vincent G. Kmiencinski died at the age of 93.