

# Sacred Heart Parish History

Sacred Heart was established in 1891.

## Inaugural Meeting

On February 22, 1891, a meeting was held in the home of Thomas Barrett on Beaver Road in Clifton (now Emsworth) to discuss plans for building the first Catholic church in the area, forming Sacred Heart Parish. Father Anthony J. Zielenbach, C.S.Sp. presided at the meeting and Mr. William P. Kuipers acted as secretary.

## First Mass

The first holy Mass read within the confines of what is now Sacred Heart parish was celebrated in the home of the Boleky family on Center Avenue on March 22, 1891. This first Mass was celebrated by Father Zielenbach. Prior to that time, priests from St. Mary's on the North Side of Pittsburgh came periodically to serve the people of the Glenfield and Emsworth districts in a chapel, and later a frame church, in Glenfield. These priests came by carriage and horseback until 1878, when the Holy Ghost Fathers of Duquesne College (University) began to minister to the people on weekends.

The priests of the Holy Ghost Order came to this country in 1870 from Germany, where the persecution of Bismarck's "Kulturkampf" ousted all religious orders. Having founded Duquesne University, known as Holy Ghost College, in 1878, the Holy Ghost Fathers devoted their weekends to the needs of the people in the outer districts of Pittsburgh.

## First Parish Records

The first entry in the original records of our parish reads as follows:

We the undersigned, agree to give the following sum toward buying ground and a building for a Catholic Church in Clifton." Then the names of those present and the amount of their pledges are given. The list includes the following original committee members of the parish: A. Bahl, Thomas Barrett, Peter Bierweiler, A. Boleky, Mary A. Egan, James Farrell, William P. Kuipers, Charles Nock, Sr., Joseph O'Neil, A. Schneider, Bryan Scully, E. Sexton, Joseph Wohnhas and A. Winterhalter.

Another notation reads:

W. P. Kuipers and Mrs. C. A. Boleky collected donations for Sacred Heart Church on May 1st 1891." Various donations are listed from Boggs and Buhl, Rosenbaum's

and Kaufmann's. Mercy Hospital donated the statue of St. Joseph. Mrs. L. M. Heyl gave "one pair of lovely candelabras"; Miss Terheyden donated three pair of brass candleholders and six candles; Mrs. Edward Frauenheim donated "one front stained-glass window.

## **Donations, Supplies and More**

The Sisters of Mercy and the priests of St. Augustine's parish donated vestments and linens. The Ursuline Sisters gave linens, vestments and altar cards. Father Suhrs supplied the missal, three vestments and two copes. Father Rain gave two vestments and a cope. St. Nicholas Church donated a monstrance and a ciborium. Father Zielenbach donated the high altar. Father Tobin donated the first baptismal font. A Mrs. Blanchard generously donated the first organ.

Practically all the appointments of the church were obtained by donations. It is clearly evident that the parish owes its beginning to the zeal of its original members, and the generosity of people in other parishes.

## **First Pastor**

Father Zielenbach became the first pastor of the parish at a meeting held on March 20, 1892. The new church was built on land adjacent to the old rectory on Walnut Street and was dedicated in the fall of 1892.

Father Zielenbach left the parish on November 20, 1892, for other duties and was succeeded by Father Theophile Meyer, C.S.Sp., who at the same time continued his teaching duties at Holy Ghost College (now Duquesne University). This double duty proved too much for Father Meyer; he soon was relieved of his parish duties, though he still ministered to the people in the Glenfield area on weekends from the college.

## **Follow-on Pastors**

Father Michael Boyce, C.S.Sp. was sent to Emsworth as pastor on December 18, 1892, "at a salary of \$450.00 a year." In June 1895, Father Boyce was succeeded by Father Patrick McDermitt, C.S.Sp., who remained as pastor only until October 1895, when Father Meyer was relieved of his teaching duties and once again took up residence as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish. At this time the congregation of St. Mary's Glenfield became officially attached to Sacred Heart Parish as its mission.

The congregation was at a standstill until 1908 when the extension of the Pittsburgh Railways Company lines through the borough brought a number of new families to live here permanently.

Father Meyer served as pastor until his death on June 30, 1938, following a tragic automobile accident. He was 81 years old. He was affectionately known as the "Bishop of Emsworth" to his wide acquaintance of both Catholic and non-Catholics. In the years of Father Meyer's pastorate from 1895 to 1918, the parish grew from 30 to 130 families.

## **Purchase of Land on Ohio River Boulevard**

The parish was without debt in 1918, and consideration was given to the building of a new church. A committee meeting was held on October 6, 1918, and Father Meyer proposed the purchase of the lot and house (old convent and school property) owned by Michael J. Slattery on Ohio River Boulevard (Beaver Ave.) between North and Orchard avenues. The committee included Robert Reilly, secretary, and Messrs. Dennis Foltz, J.W. Kelly and J.J. Stauffer. The record of the meeting reads:

"It was the general opinion that the purchase of the Odd Fellows Hall (later the YMCA) on the corner of Beaver Road and North Avenue should be taken into consideration before any decision was reached as to the purchase of the property in question."

It was moved and seconded that a committee be appointed to ascertain the amount for which the Odd Fellows Hall could be purchased. Father Meyer appointed the following committee members to report at an early date: Messrs. Dennis Foltz, J.W. Kelly and J. J. Stauffer. Although the Odd Fellows Hall was not obtained at that time, the Slattery property was purchased for \$11,000. It is interesting to note that on November 3, 1919, at a church committee meeting, it was proposed to sell the property on which the Walnut Street rectory and the old church once stood.

Plans for the building of a new church were set aside and on Labor Day 1924 ground was broken for the present school in accordance with plans prepared by William P. Hutchins, a noted Pittsburgh architect. The construction of the school was under the supervision of Father Joseph Rossenbach, C.S.Sp., who had been acting as assistant pastor since 1920 and who was also the national director of the Holy Childhood Association. In September 1925, the school opened with a registration of 120 children under the direction of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mount Alvernia in Millvale. The school cost \$87,000 and the lot and former convent building cost \$11,000. This debt was paid off gradually until 1945 when the parish again became debt-free.

## **1940s**

Following the death of Father Meyer in 1938, the Rev. Sebastian Schiffgens, C.S.Sp. became pastor. Father Schiffgens had been an assistant in the parish since December 1934. During his pastorate, the parish grew to 300 families. Assigned to the post of treasurer at Duquesne University in 1945, Father Schiffgens was succeeded by Father Henry Thessing C.S.Sp., whose zeal for the physical condition and maintenance of the parish, and skill in carpentry, painting and other trades were remarkable and will be remembered by his parishioners. Because of

difficulties that developed at his former parish in Dayton, OH, Father was recalled to that post in February 1948. Later assigned to his home parish in Arkansas, Father Thessing died suddenly on February 8, 1951.

Father Louis Schenning, C.S.Sp. was appointed pastor on February 6, 1948, but returned to teaching at Duquesne University in September of that year. In spite of his short stay, Father Schenning made many friends among the parishioners. Father Leo J. Kettl, C.S.Sp., succeeded Father Schenning and remained until July 1950. Two new classrooms were opened in the school in September 1948 making a total of six in service. Because of the poor health of Father Kettl, many of his duties fell on his assistant, Father Sylvester Dellert, C.S.Sp. Under Father Dellert's direction, the inside of the old church was renovated and painted.

## **Need for a Larger Church Building**

The parish grew rapidly, making it necessary to have five Sunday Masses, all of which were crowded. During the Masses it was impossible for everyone to get into the church. A new and larger church was needed.

Father Edward M. Smith C.S.Sp succeeded Father Kettl as pastor in July 1950 and was instructed to build a new church. Although he had been a teacher his entire priestly career, Father Smith quickly adapted himself to parish duties.

During this time, the North Borough YMCA acquired the Odd Fellows Hall. This was the property best suited for the location of the new church. Repeated attempts to purchase the property resulted only in failure. However, perseverance was rewarded when in March 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 in Aspinwall, gave the address.

## **Planning and Building a New Church**

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 suggestions for changes. Initially it was believed that a seating capacity of 600 would be sufficient, but Bishop John Dearden insisted that the church should be built to seat 700, a decision whose wisdom was obvious for that era. Agreement was finally reached and drawings and specifications were submitted for bids. Navarro Corporation was awarded the general contract and ground was broken on November 21, 1954, with Father Smith officiating in the presence of nearly 500 parishioners.

The cornerstone was blessed on the afternoon of July 26, 1955 by Father Michael Hinnebush, pastor of the Assumption Parish in Bellevue, assisted by Father George Rengers, C.S.Sp., pastor of Sacred Heart in Tarentum and Father Joseph Rengers, C.S.Sp., chaplain of Duquesne University, as deacon and sub-deacon. Father Joseph Rossenbach, C.S.Sp., who built our school 30 years prior, delivered the sermon.

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, NY, in 1896 and placed in the old church that same year.

The new church was dedicated on Saturday morning, December 10, 1955, at a solemn pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop John F. Dearden (later Cardinal), assisted by Father Aloysius Reilly, O.F.M. (the brother of Paul and Thomas Reilly of this parish). The celebrant 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.

## **Elementary School Growth and Adaptations**

Continued growth of the parish to well over 600 families totaling, 1,900 people with 350 children in the grade school 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.

## **Late 1950s and 1960s**

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. Kmiecinski, 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, 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 also 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 his leadership as spiritual director our C.C.D. became one of the outstanding units in the diocese. C.C.D. religious instruction classes for those attending public schools began on Sunday, October 18, of that same year. (Father Healy died tragically in 1999).

Under Father Vincent, baccalaureate services for all graduating high school students of Sacred Heart and St. Mary's parishes were held annually. The first of these services was on Sunday, June 12, 1960. On 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, and catholic rituals, customs and practices, followed by an informal discussion and question period. Hundreds of people, including Catholic, non-Catholic and members of the Protestant clergy, were present. Because 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.

Under the direction of Father Vincent, the old church was torn down, and the garage on Walnut Street moved and enlarged to improve the looks of the rectory grounds and to better serve the needs of the priest. While a new convent and rectory had been needed for a long time, heavy school expenses precluded building either of these buildings, although it was hoped that a new convent would be built soon. The remaining two rooms in the space occupied by the auditorium were completed and new desks were purchased for the school. The school's electrical system was completely rewired and a new and much better lighting system installed. A new fire alarm system was installed, and the exits were modernized to ensure the safety of the school children.

The heavy burden on Father Vincent and Father Gross was reduced when Father Leonard Tuozzolo, C.S.Sp. was appointed assistant pastor in September 1961. Father Tuozzolo soon became a favorite among the parishioners. 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 and Golden Jubilees**

In 1966, Sacred Heart celebrated its diamond jubilee, having 655 registered families comprising 2,070 souls. That same year, Father Vincent celebrated his golden jubilee in the priesthood. 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 Father Vincent at the age of 77. The Solomon's decision was to let Father Vincent stay in the parish for another 10 years as pastor emeritus after he retired in 1968. He spent those 10 years by remaining very involved with the parishioners. Father Vincent G. Kmiecinski died in 1985 at the age of 93.

## **1970s and 1980s**

Father Louis A. Dietrich, C.S.Sp. was appointed pastor in the summer of 1968, but failing health caused him to resign in 1971. Father William Maguire, C.S.Sp., who had succeeded Father Skaj as assistant, remained until replaced by Father Stanley L. Otto, C.S.Sp. in 1969. Father Otto was named administrator in March 1971. Being well acquainted with the parishioners and people in the boroughs, Father Otto guided the Parish in various changes and gave spiritual direction to all.

Father Otto administered the parish for four months until Father Vernon F. Gallagher, C.S.Sp. became pastor. But, eight months later, Father Gallagher was named director of Holy Childhood in the USA. Father Joseph A. Brennan, C.S.Sp. took over in 1972 and earned high praise from the Bishop for his management and direction of the parish through some difficult and tumultuous times. Father Brennan was responsible for buying the duplex at the corner of Orchard Avenue and Ohio River Boulevard, which was converted into the new convent. This paved the way to tear down the old convent to build the present rectory. Father Joseph A. Brennan died in 1991.

In October 1976, John Gerlach was hired as Sacred Heart organist/cantor.

Father Francis X. Malinowski, C.S.Sp. succeeded Father Brennan as pastor in 1977, followed by Father Martin J. Conroy, C.S.Sp. from 1978 to 1984. Father David C. Marshall, C.S.Sp. was appointed pastor in August 1984. Father Rengers was assistant to Father Conroy from 1983 to 1984 and to Father Marshall from 1984 to 1988.

In the 1980s, Sacred Heart School and Parish continued to grow and prosper largely due to the hard work of many parishioners, some very creative fund-raising and through Father Marshall's and Father Rengers' vigilance to increase parish revenue by a very successful 38 percent. Many school programs were added during this time, including boys and girls soccer, scouting,

adopt-a-student program, apples for students, along with the well-established and very successful girls and boys basketball programs.

In April 1985, Mrs. Kathleen (Kathy) Donovan school secretary for the past five years takes over duties of parish secretary/business manager.

On September 20, 1987, Sacred Heart purchased, (\$10,000), received and renovated a majestic 19-rank Moeller pipe organ, a generous bequest of a deceased parishioner, (Margaretta M. Kelly). The organ was dedicated to Catherine Burke Marshall, Father Marshall's mother. This organ was previously used at St. Joseph's Parish, Manchester and was originally dedicated on October 23, 1955. An interesting side note to the dedication of the organ at St. Joseph's was that Sacred Heart's present organist/cantor John Gerlach's father John E. Gerlach was on the church committee and a donor for this organ 32 years ago at St. Joseph's. The newly renovated organ was formally dedicated on December 6, 1987, by Ann Labounsky Steele, an internationally acclaimed organist, assisted by the parish choir under the direction of Henry C. Adams. By 1988, the parish had 3,197 registered souls, school enrollment was above 200 students with a staff of 11 teachers and four aids. The school was rebounding and showing growth.

On May 25, 1988, Father Rengers was transferred to St. Mary's, Sharpsburg, after five years of devoted service to Sacred Heart. Father Marshall spoke highly of Father Rengers: "Father fulfilled his obligations and duties at Sacred Heart in a simple and humble style". Father Rengers returned to our Lord at the age of 85 after a tragic accident on March 3, 1998.

Father Rengers replacement as associate pastor was Father Ralph Poirier, who was ordained in 1963, and came after performing missionary duties in Africa for more than 20 years. In March 1989, Father Marshall resigned as pastor of Sacred Heart due to failing health after presiding over the parish for five years. Eventually Father Marshall regained his health and was re-assigned to a parish in Rhode Island.

Father Ralph Poirier, C.S.Sp. was officially installed as pastor of the parish in May. Later that year, a heavy workload and only one parish priest, the Sunday Mass schedule was revised from four Sunday Masses to three. School attendance peaked at 218 students (largest attendance in 25 years) with a school staff of 17.

## **1990s**

The convent was sold in February 1990 for \$45,000; the monies received helped to pay off mounting costs of the school and parish. This was also the year that the parish resumed hosting Parish festivals and sponsoring the very successful St. Patrick's Day dances (previously sponsored by the Athletic Association) in the auditorium. May 1991 marked the 100th anniversary of celebrating the Eucharist at Sacred Heart Parish.

In 1992, with shrinking school enrollment, the parish secured a loan from the diocese to help defray the rising cost of daily operation of the school and church/rectory. Sacred Heart entered a period of debt.

In September of that year, Father Francis P. Meenan, C.S.Sp was appointed as parochial vicar at Sacred Heart. Father Meenan was ordained June 16, 1944.

By 1994, after holding parish meetings with parishioners to search for solutions for the very serious indebtedness of the parish and school due to declining enrollment, and after recommendation from the parish finance committee, a decision was made to close Sacred Heart School at the conclusion of the 1993-1994 school year. After review by the diocese, the Bishop granted permission in March to close the school at the conclusion of the school year.

### **Holy Family Institute Rents Closed Elementary School**

At the same time Holy Family Institute contacted the parish about leasing the school building for use as a day care facility for students with learning deficiencies. On June 10, 1994, Sacred Heart School officially closed its doors after teaching students for 70 years. The school was staffed in its entirety by members of the Sisters of St. Francis at Mt. Alvernia in Millvale. With the school now closed, the parish hired a director of religious education, Mrs. Linda McKenzie, to assist in the needs of youth for their religious education.

Also in 1994, Father Meenan, also known affectionately as Father Frank, celebrated his golden jubilee in the priesthood. The entire parish community was invited to honor this dearly beloved and devoted priest. That same year the church auditorium was renamed Smith Center in honor of the 1950s pastor Father Edward Smith, who handled the task of building our present day church for a growing parish.

Father Ralph Poirier was reassigned in July 1996; during his pastorate, the parish had stabilized with more than 900 families and had celebrated the centennial of its foundation. Father Ralph's replacement was Father John P. Skaj, C.S.Sp., who was ordained in 1963. Father Skaj's return to Sacred Heart was a very pleasant surprise for many parishioners who remembered Father's stay at Sacred Heart in the mid 1960s. Father Skaj administered to many parish duties over the years, most recently at St. Catherine of Siena in Little Rock, RI, for the past nine years. Father Skaj's "coming home" to Sacred Heart was liturgically celebrated and he was installed as pastor on September 22, 1996. Also in September the Sacred Heart religious education program began holding weekly CCD education classes in the school building.

In April 1998, Sacred Heart opened its hearts and doors to welcome Bishop Donald Wuerl, Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, for the celebration of the Mass and reception following in Smith Center. In June of that year a thank-you reception in honor of Mrs. Jane Gruber was held in Smith Center for her unselfish and loving service as organist of 33 years. Mrs. Gruber

touched the lives of so many in the parish at countless weddings, Masses, celebrations and funerals.

In 1999, Father Nicholas Nnabuaka, C.S.Sp. from Nigeria stayed at Sacred Heart while completing his studies at Duquesne University. With Father Nick's help in celebrating the Eucharist daily, the tremendous backlog of Mass offerings was greatly reduced. Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh David A. Zubik came to celebrate our Pastoral Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, along with the provincial of the Holy Ghost Fathers of this province, Father Christopher Promis C.S.Sp.

In July, Sacred Heart was blessed to receive and welcome its first deacon, Stephen Deskevich, to help assist at Eucharistic celebrations and ceremonies. By August, Father Nicholas completed his studies at Duquesne and left to enter into doctoral studies. He was replaced in September by Father James Akpagher, C.S.Sp from Nigeria.

## **2000s**

In the year 2000, the 45th anniversary of the dedication of the church was celebrated with Auxiliary Bishop David A. Zubik, Pastor Father Skaj and Assistant Pastor Father Meenan. New church signs were erected on the Ohio River Boulevard side of the church, a gracious donation from the family of Amelia and Anton Yavorka. Receiving the Manifesting the Kingdom Award from Bishop Wuerl was parishioner Mrs. Pat Fitzgerald for her 33 years of teaching religious education at Sacred Heart. In January 2001, Father James completed his studies at Duquesne University and informed the parish of his return home to the Holy Ghost Fathers in Nigeria. On May 12, Auxiliary Bishop David A. Zubik consecrated a new altar installed at Sacred Heart in a powerful and moving ritual well attended by parishioners.

This milestone in the life of Sacred Heart was an event rarely witnessed by many bishops, priest or parishioners, a fact presented by Father Frank who witnessed and participated in his first altar consecration, after celebrating the 57th anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood in June of 2001. The new altar was the bequest of Mrs. Florence Braunstein in memory of herself and her late husband Robert.

In September the Sunday Mass schedule was voted on by the parishioners and approved by the diocese to be changed to two Sunday Masses due to a drop in Mass attendance. In October, Father Meenan resigned as parochial vicar at the age of 87 and requested to stay at Sacred Heart to carry on a lighter load of duties and to be involved with the parishioners at Sacred Heart. Father Meenan's request was overwhelmingly approved by Bishop Wuerl. Also in October, organist/cantor John Gerlach celebrated 25 faithful years in making Sacred Heart's celebrations truly inspirational as organist and cantor. Finally, in December 2001, the church received a donation for a new and much needed public address system.

During 2002, the parish witnessed many improvements to the church and grounds alike. In April, a parishioner donated new flower stands at both the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph

plaques. In May, three gardens were installed around the rectory and church buildings, a project donated by a young Eagle Scout parishioner. In August and September, a generous parishioner donated new and refurbished cabinets in the sacristy and vestments areas. New flooring was added in the church, along with new kneelers, new sidewalks and railings around the rectory , which were funded by the parish share program.

In August, Father Skaj was re-appointed by the Bishop for a second six-year term as pastor of Sacred Heart. A reception in Father's honor was held in Smith Center.

At the end of October, the parish witnessed the retirement of William (Bill) Belch, who had been the parish custodian since 1965. Bill saw many changes occur within and around the parish during his 37 years of loyal and dedicated service to the school, rectories and church buildings.

January 2003 started off with Mr. Henry Adams receiving the Manifesting the Kingdom Award from Bishop Wuerl. The award recognized exceptional service to the church. Mr. Adams had been the Sacred Heart choir director for the previous 37 years. Sadly due to lack of volunteers, Sacred Heart held its 14th and last St. Patrick's Day dance in March.

On June 8, the Parish enjoyed celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Holy Ghost Fathers. The Holy Ghost Fathers had been involved with Sacred Heart since its inception well over 100 years earlier. Also in June, new hymnals were purchased and donated to enrich the celebration of the Eucharist. In August, Father Casmir Nyaki, C.S.Sp., Holy Ghost Father from Tanzania, was welcomed at Sacred Heart. Father Casmir was completing his studies for a doctorate in philosophy at Duquesne University and helped tremendously with the Mass load along with Father Skaj and Father Meenan.

The Ladies' Auxiliary celebrated its 90th anniversary. The mission of this auxiliary is to sanctify the members and their homes and families through devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to unite all the women of the parish for welfare, civic and social activities, and to promote the interests of the parish. This organization is truly the backbone of Sacred Heart Church.

In February 2004, Father Meenan celebrated his 90th birthday. In May, Sacred Heart enjoyed the visit of former pastor Father Martin Conroy, C.S.Sp. The parish was touched and honored to have Father Conroy celebrate the 50th anniversary of ordination at Sacred Heart.

On June 16, Father Meenan celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood by celebrating the Eucharist with the parish followed by a reception in Smith Center. Also in June, there was a title change of the Holy Ghost Fathers to Holy Spirit Fathers. This process was ongoing in the Spiritian Provinces internationally. Because the third person of the Trinity was no longer referred to as "Holy Ghost" but as "Holy Spirit," and is the namesake of the order, a change was proper.

On August 15, former pastor Father Martin Conroy returned to the Lord after a short illness. Father Conroy's returning visit in May was a blessing to many parishioners who had a chance to

talk and reminisce with him before his untimely death. Also in August, a decision to install much needed ceiling fans was approved and funded by various donations from the Ladies' Auxiliary and parishioners.

In September, the provincial and provincial council granted the request of Father Meenan to allow his retirement to the retirement residence in Bethel Park. A tremendous outpouring of parishioners gathered for a thank-you and going-away ice cream social to honor Father Frank's many years of dedicated service.

In November, the parish held a Ministry Fair and witnessed the power of the Stewardship Initiative by celebrating Mass and the Eucharist in Smith Center (first time in more than 20 years). This Stewardship Initiative of time, talent and treasure asked the question, "Lord, what do you want to do through me to accomplish your will for Your church." Sacred heart responded with overwhelming success by adding the involvement of more than 100 new parishioners and 13 new ministries to meet the changing needs of our parish and community.

In December, the diocese started the diocesan-wide Envisioning Ministry, which asked parishes to consider how ministry would be provided by fewer priests and make recommendations to the diocese on how to best serve all parishes and parishioners. Sacred Heart along with "clustered" parishes Assumption and St. Mary's Glenfield formed a ministry to address these and other issues challenging our parishes.

To end 2004, the children's youth ministry presented the parish with a much-appreciated live Nativity scene the weekend before Christmas. The children's youth ministry plans to continue this special gift to the parish for years to come.

Sacred Heart social events continued throughout 2005 with a Valentines Day ball, father-Daughter dance in February, Family Movie Night in April and a Parish picnic in August.

In February 2005, Sacred Heart welcomed the return of Sacred Heart and Emsworth native USAF/astronaut Lt. Col. Michael Fincke (son of parishioners Elma and Edward Fincke) for a reception in Smith Center in honor of his work as an astronaut and his recent trip to the International Space Station.

In March, Sacred Heart entered the electronic age by launching its Internet web site, [www.sacredheartemsworth.org](http://www.sacredheartemsworth.org).

On June 18, Sacred Heart is now the soul remaining Spiritian parish in the Diocese of Pittsburgh (Eastern Province), after the Diocese formally acquired duties of Holy Spirit parish in Millville.

In September the parish participated in a new parish photo directory.

On December 11, 2005, a celebration Mass for the 50 anniversary of the present church building was celebrated with Bishop Donald W. Wurel as the principal celebrant at the Mass of

Thanksgiving. A reception brunch for all invited guest and parishioners followed in Smith Center. A side note to the dedication was lifelong parishioner Regis Costello also celebrating 50-years as a Sacred Heart usher serving at the Dedication Mass on December 10th, 1955.