

## St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Parish - A Historical Summary -

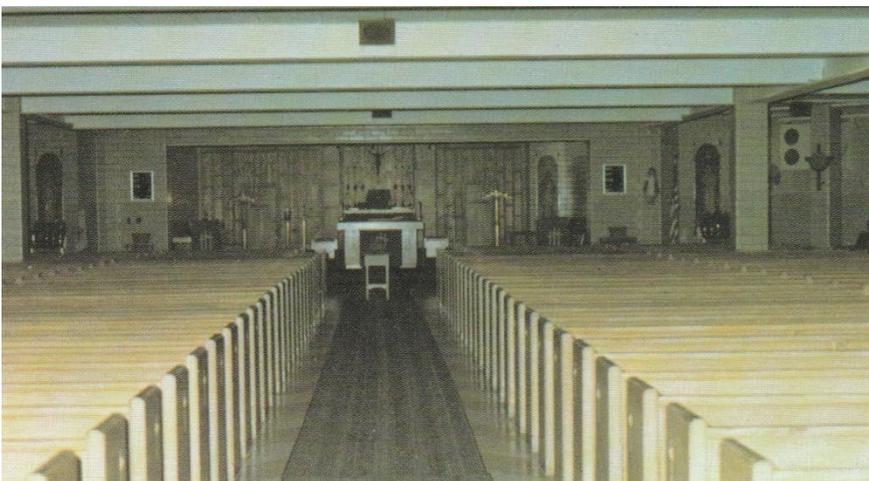
St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Parish began on November 24, 1944 when Father Jacob Zewe was appointed the first pastor of our congregation. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God agreed to the use of their chapel by our new church community, and the first parish mass was offered on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1944.

The primary concern of the founding families was to erect a combination church/school building, which would provide an education that was comprised of spiritual, intellectual and cultural development for the children of the parish. Many sacrifices, in both time and money, were made by those pioneer members.

The land for the new church/school building was provided through the generosity of Felix Caste. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place in the spring of 1949. The first mass was celebrated on January 8, 1950.



*Portrait of Rev. Jacob M. Zewe*



The dream of a parochial school was realized in September, 1950 when 123 children were enrolled in four grades. The Sisters of Saint Francis served as the dedicated teaching staff.

By 1966, the school had grown to 24 classrooms and accommodated 950 students.

From 1950 to 1959, our current school gym served as our first parish church.

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As the congregation grew, so did the need for additional space. Father Lawrence O'Connell, who succeeded Father Zewe in 1952, realized the demand for an all-purpose room and lunchroom, and was given permission from the diocese to erect a permanent church structure. And so our first "church" became our parish social hall and school lunchroom.

The first Mass of Thanksgiving in our new "basement" church was offered on the feast of St. Gabriel, on February 27, 1959. Members of our parish worshipped there until April 23, 1976, when our existing church structure was completed and dedicated. At that time, our basement church was converted to a new parish meeting place / parish hall and the social hall became our school gym.



Father John Haney was appointed as the third pastor of St. Gabriel Parish on June 29, 1983. His passion of maintaining a tuition-free parochial school was embodied by the introduction and implementation of a formalized tithing program focusing on time, talent and treasure of our parishioners. Father Haney's good nature and spirit is exemplified by the way he embraces the parish members as his "family" and lovingly refers to the church as the "miracle on Greenridge Drive". His continued presence while residing at St. Gabriel's after his June 25, 2016 retirement is truly a blessing.

Father John Skirtich assumed pastoral duties as administrator on June 27, 2016 to begin yet another faith-inspired chapter in the history of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Parish. He was formerly pastor of St. Maurice in Forest Hills for almost 16 years. Father Skirtich quickly embraced the church and school as his own, and will serve as our spiritual guide throughout the On Mission For The Church Alive process to assure the continuation of an enriched, enlivened, thriving parish.