

## A HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF SAINT ANDREW

### Saint Andrew's Field of Dreams

The Roman Catholic church of Saint Andrew in Avenel, New Jersey was established by incorporation under the auspices of Right Reverend Thomas J. Walsh, Bishop of Trenton, and witnessed by Right Reverend John H. Fox, Vicar General of the Diocese, Reverend Richard J. O'Farrell, pastor of Saint James Church in Woodbridge, Joseph Felten and Andrew Jandrisevitz, trustees of the new parish, on 14 September and recorded on 27 September 1920, in accordance with the New Jersey statute, "An Act to Incorporate Trustees of Religious Societies," written in 1875.

Andrew Jandrisevits, Joseph Felten, Harold Skay and Julius Jaeger, the earliest trustees of the new parish, who represented residents of Avenel who were parishioners of Saint James Church in Woodbridge and Saint Mary's Church in Rahway, inspired the movement to establish an independent parish in Avenel. Andrew Jandrisevits' leadership was honored by his fellow trustees who named the new church for his namesake, Saint Andrew, brother of Saint Peter.

Boundaries of the new parish were formally described in 1935 as the Rahway River to the north, Blair Road to the east, Port Reading Railroad to the south and Saint George Avenue to the west. Although Fr. O'Farrell opposed the creation of a Mission parish within the boundaries of Saint James parish because he felt that 125 Catholic men and women, the first reported census of Saint Andrew's, could not support a new facility for rather a long time, he complied with Bishop Walsh's order. Sunday Mass was celebrated in the fourth grade classroom on the second floor of Woodbridge School Number 4, later identified as Avenel School Number 4 and 5, on Avenel Street, which was built in 1912. When the Woodbridge Board of Education, in 1923, built an addition to the rear of the school which included an auditorium with a stage, the new hall served as a church for Sunday Mass.

Harold Skay built a collapsible wooden altar, and a small dressing room furnished with two wooden chairs served as a sacristy and doubled as a confessional: face to face confession was a liturgical necessity in the early days of the parish. Peter

Jandrisevits and John Wranitz, who apparently mastered their Latin, were the first altar boys.

The people of St. Andrew's met the challenge of creating a viable parish by dedicating themselves to the task of building a church. The Rosary Society sponsored card parties in private homes, at Avenel School, and at "Once Upon A Time," Bill Campbell's Clubhouse. The parish regularly sponsored block parties on Burnett Street and in 1922 held a week long carnival that occupied the large area between Avenel Street, Rahway Avenue, Burnett Street and Manhattan Avenue.

On 3 October, according to a deed recorded on 10 October 1923, "Saint Andrew's Catholic Church, Avenel, New Jersey" purchased from John B. and Mary D. C. Labat, the land on Avenel Street that bordered properties of Benjamin B. Clark, J. B. Edgar, and the remainder of the Labat property. The earliest available Parish report to the Diocese of Trenton, for the period from 30 September through 31 December 1923, advises the Bishop that the parish purchased one and one half acres of land for the price of \$1500.00 cash.

There were, at the time, 205 members of the parish, 60 men, 65 women and 80 children; the Rosary Society reported 65 members; 80 children attended Catechism classes on Sunday and were taught by 5 lay teachers. Rev. Richard J. O'Farrell submitted his annual report from 365 Amboy Ave., Woodbridge, the address of Saint James' rectory, and Harold E. Skay and Julius E. Jaeger signed the document as Lay Trustees. Although Saint Andrew's was nearly twenty years away from construction of the first church, the parish owned the field on which the present church, rectory and parking lot stand, and Andrew Jandrisevits did not allow the land to sit idle: he recruited Julius Jaeger, Jim Jaeger, Walter Manaker, and others to form a parish team that played baseball on the vacant lot.

### **The Twenties**

Parish reports to the diocese for the years 1923, 1924 and 1925, written in pen and ink, suggest that parishioners invested time and hard work to raise funds to build capital in anticipation of constructing a church. In 1923, receipts for fund raising projects were reported as \$402, while regular Sunday collections produced about half that amount; in 1924, regular collections for the year increased dramatically to \$664 and fund raising kept pace at \$606; and in 1925 collections were reported at \$615 while fund

raising fell to \$455. In 1925, the average national income was reported as \$2,239; a new car cost \$290; gasoline sold for 12 cents; bread cost 9 cents and milk 56 cents. Keds, a product of the United States Rubber Company, were not called sneakers and sold for between \$1.25 and \$4.50.

Fr. O'Farrell presented his first typewritten report to Trenton for the year 1926 when fund raising efforts produced \$794 compared to annual Sunday collections of \$663. The parish did not grow significantly between 1920 and 1926 when Fr. O'Farrell reported a total population of 60 men, 75 women and an astonishing, and probably erroneous, 200 children, 62 of whom attended Catechism classes. In spite of the increased number of children, the record reports only one wedding, 5 Baptisms, and 6 First Communicants.

Curiously, in the following year, 1927, the report was submitted in pen and ink and signed by "Rev. C. B. Reagan, Administrator." During the year, the diocese or the parish instituted a "monthly" collection to supplement Sunday collections and the parish realized an increase in revenue: weekly collections amounted to \$535 for the year while the monthly collection netted \$256; fund raising efforts realized \$295, but special occasion collections, Christmas and Easter, rose significantly to a total of \$214.

Early in 1928, Bishop Walsh was reassigned to the Newark Diocese and Most Reverend John. J. McMahon was appointed Bishop of Trenton and consecrated on 26 April. By the time he submitted his 1928 report to the new Bishop, Fr. O'Farrell's typewriter was again in good repair. The parish profile remained quite the same: there were 200 parishioners, 62 men, 58 women, and 80 children. Sunday Catechism classes were attended by 50 children, 30 boys and 20 girls; the Rosary Society enjoyed a membership of 40; there were 15 First Communicants; 4 were Confirmed at Saint James Church, and the parish boasted another marriage. Fr. O'Farrell's report valued the parish land at \$2,000. The average national income reported for 1928 rose to \$2,470, \$250 over the 1925 level, and indexed prices for housing, gasoline, milk and bread remained substantially the same, though the price of a car rose from \$290 to \$525. The New York Yankees won the world series; the New York Rangers won the Stanley Cup; and the Stock Market reported record trading levels.

In 1929 Babe Ruth hit his 500th home run; construction began on the Empire State Building; and the Stock Market crashed on Tuesday, 29 October. The average

national income fell to \$2,062, and ironically, "Happy Days Are Here Again," was among the most popular songs. Although the size of the parish did not change through its first nine years, the 125 adult Catholics of Saint Andrew's were dedicated to their parish and determined in their support: contributions and fund raising efforts produced revenue consistent with previous years.

Fr. O'Farrell's 1929 report to the diocese showed interest income from bank deposits of \$354, a sum larger than the monthly collections of \$263. Special occasion collections remained at the \$200 level; regular Sunday collections were \$504 for the year; and fund raising produced \$208. Although Fr. O'Farrell was right to predict that the parish would require rather a long time to evolve, he was well served by the diligent and persistent support of Saint Andrew's parishioners: Julius E. Jaeger and Harold E. Skay, lay trustees, who continued to sign Fr. O'Farrell's annual reports, in 1929, approved a loan to Saint James Parish in the amount of \$5,000.

Four couples were married in 1929; 22 children received First Communion, and 61 children, 34 boys and 27 girls, attended Sunday Catechism classes. News for 1929, however, was not all good. There were a shocking 17 deaths during the year, and 4 of those were children: parish records indicate that for the period between 1923 and 1928, there were only three deaths.

### **Depression Years**

Saint Andrew's Holy Name Society was officially established on 1 December 1930 and reported membership of 36, slightly more than half of the 60 men registered in the parish. The Rosary Society reported membership of 25, a significant decline from earlier levels. The parish register for 1930 lists 120 adults and 130 children, 98 of whom attended Sunday Catechism classes. The decision to loan money to Saint James Parish suggests that the lay leaders conceded that their numbers combined with uncertain economic conditions did not yet justify construction of a church, and Fr. O'Farrell's report to Bishop McMahan formally identified Saint Andrew's Parish as "Mission of Woodbridge--Saint James."

Winds of change blew through the 1930's. Rev. Richard O'Farrell, pastor of Saint James in Woodbridge since 1918 died in October 1932 and was succeeded by Rev. Francis X. Langan. Bishop McMahan died in December 1932 and was succeeded by Bishop Moses E. Kiley. Saint Andrew's population remained relatively constant, though

it is difficult to ascertain how pastors of Saint James or their designated administrators arrived at the numbers: reports for 1931 and 1932 count 65 men and 62 women. In 1933 the numbers jump to 100 men and 100 women, perhaps a rough estimate; and in 1934 there were reported 92 men, 83 women, and 112 children--not enough people to build a church in difficult economic times. The reported national average income in 1934 fell to \$1,600. Neither did change create a climate favorable to a new venture.

In 1935, Rev. Lawrence A. Travers succeeded Rev. Francis X. Langan as pastor of Saint James parish, and after one year, he was replaced by Rev. Charles G. McCorristin. While pastors came and went, a young assistant, assigned to Saint James parish in early July 1933 proved to be a stabilizing force. Rev. Charles A. Dusten belatedly found himself responsible for the Mission parish and submitted Saint Andrew's report to the diocese for the year 1935 on 22 April 1936, some three months after the normal deadline. He signed himself as "Assistant" to the pastor of Saint James, and his signature was seconded by Lay Trustees, Frederick Foerch and John DuBoyce.

Through 1935 there was but one Mass, an 8 AM on Sundays, and there was no weekday Mass at Saint Andrew's. Baptism, Confirmation, weddings and funerals continued to be held at Saint James in Woodbridge. Parishioners who chose to attend daily Mass went either to Saint James or Saint Mary's in Rahway. Fr. Dusten's is the first annual report to count the number of families in the parish: there were 115 in 1935; six people died; there were two weddings, 11 First Communicants and 4 Baptisms. In his report for 1936, dated 29 January 1937, he signed himself as "Administrator." The parish grew to 150 families; the Holy Name Society had 50 members; the Rosary and Altar Society 75; and the report suggests the formation of a 150 member Boys' Club.

Fr. McCorristin, who would serve as pastor of Saint James from 1937 until 1966, relieved his assistant of responsibility for Saint Andrew's and submitted his 1937 report without the benefit of Trustees' signatures, and for 1938 his report bears the names of new Trustees, James J. Crowley and John J. Godby. He counted 100 families, 100 men, 100 women and 200 children: his numbers are suspiciously rounded, but it was in 1938 that he persuaded Bishop Kiley to invest the parish with a church of its own.

Fr. McCorristin, it would appear, bore responsibility for the construction of Saint Andrew's first Parish Church which was located "on church property next to the public library." He secured a mortgage from the diocese of Trenton and returned the unpaid

principle of the loan St. Andrews made to St. James in 1929. The West New York firm of Frank J. Ricker and Louis Axt, Architects, designed the church, a brick and hollow tile structure with slate roof, copper gutters, and elegant wooden doors. The church, with seating for 350, cost "in the neighborhood of \$28,000." The building was "approximately 90 x 40 feet" with a choir loft and bell tower, with a room below for the sexton to ring the bell. Beneath the church was a hall with kitchen facilities and a stage.

According to the article in the Independent Leader for 29 September 1939, the cornerstone, a donation from the Woodbridge Monumental Works, was laid at 2 PM on Sunday, 1 October, by Monsignor Peter J. Hart. Monsignor Edward C. Griffin addressed the assembly. The church was blessed on 17 December 1939, and Rev. Thomas E. Carney, assistant to Saint James parish since 1938, was Fr. McCorristin's choice to man the new Mission church of Saint Andrew.

### **The New Parish**

Change began to favor the evolving parish of Saint Andrew: on 1 January 1940, Bishop Moses E. Kiley was consecrated Archbishop of Milwaukee, and on 22 May 1940, the Most Reverend William A. Griffin was consecrated Bishop of Trenton. In his report to the diocese for 1939, written in early 1940, Fr. McCorristin suggested that Saint Andrew's, still a Mission of Saint James in Woodbridge, had the assets and size to support itself, and he reminded the Chancery that Rahway State Prison Farm was within the boundaries of the Mission parish.

In the following year, 1941, Bishop Griffin established Saint Andrew's as an independent parish and appointed, as its first pastor, Rev. Charles A. Dusten whose experience as Administrator of the Mission combined with his enthusiasm promised to inspire the new venture with the energy it needed to prosper. Fr. Dusten's annual reports bore the address, 138 Avenel Street, now a parking area where once stood an interim rectory. An actual census of the parish in 1941 counted 216 families. Fr. Dusten held Forty Hours Devotions, a diocesan requirement, in early January, and celebrated two Sunday Masses, 9:15 AM and 10:45 AM, and one daily Mass at 7:30 AM. In his first year he married 6 couples, baptized 9 infants, trained 21 First Communicants, and buried 3 parishioners. The Holy Name Society reported 50 members, the Rosary and Altar society 75 and the Sodality 75 members.

When he served as Administrator of the parish, Fr. Dusten demonstrated his interest in the young by forming a Boys' Club that apparently floundered in his absence. When he returned as pastor, he continued to pursue opportunities for the young: in 1942 he reported formation of an association called Boys of the Parish and Girls of the Parish with membership of 76 and 102 respectively. In 1943 he reported a Catholic Boy Scout troop with 20 members and a youth association called Holy Childhood with 116 members, 56 boys and 60 girls, about a third of the 305 children counted in a year that saw the number of families registered in the parish rise from 266 in 1942 to 432 in 1943.

The increased size of the parish required Fr. Dusten to add a third Sunday Mass in 1944: the revised schedule offered Masses at 7 AM , 9:15 AM, and 10:45 AM. Daily Mass remained at 7:30 AM, and Benediction services were conducted at 7:30 PM on Thursdays and on First Friday. Before the year got well under way, Fr. Dusten took ill. Oral tradition has it that he suffered from a disease that caused him to gain weight. He would deliver his sermons while seated, and although he was advised against walking round the church for the Stations of the Cross, he ignored the restriction and collapsed on Wednesday of Holy Week, 5 April 1944, while praying the Stations. His obituary says he died in St. Mary's hospital, Passaic, "after a six week illness." Fr. Dusten was but thirty-eight years old.

Rev. John J. Eagan, who would remain as pastor until 1971, replaced Fr. Dusten in April 1944. By the end of the year, Fr. Eagan had baptized 40 infants, married 8 couples, buried 6 adults and 1 child, and welcomed 36 First Communicants, all children. In October and November he conducted a parish census that counted a total of 1410 parishioners, 456 men, 468 women, 486 children and 463 families. In addition to existing parish organizations, he formed a Society for the Propagation of the Faith with 90 members and a St. Vincent de Paul Society with 8. When he wrote his annual report to the diocese, in the space that asked when Confirmation was last administered, he made his small complaint: "Confirmation was never administered in this parish."

In compliance with the doctrine that advises, "If you want a task done right, do it yourself or delegate it to a busy man or woman ," the Chancery, in 1945 added spiritual responsibility for the "New Jersey Rahway Reformatory" to the Parish of Saint Andrew, and Fr. Eagan added an 8:30 AM Mass at the Prison to his three Sunday Masses at the church. The last Mass every Sunday was a High Mass at which Mrs. Albert Barna

played the organ and Mrs. Joseph Wukovets sang. With the help of two Sisters of Mercy from Saint James, Fr. Eagan taught catechism classes to grammar school children on Monday afternoons and to High School students on Monday evenings. The Bishop honored the parish on 9 December 1945 when he administered the sacrament of Confirmation for the first time in the new church: 64 were confirmed, 31 boys, 29 girls and 4 adult women, one of whom was a convert.

Fr. Eagan was busier than the proverbial one-armed-roofer. The parish, once slow to emerge, suddenly burst forth, and with the help of a Seminarian, Thomas Ryan, Fr. Eagan counted heads in 1948. He found that his parish of 410 families in 1945 had grown to 520 families, and in 1949, he and Thomas Ryan counted 750 families. Baptisms increased from 11 in 1939, to 38 in 1945, 76 in 1947, 59 in 1948, and 72 in 1949: the baby-boom of the postwar years found Avenel. The census reported 3,105 Catholics in Saint Andrew's Parish, and Fr. Eagan added Sunday Masses: in 1949 there were five: 7 AM, 8 AM, 9 AM, 10 AM, 11 AM, and 8:30 AM at the Rahway Prison Farm. The Holy Ghost Fathers of Philadelphia and the Vincentian Fathers of Princeton visited on weekends to help with Confession and Sunday Masses.

On 1 January 1950 Bishop Griffin died. George W. Ahr, who was ordained on 29 July 1928, was appointed Bishop of Trenton on 28 January and consecrated on 20 March 1950. In the same year, Fr. Eagan reported that his census of the parish, taken with the help of unnamed Seminarians, revealed still further growth: there were 999 families, 3,842 Catholics, 1,162 men, 1,089 women, 1,591 children. During the year, Fr. Eagan enlisted the help of two lay teachers to help two Sisters teach weekly catechism classes, and in the summer he instituted a Religious Vacation School that required three Sisters, three lay teachers and one Seminarian. He baptized 87, and 83 received First Holy Communion. Bishop Ahr recognized that the spiritual and administrative demands of the parish were beyond one man, and in 1951 appointed Fr. Bernard J. Carlin as Saint Andrew's first curate.

### **The New Church**

By the mid-fifties, the parish had attained proportions that exceeded all expectations. Fr. O'Farrell, who predicted in 1920 that the area would one day develop and grow, would likely be shocked by the vengeance with which his prophecy was fulfilled. In 1956 there were 1,298 families attending Masses in a church built to

accommodate 350 people, and Fr. Eagan had to build a larger church and expand the rectory at 248 Avenel Street.

As early as 17 February 1955, Fr. Eagan had in hand a new survey of parish land, and he contracted with Ricker and Axt, the West New York architectural firm that designed the first church, to design a large one: the new church would seat 859. On Thursday, 15 December 1955, the Independent Leader reported:

Building permits were issued yesterday to Saint Andrew's Parish, Avenel, for construction of a new church on Madison Avenue and an addition to the present rectory.

The church will cost \$245,000 and the addition to the rectory \$18,000.

The church to be made of stone and brick and a tile roof will be built on the lot near the present church which faces Avenel Street. It will have a 56 foot front, 148 foot depth and will be 42 feet high.

The rectory addition will be two stories high and will also have a cinder block garage. Work will begin immediately.

Fr. Eagan secured mortgages for the new church (\$200,000 at 3.5%) and the addition to rectory (\$50,000 at 3.5%) from the Emigrant Savings Bank in New York, and by September 1956, he entertained bids to furnish the church with marble altars, a pulpit, pews, and stained glass windows.

On Thursday, 27 September 1956, the Independent Leader printed a photograph of the nearly completed church with the caption:

Above is the new church being constructed for St. Andrew's Parish in Avenel, adjacent to the old church. The new church faces Madison Avenue, instead of Avenel Street. Rev. John Eagan . . . estimated that the new structure will be ready for midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Fr. Eagan's report to the diocese for 1956, written in early January 1957, indicates that the church and rectory were under construction, and correspondence dated April 1957 suggests that the church was a recalcitrant project, reluctant to be finished. The Bishop's formal blessing of the church bears the date 12 May 1957, a Sunday, when he celebrated Mass and dedicated the church. Bishop Ahr paid a second visit to the new church on 23 May 1957 when he confirmed 169, 159 children and 10 adults, 100 more than the parish's first Confirmation of 65 in 1945.

On 22 May 1957, Stephen J. and Stella C. Cohorsky of Avenel, donated to St. Andrew's Parish an undeveloped tract of land on the corner of Pocohant Street and

Madison Avenue. The Indenture says that the lot, a combination of two smaller lots, was transferred to the Parish "for and in consideration of One or more Dollars." The land sits idle as the Parish celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Bishop Ahr must have viewed Saint Andrew's parish as either a boot camp for training curates or a parish in which one might become too comfortable, for he marched Fr. Eagan's assistants in and out with excessive regularity. Fr. Carlin was replaced in 1953 by Fr. Charles LaCovera who left in 1954 to be replaced by Fr. Amedeo L. Morello. Fr. Morello saw the new church completed and gave way on 1 September 1957 to Fr. Edward J. O'Connell who barely unpacked his belongings before he was replaced on 1 June 1958 by Fr. Armand Pedata who managed to escape the revolving door until 1962.

Fr. Eagan's annual report to the diocese for 1959 was seconded by Lay Trustees, James J. Crowley and John G. Wranitz. Fr. Pedata's influential interest in the young adults of the parish appeared in the designation of "the old church" as the "CYO Hall". The parish required seven Sisters and three lay teachers to man the CCD and Religious Vacation School programs. Mr. Charles Pryce was the sexton. Fr. Eagan, whose salary was basically paid by the State and supplemented by the parish, described his attention to the Rahway State Prison Farm: he said Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, heard confession, gave instruction and was available for conferences with inmates.

The census of 1959, taken by Fr. Eagan, Fr. Pedata, unnamed Seminarians, and the men of the parish who were members of the Legion of Mary, counted 1,101 families, 5,210 parishioners, 1,291 men, 1,339 women, and 2,580 children under the age of 17. The Holy Name Society ended the 1950s with 201 members; the Altar and Rosary society with 220; the Legion of Mary 15; the Sodality 64; and the Legion of the Sacred Heart 421. Twenty-four couples were married; 120 infants and 7 adults were baptized; 8 died; and Bishop Ahr must have worn himself out on 17 October when he Confirmed 269: 126 boys, 128 girls and 15 adults, 100 more than he found in 1957. Saint Andrew's Church had grown from a fledgling Mission to a parish of significant proportions.

### **Camelot**

Giuseppe Roncalli, born 25 November 1881, was just shy of his 78th birthday when, after twelve ballots, he was chosen to succeed Pope Pius XII who died on 9 October 1958. Shortly after he ascended the Papacy as John XXIII, he announced his inspiration to convene an ecumenical council, the sort of thing Papal Rome liked to

avoid on the principle that chaos rides the wake of a Vatican Council. Pope John XXIII conceived of his council as necessary "to bring the church up to date" and to infuse it with the regenerative powers of the Holy Spirit. Vatican II was to be a "New Pentecost."

In the summer of 1960, when the 43 year-old Senator from Massachusetts accepted the Democratic Party's nomination to run for the office of President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy said the country stood on the "edge of a New Frontier." He was elected in November and in his inaugural address of January 1961, he urged the country to meet the challenges of the new decade with "the energy, the faith, the devotion [which] will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that light can truly light the world."

Pope John XXIII, a man in the last years of his life, and John Kennedy, a man in his prime, the youngest ever elected president, viewed the new decade as a time for change and reconciliation; both urged a renewal of energy; both used the metaphor of light; and both spoke with a youthful spirit that inspired the early years of the 1960s.

The first wave of children born in the years after the Second World War, the baby-boomers, were in high school, and the church scrambled to address their interests and spiritual development. Fr. Pedata took responsibility for the young men and women of the parish and persuaded Fr. Eagan that the old church would serve nicely as a CYO hall where he could see to the spiritual development of the teenagers who were beyond the reach of catechism classes. He recently wrote, "the little 'old' Church was a big target of my activity. With much help from good parishioners, we converted it into a youth center; basketball gym upstairs, and a meeting, social hall downstairs. Our Youth Group became enormous!"

Monsignor Pedata was equally enthusiastic about the altar boys: "We had a great altar boy society. Tim Certain (the smallest of all of them) burned a Z for 'Zorro' in the ceiling. His father took care of him and the ceiling!" The Sisters of Mercy from Saint James in Woodbridge continued to teach CCD classes, and Fr. Pedata remembered one in particular: "Sr. Josephus was tough! One day, thinking that I was an Altar boy, she literally threw me out of Church! A good lady!"

In 1962, Fr. Eagan reported that the parish organizations included the Holy Name Society (203 members), Saint Vincent de Paul Society (12 members), Rosary and Altar Society (220 members), Sodality (62 members), CCD (52 men and 54 women), and

the League of the Sacred Heart (203 men and 220 women): the Legion of Mary, a society of men who helped with the parish census was conspicuous in its absence. Since the diocese, in the 1950s and 1960s required an annual parish census, Fr. Eagan turned to the St. Vincent de Paul Society and with the help of Seminarians stationed at the parish for a portion of the summer, they counted 1,214 families, 4,452 parishioners, 1,224 men, 1,246 women and 1,982 children. Bishop Ahr had not forgot the 269 Confirmandi he faced in 1959, and on 20 March 1962 sent the Most Reverend James Hogan, Auxiliary Bishop of Trenton, to Confirm 215 candidates at Saint Andrew's in Avenel!

Fr. Eagan revised the Sunday Mass schedule in 1962: Mass was celebrated at 7 AM, 8:15 AM, 8:30 AM at the prison, 9:30 AM, 10:45 AM and at 12 noon, and Rosary and Benediction devotions were held at 4 PM on Sundays.

On 1 September 1962, Fr. Pedata was replaced by Fr. Chester Genecki who, like Fr. Pedata, took particular interest in the young of the parish. Fr. Genecki was director of the CYO and Catholic Young Adult Club in Burlington County before he was assigned to assist Fr. Eagan at Saint Andrew's. He took charge of parish activities at the Woodbridge State School, and during his tenure at St. Andrew's, Fr. Genecki earned a master's degree in Special Education from Seton Hall University.

The parish continued to grow through the 1960s: by 1963 there were 1,350, 250 families more than there were in 1960; 122 infants and 10 adults were Baptized; 140 received First Communion; 24 couples married; and 8 died. Fr. Eagan could no longer manage the administrative burden of the parish by himself and on 16 March 1963, hired Mrs. Dorothy O'Neill to assist him in the parish office. Mr. Charles Pryce left on 1 March and Mr. William Leahy replaced him as sexton on 4 May 1963.

The nearly naive, youthful enthusiasm of the first years of the 1960s was stunned and challenged in June 1963. Pope John XXIII convened the second Vatican Council in the fall of 1962 and died on 3 June 1963, and later that year on 22 November, John Kennedy was shot and died. The courageous vision and the challenge to make necessary change that both men offered the world remained, but their leadership, energy, and light were gone. The hope and joy, the promise of Camelot, lasted but "One brief shining moment."

## **The Sober Sixties**

Giovanni Battista Montini, Pope Paul VI, was elected to replace John XXIII on 21 June 1963. His papacy would bear the heavy burden of continuing the work of the second Vatican Council and he would live to implement its decrees. In the fall of 1963, Paul VI presided over the second of four sessions of the Council, and the Catholic community lived as if in suspension, uncertain of the direction in which the new Pope would lead the council and the church.

Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office in the early morning hours of 23 November 1963 to become the 36th President of the United States, and the country lived as if in suspension, uncertain of the path he would take into the New Frontier which had defined itself in questions of civil rights legislation and the extent to which the country should be involved in the civil war in Viet Nam.

During 1964, Saint Andrew's Parish took spiritual responsibility for what was called the Woodbridge Hospital for Severely Retarded Children. Fr. Eagan defined the parish role as "On Call," and he retained responsibility for the parish which paid his entire salary for the year. The parish continued to grow and the 1964 census found 1,405 families. Bishop Ahr visited on 14 April 1964 to Confirm another 263, 253 children and 10 adults: he recognized that the size of the parish required Confirmation at intervals of two instead of three years.

Questions about the direction the country would take in Viet Nam were answered early in 1965 when President Johnson escalated military activity: by the end of the year there were 180,000 troops on active duty in Viet Nam. Paul VI convened the final session of the Vatican Council in fall and closed the council on 8 December 1965. Although the Council had completed its work, the shape and impact of its decrees were largely unclear and issues like changes in liturgy and a transition from traditional Latin to the language of each country would require the development of formal guides and new texts.

The immediate impact of Vatican II on the church in the mid-sixties, however, was clear: implementing change would require parishes to invest even more time and resources in education for all Catholics. Throughout his years as Pastor of Saint Andrew's Fr. Eagan, once a math teacher, demonstrated the high value he placed upon education. Forums and programs to meet the educational needs of the parish were

largely in place as a function of Fr. Eagan's vision of the parish responsibility to educate. Through 1965 the weekly and summer CCD programs were staffed by the Sisters of Mercy from Saint James in Woodbridge. In 1966, though, only 3 Sisters of Mercy were available to Saint Andrew's, and Fr. Eagan enlisted the help of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary whose Motherhouse was located at 1200 Via Cascia, La Storta di Roma, Italy with an American Motherhouse in Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

Mother General Bridget Mary assigned Mother Marie Leobin, SSCC and two Sisters to St. Andrew's with the understanding that the Parish would provide a convent. In late July, Fr. Eagan informed Bishop Ahr that the Mother General refused to accept even interim arrangements with the Sisters of Mercy at Saint James: she insisted upon a "cottage in Avenel for a temporary Convent until the Convent is built. She is willing to be without a Chapel and to double up in the bedrooms if necessary." In the same letter, Fr. Eagan proposed to buy a house at 42 Madison Avenue, and the Bishop agreed. The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts arrived in Avenel on 31 August 1966, in the nick of time to begin fall CCD classes. The presence of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts in the parish required that Fr. Eagan secure spiritual services for them from outside the parish: Fr. Francis Daley served as Ordinary Confessor; Very Reverend Maurice Griffin was their Extraordinary Confessor; Fr. John Gerity held monthly spiritual conferences; and Fr. Eagan began to contemplate construction of a convent.

By 1966 the parish stabilized at 1,470 families with 2,722 children. There were 30 marriages, 103 Baptisms, 131 First Communicants, and Bishop Ahr visited to Confirm 244 on 4 June. Fr. Genecki recruited lay teachers from the parish and instituted a Saturday morning program of religious instruction for residents of the Woodbridge State School. Although the size of the school-aged population of the parish did not change, the number of available religious did: 3 Sisters of the Sacred Heart replaced 7 Sisters of Mercy, and the parish was required to provide religious instruction to the Prison and the State School: if the Church Fathers who attended Vatican II had not decided to invite the laity to take a more active role in the business of the church, the demands of the parish would have decided for them.

On 25 March 1967 Fr. Eagan signed an agreement with Albert Garlatti of Highland Park who would serve as General Contractor for the new Convent which would be built on the site of the old church. Fr. Eagan expected the Sisters of the Sacred

Hearts to have a permanent presence in the parish and personalized the convent by choosing for the front door a stained glass window with a design of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The convent was originally planned as the first phase of a building program that would include a new school and a rectory to replace the house at 248 Avenel Street. Thomas A. Vail & Company of Somerset drew plans for a building to accommodate 10 Sisters.

The first floor will contain chapel, refectory, kitchen, common room, porch and two offices. The second floor will have 10 cells, a combination sick or guest room, superior's office and cell . . . Heating and Plumbing work will be done by McGowan and McLean of Middletown, and Klein Electrical Contractors of Perth Amboy will do electrical work.

The diocese had begun to inquire, as part of the annual parish profile, what number of parishioners were students, and in 1967, Fr. Eagan reported 935 in public and 90 in Catholic grammar schools; 310 in public, and 26 in Catholic high schools. The numbers warranted consideration of a parish school and the new convent was apparently designed to house rather a large group of Sisters who would eventually teach in the proposed school.

In June 1967, Pope Paul VI, who wrestled with the difficult task of implementing changes proposed by Vatican II, issued Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, which affirmed the Church's traditional value of religious celibacy. His encyclical "evoked much harsh criticism," and he later

likened the large numbers of priests leaving the ministry to 'a crown of thorns.' He also was disturbed by the growing numbers of religious men and women asking for release from vows or who were abandoning out of hand their religious vows.

In the following year, Pope Paul VI issued Humanae Vitae, which argued for traditional doctrinal, opposition to artificial methods of birth control.

In many sectors this encyclical provoked adverse reactions that may be described as the most violent attacks on the authority of papal teaching in modern times.

The first news from Vatican II was no news. Paul VI insisted that the "Catholic Church in the 20th century should be a faithful witness to the tradition of the past, except when tradition was obviously anachronistic." His posture favored changes in liturgy and in

the role of the laity, but he struggled with questions raised by the Council to be certain that he identified the baby before he tossed the bath water. Many among religious and laity alike who looked forward to a lifting of traditional restrictions, found themselves in conflict with the church and a Pope whose interpretation of the Council's purpose seemed to contradict the spirit in which John XXIII convened Vatican II.

The spirit of unrest and conflict that attended the church was also apparent in the country's attitude toward the progressive escalation of the war in Viet Nam, where, in 1967, Lyndon Johnson deployed 390,000 American military personnel:

sentiment against U. S. involvement in the war mounted steadily from 1967 on and expressed itself in peace marches, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience. Growing numbers of politicians and ordinary citizens began to question whether the U. S. war effort could succeed, or even whether it was morally justifiable in a conflict that some interpreted as a Vietnamese civil war.

The late 1960s were difficult, troublesome times. The New Frontier proclaimed by John Kennedy and, in his way, by John XXIII was a confusing, contradictory territory, and its paths were neither clear nor straight. The future was unpredictable: Fr. Eagan could not know in 1967 that the parish would not build a school, that his convent would become a Parish House and then a rectory. Neither would he have predicted that Bingo, first introduced under the sponsorship of the Holy Name Society in September 1967, would endure through the years as the leading parish fund raiser!

John C. Reiss, DD, ordained 31 May 1947, succeeded Auxiliary Bishop of Trenton, James J. Hogan on 21 October, and was Consecrated on 12 December 1967. On 16 October 1968 he paid his first Canonical visit to St. Andrew's to administer Confirmation to 222 children and 15 adults, and to assess the progress of the new convent.

Mother Mary Leobin was attended by three Sisters of the Sacred Hearts in 1968, and in July, three more visited for the month to help with Religious Vacation School. Fr. Michael McNulty replaced Fr. Daley as the Sisters' Ordinary Confessor; Fr. William Roos replaced Msgr. Griffin as their Extraordinary Confessor; and Fr. John Gerity, in his third year of service, continued to provide monthly spiritual conferences. In the following year, Rev. Gabriel M. Coless, a Benedictine Father and college professor, who

specialized in the history of liturgy, began to serve as a weekend assistant. His paternal and cheerful spirit created a sense of stability for the next twenty-three years.

Construction of the convent was completed before 9 January 1969 when Fr. Eagan received word from the Vice Chancellor of the Diocese, Edward U. Kmiec, that Bishop Ahr granted permission for him to bless the new convent and "to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the Convent Chapel." The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts were installed in their new home and in an article published by The News Tribune on Saturday, 22 February, Fr. Eagan explained that Sister Gail Ann, Sister Jane Marie, and Sister Muriel Louise were responsible for religious education of elementary school children and assisted Mr. Thomas O'Neill director of the secondary school program which was held on Sundays in the Avenel School.

Fr. Eagan also boasted that the 'Way of Love' pre-school program, begun in September 1968, was "a 'first' in the Trenton Diocese." Under the direction of Mrs. Raymond Larson and Mrs Lawrence Wisniewski, the program, conducted during the 9:30 AM Mass on Sundays, instructed 180 children of pre-school age. If Vatican II would require education, the process was underway at Saint Andrew's parish.

In 1969 the Diocese ordered a census that required parishioners to register at the parish office. Between 1965 and 1969 the parish grew by only 50 families, but 1504 was the largest number of families in parish history: 37 couples were married; 95 infants and 5 adults were Baptized; 130 received First Communion; and 28 died.

Fr. Eagan was relieved of some of the pressure of the State Prison when a Rev. Hugh McGovern was appointed permanent chaplain and took responsibility for Sunday Masses and CCD instruction. The parish continued to provide CCD instruction to the Woodbridge State School under the direction of Fr. Genecki, and Mother Joan Rita replaced Mother Mary Leobin as local Superior of the community of five Sisters. Fr. Donald M. Endebrock replaced Fr. McNulty as Ordinary Confessor to the Sisters, and Frs. Roos and Gerity continued to serve the convent.

### **Change**

The mid-nineteenth century Liturgical movement that inspired changes ordered by Vatican II urged the Church to restore liturgy to its early Christian tradition and to revise liturgy to make it relevant to contemporary Christian life. The movement formulated its views in the light of new Christian archaeology, increased circulation of

early Christian literature and liturgical texts, and Biblical study from which emerged a record of early Christian practices. Pope Pius XII endorsed the movement in 1947 when he stressed the importance of liturgy and the need to include the laity in his encyclical Mediator Dei, and he instituted liturgical reform with Holy Week services in 1951 and 1955. Vatican II continued the process: by 1969 the documents necessary for reform began to appear: a new lectionary and calendar, and, in 1970, the Definitive Roman Missal.

Before the 1970s got well under way, Fr. Eagan's health began to fail and in July 1971, Fr. Chester C. Genecki, whose 9 year tenure as assistant set a record for longevity, took responsibility for the parish as Administrator. Andrew Introne succeeded William Leahy as sexton in March 1969, and Mother Jean Rita, who led her contingent of Sisters back to Fairhaven at the end of July, leaving behind a question of whether they would return, was replaced in August 1970 by Sister M. Rose who served as Superior for the 3 Sisters who reappeared at the end of the month.

In his first report to the Diocese, Fr. Genecki recognized a number of parish organizations whose existence and membership was not previously reported: Knights of Columbus Council #5088 (200 members), Knights of the Altar, a national association of altar boys with headquarters at Notre Dame, Indiana (45 members), 3rd Order of Mt. Carmel (15 members), a Senior CYO (40 members) and a Junior CYO (300 members). Membership in the Holy Name Society fell to 38; the Altar and Rosary Society gave way to a Ladies' Society with 125 members; and the St. Vincent dePaul Society still had its 8 members. Bishop Ahr visited on 14 May 1971 to administer Confirmation to 243 children and 11 adults.

Early signs of Vatican II reforms appeared in a revised Mass schedule that included a 7 PM Mass on Saturday evening. Sunday Masses were offered at 7:45 AM 9:30 AM, 10:45 AM and 12 noon, and Fr. Genecki added a folk Mass every six weeks: during the Mass he would explain his actions and their significance in an effort to help the children and their parents understand and appreciate the new liturgy. He also added a monthly Mass to his activities at the Woodbridge State School. There was one daily Mass at 7:15 AM, and one evening Mass on Monday at 7:30 that was accompanied by Novena devotions. Sister M. Rose, superior of the convent community of 6, though only three appear on the payroll for 1971, was identified as Sister M. Rose Perry, and

those three Sisters who were paid by the parish returned to the Motherhouse in Fairhaven Massachusetts for the months of July and August.

The task of rearranging the church to accommodate radical, liturgical change fell to Fr. Genecki. When stone-masons disassembled the rather large pulpit installed when the church was built in 1956, they built a smaller one, and used the remainder of the marble to create a sanctuary platform for the altar. They turned the original altar toward the people, cut the marble levels on which the original altar stood to provide a platform for the celebrants' chairs, and used the remainder of the marble to complete the sanctuary platform. When they removed the altar rail, they left a short stretch of the original rail in front of the side altar on which sat the original tabernacle until Fr. O'Neill replaced it with a smaller version. Removing the Baptismal font from the rear of the church to left side of sanctuary was less complicated a matter.

The task of explaining and cultivating an appreciation of the new liturgy also fell to Fr. Genecki. If Vatican II roused the ire of the religious and the faithful by failing to alter Church teaching on issues like celibacy and birth control, it's effect was private, personal, and had no apparent impact beyond the gradual exodus of religious that created personnel and morale problems, but when the Council ordered a nearly complete revision of the liturgy, abandoned the familiar, if obscure Latin, and turned the Mass round, many of the faithful struggled with the change in what they held to be an immutable spiritual reality. Among his papers is one homily in which Fr. Genecki acknowledged unrest in the parish over the new look of the church and the new liturgy: "Some people persist in saying that it was all a mistake, that they should have left the Church the way it was even if it was old fashioned," and he asked the community to distinguish between the incidental and the essential:

As one author put it, we have witnessed the death of permanence . . . most of us look for something that has not changed. For many of us that means our faith, our religion. One thing we always used to hear about the Catholic Church was that it could not change. Well if you have that idea in your head, you keep it there. It is true, in spite of what you hear and read. And yet in the Church we too have seen a lot of changes in recent times, in the Mass for example . . . Today we offer the very same sacrifice [of the Mass] in English. The language of the Mass is incidental. It is what happens at Mass that is essential, and that has remained the same down through the centuries . . . We should all ask for the vision to see that amid all the uncertainties and anxieties brought on by a too

rapidly changing world we still have something that is truly stable and reliable . . . and that something is our Catholic faith.

Fr. Genecki tried to understand the unrest he addressed and urged the parish to see beyond the face of change and find in new garb their familiar faith.

In 1973, Sr. Jane Donnelly replaced Sr. M. Rose Perry as Superior of the 4 sisters who lived in the Convent. The parish no longer offered a contingent of clergy to attend the Sisters' spiritual arrangements. One daily Mass was offered at 8 AM in the convent, and the Sisters were free to choose their own Confessors. The Sisters left Avenel for Fairhaven during the months of July and August, a practice begun in 1970, and returned in September. A Fr. Marr replaced Fr. McGovern as Chaplain at the Prison, and on 25 October, the Bishop administered Confirmation to a throng of 285!

Within a month of the Bishop's visit the parish and diocese was shocked by the death of Fr. Genecki. He took ill on Sunday at the rectory and entered John F. Kennedy Hospital in Edison for tests on Monday morning, 12 November 1973, where he died suddenly shortly past noon. He was 52 years old. Fr. Genecki's body lay in state in the church he altered to accommodate a liturgical renewal he embraced and taught to the people of St. Andrew's. The parish visited on Thursday afternoon to take their leave and they celebrated Fr. Genecki's life with Mass at 7:30 PM. On Friday, 16 November, Bishop Ahr, who returned from Washington, D. C. where he attended the United States bishops annual meeting, was principal celebrant, and Fr. Edward A. Bumbera, pastor of St. Dominic's in Brick Town, was homilist at a Mass of Resurrection: the New Liturgy for Christian Burial.

### **More Change**

In December 1973, the Bishop assigned Fr. Gerald C. Callahan as temporary assistant to Fr. Eagan who remained as titular pastor of St. Andrew's. Fr. Callahan completed the 1973 annual report and kept a hand on the wheel until March 1974, when Bishop Ahr appointed Fr. James J. McGovern to serve as Administrator. The parish grew to 1,620 families in that year: the last diocesan census was taken in 1969, and the numbers for 1974 reflected change since 1969. Membership in parish organizations became a source of concern: the ladies society boasted 140 members and the Knights of Columbus continued strong with 260 members, but the Holy Name Society dropped off

to 40 members; the St Vincent de Paul Society had 5 members; but most troublesome was the membership of the CYO whose membership had declined to 12!

When Sr. Jane Donnelly led four Sisters of the Sacred Heart to Fairhaven for the summer months of July and August, she returned with only three who were joined in January 1975 by a fourth. And when the Sisters left for the months of July and August 1975, they returned with a new Superior, Sr. JoAnn McKenzie, and their numbers had dwindled to three. By 1976 Fr. McGovern recognized that the convent was too elaborate and too large a facility to house no more than three or four Sisters, and asked the diocese to approve the purchase a house nearby to accommodate the Sisters. Bishop Ahr agreed and on 30 August 1976 the parish acquired a house at 245 Avenel Street that would serve as a convent. The Convent was renamed the "Parish House" and altered to make class rooms for the CCD program.

During his pastorship, Fr. McGovern refurbished the pews one section at a time and installed carpeting in the church. Around that time, during the later months of 1975, he sought permission to install an elevator in the church to make it accessible to the handicapped. He had the Bishop's permission by 29 January 1976 and on 16 July 1976, contracted with Albert Garlatti Construction Co. of Highland Park, the firm who built the Convent, to make necessary changes and install an elevator at a cost of \$82,882. Paull Engineering of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, architects, designed the alterations to the church, which included removal of one pew on either side of the church near the center to create an aisle for wheel chairs. The elevator was one of the first in the Trenton Diocese.

On 1 July 1976, Fr. Eagan, whose health continued to be worrisome, retired from his post as pastor of St. Andrew's after 32 years. He had given over a majority of his pastoral duties in the early 1970s when Fr. Genecki and then Fr. McGovern ran the parish as Administrators. Bishop Ahr appointed Fr. McGovern to succeed Fr. Eagan as pastor in August 1976 and in November he assigned Fr. Michael Hackett to assist him.

The Parish Profile for 1977, Fr. McGovern's first as pastor, gave the Convent address, 244 Avenel Street, as the mailing address for the parish: the rectory was still at 248 Avenel Street. The convent was located at 245 Avenel Street, and three Sisters, each from a different order, lived there: Sr. Jane Donnelly, last of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts, was described as Director of Pastoral Care; Sr. JoAnn Reynolds, a Sister of

Charity from Convent Station, N. J., was the Director of Religious Education; and Sr. Elaine Corey, a Sister of Saint Dorothy from Taunton, Massachusetts, was Coordinator of Elementary Religious Education. Fr. James Marr remained as Chaplain of Rahway State Prison and the recently developed New Jersey Adult Diagnostic Center. John G. Wranitz and Charles Podraza continued to serve as parish trustees. Joyce Zakierski, the organist hired in November 1974, gave way to Sharon Gorman in October, and the report identified an adult choir with 11 members and a teen choir with 8 members. There were 24 Lectors, 27 ushers, 38 altar boys, 35 Pastoral Aides, 8 Pastoral visitors and 24 Eucharistic Ministers

In 1977 Fr. McGovern reported 1,570 families living in the parish, and he arrived at that number by adding 95 newly registered and subtracting 101 families who moved away. The Diocesan report asked for a discussion of the "most pressing problems" the parish faced, and the staff developed a list of difficulties that began with change in the church: "Church renewal has not reached majority" led to decrease in attendance at Mass. Social difficulties of the 1970s, especially an increased divorce rate, contributed to the problem of "Breakdown of family life," which was reflected in "Alienation of youth," and a general sense that "Indifference and apathy" prevailed. The religious staff, Fr. McGovern, Fr. Hackett, Srs. Reynolds, Donnelly and Corey signed the report and committed themselves to finding "vehicles to reach marginal and indifferent parishioners" to learn their "attitudes and thinking," and they proposed to develop a "total Youth Ministry."

In 1978 Sr. Jane Donnelly, the last of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts left the parish. Sr. JoAnn Reynolds and Sr. Elaine Corey remained to face the challenge of rousing the parish to spiritual renewal. Confirmation, now conferred every 2 1/2 years, was administered on 9 November 1978 to 166 Confirmandi, a number that reflected a failure of interest in a parish whose membership continued to increase. Better news appeared in the membership of a newly formed Teenage Club that attracted 60; there were 15 members of a Children's Choir, and 11 sang in a Teen Choir. The adult religious education program began to show signs of life: 114 were involved in preparation for First Communion; 223 in preparation for Confirmation; 18 attended lectures and discussions and 42 were engaged in teacher training programs.

During 1978 Fr. Raymond J. Cosgrove, S. J. took up residence at St. Andrew's as an assistant. Fr. Cosgrove, a Jesuit, was at the end of a career of student counseling that included assignments at St. Peter's High School in Jersey City, St. Joseph's University, and St. Joseph's Prep School in Philadelphia. Fr. Cosgrove remained active through the year but took ill in the summer of 1979 when at the age of 78, he died on Sunday morning, 29 July, at J. F. Kennedy Medical Center. Fr. Cosgrove's body lay in state in St. Andrew's Church on Tuesday evening when the parish offered a Christian Wake Service at 8:30 PM, and on Wednesday when a Mass of Christian Burial was concelebrated by Fr. McGovern, Fr. Hackett, and numerous Jesuits who traveled from distances to be in attendance. Fr. McGovern shared letters of thanks from the Jesuit Fathers who were at first surprised that Fr. Cosgrove would be buried from a parish church rather than from a Jesuit Chapel. Fr. William Watters, S.J., Assistant Provincial wrote from the Provincial's Residence in Baltimore Maryland:

What a special grace last evening was for me and for my fellow Jesuits of the Maryland and New York Provinces. In joining you and your gracious Catholic, Christian community at St. Andrew's Church for the celebration of the Mass of Christian Burial, we Jesuits all experienced the wonderful blessing both of Father Cosgrove's own life and of the St. Andrew's Parish Community . . . It became apparent to all of us how [Fr. Cosgrove] experienced the living Presence of the Spirit of Jesus in the warm and human community at St. Andrew's.

If St. Andrew's parish seemed to retire into apathy and indifference in the mid-seventies, the indomitable spirit of Christian love that marked the struggling Mission parish and the parish that flourished through the 1950s and 1960s reasserted itself and rose up to bid a warm farewell to Fr. Raymond Cosgrove: the familiar spirit of St. Andrew's had not died but survived in abeyance.

### **A New Start**

Depletion of the ranks of the religious created serious personnel problems: there were not enough clergy or religious to properly staff parishes throughout the diocese, and the parishes continued to grow. St. Andrew's in 1980 claimed 1,975 families. Bishop George W. Ahr retired in 1980 and on 4 March, Auxiliary Bishop John C. Reiss was appointed to succeed him. In 1979 Sr. JoAnn Reynolds and Sr. Elaine Corey were joined by Sr. Elaine Donovan, a School Sister of Notre Dame from Wilton Connecticut.

All three Sisters left in 1980 and were replaced by Sister Doris McKernan, O.P. and Sister Frances Eustace, C.S.J. Fr. Hackett was succeeded in 1980 by Fr. David Lawlor.

On 19 November 1981 The Diocese of Trenton was divided and the Diocese of Metuchen was created. Saint Francis church in Metuchen was designated as the new Cathedral, and the Convent at St. Cecelia's in Iselin was chosen to serve as the new Chancery Office. The Most Reverend Theodore E. McCarrick was appointed Bishop of Metuchen on 19 November 1981 and installed on 31 January 1982. Bishop McCarrick was first appointed Auxiliary Bishop of New York on 24 May 1977, and ordained a Bishop on 29 June 1977.

Fr. Edward O'Neill was selected to replace Fr. McGovern as pastor of St. Andrew's and Fr. Thomas Steckel replaced Fr. David Lawlor as Associate Pastor. Mr. James P. Kissane and Mr. Anthony Graham replaced John Wranitz and Charles Podraza as trustees of the parish and, on 8 March 1982, witnessed the amendment to the documents of incorporation that officially shifted parish affiliation from the Diocese of Trenton to the Diocese of Metuchen.

In 1982, St. Andrew's first full year under the auspices of the Diocese of Metuchen, Steve Ciak served as Sexton, and Fr. O'Neill hired Rosemary Brzychcy to play the organ. Fr. Thomas Steckel replaced Fr. Lawlor as Associate Pastor, and since there were no Sisters available to staff CCD programs, Fr. O'Neill rented the parish property at 245 Avenel Street to a private couple while he waited to see what might be done about recruiting Sisters for the future.

Fr. Steckel initiated a Prayer and Praise Group with a meeting on 14 January 1982 that was attended by 30 to 35 parishioners. During their first six weeks the Prayer Group met with representatives of the Body of Christ Prayer Group from St. Francis Cathedral who taught the essentials of the program. The group, originally led by Rose Marie and Lenny Paliscewski, met every Wednesday evening and while he remained at St. Andrew's, Fr. Steckel served as moderator and offered Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction once a month.

During his pastorship, Fr. O'Neill made the transition from the rectory at 248 Avenel Street to the present rectory at 244 Avenel Street. He also removed the Baptismal Font from the front of the church to the center where Fr. McGovern created an aisle. Since the new church, built in the mid-fifties, lacked the bell tower of the original

parish church, Fr. O'Neill sought permission of the Bishop to correct that deficit. On 22 October 1983, the I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio acknowledged Fr. O'Neill's order for a Paramount 4000 Trac-a-matic Carillon--electronic church bells! Verdin Company promised to have the bells in Avenel in time for the Christmas season. The church bells were a significant investment: the carillon itself cost \$7,185 and required installation by an electrician and a roofer who would attach the speaker support frame to the church roof to the rear of the building and install devices to prevent rain water from damaging the speaker.

The Diocese of Metuchen replaced the Trenton diocesan "Parish Profile" with an "Annual Pastoral Report." In his report for 1983, Fr. O'Neill listed Rev. Charles Costello as his Associate Pastor, Rev. Mr. Michael Copertino as a Permanent Deacon. Deacon Copertino, a member of the parish since 1955, taught CCD for 17 years and after Vatican II, was among the first lectors and Eucharistic Ministers of the parish. He completed a three year course of studies and was ordained a Deacon on 16 May 1981 and stationed at St. Andrew's. He continued to work with the CCD program as the Director of Religious Education, restructured and led St. Andrew's pre-cana program, taught weekly Bible classes and worked with adult converts in the RCIA program. Deacon Copertino assisted at Mass and administered sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. When the Prayer and Praise Group, of which he was a member, found themselves without a clerical moderator, he offered Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction once each month. Deacon Copertino served St. Andrew's Parish until 1985 when, in April, he succumbed to cancer. The Permanent Deacon was one answer to post-Vatican II difficulties with personnel shortages.

When asked to reply to the question, "Would you be in favor of a 'DIOCESAN-WIDE' CENSUS in 1984?" Fr. O'Neill would not write, "NO," but replied that he had recently completed a census and learned that calculations of the number of families in the parish made in lieu of an actual count were severely over-stated. The actual census counted 1,680 instead of 1,895 Catholic families in the parish and estimated that only 950 families actively supported the church.

The Parish resumed responsibility for Mass, instruction and counseling at the Rahway State Prison, the Avenel Diagnostic Center, and Fr. Genecki's Saturday morning program at what was now called the Woodbridge Development Center continued. Fr.

O'Neill changed the Mass Schedule: Masses were celebrated at 5:30 PM on Saturday, 7:45 AM, 9 AM, 10:30 AM, 12 noon, and 5 PM on Sunday; daily Masses were scheduled for 8 AM and 12 noon. The Bishop visited on 14 May 1983 to administer Confirmation to 58 candidates; 55 children were Baptized; 48 died; 35 couples were married and 3 sought annulments. The Parish workload was excessive, even with the aid of a Permanent Deacon, and Fr. O'Neill made a diplomatic plea for help: he described the difficulties incarcerated Catholics endured at Rahway State Prison and urged the Bishop to appoint a regular Chaplain.

Through the early 1980s, St. Andrew's Associate Pastors once again experienced the revolving door: Fr. David Lawlor was assigned to the parish in 1980 and was transferred by 1981 when Fr. Thomas Steckel arrived to leave in 1982. Fr. Charles Costello survived from 1982 till 1984, but Fr. Thomas Alappat lasted one year, from 1984 to 1985; Fr. Sevastian M. R. Pillai came and went in 1985. Fr. Thomas A. Piechocinski, Ed.D. relieved Fr. O'Neill as pastor on 25 October 1985, and a few days later, on 31 October 1985, welcomed Fr. Raphael Moyalan, C.M.I., an extern priest who served the parish in lieu of an assigned Associate Pastor. Rev. Mr. James Hagerman replaced Deacon Copertino in 1985, and Joseph Karabin served as Director of Religious Education. In 1984, Anthony Graham resigned and Carmine P. Muccilli joined James P. Kissane as Lay Trustees, and Fr. O'Neill reported the existence of a Parish Financial Council chaired by Benjamin Dispoto whose tenure extended through 1988.

In June of 1986, Fr. Moyalan continued to serve the Parish and the Bishop appointed Rev. Joseph Karjewski as Associate Pastor. Deacon Hagerman continued in his role as Permanent Deacon. Joseph Cornacchia served as Director of Religious Education. James P. Kissane resigned, and Jean-Paul Pillet joined Carmine Muccilli as Lay Trustees: they would serve the parish until 1991.

In 1986, Deacon Hagerman developed the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, the RCIA program. He developed a handbook of lessons and Scripture reading, and encouraged a team approach to education of adults who prepared for Baptism. When Deacon Jim Hewitt replaced Deacon Hagerman, he served as director of the program, which continues under the direction of Patricia McKim.

The parish grew by about 50 families to 1,664 in 1986, and Fr. Piechocinski urged the Diocese to send help. Through the course of the new year he planned to reorganize

the Youth Group, enlarge the choir, and extend the Parish Mission, a vehicle that proved to succeed in repatriating alienated or indifferent parishioners. In order to accomplish his goals, Fr. Piechocinski wrote that it was imperative to find "two associates to implement Parish Programs. Fr. Raphael Moyalan, the extern priest, is leaving the Parish to return to India on June 14, 1987." He also recommended that Fr. Krajewski be reassigned "to an ethnic Parish whereby the necessity of English is not imperative."

In February 1986, Fr. Piechocinski requested and received Diocesan permission to purchase a new organ for the church. He advised the Bishop that the parish would raise money for the organ by issuing a "Subscription Memorial Series, and explained that fund raising by Memorial Subscription was a tradition at St. Andrew's Parish. Fr. Piechocinski initiated a drive to raise funds in March 1986, and by 1 June 1986 reported that he had \$34,385 of the \$35,400 he needed to buy and install a new Allen Digital Computer Organ. On 2 July 1986, the Allen Organ Company acknowledged his order, and once again, St. Andrew's demonstrated the determined spirit of support that characterized the small group of men and women who founded the parish.

On 30 May 1986, Bishop Theodore E. McCarrick was appointed Archbishop of Newark, and the Most Reverend Edward T. Hughes, D.D., who was consecrated a Bishop on 21 July 1976 and appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia, was appointed on 11 December 1986 and Installed as Bishop of Metuchen on 5 February 1987. Bishop Hughes heard Fr. Piechocinski's call for help and on 1 June 1987 appointed Rev. Mr. Edward Czarcinski as Permanent Deacon of St. Andrew's Church. Within the month, he appointed Fr. Roger Labonte and Fr. Blaise Baran as Associate Pastors.

In his report for 1987, Fr. Piechocinski estimated that there were now 1,629 families in the parish, a total of 4,013 Catholics. The weekend schedule offered Mass at 5:30 PM on Saturday and 7:45 AM, 9 AM, 10:30 AM, and 12 noon on Sunday. Eighty-four children were Baptized; 37 couples were married; 3 Annulments were granted; 53 died; 58 received First Communion; and only 41, 39 children and 2 adults, were Confirmed. Fr. Piechocinski counted 352 public school students in the CCD program, and all were in elementary school.

In 1989, his last as pastor, Fr. Piechocinski, addressed difficulties with the boiler in the church. He requested permission to replace the existing boiler. On 24 May 1989, the Diocese approved his plan to remove asbestos, and replace the boiler, a chore that

cost the parish \$32,166. Fr. Piechocinski took the a direct approach to the problem and the parish raised money with a special collection.

Fr. Robert G. Lynam replaced Fr. Piechocinski as Administrator on 9 January 1990, and submitted the 1989 report to the diocese. Fr. Lynam recognized that his appointment to St. Andrew's was temporary, and subject to evaluation after a period of six months. Since he was uncertain of his future, Fr. Lynam's plans for the parish were necessarily undeveloped. Fr. Edward Czarcinski, the Associate Pastor who replaced Frs. Labonte and Baran in June 1988, was joined in December 1988, by Fr. Virgilio Chagas, an extern resident. Rev. Mr. James Hewitt was appointed Permanent Deacon on 17 June 1989. Mr. Frank Pelzman replaced Mr. Benjamin Dispoto as Chair of the Parish Financial Council. The population of the parish was reported as 1,757 families in 1989, though a door-to-door census had not been taken since 1983. The number of children who received the sacrament of Baptism in 1989 rose to 94, but there were only 38 First Communicants and 33 Confirmandi. The report identifies 365 public elementary school students in the CCD program, not a large number when compared with the number of families in the parish. Thirty eight couples were married; 4 marriages were annulled; 39 died; and 1 adult was baptized and 6 were confirmed.

St. Andrew's Parish had demonstrated over the years the high value they placed on their Church and on their Catholic Faith, but the people of St. Andrew's also showed that they could be unresponsive if a parish administration failed to appreciate the values of a traditional, proud, and deeply religious people. Calls for help from a string of pastors from Fr. McGovern on did not precisely fall on deaf ears, but even creative management of limited resources could not solve the personnel and morale problems that faced the Diocese and particularly St. Andrew's Parish in Avenel.

### **Renewal**

When Rev. Msgr. Immanuel W. Vernon, Diocesan Secretary for Canonical Affairs, was charged with the complex difficulty of restoring priests and sisters to the depleted ranks of the Diocese of Metuchen, he turned to Religious Congregations and Orders for help. In 1987 Msgr. Vernon wondered of Fr. Peter Goyuk OMV, American Delegate of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, if his Congregation might like to establish a presence in the Diocese by providing a Chaplain for the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Washington, New Jersey. Shortly after Fr. Peter agreed to staff the Shrine,

Msgr. Vernon wondered if the Oblates would not like to expand their ministry in the Diocese to include a parish. Fr. Peter applied to the Rector Major in Rome, and received permission for the Oblates of the Virgin Mary to accept a parish assignment in the Diocese of Metuchen, and in early August 1990, Fr. David Kosmoski, OMV was appointed Pastor of St. Andrew's Church in Avenel.

The Oblates of the Virgin Mary are a Congregation of Religious founded in 1826 by Fr. Bruno Lanteri, a Northern Italian Priest whose early spiritual formation was influenced by his relationship with Fr. Nicolaus Diessbach, an ex Jesuit who "showed him the power of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola." Fr. Bruno modeled his Apostolic Ministry on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. He organized retreats and parish missions, taught the laity to do the same, and attended to the ill and the disenfranchised: his ministry extended to the homebound ill and to those in prison. Fr. Bruno's spiritual message emphasized personal and congregational prayer and meditation, and active, practical participation in the lives of those Christians whom he touched. Fr. Bruno taught his apostolic approach to the members of his Congregation. Although they are a Congregation who live in community and take vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, they do not distinguish themselves in their clerical attire: Fr. Bruno wore the simple cassock of the time and instructed his follower to do the same. Pope John XXIII identified Fr. Bruno Lanteri as the precursor of Catholic action among the laity, an example of the renewal of an active laity he envisioned when he was inspired to convene the Second Vatican Council.

Fr. David Kosmoski, OMV and his assistants brought to St. Andrew's Parish the spirit of Fr. Bruno Lanteri's Apostolate. Fr. David was accompanied in August 1990 by Fr. James Nibler, OMV, and they were joined in early December by Fr. Peter Grover, OMV. When the Diocese wondered if Fr. David might like to expand the Oblate ministry to include the diocesan retreat house in Perth Amboy, he agreed and in June 1991, Fr. David Nicgorski, OMV joined the Oblate community at St. Andrew's as Program Director of Emmaus House. If St. Andrew's Parish cried out for priests, the Oblates answered.

Fr. David was installed as pastor on 30 September 1990, and the Oblates set to work "to animate the parish." Programs for lapsed Catholics, support groups for the bereaved, the divorced and separated, and especially a ministry for the young were top

priorities. Fr. Peter Grover was designated the Director of Religious Education and developed a CARE (Certification of Accreditation for Religious Education) program for lay CCD instructors. Fr. David restored the Vacation Bible School for children and developed a weekly Bible Study program for adults. He created a children's choir under the direction of Mr. Steve Marchewicz. Fr. Peter organized a youth group and inspired the teenagers of the parish to attend Mass regularly, participate in and learn to give retreats to other youth in the parish and around the diocese. As Fr. David cheerfully wrote, "these teens are developing a real spiritual life (plus having fun)!" Fr. Peter also brought back variety shows, reminiscent of the Minstrels of the 1950s that raised funds for the new church. If the Parish of St. Andrew was a handful for the limited staff of the 1980s, Fr. David's Oblates were a handful for the Parish.

Shortly after Fr. David assumed responsibility for the parish, Carmine P. Muccilli who served for 7 years and Jean-Paul Pillet who served for eight, retired as Lay Trustees and were replaced by William T. Higgins and Irene P. Smakula.

By 1992, Fr. David hired Christine Urban as Director of Music who joined Dolores Gellici, secretary of Religious Education, and Dorothy O'Neill to comprise the lay parish staff. With permission from the Diocese he installed a smoke detector system in the church and boiler room, installed a new sound system in the church and church hall, and disposed of the vacant house at 245 Avenel Street, the old convent. In 1993 he repaved the parking lot. He installed air conditioning in the church in 1994, and demolished the antiquated rectory at 248 Avenel Street. He was forced to replace the boiler in the church and installed a water purification system to prevent the sort of damage that ruined the 5 year-old boiler. In 1995, with help from the Altar Rosary Society, Fr. David cleared the area near the rectory and built "Mary's Garden," a flower garden with fish pond and benches which serves the parish and community in its prayerful, serene atmosphere. Bishop Hughes blessed the garden when he visited St. Andrew's for the 75th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, 16 September 1995.

Fr. David is heir to Fr. Eagan's early spiritual responsibility for Rahway State Prison, and expanded his ministry to the Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center where he regularly says Mass and provides spiritual direction and confession. Fr. Peter and a group of 8 catechists continued the ministry of Fr. Genecki at what is now the Woodbridge Developmental Center:

In addition to his responsibilities as Director of the Emmaus House, Fr. David Nicgorski was appointed Director of the Young Adult Ministry for the Diocese. He obtained Certification in Spiritual Direction and uses the retreat house to host parish retreats. When Rev. Jim Walther, a transitional deacon, was assigned to St. Andrew's Parish in June of 1993, he joined Fr. David Nicgorski at the retreat house and focused upon the Youth Ministry: many candidates for Confirmation from the parish and from other parishes throughout the diocese attended pre-Confirmation retreats under his direction.

At the beginning of 1995, after 31 years of dedicated service to St. Andrew's Church, Mrs. Dorothy O'Neill retired. She was the first and only secretary in parish history until Mrs. Maryrose Buonomo took over the reins of the office.

In September 1994, Rev. Gregory Cleveland, a transitional deacon, joined the community of Oblates, and on 10 June 1995, Feast of the Holy Trinity, Bishop Edward T. Hughes administered Holy Orders to Fr. Gregory Cleveland and Fr. James Walther, at a Mass concelebrated by Fr. Timothy Gallagher, OMV, provincial, Fr. David Kosmoski, OMV, Fr. Peter Grover, OMV, Fr. David Nicgorski, OMV, and numerous other Oblates and diocesan priests. Msgr. Michael Alliegro, vicar for pastoral life, served as master of ceremonies. In the spirit of Fr. Bruno Lanteri, Fr. Greg and Fr. Jim welcomed the people of St. Andrew's parish to attend and share in the joy of ordination.

Shortly after Frs. Jim and Greg were ordained, on 16 August 1995, Fr. Peter Grover, after nearly 5 years at St. Andrew's, was transferred to Boston where he was appointed Director of the St. Clement Eucharistic Shrine and assistant director of Our Lady of Grace Seminary. Fr. Jim Walther replaced Fr. Peter as Director of Religious Education and also assumed responsibility for the parish Youth Group.

In a short five years the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, under Fr. David Kosmoski's direction, uncovered the warm, human Christian Community at St. Andrew's that the Jesuits found when they visited to bid farewell to Fr. Raymond Cosgrove. Their efforts on behalf of the spiritual vitality of the parish have repatriated many of St. Andrew's parishioners and restored the spirit of the small group of Catholics who, in 1920, envisioned just such a Parish as prospered in the 1950s and early 1960s, a parish like the one at Saint Andrew's that on 20 September 1995 celebrates its 75th Anniversary.

