

Our Patron Saint Vincent de Paul, was born in Gascony, France in 1581 to a very poor family. He became a priest at the age of nineteen. Captured by pirates while on a sea voyage, he spent two years as a prisoner and slave in Tunisia, but he succeeded in converting his master to Christianity. St. Vincent de Paul died in Paris on September 27th, 1660 and was canonized by Pope Clement XII in 1737.

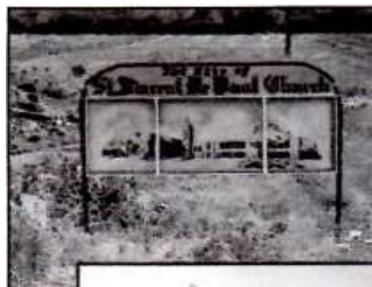
St Vincent de Paul's mission was to care for the poor, the sick, orphans and foundlings, to emancipate slaves, to provide for people in time of famine and war, to teach seminarians, and to found a universal and organized charity-now known as the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

His was a life of intense activity, and he made it plain that those whom he attracted to himself were to serve God in the active life. But he also understood that external activity must be nourished by interior devotion. To the Vincentian Fathers he would say: "Prayer and study should resolve themselves into action; the light in the mind should become a fire in the heart."

For sixty years France benefited from the charitable works of St. Vincent de Paul. On his deathbed when asked to bless all his works, Vincent responded, "He who began the work will bring it to completion." (2 Cor 8:6) Today people in every parish in the world benefit from the charity of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. St. Vincent de Paul's Feast Day is September 27th.

Our parish of St. Vincent de Paul in Elyria Township was established in 1948. However, until negotiations for the property were concluded, the Official Decree of Establishment was delayed until November

27th, 1949. We owe much thanks to John and Ann Karman who purchased the property and immediately in turn sold it to the Diocese of Cleveland for our church. Mr. and Mrs. Karman were among our dedicated founding members.



The parish covered approximately five square miles in Elyria Township, Lorain County. The parish was established because of the growing numbers of Catholics in the area. Existing churches were unable to house all the faithful.

Groundbreaking for the new church was held on September 3rd, 1950 with Msgr. William L. Newton of Elyria, Dean of the Lorain Deanery, and Father Chester J. Bartlett of Lorain taking part in the ceremony. It was not until March of the following year that actual construction could

be started because of terrain difficulties and weather conditions.



The founding pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish was Father Joseph P. Conlon (1949 – 1961). The very first mass was celebrated in the Auditorium of Vincent Public School on January 8th, 1950. The school, located in the Clearview School District, was the meeting place for the parish until December 1951.

A house was purchased in January 1950 for use as a parish rectory. It was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Goodsite and was located at 2215 North Ridge Road. Later the home was moved to the new parish property about 800 feet away.

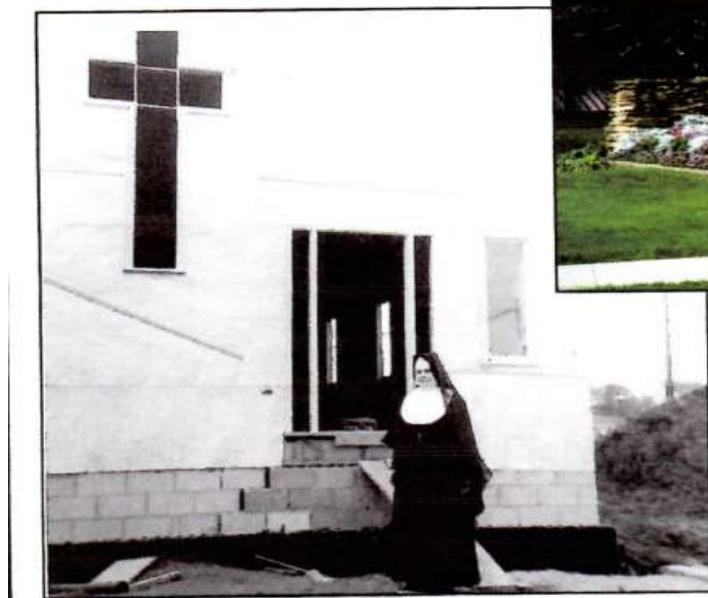


On July 22nd, 1951 Msgr. James J. Duffy, pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Lorain, laid the corner stone in place. Msgr. William L. Newton pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Elyria gave the address.



The hopes and dreams of Father Conlon and the founding parishioners came true on Christmas Eve 1951 when at Midnight the first Mass was celebrated in the new church. It was a happy throng that filled the church at the first Mass.

In 1955 another dream came true with the opening of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School. The idea of a Parochial School was not only the desire of the bishop but also the hopes of the entire parish. Not



only should the Church train the child in the things of God, but also it should take the facts of everyday life and integrate them with the facts of eternal life. It must educate the complete person. Everything on earth are good and we should all learn to use them for the honor and glory to God. The school opened with five classes and 211 students. Sister Helen Marie, CSJ, was the school's first principal.

Archbishop Hoban assigned the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cleveland to staff the school. In 1956 Father Conlon supervised the building of a Convent to accommodate ten sisters.

Father Conlon established several organizations in the parish, among which were the Altar & Rosary Society, the Holy Name Society, the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Parish Youth Group – then called the Vincentians.

Upon the untimely death of Father Conlon in 1961, Father Charles H. Logue was appointed Pastor. Under his guidance and the Sisters of St. Joseph the school flourished and in 1962 hit its peak

Father Logue planted all the beautiful trees that now line the driveways of the church. He enhanced the beauty of the church with the installation of the stained glass windows and built a shrine to Our Lady of Grace in the back yard of the rectory. It was during Father Logue's time that administrative offices were added to the small house that served as a rectory. Father's term as pastor certainly marked a deepening of the spiritual life of the parish in many areas. He also had the privilege of celebrating the "mortgage burning" ceremony.

With the retirement of Father Logue in 1976, Father Liam J. Kitt was appointed Pastor. Father Kitt, being an avid sports promotor, added the Gymnasium to the list of building now in use. An organized sports program was initiated and was affiliated with the Diocesan CYO Program.



The gymnasium has proved to be a great asset, not only for volleyball and basketball, but also for many social gatherings of the parish.

Father Kitt established the "Lay Council" of the parish, encouraging greater participation and responsibility for parish growth among the people. He also added a Kindergarten to the school.

In 1986 when Father Kitt retired and returned to Ireland, Father James R. Ols was appointed the fourth pastor of the parish. Father Ols was faced with the challenge of renovating the then forty-year-old buildings and of establishing new spiritual programs as called for by the church.

The rear parking lot was repaved and an access road out to Olivet Street was put in form better traffic control for the school and the weekend Masses. Men of the parish got together, under the supervision of Bill Kopronica, the director of maintenance, and constructed a picnic pavilion on the property. The roofs of all the building had been replaced. The interiors of all the

buildings have been renovated. A new boiler was installed in the school and all buildings have new furnaces with the added comfort of air conditioning.

Bill Kopronica completed a number of projects including renovating of the parish offices, building a new altar, altar of repose and pulpit for the church, and constructed a lift to aid the handicapped in getting into the church.



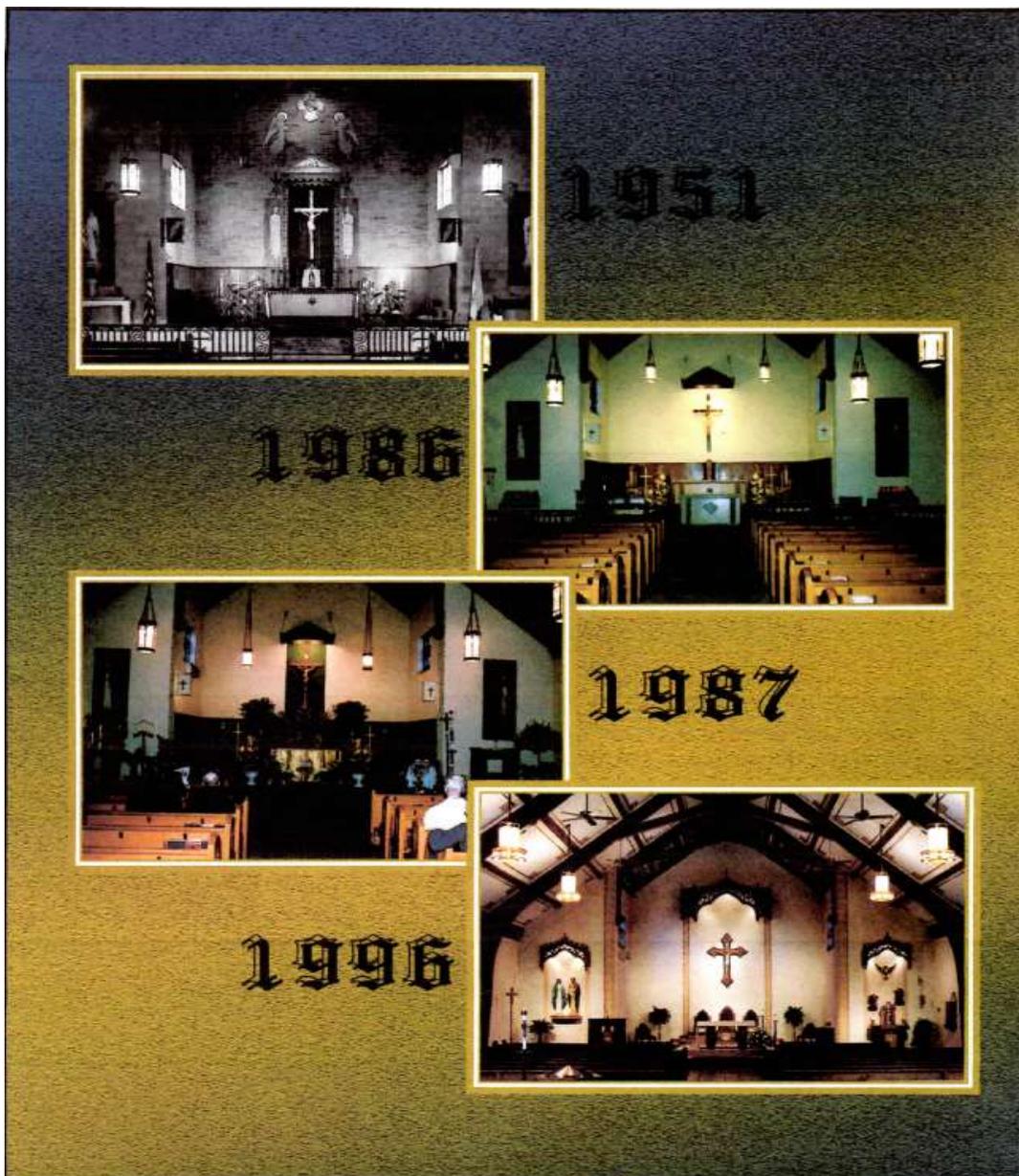
The most Reverend Cardinal Luigi Ciappi, personal theologian to Pope Paul II, visited St. Vincent de Paul on September 8th, 1987. He celebrated Mass with us and consecrated the parish to Our Blessed Mother.

Father Ols took several pilgrimages to Lourdes and Fatima with parishioners and subsequently built a shrine to Our Lady of Fatima on the Church property.

A new Galanti Digital Pipe Organ was installed in the choir loft of the church. In 1988 Mr. Brian Wilson was employed as Parish Music Director and Organist. He succeeded Mrs. Mary Agnes Teleha who had faithfully served in that ministry for many years. Brian's personal talent and his development of our Parish Choir have added much to the inspiration and beauty of all our liturgies.



The renovations of St. Vincent de Paul over the years. 1951-1996



A Shrine to St. Ann, dedicated to the gran-parents in the parish was built in the church and new confessionals to accommodate the option of face to face confession were installed.

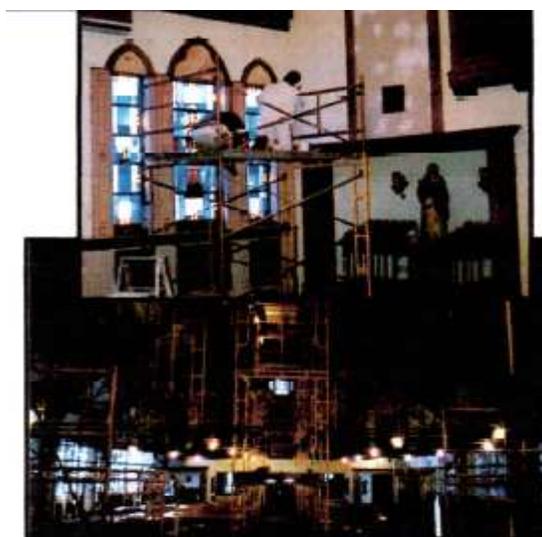


Completing a long line of dedicated Sisters of St. Joseph, Sister Genevieve O'Malley, Principal, Sister Mary Ellen Hoy, Librarian, and Sister Alice Marie Moran, Sacristan and housekeeper in the convent, retired in 1994. They and all of their predecessors established a school upon which its success is built today. The memory of the Sisters remains in the hearts of all the parishioners, but especially in those of the students who received their education from them.

Mrs., Marge Malenich was selected as the first Lay Principal of the school when the sisters left. She remained with our all lay faculty operating until the close of the school in



In 1995 Father Ols conducted a building fund campaign to renovate the church, to build a new kitchen, new restrooms and bleachers in the gym, and to add two new classrooms on to the school. The people, as always, responded with great generosity and began their three – year commitment toward fulfilling their pledge.



In January 1996 Jack Winterich of Novelty, Ohio, was employed to re-design the interior of the church. The new crucifix is actually now more than one hundred years old. Along with the doors to the sacristy, and several statues, it was obtained from the remains of St. Joseph Church on Woodland Avenue in Cleveland and restored for our use. The ceiling was replaced and the pews were refinished. The floor is Italian ceramic tile imported from Moderna, Italy. We were able to obtain it through the generosity of Mr. Albert Fisher, who left us \$82,000, in his will. Mr. Winterich's interior design, painting, and woodwork have truly enhanced the beauty and prayerful atmosphere of our church.

The Altar & Rosary Society has continued to be a major support both spiritually and financially for the parish. Their prayer before the Eucharist and their praying of the rosary at wakes, both of members and other parishioners, has been a source of much grace. Between Christmas and Easter, they share their time and talent in the baking of about 4000 nut and poppy seed rolls, which bring substantial revenue to our parish. Those funds in turn have been a continued assistance in the maintenance of our church.

Our parish Holy Name Society has been distinguished with the "Parish Society of the Year" numerous times of the years. The size of their membership, their participation in the activities of the Diocesan Union of Holy Name Men, their charitable works, and volunteer services in the parish has all contributed to this recognition. Of special note is their presence at all funerals of parishioners as adult servers at the mass. The sponsorship of the "Pancake Breakfast as well as the "250 Club" brings parishioners together socially and likewise contributes to the financial needs of the church.

Father Ols renovated the vacant convent renaming it The Conlon Ministry Center in memory of our founding pastor. The building now has offices for our deacons, our Director of Religious Education, a large meeting room and ministry programs.

During Father Ols pastorship he established RCIA. It is currently a yearly teaching session with Sandy Gross, Nerissa Maholic, and Father John Retar our current pastor. More than one hundred men and women have been received into the church. The Pre-Cana Program to help young couples prepare for marriage was set up with a team of about fifteen married couples from our parish. Tom and Mary Varady

coordinated this very important service to young engaged couples. Mrs. Rose Mate gathered together a group of women who began volunteering to provide Funeral Luncheons for families after the burial of a loved one.

The Pro-Life Commission was established with Deacon John Slatcoff as the first director so that we could take our part in the National Respect-Life program. Mrs. Jean Sherwood then took over and the commission is still very active in the parish with the leadership of Dan and Dorothy Kaigan. As a parish we are committed to the belief that all human life sacred. We are obliged to care fore human life from conception to natural death.

Following the example of St. Vincent de Paul, service to those in need remains a priority in our parish. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was re-organized in 1987 by Ben Zezula in order to broaden the charitable work we could do for individuals and families in our community. With Bens untimely death, John Slatcoff became president of the board and continued to develop the work of the society. John expanded the group to include auxiliary membership. These men and women help the board in carrying out assistance to those in need. The delivery of dinners to families at holiday times and throughout the year, prepare the Lenten Soup Supper for the parish, and sponsor many other activities to help the society raise funds to carry out the charitable work. Carl Senzek is currently president. In the spirit of ecumenism Carl has joined the society with other Christian churches in establishing the "Sharing Christmas Program" which provides a dinner on Christmas day for all those in the wider community who would otherwise be alone or not have dinner on that day.

In 1991 Father Timothy W. Gareau was assigned as associate pastor. Father Tim ministered enthusiastically in all areas of parish life and certainly was beloved by the people. He was with us until 1995 when the Bishop transferred him to St. Angela Merici Parish in Fairview Park.

In 1998 Mrs. Judith Clevenger was hired to be a part time Minister to the Elderly, the Sick and the Homebound. Judy coordinates the Eucharistic Ministers who bring Communion to the homebound on Sundays. She directs our parish bereavement program —"Seeds of Hope"— plans our annual Remembrance Liturgy for the deceased, and directs pilgrimages, days of recollection and other activities for the seniors in our parish community.

On May 23rd, 1998 John Slatcoff was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate for the Diocese of Cleveland. Rev Mr. Slatcoff is the first permanent deacon from our parish. After his ordination Bishop Pilla assigned Deacon John to us as Pastoral Associate. He and his wife, Cookie, are the parents of five children and the grandparents of fourteen. Deacon John serves our parish in many communities in many ways through his pastoral and sacramental ministry.

On September 27, 1999, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, Bishop Anthony J. Quinn solemnly dedicated our newly renovated church and altar. The Bishop placed several relics beneath the table of the altar, one of which was a relic of St. Vincent de Paul. Our director of maintenance, Kevin O'Conner, made a new altar table. During the ceremony he and his assistant, Billy Dryden, secured it permanently in place over the relics.

The parish continues to thrive because of the very generous sacrificial giving of the

people and because of the efforts of nearly four hundred active volunteers in various of parish life. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to the many men and women who have worked the Bingo program over the years, especially Lad Kalis who directs this fundraiser, and his co-planners, Phyllis Schmidt, Helen Karam, Kathy Joeright Dorothy Waters and Judy Clevenger.

On November 27th, 1999 we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our parish. It has been fifty years of growth as a church community. With the current membership of one thousand two hundred and fifty households we remain committed to a parish that is centered on the Eucharist. The priorities of our lives remain the worship of God, education in faith, evangelization, care for the poor and those in need, and upholding the dignity and sanctity of all human life.

This article was published in the Church Directory on the event of its 50th Anniversary, November 27th, 1999. We have continued to write the history of this loving parish where God is found in its service and its people. Much has changed since then but this was the foundation of the parish.

We will continue to write her stories so that future generation may know the deep love for God rooted here and nourished here. Please check back regularly as we continue to add to her history.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish can best be described as follows: "***Having somewhere to go, is home. Having someone to love is family. Having both is a BLESSING***"