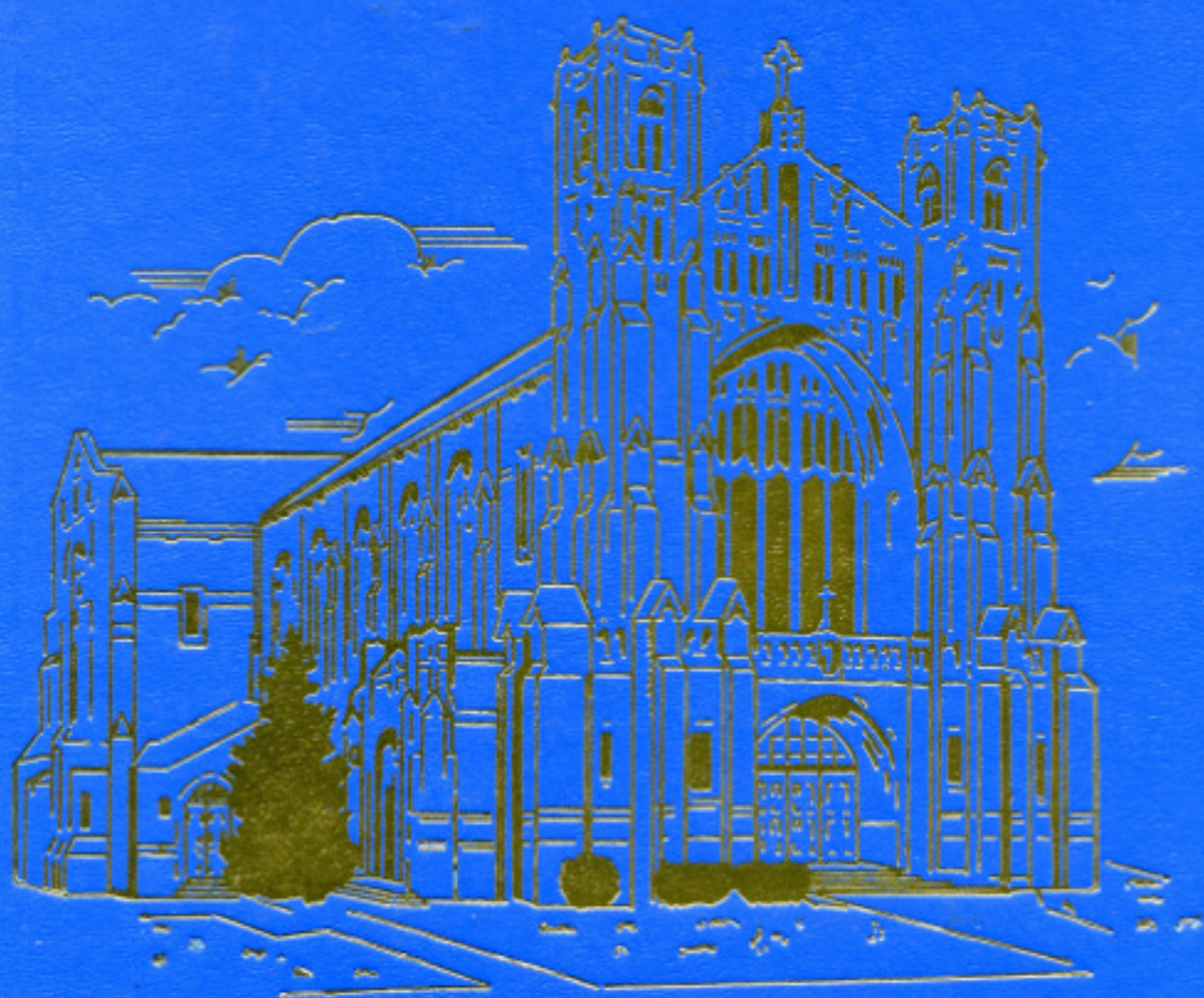


St. Alphonsus Parish





St. Alphonsus Parish

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125th
Anniversary
1852 - 1977

And The History of Catholic America

1977

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*His Eminence
John Cardinal Dearden
Archbishop of Detroit*



OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

Dear Father Yagley:

The 125th anniversary of the establishment of a parish is a rare event. What you are planning, therefore, for St. Alphonsus parish in Dearborn as it prepares to commemorate so many years of existence is very much worthwhile.

I welcome the opportunity of this writing to express to you, the priests, religious, and parish community my cordial good wishes and my personal congratulations on this memorable occasion.

Certainly, St. Alphonsus parish has under God much to be proud of. It has had over the years a tradition of strong faith, a vibrant parish spirit, and an evident joy in the things that lead us to God. And I know that, as the parish and its friends unite in a special action of prayer, they will ask God in His goodness to continue to make St. Alphonsus parish abidingly faithful to its mission in the Church.

Cordially yours in Christ,

John Card. Dearden
Archbishop of Detroit

Tribute to Father Yagley

The history of St. Alphonsus reveals a parish rich in faith led by priests strongly committed to their duties of teacher, leader, and servant of the faithful. Their efforts, differing in style and intensity, yet constant, have led us to this day of celebration. Each period in parish growth has been marked with its problems and its solutions. Yet, perhaps, no period has been more demanding on the priest and his people than the one through which we are now moving — a period which tests faith and commitment daily.

It is, therefore, particularly fitting on the occasion of the anniversary of our parish that we pay tribute to our priests and especially to our pastor, Father Carl Yagley, whose quiet courage and steadfast direction have helped St. Alphonsus extend, as well as maintain, its programs of service within and often beyond parish boundaries. Today gives us the opportunity for public recognition of a faith and constancy we frequently take for granted. Thank you, Father Yagley, for being with us.

Reverend Carl J. Yagley



"I will work as if everything depends on me and pray as if everything depends on God."

Dedication

The 125th anniversary of St. Alphonsus Parish celebrates more than anything else the faith of its people.

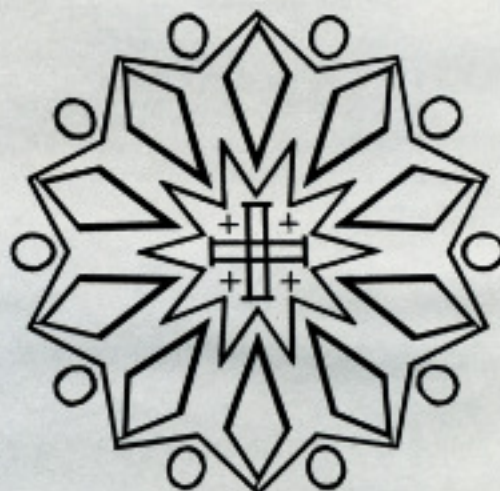
Every line of its history from 1852 until the present day reflects deep conviction and firm commitment to the central role of the Church in the life of the community.

Rugged terrain, epidemics, poverty, dissension, expansion, affluence, recession, and change have entrenched a faith that is living and functional.

Living — in that each segment of its membership is recognized as vital to its life. No community is complete which does not draw from the enthusiasm of its young, the labors of its middle-aged, and the wisdom of its elders.

Functional — in that each member is expected to contribute from his abilities to the welfare of the many, and to an astonishing degree, has done so.

With gratitude to God for His singular graces to St. Alphonsus Parish through its men and women of faith, this book is dedicated.



**That we all
may be
One**

Vision, Sacrifice, Faith

Preface

St. Alphonsus Parish was founded one hundred and twenty-five years ago by a small group of devout German immigrants who had brought a firmly established faith with them from the old country. They were determined to implant in their children the seeds of this solidarity, and the inspiration to pass on to future generations their treasured religious heritage. Through education and spiritual guidance, they built a strong Catholic community, filled with family spirit and centered around their Church.

Today, a century-and-a-quarter later, with many of the same pioneer families represented, St. Alphonsus has welcomed generations of newcomers with their traditions. This has created an unique blend of the old and new in all phases of parish life. Mother Church has embraced and met their need to maintain family values through Catholic education. The diversity of their backgrounds has enriched parish life, opening it to new experiences of sharing in the Lord.

Recalling through this book the rich tapestry of the parish's history, and reliving the trials and triumphs of its pioneers, should provide renewed strength for the future of St. Alphonsus. Having experienced a "Century of Conquest" and twenty-five years of vital change, St. Alphonsus is a testimony to the convictions and values of its founders and its parishioners. With this legacy of faith we will continue to glorify God's great love.

In The Beginning

Detroit was a small village surrounded by thick forests when German immigrants began to settle near it in the middle of the nineteenth century. Carving a farm from this wilderness was then a tremendous feat. The area had begun to open up when the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. Before that, maps of the United States labeled Michigan Territory "Interminable Swamp."

As railroads crisscrossed the country, and as the population pushed ever westward, key cities expanded at a steady pace. In 1833 the Diocese of Detroit was erected and the Right Reverend Frederic Rese was appointed its first bishop. This was also the year in which Father Martin Kundig held Detroit's first German services — in St. Anne's Church, and an arsenal built in Dearbornville in 1833 led to new job opportunities and further population growth. Detroit's census of 1834 counted five thousand residents. Within a decade, that figure exceeded twelve thousand.

The Michigan Central Railroad's wood-burning locomotives were clattering through Springwells — which had not yet swallowed the southern part of Greenfield. In the 1840's, and the entire area was a strange mixture of people: foreigners, colonists, and natives, sophisticates, woodsmen, and Indians. When the founders of St. Alphonsus first came to south Greenfield, their little community — modeled after those they knew in their homeland — was largely self-sufficient, but a trip into town for supplies could be an adventure. Land speculators, farmers, loggers, and trappers mingled with the Indians. The mixture of languages necessitated an abundance of hand signals for those who did not travel in multi-lingual groups.

Although the farms these immigrants wrested from the forest were modest in size, their families were large by today's standards. It was concern for the children that prompted their first mutual undertaking as a religious community.

One day in 1846, Peter Joseph Henn approached his neighbor, Peter Joseph Esper, with



Esper family played a prominent role in the formation of St. Alphonsus Parish. Left to right: Anthony, Peter, Jacob and Michael, standing; John and Matthias, seated – circa 1865.

the suggestion that a school be established. With the help of a few other German neighbors, they immediately set their plan into action. In that same year, on Esper's land, in a log cabin just north of what is now the intersection of Warren and Bingham, the school of an as-yet-unnamed parish was opened. Joseph Hellner, who had been a teacher in Germany, was hired as the first schoolmaster. Parents paid a tuition of forty cents per month.

The subjects taught by a succession of male teachers were German reading, religion, English reading, and arithmetic. Before the Sisters of St. Agnes of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, took over the responsibility in 1880, others in charge of the children were Herr Peter Ternes, Kramer, Grimm, Schumacher, Jaminet, Arends, and Wirth.

Considering the hardships of the times – especially for newly arrived immigrants who did not speak the tongue of their new country – this was an impressive step. There were no public schools available to their youngsters.

The Espers' Dedication

To attend Mass and receive the Sacraments, the Greenfield pioneers had to travel the rugged roads to St. Mary's in Detroit, a parish organized for German Catholics by Father Kundig in 1841. Finally, in 1852, a zealous Redemptorist priest, the Reverend Ernest Glaunach, began to make sporadic trips to their settlement. The first Mass in Greenfield was held on May 30 of that year in the Esper home. The devout couple had transformed their living room into a chapel for the priest's visit.

When Father Glaunach came a second time, the Espers had converted an adjoining room into a sacristy and confessional. On his third visit, the third downstairs room had become his bedroom and five of the Esper sons had moved into the barn. There their beds stayed until St. Alphonsus Church was built.

It was also the Espers – Peter Joseph and his wife, Catherine (nee Thiesen) – who donated the

land for the church. On October 3, 1851, they signed a deed transferring four acres of their farm to Bishop Peter Paul LeFevre "for the purposes of having a burying ground, erecting a Roman Catholic church, school, and pastor's house, on the premises . . . for the use of the German Catholic population, and for other such good and benevolent purposes as he . . . may determine."

By the time the cornerstone was laid in August, 1852, there were already fifty families in the new parish. On that joyous occasion, the Very Reverend Peter Kindekens, the Vicar General, preached in English; and the Reverend Albert Schaeffler, C.S.S.R., superior at St. Mary's Redemptorist community, preached in German. Father Schaeffler visited the Greenfield mission a number of times after that, including the dedication ceremonies on October 10 of that year.

The parishioners themselves built the church, a building measuring thirty feet by fifty feet and twenty-six feet high. No picture or further description has been located in historical files. Its adjacent cemetery extended westward into the present location of Schaefer Highway.

Father Glaunach was not present for the dedication; he was scheduled to preach at three services in Detroit. Those were to be his last three

sermons. At age forty-nine, he fell victim to the cholera epidemic then raging in the city, and died in the afternoon of October 19.

The Redemptorist annals state:

Father Glaunach's death created a great stir, not only in the German parish, but even in the French and English parishes of Detroit. On all sides, preparations were made for a solemn funeral. A deputation from St. Alphonsus Parish in Greenfield came with the request that his remains be interred in their church, since he was the founder of that parish and their beloved spiritual father. To their great sorrow, this request had to be refused . . .

One Flock; Many Shepherds

Father Glaunach's successor at St. Mary's was the Reverend John DeDycker, C.S.S.R., who had come to Detroit from Baltimore, Maryland. He had been attending the Greenfield parish every other Sunday. According to the Redemptorist annals:

Father De Dycker was called to the country on a sick call. In the wagon which was sent to fetch him, there was also the doctor and a midwife. Father excused himself for not taking part in the conversation because he had the

The second church building in St. Alphonsus's history was dedicated in 1875.



Blessed Sacrament with him. At this, the doctor who was a fallen away Catholic began to blaspheme and ridicule the faith, so that the priest and the midwife felt obliged to get off the wagon and to make the journey on foot. God punished the culprit almost immediately. He lost his practice in Detroit and left for Chicago, where he died in extreme poverty shortly after.

In December of 1854, Father Francis X. Roth, C.S.S.R., replaced Father DeDycker. Shortly before his arrival, the old log school built in 1846 collapsed during a severe snow storm. Under the direction of Father Roth a new one was built in 1855. It was a simple frame structure attached to the church.

In 1856, Father Roth was replaced by Father Bartholomew Gruber. At the end of that year, his station was assumed by Father Peter Cronenberger.

During June of 1858, Father James Nagel helped out at St. Alphonsus. Father Nagel had distinguished himself in New York's cholera epidemic of 1846, and although history describes his health as "always poor," he lived to his late eighties and is credited with the organization of eighty-four parishes.

St. Alphonsus's first resident pastor — a diocesan priest — the Reverend Julius (or Julian) Maciejewski was appointed in July, 1858. Father Maciejewski built the first rectory — a small frame two-story building with five little rooms. He left a mystery in the form of two words he scrawled under the year of 1860 in the parish marriage register: "Utinam Felicior." Translated from the Latin, this means "I wish it were a happier year."

When he was transferred to St. Michael's Church, Monroe, in June, 1860, the Redemptorists resumed their pastoral chores in Greenfield. Father Maciejewski died less than a year later.

Forging Ahead

Father Nagel was one of two priests specifically mentioned as tending St. Alphonsus in 1860; the other was the Reverend Louis Claessens (Americanized to Claussen). He met death at a young age when a small boat in which he was a passenger overturned in a storm on Chesapeake Bay.

Services at Greenfield were again reduced to twice monthly until January, 1861, when the pastor of St. Mary of Redford, Father Edward Dumont,

began visits to St. Alphonsus. In June, he assumed the entire responsibility for the parish, even though the Redemptorist annals refer to him as "a French priest (he was actually Belgian), unable to speak German."

Father Dumont cared for both parishes until November. During that time he purchased a half-acre of land from John Horger for one hundred and fifty dollars. On this property — now occupied by the intersection of Calhoun and Warren — he began the construction of a two-story brick school building. It was completed by St. Alphonsus's second resident pastor.

The Reverend Charles Chambelle was appointed Pastor of St. Alphonsus in November of 1861. His first concern was the completion of the school, which was then the province of a Mr. Wirth, who served as schoolmaster.

Although this was the Civil War era, church affairs seemed to run smoothly with the hard-working Father Chambelle at the helm. His 1870 report stated that he celebrated Mass every Sunday at Greenfield, where there were now seventy-two families, and every second Sunday and second Holy Day at Springwells (Holy Cross), where there were ninety-seven families. He taught catechism twice a week and on Sunday at St. Alphonsus, and once a week at Holy Cross. Two thriving societies were St. Mary's Society for women and St. Aloysius's Society for boys.

When Father Chambelle was appointed to the pastorate of St. Mary's of Redford in 1873, he was replaced at St. Alphonsus by a man termed "one of the most colorful priests of the diocese." Father George Godez came to Greenfield after a thirty-year pastorate in Westphalia, Michigan. George Paré, in his book published in 1951, *The Catholic Church in Detroit*, said of Father Godez:

The thirty years spent as a pastor in Westphalia made him the peer of any of the Missionaries in the pioneer period. Astride his white horse, and wearing in all circumstances his high silk hat, as tradition has it, he was a familiar figure in all the adjoining counties and his church records disclose that he exercised his ministry throughout the area.

An official photograph of Father Godez depicts him with a dour face, but that was probably because it was not fashionable to smile for one's portrait in those days. It is obvious he cared deeply about his fellow Christians, and although he





Father George Godez, the third pastor of St. Alphonsus, contracted for a new church in 1873.

was slight in build, he had a hard life and was an energetic worker for the Lord. He was seventy-one years of age when he came to St. Alphonsus, but continued to keep up his reputation as a mover.

The parish report for 1873 showed a balance of three hundred and fifty dollars in the church treasury, but that didn't stop Father Godez from contracting for a new church that would cost \$5,779.30. Fifty-one pews affording a seating capacity of about two hundred and fifty, were installed in the spacious new sanctuary. Front-row seats were in demand then. Those pews rented for sixteen dollars per year and the others were fourteen dollars.

Materials from the old church were used in the construction of the new. Father Godez himself donated the Main Altar. The parishioners were also generous in their contributions. Subscriptions totaled \$4,059.65, and the loan taken out for \$1,080 was paid within the year.

Although the church was not yet completed, its first Mass was celebrated on Christmas Day in 1874. It was September 5, 1875, before Dedication Day greeted Bishop Caspar Henry Borgess and hundreds of parishioners and well-wishers. After an early Mass said by Father Godez, guests were treated to "a delicious lunch and refreshments of all kinds in good quality and quantity." The Bishop said a Pontifical Mass, dedicated the church, and officiated at the Confirmation ceremony. In the evening, a vespers service ended the day on a serene and inspiring note.

Within the next couple of years, the graves in the cemetery beside the church were moved to the northern end of the parish property where Mr. Esper had donated another four acres of land. Schaefer Road, which cut through between the Horger farm and the parish property, later covered part of the area of the old cemetery.

It was 1879 before work was finally completed on the burial ground. The previous year's church report tallied fourteen dollars for the sale of cemetery lots and eight dollars and fifty cents for the sale of single graves. Repair of the fence around the graveyard had cost fifteen dollars and fifty cents.

Joys and Sorrows

In 1880, the parish — now officially located in Springwells which had annexed the southern part of Greenfield — consisted of "50 landowners and 10 renters." Two Sisters of St. Agnes came that year from their Fond du Lac motherhouse to teach at St. Alphonsus School. These first nuns were Sister Ludgard Hoefler, Superior, and a postulant, Margaret Quint, who became known as Sister Cosma. Their salary was three hundred dollars a year, plus whatever parishioners might bring from their farms in the form of edible bonuses. Their home was the second floor of the school building.

Father Godez was the first priest in the diocese to celebrate his Golden Jubilee. The parish feted him on August 24, 1881. As records show he was ordained in Austria on July 20, 1832, when he was thirty years old. The celebration was a bit premature, but that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the pastor's well-wishers and the joy of the ceremonies. Bishop Borgess celebrated Mass at 10 a.m. in St. Alphonsus Church; Father Friedland of St. Joseph's, Detroit, preached the sermon. That same day the new 121-pound bell was consecrated.

When Father Godez was stricken with an illness in January, 1883, he was given the last sacraments by Father Bernard Wermers of St. Boniface, Detroit, and the Papal Absolution by Bishop Borgess. He passed away on January 14 and was buried in the parish cemetery where his gravestone, near the church he had built and near the northern end of the cemetery, stands as a silent tribute to the great service he performed for his flock.



A side view of the school building completed during Father Chambelle's pastorate, 1862, with the convent addition built under the direction of Father Philip Spies, 1888.

Father Wermers, executor of Father Godez's will, then became administrator of the parish until March when the Reverend Jerome (Hieronymous) Henkell, a Capuchin priest of the Milwaukee province, assumed the pastorate. From that time until 1897, the Capuchins from St. Bonaventure's Monastery on Mt. Elliot — established that same year, 1883 — took care of the parish. They would work in their own community during the week, stay in the parish rectory for the weekend, and be driven back to Detroit by a parishioner on Monday morning. Since they were priests serving missions all over the country, it was not unusual for the parish to have a substitute pastor on any given Sunday.

Father Henkell, a bearded and corpulent young man known for his sense of humor, barely had time to see the completion of his first project — the repainting of the sanctuary — before he was replaced by Father Anastasius Duckgeischel, who was aided by three other Capuchins — Father Peter Damian Stark, Father Ignatius Ullrich, and Father Stephen Sack.

Father Sack was appointed pastor in August of 1885, but three months later the pastorate was assumed by Father Raphael Umstaetter. He was responsible for the organization of a Young Ladies' Sodality in March of 1886.

During the tenure of Father Philip Spies, which began in May of that year, a society for married men, the Fraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was established. The younger men were

organized into the Young Men's Sacred Heart Society in 1888.

He organized the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners. Then he directed the building of a new convent, which was attached to the south side of the school building. The upstairs living quarters were converted into more classrooms, furnished with long tables and benches which served as communal desks.

There were just four grades in the school; it was in session for one hundred and sixty-six days per school year, although many students lost time due to farm chores, the difficulty of traveling long distances on inclement days, and illness. Enrollment for the year of 1894-1895 was sixty-four. Subjects were catechism, Bible history, German reading, English reading, spelling, arithmetic, and geography.

The new hall inspired the organization of a Dramatic Club, which specialized in German plays — mostly in the melodramatic vein. In a rehearsal, one of the players, young Leonard Esper, was accidentally killed. There are two versions of the tragedy. One says that a supposedly empty gun was fired at him; the other, blames it on a stunt with an axe.

The church was beautifully redecorated in 1892 with green interior walls and the installation of stained-glass windows fashioned by Friedrich and Staffin of Detroit. Two years later the twin Esper brothers, Peter and Michael, said their first Masses

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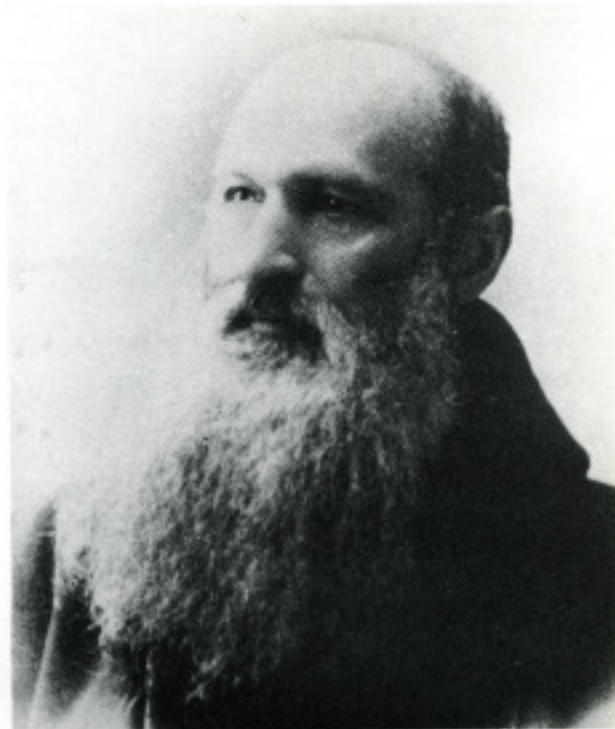


GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST





Father Anasthus Duckgeischel, OSF, with his sister, who served as his housekeeper, 1883-1885.



*Reverend Philip Spies, OFM
Pastor 1886-1897*

in their home parish. They were ordained as priests of the Society of St. Sulpice. Father Geary's book says:

... The old church was very happy that day — here was the fruit of almost half a century of struggle, for Priestly vocations from a Parish mark that Parish as having come of age and as one that is full of Grace. It was fitting too that the first vocations came from the family that so graciously lent its home to Father Schaeffler and Father Glaunach in darker days.

That chapter in the parish history closed with these words:

On June 6, 1897, Father Philip Spies, O.F.M. Cap., said his last Sunday Mass as Pastor of St. Alphonsus and gave First Communion to that year's class. He celebrated a Wedding Mass on Monday, June 7, and much to the sorrow of the people, left St. Alphonsus.

This kindly Capuchin, a tall man with balding pate and a long gray beard, passed away at the age of sixty-seven on December 6, 1906. At the time, he was pastor of a small parish, St. Joseph, near Mt. Calvary. He had contracted pneumonia while on a sick call.

A Learned Leader

One can gain great insight into the personality of St. Alphonsus's next pastor by reading a series of pocket-sized directories he had published in the first few years of the twentieth century. The Reverend Anthony J. Buechsenmann, a diocesan priest, was a learned man who promoted reading among his flock. He provided, mainly through his own writings, some interesting food for thought in these directories, including essays on *Reading, Fear of Death, The Catholic Priest, How To Be Happy,* and *The Church Collection*.

In the last-named article, he wrote:

The ordinary collection is profusely patronized by small coin. The great American copper is nowhere more in its element. There is an infusion of nickel and a suspicion of silver, but the multitude, the common mass, is copper by a large majority . . . Our suggestion is not less copper, but: "More coppers."





The old rectory in the winter of 1900

Twins, Peter and Michael Esper, said their first Masses at St. Alphonsus in 1894.



The Jewel Of The Diocese

Father Buechsenmann, a native of Germany, was fifty-one when he came to Springwells after an eighteen-year pastorate in North Dorr. His great enthusiasm for the priestly life and his meticulous record-keeping left a still-appreciated store of documents accumulated during his twenty-three years of service to the Parish of St. Alphonsus.

Immediately upon his arrival on June 10, 1897, he was confronted with a problem that had been successfully forestalled for the past year by Father Spies. The Sisters of St. Agnes were leaving. Their Fond du Lac Superior, Sister Mary Agnes, felt she could no longer spare the Springwells teachers. She said, "Since there are so many Orders in the neighborhood, it won't be hard to get other teachers."

Father Buechsenmann anxiously appealed to Bishop Foley to convince the Sisters to stay. Later, he wrote in his journal: "The Bishop said, 'They will not go,' but they went." In the school, there were between fifty and sixty children.

By the time school reopened on September 1, 1897, the good pastor had employed three Sisters of St. Dominic from Adrian. Sister M. Alberta, Superior, taught the upper four grades; Sister M. Christina — who, after her initial three-year stint, returned twice again to St. Alphonsus — taught the younger children and directed the choir. Sister M. Stanislaus served as cook.

(continued)



My soul longs for Thee,
O Lord, more than watchmen
wait for the dawn. Ps. 130,7





This was still a German country parish primarily concerned with farming. Families were working units, and the parishioners formed a larger family under the roof of their church. Indeed, many of them were related to each other by blood as well, with the names Boehmer, Esper, Hellner, Horger, Korte, Neckel, Schaefer, Schlaff, Taubitz, Ternes/Terns, Theisen, and Wittersheim, each appearing a dozen times or more in the parish rolls of the day. The directory for 1903-1904 lists seventy Espers and eighty-three Theisens.

Societies were numerous and active. Parish picnics held in Schaefer's Grove — just in back of the old Schaefer Inn on the northeast corner of Michigan and Schaefer — drew an enthusiastic crowd, even on a weekday, and brought a handsome profit to the parish coffers.

The spirit of unity that prevailed at St. Alphonsus during the prosperous days around the turn of the century can be best expressed in the words of Father Buechsenmann, who stated in his journal after only one year of service here:

In general, the people go to Communion very regularly and they attend Divine Service well. By the end of the year it was proven to me that the parish is full of life and vigor. A genuine Catholic spirit prevails here and modern Liberalism has found no entrance. Our Youth is pious and unspoiled. Religious societies are blossoming and a marked zeal shows itself in them. The Parish school is generously supported and the whole parish loves its Church and honors it as its most precious possession . . . I have seen for myself now that what an old Priest once said to me is true: "Springwells is the Jewel of the Diocese."

Still Building

On Friday, October 10, 1902, Bishop John Samuel Foley celebrated a Pontifical Mass at 10 a.m. in St. Alphonsus Church to celebrate the parish's Golden Jubilee. With the Bishop at the altar were the Ternes brothers, Father Anthony and Father Peter, and the Esper twins, Father Peter and Father Michael. Father Seybolt of St. Joseph's Church in Wyandotte delivered the sermon, and thirty other priests were among the worshippers in the crowded sanctuary.

On Wednesday, October 15, there was a Requiem Mass for all deceased parishioners. That evening, a supper and a show in the parish hall rang down the curtain on the happy commemoration of fifty years of blessings as a Christian community.



Reverend Anthony Buechsenmann



*Monsignor John S. Mies
Father Buechsenmann
was succeeded by
Monsignor Mies.*

The parish was fifty years old and the rectory was not much younger. It definitely needed replacement and Father Buechsenmann made that his next project.

When asked to donate toward the rectory construction, parishioners had subscribed three thousand dollars immediately. With the additional help of their labor, and the hauling being done by their horse and ox carts, no debt was incurred. The formal dedication was held on February 14, 1905, "in spite of terrible weather."

During the construction period — on Sunday, June 12, 1904 — a break was taken for the celebration of Father Buechsenmann's Silver Jubilee of Ordination. A High Mass and banquet, complete with an effusive thank-you speech, was followed by a party in the parish hall. This was the perfect opportunity for the people of St. Alphonsus to show their appreciation to a man they had come to love.

He was a strict Father to them, but it was always obvious that their pastor had their salvation in mind. His sermons were so enlightening and lively, even though long, that there were few worshippers who would find fault, even when a ten o'clock Mass lasted until one.

Father Geary tells us:

Down the years of Father Buechsenmann's pastorate, he was a beloved and welcome guest at every home in the parish. It was no unusual sight to see him followed by crowds of children striding along the muddy Schaefer Road to the grove and park behind the Schaefer Inn. He cared little for money or finance, but was deeply concerned about his people, even to the point of forbidding them to attend a dance sponsored by a neighboring parish. He quoted the Council of Baltimore which forbade parish dances. Waltzes were very popular then, and there were many abuses connected with the dances, even though they were held under parish auspices. The Irish loved to dance and kept it up, much to the displeasure of the Bishops and the German pastors.

War Years

The 'Teens brought great changes to St. Alphonsus Parish as well as to the rest of the world. At the start of the "War to End All Wars," real estate investors, such as Robert Oakman, were buying up the farms of Springwells and subdividing them into city lots. By 1920 the Ford tractor plant had been moved from West Dearborn to the site of the Ford Eagle Boatworks on the Rouge River in Springwells. An area building boom was in full swing. To prevent annexation by their mushrooming neighbor, Detroit, and to ensure taxation of the Ford plant, Springwells was then incorporated as a village. While "the boys" were overseas "making the world safe for democracy," those at home were transforming pastoral country scenery into a bustling suburb.

The war brought a great deal of sadness to the people of St. Alphonsus, both for themselves and for those they still knew and loved in Germany.

These were hard years in the personal life of Father Buechsenmann, also. His sister, who had never married and had served as rectory housekeeper throughout his pastorate, died in 1912. Fortunately, he had some help from 1915 to 1920, from Father Cyprian Alber and from two companions who stayed at the rectory at different times. They were Father Shemansky, a friend rather than an appointee, and Father John Helten, who served as Father Buechsenmann's eyes in 1919 and 1920 when the older priest's sight and health were both failing. Records indicate that Father Helten unofficially served as "vicarius substitutus" at least for the final year of Father Buechsenmann's tenure at St. Alphonsus.



A front view of the old church

When the pastor left in December of 1920, he spent a brief time with relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Henn, who lived at the southeast corner of Warren and Neckel. Then Bishop Michael James Gallagher visited him there, and recommended that the ailing priest be transferred to a hospital.

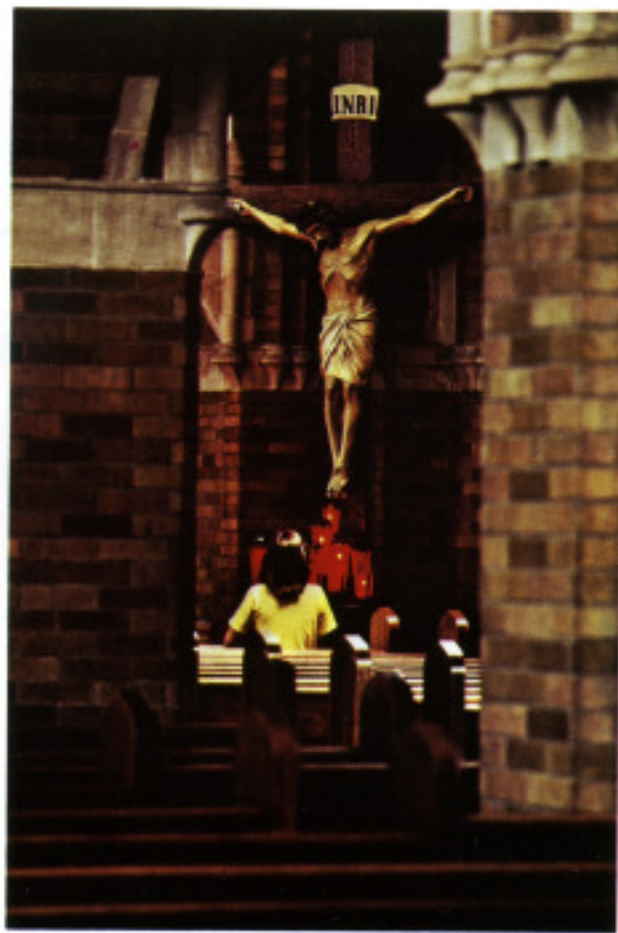
The last years of Father Buechsenmann's life were spent in the care of the devoted Sisters of St. Joseph at New Borgess Hospital, Kalamazoo. When he died in June, 1927, his remains were laid to rest in a crypt in the hospital cemetery.

A New School

The Reverend John Siegfried Mies came to St. Alphonsus in the month of his forty-ninth birthday in February, 1921. A native of Germany, he had come to Detroit with his parents at the age

(continued)





of seventeen. With his illustrious background as a priest, his accomplishments in a brief two years at Springwells were no surprise.

He first turned his attention to the erection of a new school on a site that would be away from the traffic of busy Warren Avenue. With this in mind, he purchased fifteen lots from the Robert Oakman Land Company Aviation Field, a tract that had served as a landing strip during the World War. Father Geary's book tells us:

The first floor was to be a hall for parish use and there were four schoolrooms and three music rooms on the second floor. This the north half of the present school, including the center unit.

The [brick] building [200 feet long and 90 feet wide with a height of 42 feet] is located at the eastern end of the church property about halfway between Warren and Gould. Father Mies had permitted the city to put Gould through the church property and had moved the cemetery back to make way for the new street. On Sunday, September 24, 1922, Bishop Gallagher came to St. Alphonsus for Confirmation and to solemnly dedicate the new school. Father Mies had announced on the Sunday previous that the blessing of the new school is a festive occasion that should be celebrated, and he saw to it that it was. Many priests attended and a dinner for the clergy was given at 5 o'clock. A supper was served for the entire parish at 7:30 at \$2.00 a plate

In November of 1922, Father Mies arranged for a Mission at St. Alphonsus — a week for the men and a week for the women. This was the final service Father Mies rendered St. Alphonsus Parish, for in December, 1922, he was transferred to St. John the Evangelist, Detroit. There he built the present church next to the hospital on Grand Boulevard.

Building Again

In January of 1923 a fair, handsome, open-faced young man was appointed to the pastorate of Springwells Parish that now embraced about two hundred families and was rapidly growing with the blossoming of the surrounding suburb. The Reverend John Aloysius Klich, who had not only been Assumption College's star pitcher, but had taught Latin and German while still a student there, had been ordained by Bishop Foley in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on the Fourth of July, 1909. His most recent pastorate had been at St. Mary's, Belding. In his five years there, he also

tended its two missions in Marion and in Smyrna, remodeled the Marion church, built a new one in Belding, and "conquered the former anti-Catholicism of that small Protestant town." He maintained his reputation as a go-getter through nineteen years of devoted service to St. Alphonsus Parish.

Father Klich's first concern was the living quarters of the Sisters. They were still residing in the old school and certainly deserved better. The school enrollment — and the number of Sisters teaching there — had continued to grow steadily. The "convent" had grown older and more cramped.

Arthur DesRosiers was asked to design a Gothic-style convent to accommodate twenty-four Sisters. Located on the southeast corner of Gould and Schaefer, this spacious building was provided with every modern convenience of the day. A newspaper description stated:

The walls of a mingled shad-red brick are laid up in an English bond. The building is trimmed with limestone, and the main entrance, all stone, is of a particularly refined Gothic character and features a niche worked into the detail of the window above the door. The plan provides community rooms, library, chapel, music rooms, and service rooms, and has large sitting porches retired from the street. The building is roofed with heavy green slate.

By the time the Sisters moved into the new convent, Father Klich was planning an addition to the school, also straining at the seams. He would employ, but in reverse, the same plan for this southern flank as Father Mies had used for the northern end of the building.

The addition was completed in 1926, and was able to serve the graduation ceremonies of the first St. Alphonsus High School students in June of 1927. Graduates were: Benedict Henn, John Karpinski, Mary Horger, Catherine O'Neill, and Lavina Eichner.

The beautiful new auditorium which was completed in 1925 afforded far more space for Sunday Mass than did the old church. That year's Christmas Eve Midnight Mass was celebrated there. For the next few months, the children's Mass was said there. Finally, all church services were conducted in the school auditorium, and the Blessed Sacrament was reserved there.





Father John Klich was appointed pastor in 1923.

"I love these little people, and it is not a slight thing when they who are so fresh from God, love us."

(Charles Dickens)

Looking Ahead

In the meantime, Springwells had become a city in 1924 and adopted a new name — Fordson — the following year. The original Village president, Charles Horger, and the Mayor of Fordson, Joseph Karmann, were both parishioners of St. Alphonsus. On January 9, 1929, Fordson merged with Dearborn as the City of Dearborn — another measure to protect themselves from annexation by Detroit.

The area was booming; it was a prosperous era. Large-scale parish building plans were undertaken without hesitancy — without any perception of the Depression ahead.

In 1925, the parish was \$76,000 in debt. The school addition, completed in 1926, added another \$90,000 debit. Seven more lots, at a total cost of \$16,310, were purchased from the Robert Oakman Land Company in June, 1927.

This location at the northern limits of the parish complex and with frontage on Calhoun was to be the site of the new church, at an estimated \$300,000, and the new rectory, at an estimated \$45,000. In 1928, a loan was taken for \$300,000, and for that year there was a total indebtedness of \$250,000.





Sister Rose Margaret, Principal of St. Alphonsus High School, with James O'Donnell, Assistant Principal, and Mrs. Louise McGuire, Secretary



Students at prayer, work and play



With the establishment of St. Luke's Parish in the same year, the boundaries of St. Alphonsus were again reduced, as they had been in earlier years for St. Clement's, St. Christopher's, and St. Barbara's Parishes.

And Still Building

Father Geary's history tells us:

On Monday, April 11, 1928, ground was broken for the new church. Mr. Peter Theisen had the honor of turning the first sod. At this time there were 600 families in the parish and 900 children in the school. Father Klich wisely had planned on a large church to accommodate the ever-growing population. The church will seat 1,250 people and time has proven that it is still large enough for a parish of 3,000 families. There is only one Mass when many are compelled to stand — the 11:00 — and this could be remedied if more would attend the early Masses. The pioneer farmers of the parish insisted on attending High Mass. It was a joy for them to be there and to help sing the praises of God.

Six hundred parishioners gathered for the laying of the cornerstone on August 19, 1928. Bishop Gallagher attended, and twenty-four priests. The Knights of St. John and the Holy Name Society, which Father Klich had started in the parish, led the procession to the site. Holy Redeemer Band supplied the music.

On May 18, 1930, the new church was dedicated by Bishop Gallagher. The bishop was met at Miller and Morrow Circle by a delegation representing all the parish societies, and he was conducted to the church in solemn procession; Monsignor Mies was celebrant of the Solemn Mass, Father Peter Esper was deacon, and Father Michael Esper was subdeacon. Father William Murphy — the late Bishop Murphy — and Father Charles Ulenberg were masters of ceremonies. Bishop Gallagher preached.

The dedication book also provides additional information.

The arrangement of the choir is unique. The rich Gothic window and the artistic grill-work are special features which command one's attention, as well as the splendid Austin pipe organ, which is the gift of the Holy Name Society. The blessing of this new Memorial Organ took place on Sunday evening, March 23, 1930, when the parishioners gathered to listen to a sacred concert given by the Holy Rosary Choir . . .

The old school had been torn down in 1928, and in 1930 the steeple was removed from the old church — then in use as a gymnasium — because it

was in danger of falling. The 1904 rectory next to the old church was serving as a music studio.

The new rectory had been completed in March, 1929. Its sixteen rooms and three garages afforded plenty of space for offices and living quarters for the pastor and his assistants. At that time, Father Klich was being aided in his duties by the Reverend James O'Brien, who had come to St. Alphonsus in January, 1927. Father Joseph Schramm, a young professor from Sacred Heart Seminary, had been assisting on weekends since March, 1926, and continued to do so through 1932.

Father O'Brien was assigned to the pastorate of St. Alphonsus Church, Deerfield, in January, 1932. He was replaced in Dearborn by Father George Kerby who quickly became known for his beautiful singing and his interest in parish societies. It was through his efforts that the Rosary Altar Society was organized.

Toward the end of 1933 Father Kerby was transferred to St. Theresa in Detroit, and two new assistants were sent to St. Alphonsus. These were first appointments for Father John Patrick Wagener and Father Morgan Harris, who had been ordained that June.

Bucking The Tide

On June 14, 1934, the entire parish celebrated with Father Klich the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. It was a happy occasion. The party-goers turned their conversation to fond reminiscences and tried to forget the troubled times they were now experiencing.

But *A Century of Conquest* tells us:

The splendid progress of St. Alphonsus Parish was greatly affected by a national crisis which brought poverty and ruin to the whole country in October of 1929. Bank failures, millions of unemployed workers, and silent factories could not but mean a halt in the material growth of any parish in an industrial area, and, although the plans for the new church were pushed to a successful conclusion, it was with a heavy heart that the valiant Father Klich noted the misery of his people and the great unpayable debt incurred in so much necessary building.

No one will ever know the worry that burdened his heart during the critical years between 1930 and 1938. During these crucial years, Father Klich did not neglect his beloved school. Every day he was seen at the playground — with his inevitable pipe — followed by "Duke," the Boston Bulldog, who even accompanied the pastor into the classrooms.



Father Klich with members of the Ushers' Club in 1926

Father Klich was always welcome at the playground where he used to be surrounded by children. He had provided an excellent playground for them, complete with swings, merry-go-rounds, and teeter-totters. There were tennis courts on the north end of the school grounds, and these were always well used. During these years, Mr. Joseph Falls directed the men's choir and organized a fine boys' choir.

The Sisters trained the children to sing their own Mass on schooldays. The schoolday began with Mass at 8:00 and woe to the student who was late! It was always an inspiring thing to see the children on the playground stop all they were doing when the Angelus rang and make the sign of the cross, say the Angelus, genuflecting at the words, "And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us," and then return to their play. The order and discipline in the school gave eloquent testimony to the diligence of the Sisters who made St. Alphonsus one of the best schools of the Diocese.

Assistance From The Assistants

On the evening of April 7, 1936, the residents of St. Alphonsus's rectory suffered a harrowing experience. It began at about nine o'clock when two armed men called on the rectory and held up Father Klich, who had answered the doorbell. At gunpoint, they then forced him, as well as the housekeeper, Mrs. Robertson, and her son, Roman, into the basement. When Father Wagener came down to investigate the disturbance, he was also

grabbed by the thieves. All four victims were then bound.

Upon overhearing the disturbance, Father Harris left his upstairs room, ducked through the housekeeper's quarters, out a window, over the garage roof, and then jumped down into the cemetery. After climbing the fence, he ran to the service station on the corner of Gould and Schaefer to call the police.

Sergeant Linehan and Officers Kerske, Rieve and Bell responded to the call. Officer Kerske entered the rectory and headed for the basement where he noticed Father Klich, Father Wagener and Mrs. Robertson and son tied together with rope. Though one of the thugs fired two shots from a shotgun over the officer's head, the officer could not return the fire for fear of hitting the four tied together. One man tried to escape by way of the garage door but was wounded by one of Officer Bell's six shots, and arrested. The second holdup man escaped by going out through the basement window.

Father Klich later said that one of the thieves was a man whom he had helped when he was still a pastor at Belding.

The two assistants who had shared Father Klich's holdup experience were transferred in 1939 and 1940. Father Wagener was sent to Holy Cross, Marine City, in July, 1939, and two years later entered the Navy as a chaplain. He was replaced by Father James Dolan. Father Harris was transferred

in June, 1940, to St. Matthew, Detroit, and his place was taken by Father Francis Dietz, who had just been ordained by Archbishop Mooney. This very boyish-looking young priest became very active in promoting Cana and pre-Cana programs at St. Alphonsus, and also started an information class.

Then, in July, 1941, Father Lawrence Des Longchamps was transferred to St. Mary's Parish in Wayne. This chubby young priest had served at St. Alphonsus since the time of his ordination six years earlier. He was "a favorite among students." Now he was replaced by another newly ordained priest, Father Sylvester Van Tiem.



Sad Times

In 1940, there were thirteen hundred families in the parish, representing some five thousand people. Although about a third of the parish families were unable to support their church financially, parish debt was slowly being reduced. Parish income in the years 1938 through 1940 had averaged sixty thousand dollars. Indebtedness stood at \$371,000, including a mortgage of \$300,000.

The following year, 1941, saw the war in Europe escalate into a second world war. There were eight hundred and thirty-two young people who left the parish to join the armed services. The parish kept in touch with these young men and women, and prayed for their safety.

During these troubled times, Father Klich and his assistants had helped to build a number of parish organizations, and their ranks were a great source of inspiration to the people and their priests. More than a dozen groups responded to a variety of interests and concerns in the parish.

Father Klich spent his fifty-eighth birthday, Friday, March 6, 1942, seriously ill at Mt. Carmel Hospital. Two days later he died, leaving a shocked and grieving parish. He had served St. Alphonsus for nineteen of his thirty-three years as a priest. The funeral on Wednesday, March 11, was attended by two hundred and fifty priests. Archbishop Mooney presided.



Bishop Gallagher presided at the laying of the cornerstone for new church in August, 1928.

Organizing and Beautifying

In the interim Father Dolan was appointed administrator. He and Father Dietz and Father Van Tiem cared for the parish until a new pastor could be chosen.

The Reverend William P. Schulte was appointed pastor on April 8, 1942. A retired Lieutenant Colonel (chaplain) of the National Guard, he had seen Army service overseas in World War I. He had just completed fifteen years as pastor of St. Elizabeth in Detroit, where he had succeeded his uncle, the Reverend Anthony Ternes. Father Schulte had been the first Director of the Eucharistic League, serving from 1920 to 1935. He had also served as State Chaplain of the American Legion, National Chaplain of the Forty and Eight, and State Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus. In 1938 his old friend, Archbishop Mooney, had made Father Schulte a Consultor. When the Archbishop began the Archdiocesan Development Fund, he chose Father Schulte as one of its organizers and directors.

When this devoted priest came to St. Alphonsus he set about organizing the office procedures to include the most modern techniques of dual indexing of church records and classification of church census. The system of financial support which he inaugurated — involving boxes of numbered envelopes and an annual statement mailed to each parishioner — made soliciting unnecessary.



*Monsignor William Peter Schulte
Pastor 1942-1956*

The official parish newspaper, *The St. Alphonsus News*, was given a new look and a new name — *The Voice*.

The pastor's labors were rewarded in August, 1944, when he was named a Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor.

Another hard worker, the Reverend George Stromske, had come to St. Alphonsus in October, 1943, when Father Dolan was transferred to the pastorate of St. Anthony's Church, Temperance. This hefty young man was a great favorite of the young people and during his six years in the parish he organized and directed one of the most successful C.Y.O. programs in the city.

More physical changes beautified the parish complex in 1945. First, the Detroit Stained Glass Works was commissioned to install nine clerestory windows and one transept window at a cost of \$15,812. No loan was taken for this. The beautiful windows are so designed that the church is always filled with light. In stunning colors they depict the life of Jesus and Mary and provide an inspiring reminder of the mysteries of the rosary.

Next, a stone crucifixion group was erected in the cemetery in memory of the thirty-four parish heroes who had died for America in World War II. This statue was placed near the stone cross that marks the grave of Monsignor Schulte's mother. Although the memorial cost ten thousand dollars, it too was purchased without benefit of a loan.

In the meantime, Father Dietz had been transferred to St. Veronica, East Detroit, and was

replaced in March by Father Thomas Schmitt, who had been ordained the month before.

Monsignor Schulte became seriously ill that summer when he went away with the National Guard to Grayling. He spent some time in the hospital before he could resume his duties at St. Alphonsus. He remained in poor health, but continued to work without complaint. Father Geary's history says of him:

He is a great friend of priests and there is no priest who ever visited the rectory who did not at once feel at home with this pastor with the warm smile and hearty welcome. He is a friend and companion to the priests who help him — always willing to chat with them without that cloak of reserve or dignity so often affected by those in authority. His mind is open to new ideas — he readily permits his assistants to suggest and carry through plans for parish organizations.

Devoted Priests And People

The newly ordained Reverend Jasper Sirianni replaced Father Van Tiem in November, 1946. He is mainly remembered for spearheading an Archdiocesan-wide Holy Name Society membership drive that brought enrollment in the organization to over eleven hundred men. The school was another of his pet projects.

When Father Stromske was transferred to St. Elizabeth, Detroit, in June, 1948, Father Charles Kraus came to take his place. Father Kraus's "specialties" were the parish newspaper and the athletic program.

In June, 1950, Father Schmitt was sent to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Detroit, and Father Cyril Rancourt came to St. Alphonsus from St. Boniface, Detroit. He and Father Kraus worked hard to put the parish among the leaders in the Archdiocesan Development Fund Drive. He was also a great inspiration to the Holy Name Society.

That same fall, the Passionist Fathers of St. Paul Monastery, Detroit, led a successful mission at St. Alphonsus. These dedicated priests had been great friends of the parish for many years and were always willing to come when called.

Not only in such drives as that for archdiocesan development, but in all vital areas, the people of St. Alphonsus continued to maintain a reputation for generosity. A new furnace was installed in the school in 1948. No loan was necessary for this seventeen-thousand-dollar improvement.

The 1950's

During the 1950's heavy demands were placed on parishes everywhere to provide a stability missing during the war years. St. Alphonsus responded with a period of growth and development.

Having no pressing financial problems, the parish gave five thousand dollars in April of 1951 to the fledgling Parish of St. Bernadette, Dearborn, to help it get started.

On Sunday, June 3, 1951, Reverend Thomas F. Esper, son of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony M. Esper, celebrated his first Solemn High Mass at St. Alphonsus. His brother, Reverend Clement J. Esper, who had been ordained in 1941, served as Archpriest. Reverend George Esper, a cousin, was present in the sanctuary with Monsignor Schulte. Reverend Henry Villerot, Reverend Walter Markowicz, and Reverend John C. Ryan assisted.

The Feast of the Precious Blood in 1951 had more than its usual significance. It marked the forty-fifth anniversary of Monsignor Schulte's ordination to the priesthood, the last nine years of which had been spent at St. Alphonsus. To commemorate the event the parish joined in a High Mass of Thanksgiving in tribute to and prayers for the Monsignor.

It was also at this time that another priest was making a name for himself. This one had an "angel" who erased his blackboard on television every Tuesday evening. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, besides hosting his television show, was appointed National Director for the Propagation of the Faith. In this capacity, on August 12, 1951, he made his first mission appeal in the Archdiocese of Detroit at St. Alphonsus Parish. The Bishop preached at all the Masses in behalf of the Missions and the parishioners' response amounted to over five thousand dollars, due in part to the presence of visitors.

When Father Sirianni, after nearly five years of service to the parish, was transferred to St. Ignatius, Detroit, in June of 1951, he was replaced for the summer by Father Robert Monticello. When he left in October, Father Maurice Geary came to fill his position.

Within a few short months, Father Geary was requesting information and photographs covering the years 1852-1952 for inclusion in *A Century Of Conquest*, a parish history that would be part of the Centennial to be celebrated eight months hence. It was this book that provoked reminiscence and



Annette Mycek, Dolores Reedy, Sally Reedy and Anna Lewis pose with centennial cake, a replica of the old church.

served as a reminder of the great progress that had been made, not only during the first century of the life of St. Alphonsus Parish, but within the previous decade. Where there had been about six hundred families in 1942, there were now three thousand, devout and zealous as their forefathers had been in the observance of their faith.

One week after his ordination as a Maryknoll Missionary, Reverend J. Harvey Tessier, son of Urban Tessier, celebrated his first Solemn High Mass at St. Alphonsus on June 22, 1952. Monsignor Schulte, Father Hubert Maino, Father John Zwiers, Father Maurice Decker, and Father Edward Blazo assisted. Father Tessier was subsequently missioned to Peru.

With the Centennial just three months away, on June 29, Father Geary issued a final plea for material for the parish history, reminding the people, "This will be our Centennial Book and we won't have another for a hundred years."

Then in September, one month before the One Hundredth Anniversary, Fathers Kraus and Rancourt, by will of the Bishop, were transferred. Father Lawrence Hamel and Father Raymond Maiberger came to replace them. Most of the responsibility for the Centennial and for the building program now fell to Father Hamel as a result of Monsignor Schulte's failing health.

In the same issue of *The Voice* that announced the transfer of Father Rancourt and Father Kraus, an appeal was made to the parish on behalf of the Centennial, "Let's make the world notice that this is only our first one hundred years

and that there is no ceiling on our progress. Help with the Centennial by giving a donation next Sunday to defray luncheon and entertainment expenses. This is your parish — it's proud of you. Are you proud of it?"

When the day came, October 12, 1952, the Centennial Mass was offered in the presence of His Excellency, Most Reverend Allen J. Babcock at 11:00 a.m. Celebrant was Reverend George Esper, assisted by Reverends Clement Esper, Thomas Esper, Leonard Partensky, Walter Markowicz and Cyril Rancourt.

After the Solemn High Mass the priests were served dinner at the Shores Cafe. Benediction followed at 3:00 p.m. An Open House characterized by "many exhibits and plentiful refreshments," was held on the school grounds from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m.

New Grade School

Fast on the heels of the Centennial came the request "to get behind our Building Program." St. Alphonsus was not unique. The "Baby Boom" after World War II placed demands on most parishes for more classrooms to provide for the Catholic education of the increasing numbers of children. Plans for a new school were well under way, but funds were needed to begin construction. Thus, the faithful were reminded to honor their pledges — "Detroit and Dearborn know about our plans to build. All eyes are on us to see whether we are just talking or building." "Cash is most welcome, pledges are most welcome as long as they are paid. The parish that builds together, stays together." By November 9, pledges amounting to eighty-eight thousand dollars had been received. The goal was \$750,000.

However, with faith in the people and concern for the children, Monsignor Schulte turned the first spadeful of dirt, on November 23, 1952, initiating a two-part expansion program of a new elementary school and a gymnasium complex. It was during this month that the nuns took up residence in the partially completed new wing of the convent.

The drive for funds was still short of the goal. December found a house-to-house campaign taking place to bolster the Fund Drive. Parishioners were admonished, "Do what you can for the Building Fund, and don't detain the worker . . ."

To the joy of all, Monsignor Walter R. Hardy presided at the laying of the cornerstone of the new school and recreation center on Sunday afternoon,

April 12, 1953. Monsignor Carroll F. Deady, Superintendent of Parochial Schools, preached. Monsignor Stanley Skrzycki was the presiding priest at Solemn Benediction.

In June of the same year, Reverend John A. Blaska, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Andrew Blaska, offered his first Solemn Mass at St. Alphonsus. Monsignor Schulte assisted him, along with Reverend Francis X. Dietz and Reverend Arthur M. Karey. Since Father Blaska had spent his entire twenty-six years as a parishioner of St. Alphonsus, his reception at the Dearborn Inn was an occasion for a reunion of the graduates of 1945 as well as for parishioners and family friends.

On the same day, June 7, Reverend William A. Immel, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Immel who had recently moved into the parish, celebrated his first Solemn Mass at St. Theresa, Detroit.

Fund raising for the new school was still very much a part of the parish's life, although it was now taking on a number of forms. Since the hiring of the first Athletic Director, Paul Baulus, in February, 1953, a Sponsors' Club had been organized to support the growing number of athletic teams within the school. Season passes were available for five dollars. Proceeds went toward better equipment for greater protection and safety.

The Altar and Rosary Sodality announced Tuesday Night Bingo Parties to raise money for

When the old church was torn down in 1954, Father Hamel and Bernard Cusino found the cornerstone empty.



equipment for the Domestic Science Room. The women observed, "Our present kitchen is inadequate for the various socials of the parish, so the new equipment will be available for such use, as well."

When the doors of the new grade school opened in October, 1953, eight hundred and seventy youngsters were the first to enjoy the long anticipated facilities. In addition to the fifteen classrooms, a clinic, a soundproof music room, office space, supply room, and four large washrooms, the school boasted of "a univent in each classroom, which controls the changes of air in the room throughout the day; florescent lighting, celotex ceilings, and high grade asphalt tile floors. A three-day open house was declared to enable the contributors to see what their efforts had wrought.

The following Sunday two hundred men of the parish agreed to visit every family and to solicit pledges needed to retire the debt on the new school and to enable work to begin on the Activities Building. By November 8, two hundred and thirty thousand dollars had been raised. It is interesting to note that on the same Sunday two thousand, seven hundred dollars had been collected for the Missions.

The Solemn Blessing of the school was held on December 14, with His Eminence, Edward Cardinal Mooney, officiating. An overflow crowd attended.

The old rectory and church, which was used as a gymnasium and later on for grade school classrooms, were torn down in February of the following year to make way for the Activities Building. To his surprise, Father Hamel found that the cornerstone of the old church was empty — devoid of the usual memorabilia. The happy note was that the parish was out of debt and the parishioners could take pride in their accomplishments. Once again, their generosity and faith were evident.

The new year opened with the transfer of Father Geary to St. Benedict, Highland Park, after a term of two years here. As was the custom, a parish farewell program was held on January 17, 1954, in the school hall. Father Leonard Makulski, a priest of some sixteen years experience, was formally welcomed.

The number of priests caring for St. Alphonsus was increased to five when Father Robert J. Fehribach, a newly ordained assistant was welcomed to the parish on September, 1955. His stay was short — ten weeks — when he was transferred to St. Mary's, Wayne. A missionary of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Father Charles Govaert, was assigned as temporary assistant.

Meanwhile, delays on the new Activities Building continued. However, early in January, 1956, the floors were laid. The parish looked forward to full use of the much-needed accommodations. Father Hamel, who had guided much of the project, underwent surgery in January, and his recovery called for a recuperation period in Florida. His return to Dearborn was greeted with enthusiasm.

The parish family of St. Alphonsus was united in sorrow in March, 1956, when its beloved pastor, Monsignor Schulte, passed away. His friend and classmate, Cardinal Mooney, gave the sermon at the funeral services, attended by twenty-five monsignori, more than two hundred and fifty clergymen of the diocese and nuns representing several religious orders. Also present were city officials of Dearborn and Detroit, and members of the Knights of Columbus, American Legion, and the National Guard.

Monsignor Schulte was buried in the parish cemetery next to the church, in a tomb beside those of his mother, Elizabeth Ternes Schulte, and grandparents. Bishop Allen Babcock of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, a former assistant to Monsignor Schulte, said the prayers at the gravesite.

Bishop Named Pastor

On March 23, 1956, *The Michigan Catholic* made public the appointment of the Most Reverend Alexander M. Zaleski as pastor of St. Alphonsus. Bishop Zaleski, who came to Dearborn from St. Vincent's, Pontiac, had been consecrated bishop by Cardinal Mooney on May 23, 1950. His welcome was marked with great warmth.

However, it was not until Bishop Zaleski had settled in and become acquainted with his new parish, that he was given a party on July 26, to mark a dual celebration. He was welcomed to the parish, and honored on the occasion of his Silver Anniversary of Ordination. He had been a priest of God for exactly half his life.

In June, Father Brady, a St. Alphonsus High School graduate of the Class of 1944, was assisted at Mass by Father Hamel, Father Blaska and Father Eugene Wojtewicz. Father William P. Murphy, Sulpician, preached. A banquet and reception followed in the Parish Hall.

Father Hamel, who had served as administrator for four years during the illness of Monsignor Schulte, and whose term saw the successful direction



Bishop Alexander Zaleski on the occasion of the Silver Anniversary of his ordination

of the Centennial, the completion of the new school, the demolition of the "Old Church," and the erection of the Activities Building, was assigned to establish a new parish "in the vicinity of Harper and Thirteen Mile Road." Parishioners gave him a royal send-off at the farewell party held in the new Activities Building on June 26.

On the same day Father Hamel left for St. Clair Shores, the newly ordained Reverend Thomas J. Gumbleton, destined to become a bishop in the Archdiocese of Detroit, arrived at St. Alphonsus to begin his four-year term as assistant pastor.

Four months later, recently ordained Father Leon Page arrived from St. Henry's, Lincoln Park, to serve the parish. The people responded with their usual warmth in welcoming him.

Three days after school reopened in September, 1956, the first meeting of the new Parent-Teacher Association was held. This organization retained the bishop's special interest and support during his entire pastorate.

With the number of priests now in residence at St. Alphonsus and the trend towards more office calls, it was all but impossible to provide adequate service and privacy to parishioners, with just two

small offices in the rectory. Thus, in January, 1957, Bishop Zaleski purchased the house just north of the rectory and remodeled it into an office building. Five convenient offices and two waiting rooms were designated for parish business, thus allowing the rectory to be reserved as a residence for the priests.

Once again the people said goodbye to their assistant pastors — two, this time. After five full years, Father Maiberger was transferred to St. Aloysius as an assistant, and Father Makulski was appointed to organize a new parish in Garden City under the patronage of St. Dunstan. A multiple celebration was held in the parish auditorium on June 23, as the parishioners bid them farewell and welcomed Father Harold Wolf and Father Arthur Steslicki.

Along with the announcement for the Fall opening of school, the following item appeared in *The Voice*: "New Parking Lot — More parking facilities have been provided for the members of the parish. The new lot is on the west side of Schaefer, just north of Gould."

After a stay of two years, Father Arthur Steslicki moved on to Divine Child. His place was taken by Father Joseph Jacyna who had been serving the parish in an unofficial capacity for some months.

When the Reverend Vincent Marion Bielicki was ordained to the priesthood in June, 1960, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Marion Bielecki, had been members of the parish for thirty years. Father Bielecki had graduated from the high school in the Class of 1952. Bishop Zaleski served as Assistant Priest at Father Bielecki's first Solemn Mass. Father Maiberger returned to join Fathers James Bettendorf, Leon Page, and Seminarian James Kenneally for the solemn occasion.

Later in June, Father Gumbleton received word that he would conclude his four years at St. Alphonsus and assume his new duties as Assistant Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Father John Fauser, who had come to replace Father Gumbleton in June, 1960, left the following September to take up his duties at St. Mary's Student Chapel, Ann Arbor. Father Francis Granger arrived the day Father Fauser left.

In the year that followed, the parish bid farewell to Father Page who left for St. Martin's, Detroit, and extended a cordial welcome to Father Alex J. Brunett, newly arrived from St. Rose of Lima Parish. In November, 1961, Father Bernard J. Dominick was appointed to relieve Father Jacyna who had been taken ill.



Sister Joseph Cecile, Principal of St. Alphonsus Grade School with Sister Mauritia, Assistant Principal, and Mrs. Alice LeDuc, Secretary

*"Teach me goodness,
discipline and knowledge."*

Catherine Grisdela, Catherine Sherman, Coordinators of REP with Shirley Maguire, Secretary



On "Stilts"

It was in 1960 that the Ford Motor Company adopted a new program broadening its financial assistance to American education by matching the contributions of Ford employees to colleges, universities, and secondary schools. By 1962 an appeal was made to such employees within the parish to make contributions to the high school, which would then be matched dollar for dollar. The parish made use of the AID Program well into the 1970's when the program was withdrawn.

Bishop Zaleski was soon involved in more school expansion. Enrollments kept climbing and St. Alphonsus was doing its best to keep pace. Now, however, land was becoming scarce. Playgrounds and parking lots were necessary, so where could more classrooms be built? Why not above a playground — on "stilts?"

The pastor informed the parishioners that the "new addition will extend from the present grade school to the edge of the convent garden, but instead of a square block nearly filled with school building, the addition will provide some open space, and we'll look more contemporary than industrial."

This, with the help of architects Diehl and Diehl, was what was done. Seven elementary school classrooms were provided, without sacrificing any of the children's outdoor play area. The structure was eighty-seven by a hundred and six feet.

A one-story parish library, primarily for adult use, was the other part of the building program. Its site was the south side of the high school building, between the school and the rear driveway of the Activities Center. Facing Calhoun, the building — twenty-four by eighty-four feet — promised to be more than just a place to read or borrow a book.

It was planned as a comfortable clubroom for the parish's older people. The construction project, which cost three hundred one thousand dollars, also included acoustical improvements in the music rooms and gymnasium.

The Parish of St. Alphonsus, then employing thirty-one teaching Sisters of St. Dominic, and fourteen lay instructors, was maintaining its reputation for educational excellence. With a 1962-1963 enrollment of one thousand and seventy-eight children in the elementary school, and four hundred and fifty students in the high school, it is clear this reputation was worth keeping.

Priestly vocations continued within the parish, as well as within the Archdiocese. On June 3, 1962, Reverend James Patrick Kenneally, son of Mrs. Ann M. Kenneally and the late Patrick F. Kenneally,

officiated at his first Solemn Mass. Father Sirianni, Father Bielecki, Reverend Mr. Swierzb, and Seminarian John German assisted. Bishop Zaleski preached. Father Kenneally gave his First Blessing during the parish reception that followed.

By now, five years had elapsed since Father Harold Wolf had come to St. Alphonsus, and it was now time for him to be transferred — to Guardian Angels, Detroit. With feelings of gratitude, the parish acknowledged his generous service. Father Brunett was moved at the same time, after only one year in the parish. Yet, his ready availability had left an impression on both young and old.

Within the week, Father Richard P. Ciesniewski and Father James F. Trent arrived; Father "C" from St. Cunegunda, and Father Trent, newly ordained. "Father C's Corner" in *The Voice* was widely read.

The Parish Council of Catholic Men was organized within the parish in July, 1962. It was a federation of all the men's organizations of the parish whose primary function was "to render assistance to the pastor in furthering the spiritual and temporal life of the parish through a united and informed laity."

Reverend James Kenneally officiated at his First Solemn Mass on June 3, 1962.



The year 1963 saw the establishment of the Parish library and the addition of the Schaefer Annex to the parish facilities. The Annex, a former electrical wholesale store, was later to be used as classrooms for the grade school as well as a meeting place for parish organizations.

The February 9, 1964, issue of *The Voice* carried this item under the heading "Did You Know?"

That our parish had spent an average of \$96,000 every year for the past five years in new building and improvements (that insure our investment and further stabilize our community). This averages sixty-two cents per family per week.

Fortunately, we had put aside each year \$127,000 or about eighty-two cents per family per week, so that left about \$31,000 retained each year for future improvements and repairs. That's twenty cents per family per week. NOW do you see how important that EXTRA Dollar a week IS to your Parish???

Of the thirty-one young men ordained to the priesthood on June 6, 1964, one was a member of St. Alphonsus. This time the newly ordained parishioner was John R. German, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew German. At his First Solemn Mass, Father Maiberger was Archpriest. Father German was assisted by Father Kenneally and Reverend Mr. Thomas Hamel. Bishop Zaleski preached.

Father Dominick, who had served as editor of *The Voice* during his term at St. Alphonsus, used the June 28, 1964, issue to announce his transfer to St. Clement's, Romeo, stating, "This is one of the saddest articles your editor has ever had to write . . ." His replacement, Father Raymond J. Klauke, was no stranger to Dearborn. His family had been parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish since 1920. Father Klauke was quickly assigned to moderate the Dads' Club and Athletic Department, Rosary Altar Sodality, 30-Up Club, and to provide marriage instructions.

Over eight years had elapsed since Bishop Zaleski had become pastor. On December 8, 1964, an official parish farewell was held in the Activities Building. Bishop Zaleski was about to move on to his next responsibility — that of Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Lansing. The schoolchildren presented a program. Parishioners and friends offered personal congratulations and best wishes. Naturally, refreshments were served.

His farewell to the parish was direct and full of feeling:

As I leave you as pastor of St. Alphonsus, I depart with a feeling of deep gratitude in my heart, first of all, to Almighty God that He has given me the privilege of serving you during these past eight and one-half years. I am also grateful to Him for the many graces He has bestowed on you through my hands. I give thanks to Him likewise for the way you have responded to His undying love.

Getting Involved

Even before the name of the new pastor was announced, the financial report for 1964 forecast future expenditures:

However, many things remain to be done to help St. Alphonsus keep pace with the needs of the times, e.g., improvement of science laboratory facilities, current books for parish and school libraries, eventual replacement of the organ in the church, salary needs, etc.

Appointed to succeed Bishop Zaleski as pastor in January, 1965, was the Right Reverend Bernard H. Kearns. His background as Navy Chaplain during World War II and twenty years in the Archdiocesan Chancery Office contributed to the store of wisdom he brought to his new responsibilities. His natural wit and spiritual depth were quickly apparent to the congregation.

A number of liturgical reforms corresponded with Monsignor's arrival. He reminded the people that despite the temporary disorientation that might follow,

The Church has survived Nero, Attila, and Stalin. She has overcome the Arians, the Jansenists and the Feeneyites; she has outlasted the Reformation, Eastern Schism, Rationalism, Industrialism, Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Ku Klux Klan. She has endured under Dictatorships, Monarchies, Democrats and Republicans. She has lived through periods of corruption and stagnation, zeal, enthusiasm, doubt, rebellion, extroversion and introspection. She has survived one liturgical change: I think she'll survive another.

In spite of Father Klich's vision to build a church bigger than most thought necessary at the time, even he could not foresee the crowds at the later Sunday Masses. In an effort to relieve the number of parishioners standing at the 11:00 a.m. Mass, a second Mass was soon scheduled for the gym for the same hour. The practice was begun on an experimental basis and has continued since March 7, 1965.

(continued)







Bishop Thomas Gumbleton officiates at Girl Scout awards.

The Parish Planning Committee of ten members, which had been organized under Bishop Zaleski, was ready to launch a series of projects under Monsignor Kearns' guidance. The first of these was the establishment in March, 1965, of a Parish School Board under the presidency of Dr. Simon Babel, Principal of Lowrey School. The other officers were James O'Reilly, Vice-President; Mrs. Joseph Simmer, Secretary; Mrs. Vincent Shaw, Corresponding Secretary; Edward Cardelli, Treasurer; John Calucci, Trustee; Joseph Koprowicz, Trustee; and Sister Marie Ruth, Principal.

With the transfer of Father Granger to the Parish of St. Agnes, in January, 1965, the number of assistants had been reduced to three. Six months later Monsignor acknowledged his appreciation for the assistance the parish had been receiving from Father Louis Grandpre, Father Vern Boutilier, a student from Nova Scotia, and from Father Thomas Gumbleton who had all supplied weekend help. Father Markowicz, it was noted, had been "coming here every weekday to offer one of the scheduled Masses for eighteen years", on a purely volunteer basis.

Inner-city parish assistance began in the summer of 1965. The Parish Planning Committee had begun work on the project under Bishop Zaleski, and Monsignor Kearns welcomed the idea. He sought and received approval from the Archbishop to set up a sub-committee headed by Jack Horrigan. The activity known as Project Scoop-Inner City, was the creation of a group of seminarians at Sacred Heart Seminary. The plan called for utilizing Seminary facilities during the summer months for the benefit of the underprivileged and disadvantaged children. Health education, tutoring, and recreational activities were offered. Volunteers were asked to sign up at the rectory. By July, reports were coming in as to the success of the project.

Father James H. Fullmer was welcomed into the parish in June, 1965, three weeks after his ordination. Vitality was his hallmark. Father

Klauke left to become Chaplain of the Federal Correctional Institution, Milan.

Summer brought more help in the person of Father Frank Sokolowski who had been stationed in Paris, France, as Chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and as Professor of Greek and Latin at the Polish Seminary in Paris. He was to serve St. Alphonsus while he visited his relatives in the area.

Father Philip Devlin, a Holy Cross Father, a student at U. of M., whose previous experience included six years in Chile, agreed to help on weekends.

Earlier in 1965, there was talk in the parish of the need in the high school to improve the "hopelessly inadequate" science laboratories and to renovate the cafeteria to meet new standards. This was the first major problem that the new Lay Board of Education had to face.

Proposed plans called for remodeling two downstairs classrooms, which up to that time had been used by the grade school, into high school Biology and Chemistry laboratories. The cafeteria which was an auditorium up until 1958 and which had been used for Mass in the late 1920's, needed remodeling to deaden the students' voices.

It was these demands that prompted Monsignor Kearns to write:

It is said that if you could cut open the heart of any pastor, you would find engraved there the deathless words, "And who's going to pay for all this?"

The reaction of the members of the parish will be the single most important item guiding the Parish Planning Committee and your pastor in deciding what course of action to take.

There is no question as to the desirability of the proposed new facilities. The only question is whether the people of St. Alphonsus Parish really want them, and want them badly enough to make the sacrifices necessary to construct them and keep them in operation.

It was to this challenge that the Lay Board of Education responded. In the middle of the summer, July 14 to be exact, the Lay Board summoned the parishioners to a meeting "so urgent it could not wait until Fall." Recommendations for the educational program, expansion, and needed moral and financial support of the whole parish were outlined. Solid support for the Board's proposals were evidenced by a resounding affirmation to accept the burden for the proposed improvements in the school buildings.

School Improvements

Since the cafeteria was a "must" to be completed before school started in September, the project plunged ahead. Almost immediately, bids were taken on the creation of a Science Center and on the rejuvenation of the cafeteria. Though higher than anticipated, John Barrett's bid was accepted. He agreed to begin work for a guaranteed maximum not to exceed \$172,400. Additional costs included the architect's fees and the laboratory equipment.

As always, the expansion program called for additional funds. A Sacrificial Offertory Drive through the faithful use of envelopes each Sunday was organized. Monsignor Kearns used the opportunity to point out that there is much more to involvement than just donating.

Parish life offers so very many opportunities for growth, for assistance to those in varied needs, for the satisfactions that stem from worthwhile accomplishments and most of all for spiritual advancement.

Every member of the parish can profit, now and in eternity, through active involvement in some of the facets of parish life. The PTO, the Rosary Altar Sodality, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Thirty-Up Club, the Dads' Club — there are excellent organizations in the parish. Why not choose one in which you can find a special interest, and pitch in and help?

Too many parishioners remain aloof from the main stream of parish life, and the parish is the poorer for it — and they are poorer for it too.

There is so much to be done: Building an educational system second to none; teaching the truths of their religion to youngsters who are not enrolled in the parish school; providing cultural and social outlets for all our youth, whether or not they attend school here. This is a most meaningful objective, and there is much more to be done.

Thus on the keynote of involvement, one hundred men of the parish volunteered their help on September 26, 1965. As Monsignor expressed it, "This is a continuing problem and deserves continual attention."

Father Sokolowski returned to France in September, but the hope that he might return was later to be realized.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, 1965, the church organ "expired." In the interim, permission for the temporary use of an electronic organ was obtained from the Archbishop. Such an arrangement required an elaborate system of sound boxes distributed around the church.

These speakers will be set up so that there will be two in the front corner of each transept near the confessionals (hearing confessions during the eight o'clock Mass on weekdays will be a greater joy than ever) and one will be placed high on the wall behind the crucifixion scene that surmounts our high altar.

A week later Monsignor Kearns left for retreat. He explained its value this way, "Apart from retreat, one never seems to have a chance to collect his thoughts — to sort through them, straighten out his sense of values and reorient himself for the days ahead."

The "days ahead" very much focused on the renovation of the cafeteria and the high school science laboratories. In the words of Father Ciesniewski, "This is costing a fortune . . ."

Responding to the plea for involvement in the parish, the Senior Citizen men took on the responsibility for serving the 7:30 a.m. daily Mass. Their gifts of experience and generosity did not pass unnoticed.

Recalling the woe etched on the face of Bishop Zaleski when he had returned from the Council in Rome to find that the grade school building had been severely damaged as the result of settlement caused by the "on stilts" addition, Monsignor Kearns received word on December, 1965, that the out-of-court settlement had just been concluded and that the parish had received \$67,883.82. This he termed "a costly experience."

Midnight Mass, 1965, was the first opportunity for the parish to experience a "concelebrated" Mass, which until that period had been reserved for occasions such as the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops. Its beauty was explained by Monsignor: "For priests who participate in it, it brings into clear focus the unity of the priesthood,

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*"By His power He is present
in the Sacraments."
Second Vatican Council*



(Above) Relic of St. Alphonsus





Sister Rose Margaret, a loyal fan, cheers Arrows on to victory.

and helps them realize that their priesthood is something they share with other priests not for their own benefit but for the benefit of those to whom they minister."

When the Parish Planning Committee issued the financial report in January, 1966, the parish had \$90,000 on deposit in the Archdiocese. Outstanding obligations amounted to \$72,000: grade school overhang, \$30,000; science equipment, \$13,000; Science Center, \$20,000; language laboratory, \$5,000; new desks, \$4,000.

As the congregation continued to use the temporary electronic organ while the search continued for a permanent one large enough for the church, yet within a reasonable price range, the Altar Rosary Sodality offered to take on the obligation of monthly payments.

The schools were filled with students, but so were the CCD classes. In early 1966 their enrollment numbered 728, meeting in three centers — Parkman School, Maples School and St. Alphonsus. The combined staff numbered fifteen Sisters and thirty lay teachers. The entire operation was overseen by a newly appointed CCD Lay Board under the guidance of Father Fullmer. An office in the Schaefer Building was set aside for the exclusive use of those actively engaged in the Confraternity Apostolate. This office was stocked with a mimeograph machine, audio-visual equipment, and a collection of professional references. When preschool religious instruction was made available in January, one hundred three "little people" took advantage of the opportunity. Speaking of the Confraternity Apostolate, Monsignor declared, "No parish activity outranks this one in importance."

Church Remodeling

The next significant change to take place was the remodeling of the sanctuary to comply with liturgical practices. It was now required that the priest face the people while offering Mass — truly, a new experience for both priest and people. As in each phase of renewal that followed Vatican II, St. Alphonsus opted to move slowly, allowing the parishioners to adapt and to contribute. *The Voice* for February 13, 1966, introduced the idea.

Our present sanctuary holds a very real place in the affections of many of our people. It represents a standing link with many parishioners of former generations whose lives of deep faith and cheerful sacrifice are largely responsible for what St. Alphonsus is today. Any remodeling of it should be approached cautiously and with the determination not to change it any more than good liturgical sense seems to make mandatory.

The Main Altar was left intact, including the statuary behind the altar. A low platform was built, raising part of the sanctuary floor to elevate the free-standing new wooden altar. Its design of simple elegance matched the wooden furniture in the sanctuary. A new lectern was likewise required from which the lectors would read the Old Testament and the Epistle readings.

The results of "dollars and devotion" were again evident when parents, alumni, senior citizens and all parishioners were invited to the dedication of the new high school facilities on March 13. Visitors toured the Modern Language Studio (formerly the library), the Science Center, and finally, the new Social Cultural Center at the site of the old cafeteria. The huge investment of time, effort and money which "nearly depleted parish reserves," had enabled St. Alphonsus High School to meet accreditation demands.

By now permission had been granted by the Archbishop for each parish to celebrate an evening Mass on Sundays. The parishioners were requested to indicate a preference as to time.

Thus, the five-thirty evening Mass became a part of the Sunday Mass schedule.

The organ "situation" was finally settled by a conference with the Archbishop. The electronic organ would have to go, and the price of the pipe organ was not to exceed \$30,000. The Wicks Company promised to have the organ installed in "nine or ten months." The console was to be

placed on the east side of the church to enable the organist to face the congregation for group singing; the pipe organ itself was to be built in the old choir loft to make the pipes "accessible for maintenance and tuning."

Having completed the remodeling of the schools, the parish Board of Education was able to devote its time to other things. In the Spring of 1966, it decided to organize a program to send "a few of the Sisters abroad for short courses of study each summer." The expenses involved were to be met by existing grants and an annual "Bon Voyage" dinner. The goal was six Sisters each year. For the first year, four were chosen: Sister Marie Ruth, the outgoing principal, was unable to accept due to the press of closing school. Three Sisters — Sister Marie Florence, Sister Joseph Ann, and Sister Marie Madonna — were the first Dominicans to benefit from the opportunity.

Father Robert McMurtrie arrived at St. Alphonsus in June, three weeks after his ordination, and Father Trent was transferred in August to St. Martin's.

To keep the parishioners apprised of the ever mounting needs of the parish, a new column was introduced through *The Voice*, entitled "The Layman Speaks." Contributors included Judge Joseph Rashid, Dr. Simon Babel, Leo Early, Leo Henn, Joseph O'Reilly, James O'Reilly, (Mrs.) Ann Hunt, Bill Sinatra, and Harry Todeschini. Without realizing it, these men were fulfilling the role described in the *Decree on the*

Apostolate of the Laity which had come forth from the Second Vatican Council, November 18, 1965: "The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in close union with their priest, bringing to the church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which should be examined and resolved by common deliberation."

A respite was accorded the parish in its attempt to "make ends meet," when in September a bequest of \$25,000 was received from the estate of Mrs. Helen Gaertner. For the first time in 1966 the parish was "in the black."

During the previous summer much planning, work and generosity resulted in additional paved space which provided off-street parking for three hundred cars. Even though \$5,500 was saved through donations of time and materials, the project cost the parish \$7,500.

The new organ officially became part of the church when it was dedicated by Monsignor Kearns on January 15, 1967, at 4:00 p.m. The organ was blessed and the people were commended for another accomplishment. A short concert of music for organ, brass, woodwinds, choir and congregation followed.

Once again, it became necessary to adjust the parish schedule of Masses. In February, the 5:30 a.m. Mass replaced the 5:00 a.m. and the 6:00 a.m. Liturgies in the gym chapel were now at 11:00 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. The following June the 12:15 "gym" Mass was dropped.

From time to time notices in *The Voice*

(continued)

Homecoming Parade







A Concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of St. Alphonsus Parish, October 9, 1977



reminded parishioners about parking violations during the hours of heavy church attendance. Conditions improved in March due to the installation of "No Parking" signs on the east side of Calhoun.

St. Alphonsus's former Deacon Melvin Blanchette, returned to offer Mass at 9:30 a.m. in the church and at 11:00 a.m. in the gym. He was honored at a reception later in the day.

Liturgical changes continued. By November, 1967, the entire Canon of the Mass was being prayed in the vernacular.

Parish committee members worked hard to encourage the people to make use of envelopes for the Offertory collection. In the fall of 1967, two thousand nineteen families had subscribed to the newest efforts. The amount pledged was \$6,182 a Sunday.

Bernard Owens, a Basilian, and a member of the parish, was ordained on December 9, 1967. The following day he offered his First Solemn Mass at St. Alphonsus.

New Programs

With 1968 came the beginning of the Parish Continuing Education Program. The twelve-week course dealt with Witness, Doctrine, Liturgy, and Sacred Scripture. All parish adults, including high school seniors were invited to participate.

Casualties of the Viet Nam War were beginning to touch the family of St. Alphonsus when the name of Philip Gandolfo was added to those of Robert McKenna, James Hintz, and Christopher Leskey in January, 1968.

Legislation referred to as the School Aid Bill, began to absorb everyone's attention in early 1968. Passage of the "Bill" would provide, on the part of the state, financial assistance to non-public schools. Repeatedly, interested Catholics were urged to write to Michigan lawmakers.

The Parish Speak-Up Groups were organized under the leadership of William Flanigan. "Focus: Summer Hope," a program to reduce racial tension and prejudice followed quickly. A corps of priests was chosen to speak in over one hundred larger parishes in the Archdiocese. Father "C" was one of that number.

Despite the "financial strait-jacket" the parish wore, the Board of Education and the Parish Planning Committee recommended to the pastor that the school open the following September with all twelve grades.

At the CCD Open House held on April 28 in the Activities Building, for the purpose of introducing the new full-time CCD Administrator, Joseph Kalwinski, the scope of the proposed program was outlined: curriculum, recruitment of teachers, summer school classes, teacher training workshops, expanded enrollment, and effective communication.

Father Fullmer left St. Alphonsus in September, 1968. The roster in the parish now read: Right Reverend Bernard Kearns, Father Richard Ciesniewski, Father Robert McMurtrie; In Residence: Reverend William McCauley, Reverend John Lombardi, Deacon: Reverend Mr. Edward Nowakowski.

Realizing that a broader and more permanent representation was needed in the parish, a member of the Parish Planning Committee proposed a logical development for its own committee. Thus, in November, 1968, Monsignor Kearns appointed the first twenty-four member Parish Council. Its officers were: President, John Karpach; Vice-President, Kenneth Crause; Secretary, William Flanigan. This was one of the very first Parish Councils organized in the Archdiocese.

The first elected Council took office the following year: President, Arthur Cooper; Vice-President, Robert Rashid; Secretary, Madeline Wiegandt; Corresponding Secretary, John Hengesbach.

Members were reminded of their twofold responsibility by Monsignor: "One aspect of it," he said, "is to serve as an active two-way channel of communication between the Council and the parishioners who put you there. The other is that as a Parish Council member you must be willing to assume a real degree of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of every member of the parish. The Council shares in a very definite manner in the pastoral responsibility." The first Parish Council Constitution was published on September 2, 1969.

Work toward common goals, with unity of direction provided by the Council's efforts, began with an effort to restore parish fiscal stability. The first Parish Festival known as PIP (Parish Improvement Program) under the chairmanship of John Ewing, was held on May 23-25, providing an opportunity for the parish to function as a single unit. All ages joined in a united effort. The out-

come was a financial success — \$52,862.36 — and a growth in the concept of community. Mr. Ewing expressed his feelings:

No words can express my gratitude adequately for the fantastic turnout by the thousands of people who came to the Spring Festival and the hundreds who worked on it . . . God Bless You, Thank You, and a well-done to everyone of you from Mr. PIP.

Following the establishment of the Parish Council, word was received from the Archdiocese: "Every parish in the Archdiocese shall establish a Committee on Worship within six months. It will have as members, laity, religious, and clergy of the community." Miss Gertrude Prion served as its first chairperson. Father Melvin Blanchette acted as moderator.

The 1970's

With the advent of 1970 came the need for parishes to conduct self-studies on the feasibility of keeping parish schools open as the financial picture steadily worsened.

The School Aid Bill had now become Parochial. Parishioners were again asked to write to the Michigan Legislature — hundreds responded. Monica Bernier, Lillian O'Reilly, and Joan Forsthoefel met with Representative Lucille McCullough. Teachers, students, and parents volunteered to work on a cause pioneered years earlier by Dave Mills, Larry Masten, and others.

On February 15, Father McMurtrie announced his plans to return to school full time, concluding his year and a half of service to St. Alphonsus. Father Jerome Swierzb was assigned to replace Father McMurtrie, but by March it was clear he would not be coming, due to a heart ailment. Monsignor remarked, "Say a prayer that Father "C" and I stay healthy. If one of us gets sick, I think the other would quietly head for Lower Slobbia." Father Gerald Maloney arrived some weeks later from Holy Name Parish, Detroit.

In March, 1970, the CCD program was expanded according to Archdiocesan guidelines. Its new name, Religious Education Program, was shortened to REP.

It was at the same time that the name of James Fleming was added to the list of those who had died serving in Viet Nam.

In May the Parish Festival was declared "a smashing success." Monsignor named a nameless lady as "Good Sport of the Festival." Wearing old



Father Frank Sokolowski blesses Easter food baskets on Holy Saturday.

shoes for her work stint, she found at day's end that her good shoes had been sold for twenty-five cents.

Father Ciesniewski received his "marching orders" in June, 1970. After a term of eight years, he was assigned to St. Clement's, Centerline. Monsignor announced a farewell reception for him which would take place in the Activities Building, "We won't attempt to mention a closing time — it would be an empty gesture, he has so many friends . . ."

It was during that summer, in June, that Father Carl Yagley came to St. Alphonsus to serve as assistant pastor. Little did he or the parishioners realize that he would assume the role of pastor in 1973. In coming from St. Gertrude, St. Clair Shores, Father noted that he had left the shores of beautiful Lake St. Clair for the banks of the Rouge River.

The parish rejoiced with Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Kelly on Sunday, September 13, 1970, when



"A reception was held and refreshments were served."



their son, Father Richard Kelly, returned to St. Alphonsus to celebrate his first Solemn Mass. The Altar Rosary did a "bang-up" job according to Monsignor, providing a reception suitable for the occasion.

With the passage of Parochial by the Michigan Legislature and the declaration by the Supreme Court that such a law was constitutional, non-public schools breathed a deep sigh of relief. It was short-lived, however. Proposal C was passed on November 3, 1970, which called for a constitutional amendment to prohibit services, with the exception of bus transportation, to children attending non-public schools. On November 15, the Parish Council met and resolved, "That the Parish Council make an announcement that our school will not close . . ."

Monsignor agreed with the motion, but reminded members that part of the parish could not be served to the neglect of those parishioners not directly affiliated with the school. "The parish must be considered as a whole." A Day of Recollection was planned as a sign of rededication on the part of the Council members.

As parish schools everywhere waited for a decision from the Cardinal, Monsignor reminded the people:

What I mean is this: once we know what the framework of the decision is, we should have the resourcefulness and determination needed to provide for all our needs. A spirit of apathy and discouragement here can be far more harmful than anything coming from "downtown."

I may be wrong. I often am, but I really feel that nobody else can defeat us. We can, however, defeat ourselves. So let's wait for His Eminence's decision, not in disgruntlement and despair, but patiently, ready to take whatever action is indicated at that time.

One of the most vital elements of life at St. Alphonsus held its first meeting on January 11, 1971, at 1:00 p.m. in the Schaefer Building. The Senior Citizens described the requirements for membership within their ranks:

This group is not bounded by strict age barriers but rather represents a large group of persons of varying ages who have retired from regular employment, watched their children grow and begin their own homes, or who have, perhaps, found themselves alone at this time of life. ALL are ready for a good time at a moment's notice.

Early in 1971 the Archdiocese published guidelines for the continuation of parish schools. The Parish Council met on two days in succession and the finance committee met on a continuing basis to meet the requirements. In March word was received that both schools of the parish might remain open. Monsignor was quick to remind the parishioners, "We can now with relieved minds buckle down to the never-ending task of paying, not just for the school, but for our entire parish program."

Now, more than ever, the Festival became a necessity. John Ewing agreed again to serve as



Father Yagley presides at the veneration of the relic of St. Alphonsus, August 1, 1977.



The Annual Jubilarians' Mass

chairman. Dave Mills took on the ticket raffle and organized the system that is still in use today. When the tent came down in May, 1971, the chairman said it all, "I never worked with a finer, more cooperative, hardworking group of people in my life. I can't praise them enough."

Father Eugene O'Brien, S.J., son of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick O'Brien, offered his First Solemn Mass at St. Alphonsus on Sunday, June 13, 1971. The parish joined in celebrating with the new Jesuit.

In July word was received that Father Mel Blanchette, who had served the parish as a deacon and as a priest, would be assigned to Washington, D.C., effective August 1.

In September bids were taken on the redecoration of the interior of the church. The project was a tangible result of the PIP.

The next liturgical advance was the Baptismal Mass, celebrated on Sunday, September 12, at the 12:30 p.m. Mass. The custom was adopted on a monthly basis. Private baptisms continued on the remaining Sundays of the month.

It was in the Fall of 1971 that the Worship Committee began a series of articles in *The Voice*, written by a seminarian of the Society of St. Paul

By way of introduction, tribute was paid to two special blessings enjoyed by the parish:

One of the great blessings that St. Alphonsus Parish enjoys is an accident of geography. Inside our parish bounds there are a great many manifestations of the religious spirit. The one that first comes to mind is the Convent of the Divine Master on Warren and Oakman Boulevard Another place is St. Paul's Monastery on Pinehurst which is also the center for Alba House Communications in our area.

The mutual support and benefits derived through association with these religious groups and the parish continues to bear fruit to the present day.

The Christian Service Committee was instituted to help those who had specific needs which could not be fulfilled elsewhere. The call went out for volunteers who would "make a sort of open commitment to do whatever comes up." With that as a job description, Mrs. Ann Butler agreed to get it started. Thus began a program that has expanded each year in scope and spirit.

"All parishioners are invited to come and meet the Lay Ministers on March 19, 1972, from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the Reception in the Activities Building." After months of careful explanation and selection, the first twenty-six Lay Ministers were commissioned by Cardinal Dearden to serve the faithful of St. Alphonsus:

You, my brothers, have been chosen for an important service and must now strive more earnestly than ever to live a Christian life, to give good example, to witness to your faith, and to be dedicated to Christ's living presence in the Eucharist.

Following another successful festival in May, 1972, Monsignor expressed his gratitude to the workers — seven hundred workers are needed for a good festival — and to John Ewing:

And in a special way I'd like to thank John Ewing, whose unobtrusive and ultra-efficient leadership makes the whole thing possible. Without John we'd be lost. There's no way I know of to express with any degree of accuracy the debt we all owe John. This is just a feeble effort to indicate that we're deeply conscious of this debt and would express it adequately if we only knew how.



Monsignor Resigns

When Monsignor Kearns announced his resignation on November 5, 1972, and his determination to serve as an associate pastor, the unbelief and sincere regret of the parishioners was reflected in an open letter printed in *The Voice* at the request of Marguerite Miller. Her final lines capped the feelings of the congregation: "Thank you, Monsignor Kearns, for your unceasing and loving labors in our behalf. Your future welfare is in the hands of Our Lord, and He will not fail you."

When the Parish Council met on November 19, everyone's energies were directed toward a solution of the twofold crisis — how to persuade Monsignor to remain and how to balance the budget. Numerous solutions were offered during that three-hour meeting. The agreed-upon plan was that Monsignor be requested to change his transfer to a "sabbatical leave" of one year to enable the parish to solve its fiscal problems. At the end of the period Monsignor was to return as a functioning priest without the burdens of the pastorate.

To the relief of all, Monsignor's response was typically positive:

I want to take this opportunity to express my great gratitude to the Parish Council for coming up with a plan such as they have. From my personal point of view, it's just splendid. I never did want to leave here, but simply must, in order to give new leadership a chance to attack our financial problems with vigor and vitality. But this makes leaving ever so much easier. Knowing I'll be back makes all the difference in the world. Because there's one thing I've learned in the past few weeks — I'm going to simply feel like a fish out of water anyplace else but here.

During the nine months that followed Monsignor's departure, Father Yagley served as parish administrator. The search for a new pastor followed Archdiocesan guidelines which called for the preparation of a parish "profile," outlining the composition of the parish and the specific needs of the people. The forty-page profile, compiled under the direction of the Parish Council president, Louis Peiffer, was finally reduced to a descriptive summary of the pastor St. Alphonsus hoped to find:

A spiritual leader sensitive to parish consensus before making changes, and responsive to general and specific spiritual and liturgical needs of the parish, including the young, middle-aged, and senior citizens.

An administrator who can work effectively with the intended lay business manager and



Mrs. Mary Lietz, a member of the Legion of Mary, crowns the statue of Mary during the May Procession.

his staff. Disposed to work energetically with the Parish Council and its various commissions. Willing to support sincerely the parish's dedication to maintaining its complete educational program.

The summer of 1973 brought more changes in the pastoral staff. Father Maloney left in June which meant that Father Yagley and Father Sokolowski, now the only priests at St. Alphonsus, spent several hectic weeks just keeping up with ordinary duties. Father Thomas Byrne, then on sick leave, Father Robert Donlon, SCJ, and Father Ted Cassidy, SCJ, both attending the University of Detroit, for the summer, lent a helping hand. In July Father Donald Kresmer was appointed temporary assistant, pending the appointment of a permanent associate. Father Robert Kurilec, a Priest of the Sacred Heart, arrived in August from Donaldson, Indiana, where he had been serving as a seminary professor. In October both agreed to serve as associates.

In response to the request of the Parish Council that Father Yagley be made Pastor of St. Alphonsus and that Monsignor Kearns be reassigned to the parish, the following good news

served as the "cover story" of *The Voice* for September 30, 1973:

Word was received from Bishop Schoenherr's office this week that Father Yagley has been assigned as Pastor of St. Alphonsus. Father Kresmer and Father Kurilec are assigned as associates.

Monsignor Bernard Kearns will return to St. Alphonsus in a non-administrative position in the near future. We pray that the Father will guide them in their future endeavors and we may all grow spiritually as a family.

In the same issue of the parish paper, September 30 was designated as "Mrs. Esper Day." The 12:30 p.m. Mass was offered for her intentions and a reception followed in the Schaefer Building. In a parish noted for its large number of devoted parishioners, Mrs. Gertrude Esper's years of service called for special recognition. She acknowledged the honor with quiet pleasure.

Bishop Walter Schoenherr and Father Gerald Brennan, Dearborn Vicar, formally installed Father Yagley, Father Kresmer, and Father Kurilec as pastor and associates on Sunday, October 23, at the 12:30 p.m. Mass. The parishioners were invited to meet and congratulate the "new" priests of St. Alphonsus.

Aches and Pains

The 1970's ushered in the era of "Maintenance." Each year the aging buildings seemed to develop a new malady.

The roof on the high school building could no longer be patched up. An inspection indicated that the old roof would have to be removed and a new one provided. This was accomplished, much to the consternation of the high school students who suffered through weeks of tar fumes. Knowing that they would remain dry during the next school year, made the situation not just tolerable for them, but worthwhile.

January, 1974, marked the first of Father Yagley's "State of the Parish" addresses. Speaking at all nine weekend Masses, he recounted the spiritual and material happenings of the previous year. Father expressed concern over the inability of the parish to provide a yearly raise for employees. He felt it an injustice to let this situation continue.

At last his sabbatical was completed, and Monsignor Kearns left St. Jude's, Detroit, and returned to St. Alphonsus, the parish he loved and the place he had chosen to continue his ministry.

It goes without saying that St. Jude's returned him very reluctantly.

Next, the bleachers in the gymnasium gave out. With the assistance of the Dads' Club, the old ones were removed and new ones installed. The Dads' made this their major parish project for the year, underwriting the total expenditure.

Father Kurilec left in June, 1974, to become the principal of a high school in San Antonio, Texas. In October, Father Kresmer was made pastor of St. Charles, Newport.

Several weeks before this, a phone call was directed to Father Yagley. An unfamiliar voice said, "I'm Father Leon Hart — you know, like the Lions' football star. I understand you need some help and I'm looking for a parish where I can assist." Thus, Father Hart, a Basilian and an administrator at Assumption High School in Windsor, Ontario, became a member of the Family. Only a brief time was needed to reveal that no one enjoyed a celebration more than Father Leon.

The second "State of the Parish" address in January, 1975, contained the welcome news that the people had been more generous and that the financial status had improved. But little did Father Yagley realize that as he spoke these words, the school cafeteria was being flooded with eight inches of water, due to a broken sewer line — about \$6000 down the drain. It was just a few months later that Mr. Henry Boleski's sewer broke, some twenty feet from where the school's had broken.

Father Edward Olszewski arrived in January from Christ the King Parish, and Father Donald Demmer, newly ordained, followed in February. Father Demmer was to devote his efforts to the high school students through religious counseling and classroom instruction.

In Spring, thanks to the Dads' Club, the church bells which had been rung by hand, were now electrically operated and an electronic carillon was added, thus enabling hymns to be played after the "Angelus", and before the Masses.

That summer the interior of the convent was painted. New lockers were installed in the high school. The grade school lost two rooms to the increased high school enrollment of six hundred and ninety students. Due to rusted brackets, extensive work was needed to prevent the church gutters from falling.

Father Olszewski left in January of 1976, and was not replaced until July of that year by Father Frank Camaj. He was the first Albanian priest to be ordained in the United States.

Many stories begin, "On a cold December morning." It was a cold December morning in



Father Eugene LeFebvre and Father Yagley officiate at services on St. Anne's Night.

church due to the breakdown of a circulating pump which left the church without heat. An emergency pump was quickly brought in to prevent further damage. Michigan was beginning to experience its coldest winter and the country was soon to feel the effects of the natural gas shortage that closed many schools and factories. Extensive repairs were begun on all heating systems, not only to conserve gas but to reduce those gas bills of \$7,000 a month.

In March, a stone from the church tower came crashing to the ground, just missing some people entering the church. Over the years summer heat and winter cold had taken its toll. Several pieces of stone had to be replaced as well as many of the crosses on top of the towers. Again, steel pins had rusted and cracked some of the stone work.

Father Frank Camaj was transferred in June, 1977, to Ascension, Warren, and Father Frederick Klettner filled his position in July.

Presently, St. Alphonsus is served by Father Yagley, Monsignor Kearns, Fathers Sokolowski, Demmer, and Klettner, with Father Hart assisting on weekends.

Sisters of St. Dominic

Before there was a St. Alphonsus Church, there was a St. Alphonsus School. For more than one hundred and thirty years, the people of this parish community have dedicated themselves to the

belief, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," (Proverbs 22:6)

Since Father Buechsenmann contracted for the first three Adrian Dominicans in 1897 for a "salary of forty dollars a month, fifty dollars for playing the organ, with the care of the sacristy and altar linen to be included," the Dominican Sisters have helped to staff the schools.

At times the grade and high school operated as a single unit under one principal who usually was the convent superior as well. At a later date, accreditation standards required separate principals for the two buildings. Sometimes a third Sister served as superior.

Among those who served at St. Alphonsus in these positions were Sister Mary Rose, Sister Mary Josephine, Sister Mary Bernadine, Sister Mary Christina, Sister Mary Anthony, Sister Mary Cyprian, Sister Mary Ursula, Sister Mary Francis, Sister Francis Joseph, Sister Reparata, Sister Jean Marie, Sister Marie Ruth, Sister Ann Regina, Sister Mary Lourdes, Sister Clare Cecile, Sister Mary Bruno, Sister Agnes Charles, Sister Kathleen Scanlon, Sister Rose Margaret, Sister Joseph Cecile.

With the advent of the 1960's many new areas of endeavor were opened to the Sisters. Today forty-six percent of the Dominicans are engaged in education. Of that number, thirteen Sisters are stationed at St. Alphonsus which is the largest number of Dominicans engaged in the service of one parish in the archdiocese. They are: Sister Marie Arthur, Sister Marie Harold, Sister Norita Marie,

Sister Marie Gabriel, Sister Rose Clement, Sister Mary Louise Gass, Sister Virginia McTaggart, Sister Mauritia, Sister Clare Charles, Sister Barbara Ann, Sister Joseph Cecile, Sister Mary Willard. Sister Mary Fisher is an instructor at Henry Ford Community College.

In September, 1977, James E. O'Donnell was named high school principal. Rather than a break in tradition, the selection of a layman marks a return to the first school erected in 1846 with Joseph Hellner as headmaster.

What, perhaps, has been true over the entire history of St. Alphonsus has been the conviction that a school is an integral part of the parish.

A Year of Jubilee

On Sunday, October 24, 1976, Father Yagley proclaimed a Year of Jubilee to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the founding of St. Alphonsus Parish on October 10, 1852.

An Anniversary Book was commissioned to recall in words and pictures the historic events of those years. Various groups and organizations held festivities throughout the year with the "Anniversary" theme: the PTO Dinner Dance, the grade school's "Happy 125th Birthday" concert, the Sodality's fashion show, the high school's "Fall Revue," to name but a few.

An historic marker was struck commemorating the sacrifice, vision and faith of the founders and past parishioners.

The day of celebration, October 9, 1977, was marked by a concelebrated Mass solemnized at 12:30 p.m. A procession of visiting clergy, religious and parish representatives led by a Color Guard, Knights of Columbus, and men of the Alhambra, marched from the rectory to the church. Bishop Walter Schoenherr was principal celebrant. Father Walter Markowicz preached.

A parish reception followed in the Activities Building from 2:00 — 4:30 p.m. "Refreshments of all kinds in good quality and quantity were served." ■

Founded 1852

**125th ANNIVERSARY
ST. ALPHONSUS PARISH
IN COMMEMORATION OF
THE FOUNDERS
AND
PAST PARISHIONERS
FOR THEIR GIFTS OF VISION
SACRIFICE AND FAITH**

October 9, 1977





Members participate in monthly meeting of Parish Council.

~ ~ ~ PARISH ORGANIZATIONS ~ ~ ~

The story of St. Alphonsus would be incomplete without recalling the numerous parish organizations which developed as the size and demands of parish life increased. Through the years parish organizations have continued to be the backbone of spiritual, charitable, and social encounter. Each parishioner with the desire to be engaged productively in the welfare of St. Alphonsus, has had an ongoing program through which to channel the desire to participate. Such a concern for individual involvement led to the establishment of the Rosary Altar Society in 1891.

Rosary Altar Sodality

It was Monsignor Kearns who expressed the belief that "the ladies of the Altar Sodality are the backbone of any parish." The Sodality bylaws indicate the extent of their service: "The purpose of this organization is the care of the altars, the linens, and the conduct of devotions to Our Lord's Mother under the title of the Rosary. . . . The objectives shall be to unite the women of the parish in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, to raise funds for the care of the altar and the sanctuary, and to participate in local, state, national and international projects approved by the pastor."

The Rosary Altar Sodality holds monthly meetings to provide an opportunity for the women to plan their activities and to meet socially. Reports of these events are recorded in *The Voice*.

What is not reported are the many hours that are spent in the actual care of the church. The scent of the hot iron on freshly laundered altar linens or the hum of the carpet sweeper being moved over the Persian rugs at the foot of the altar are part of the care that is carried on by the ladies year after year. The funds realized from their social events make possible the replacement of items as they are needed.

Corporate Communion on the first Sunday of the month and the recitation of the Rosary at the wake of each deceased member provides the spiritual emphasis.

Historically, the women of the Altar Sodality were divided into guilds. Today, two such guilds remain active: St. Rita's Guild, which provided the tapestry antependium, and St. Theresa's Guild, which has provided the baptismal gowns given to each infant baptized in the church.

The Sodality continues to be a channel of love through service.

Ushers

Ushers have been serving St. Alphonsus Church since the late 1800's, although they were not formally organized until 1925. Edward Reuter, Sr. served as first president during the pastorate of Father Klich.

Ushers, past and present, have maintained the purpose of the organization: "to uphold and

preserve dignity in the House of God and to maintain proper order at all church services and affairs." Their watchwords continue to be "reverence, punctuality, politeness and cheerful service."

Monthly business meetings and fellowship through the years have characterized the group. Baseball games, picnics, card games and informal gatherings, and more recently, the annual dinner-dance for ushers and their wives typify the latter.

Deceased members are remembered in the annual Thanksgiving Day Mass and in the Rosary recited by the ushers at the wake of a member.

Perhaps, *The Voice* of 1965 had the best description: "As you see, the usher comes in a variety of sizes and from all walks of life. He is a man of integrity, sincerity and has an ardent desire to do the job the best way he knows how — in the service of his church, in the service of his pastor and in the service of his fellow parishioners."

St. Vincent de Paul Society

The St. Alphonsus Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society was organized in 1925. George Horger served as the group's first president. The purpose of the society has been to meet the needs of families within the parish who require assistance.

Funds for these Corporal Works of Mercy are raised through free will offerings for *The Sunday*

Visitor, poor boxes, book racks, Thanksgiving Day collection, and the sale of religious calendars.

In recent years families have been able to share more directly by bringing gifts of food to the altar rail during the Offertory of the Thanksgiving Day Mass which are then delivered to the needy by the Vincentians.

Throughout the years the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society has been carried on quietly and effectively.

Men's Club

Since the 1940's the Men's Club has been a functioning organization. Its contributions to the life of the parish have remained constant although the name of the group has changed several times. During the 1940's and 1950's members belonged to the Sponsors Club whose main purpose was to support the athletic programs of the parish schools. In the late 1950's the program remained the same, but the name was changed to Dads' Club. The sale of season passes provided the major portion of income. Increased responsibilities in the 1960's called for an expanded membership and additional sources of revenue.

In 1975 the Dads' Club changed its name for the third time: The Men's Club of St. Alphonsus, to include all men of the parish. Their role was further

Rosary Altar Sodality members examine new altar linens.





Senior Citizens keeping abreast of current legislation affecting community welfare

Men's Club members prepare to board newly acquired bus



Ushers continue to provide special services for liturgical functions.



expanded. In addition to supporting athletic programs, the members agree "to assist the parish in any area where needed."

Social aspects of membership are reflected in the informal parties in the Schaefer Annex, the annual dinner-dance, the parish picnic and frequent golf outings.

The 30-Up Club

Father Maurice Geary lent his assistance, in August, 1952, to the formation of a "club to give single Catholics an opportunity to meet and share in the social and spiritual benefits which such a group offers."

This club has met on a monthly basis with varied activities planned to meet their needs. Members have been observed dancing on Saturday night, boarding a bus for Frankenmuth, ice skating at a local rink, attending Mass on Sunday or bowling on Sunday afternoons.

The 30-Up Club's membership has crossed city and parish lines. The members continue to extend a welcome hand to any who wish to join them.

Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary has always called for great devotion on the part of its members. The first organization at St. Alphonsus was formed in 1955. This group has continued through the efforts of a number of people who continue to meet on a weekly basis. The Legion leads the Rosary before Masses and it is instrumental in planning devotions to the Blessed Mother. They unite efforts with the Worship Commission to plan the May Procession and the Crowning of Our Lady each year. This activity is especially meaningful to the families whose children, led by the First Communicants, join in the procession.

Senior Citizens

The Senior Citizens of St. Alphonsus have always been a vital facet of parish life. Their participation in all parish organizations has contributed to their continuity.

It was not until the mid-Sixties that an organization was formed whose aims and purposes were directed towards the interests of the Senior Citizens. The first members were part of the City

of Dearborn's Senior organizations.

In 1970 when the St. Alphonsus Leisure Timers were organized, their bylaws expressed their emphasis: "The St. Alphonsus Senior Citizens are primarily involved in the promotion of their members' spiritual and educational growth, particularly in the areas of Christian service and worship."

In the areas of continuing education, this group scheduled programs on the sacraments, the liturgy, the aging process, and benefits for the elderly. Members have worked closely with the Christian Service Commission in visiting the sick and infirm, offering solace to the bereaved, and in lending assistance generally.

In March, 1973, St. Alphonsus Senior Citizens requested and received representation on the Parish Council. Roy Deufel and Mrs. Marion Caubet were the first Council representatives.

The membership has grown to one hundred and eighty-two. Their well-rounded calendar includes trips to Florida, places of interest in Michigan, retreats, workshops for the Festival Boutique, and special seasonal parties. They provide unparalleled service to the homebound through the "Meals on Wheels" program. They maintain contact with shut-ins through visits and the bringing of Holy Communion.

St. Alphonsus Senior Citizens portray a living example of the Lay Apostolate.

Parent Teacher Organization

As the size of parish schools increased in the 1960's, it became apparent that if parents were to continue to share the responsibility for their children's education, there would have to be an opportunity for a meeting of minds. The PTO was formed in 1956 through the efforts of Bishop Zaleski.

This group has given parents and teachers an opportunity to work together for educational advancement. It helps to sponsor such programs as the Science Fair and the Art Shows. Members assist in serving refreshments that follow many activities in and around the school. The annual PTO Dinner Dance has become a favorite "night out" for the adults. Funds raised through membership and special activities have provided library books, audio-visual equipment, curtains for the stage, and other enrichments.

PTO meetings acquaint parents and teachers with mutual problems and supply assistance in meeting them.



Father Yagley joins teachers and graduates from St. Alphonsus High School on the occasion of the 50th class reunion.

Scouts

If you can remember waking up in a cold cabin, wandering through the woods with dewey grass underfoot, eating partially cooked dough around a hot dog, sanding a block of wood, and displaying a shiny new membership pin, then you recall the Scouting Program at St. Alphonsus. This program has been reported throughout the long history of the parish. Troops have been available for both boys and girls at various times. These troops have been ably guided by dedicated adults whose services continue. The youngsters involved in these programs give service to the parish when needed, and work to increase their faith through various achievements, such as the Marion Medal and the Parvuli Dei awards.

Youth With Action

St. Alphonsus Parish has through the years recognized the special needs of all age groups in planning its activities. Special concern has always been for the young people. The names and organization of the groups have changed from time to time, but the objectives have remained the same —

to provide the young people with wholesome activities and to instill the concept of stewardship.

Young Men's and Young Ladies' Sodalities developed in the 1930's and 1940's; the Catholic Youth Organization in the 1950's. The Valiant Club and the Young Christian Movement in the 1960's preceded Youth With Action, whose program has included, on a weekly basis, the study of the Scriptures, Church History and the Sacraments. Social outings and service to the parish round out their program.

Band Boosters

Band Boosters have served St. Alphonsus school bands in much the same way the Men's Club has supported the athletic programs. The membership, composed primarily of band members' parents, has provided equipment and uniforms, of excellent style and quality, with funds raised through candy sales, occasional socials, and monthly paper drives. The band and the Band Boosters have made outstanding contributions to numerous parish, civic and patriotic functions.



These programs have contributed greatly to the spirit and activity of parish life that have characterized the history of St. Alphonsus since its origin.

Pastors at St. Alphonsus

Reverend Ernest Glaunach, C.Ss.R.	- 1852
Reverend John DeDycker, C.Ss.R.	November, 1852 - December, 1854
Reverend Francis X. Roth, C.Ss.R.	December, 1854 - February, 1856
Reverend Bartholomew Gruber, C.Ss.R.	February, 1856 - December, 1856
Reverend Peter Cronenberger, C.Ss.R.	December, 1856 - June, 1858
Reverend Julius Maciejewski	July, 1858 - June, 1860
Reverend Edward Dumont	June, 1861 - November, 1861
Reverend Charles Chambille	November, 1861 - October, 1873
Reverend George Godez	October, 1873 - January, 1883
Reverend Bernard Wermers, Administrator	January, 1883 - February, 1883
Reverend Jerome Henkel, O.F.M. Capuchin	March, 1883 - May, 1883
Reverend Anastasius Duckgeischel, O.F.M. Capuchin	May, 1883 - August, 1885
Reverend Stephen Sack, O.F.M. Capuchin	August, 1885 - November, 1885
Reverend Raphael Umstaetter, O.F.M. Capuchin	November, 1885 - May, 1886
Reverend Philip Spies, O.F.M. Capuchin	May, 1886 - June, 1897
Reverend Anthony Buechsenmann	June, 1897 - December, 1920
Monsignor John S. Mies	December, 1920 - December, 1922
Reverend John Klich	January, 1923 - March, 1942
Reverend James Dolan, Administrator	March, 1942 - April, 1942
Monsignor William P. Schulte	April, 1942 - March, 1956
Reverend Lawrence V. Hamel, Administrator	September, 1952 - April, 1956
Most Reverend Alexander M. Zaleski	April, 1956 - December, 1964
Monsignor Bernard Kearns	January, 1965 - November, 1972
Reverend Carl J. Yagley	October, 1973 - Present

St. Alphonsus Parish

Organizations

Parish Council	Senior Citizens
Men's Club	30-Up Club
Altar Sodality	Band Boosters
Ushers Club	Parent Teacher Organization
St. Vincent dePaul	Girl Scouts

Commissions

Worship	Education
Christian Service	Administration

Committees

Parish Improvement Program	Student Council
Religious Education Program	Finance
Legion of Mary	Youths With Action
School Board	The Matthews

This publication commemorates the efforts of the people of St. Alphonsus over a period of one hundred twenty-five years and, in a special way, the efforts of our parishioners who have made the Anniversary Year truly memorable.

To all who have participated by direct contribution or by expenditure of time and effort in each phase of the year's celebration, and in the compilation of this commemorative volume, I wish to express my deep and sincere gratitude.

Father Yagley