



Church of St. Gertrude
Forest City, Minnesota



150 Years

1857-2007

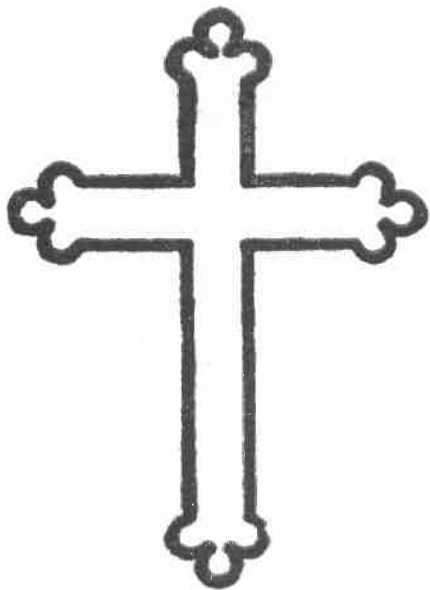
*A Reproduction
of the
Centennial Celebration Booklet
1857-1957*

- and -

*The Next Fifty Years
1957-2007*

Centennial Celebration

1857 - 1957



St. Gertrude's Church

Forest City, Minnesota

A History
of
St. Gertrude's Parish
in

FOREST CITY, MINNESOTA

1857-1957



THE MOST REVEREND WILLIAM O. BRADY, S. T. D.
Archbishop of Saint Paul



244 DAYTON AVENUE
SAINT PAUL 2, MINNESOTA

September 10, 1957

TO THE REVEREND PASTOR AND THE FAITHFUL
OF SAINT GERTRUDE'S PARISH AT FOREST CITY:

The Archbishop has already joined with you in a day of thanksgiving to commemorate the first offering, now one hundred years ago, of Holy Mass in the present parish of Saint Gertrude.

In commemoration of this event, some historical records will be printed and these will also serve to keep alive, for the Catholics of the future, the sense of importance which so great an event always spells in the life of the Catholic Church.

On the occasion of the publication of this booklet, the Archbishop renews his congratulations on the centenary that has already been attained and begs God's best blessings on the Parish at Forest City as it begins a second century near the altar of God.

With every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Christ,

William O. Brady
Archbishop of Saint Paul



In Loving Memory of
ARCHBISHOP JOHN GREGORY MURRAY

Late Archbishop of Saint Paul
under whom the Church of Saint Gertrude became an independent
parish in 1945

Born February 26, 1877
Consecrated Bishop April 28, 1920
Archbishop of Saint Paul, October 29, 1931
Died October 11, 1956

May he rest in peace.



St. Gertrude's Church, Rectory and Cemetery



Archbishop Brady with Clergy and altar boys in front of church after Centennial Mass on August 18, 1957.

As you turn off U. S. 12 at the north end of Litchfield onto State Highway 24, there is no sign to inform you in this year 1957 that the village of Forest City lies just six miles ahead. Yet its place is secure in Minnesota history, for one hundred year ago it was the first white settlement in Meeker County, the site of the offering of the first Mass and the first Catholic church in that territory. Its name soon became familiar to Irish immigrants in cities of the Midwest and the distant eastern seaboard. In fact it is quite reasonable to suppose that within a few years prospective emigrants in far off Ireland were gathering around their hearths in County Tryone and Kerry to read and discuss the latest letter from one of their relatives in the new frontier settlement. Here was located the first county seat, the first Post Office and Federal Land Office, the first newspaper published in Meeker County. Everything pointed to a prosperous and stable future for the pioneer village on the banks of the Crow River. But the promise was never fulfilled as frequently happens with men's dreams and plans.

The first Catholic settlers who arrived in the spring of 1856 were John Flynn and John Whalen, and they were soon followed by others, among them Thomas O'Dougherty with his family and brother John in the summer of the same year, and in the following year Patrick Finnegan, Andrew Sullivan, Bryan McNulty, Edward Campbell, John and Michael Murray and Patrick Casey. The early predominance of Gaelic settlers was the natural aftermath of the great wave of Irish immigration which had its peak year in 1851 and was still rolling across the western prairies.

Here then was the nucleus of a Catholic community and in a short time its existence became known to the Benedictine monks who had just established themselves at what later became St. John's Abbey, Collegeville. One of their number, Father Alexius Roetzer, traveled the forty miles to offer the first Mass in Meeker County sometime in 1857 at the log cabin of John Flynn. Undoubtedly he must have spent several days instructing the young and old and administering the sacraments before continuing on his far flung mission circuit which then covered at least four counties. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that in the beginning a priest could come to the settlement only once a year. Father Alexius continued his visitations but by 1860 the names of two other Benedictines, Fr. Whitcomb and Fr. Scherer, are mentioned as attending the pioneer congregation. Then from 1862 to 1866 Father

Meinulph Steukemper of St. John's was in charge of the growing Catholic population of Meeker County, still saying Mass in private homes, administering the sacraments and instructing the children wherever a group could be gathered together.

But the faith and zeal of these pioneers was not satisfied with such makeshift arrangements and in 1866 they bravely started making plans to build a parish church. By February 13, 1867 the site had been secured, a donation from the city, the deed filed and actual construction soon begun. With the generous help of many non-catholic neighbors the men of the parish began hauling lumber from Gillman's Mill near St. Cloud and the work went ahead steadily throughout the summer and fall of 1867. Sometime during this period, Father Meinulph was succeeded by another Benedictine, Father Augustine Burns, who directed the final stages of the project. To him fell the honor of offering the first Mass in the new church (dedicated to St. Gertrude) on Christmas Day, 1867, and on that same day he officiated at the first wedding in the church, uniting John Fitzgerald and Louisa Campbell in the holy bonds of matrimony. During the previous October the first mission in the new parish was preached by a Holy Cross Father, Rev. Paul Gillen, even before the building was completed. At this time the congregation numbered about fifty families who under the leadership of Father Burns and the trustees, M. J. Flynn, John Dougherty, Sr., Daniel Dougherty and Patrick Casey had contributed the sum of three thousand dollars to erect this first Catholic church in Meeker County.

Almost inevitably in such a pioneer parish, because of its missionary status and the frequent changing of priests to other areas, the records of the first baptisms, marriages and funerals are scattered, confused or lost, never now to be recovered. One of the earliest known instances of the administration of the last sacraments was at the death of the pioneer John Flynn in 1859, who was buried on the site of the present parochial cemetery. The land did not become official church property until 1884 when the owner, John Dougherty, presented the deed to the trustees of the parish which had already been incorporated on March 26, 1878.

Prior to this, however, the village of Forest City and St. Gertrude's Church had successfully weathered the Panic of 1857, the Indian outbreak of 1862 and the prolonged absence of some of its ablest men in military service during the Civil War. Thereafter

progress and growth continued steadily with the constant arrival of new families seeking homesteads in the area. Indicative of this growth was the memorable visit on September 16, 1868 of the Bishop of St. Paul, Most Reverend Thomas Grace when he conferred the sacrament of Confirmation for the first time in Meeker County. Later that same year on Dec. 6, the church was formally dedicated to St. Gertrude, the famous Benedictine abbess of the seventh century. In the spring of 1869, a class of twenty-five children received first communion from Father Burns, although the parish still numbered only about eighty families. Yet Forest City and St. Gertrude's seemed destined to continue as the thriving center of all the surrounding territory and predictions as to its future greatness could not seem extravagant even to the more conservative citizens.

All these grandiose dreams were shattered in the summer of 1869 by the decision of the officials of the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad to plot the route of their trains several miles to the south of Forest City, and to erect there a station which later developed into the town of Litchfield. While this soon became the commercial and political center of the county, and several families from St. Gertrude's built homes there, future pastors with so many distant missions under their care saw the advantage of living close to such modern means of transportation. So in twelve short years this pioneer church had fulfilled its destiny as the cradle of Catholicism on a wild frontier and had achieved its greatest expansion, at least externally as men measure such things. The full effect of these events was not apparent for several years, and until the church at Darwin was built in 1878, and that of St. Philip in 1882, a large congregation of the faithful attended Mass every Sunday in St. Gertrude's. During this time, Father Burns, the last Benedictine pastor, was succeeded by Father Michael Hurley, the first diocesan priest, in 1871, who continued as pastor until relieved by Father Cahill in 1873. The latter remained in charge until 1876 when Father John McDermott was appointed pastor and it was under him that the parish was legally incorporated. When Bishop John Ireland visited the parish in October of 1876, the number of families had increased to two hundred and there were over three hundred candidates for the sacrament of Confirmation. Actually a large proportion of these families were soon to be assigned to either of the new parishes then being formed in Litchfield and Darwin. At an even earlier date two daughter parishes of Forest

City had been founded, one at Greenleaf with a church built in 1870, and the other at Manannah with a church under construction in 1876. After the establishment of these parishes, especially the one at Litchfield, the Catholics of Forest City had to be content to become a mission, first of St. Philip's and later of St. John's, Darwin. The little church of St. Gertrude had been built, well furnished and paid for, a cemetery acquired and laid out, and now the days of its preeminence in the county were coming to an end. Its history from now on will be the uneventful chronicle of Sunday masses being regularly offered week after week, of sacraments being received, infants baptized, first communion and confirmation classes, young couples being married, the sick being visited and anointed, the dead being laid to rest in the shadow of the church. Each year there was a fair, or fund-raising festival and other social events in accordance with the custom of the times. The priests who had charge of the parish after Father McDermott left in 1882 were Fr. Patrick Kenny of Litchfield until the fall of 1883, when Father McDermott returned to become pastor of Darwin and Forest City until his death in 1887. During the next six years the pastoral obligations were fulfilled at various times by Father Joseph Tracy, Father Hugh McDevitt and Father Edward Lee until the



Interior of Church in 1957



Fr. John McDermott



Fr. Joseph Tracy



Fr. P. J. McCabe



Fr. Edward Lee

arrival of Father P. J. McCabe on September 21, 1893. He remained in charge for nine years and in 1901, towards the end of his term, had the foresight to direct the moving of the church building to its present, more imposing site, where it was enlarged and remodeled.

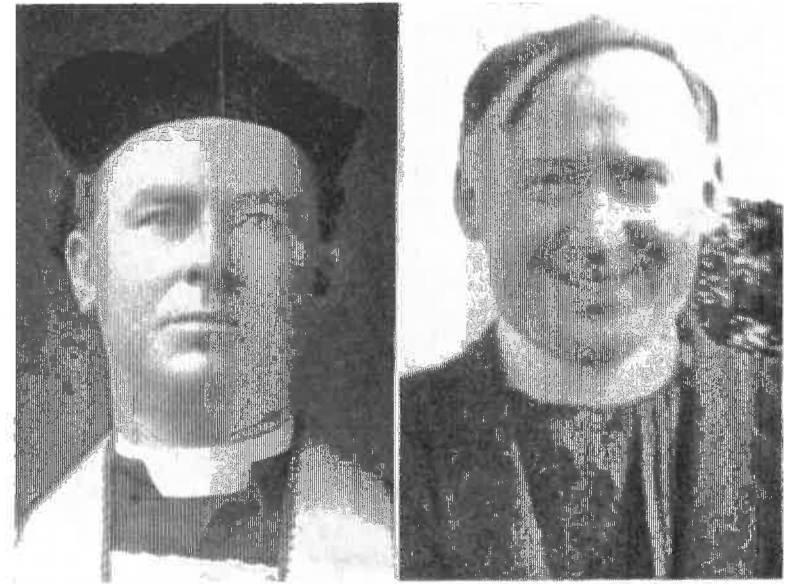
As the church remains today substantially the same as it was at the turn of the century, it is fitting to pause here and to list for the information of the present generation the names of those who donated much of the sacred furnishings we gaze on each Sunday. The bell in the tower is the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Burke in memory of their son John. St. Gertrude's window in the sanctuary was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Denis McCarthy in memory of their son John; St. Joseph's window by Mr. and Mrs. John Burns in memory of their two sons, Thomas and John; Mrs. Michael Murphy donated the double window, St. Luke and St. John in memory of her husband; Frank and Mary McIntyre gave the double window, St. Matthew and St. Mark as a memorial. The Circle window was donated by the Altar Society.

Windows in the main part of the church were donated by Chris Baden in memory of his wife Mary; James Fitzgerald in memory of his parents, Patrick and Joanna Fitzgerald; Mary Whalen in memory of her husband John Whalen; William and T. J. Murphy in memory of their brother Joseph; Matthew, Patrick and John Flynn in memory of their parents, Patrick and Ann Flynn; Susan Burns in memory of her mother, Ann Burns. Mr. and Mrs. P. J. McIntyre also donated a memorial window.

Mrs. Mary Pike donated the main altar in memory of her mother, Mrs. Burke. The side altars were donated by the Altar Society. Mrs. Michael Murphy and Mrs. Denis McCarthy, Sr., donated the sanctuary lamp, and the vestments were the gift of Catherine Murphy.

William O'Keefe, Sr., by the terms of his will, bequeathed four hundred dollars to the church to be used by Father Dobbins to provide furnishings and decorations for the altar. In addition the unceasing generosity of the whole parish was demonstrated time and time again through the years by their loyal support of their own church and their liberal contributions to other causes at the request of Diocesan authorities.

As far back as 1868, for example, a grand total of eighty dollars had been sent out from St. Gertrude's Parish for the St.



Fr. Lawrence Cosgrove

Fr. Michael M. Ryan

Vincent de Paul Society, for the Seminary Fund established by Bishop Grace and for the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX. Similar instances of generous giving could be recorded of every succeeding generation of Catholics in Forest City right down to this centennial year.

Father William Dobbins who succeeded Father McCabe as pastor in September, 1902, served the congregations of Forest City and Darwin with great zeal for fourteen years until August 15, 1916 when Father Lawrence Cosgrove was placed in charge of both parishes. He it was who arranged for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary in 1917 of the building of St. Gertrude's Church and for the same occasion published the first history of the parish in a booklet which also contained an account of the parish in Darwin. While on a visit to his native Ireland, he died there on April 18, 1920.

He in turn was succeeded by Father M. M. Ryan who despite a great deal of ill health continued as pastor until his death on July 17, 1936. Thereafter the parish was vacant for a short while



Fr. Thomas J. McNamara

Fr. Martin Donovan

until Father Donovan was appointed in October, 1936 as pastor of Darwin with Forest City as a mission. Nine years later, in the summer of 1945, when he was succeeded by Father Jerome Campbell, the late Archbishop Murray gave the faithful of Forest City their first resident pastor in many years when he appointed Father Michael Lawler to the post.

The new pastor's first task was to draw up plans and start the construction of a rectory. Before it was finished, however, Father Leo Howley was assigned as pastor in December, 1945. Under his direction the house was completed in 1946, and in the following year he saw to the completion of another valuable addition to the parish facilities in the excavation of a basement under the church and the furnishing of it as a center for social activities. Men of the parish donated much of the labor and equipment for this project and thus kept the actual financial cost down to a modest figure.

When Father Howley was transferred to St. Dominic's Church in Northfield in April, 1948, Father John McGuire came to stay for a few months and he was succeeded by Father Francis Fairley

in September, 1948. He remained in charge of St. Gertrude's until replaced in March, 1952 by Father Francis Welch who was succeeded in December of that same year by Father Thomas McNamara. Despite poor health that required extended hospital care several times, Father McNamara continued as pastor until his rather sudden, though not entirely unexpected death on October 15, 1956. He was stricken while preaching at mass on Sunday morning, and without being able to even finish the mass had to be helped to the sacristy and then carried over to the house. Later in the day he was taken to the Meeker County Hospital in Litchfield where after receiving the last sacraments, he died on Monday morning. Archbishop Brady offered the Pontifical Requiem Mass for him here in St. Gertrude's Church the day after the funeral of Archbishop Murray, and he was buried as he had requested, in the



Corpus Christi procession in 1947 with Fr. Leo Howley Carrying the Blessed Sacrament.

parish cemetery behind the church. The bereaved parishoners soon established a fund for the purchase of a beautiful stone cross to mark the grave of Father McNamara and to perpetuate their grateful affection for him.

After his death Forest City was made a mission of St. Philip's in Litchfield and was faithfully served by the pastor, Father Clarence Foley and his assistant, Father William Bullock. They began making plans to celebrate in the following August, the one hundredth anniversary of the first Mass offered in the parish in 1857, but in June St. Gertrude's again became a mission of Darwin under the care of Father John Fleming, the pastor there. A month later Forest City once more had a resident priest when Father Vincent Hope was appointed administrator on July 18, 1957.

To commemorate the completion of one hundred years as a Catholic community and its honorable primacy as the pioneer parish and mission center in Meeker County, Archbishop Brady came on Sunday, August 18, 1957 to offer a Pontifical low mass and to preach the jubilee sermon in the ninety-year-old church which was filled to overflowing. After mass he conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on a class of forty boys and girls and two adults. Present for the ceremonies and guests afterwards at a dinner served in the rectory by the Altar and Rosary Society were the following priests: Fathers Foley, Bullock, Fleming, John Ward of Manannah, Frederick Barthelme of Maple Lake, Bernard Schreiner of Eden Valley, Leo Howley of Hopkins, John Gleason of Regal and Jerome Dougherty O. S. B. of St. John's Abbey, in addition to the Archbishop and Fr. Hope. A general celebration for all present and former members of the parish and their friends was scheduled to coincide with the annual Fall Festival and Dinner on Sunday, September 29th.

This brings to a close an altogether too brief chronicle of St. Gertrude's Parish in Forest City. To people obsessed with the modern craze for statistics and the mania for guaging greatness by bigness is may not seem a very impressive story. But as Archbishop Brady said in his sermon at the centenary, the destiny of the parish in God's providence was not to expand materially but spiritually and having once been the Mother Church with numerous offspring on a large frontier, to continue quietly as a dwelling place of God among a smaller group of His children, who chose the more wholesome life on the land.

Obviously there is nothing very spectacular or what the Journalists call newsworthy about the place or its inhabitants and their activities. As the motorist speeds along north-eastward on State Highway 24, the road curls and winds through a pleasant, rolling countryside, until at the crest of a little hill the tall slender spire of Saint Gertrude's Church can be seen cleaving the horizon on the eastern edge of Forest City. For a moment the gleaming white walls of the church and rectory with the well kept graveyard in the foreground, form an interesting picture for the hurrying traveler and then they are left behind. Such was the role, too.



Fr. Albert (Joseph) Hannan, OSB



Grave of Fr. McNamara in St. Gertrude's Cemetery.

of this locality in early Minnesota history. But what a rich pageant of pioneer Catholic life once unfolded here and left its indelible imprint on the future course of events in all the surrounding territory. The hustle and rawness of frontier life were refined by the gentle influence of Christ's presence in the mass and the sacraments; the crude monotony relieved by the annual cycle of the church's feasts and festivals, its picnics and bazaars, as well as by the regular visits of the intrepid Benedictines from St. John's



Officers of Altar and Rosary Societys Left to Rights Mrs. Ed Meyers, Mrs. Harold Crusoe, Sec., Mrs. Lloyd Valiant, Vice-Pres.; Mrs. Leander Schoolmeesters, President.

Abbey. All these things belong to the past now, but they also go to make up much of the living tradition of this little rural parish which continues into its second century the God given task of bringing Christ to its members in order that they may become more Christlike.

Despite its status as a mission and the lack of a full time resident pastor most of the time, the deep faith and piety of the parishioners has been clearly expressed in many different ways. Not the least in importance is the fact that two of its men have been ordained to the priesthood and two of its daughters have



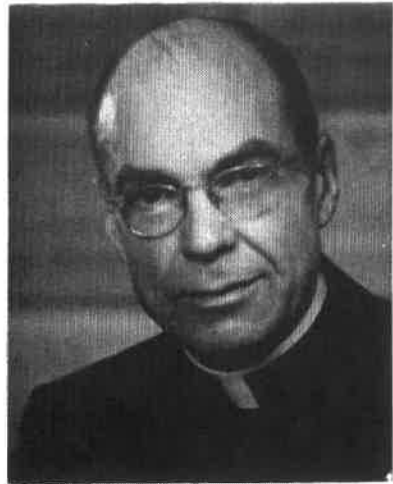
Altar Boys, 1957

Frone Row, Left to Rights Maynard Theis, James Koenig, Pat Flynn, Dan Christle.

Back Row, Left to Rights Donald Moyer, Francis Arens, Charles Rick, James Valiant.

entered the religious life as sisters. The priests are Father Chrysostum Schreiner of the Order of St. Benedict, ordained at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota on June 29, 1884, who died on January 3, 1928; and Father Joseph Hannan, also a Benedictine who was ordained at the St. Paul Seminary in June, 1913 and is now stationed at Assumption Abbey in Richardton, North Dakota. The nus are: Sister M. Lucida, Miss Margaret Jackman, who entered the Congregation of St. Joseph in 1913 and died in 1935; Sister M. Bruce, Miss Marie Flynn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pat Flynn, who entered the Order of St. Benedict in 1952 and is now stationed at a Nursing Home in Staples, Minnesota.

The following men have sacrificed their time and efforts for the welfare of the parish since it was first organized, in serving as trustees: John Dougherty, Sr., Patrick Casey, Sr., M. J. Flynn, Dennis McCarthy, Chris Baden, John Sullivan, Michael Murphy,



Father C. R. Foley

Philip Turck, T. J. Murphy, Patrick Flynn, Thomas Farley, E. J. Boullion, Matthew Flynn, James McCarthy, Edward Boullion, and the present incumbents, Ray Koenig and Matt Flynn. The officers of the Parish Cemetery Association are: Ray Arens, James McCusker and Fabian McCarthy.

According to the most recent figures available there are at present fifty-three children of pre-school age, seventy-two in grade school, twenty-three in high school and ten young adults out of high school. Unfortunately there is no complete list at present of the young men and women of the parish who are serving in the armed forces of our country.

Since the Men's Club disbanded a few years ago, there is no formal organization of the men of the parish at the present time. Nevertheless, they have in the past always been quick to volunteer their services in performing many tasks for the general welfare of the parish and continue to do so now. With their cheerful and generous cooperation they considerably have lightened the load of responsibility of the priests in the maintenance of the parish buildings, as well as in many other worthwhile projects.

The women's Altar & Rosary Society has been active for many years in the parish and even a partial list of their praiseworthy accomplishments would take up far more space than we have at



Fr. V. J. Hope

our disposal. Besides putting on the Annual Parish Dinner and other Social Activities, which raise a considerable sum every year to help keep parish finances out of the red, they assume responsibility for the care and furnishing of the church, altar, sanctuary and sacristy as well as of the parish house. All the members may well be proud of what their Society has accomplished both in the past as well as in the present.

Our Parish Choir has a long history and the present group maintains the high standards set by those of past generations. Under the capable guidance of Mrs. Raymond Koenig, organist and director, they contribute that indispensable element of sacred music to the worship of God, at the Sunday High Mass, at the great festivals like Christmas, Holy Week and Easter, as well as at Lenten devotions, Forty Hours devotion, Wedding masses and Funerals. The members of the choir are: Mrs. Gerald Kielty, Mrs. Wilfred Rick, Misses Patricia Shaw, Joan Rosenow, Elaine Nothnagel, Ellen McCann, Darlene Rohrbeck, Janet Crusoe, Patricia Valiant and Sylvia Theis.

In concluding this brief sketch of the history of St. Gertrude's Parish in Forest City, the compiler is well aware that mistakes and omissions will come to light very quickly, perhaps before the book is off the presses. All that can be said is that they were not intentional, least of all any personal slight to anyone living or dead, and the only excuse is the lack of more complete records and the shortness of the time allotted for the task. Although no one else can be blamed for any errors discovered in our story, credit for inaugurating the work and collecting most of the material used must be given to many others, including Father Clarence Foley of St. Philip's Church, Litchfield; Mrs. Joe Flynn and her daughter, Dorothy, now Mrs. Stanley Tacheny of Litchfield. In addition to the personal recollections of some of the older parishioners, the sources of much of the information set down in the previous pages are: Father Lawrence Cosgrove's *Golden Jubilee Parish Book*, 1917, Lamson's *Meeker County History*, 1937, Father Jerome Quinn's *Dissertation on the History of St. Philip's Parish, Litchfield, Minnesota*, 1951, and *The History of the Church of St. John of Darwin*, 1953.

September 21, 1957

THE END

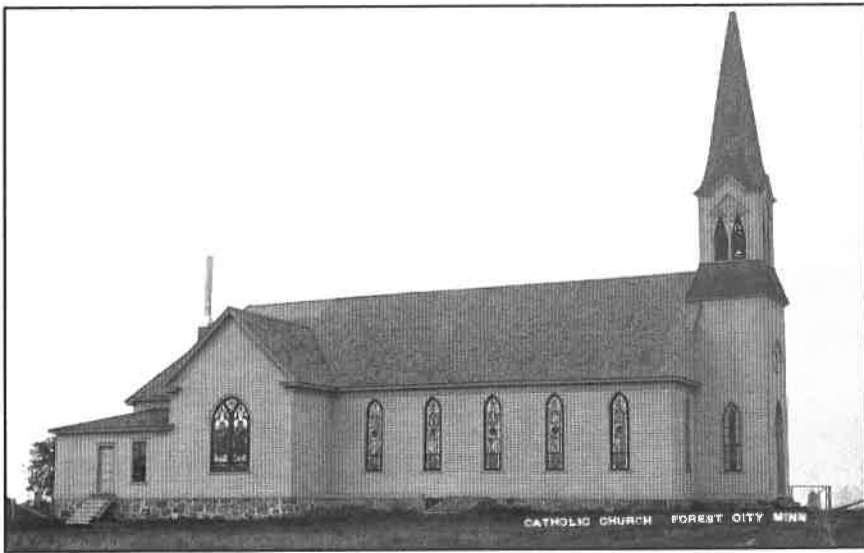
MEMBERS OF ST. GERTRUDE'S PARISH IN 1957

Mr. & Mrs. Nick Arens	Mr. Alvin McCusker
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Arens	Mr. & Mrs. Edmund Meyers
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Asfeld	Mrs. Matt Moser
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Baden	Mr. Joseph Moser
Mr. & Mrs. Milton Baker	Miss Dolores Moser
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Becker	Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Moyer
Mr. & Mrs. Nick Becker	Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Nothnagel
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Becker	Mr. Lawrence Nothnagel
Mr. & Mrs. John Bollin	Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Nohner
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Boulion	Miss Shirley Nothnagel
Mr. & Mrs. John Boyer	Miss Ann O'Keefe
Mrs. Ambrose Brutger	Miss Kate O'Keefe
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Christle	Mr. Tom O'Keefe
Mr. & Mrs. Harold Crusoe	Mr. & Mrs. William O'Keefe
Mr. & Mrs. John Crusoe	Mr. Ray O'Keefe
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Ertle	Mr. Francis Pennertz
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Farley	Mrs. Howard Pennertz
Mr. Richard Farley	Mr. & Mrs. Peter Pennertz
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Fisher	Mr. & Mrs. Sylvester Quast
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Flynn	Mr. & Mrs. John Ranthum
Mr. Donald Flynn	Mr. & Mrs. Walter Ranthum
Mr. Matt Flynn	Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred Rick
Mrs. Pat Flynn	Mr. & Mrs. Ed Rohrbeck
Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Frederick	Mr. & Mrs. Walter Rohrbeck
Mr. & Mrs. Hilary Garding	Mr. & Mrs. Rudy Rosenow
Mrs. Mary Harbinson	Miss Frances Rosenow
Mr. Tom Harbinson	Mrs. Kenneth Scholtes
Mr. & Mrs. George Hartneck	Mrs. Mary Scholtes
Mrs. Ray Hennessey	Mr. Leo Scholtes
Mrs. August Holmgren	Mr. & Mrs. Henry Schoolmeesters
Mr. & Mrs. G. A. Kielty	Mr. & Mrs. Leander Schoolmeesters
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Kielty	Mr. & Mrs. Norbert Schoolmeesters
Mrs. Wilfred Knutson	Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Schreiner
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Koenig	Mrs. Sophie Schreiner
Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Loch	Mr. & Mrs. Milton Shoutz
Mr. & Mrs. Tom McCann	Mrs. Lloyd Shoutz
Mr. James McCann	Miss Loretta Schulte
Mr. & Mrs. Fabian McCarthy	Mrs. Anna Shaw
Mr. & Mrs. Jim McCusker	Miss Patricia Shaw

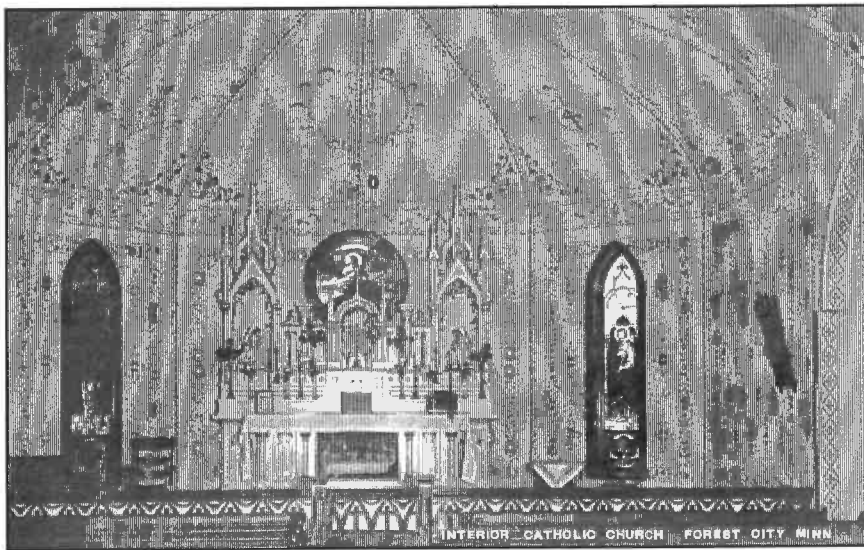
MEMBERS OF ST. GERTRUDE'S PARISH IN 1957

Mr. & Mrs. James Shaw	Mr. Vernon Watkins
Mr. James Shea	Mrs. Anna Weiss
Mr. & Mrs. Delmar Taylor	Mr. George Weber
Mr. & Mrs. William Theis	Miss Theresa Weber
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Turck	Mr. & Mrs. Al Westrup
Miss Helen Ann Turck	Mr. & Mrs. Clem Wimmer
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Turck	Mr. & Mrs. Louis Wimmer
Miss Lena Turck	Mr. Lawrence Wimmer
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Valiant	Mr. & Mrs. John Wimmer
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Valiant	Miss Rose Wimmer
Mrs. Lloyd Valiant	Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Walters
Mr. Fred Waltzing	Mr. Joe Young
Mr. & Mrs. James Watkins	Mr. & Mrs. Leo Young





St. Gertrude's Church
1904



The Next Fifty Years

1957-2007

Written by Gloriette Wimmer



Church of St. Gertrude

Mission Statement

We, St. Gertrude's Catholic Community, are proud of our history of reaching out and caring for the people of rural Forest City for 150 years.

We seek to form ourselves in the faith, to celebrate God's presence in our lives, to reach out to those in need, to build God's Kingdom of peace and justice; and to be the "roots" people look to when death calls upon their family.

We pray that we, in union with our neighboring churches, may honor our heritage and continue to grow and flourish as the concrete, real, and recognizable presence of Christ in our corner of the world.



BISHOP JOHN C. NIENSTADT

Bishop of New Ulm

Born March 18, 1947

Consecrated Bishop June 12, 2001

March 2007 - Pope Benedict XVI appointed Bishop Nienstadt as the coadjutor Archbishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and he will minister as apostolic administrator of the New Ulm Diocese until a new bishop is appointed.

The special term "coadjutor" indicates that upon the retirement of Archbishop Harry Flynn, Archbishop Nienstadt will automatically become the Archbishop of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Diocese.



In loving memory of

BISHOP ALPHONSE J. SCHLADWEILER

Born July 18, 1902

Consecrated Bishop January 29, 1958

Died April 3, 1996

MAY HE REST IN PEACE



In loving memory of

BISHOP RAYMOND O. LUCKER

Born February 24, 1927
 Consecrated Bishop September 8, 1971
 Died September 19, 2001

MAY HE REST IN PEACE

The Next Fifty Years

1957-2007

The Church of St. Gertrude has continued to be a thriving, faith-filled center in the community for 150 years and became part of the New Ulm Diocese November 18, 1957, when Pope Pius XII established the new diocese which consisted of the western part of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Monsignor Alphonse Schladweiler was appointed the first bishop.

Father Vincent Hope, having served the parish for almost four years, June 1957-February, 1961, was succeeded by Father Germain Rademacher until September 1962.

Father Rademacher directed the redecorating of the church in 1962. The upper section of the altar was removed, the circular window in the sanctuary was closed up; the wall behind and above the altar was beautifully decorated by DeNardo Decorating Studio of St. Paul.

A large cross, donated by James and Harriet McCusker and Mrs. Raymond McMullen in memory of Mary Kielty, was placed on the panel behind the altar.

Men and boys of the parish shortened the pews and kneelers to provide an aisle on each side of the church.

Each envelope holder was asked to contribute \$30.00 for the redecorating project.

Father Edward Clemens and Father John Brunner of St. Anthony Church in Watkins were pastors of St. Gertrude's September 1962 to September 1964, when Father Frederick Fink was appointed pastor and was also in charge of St. Columban Church, rural Greenleaf, until it closed its doors in 1971.

A parish renewal program had begun April 1963 in the diocese, with diocesan-wide distribution of Liturgy Constitution to all the priests.

September 1964 instruction of the Sacred Congregation Rites stated in Article 91: "It is proper that the main altar be constructed separately from the wall so that one may go around it with ease so that celebration of Mass may take place facing the people."

The centuries-long custom of saying Mass entirely in Latin was abrogated. V-Day: the first Sunday of Advent, November 29, 1964, was the day in the United States that the vernacular was introduced into the Eucharistic Sacrifice. (Vernacular Replaces Latin)

Laymen began an active role in Mass as commentators and lectors. The first commentators and lectors at St. Gertrude's in 1964 were James Shea, Ed Meyer, Leander Schoolmeesters, Wilfred Rick and Patrick Finnegan.

The U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops did away with the rule of not eating meat on Friday, November 18, 1966.

A member of St. Gertrude's, Sister Kathryn Mary Schoolmeesters, daughter of Leander and Ann (Nistler) Schoolmeesters, made her religious profession as a School Sister of Notre Dame on July 17, 1967, at Provincial House Chapel on Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, MN. She took her final vows on August 4, 1973.

Church of St. Gertrude elected their first parish pastoral council in 1967.

Under the direction of Father Fink, the church interior underwent extensive renovation in 1968. The

remaining part of the old altar was removed. An oak wall was built behind the altar, the two stained glass windows in the sanctuary were closed up, communion railing removed, pews refinished, confessional, sacristy and choir loft were relocated.

Father Fink served the parish for seven years, 1964-1971, and was succeeded by Father Harry Tasto.

Father Tasto, an experienced carpenter, exposed the beautiful circular window in the sanctuary, which had been closed up for fifteen years. Father Tasto was the last resident pastor at St. Gertrude's, having served the parish for nine years, 1971-1980. He was succeeded by Father Robert Merth. Father Merth was appointed pastor at St. Gertrude's and Church of Our Lady in Manannah until June 1985, when Father Paul Schumacher was appointed pastor at St. Gertrude's and Church of St. John the Baptist in Darwin.

In the early 1980's, parishioners in the RENEW Program organized the Youth Group, the future leaders of the church. To fully involve the youth in the church and community they participated in projects and various other activities, serving their Lord and growing in their Christian faith.

The first Annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service was on November 27, 1985, at Ostmark Lutheran Church, rural Watkins, led by Pastor Timothy Thoresen of Ostmark, Pastor Lois Vetvick of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ, and Father Paul Schumacher of St. Gertrude's, both in Forest City. The service is followed by refreshments and fellowship. The service is hosted each year by one of the three churches on Thanksgiving Eve.

Bishop Raymond Lucker, second bishop of the New Ulm Diocese, was the first bishop in the nation to appoint pastoral administrators as leaders of parishes in March 1981. St. Gertrude's was blessed with its first pastoral administrator when Sister Kathleen Fernholz was appointed to St. Gertrude's in September 1987. She moved into the rectory, which had been unoccupied since 1980.

Father Paul and Sister Kay were with the following ministries:

Fr. Paul—Baptisms, weddings, funerals, religious education K-through adult in both parishes, Liturgy Group at St. John's.

Sr. Kay—Baptism preparation, Social Concerns, Agenda and Enrichment in both parishes, Liturgy Group at St. Gertrude's.

Father Schumacher served the parish for three years, 1985-1988. Father Fred Fink returned as Sacramental Minister at St. Gertrude's and Pastor at St. John's in Darwin.

The last Saturday night Mass at St. Gertrude's was September 3, 1988. Beginning Sunday, September 11, there is only one Mass, on Sunday morning.

The first Finance Council was appointed in 1989—Wilfred Knutson, Reid Van Brunt and Steve Becker. Also in 1989, the Altar and Rosary Society's name was changed to Council of Catholic Women—CCW.

St. Gertrude's first parish pictorial directory was published in 1990.

December 1990, used room dividers were installed in the church hall for religious education classes. The dividers were donated by the Church of St. Willibrord in Gibbon, following a fire in their church on Good Friday.

Sister Kay Fernholz resigned in March 1991. Tom Johnson came on as pastoral minister in July 1991. Tom, wife Jeanne, Matthew 10, Benjamin 7 and Rachel 5, moved into the rectory. Tom was installed Pastoral Administrator February 3, 1993.

St. Gertrude's celebrated its 135th anniversary in the 125 year old church November 15, 1992, with 1:00pm Mass, followed by potluck dinner.

The first annual "Good Friday Way of the Cross Walk" took place April 9, 1993. Three area churches participated: Ostmark Lutheran, St. Matthew's United Church of Christ, and St. Gertrude's Catholic. Men carry the homemade wooden cross and the group of followers stop at various sites along the way around Forest City. Scripture is read, with prayers and singing. The group then drives their vehicles to Ostmark Lutheran Cemetery for scripture, prayer and singing. The one-hour service concludes at the host church where a soup supper is served.

During the summer of 1994, the attached single garage on the rectory was dismantled and replaced with a larger garage and office.

The Council of Catholic Women, CCW, disbanded December 1995. Committees were formed: Worship and Spirituality, Education, and Social Concerns.

Father Paul Schumacher returned as Sacramental Minister at St. Gertrude's and Pastor at St. John's in Darwin, effective June 1999

until June 2000, when Father Patrick Luke Casey was assigned as Sacramental Minister at St. Gertrude's and Pastor at St. John's in Darwin. Father Pat is a son of the late Patrick Joseph "Joe" and Florence (Sexton) Casey of Litchfield, and great-grandson of Patrick Casey (1816-1894), Darwin Township. Patrick Casey was a trustee of St. Gertrude's parish when the present, historic yet sturdy, beautiful church building was erected in 1867, 140 years ago (ref: page 10).

The early pioneers often walked from their homes to Forest City to get instructions in the Catholic faith, at times walking barefoot and putting their shoes on before entering the church. The Caseys were members of St. Gertrude's until the Church of St. John the Baptist in Darwin was built in 1878.

In compliance with regulations, the worship area of St. Gertrude's church became handicapped accessible in September 2001.

Tom Johnson resigned as Pastoral Administrator effective July 31, 2002. The Johnson family moved to Vernon Center, MN.

Kathleen Landreville arrived January 2003 as a Pastoral Administrator Intern, and moved

into the rectory. A security system was installed in the rectory and the church.

Kathleen was installed Pastoral Administrator July 17, 2005. She resigned October 8, 2006 and lost her three and a half year battle with cancer on December 13, 2006. Mass of Christian burial was at the Church of the Risen Savior in Burnsville, MN. Burial was in her hometown of Hermansville, Michigan. She is survived by her children: Rick (Mary) Schroeder, Michael (Suzanne) Schroeder, Dan (Kristal) Schroeder, and Mary Jane Kernosky, and seven grandchildren. May she rest in peace.

Since 1957, the following parishioners have willingly and faithfully served as trustees of the church: Matt Flynn, Ray Koenig, Ray O'Keefe, Ed Meyer, Ray Arens, Mabel Ziegler, James Shea, Wilfred Knutson, Reid Van Brunt, Patricia Mares, James Ziegler, Jane Fisher. Present incumbents: Janet Hendrickson and Bruce Kiehn.

The beautiful music for Masses, weddings, funerals, etc. has been provided by organists: Ella Koenig, Mary (Young) Bacon, Maureen (McCarthy) Mahoney, Margaret Schoolmeesters, Betty (Kuechle) Carlo, and present

organist, Cindy Knutson, also leading the choir of: Jane Fisher, Don and Juanita Arens, Lou & Carole Huber, James and Marcia Ziegler, Nancy Moyer, Karen Marsh, Mary Knisley and Patricia Munson.

With the cooperation of the entire parish, several fundraisers are held annually: Men's Pancake, Sausage and Potato Salad Supper, St. Gertrude's Fish Fry, Razzle Dazzle Raffle (replaces the fall festival) Ladies Night Out Christmas Dinner, and Bake Sales.

The women of the parish volunteer their services by serving a meal for the local Bloodmobile workers, serve birthday cake and coffee at the local nursing homes.

Parishioners donate to the local food shelf, to the white sock and t-shirt project, which goes to local charities.

The 139-year-old church's worship area underwent extensive renovation April-June 2006. The ceiling was repaired; walls were insulated and painted. New oak window trim and new carpet were installed.

Many parishioners have served on committees, councils, etc. Serving in these ministries in 2007:

Parish Pastoral Council:

Father Casey – pastor; Carole Huber – chairperson; Donald Arens, Joan Turck, Darala Loch, Patricia Mares, Steve Hendrickson, Patricia Munson; Janet Hendrickson – trustee.

Finance Council:

Father Casey – pastor; Howard Pennertz - chairman; Peg Shaw – bookkeeper; Karen Crusoe, Kevin Root, Steve Turck, Cindy Warren, Jim Ziegler; Bruce Kiehn – trustee.

Eucharistic Ministers:

Lisa Cox, Jane Fisher, Kathy Hansen, Nancy Moyer, Marg Theis, Bruce Kiehn, Duane Mares, Bob Markgraf, Chuck Schoolmeesters.

Lectors:

Kim Renner, Melissa Sackett, Judy Barka, Judy Markgraf, Mike Kramer, Howard Pennertz.

Cantors:

Mary Knisley, Patricia Munson, Juanita Arens, Nancy Moyer.

Altar Servers:

Alan Barka, David Barka, Tori Barka, Katlyn Kiehn, Dillon Lucken, Krista Miller, Kim Miller, Joe Valiant, Daniel Cox, David Cox, Adam Schoolmeesters, Donald Arens, Bruce Kiehn.

Sacristans:

Donna Becker, Jane Fisher, Nancy Moyer, Patricia Mares, Jo Valiant.

Ushers:

Jon Barka, Luverne Kuechle, Adrian Meyer, Art Rick, Maynard Theis, Steve Turck, Chuck Rick, Phillip Valiant, Jim Ziegler.

Religious Education Teachers:

Kim Renner, Jill Root, Cindy Knutson, Sarah Marsh, Darala Loch, Lisa Cox.

Confirmation Instructors:

Bruce Kiehn, Judy Barka

Office:

Carole Huber, Millie Turck.

Worship and Spirituality Committee:

Jane Fisher, Kathy Hansen, Cindy Knutson, Joan Turck, Donna Schreiner, Mary Knisley, Juanita Arens.

Social Concerns Committee:

Carole Huber, Marg Theis, Gen Rick, Marge Rick, Rose Ruprecht.

Education Committee:

Lisa Cox, Kim Renner, Darala Loch, Jill Root.

Greeters:

Al and Pam Miller family, Chuck and Linda Schoolmeesters family, Ken and Kim Renner family, Lou

and Carole Huber, Bob and Donna Schreiner, Howard and Millie Turck, Jim and Cindy Theis, Chuck and Marge Rick, Mike and Audre Kramer, Don and Juanita Arens, Art and Gen Rick.

Cemetery Board:

Phillip Valiant, Art Rick, Chuck Schoolmeesters, Chuck Rick.

Quilting Club:

Patricia Mares, Ardes Shea, Rose Stewart, Camilla Katlack, Florence Worden, Ann Schoolmeesters.

St. Gertrude's most recent records indicate there are approximately 125 registered families in the parish, 23 students in religious education classes and 13 students in the confirmation class.

Parishioners submitted recipes for "A Taste of Heaven's Cookbook", which was published February 2007 as a fundraiser for the 150th Anniversary.

Cookbook Committee:

Maxine Knisley, Jane Fisher, Donna Becker and Marg Theis.

Parishioners completed a family quilt block for the parish quilt, which was assembled by Jane Fisher and Patricia Mares. The quilt will be displayed in the church.

A lifelong member, Howard Turck, was baptized September 9, 1923, and was also confirmed at St. Gertrude's. Howard, an active parishioner, has served on parish council and various committees in the church.

This concludes the history of St. Gertrude's Church, compiled and edited by Gloriette Wimmer, Ann Schoolmeesters, Camilla Katlack, Howard and Millie Turck.

150th ANNIVERSARY

A 150th Anniversary celebration is planned for August 26, 2007, at the church, beginning with Mass, with Bishop Nienstadt as celebrant, followed by a catered noon meal, an afternoon of entertainment, a program, music, games, and reminiscing.

We ask God's blessing and guidance as we continue our faithful journey in the coming years.

150th Anniversary Committee:

Jane Fisher, Marg Theis, Carole Huber, Lisa Cox, Gloriette Wimmer, Ann Zillmer, Camilla Katlack, Ann Schoolmeesters, Patricia Mares, Howard and Millie Turck.

2007 Membership

Ahlbrecht, Jean
 Anderson, Mike & Lynn
 Arens, Don & Juanita
 Arens, Mike & MaryLou

 Bacon, (Robert) & Mary
 Barka, Randy & Judy
 Becker, Gerald & Carol
 Becker, Robert & Carole Lou
 Becker, Roxanne
 Becker, Steve & Donna
 Berg, (Vernon) & Ellen
 Bridge, Kerry & Mary

 Cox, (Tom) & Lisa
 Crusoe, David & Karen

 Duclos, Mike & Kathy

 Ertl, Dianna
 Ertl, Richard & Kim

 Felling, Bernard & Gladys
 Ficker, Chad & Lori
 Ficker, Conrad & Jane
 Fisher, Richard & Jane

 Garding, Chris & Brigitte
 Garding, Deb
 Garding, Jerry & Betty
 Garding, LeRoy & Melody
 Geislinger, Elroy & Lori
 Gollier, Eric

 Hagedorn, Sylvia
 Hanley, Mike & Elly
 Hansen, Bob & Kathy

Hendrickson, Steve & Janet
 Herker, Tom & Laurie
 Herker, Tony
 Holker, Albert & Erin
 Holmgren, (Travis) & Sara
 Hornburg, (Greg) & Aimee
 Huber, Lou & Carole

 Jacques, Stan & Sue
 Jaquith (Jared) & Melissa

 Katlack, Camilla
 Kiehn, Bruce & Joyce
 Kilty, (Gerry) & Breckett
 Kilty, Marna
 Knisley, Bob & Maxine
 Knisley, Mark & Mary
 Knutson, Wilfred & Mary
 Knutson, Dave & Cindy
 Kramer, Mike & Audre
 Kuechle, Luverne & Joan
 Kuechle, (David) & Pam
 Kuseske, Jeff

 Laney, Jon & Gloria
 Lindberg, Matthew & Mary
 Loch, Dale & Mary
 Loch, Darren & Darala
 Loch, Gail
 Loch, Steve & Julie
 Lucken, Thomas & Stephanie

 Mares, Duane & Patricia
 Markgraf, Bob & Judy
 Marsh, Harry & Karen
 Marsh, Sarah
 McCarthy, Jim & (Karen)

McCarthy, Steve & (Becky)
 Meyer, Adrian & (Suzanne)
 Mies, Ivan & Donna
 Miller, Al & Pam
 Movrich, Michael & Heather
 Moyer, Don & Nancy
 Moyer, Larry & Cathy
 Moyer, Kyle
 Moyer, Thomas & Marie
 Munson, Roger & Patricia

 Niewind, Sandry

 O'Donaghue, Phil and Susannah

 Pennertz, Howard & Patricia
 Pennertz, Dorothy
 Pennertz, Joseph & Jennifer

 Quinn, Tom & Donna

 Ramthun, Richard
 Randt, Jessica
 Rathbun, Mike & Julie
 Renner, Ken & Kim
 Rick, Art & Gen
 Rick, Brenda
 Rick, Chuck & Marge
 Rick, Larry & (Karla)
 Root, Kevin & Jill
 Ruprecht, Jerry & Rose

 Sackett, (Paul) & Melissa
 Scholtes, Kenny & Betty
 Schoolmeesters, Ann
 Schoolmeesters, Chuck & Linda
 Schreiner, Bob & Donna
 Shaw, Chuck & Peg
 Shea, (Ardes)
 Shnyder, Anthony & (Michele)

Shoutz, Lloyd & Sharon
 Shoutz, Lloyd Jr. & Irene
 Slater, (Steve) & Melissa
 Smith, (Troy) & Janice
 Stewart, Rose
 Stinson, (Eric) & Shanda

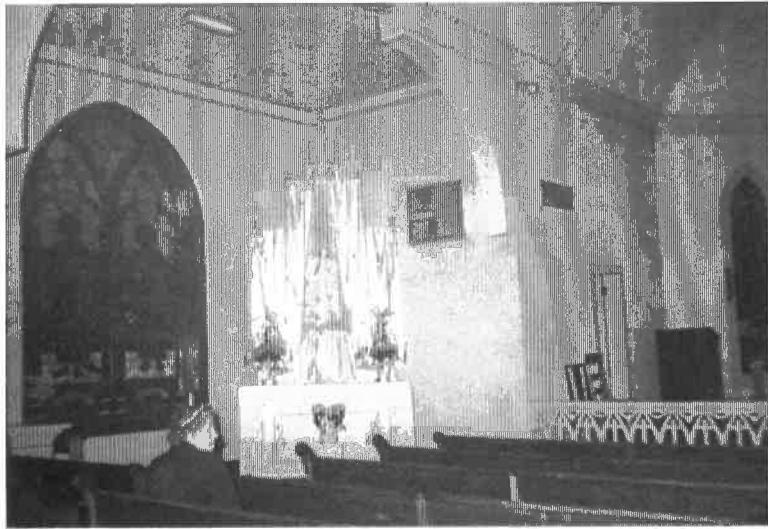
 Theis, Jim & Cindy
 Theis, Maynard & Marg
 Turck, Howard & Millie
 Turck, Steve & Joan

 Valiant, Larry & Debbie
 Valiant, Lee & Holly
 Valiant, Lee Jr. (Butch)
 Valiant, Phillip & Jo
 Valiant, Sandra

 Warren, (Mike) & Cindy
 Wimmer, Clem & Gloriette
 Wimmer, John & Joan
 Wimmer, John Jr.
 Wimmer, Tom
 Winter, Harry
 Worden, Florence

 Yanish, Paul & Debra

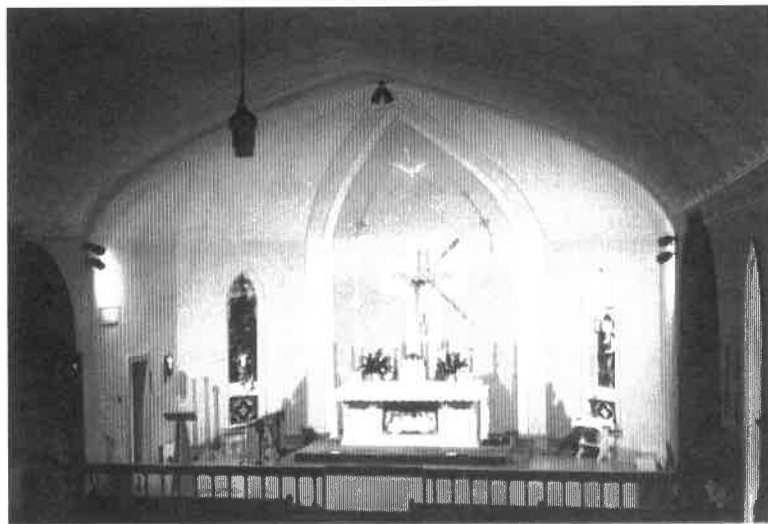
 Ziegler, Jim & (Marcia)
 Ziegler, Joseph & (Kristi)
 Zillmer, (Rick) & Ann



Side altar 1958



Sanctuary 1978



Sanctuary 1962



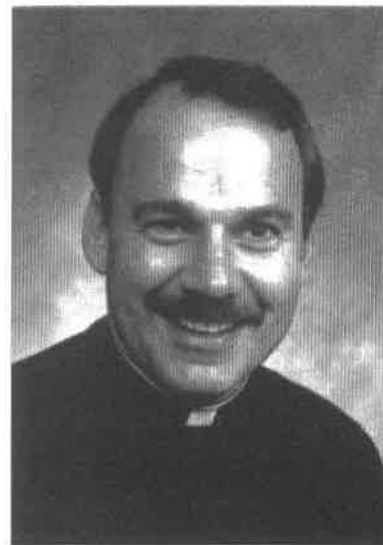
Sanctuary 2007



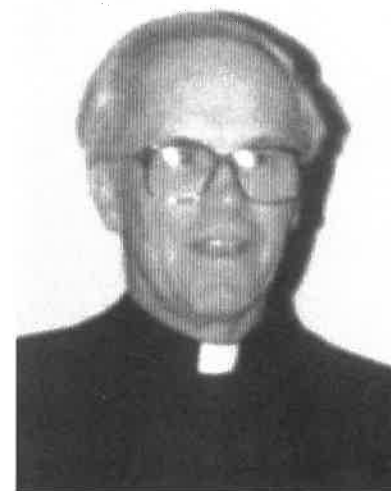
Fr. Germain Rademacher



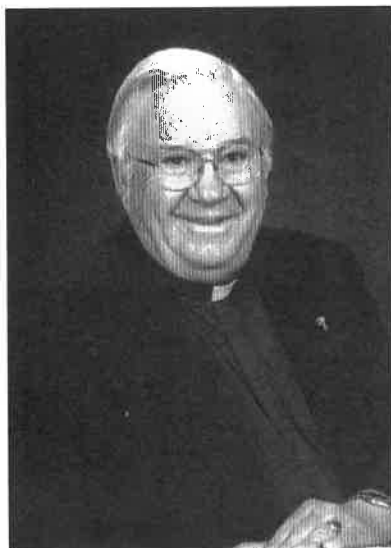
Fr. Edward Clemens



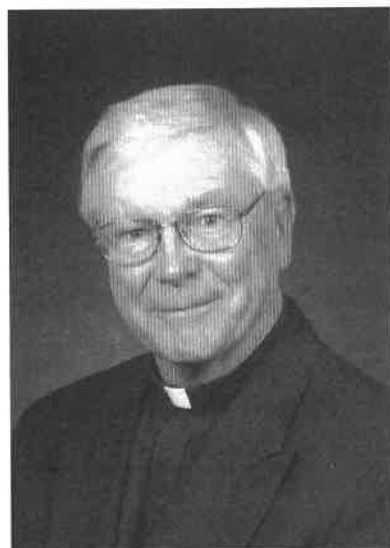
Fr. Harry Tasto



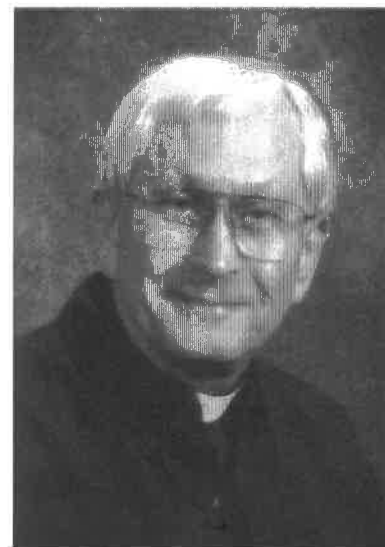
Fr. Robert Merth



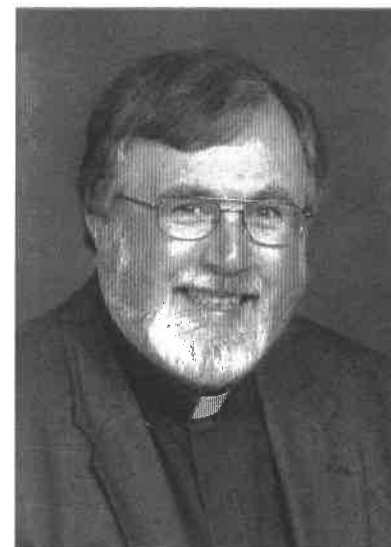
Fr. John Brunner



Fr. Frederick Fink



Fr. Paul Schumacher



Fr. Patrick Casey



Sr. Kay Fernholz



Mr. Tom Johnson



Kathleen Landreville



Sr. Kathryn Schoolmeesters