



A History 1984 – 1999

By Jack Young

INTRODUCTION

"LEST WE FORGET THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE ..."

-ANONYMOUS

This small history was written so the struggles and hard work of the pioneer parishioners of St. Francis by the Sea Parish would not soon be forgotten. That those who come after and for many years in the future will know of the determination they had in building a great Catholic community. There is always a risk of offending someone whose name may be overlooked, but some few people did so much early on that their efforts cannot go without mention. Dick and Carol Teasel (deceased), Bob Grohman, Nina and Tom McCunniff, Bill and Claire Formwalt, Bob and Stella Faught, Bert Connor (deceased), Fred and Lynn Kolowich, Tom Mungenast (deceased), John Eck, Mike Malanick, Art Mueller, Paul and Virginia Duval, Joe Burke, Rick Minson, David Wilhelm, Skip Wallace, Polly Foster, and Claude Gaudette. Some of these people were kind enough to give me information for this history. A special thanks to two other people, Jim Collins of Holy Family, who let me use some of his history of the early church, and my daughter Meg Geddy, Ph.D., who edited this work.

PROLOGUE

LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF YOUR PEACE,
WHERE THERE IS HATRED, LET ME SOW LOVE,
WHERE THERE IS INJURY, PARDON LORD,
WHERE THERE IS DOUBT, FAITH,
WHERE THERE IS DESPAIR, HOPE,
WHERE THERE IS DARKNESS, LIGHT
WHERE THERE IS SADNESS, JOY,
OH DIVINE MASTER, GRANT THAT I MAY NOT
SO MUCH SEEK TO BE CONSOLED AS TO CONSOLE,
TO BE UNDERSTOOD, AS TO UNDERSTAND,
TO BE LOVED AS TO LOVE,
FOR IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE,
IT IS IN PARDONING THAT WE ARE PARDONED,
AND IT IS IN DYING THAT WE ARE BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE.

This prayer, seen in the calligraphy on the back wall of our church, sets the mood of how St. Francis of Assisi has entered the lives of all the parishioners.

IN THE BEGINNING

After Columbus discovered America, Spain eventually established its western headquarters in Havana, Cuba. Spanish soldiers and priests explored southeastern North America, and established forts and missions hand in hand with the other. Even before St. Augustine, Florida was founded, colonies were built on the Rappanhanock River in Virginia, St. Elena Island (Parris Island) and St. Catherine's Island (Georgia). To secure fresh water, a necessity for sailing ships, many visits were made by Spanish vessels to Spanish Wells on Hilton Head Island. The Spaniard, Lucas De Allyon, founded the first settlement in South Carolina on June 24, 1521 at the mouth of what is probably the Santee River. Two Dominican priests took care of the spiritual needs of this community of about 600 people. Many of these inhabitants died, and the remaining 150 souls returned to Hispaniola in 1526.

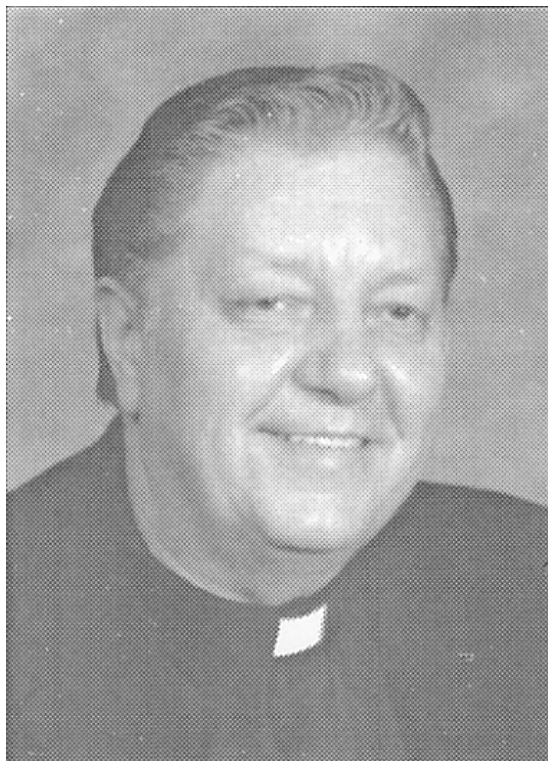
Jesuits eventually took care of the remaining settlements along the southeastern seaboard until 1573. After that the Franciscans were assigned to these missions, and it became the Golden Era of the Franciscans as they extended their religious influence throughout this southeastern region. Many Indian tribes were converted to Catholicism in an attempt to protect them from the harsh demands of their Spanish conquerors. As Spanish influence waned, the British King, Charles II had his forces explore and conquer many of these former Spanish settlements. At the same time, the King deeded with impunity these lands to Lord Proprietors as rewards for past services, and William Milton began to explore the South Carolina coast, making arrangements for new settlers from Barbados. The Franciscans began to lose their influence as the English moved in. Hilton Head Island, then known as Trench's Island, was named after a senior overseer. After the Lord Proprietors sold their interests back to the Crown, harsh anti-Catholic penal laws were enforced. Because of this, most Catholics in this region went underground until the American Revolution in 1776.

It was not until 1820 that John England was named the first Bishop of a new Diocese that included Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, and was headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina. Not much is known of the Catholic Church on Hilton Head until 1864 when a church building was constructed to accommodate the large Federal military and civilian population. When Fort Walker was captured by the North forces, the island was used as an ordnance and refueling depot. Mitchelville was the town created, population about 50,000. The first Mass was celebrated on August 7, 1864 in the church building. This building lasted until April 5, 1868 when it was destroyed by a hurricane. The war over, most of the population of the boomtown, Mitchelville, dispersed and the responsibility for the Catholics on Hilton Head Island was assumed by St. Peters Church in Beaufort. About 120 black Catholics still lived on and around the island but had no church until a Mrs. March built one on her plantation on Hutchinson's Island. It burned down in 1869. Another church was finally built in its place with a grant of \$400 from then Bishop Robert Lynch. This tiny building served the Catholic population until the James E Byrnes Bridge was built in 1956. Sporadic visits to Hilton Head were made by priests during this time, but with so few Catholics actually living on the island, the Catholic Church almost died out.

In 1961, the Sea Pines Company functioned as an advertising and sales organization for their new development and attracted national attention. Two Catholic executives of the company invited Father John Simonin of Charleston to say Mass at the Hilton Head Inn. He agreed to say Mass from June 1 until Labor Day on Sundays at 11:30 AM. Forty people attended the first Mass and from then on the attendance grew, and Father Simonin told the bishop he thought it would become a permanent congregation so they would need a church. Sometimes it was necessary to move the

Mass location to the Adventure Inn because of space commitments for meetings at the Hilton Head Inn. Because of future need for a possible new parish, a second collection was established to build a permanent church on the island. Hilton Head was raised to the status of a mission station, and Father Paul Seitz was appointed as pastor of this mission in 1966; consequentially all Masses were moved to the Adventure Inn. At times there was not enough room, and the attendees spilled over into the bar room. As part of the mission Father Seitz still said Sunday Mass at both Hardeeville and Pinckney Colony before coming on to the island for the 11:30 Mass.

Eventually the Sea Pines Company donated land for several church congregations on the island, the Catholic Church being one of them. A piece of property on Cordillo Parkway donated by the company was judged too small for future growth. Negotiations to exchange the property with the Sea Pines Company were completed in 1968, so that the present site of Holy Family was secured. The first church was built and named the Church of the Holy Family but was eventually outgrown. It was from this beginning in 1983 that St. Francis evolved with seed money of \$40,000 from the Holy Family building fund and was able to break off and start the new parish.



FATHER JOSEPH MAJEWSKI C.Ss.R
"OUR FOUNDING FATHER"

Father Joe, as he was affectionately known, was born of a modest family in Brooklyn, N.Y. Anyone that knew him had to know from his accent that he was pure "Brooklynese," and that he talked straight from the heart. He left his home at the age of 13 to go to the Redemptorist minor seminary in Northeast, Pa., near Erie. He became a priest at the age of 26. The C.Ss.R. behind his name stands for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The Redemptorists are basically a missionary order, working in Puerto Rico, South and Central America as well as the southeastern part of this country. They also maintained some non-missionary parishes, but now their mission is to serve the poor.

He had already been a priest for 17 years and was pastor of a Redemptorist parish in Opelika, Florida, when chance would have it that he attended a dedication of a new church in Orangeburg, S.C. by the bishop of Charleston, Ernest Unterkoefler. During his stay, the bishop asked the Vice Provincial of the Redemptorists, John Lehrhinen, also in attendance, if his order could open a second parish on Hilton Head Island. Without hesitation, Father John said he would open a parish, knowing that the Bishop would give the new parish and priest his support. Father John leaned over to Father Joe and asked him if he would like to be transferred to Hilton Head. Father Joe said he would, because the parish in Florida, of which he was pastor, was 65-70% Hispanic speaking and Father Joe didn't speak Spanish. Another Redemptorist had just come back from Puerto Rico who did speak Spanish and thus could take over Father Joe's duties in Opelika. Therefore the life of

Father Joe became intertwined with the as yet unknown parishioners of Saint Francis by the Sea Catholic Church.

He arrived on Hilton Head not knowing a soul, without a place to live, and no place in which to say Mass. He finally managed to find a condo on the third floor of a building on the north end of the island and settled in. Because of the many steps, he was reluctant to tell elderly parishioners to visit him, fearing they might fall. Then he had to have a place to say Mass on Sundays and scoured the north end of the island for any large building big enough to hold an audience, the size he wasn't sure of, or even if they would come, when he said that first Mass. He had no phone in his condo as there was a two week wait for installation so he had to use pay phones to contact these prospective locations. When he talked with people about using their building on Sundays and they told him they would get back to him, he couldn't give them a phone number, but instead had to call them. He was turned down a number of times until he talked with Torn Reilly at Crazy Crab north, the only Crazy Crab restaurant on the island at that time. Tom told him it would be fine, and "Holy Crab" was born.

The next problem was how to get any prospective parishioners to Mass on Sunday. Both Holy Family and St. Andrews at Pinckney Colony agreed to run notices in their bulletins the two weekends before the first Sunday of Advent, 1984, and Father Joe ran ads in the Island Packet. The turnout that first Mass was about 75 people. The first collection was \$102.50. The second Sunday it rose to 100 people and the parishioners along with their priest never looked back. One drawback Father Joe had in celebrating Mass at the restaurant, and later on at other sites, was that he had to carry all his vestments, liturgy, chalice, candles, wine and wafers to be consecrated, and anything else he might need, in the trunk of his car. Bob Fought was of tremendous help here, serving as the first sacristan of the parish and helping Father set up everything needed to say Mass.

With more people coming to Mass each Sunday during 1985, he knew he had to find more space, so he went to Reverend John Miller, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and the elders agreed to allow him to hold services there on Saturday evenings. They also allowed the parish to use their hall for parish dinners and get-together, permitting the new parishioners to mingle and become a closer family. This was a fine weekly arrangement that went on until the present church was built. As more space was needed for Sunday mass, Father Joe called the principal of Hilton Head Elementary School, and she allowed him to use their auditorium. Mass was celebrated from the stage, concluding the First Communion class of 1987. While the Crazy Crab on weekdays, First Presbyterian on Saturdays and Hilton Head Elementary on Sundays were not the perfect solution, the parish prospered and grew because of the faith of the people and Father Joe.

PROPERTY

During the 1970s, someone from the Diocese, had the foresight to see an expanding population on Hilton Head and bought another piece of property. With Holy Family already established on the south end of the island, they looked at property on the north end. Eventually a two acre parcel of land, plus two fingers slightly disconnected from the main acreage, bordering the Spanish Wells golf course was purchased by the Diocese. At that time this property seemed adequate on which to build a church, it was hard to imagine what could be done with the other two fingers of land that were detached. A rectory and office on those pieces of land would not be allowed because there was a "no business" restriction in that area, and it was feared that other property owners would look on those two buildings as a business. Another negative in the Spanish Wells property was the fact that it was about eight miles from Port Royal Plantation and six miles from Hilton Head Plantation, both of which would make up the bulk of the parish population.

By now the parish was growing from the original or so 100 families to standing room only during Sunday masses at the elementary school. This meant that the Spanish Wells property, while nice, would not be adequate for the church and surrounding structures to make it a community. Thus Father Joe and a committee appointed by the parish council, formed in March of 1985, went looking for a larger property, more centrally located on the north end. About this time Greenwood Development Corporation had plans to develop Palmetto Hall Plantation and the present church parcel was a part of that plantation. Father Joe, the committee, and Chuck Pigg of Greenwood Development Corporation got together and worked out a fair price for the present property, but the Diocese was reluctant to give the parish its OK to buy this land because they already owned the other piece of property on the north end. Bishop Unterkoefler was finally convinced that the Diocese could sell the other piece of property, and when Greenwood was about to take the offer off the table, he gave Father Joe the affirmative to buy the Greenwood land.

In hindsight, the new site was ideal because of its location close to the hospital and the only island nursing home at the time. While no one could foresee the widening of Beach City road at that time, the proximity to both Hilton Head and Port Royal Plantations was a plus for the bulk of the parishioners making up the parish.

BOUNDARIES OF A NEW PARISH

Bishop Unterkoefler wrote a letter to Father Joseph Majewski dated March 1, 1985. In it, the bishop stated that in as much as the people were gathering for Sunday Masses and on other occasions in anticipation of forming a parish, the Diocese was now ready to recognize the community by issuing a decree establishing the canonical boundaries. A similar letter was written to the pastor of Holy Family parish who would be losing some parishioners.

"In accordance with Canon 515:1-3 of the revised code of Canon Law of 1983 the boundaries are: Beginning at the midway point of the Intracoastal Waterway at the James F. Byrnes Bridge proceeding northeast along Mackay Creek to Port Royal Sound; following Port Royal Sound S.E. to the Atlantic Ocean; proceeding southerly down the coastline of Hilton Head Island to a point where Singleton Road would bisect the Broad Creek (if road were extended); west along a midway line of Broad Creek to south of Buck Island to Calibogue Sound; south along the coast of Daufuskie Island to the New River; proceeding west up New River (Intracoastal Waterway) to Ram Horn Creek; proceeding north up Ram Horn Creek to Cooper River; proceeding east along Cooper River to Calibogue Sound and Intracoastal Waterway to Mackay Creek and the James F. Byrnes Bridge. It also would include Pinckney Wildlife Refuge, Buck Island, Daufuskie Island, Jenkins Island and the northern end of Hilton Head Island."

THE FIRST PEOPLE

As any good priest will say a parish depends on the people that make up the congregation, and St. Francis has been blessed with numbers of good people of good will. The original members who left Holy Family and Pinckney Colony came to the "Holy Crab" not knowing what to expect, but sensing a grand adventure, and joined the new parish with that attitude in mind. They volunteered to do the many things that it takes to get a new parish started. Because it was a restaurant, Crazy Crab had an effect on them, probably more so than going to a new church or even an old one. Since they sat around tables and even at the bar during Mass, there was a certain spontaneity, gregariousness, and informality that made them reach out to each other and become close friends. Also it didn't hurt for those mostly transplanted Northerners to look out the back windows of the restaurant and see dolphins playing in the canal behind the Crazy Crab.

Stories still abound among the early parishioners about the spaghetti dinners in the Fellowship Hall at the First Presbyterian, and the Kazoo Band that provided the entertainment. That spirit carried over to the new church and can still be seen in the many people who go to the daily 8 AM mass. These people were the nucleus of volunteers that make up the many committees in the church today. Many of them still go every day to McDonalds after 8 AM Mass for fellowship, coffee, and a bite to eat.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Because of the Redemptorists' work with the poor, Father Joe met with John Cantwell and Pat Sanderson during the first year of the newly formed parish and asked them to form a committee addressing and attempting to solve the needs of the less fortunate. Thus the CS & J Committee was formed, and though it is a small committee, it has been a major force in the development of the Parish. From this small group of people sitting around a table at the Crazy Crab evolved a mind set and a resolve, to help people who needed help, without being judgmental.

Today it flourishes in an office within the parish complex, still doing God's work. John Cantwell became the "man in the street" seeking out needful people, many too proud to ask for help, eventually making them clients. He and Father Joe devised the 5th Sunday program, whereby the offertory collection on those Sundays would be given over to this committee to dispense. That meant every month of the year that included 5 Sundays, and there are five of them, funding would be available to the committee. It also was decided at that time that every first Sunday of the month would be "Canned Goods" Sunday, and all the groceries brought to Mass on that day would be turned over to Deep Well, the emergency social service agency on the island. The parishioners have been most generous in their giving of both groceries and money to this program. The committee has dispensed thousands of bags of groceries over the years, as well as many thousands of dollars.

At both Thanksgiving and Christmas, groceries for a week are delivered to the needy from a list provided by Deep Well. This practice started at the Crazy Crab, then moved to unoccupied store rooms in different shopping plazas, thanks to John Cantwell's friendship with developers, and finally found its home in the Family Center. It is a tribute to the organization that, even before a new church was built, the parish was doing good works. It flourishes today with numerous volunteers from the parish delivering turkey and all the trimmings, plus much more to those people less fortunate than we are. While CS & J is not as well known as the St. Vincent DePaul Society, over the years it has helped thousands of people. The parishioners should be very proud.

BUILDING A CHURCH

In order to build a church, the first thing necessary is a volunteer base from which to work. Again St. Francis was blessed with a group of untiring people who met as committees countless numbers of times. There were two committees formed, directly responsible to Father Joe and the Parish Council. The Building Committee was responsible for the recommendation of the architect and design of the building, as well as the builder to construct it. They were responsible for staying within budget or any budget changes, to bring it in on budget and on time. The Financial Committee was responsible for raising the funds needed and setting the budget for each project. Both of these committees were formed in 1984 when the parish numbered about 135 families so this was a major undertaking for such a small group. Their thinking was, "If you build it large enough and beautiful enough, people will come." And build they did, with the parish growing to over 1800 families at this writing. Having good priests also helps.

The property of approximately 7 acres at the corner of Beach City Rd. and Bill Fries Dr. was purchased from Greenwood Development Co. There was then a meeting of all interested parishioners on the size and type of church they wanted, with rough guidelines for an affordable budget. It was thought by many of the parishioners that the church should be far larger than what was presently needed, to avoid the various building programs Holy Family went through. Not doing so might mean additional building to this new church.

General Bert Connor, the original chairman of the building committee, soon took seriously ill, and had to resign. Dick Teasel became the next Chairman and directed the building from start to finish. Nina McCunniff and Art Muller were co-chairs of the Design & Architecture Committee along with Polly Foster, Claude Gaudette, and Joe Burke. Bob Grohman was chairman of the Finance Committee, Tom Mungenast, Vice Chairman, and Fred Kolowich was Chairman of the Parish Council.

There were meetings from 1984 to 1990, almost six long years, and Father Joe attended all of them, sometimes two a week. An early task was to select and hire an architect from a list of six that had been contacted by the committee. Interviews were held for them to talk about their completed works, their present work as well as the committee expressing the church they envisioned and deciding if the architect was compatible with them. A final interview was arranged with Rick Minson, a local architect, and after diocesan approval, he was given the job. During the first two years, the Diocesan Building Commission came up with some major objections: why so large a church seating 900 people, the arrangement of the building on the property, the size of the parking lot, etc? With the architect's contract running out, Father Joe had to finally write the Bishop telling of all the meetings, and how all these delays from the Diocese were working against the project. Approval from Charleston finally came through.

The final design of the church again resulted from still more meetings with the committee and parishioners; the only caveat from the Diocese was that the church could not be in the shape of a cross but rather semi-circular so that everyone could see each other as well as the altar. As it turned out, natural light and nature came into play to providing a bright interior, enhancing the bright colored walls, carpeting, and natural wood finishes. An interesting aside is that the 5 windows on each side represent the 5 windows in the Cathedral of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy.

As the design progressed, an Interior Committee was formed with Virginia Duval as Chairperson to come up with details of furnishings, paint colors, wall coverings, if any, and floor coverings. While this work progressed, the Finance Committee worked tirelessly, investigating the necessary funding for the church building and convincing the Diocese that the parish was capable of carrying out the program presented to build such a facility. The plan presented to the parishioners will be addressed in a later chapter. The next order of business was, with Diocesan approval, the selection of a construction firm. By this time, the Committee was in good stead, having learned from their experiences selecting an architect. Five builders were contacted and two of them combined to submit a bid as did one other firm. The Diocese okayed that procedure even though three bids were what they wanted.

Now came the long awaited day for opening the bids, but when that happened the committee was in despair. The lowest bid was \$400,000 above the budget. This happened because of the delays mentioned, meaning building costs were higher. The Committee, along with Father Joe, met with the two bidders to see if something could be done to reduce the cost. Only one of the bidders was interested in this, and was nice enough to try to get the cost down to an affordable number. Walter Murphy of Rives-Worrell & Co., Savannah, was the contractor who agreed to work with the members to identify what could be deleted, modified or delayed in order to build the church at a

more acceptable figure. With this, the Diocese agreed to raise our loan to \$700,000, a good dollar figure, and we now could build a church for \$1,500,000 or less. The Committee and Mr. Murphy had a very difficult time getting down to that figure. At one point Mr. Murphy, offered to build the same church as St. James in Savannah for that price. Looking at that church, the Committee agreed that the design was not suitable for the needs of St. Francis. It wasn't the look they had in mind.

With lots of work and many meetings, a design was arrived at that would come in at the \$1,500,000. The Bishop signed the contract, and all was ready to go. Ironically, the financial delay was a blessing because some parishioners now pledged more, and many new parishioners were registering, accelerating an increase of funds. In fact some scuttled details could now be put back into the building plans because with this new money, the Diocese allowed the construction costs to be raised as long as their particular loan did not exceed \$700,000.

After 5 long years of planning and meetings, the Ground Breaking Ceremony took place on March 25, 1990. A reception was held after the ceremony at the Hilton Head Bath & Tennis Club. About 500 parishioners and workers attended this affair. The First Mass was celebrated at 10:00AM, Sunday, March 3, 1991 to a standing room-only crowd of worshippers. It was a tremendous celebration, tears as well as applause flowing throughout the audience and on the altar. 80,000 bricks, gallons of sweat, and untold hours of meetings proceeded that happy day. Without doubt, Walter Murphy was the reason the parish has as remarkable a church as we see today. He was completely dedicated to the building and attended every meeting for which he was required, as well as the Contractor's Meeting every Thursday during the 9 months of construction.

THE INTERIOR

When one first walks into the church from the narthex, the beauty of the interior dazzles the mind's eye. From the awe inspiring great crucifix on the wall behind the altar, with sunlight flowing through the skylights, the side windows affording views of trees and blooming azaleas, one feels a sense of calm and peacefulness. Overhead the great beams of natural wood form a sturdy canopy. Soft rose carpeting and beautiful natural wood pews lead the way to a simple altar made of cherry, complimented by a graceful cherry pulpit and matching chairs and credence table. The brickwork holding statues of Mary, the mother, and Joseph, the carpenter, matches the exterior brick.

The beauty of the sanctuary is enhanced by the Baldwin Digital Organ, a commercial style installed for the first time ever in the United States. As noted in the prologue, the Prayer of St. Francis adorns the back wall, was done in graceful calligraphy by a young Bluffton artist. Ruth MacDonald created beautiful banners sometimes seen on various feast days. The relief of Our Lady of Perpetual help adorns the back left-side wall, a tribute to the Redemptorist Fathers of whom she is Patron. On the opposite wall is a relief of the Sacred Heart. The spiritually-inspired Stations of the Cross were added about a year after the church opened, and deserves a special mention because they were designed by a parishioner, Gloria Rohr. The niches for the stations were in the original design of the church, and it was up to Mrs. Rohr to complete the sculpted pieces. She got the inspiration for these unique 14 pieces of art during a visit to the Air Force Academy Chapel in Colorado Springs, CO. She sculpted a clay model just about half the size of the ones now seen. She then went ahead and did all 14 and turned them over to Adam Schultz from SCAD in Savannah to double the size and cast them in a fiber plaster material. Her husband built the backing and frames. They were secured in place by Rich Regan and Mike MacDonald, also of the parish. The stark white figures stand out against the soft glow of the surrounding walls. Ralph Glotzbach, now deceased, turned the wooden crosses seen on each station. He also designed and installed the outside Stations of the Cross. But

before these stations were completed, a dedication ceremony took place by Bishop David Thompson of Charleston.

As a result of the church building, Rick Minson III, President of Minson Architects & Planners, Inc. from the South Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was given The Energy and Design Award. The juried committee noted that "Innovative daylighting techniques and overall design excellence" singled this project out and made it stand head and shoulders above the rest of the competitors.

As a footnote to the church's construction, it is appropriate to thank several members of the parish, Mike Malanick and Dave Wilhelm, while working for the Town of Hilton Head, got the necessary approvals from the town, as well as guidance when help was needed with building codes.

FUNDING FOR A MAJOR PROJECT

As one can imagine, it took a lot of courage from the pastor and the Finance Committee to think that a small growing parish could raise \$1,200,000, in the short time needed to convince the Diocese of the viability of the project. It took strong leadership plus great imagination to conceive of a plan and carry it through. Yet Bob Grohman, Tom Mungenast and Ginnie Carzoli did just that over a few short weeks in the fall of 1987. They had a strategy that was like a battle plan for a military engagement. This concept was first presented to the Finance Committee at the Crazy Crab on October 1, 1987, where incidentally the victory celebration was to take place at the same site only 25 days later on October 25. Mrs. Carzoli's duties were to chair an Administration Committee. There were about 45 members involved in the two committees. Each of them, Finance and Administration, had specific duties:

The former received the pledges/payments of the parishioners, with the treasurer having custody of all the funds. The latter committee prepared the master list of the parish, designed the pledge cards, did the printing and tabulated the final figures. The ladies of that committee were also responsible for the "victory" dinner on October 25.

The campaign's kickoff announcement was done by Father Joe at all masses October 3/4. On October 10/11, the Chairman of Finance, Bob Grohman, spoke at all masses and a letter was mailed along with a pledge card to each parish family. Father Joe again appealed at the masses of October 17/18, never speaking of money, but urging instead, full cooperation and generosity. October 24/25 was billed as Victory Sunday with all pledges or payments to be made by the end of the noon Mass. Follow up visits to non-participants were made the same afternoon by committee members.

This entire campaign was outlined at the opening meeting in the H. H. Elementary School Cafeteria to all members of the committee. Mr. Grohman presented a simple straight-forward plan, based on the premise that all parishioners wanted a church, and they would support the financing of it without arm twisting or pressure. All members on the committee were encouraged to talk up the building campaign to all parishioners. Publicity from the media was encouraged. The people were asked to give as much cash as possible on the first go round, along with their pledge for future payments.

On the weekend of October 10/11, Bob Grohman, in his talk at every Mass, asked the 320 families to pledge at least \$900,000 by October 2 ~ and pay at least half of that by June the next year. The basis of the original figure was that each family pledge a minimum of \$3000. The fund raising campaign was very positive and therefore successful. Because of these achievements, Bob Grohman has been

invited to other parishes in the Diocese to help set up fund-raising programs for their particular needs.

THE PARISHIONERS

As already noted, there were a nucleus of people ready to move from both Holy Family and Pinckney Colony to St. Francis as soon as it was declared a parish. Several of the families had petitioned the Diocese that this new parish be opened. But there were questions in Charleston in 1984 as to the need for another parish on Hilton Head when the population of the island was only about 12,000. These same questions persisted when it came time to build a large church, but the people persevered and finally won.

The same people who were dedicated to the idea of a new parish had a pioneering spirit not found in many parishes throughout the United States. A great number of these people had been involved in building churches and schools in their former residences, some several times over. But this did not deter that early spirit that infected the first members of the parish. Any task that had to be done, they rolled up their sleeves and went to work, no questions asked. This camaraderie of "doing," which still permeates the members today, and all take pride in what has happened at St. Francis. Remember that this all started with only 75 members attending Mass at the Crazy Crab. Six years later at the dedication of the new church, Bishop Thompson said, "Father Joe, these people love you because you love them." No greater tribute could be paid to a priest and no greater tribute could be paid to the parishioners. We are family.

THE PARISH AT WORK

The parishioners who make up the congregations of the various parishes around the country not only go to Mass on Sundays, but are also expected to participate in the various parish activities. While all Catholic priests preach the same doctrine and say the same Mass, the activities within parishes are widely divergent. St. Francis has a mix of activities, mainly church oriented but some social, that appeal to almost every member of the parish. All of the parishioners are urged to participate in as many of these activities as they care to, but certainly to participate in some. Listed below are the main activities with a short description.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: The council is an elected body of 9 members with the election taking place in the spring. The nominees are selected by a nominating committee, appointed by the presiding council. The council members serve staggered terms, so there is continuity. Anyone other than those selected by the nominating committee may put his or her or someone else's name in nomination. A nominee must be a member in good standing of the parish and at least 18 years of age. The council represents a cross section of the parish and advises the pastor in his administration of the parish. They meet once a month.

Many of the following committees either report directly at council meetings or through a liaison member on the council.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: This is a consulting body established by the Diocese to advise the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish and assist in the planning and administering of all financial matters. The committee consists of the pastor and no less than three active lay members of the parish who are knowledgeable and skilled in financial matters. They and the chairperson are appointed by the pastor. Some specific duties are

adhering to the diocesan guidelines on fiscal policy, internal controls, reporting the financial status to the Pastoral Council quarterly and the parish annually, providing for sufficient capital reserves, investing of assets, planning for any payment of parish debt and ensuring that a plan of preventive maintenance is adopted and monitored with relation to the parish facilities.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE & JUSTICE COMMITTEE: See a Previous Chapter.

STEPHEN MINISTRY: This ministry is one person reaching out to another in times of loneliness, depression, parenting, sickness, grief, crisis, or hospitalization. Those are but a few of the situations involved in this ministry. These parishioners are intensively trained over a period of time to team skills needed to help a client deal with a problem he or she may be facing. This is a meaningful way for any parishioner wanting to volunteer to share him or herself with people having difficulties. There are about 35 active ministers.

HAPIN: Those letters stand for Help a Person in Need. This program was instituted by David Kerins. Volunteers prepare and deliver frozen dinners to shut-ins of the parish. Anyone wanting to prepare frozen dinners for this program may do so. There is a cabinet in the Narthex of the church in which aluminum pans are stored. The person prepares a dinner or dinners, placing the dinner in these containers and storing it in the freezer in the Family Center kitchen. They are then delivered as needed.

HISPANIC MINISTRY: Will be covered in a later chapter.

LITURGY COMMITTEE: This committee is made up of about 8 members of the parish and is open to anyone interested in becoming a member. They are at the call of the pastor to help on decisions pertaining to the liturgy. Because so many of our parishioners are from different parts of the country, they have been able to combine backgrounds of various geographic regions with the authentic teaching of the Catholic Magisterium to form a vital, vibrant faith community.

MUSIC MINISTRY: The music is selected to coordinate with the word of God and the variety of special events being celebrated. We have a professional music director in charge of an adult and junior choirs. All members of the parish are invited to try out for the choir. Cantors assist at all Masses on Sundays and Holy Days. There are presently 5 or 6 cantors and anyone with a background in singing or music is asked to audition. During the early days of the parish when 9 AM Sunday Mass was said at the Elementary School, and continued on until 1998, a folk mass was sung by a group playing various instruments. They have since disbanded.

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS: There are approximately 120 Eucharistic ministers serving the parish. Parishioners are invited to become members of this important and holy ministry. Induction takes place once a year. 43 serve each weekend as the Eucharist is distributed at the 5 weekend Masses. They also distribute at the 2 daily Masses. The hospital and two nursing homes plus visits to the sick and shut-ins comprise another part of their busy schedule.

LECTORS: Two participants are assigned to each of the 5 weekend Masses, a reader and an announcer. A schedule is mailed to each lector in advance of his or her participation. There are about 50 lectors and this ministry is open to all parishioners. There are workshops to upgrade the reading skills of the participants. A lector also serves at the two daily masses.

USHERS: Because as many as six ushers are needed for the weekend masses and holy days, a pool of about 40 ushers are needed. All men and women of the parish are welcome to join this group. Schedules are made up a month in advance.

ALTAR SERVERS: There are presently about 30 of the youth group as well as the grade school boys and girls assisting at the weekend masses. This service is open to all children of the parish.

RCIA: This stands for the Right of Christian Initiation for Adults. A small but very active organization brings instruction of the Catholic faith to people seeking more learning or who are looking forward to conversion to the faith. It is inspirational to see the new members of the church come forward at Easter time to profess their faith.

CCD: A group of volunteer teachers headed by a director are responsible for the religious education of those students not attending a Catholic school. There is always a need for additional teachers/volunteers because of the size of the program; over 400 students are enrolled.

ST. CLAIRE'S GUILD: This is an active group of women from the parish involved in many aspects of parish life. They care for the altar linens, flowers on the altar, coffee and "goodies" following the 9 AM Mass on Sunday. They conduct a prayer chain for the sick, do bereavement calls, and hold newcomer coffees. They also hold bake sales and other fund raisers throughout the year, raising money goes to buy additional items for the church. They meet once a month on the first Friday.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS: The Thomas Reilly Council #10668 of St. Francis Parish is a very active organization, open to all men of the parish over 21 years of age. There are about 60 active members at this writing. They serve as honor guard for the Bishop when he participates in parochial activities on the island. They are involved in charitable as well as social activities in the community. A main charity is helping the mentally challenged. The Knights meet the 1st (business) and 3rd (social) Mondays of the month.

PUBLICITY: As with any large organization, disseminating information is a major task. It can only happen with the cooperation of all organizations. The Parish has two official publications, the weekly Bulletin and the monthly Herald. The Bulletin, passed out at the weekend masses, is handled by the office staff and notices for the following Sunday must be in the office by the preceding Wednesday. The Herald, staffed by parishioners, has as its deadline for publication, the second week of the month. People with writing skills may volunteer for this staff. Parishioners may submit articles for publication.

SCHOOL BOARD: With the opening of St. Francis Parochial school now numbering 90 students a school board was mandated. There are nine elected, one appointed, to guide the Christian

development of all children in the Parish. It is open to any member of the Parish but six slots are reserved for parents with children in the school. Various committees are formed to oversee the educational activities.

SCHOOL FINANCE COMMITTEE: Members of the school board appoint the members of this committee to oversee all financial aspects of the school. Members of the Parish Finance Committee serve as ex-officio members.

FAMILY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION: This is a group of people with children attending St. Francis School, much like a PTA that gets together to assist in fund raising, socials, and other various projects.

YOUTH GROUP: An active group of teens and young adults involved in various activities within the parish. They also take trips to various places, and during the summer spend time either on the island or away, helping repair homes of the needy, or other social activities. They raise funds for their various needs with raffles, cookie sales etc.

SOCIAL

BRIDGE GROUPS: There are two groups at present. A couples group is open to all. They play two table party bridge, once a month according to a schedule, with one couple hosting and serving dessert. On awards night they have a dinner get-together in the Family Center. Another group of ladies meets once a month in the Family Center.

MOTHER'S MORNING OUT: This is a group of young mothers with small children meeting once a month in the Family Center. It is a social gathering for the moms and playtime for the kids. They plan various events such as holiday parties, family picnics and other functions. They also plan one night a month for "mother's night out" when the ladies get out for shopping, movies, the theatre or other social happenings.

GOLF: There is an annual Parish golf tournament played in the late Fall strictly as a social outing. Prizes are awarded at a catered luncheon in the Family Center following the tournament. Open to all on a first come basis.

ULTREYA: A group of parishioners that have made a Cursillo weekend. They meet monthly. It is also open to those people interested in this movement. This is an island-wide group of 30-35 couples that meets at Holy Family Church. Their meetings are a sharing of spiritual experiences. They have two socials a year.

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT: This is a group of 20 to 30 people that meet for prayer one night a week.

MEN'S PRAYER GROUP: Meet Thursdays at 7:00 AM prior to Mass.

PARISH PRAYER CHAIN: A group of women who pray for health and recovery of parishioners and friends. The chain is done by telephone.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP: This group meets weekly in the Family Center to learn more about the teachings of the Bible. All are invited.

BOWLING: There is a group of bowling enthusiasts that has formed teams and bowl weekly at the local lanes. Anyone interested can join when the league forms.

THE RECTORY AND OFFICE BUILDING

From the beginning, the master plan for the parish buildings included the church, rectory, office building, family center, an outdoor mass amphitheater, outside Stations of the Cross, a nature walkway, and parking. Once the church was built, it was time to start on a home for the priests as well as an office building to do the necessary work of keeping the parish running.

The finance committee worked on another fund raising drive to raise the \$1,200,000 that would be needed to build this part of the complex. Dick Teasel was again at the forefront with sketches of these two buildings and turned these early drawings over to S. Carson & Co., the architects chosen for the job. Because Dick had been involved almost non-stop for 8 years on the church, he requested someone else head up this building committee. Bill Formwalt then became chairman, and he and his committee worked with the W. Fishburne Co. who would build the two buildings. The construction of these two buildings was completed in April of 1993. The priests then had a home to live in, and the office staff had a place to operate a growing parish.

THE FAMILY CENTER

The Family Center was planned but put on hold until the rectory and office building were completed. In the fall of 1993 the finance committee approached the Diocese to allow them to use Walter Murphy to build the family center without putting it out for bids. Mr. Murphy's work had so satisfied them that they felt no need to seek out another builder. Mr. Murphy then selected an architect, Pat Shay, with whom he had done projects in Savannah.

With limited land available, it became apparent that the building would have to be two stories. This became a sticking point because of safety and discipline problems if it were to be used for CCD classes. But buying additional land would delay the project because of limited funding. In the end, Father Joe was able to get the Bishop to allow the parish to buy 3 more acres west of the church. About this same time, Dick Teasel was approached by an anonymous donor with the offer of \$1,000,000 if the parish would build a parochial school. While a school was not in the original master plan, this offer caused the council to take a new look at the subject. The diocese insisted on a feasibility study throughout the parish before any plans could be formed. A survey went out to all parishioners asking them questions concerning a school and how they would support it if built. The results of the survey were a) there were not enough potential students to pay \$1500 a year tuition; b) less than 25% of the parish would support the cost of building the school; c) less than 25% of the parish would support the estimated operational costs. When the Diocese saw the results of the survey, they advised Father Joe there would be no school as of now.

Because of the uses envisioned for the Family Center, it now became apparent that the design had to include a meeting hall and a kitchen to take care of catered dinners and parties. Other needs were storage facilities, bathrooms, entrance halls, and space for 12 CCD classrooms. The present design,

arrived at after many meetings with the architect and ideas from the parish, provided 6 classrooms with fold away walls in the main hall, and two wings and the back entry way, with 6 rooms on each wing, totaling 18 classrooms in all. Each room accommodates 20 students, for a total of 360 students, an estimate of need over the next five years when more space would have to be provided. Once completed, the Center has been in constant use as the parish has grown, housing meetings, parties, wedding receptions, and many other activities. There was a grand parish party upon its opening and dedication. It is a magnificent building and compliments the entire complex surrounding it.

FUND RAISING IN 1993

The campaign to raise funds to build the rectory, office building, parking, landscaping, and additional land took place December 4 and 5 of 1993. The appeal, while intended for all the parishioners, focused mainly on the new people coming into the parish in 1992 and 1993. A goal of \$1,500,000 was set for this project. Because of a balance of pledge funds on hand, the parish was able to borrow \$400,000 from the Diocese to get the work underway. Any future members would also get a pledge card and a letter inviting them to participate in the new campaign. It was stressed in all talks and letters to the parishioners of St. Francis by the Sea, because of their loyalty and generosity to their church, the fund raising would again be successful. And so it was.

By 1993, the parish had grown to 950 families and their giving was truly outstanding, when compared to other fund raising activities across the country, both within the church and outside it. But it still took much hard work by many devoted committee members to make the program successful. By now the parish had contributed or pledged \$3,700,000 to complete this work.

The Family Center was the next building in the master plan and it would cost \$1,900,000. Once again, the wheels of the finance committee started to turn and a similar plan was laid along the lines of the ones that had been successful in the past. By 1994, the parish grew to about 1100 families and all were asked to pledge \$1500, payable over three years. Once again, the generosity of the people was inspiring, and we can all see the results of a vibrant Catholic community, proud of what it has accomplished. It has only been 15 years since the parish started with 75 people attending Mass in the Crazy Crab, and it now numbers well over 1800 families.

THE COLUMBARIUM

In the fall of 1995, after putting the parish off for a while, the Bishop finally allowed a Columbarium to be built. A Columbarium is a burial place for the cremated ashes of a person. The ground in back of the church where the Columbarium was to be built was consecrated so it could receive the ashes of those parishioners whose family chose to bury them there. While these plans had already been in the master plan, they had to take a back seat while the other work was done. Ed Evans of Wood and Associates, Inc. was contacted to do the site work because he was a landscape architect and had already done the site planning for the Family Center. The committee wanted a garden atmosphere for this project. The same man who had done the brickwork on the church was also selected to build the walls and forms to receive the bronze holders and name plates.

The agreed upon design reflected exactly how the committee perceived it when finished, and anyone who has spent some time there, looking at the beauty of it overlooking the small lagoon, comes away with the serenity the garden portrays. The design includes 2000 niches, and to date over 500 of them have been purchased. It is a self financing project. The burial service is truly beautiful, taking place after the Mass. The altar servers carrying the crucifix and incense lead the way in a procession,

going front the altar out the side door to the final repository. The priest carries the remains and intones the burial prayers. The family, and sometimes the entire audience, follows to the Columbarium. The family can know that their loved one's remains are close by and can visit them as often as they want.

FATHER MARTIN LAUGHLIN

Sadly for many parishioners, on February 16, 1996, Father Joe was transferred to Hampton, Virginia. A good friend as well as a wonderful priest was moving. On February 18 the parishioners were invited to a reception for the new pastor, Father Martin Laughlin. Father Martin had been pastor of St. Peter's on Lady's Island, which encompassed Beaufort and the northern part of the county, so he was no stranger to the environs of Hilton Head. While he served the parish for a very short time, just under a year, he left his mark. He was a very devout and holy man, small of stature, but a giant in his love for Christ. His sermons were full of insight into the history of the bible, the early church and teachings of Christ. He started the devotion to Christ in the Eucharist, exposing daily the Blessed Sacrament on the main altar, and this practice continues on today.

Perhaps his biggest accomplishment was to start a parochial school under the auspices of St. Francis Parish. He had much experience in this matter, having done so at St. Peter's Parish, and many believe that was the reason he was given this assignment by Bishop Thompson. The school takes in the three parishes, St. Francis, Holy Family and St. Andrew at the old Pinckney Colony site in Bluffton Township. (No Photo of Farther Martin was available.)

A QUALITY CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The full responsibility for the Catholic school system resides with the Bishop of the Diocese. He exercises this responsibility by appointing agencies and individuals to assist him. A superintendent of schools appointed by the Bishop is the chief administrative officer of all Catholic schools in the Diocese and heads up the Department of Education. On a local level, the pastor is the spiritual leader of the parish community, and as such, is responsible for the total Christian education of the parish. He is, therefore, responsible to the families of the parish, for the spiritual welfare of the young people, and to see that the teachings of the Catholic Church are accurately presented to these youngsters. He, in turn, gives the responsibility of the instruction to the principal.

ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Perhaps the final piece of the mosaic known as St. Francis on Hilton Head Island was the addition of the elementary, school. It had been a dream of many parishioners but the demographics had always pointed out that there weren't enough families who would be willing to pay the necessary tuition, nor the money to support the ongoing expense of a private school. However, in 1996, the pastors of the three churches in southern Beaufort County wrote to the Bishop advising him of their support for a Catholic grade school. Thus, with the approval of the Diocese, two grades, Pre-K and Kindergarten, opened in the fall of that year. These classes, located in the Family Center, were attended by 40 students. The first and second grades were added the next year, and enrollment grew to 95. Father Martin knew how to get the proper response from the parishioners to take on this major project. Judy Haupt was elected president of the Parish Board of Education, and Tom McTigue became chairman of the Building Committee, which eventually put together plans and finalized the construction of the school that now graces the property. When Father Laughlin left the

parish, Father Michael McCafferty, upon his appointment as pastor, stepped in and guided the project without missing a beat.

The building project in 1997 was to improve the entire facility by constructing a 22,000 sq. ft. building to house the needed new grades and expand into a full time eight grade school. This new building housed the new class rooms, a media center/library, science lab, computer room, cafeteria/auditorium, office, lavatories, and storage space.

SCHOOL FUND RAISING PROJECT

Because the capital requirements for building the new school building were a little over \$2,000,000, a fund raising committee was established. From the time the Family Center was completed to the start of building the school, the parish had grown by 55%, this meant that fund raising could be spread over many more families, although the families having children attending were expected to contribute more. Once again the blueprint from the original plan was used as a guide to contact families for pledges. And as the bulk of the monies was pledged or given in grants, the need for a loan from the Diocese was reduced, but it was still a considerable amount of money. The Diocese consented to a loan of \$500,000 effective October of 1998.

One of the ways the Committee planned to reduce the loan was by sponsoring an annual St. Francis School Gala. The first of these dinner dances was held in the fall of-1997 at the Marriott Crown Resort. The committee worked long and hard to make it a success, with the "Little Red Schoolhouse" as the motif. Hand painted birdhouse/schoolhouses adorned each table as door prizes. The committee has other plans for fund raising including galas through which the parish can come together and socialize for a good cause.



FATHER MICHAEL McCAFFERTY



FATHER GRADY

On March 12, 1997, a new face joined the family of St. Francis. An imposing figure at 6'5", Father Mike and his two dogs arrived to take over the reins of this growing parish. At the time of his appointment by

Bishop Thompson, the parish had approximately 1300 registered families. In the two years since that time, it has grown to over 1800 families with more registering every month.

It has become a daunting task just to get a handle on things, particularly without another priest to help out with 16 Masses each week, funerals, weddings, confessions, the new Hispanic ministry, not to mention the school and the administrative work it takes to run a parish the size of St. Francis. This is not to say he does all of this alone, but there are many things that only he can do, and the ultimate decision making about the parish rests on his shoulders.

The good Father Grady, an elderly Jesuit, came out of retirement to help out, but his health deteriorated, and he retired again for good. Benedictine priests from Savannah come on weekends to spell Father Mike, but the parish is hoping for a permanent assistant. Deacon Joe Nazarro is also a help with baptisms, sermons, and his work with the Stephen Ministry.

Father Mike, originally from Chester, Pennsylvania, a member of a large family, oldest of nine children, learned how to get along with, as well as take care of children. He remembers during his childhood he wanted to become a priest, and an uncle who was a priest probably cemented the idea along the way. He detoured from his calling after high school with an enlistment in the Navy for 4 years. Stationed at Norfolk, Virginia, most of his sea time was spent in the Mediterranean. His anemic faith, according to him, was rekindled during this period of Navy life. After his discharge, he entered a Franciscan seminary in Massachusetts. Ordained in 1987, he stayed with the Franciscans until he decided to leave the Order and become a diocesan priest and work in parish life. He liked the southern part of the country, having spent time in Charlotte, N.C., and petitioned the Bishop of Charleston, S.C. to come and serve that Diocese. Before coming to St. Francis, he was a parish priest at St. Joseph's in Columbia and served 5 years as Catholic chaplain at the University of South Carolina, ministering to students.

His hobbies, when he gets time for them, besides his dogs, are antiques and reading history. Many of his sermons are laced with a comparison of history and how it corresponds to both the church and living today. The parochial school and the Hispanic Ministry are two things to which he points with pride as accomplishments during his watch. He has a positive outlook on life, and parishioners hope he will be here to serve them for many years to come.

The newest addition to the St. Francis staff is Father Ray Carlo who was assigned as Parochial Vicar in June of 1999. With the parish getting close to 1900 registered families, he will have plenty of work to do. He was welcomed in the usual St. Francis way with a reception in the Family Center. He is both witty and friendly, which should serve him well in this large ministry.

THE HISPANIC MINISTRY

Along with the population growth on Hilton Head Island during the early '90s, came an influx of Hispanic speaking people, who saw in America a better place to find work and raise their families. They emigrated from Mexico, Columbia, Nicaragua, Honduras, and other Central American countries. They brought with them, along with their families, a mixture of the cultures of these various countries. Because they either spoke very little or no English, it was hard for them to assimilate into the American way of life, especially since they also wanted to retain as much of their own culture as possible. They were being heavily proselytized by other churches on the island, yet for the most part, their religious background was Catholic.

During a meeting of the CS & J committee in the Fall of 1994, a discussion of this problem was aired. It was felt that because of their Catholic background, they would be a welcome addition to the

St. Francis community, particularly if they were looking for a place to worship. A major problem was there was no priest who spoke Spanish to say Mass, hear confessions, and do some counseling. A Father Nickerson from Ridgeland was contacted because he spoke the language and already had a Hispanic ministry going in southern Beaufort County. He agreed to say Mass once a month, and did so for about a year until he was transferred to Florida, where his language skills were more needed.

His first celebration of Mass drew a gathering of about 50 people, and they celebrated after Mass with a covered dish supper and a festival of sorts. Both Judy Haupt and her husband, Ted, a former University professor, who had taught Spanish became very involved in getting the Hispanic ministry underway. Eventually Father Jack Smythe, a Redemptorist who spoke Portuguese, was assigned as an assistant to Father Joe, and carried on with these Masses. But it wasn't until Father Mike took over as Pastor that the Hispanic Ministry became a full-blown activity in the parish. Now there is a 7 PM Mass every Saturday evening and a Spanish insert in the missalette. Weddings and baptisms have taken place. Father Mike opened a Hispanic office in the parish office building to take care of the many problems these people faced on a daily basis. They are hard working and are an asset to the island community as well as the parish.

At this writing, two situations are being addressed. One is the language barrier, particularly with the children, before they start kindergarten. The other, Father Mike took a sabbatical for a month to take intense training in conversational Spanish so he will be better able to offer counseling where needed, as well as his other duties with these members of the parish.

A RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS

On February 26, 1998 parishioners awoke to the terrible news in the Island Packet that the Crazy Crab had been completely destroyed by a raging fire the night before. It was an appalling loss to those early parishioners, but mostly to the entire Reilly family and their co-workers. Fortunately no one was injured in the blaze. Tom Reilly vowed to rebuild his restaurant bigger and better. And it was on May 24, 1999 he invited Father Mike and the parish to celebrate a Holy Mass and bless the new restaurant. What a celebration it was! An estimated crowd of 240 graced the gleaming new restaurant. Jim McCahill was master of ceremonies, regaling the attendees with stories of those days when this was their early church for daily mass. He also led the crowd in song after mass with those "corny" but funny tunes that the old McDonald's crowd had written. Betty Purdy and Harold Gleason provided the music on a keyboard.

Of course, the centerpiece of the celebration was the Mass and while there were no porpoises spotted that morning, many of the old timers strained their necks looking for them. Father Mike in his homily set the tone when he said this was the cradle of St. Francis by the Sea. He noted that the gathering was just as a family would do. And then he thanked God for all the blessings that he has bestowed on this wonderful parish. There were a few damp eyes among those people who had seen this parish come so far from such a small beginning. It was nice to be back in the "Holy Crab" one more time.

THE FUTURE

The great challenge to existing and fixture parishioners of St. Francis by the Sea will be to continue with the spirit that so guided the early parishioners to build a loving community. As we move forward into the new millennium, we pray the Holy Spirit will continue to shower the parish and the Diocese with the grace that has been so bountiful in the past. With Bishop Thompson's retirement, the Holy See has tapped Father Robert Baker to be the next Bishop of the Charleston Diocese, which is comprised of the entire state of South Carolina. As the parish grows, there surely will be

new ideas and buildings to take care of future needs; an expansion is needed in office space to keep up with the increasing growth of the parish, perhaps a larger playground or a fitness center for both young and old might be an idea whose time will come. No doubt the school will grow and there will have to be more emphasis on the youth and keeping them involved in matters of the church. The future looks very bright for Catholics in the Hilton Head area: with Holy Family, while growing slowly, because of location takes care of many visitors to the island, and St. Andrews in greater Bluffton growing on a daily basis, and the growth of St. Francis by the Sea, the Church will be well served. Many of the older members of the parish wish they could be around to see this future come about.