

St. Roch Parish History

In 1954, Mrs. John Kornowski and other future parishioners petitioned the late Cardinal Mooney to permit the establishment of a parish at Flat Rock. There was a census taken and Cardinal Mooney gave permission to begin the Mission of St. Roch that same year. The Mission was served by St. Mary Parish in Rockwood. Father John Hubert and Father Ed Scheuerman, who were assistants at St. Mary's at the time, came to celebrate the Masses in the Flat Rock Theater each weekend. The Old Hill Farm was purchased with funds from the Archdiocesan Development Fund for the Parish site. The property had an old farmhouse which served as the first rectory. The barn and other out buildings were taken down by the parishioners.

The request became a reality in 1956, when Fr. Norbert Chateau arrived at Flat Rock as Founding Pastor of St. Roch Parish, June 22, 1956.

About 450 families comprised the new parish community. The first baptism was celebrated on June 24, 1956, as Timothy Ciersezwski was christened. The first Sunday bulletin appeared on September 2, 1956. With Fr. Chateau named pastor; a king-size housecleaning detail was formed, armed with soap, paint and glass polish. The old farmhouse became the site for daily Mass with a chapel on the east side of the living room. Another room, which was a former nursery, complete with cowboy pictures on the wall, became the sacristy and confessional. In these meager surroundings, Fr. Chateau arranged with an architect to draw up plans for the church building. Fr. Chateau remained as pastor through 1962. The present Church building was constructed and the first Masses were held on Ascension Thursday, May 30, 1957. The first Sunday Masses were held on June 2, 1957. After this, Cardinal Mooney blessed the Church on May 11, 1958.

On June 22, 1962, Father Valentine Kaznowski was appointed second pastor of St. Roch Parish. Father Val built the new rectory which was completed in September, 1964. The parish had a total membership of 500 families at that time. The present social hall was constructed in 1967. The first Parish Pastoral Council was established in August, 1970. When the Liturgical Renewal of the Second Vatican Council was promulgated, Fr. Val supervised the renovation of the sanctuary of the Church.

In September 1972, Fr. Lawrence E. Dunn was appointed third pastor of St. Roch. Fr. Larry came home from missionary work in Brazil and used some of the mission techniques to help build a sense of community within the parish. Fr. Dunn stayed for three years.

Fr. Thaddeus Ozog was appointed the fourth pastor of St. Roch Parish on March 25, 1976. The main thrust of Fr. Ted's ministry was the continuation of the Liturgical Renewals of Vatican II. The reconciliation room was constructed for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This afforded the penitent the opportunity of celebrating the sacrament according to the revised rite for this sacrament. Harold Goodhue was ordained a permanent Deacon on June 10, 1978, and has served the people of the parish since that time through his service at the altar, visiting the sick, baptizing infants and ministering to the poor and needy.

Fr. Arthur Bell was appointed fifth pastor of St. Roch Parish on January 2, 1979. Fr. Bell continued to build the liturgical programs begun by the previous pastors. The thrust had been to make the celebration of Mass an experience of beauty with the visual aids of new vestments and the new hymn books to afford a greater variety of hymns to praise and thank the Lord.

Fr. Fred Misiolek became the sixth pastor on December 5, 1990, and served the parishioners until 2001. Fr. Fred worked at saving funds for the building of a new church. In his years as pastor, he visited the sick and infirmed along with ministering to the people in many other ways. He worked toward adding the new accessible lavatories as well as refurbishing the sanctuary. When Fr. Fred left for his new assignment in July, 2001, Fr. Kevin Thomas became temporary administrator.

Fr. Richard A. Hartmann became the seventh pastor on October 1, 2001. He held a town hall meeting to hear what the needs of the parish were and what direction it needed to take. Many parishioners indicated the need to build a new church. Based upon this parish community desire, a New Church Feasibility Committee was formed in January, 2001 to determine if there was a need for a new church and to make appropriate recommendations to the church council. After study, prayer and reflection, the St. Roch church council gave approval to proceed with a new church building project on Nov. 21, 2002.

With the appointment of Fr. Rick, Deacon Hal Goodhue returned from up-north to assist him with the Parish. Deacon Leo D'Argis, emeritus also joined Fr. Rick and Deacon Hal, in 2007. In October of 2009, Deacon John Malloy, Jr., was appointed to St. Roch Parish and is still serving the parish today. Deacon Leo died on November 9, 2010 at the age of 81. Achieving Senior Status, Deacon Hal assists Fr. Peter Ilke in Onaway, Michigan, and at St. Faustina in Florida.



The New Church Building Committee lead by Tom Duford included Jerry Roberts (1941-2013), Mike Dziuban, Charlie Goulding (1922-2008), Paul Gagne, Valerie Peterson, Steve Blaszcak, Dave Zurawski, Sr., Christopher DeAngelis, Greg Fernandez and Fr. Rick Hartmann, was formed on Nov. 26, 2002. The Architect, Merrit, McPherson Cieslak was hired along with J.S. Vig as our Construction Management Contractor. The church received approval from the College of Consultors. St. Roch paid for all construction costs with no financial assistance from the Archdiocese of Detroit. The final cost exceeded \$2,500,000. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on August 14, 2005.

Parishioner, Chuck Penny a master woodworker, designed and built the new altar, ambo, vestment cabinet, and vestment table with the assistance of Mike Burns and Val Kryk. Parishioners James and Judy DeAngelis, owners of DeAngelis Landscape, Inc., donated the landscaping. Parishioners Ron and Sandra Baker donated the windmill in the retention pond for aeration.

On August 12, 2007 our new church was dedicated with Mass celebrated by Cardinal Adam Maida and Father Rick Hartmann. The new church was completed with the prayers, support, work and financial generosity of the community of St. Roch for the greater glory of God. After the dedication, we have seen a stained glass window, donated by the C. J. Williams family, installed above the altar. The baptismal font was installed in January of 2008 and the first baptism was celebrated just a couple weeks later. The steeple was added in the summer of 2008.

The original church, which was being used temporarily for Religious Education, was transformed into classrooms and office space. JS Vig Construction was hired to complete the renovations. The work began May 23, 2011 and was completed the first week in September. The dedication ceremony was held on September 18, 2011. The total project came in under budget.

In the fall of 2012 construction of the new garage began. Carlson High School Trades Class and teacher Malcolm McLean provided labor. The construction of the garage received approval of occupancy in April 2014.

Upon retirement of Fr. Rick Hartman on June 30, 2014, Fr. Hoang Lam was appointed Administrator of St. Roch on July 1, 2014. He was born in Saigon, South Vietnam. Ordained on June 3, 2006, his assignments include Guardian Angels Parish, Clawson and St Joan of Arc Parish, St Clair Shores. On July 1, 2015, Fr Hoang Lam was assigned to Our Lady of Grace in Warren, MI.

Fr. Raymond (Ray) Lewandowski was installed as the eighth pastor of St Roch as of July 1, 2015. Fr. Ray came to us from St. Dunstan/St. Raphael in Garden City, MI. In the short time that Fr. Ray has been here we have seen the addition of a new digital sign, a digital keyboard and a sidewalk connecting the parking lot to the meditation garden.

Over the years, the parish has had many different service organizations, some of which are still with us today. The Parish Council's various commissions have all played a role in the worship, education, Christian service, and stewardship of our Parish and Community. Throughout its history, the people of St. Roch Parish have remained faithful to our Catholic Church and have worked for the betterment of our parish community.

