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St. Monica Parish History Recounted

By ARTHUR P. FARREN
 Fifty years ago young Father John P. Brophy rode his bicycle out Genesee Street, Rochester, to look over the site of the new parish to which he had been named pastor.

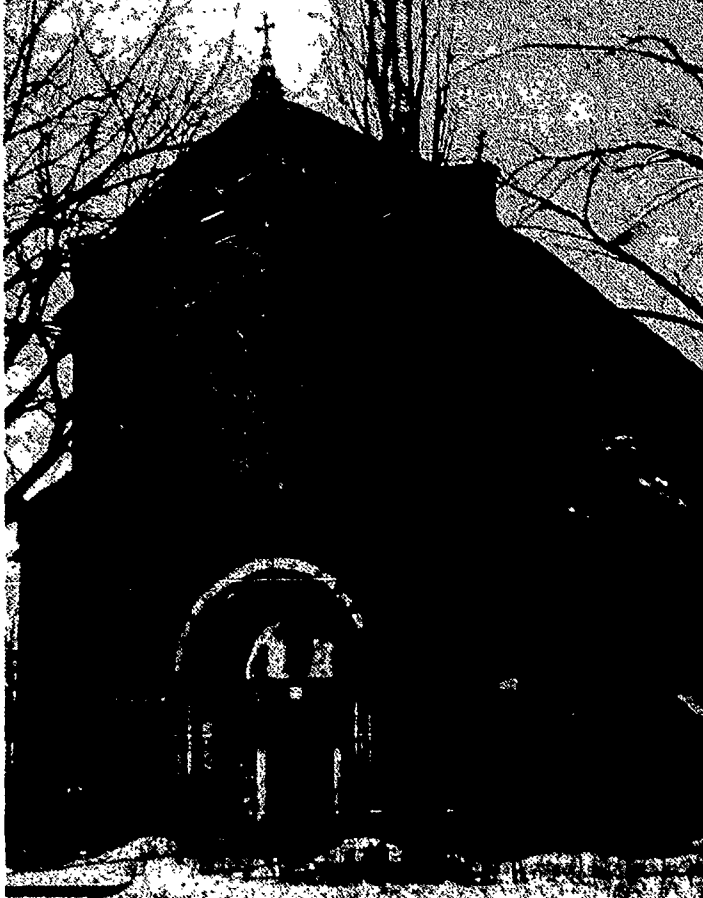
Bumping past many wheat fields along the route, he found about 65 families within the boundaries of the as yet non-existent parish.

TODAY, St. Monica's is one of the largest and most modern of the city's religious institutions — with thousands of parishioners; a beautiful Romanesque church; an expanding school; a rectory, a convent, a large recreational hall and a large parking lot.

Proudly will the parishioners of St. Monica's celebrate the passing years on next Sunday, when two Bishops will assist at Golden Jubilee rites.

HIGHLY revered in memory's tribute to successful spiritual and material accomplishment are two "men of God" who now enjoy their eternal reward — Father Brophy and his successor, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. William F. Bergan, whose pastorates covered 49 of the 50-year span. Hardships and difficulties of the early days of the parish can be appreciated by recalling an interview Father Brophy had up on completion of 35 years as pastor.

"There were any number of times," Father Brophy said, "when I walked downtown because I lacked the necessary



ST. MONICA'S CHURCH, GENESSEE STREET, ROCHESTER

five cents to pay the fare, but I never thought about it as a hardship."

Referring to the first winter, the priest declared "Father and Mother sent us a load of turnips and carrots in the fall and somehow we got through the winter. Youth is wonderful."

Distance walking was no novelty to the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught in the little school. From 1899 to 1907 they lived in St. Mary's Orphan Asylum, formerly located at Main and Genesee Streets; in all kinds of weather they



MONSIGNOR BERGAN

would walk each morning to St. Monica's, carrying their lunches with them, and in late afternoon would walk home again.

An account of the parish progress, written by the Rev. John J. Tressy, one of the present assistant pastors, is contained in a historical souvenir to be distributed during the jubilee observance.

BORN IN Shortsville, N. Y., on Oct. 10, 1867, Father Brophy was educated at St. Andrew's Seminary, St. Joseph's Seminary in Troy, and St. Bernard's Seminary. He was ordained by Bishop McQuid on June 8, 1895 and taught at St. Andrew's Seminary for three years before being assigned his pastorate.

St. Monica's branched off from the southwest portion of Immaculate Conception parish. St. Bernard's Seminary owned a tract of land on Genesee Street a little more than a mile from Immaculate Conception Church. St. Monica's Church corporation purchased some of this ground at a price of \$3,800.

Ground was broken in 1898 for a combined church-school two-story brick building, to cost \$9,995, in which Father Brophy celebrated the first Mass on Dec. 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was the 17th parish to be established.

On Jan. 3, 1899, the school was opened with six grades, 67 pupils and three teachers — Sisters Mary Regina, Mary Hortensia and Mary John. Typical of the Sunday collections was that of Jan. 22 — \$29.57 for the school collection; \$11.29 for the regular Sunday collection and \$1.20 for the door collection. Total revenue during 1899 reached \$4,753.46.

HIGHLIGHTED during the next 13 years of gradual growth were the following events: First Communion class (1899); first Confirmation class (1901); organization of the parish Holy Name Society (1903); expansion of the school to nine grades, with 230 pupils (1904); presentation of a \$6,500 purse to Father Brophy on his 10th anniversary of ordination for reduction of the church debt (1905); borrowing of \$10,000 to enlarge school (1906); purchase of a house on Genesee Street opposite the school for use as a convent (1907).

Appointment of first assistant pastor, the Rev. Stephen J. Byrne (1908); organization of a young men's club (1909); visit to school of His Eminence Vincenzo Cardinal Vanutelli (1910); a circus staged for the benefit of the church on the West High School grounds, attracting a 7,000 attendance (1912).

AT A MEETING of all parishioners in 1913, it was decided to undertake the building of a new church, for which \$15,000 was pledged. On Oct. 4, 1914, the cornerstone was laid. On Jan. 30, 1915, Father Brophy celebrated the first Mass in the new church, which was blessed the following day by Bishop Harley. Cost of the building construction totaled \$45,020, while the interior furnishings came to \$10,181. Still standing are the 20 marble pillars which were installed at an original cost of \$275 each.

Parishioners of St. Monica's today enjoy the luxury of a large parking lot adjoining the church. This was first provided in 1926 when Father Brophy purchased an additional two and one-half acres on Genesee Street. In 1932 a lot on Sawyer Street was secured to provide an additional entrance to the parking space.

In 1928 Father Brophy let contracts for the erection of a new convent, located on Millbank Street at the west end of the church property. It is conceded

to be one of the finest in the state.

RECOGNITION of his outstanding work for the church was accorded Father Brophy on Mar. 20, 1931, when Pope Pius XI made him a Domestic Prelate, with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor.

During these years the parish hall was a wing in the school building. When this was converted into classrooms, the basement was used for meeting. Foreseeing future needs, Monsignor Brophy and his parishioners provided for erection of a parish recreational hall on Genesee Street next to the school which is the first unit in what eventually will be the new school.

Simple in design, the recreation hall contains an auditorium seating 760 persons, and full facilities for a social center. The building was dedicated and blessed by Archbishop Mooney in 1935. Currently it contains the kindergarten class.

MONSIGNOR Brophy's 41 years as pastor ended with his death, at the age of 73, on Apr. 18, 1939, after three months' illness. His Excellency Bishop Kearney celebrated the funeral Mass on Apr. 21. Thousands of persons passed in procession as the Monsignor's body lay in state, and legends of his ability and charity have increased with the years. Said Bishop Kearney:

"In his passing the diocese loses one of its majestic figures. He was a fine gentleman, a zealous priest, a conscientious worker, a man of deep personal piety and singular devotion to every soul in his parish. He will be mourned by a large group of admirers and friends, both Catholic and non-Catholic. We feel we have sustained a great loss in his death."



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St. Monica Jubilee Set Sunday

(Continued from Page 1)

erion and the Rev. Leo V. Smith, The Rev. John E. Maney, S.T.D., will be master of ceremonies and the Rev. Mr. Elmer McDonald second master of ceremonies. Students of St. Bernard's Seminary from St. Monica's Church will fill the minor offices of the Mass. St. Monica's choir, under the direction of Hugh Dodge, will sing.

Monsignor Lambert will celebrate a solemn High Mass for all deceased members of St. Monica's on Monday at 9 a.m. The golden jubilee ceremonies will conclude with a reception in the parish hall Monday evening to

Augustine Timmerman (deceased) (1911-13); Francis T. Moffett (deceased) (1913-19); Cornelius J. Hogan (1919-21); Francis J. Reilly (1919-26); Emmett Dougherty (1922-26); Ralph Meyer (1925); Joseph Otte (1926-29); Raymond D. Cunningham (deceased) (1926-26); Charles Azzi (1926); John Neagy (1927-31); Edward H. Hartman (1929-41); William F. Latham (1931-33); John L. Maxwell (1932-36); William A. Burns (1933-35); Harold F. Rogers (1935-); Bernard R. Cleary (1936-42); John J. Tressy (1941-); Paul J. Gibbons (1942-45); James P. Collins (1945-); Raymond M. Kenny (1946-48).

Parishioners ordained to the priesthood include: **RT. REV. MSGR.** Michael J. Costigan, V.G., Rapid City, So. Dakota; Very Rev. Msgr. John S. Randall; Rev. Donald Ammerling, O.S.A.; Rev. Bernardine Ward, O.F.M.; the Reverends Henry X. Atwell, Edward Ball, John Ball, Henry Donabek; Joseph Donovan; John Duffy; Gregory Dugan; Orrin Feller; Robert Fennessy; Patrick Flynn; John Healy; Robert Henry (deceased); John Kelly; Ambrose Knitter; Donald Lux; James Slattery; Mansfield Starks; Joseph Sullivan and Leo Ward.

Forty-three parishioners have become nuns, and 20 parishioners now are studying for the priesthood.

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