

Saint Mary's Parish, Rexville Slates Centenary Observance

By DOLORES HANBAHAN

Rexville — St. Mary's Church here will commemorate more than a century of continuous devotion in the service of God on Oct. 19 with a Centennial Mass, celebrated by the pastor, the Rev. John D. Malley.

His Excellency Bishop James E. Kearney of Rochester will preside in cappa magna. Monsignori and priests from all sections of the Diocese will be in the sanctuary.

Special music has been arranged for the Mass by St. Mary's Choir, assisted by members of St. Joachim's choir, Canisteo. Miss Marie Bruner of Hornell is director and Mrs. Helen Callahan of Canisteo, organist.

DIRECTLY AFTER Mass, His Excellency will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to a class of 25. He will deliver the sermon at the Centennial Mass, also.

After Mass, a dinner will be served to several hundred parishioners and friends at the Community House. The large-scale task of planning is being cared for by a committee of parishioners.

MASS WAS celebrated in the Rexville area as early as 1837 in the home of the late Patrick McCormick. The zeal of the early Catholics in that area, and their respect for the clergy is illustrated by a story still told by parishioners.

One of the visiting priests, who came from Rochester on horseback to celebrate Mass, left his cassock in the McCormick home. He was transferred, and the family was unable to return the garment. Two generations kept the cassock carefully hung in a closet and would not permit it to be thrown away since it had "clothed a man of God."

The first church in the territory now served by St. Mary's was built in 1845 on a site in Greenwood donated by Patrick Flynn. Mass was celebrated for the first time in the original church by the Rev. Thomas McEvoy in 1846.

FATHER McEVoy served as pastor until 1849. He was succeeded by the Revs. Michael O'Brien, John Tuohy, Daniel Moore, A. M. McConnell and James Rogers.

In 1853 the Rev. C. D. McMullen was appointed pastor. One of his first official acts was the transfer of parochial jurisdiction from Greenwood to the village of Rexville.

Increasing population in the Rexville area necessitated a larger church, so St. Mary's Church was built on a site donated by Alphonse and J. J. McCormick.

St. Mary's was dedicated Sept. 8, 1875 on the Feast of the



REV. JOHN D. MALLEY
Pastor

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, by Bishop Stephen V. Ryan of the Buffalo Diocese, of which Rexville was then a part.

FOR THE SOLEMN occasion, clergy came from all sections of the state. Among the priests present were the Revs. Michael P. Connerly, who was then pastor, Francis Clark of Hornellsville, James Rogers of Owego, James Bloomer and James McManus of Elmira, Philip Kin-sella of Wellsville, James Baxter of Bath, Martin Ryan of Addison, James Dunbar of Belmont, William Regan and Patrick Creighton of Brooklyn.

Only two years later, in February 1877, the new church burned to the ground. The people, with characteristic cooperation, immediately began building a new church. Materials had to be brought from Wellsville, and parishioners responded with 225 teams of horses to haul the necessary supplies.

They worked steadily and with almost amazing efficiency. Seven months later the new St. Mary's was completely built. It was dedicated Sept. 14, 1877 on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

AT THAT TIME, there were 750 parishioners, which was twice the number the new church would accommodate.

The parish continued to thrive, and in 1893, St. Mary's Parochial School was established. A new building was erected which was considered one of the most modern in the area at that time. The Rev. M. O'Shea was pastor at that time.

Slates of Mercy staffed the new school which had an average attendance of 37 pupils. The school has not been in operation for many years now.

The building which housed the classrooms was used as a community hall by parishioners and organizations in the vicinity until it was destroyed by fire, Sept. 14, 1943. Parishioners formed a bucket brigade, but the wooden structure was burned to the ground in less than an hour.

In the latter part of the 1880's, however, the parish was expanding with the increasing number of Catholic farmers who settled in the area. In 1893, the Confirmation class numbered 107 parishioners. Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid of the Diocese administered the Sacrament.

THE CEMETERY on the hill, which is still used, was blessed in 1886 by Bishop Ryan.

Among the early pastors of St. Mary's were the Revs. F. Clark who served from 1879-1882; H. H. Connerly 1883-1888; M. O'Shea, 1888-1889; G. B. Grattan, 1890-1893; H. McConnell, 1893-1896; J. F. Mooney, 1896-1897.

The Rev. James Griffin, later to become Rt. Rev. Msgr. Griffin and pastor of St. Mary's, Coaling was an assistant pastor from 1892 to 1893.

The longest pastor in St. Mary's was that of the Rev. J. E. Casey, who served the parish from 1897 until 1918. Father Casey was a cousin of the late Bishop John F. O'Hara of Rochester.

THE REV. Cornelius A. Silke became pastor in 1918. He was in charge of the parish until 1932 when he was transferred to St. Ann's, Hornell.

From 1932-1934 the Rev. William M. Cannon was pastor. He is the only one of St. Mary's former pastors who is now living.

At present he is pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Corning. The Rev. Raymond M. Lynd succeeded Father Cannon as pastor until 1939; the Rev. Frederick C. Wise, 1939-1943 and the Rev. Bernard Cleary, 1943-August 8, 1951.

Father Malley, then assistant pastor of St. Ann's, Hornell, was appointed administrator Aug. 9, 1951 and named pastor on Aug. 22, 1951. Since being appointed pastor, he has, with the cooperation of parishioners, carried on an extensive program of reconstruction, enlargement and improvement of parish buildings.

In September, 1951, \$4,000 was raised by subscription for the program. The interior of the church was completely redecorated and renovated by the con-



(Hornell Evening Tribune Photo)

Interior of St. Mary's, Rexville

tracting firm of Gervase and Forde, Rochester. It was completed last December.

The interior of St. Mary's today presents an attractive picture with its flying Gothic arches and walls a blend of peach and terra cotta. The sanctuary is a warm buff of Arvon finish. On the blue ceiling are symbols of the Blessed Virgin, patroness of the church.

The organ has been electrified and a new rose-tinted window installed over the main altar, which sheds a soft glow.

THE ALTAR itself has been completely remodeled. Massive gold-plated candlesticks have been purchased. A new floor lamp has been installed in the sanctuary. Gray and mauve rugs cover the sanctuary floors.

Side altars, dedicated to St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, have been enhanced with new draperies in silver gray. All statues within the church have been restored and the stations of the cross remodeled in natural colors and gold leaf.

Pews have been refinished and new kneelers installed. A new system of indirect lighting and tile flooring are also among the improvements effected within the past year.

The exterior of the church has been painted, through the volunteer service of the men of the parish. The men also installed the flooring throughout the church. The main entrance to the interior of the church has been remodeled and new porches added to the side entrances.

IN THE RECTORY, a new

chapel was dedicated on Oct. 18, 1951, on the Feast of St. Luke, by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. William M. Hart, vicar-general of the Rochester Diocese. It has a privileged altar and is classed as a public oratory.

The chapel, dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, was, Father Malley says, made possible through the generosity of the friends of St. Mary's. The altar and furnishings in the rectory chapel are of blond oak. An Italian hand-carved Crucifix is over the altar.

The chapel has a new electric organ. Funds for stained glass windows have already been donated, and the work will be done in the near future.

The next improvement planned for St. Mary's is the repairing and painting of the church tower and spire. Father Malley has announced that the offering received on the day of the Centennial Mass will be used for that purpose.

A plaque in honor of the "friends of St. Mary's, who have aided in the program of remodeling and restoration will be placed in the vestibule of the church. Present trustees are Robert



St. Mary's Church, Rexville

Grumley and Leo Harkenrider. Edward McCarthy and J. Brady Kilduff are the auditors.

IN DISCUSSING the past, present and future prospects for St. Mary's, Father Malley said today:

"A wonderful spirit of faith has prompted parishioners to the extraordinary cooperation and interest they have shown towards their House of God.

St. Mary's Church Rexville

'Bank Of Faithful' Pledges Million

New Orleans — (NC) — A promise of a \$1,000,000 philosophy hall to be erected at Notre Dame Seminary was among the gifts given New Orleans' Archbishop Joseph Francis Hurmel, when he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his consecration and the 50th jubilee of his ordination here.

At a luncheon, during the three-day jubilee celebration, in token of the promise Auxiliary Bishop L. Abel Calloquet of New Orleans, presented the Archbishop with a "check" for \$1,000,000 drawn on the "Bank of the Faithful." Bishop Calloquet said the "check" was guaranteed by "500,500 stockholders."

Msgr. John Lee, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. James Higginbotham, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John Carr, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles Maxwell and the Rev. Eugene Mahoney. All have since died with the exception of Monsignor John Carr who is pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church in Buffalo.

WOMEN parishioners who have chosen a religious vocation include:

Sister Angelica McCormick, Sister Cyril Dunningan, Sister Eugene Higginbotham, Sister Philip Carr, Sister Richard Lyons, all Sisters of St. Joseph; Sister Cecilia McCormick, Sister Succurus O'Hagan, and Sister Theodora O'Hagan of the Sisters of Mercy;

Sister DeSales Dunn, Sister Martha King, Sister Gertrude King, Sister DeCharita McCormick and Sister Blonnie McCormick of Sisters of St. Mary de Namur;

Sister Mary McCormick and Sister Loretta McCormick of the Ursuline Order;

Sister Hyacinth Maxwell, Sister Amanda Mahoney, Sister Mary John McKinley, Sister Philomena Sweeney, Sister Giovanna Sweeney and Sister Terence Marie Dempsey, Franciscan, and Sister Dolores O'Hagan, Sisters of Charity.

Missionary Sisters of the Divine Guild from Belmont are assisting Father Malley, the pastor in the religious instruction program. The nuns teach elementary pupils of Greenwood Central School. A laywoman instructs grade school children in religion in Troupsburg.

Secondary school students of the area schools are instructed by the pastor, Father Malley.

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