St. Francis Of Assisi Parish, Rochester, Started 25 Years Ago In Neighborhood Theater Building

Few Rochester parishes had a more humble beginning than St. Francis of Assisi which 25 years ago converted a former theater building in Whitney Street into a church that continues to serve as a house of worship for the parish to the present day.

In this Whitney Street church next Sunday (Oct. 10) at a.m. Father Joseph Cirrincione, pastor, will celebrate Mass marking the 25th anniversary of the parish's establishment. His Excellency Bishop Kearney will preside and preach the sermon.

History of the parish dates back to Aug. 15, 1929 when Bishon John Francis O'Hern solemnly blessed the new St. Francis of Assisi Church building which prior to its consecration, served not only as a theater but later as a garage. The Rev. (later Monsignor)

Adolph L. Gabbani was the first those days of depression averaged about \$65 a week. The low pastor of St. Francis. The lower flat of a house at 81 Whitney St., point was reached in 1933 when the average was \$54. next door to the church, was

Baptisms also reached a low

point that year with only 94

babies baptized. High year for

Baptisms was 1948 when there

were 154. Last year there were

163 Baptisms in the parish.

rented from the Spoto family and used as the first rectory. A small cottage was nurchased on June 29, 1930, and used as a meeting hall for parish societies. A garage was Later built next to

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Confirmations were high dur-THE RT. REV. MSGR. John ing these early years. There were M. Duffy, presently pastor of St. 152 Confirmations in 1934 with Augustine Church but then Diothe high point reached in 1937 cesan Superintendent of Schools, when there were 163. used to hear confessions and celebrate Sunday Mass during those first years of the parish.

In the spring of 1931, Father Gabbani moved into tris new rectory at 401 Orange St.

Sunday School was conducted in the church with students from St. Bernard Seminary instructing. During the week, several priests from the diocese would conduct catechism classes in the Charles Settlement House with the assistance of Miss Bertha Martens:

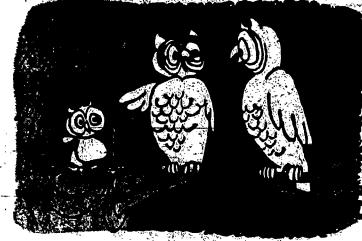
The number of children from public grammar schools catechized in those days averaged shout 750. Public High school students were not released for

numbered 275 students. THE NUMBER of grazmmar ester.

school students under instruction The Rev. Joseph A. Cirrintoday has dropped to approxi clone, one of the newly ormately 500, with about 220 high daimed, priests of the St. Bernschool students enrolled. The nard Seminary Class of 1934 parish now has about 125 chilwas appointed the first full time assistant of St. Francis dren enrolled in parochial schools and about 30' in Catholic high on July 1, 1934. schools.

chools. The following May, the Rev. Sunday collections during Pietro Mois, pastor of St. Fran-

Church.





. St. Francis of Assisi Church, Whitney St., Rochester.

Pastor

cis of Assisi Church in Auburn, died and Father Gabbani was

THE NUMBER of marriages appointed pastor of that parish. Archbishop Mooney apin the early years of the parish were about the same as they -ointed Father Cirrincione as are now: about 35 to 45 a year. administrator of the Rochester In 1941 the number rose to 73 Church. These changes took

and the two years following the place on June 1, 1955. war recorded a total of 168 mar-One month later, the Rev. rlages. The death rate has re-Thomas J. Manley, a newly ormained fairly constant, average dained priest, was assigned to ing between 30 to 40 deaths a St. Francis as assistant pastor. year. The number of Commun-Father Manley was given charge ions rose from 17,000 in the first of the Sodality.

years to 35,000 during the war To supplement the meagre inyears. Highest recorded attendcome of the parish, various card ance at Sunday Mass was on parties, raffles, bazaars, suppers April 16, 1939, when 2,236 per and dances used to be held. In sons attended St. Francis spite of this, it was necessary to borrow \$350 to pay for a fur-

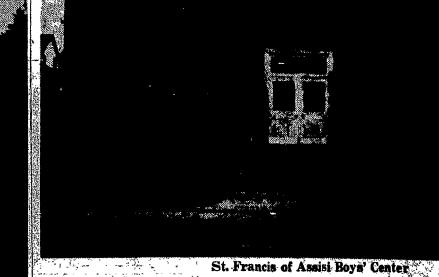
nace in the rectory and for paint-In the spring of 1933, Bishop classes at that time. When this O'Hern died and was succeeded ing the interior of the church. began in 1941, the first class by Archbishop Mooney who be-St. Francis of Assisi was escame Archbishop-Bishop of Roch. tablished as an "Italian National Parish" in 1935, having hitherto

FATHER CIRRINCIONE been a mission directly under the bishop. Parish lines went

Parishioners were already conalong the New York Central Railroad (Main Line) to the in tributing to the funct for the tersection of Brown St., to the center. It was hoped to build the middle of Allen St., to the Sub center entirely from donated la way; along the Subway to the bor to help keep expenses down. N.Y.C.R.R., south and west of On Sunday, June 9, ground Lyell Ave, to the city line and breaking ceremonies were held along the city line on the west, with the Rev. John Duffy and

A summer school was conduct. Judge Charles Lambiase as prined in 1936 with the assistance of cipal speakers. Excavation start-Sisters Carita and Maris Stella ed the next day. Work continued of SS. Peter and Paul Church. all summer and advanced sum-Classes were held in the club, ciently by fall to have the corhouse and in the rectory garden. nerstone ceremony on Sunday, Father Manley was succeeded Oct. 6. Monsignor Hart officiated as assistant pastor by the Rev. at the ceremony and the princi-John M. Merklinger in June of pal speaker was City Judge for the Conversion of Russia and the spring. Bishop Kearney They will live in the house 1937. The same year, on the Michael Rogers.

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, NINE MONTHS AFTER the day, January 11, 1948. That evethe outdoor statue of St. Francis groundbreaking ceremony, on ming, Father Cirrincione began was solemnly blessed. A double Sunday, March 9, 1941, Bishop a writes of weekly radio talks on Cearney blessed the new build the story of Fatima over WSAY ney St. on Sept. 28, 1937, to be ing and celebrated Mass there. The Women's Eucharistic used as a rectory. More than 450 persons assembled League held its first Holy Hour On November 11, 1937. His Ex. in the auditorium in the evening on March 27, 1948. Attendance cellency Bishop James E. Kear when the dedication dinner was then was about 79 women, but ney was installed as the fifth held. The late Father Flanagan the organization now numbers Bishop of the Rochester See to (Msgr. Edward A. Flamagan) di- about 35 women. succeed Archbishop Mooney who rector of Boys Town, was prin-earlier had been named to head cipal speaker. FATHER CIRRINCIONE left for a pilgrimage to Fatima and the Archdiocese of Detroit. The final cost of the building, Rome on May 7, 1948. Before SHORTLY AFTER. Bishop including equipment, was \$12, leaving the men of the parish Kearney's arrival in Rochester, 500, The new Boys' Center con- launched plans for a shrine dedi-Father Cirrincione was appoint. tained, in addition to catecheticaled to Our Lady in the lot be ed pastor of St. Francis and he cal rooms, a large recreation tween the church and the Girls' was installed in office by the Rt. room in the basement and a Center. Father Cirrincione re Rev. Msgr. William M. Hart, large auditorium with stage on turned at the end of May with a V.G., on the vigil of the Feast of the main floor. This was suit statue of Our Lady of The Ros the Immaculate Conception, Dec. able for basketball and other ary of Fatima, carved out of 7, 1937. On Feb. 14, 1938, the par games. wood by the famous Portúguese sculptor, Jose Thedim, and blessparish in 1941 by C. P. Ward ed by Pope Plus XII. It was title of St. Francis of Assisi Church of Rochester, N. Y. solenanly placed in the waiting Catechism classes were trans enabling Father Cirrincione to shrine. ferred from the Charles Settle. Carry out his program for the A chapter of the Third Order ment House to the clubhouse and young people of the parish. A of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was to the church in the fall of 1938, cottage was purchased at Con-The need for a catechetical cen. esus Lake and it became a fater was now greater than ever. millar sight to see the St. Fran-Priest Taught Plans were launched for the Cis of Assisi bus, filled with construction of a parish Boys' youngsters, headed for Conesus **Dusty Rhodes** Center, and in the spring of 1940, Lake. To Hit Ball a site was purchased at 69-71 Father Merklinger was suc-Whitney St. Bishop Kearney met ceeded as assistant pastor by the with a special committee of bus- Rev. Thomas K. Cleary in June New York - (NC) - The inessmen headed by Charles M. of 1942. This year also, the house Dispenza and the late Christo at 77 Whitney, St. was converted Rhodes of the New York Giants pher H. D'Amanda to map plans into a rectory. The war years for citywide support of the new created a shortage of priests in how to swing that powerful bat center. It diocese and St. Francis was it a Catholic priest. His name is Father J. Malcolm. Rafferty and he's stationed at St. Andrew's Church in Mont somery, Ala.



established in the parish by the blessed the redecorated church owned by the parish at SI white Rev. Howard Rafferty, O.Carm. on Sunday, Nov. 28.

left without an assistant from of Chicago and the first meeting was held Nov. 21, 1948.

1944 to 1946. The pastor left for another pil-A campaign was begun in the summaer of 1944 to raise money grimage to Fatima and Lourdes for a new church organ, The in August of 1949. On his recampaign was successful, but turn he brought back another due to shortage of materials, delivery was delayed until 1947. of Mary, also carved by Thedim The organ was blessed on Sun and blessed by the Holy Father. day, March 9, 1947, anniversary FAMILY BOSARY for Peace institution. It became customary of the opening of the Boys' Cen- radio broadcasts were inaugurat- to broadcast outdoors from the ter, by Bishop Kearney before ed by Father Cirrincione on Mass. Philip Kreckel played an March 4, 1950 over WSAY. The months. first broadcasts originated at the organ recital that afternoon.

ON MARCH 4. 1945, a double studios of the station, but later Marian Year, Bishop Kearney recitation of historical facts give house was purchased at 81 Whit. arrangements were made for gave permission for an evening ney St. It was hoped to use it them to originate in the Girls' Mass to follow the Thursday some day as a convent but in the Center, Bishop Kearney led the meantime it was rented to two Rosary on the opening night. Tamilies. The house at 401 Or. The Rev. William F. White, lifth year and has accounted for years. The full story is known ange St. was vacated by its ten. who had just been ordained, suc-almost 40,000,000 regaries. ange St. was vacated by its ten- who had just been ordained, suc- almost 40,000,000 rosarles. ants in 1945 and with funds ceeded Father Vogt in July of furnished by the Hickey-Freeman 1950,

Clothing Co., it was converted Bishop Kearney led the Family into a Girls' Center, Bishop Kear. Rosary for Peace on July 2, the Father O'Connell." ney blessed it on Sunday, Jan. day that Father White was pre-

sented to the parish, and blessed uary 26, 1946. The Rev. Francis H. Vogt was the new shrine of St. Jokeph in welcomed by the parish on Sun the Rose Garden.

day, May 12, 1946 as its new as Father Cirrincione left for a sistant. Father Vogt had been Holy Year pilgrimage in August Steps have been taken however, serving as an army chaplain in of -1950 and again brought back to intensify the work of the rea statue, this time of the Sacred ligious instruction of the children. Europe. The Holy Name Society, which Heart. The statue was again had discontinued meetings dur. carved by Thedim and blessed by

ing the war, was revived and be the Pope. came active again. Shortly after That fall, a new sacriaty was ters who dedicate themselves to ordination, the Rev. Anthony F. added to the church. The last of catechetical instruction of public Calinzeri reported to St. Francis the church debt was paid and school children and visitation of as a second assistant in July, plans were made to raise money homes. The Sisters have accepted 1947. The first of a series of Novenas church. Work began in February St. Francis parish as soon as 1947.

in homor of Our Lady of Fatima of 1951 and progressed through they have members available; World Peace was begun on Sun-

THE BEV. B ICHARD

STARTED TWENTENI O'Connell succeeded Father years ago to provide spiritua Calimeri and in June of 1953, care for the Italian people living Father White was transferred, in the south west section leaving the church with only one Rochester, St. Francis And parish has marked progress since assistant.

for Peace had become a diocesan theater, More important than the ma terial expansion which the par Rosary Shrine in the warm ish has enjoyed during the past quarter of a century laits spir

urable graces and blessings en night broadcasts. The Family loyed by St. Francis Assist pe

In June, 1954, the Rev. E. Charles Bauer was appointed to St. Francis to take the place of

Earlier plans for building arish school in connection with this year's Silver Jubilee celebration have been abandoned be cause of the expense involved

homes. The Sisters have accepted

An invitation to establish a convent in the parish has been extended to a community of Sig-

> Call: Dr. R. E. Brack HO 4160

During the few years of its its humble establishment in the existence, The Family Rosary building that once served as

As a special feature of the itual, progress. Unfortunately, a gave permission for an evening only a small hint of the immen

ney St.

COURIERJOURNAL Friday, October 8, 1954

With the second

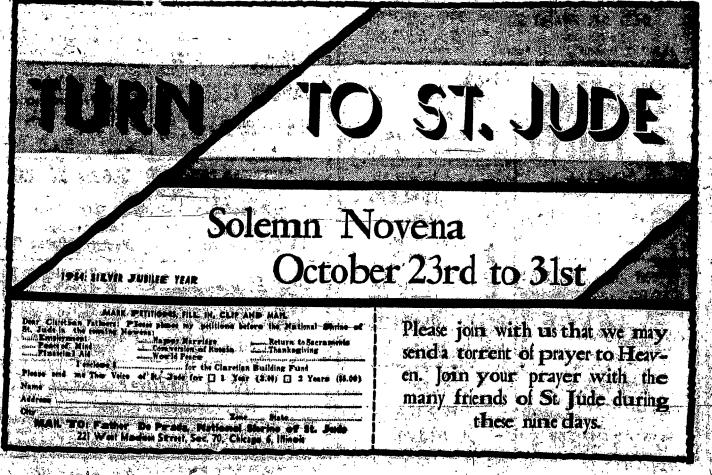




"He said his first wonies of wrisdom sonight, excritice for the Mission."

Mission Sunday October 24 MEMBERSHIPS Ordinary Perpetual \$40 Membership Membership (Any Living or Deceased Person) Special Family Perpetual \$100 Memberships Membership (Up to 18 persons) Linitied to Members of One Family Society For The Propagation Of The Faith Vorry Nev. Mejr. John S. Randall 50 Chestnut St. Rechester 4, N. Y.

and man in the start with a start in the



THES GLAINT who equalled an all time World Series record for pinch hits with three straight while helping to batter the Cleveland Indians into four straight defeats in the World Series, was a 16-year-old orphan just learning the fine points of the game when he came to the attention of Father Rafferty. Dusty Rhodes is not a Catholic, but that made no difference to Father Rafferty. The priest recalled: "I coached him in batting when he played with St. Andrews Gaels from 1944 to 1946, Boys of all faiths play on my athletic teams. Dusty was hitting a long ball even then. But Fie was pulling too many potential homers toward the foul

FA THE B RAFFEBTY soon took care of that and Dusty de-veloped that smooth batting stroke which now has lifted him into the ranks of national heroism. From Father Rafferty's teams and semi-pro ball in Montgomery, Dusty Rhodes went on to the mainor leagues with the Nashville Vois, then made the big step to the big leagues with the New York Giants in 1952.

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