



Inner-city pastor Father Francis Vogt surveys his portion of God's kingdom on earth — with a fire-wrecked house across the street from his rectory and some of the youngsters of his little flock.

# The Catholic COURIER

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

St. Bridget's

## Inner-City Parish Struggles to Survive

St. Bridget's parish, centered in the Gorham-Hand Street area of Rochester's 7th Ward is an inner-city parish struggling for survival under many difficulties.

Now 111 years old, St. Bridget's was solidly Irish when the parish was founded and the neighborhood was called "Little Dublin."

In 1965, the neighborhood is predominantly a Negro one, with a good-sized number of Puerto Rican families.

In between, there was a long era when St. Bridget's was mainly an Italian parish.

A look at the parish baptismal register gives an idea of the various groups which have lived in the 7th ward area in the past century:

1850's — Mostly names like Bridget Carmody, Patrick McCarthy and Lawrence McKeirney.

World War I days — Representative names were Angelo Morelli, Mary Ciaccia and Antonio Montanarella.

1950's — Santiago, Rimos, Jose Cuadrado and Luis Molina were average names in the baptismal book.

1965 — A American Negro names showing up now, like Rufus Ware and Lorasco Thomas.

Last year's figures show that 60% of the baptisms still come from Puerto Rican families, however.

About 700 people attend Mass every Sunday now at St. Bridget's, and of these almost half are Puerto Ricans and 75-80 are Negroes. Of the other whites, many are old parishioners who now live outside the parish.

Financially, St. Bridget's faces rugged going. The Sunday collection runs to about \$250, and with a school of 250 children, the parish has a hard time making ends meet.

"The Diocese is helping us with \$3,000 a year," said Father Francis Vogt, St. Bridget's pastor, "which we use toward the salaries of our three lay teachers." (Four Sisters of St. Joseph make up the rest of the school staff.)

From time to time, individual parishes have taken up special collections to help the struggling little parish. These have ranged from donations of \$300 to \$900, and have been a real, if infrequent, help.

Biggest encouragement for future financial help has come from suburban St. Thomas More parish, whose pastor, Father Francis Pegnam feels that his people can manage some steady assistance for St. Bridget's needs. Starting next year, the Brighton parish hopes to make a substantial contribution to the inner-city parish each year.

"We're in a transition period

right now," Father Vogt points out, "but the parish has met many changes in the past, and we feel that it has an important part to play here in the years ahead.

He points to the 112 baptisms of 1964 as an evidence of this:

"Even in its (Irish) heyday, St. Bridget's had only about 90 baptisms a year, and during the depression it went as low as 13 for the whole year," he explained.

Most encouraging at this point is the steady-increasing number of Negro converts to the Church. Of the 60 baptisms already recorded this year, the majority are of Negroes.

"I believe that the combination of our Puerto Ricans, who are becoming better-instructed and practicing Catholics each year, and the Negro converts who are entering the Church, will give us a good strong parish in future years," the stocky priest says.

Because he speaks Spanish, the assistant pastor of St. Bridget's, Father Roger Baglin does much of the pastoral work with the Puerto Rican parishioners. One parish group is for their special benefit, the Caballeros de San Juan. Father Baglin has been told on the worth of the "Cursillo" movement, because of its effect on some of his group.

"About 10 of our men have made the Cursillo (an intense sort of retreat, aimed at deepening the apostolic spirit of Catholics—editor's note), and it has certainly helped them to be better Catholics," he said.

As Father Vogt takes a long look at his parish, he is very realistic. He admits that the present situation is a difficult one, and that St. Bridget's needs all the outside help it can get.

Realizing the crucial problems of the century-old parish, a heartening number of Catholics from outside the parish have begun offering their services as volunteers.

For example, 7 adults are helping the two priests teach some 200 youngsters in the public school CCD program.

On Sunday mornings, some 25 to 30 Catholic high-schoolers donate their morning to St. Bridget's younger set. They call at homes to escort children to Mass (many of the parents are not Catholic, but are willing to let their youngsters join the Church).

"After Mass, these wonderful kids from Mercy, Nazareth and Kearney high schools conduct catechetical programs over in school, getting their charges ready for Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, etc.," Father Vogt details.

Students from St. Andrew's seminary, mostly out-of-town boarders, work on Saturdays with painting and repair projects.

They're also collecting used furniture to distribute it where needed.

Collegian volunteers also conduct individual tutoring programs, giving St. Bridget's pupils help in reading, speech therapy, etc.

Members of the city Newman Clubs are also on the scene as volunteer painters and refurbishers.

All in all—the parish plant is in pretty trim shape. A recent sand-blasting job on the brick church and school has given them both a fresh look on the outside, and their interiors have been refurbished nicely.

Renovations has put a new face on the parish plant, but has put it financially in the hole at the same time. At the moment, St. Bridget's has a \$47,000 debt, not much for the average city parish, but a heavy load for this one.

"We are reducing that fairly well," Father Vogt hastens to add, "thanks to a successful renovation campaign last year. So far \$22,000 has come in and we're hoping for another fifteen or twenty thousand before the collection period is over."

With a constantly changing

neighborhood and more family instability than usual, things like training a First Communion class pose quite a problem each year.

St. Bridget's meets it by having four or five different First Communion dates each year. There will be one big one (85 children) in a few weeks, another at the end of summer vacation school, 30 youngsters

have already made their First Communion earlier this year.

"In our school, for this current class, we have children all the way from Grades 1 to 5," Father Vogt went on. "Some of these children are recent converts, some have moved from school to school so rapidly that they haven't been able to get

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## Honorary Degree For Xerox Head

St. John Fisher College will award its eighth honorary degree June 6 to Joseph C. Wilson, president of Xerox Corporation. Wilson, who will be the principal speaker at the Basilian college's 11th commencement exercises, will receive the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

A life-long resident of Rochester who has been identified with the company he heads throughout his entire business career, Mr. Wilson was elected president of The Haloid Corporation, predecessor to Xerox, in 1946 at the age of 37.

He was a Phi Beta Kappa member of the University of Rochester in 1931 and graduate of the Harvard Business School in 1933.



JOSEPH C. WILSON

Graduate School of Business Administration, where he received his master's degree with distinction in 1933.

Following graduation from Harvard, Wilson joined Haloid, a firm with which his family had been associated for two generations. He was named secretary in 1936, treasurer in 1938, a member of the board of directors in 1940, and vice-president in 1945.

Wilson is known for his active support of educational and cultural institutions. He has served as a member of the board of trustees of the University of Rochester since 1949 and has been chairman of the board since 1954.

Among the many community projects with which Mr. Wilson has been identified are the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, of which he is a former president, and the city and county Community Chest. He became a member of the board of directors of the Community Chest in 1950 and has been a member of its executive committee since the following year.

He is a trustee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Inc., the Committee for Economic Development, the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, and the Rochester Savings Bank.

He also is a director of The Bank Organization, Ltd., the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co., Lincoln Rochester Trust Co., McCurdy & Co., Rochester Gas & Electric Corp., Superior Gravels, the Small Business Investment Co. of New York, Inc. and the Automobile Club of Rochester.

Wilson is a member of the Tenesse Valley Club, the Country Club of Rochester, the University Club of New York and the Metropolitan Club of Washington, D.C.

He is a council member at large of the Otsego Council of the Boy Scouts of America.



DR. ARTHUR LARSON

## College Slates Dr. Larson, Aide to Ike

Dr. Arthur Larson, director of the World Rule of Law Center and special assistant to the President during the Eisenhower Administration, will be the main speaker at Nazareth College commencement May 31, 4 p.m.

Dr. Larson is widely known as a lawyer and educator as well as a former government official. His books include "When Nations Disagree," "What We Are For," "Know Your Social Security," "The Law of Workmen's Compensation," "A Republican Looks at His Party," and his most recent, "A Warless World."

Dr. Larson attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and holds four degrees from Oxford, including the D.C.L. (Doctor of Civil Laws). He is a Fellow of Pembroke College. After practicing law in Milwaukee, he taught in the law schools of the universities of Tennessee, Cornell, and Pittsburgh, where he was dean of the law school. He left Pittsburgh to become Under Secretary of Labor in 1954.

In 1956 he was appointed director of the U.S. Information Agency. Later he became special assistant to President Eisenhower, and continued as part-time special consultant to the President after leaving Washington. Currently he is director of the World Rule of Law Center at Duke University and is consultant to the State Department on United Nations matters.

Council warden Edward A. Hise has been named general chairman by Grand Knight Edward A. Claus.

Arrangements have been made so that the congregation can receive Holy Communion at the service.

Elmira Fourth Degree Assembly Color Corps will act as an honor guard, under the direction of Color Corps Captain Willis I. Larrabee and Fourth Degree Faithful Navigator Frederick E. Dykins.

THE CATHOLIC COURIER

DEADLINE

MONDAY NOON

FOR ALL NEWS



FIRST COMMUNION CLASS of Sister Virginia (standing), gathered into one classroom for this picture, includes pupils from Grades 1 through 5.

## Penfield Churches Plan Aid to 'Inner-City'

Nine churches in Penfield will pool facilities to aid the needy in Rochester's "inner city" in a two-day good neighbor project.

Clothing, bedding, household items, furniture, Scout uniforms and equipment are sought.

Saturday and Sunday, June 5 and 6, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. is target time for the aid drive. Items may be brought to old St. Joseph's Church in the heart of Penfield village.

The nine participating churches are Penfield Advent Christian Church, East Penfield Baptist, Penfield Methodist, Penfield Presbyterian, First Baptist, St. Joseph's, Second Reformed, Faith Lutheran and the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation.

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