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Centenary at Elmira Parish

(Continued from Page 1) sionally visited them and urged them to form their own church.

Property for the new church was purchased on Dickinson Street and a corner stone was laid in 1866 and was consecrated in 1868. The cost of the structure was \$8,040, and a local newspaper commented, "In these times everything is high."

The church had a seating capacity of 400 and a membership of approximately 300. The Sunday School had an enrollment of between 60-70 pupils.

Elmira at that time was part of the Buffalo diocese.

The first resident pastor was Father Serge Schoupenkoff. After a year he was succeeded

Fr. Lepp Dies, Former Atheist

PARIS—(NC)—Father Ignace Lepp, controversial priest, psychologist and author, has died in Paris. Father Lepp, a convert, was prominent in communist intellectual circles of the early 30's.

Born in Lithuania, Father Lepp joined the communist party at 15. He went to live in Moscow, and became a professor at Tiflis and president of an association of Marxist writers. He often mentioned that he sought an ideal society, a society without misery, and believed at the time that only communism could supply it.

Disillusioned by the Moscow trials of 1937, he left the party. He became a Catholic, and was later ordained a priest. He continued his research and writing in many fields after his ordination.

by Father G. Erhardt, who served until January 7, 1871. Father V. VonKappin was pastor until July 1871 when he was succeeded by Father G. Gruber, who served until June 2, 1873. The Reverend A. Bachman was the next pastor until June 1874. Father T. Neibling served until December 27, 1874, when Father J. Strleke replaced him, and served until August 1886. Father A. Geisenhoff was then appointed.

During this period St. John's Parochial School was organized. The school was built in the spring of 1875 at a cost of \$2,000. The teachers were supplied by the Sisters of St. Francis of Buffalo.

In 1889 the old church on Dickinson Street burned and services were temporarily held in the school house on Benjamin Street.

In discussing plans for a new church, parishioners decided to locate it near the center of the city. Many sites were considered but the choice finally settled at Lake and Second Street. The corner stone was laid May 4, 1891 and was consecrated by Bishop Stephen V. Ryan of Buffalo in 1892.

In the cavity of the corner stone was inserted a tin box containing a copy of the Elmira Telegram; the Catholic Union and Times of Buffalo; a map of North America; and a synopsis of the history of St. John's Church from its foundation to the time of the laying of the corner stone.

Father Geisenhoff remained pastor until December 1891 when Father Trautwein succeeded him. In January 1903, the beloved Father John B. Stemmler was appointed to lead the congregation. History has recorded the many improvements

brought about by this able leader.

At Father Stemmler's golden jubilee in December 1940, Bishop Kearney celebrated the jubilee Mass. Hundreds of parishioners and clergy joined in the celebration which climaxed with a banquet. A golden monstrance was presented to Father Stemmler as a gift of the parish. Long now deceased, Father Stemmler has left a living monument of the present parish and church.

Rev. Theodore J. Winterroth was appointed the new pastor in June 1942 and served until his death in January 1957. Father Joseph O. Gorman was pastor until October 1952. At that time Father Raymond G. Heisel became pastor and made extensive and badly needed repairs to the church. In June 1961 Father John J. Leary was appointed and served until June 1965, when the present pastor, Father William D. Tobin was appointed. Father William L. Reed, assistant pastor, served the parish from 1959 to 1966.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF St. John's parish history include:

Father Stemmler's frequent trips to "the Church on Dutch Hill" — a former school house used as a church for residents of that area outside Elmira.

The parish bulletin, the Vigilite, begun in 1936 is Elmira's "oldest Catholic newspaper" still being published.

Organizations of the laity are a Holy Name Society for men of the parish, St. John's Beneficial Society founded in 1870, a Rosary Guild for women of the parish, Legion of Mary and a choir.

Bishop Kearney inaugurated the annual Red Mass for jurists and lawyers of the Elmira area at St. John's Church in 1940, the year following a redecoration program of parish properties.

Plans are now under study to rearrange sanctuary furnishings in order to conform to recent directives of the Vatican Council.

The story of St. John's 100 years ends, therefore, not just with memories but with hope and confidence for a continued, energetic parish life.

A quarter of a century ago, Elmira City Manager Ralph D. Klebes wrote to Father Stemmler, "In these critical times, it is of the utmost importance that we hold fast to spiritual values." His words are obviously still apt today and St. John's — its pastor and its people — are committed to that task.



St. John's Baptist Church has long been a familiar landmark in downtown Elmira.

Music t

A recent decision of the 1 Bishops' Liturgical committee to ease restrictions on mod music and instruments at M was greeted with enthusiasm noted priest-composer v tted Rochester last week "Absolutely necessary" the comment of Father C since J. Rygers, who conduct his "American Mass Progr at a Mass here on June 2 m ing the third anniversary the founding of St. Martin Porres Center.

Founded by Mrs. Mary Muchard in 1863, the neigh hood center is located at N. Clinton Ave. in St. Bridg parish. The Mass which attr ed an overflow congregat was held at St. Bridg Church.

"There was a great vacu in Catholic Mass particpa (in the days of the old al Masses), in terms of cong ronal singing, which now n be filled, the 34-year old Ne priest noted. He doesn't t that current Church music t the vacuum.

Father Rivers, 34, is assis pastor at St. Joseph's paria Cincinnati, Ohio, and a tea of literature and drama at n by Purcell High School in t city.

"It's not just the teen-ay who are impatient with son the music now being used Mass, Father Rivers emphat noting that many adults w also looking for more suits music for congregational s ing.

The priest voiced a ferv hope that "some real leade in Church music, by those e are competent to do it," w be forthcoming.

If the capable musicians d show this initiative, "the res will be less than happy," predicted.

Father Rivers' "Mass 1 gram," based on the Negro s ritual and Gregorian chant, enjoyed a widespread suc since it was published in 196

The Man Behin

Alinsky

Delegates of the Catholic territorial Council and o Church groups active in l civil rights programs will tend tonight's annual con tion of the militant Negro ganization FIGHT at the R ester Institute of Techno nnaum. It begins at 7.

Formed with the help of controversial sociologist Saul / sky, the FIGHT group will n its first birthday at this venton.

(FIGHT stands for Freee Integration, God, Honor, day.)

Many Rochester area dents, including Catholics, still puzzle about the bi speaking Alinsky.

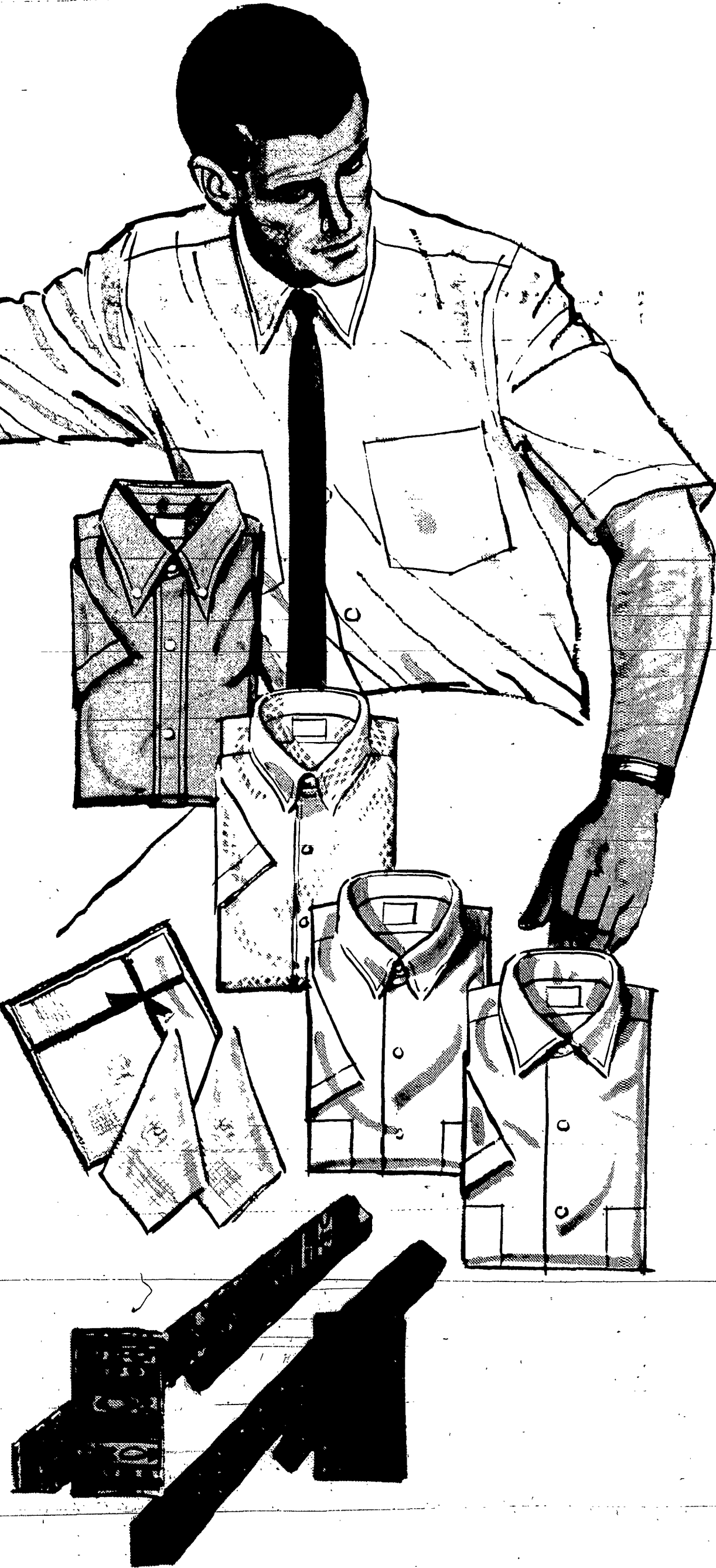
Sulpician Father John Cronin of the U.S. bisi NCWC Social Action Dep ment recently character Alinsky as "a many-sided m

"I suspect there are t Saul Alinsky," he said, v asked his opinion of the controversial "social tactician the Industrial Areas Fou tion.

Father Cronin made his ments in a talk to 40 pr from economically depre

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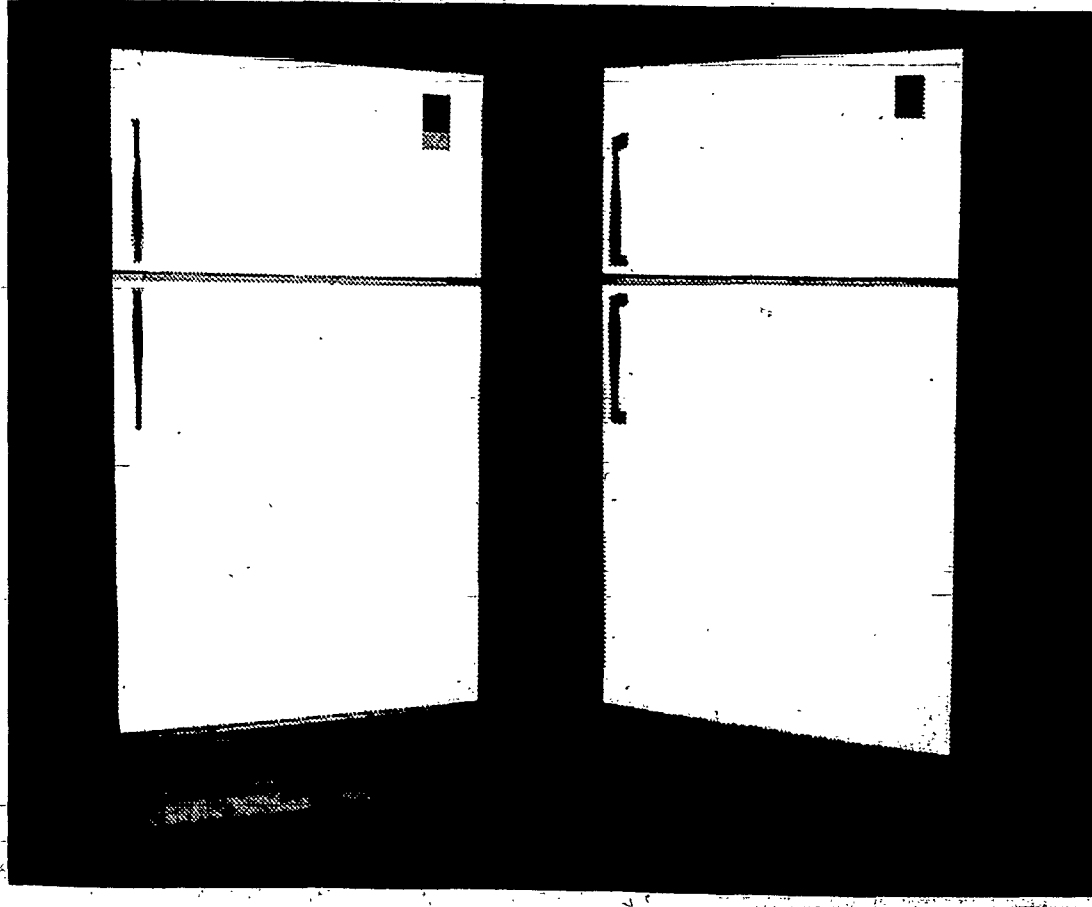
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