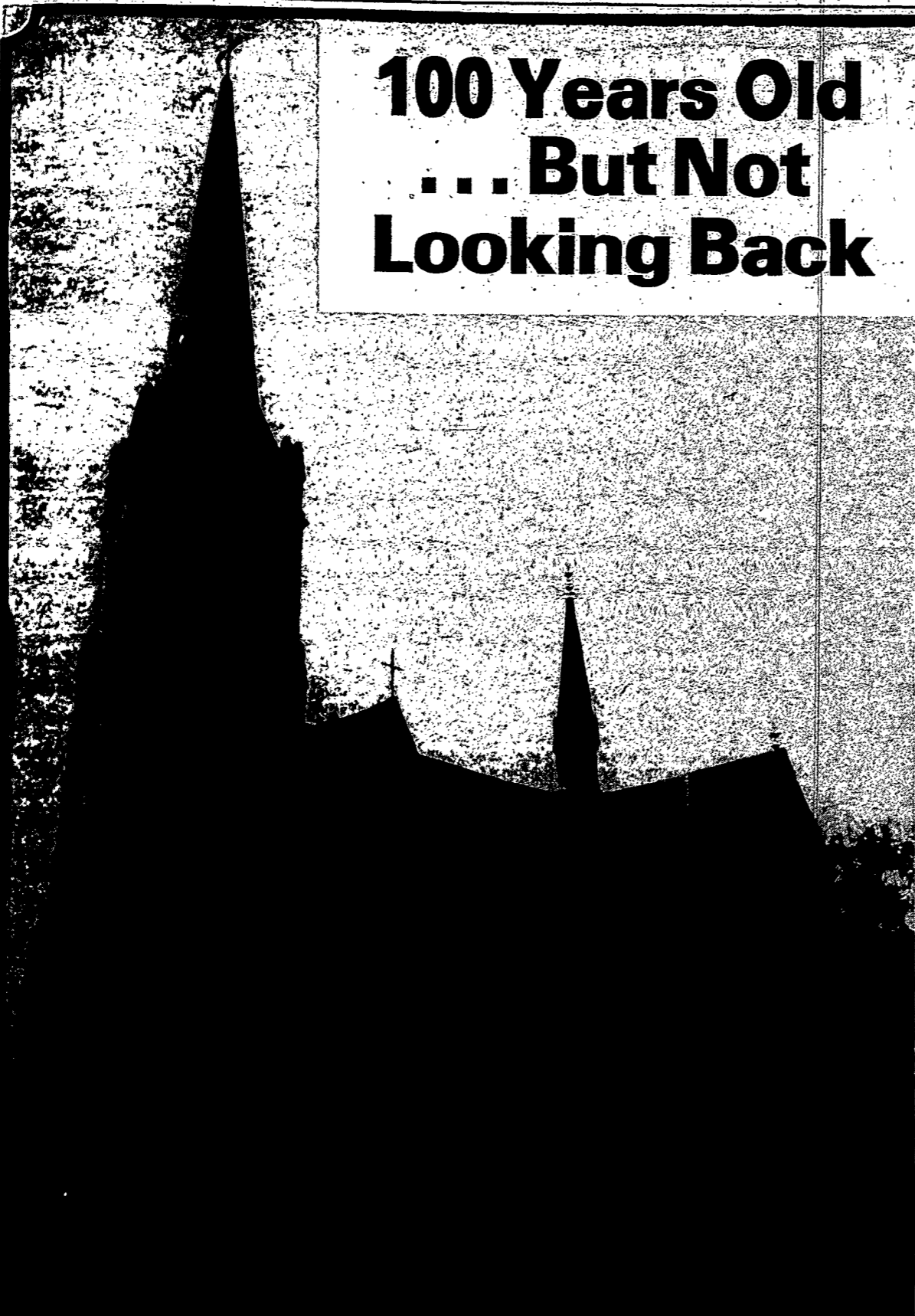


100 Years Old ... But Not Looking Back



St. Michael's Church will begin its centennial observance with a Pontifical High Mass celebrated by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan at 6 p.m. on Sunday Sept. 29. Priests from the parish, former associate pastors, sisters from the parish, and friends and neighbors will attend.

A buffet supper in the parish hall will follow the Mass. Tickets are available for the buffet at the church rectory and church hall.

Oldest Parishioner

Mrs. Louise White, who celebrates her 101st birthday on Oct. 8, may be the oldest parishioner of St. Michael's.

Mrs. White's daughter, Ethel, informed the Courier last week that her mother settled in Holy Redeemer Parish from Alsace Lorraine. She came with her family at the age of 12.

Shortly thereafter they moved to St. Michael's Parish. All of her children, five boys and two girls, attended the parish school.

BY JOHN DASH

Used to be called the Butterhole, a rolling pasture filled with dairy cattle that supplied the infant community of Rochester with milk and cheese and, of course, butter.

By the time historians in the area got around to setting down the story, the pastures were buried in stone and concrete and macadam and Butterhole was home to a vigorous group of German immigrants.

Today rangy blue chickory flowers and tall gold ragweed spring out of the wide dusty patches of lots emptied of homes and factories by urban renewal programs, and from the shops on Clinton Avenue the liquid sounds of Spanish music spill over the neighborhood that once, on Fall evenings, were washed with Lieder from the Vaterland.

At the heart of Butterhole stands St. Michael's Church, a center of faith for a century of change — and a springboard for the challenges of tomorrow.

Back in June 1872, a number of laymen from St. Joseph's and Holy Redeemer Parishes got together to see what could be done about building a new church in the Butterhole. It seems the area was not only developing very quickly from the influx of German immigrants, but the older folks in the neighborhood had trouble getting to Mass, especially during the severe Rochester winters, because the area wasn't served by streetcars.

After some months of organizing, the group petitioned Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, the first bishop of the Rochester Diocese, for permission to go ahead with the building.

In January of 1973 they again petitioned the bishop, this time for a priest for the fledgling parish of 80 families from St. Joseph and 100 families from Holy Redeemer. The bishop assigned Father August Pingel, CSSR, to the temporary post.

The cornerstone for the first church building was set in place with great panoply on Sept. 14, 1873; and less than six months later a priest from Wurtemberg, Germany, Father Fridolin Pascalar, was appointed the first pastor.

On March 8, 1874, the first Eucharist was celebrated in the first parish church. The sermon was delivered in German.

The growth of the community over the next few years was a surprise even to the bishop. In 1888 he confessed to the parish that permission to establish St. Michael's came only after some gentle arm-twisting by the rector of St. Joseph's Church and his promise of full support.

Two years later, the soaring neo-Gothic church that today adorns the 5th Ward, opened its doors for worship to the increasingly populous Butterhole community.

The beauty of the church prompted Bishop McQuaid to write his friend Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York that it was "the best Church in my diocese, not excepting the Cathedral."

In 1896, Father Pascalar resigned his post as pastor and returned to his beloved Germany where he died three years later.

He was succeeded by Father Mathias Hargather.

During this time the crunch came for educational facilities of the parish.

The children had been given instruction by the Sisters of the Order of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame since the day following the dedication of the first church. By 1890 the first church building had been entirely converted for school use, and in 1892 an eighth and ninth grade were added.

The education of the community children became Father Hargather's first concern and three years after he began his pastorate, and on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the parish, he dedicated a new school building. Bishop McQuaid preached at the Mass and said: "The education of the mind and heart and soul is first. Therefore, we consecrate your school to the young for their instruction in our holy religion. We are denied that right in the public schools, yet your tax collectors take your money, Catholic money, the same as the other, to carry on what they call higher education. Yet there is not one branch taught in their schools that is not taught in yours. Is that honest?"

The spirit of that question was to be raised time and time again during the following years.

The finest set of bells and chimes in Western New York was set in the tower of the church in 1903. The appraisal of "finest" stands today, according to the present pastor.

Father Hargather died in 1929 and was succeeded by Father Ferdinand Schied, a priest who had received his early education in the parish. Father Schied died in 1934. During his priestly life he had earned the name "priest of charity" and, significantly, he was known to belittle the assistance he gave to the poor.

Msgr. Arthur Florak assumed the pastorate of St. Michael's in 1935 and held that post until his retirement in 1961. At the time of Msgr. Florak's death in 1962, Bishop James E. Kearney quoted from Charles Dickens' story of the visit of an old school master to the grave of his pupil:

"Think what night is and then think of the beautiful country to which she has winged her early flight and say, 'If one solemn wish expressed over her grave could call her back, who of us would utter it.'"

The present pastor is Father Benedict Ehmann.

The community has changed significantly during his tenure, and the most significant changes have come "within the last five years or less," he says.

The parish noted a financial enfeeblement during the middle 1960s, due mainly to the increasing costs of maintaining a school staffed by growing numbers of lay teachers. A critical point in the school's life came last year when the Council of Inner City Parishes assumed responsibility of the facility and reorganized St. Michael's into a junior high.

It was also during the middle 1960s that the neighborhood felt the impact of a new wave of immigrants.

Father Ehmann estimates that between 35 and 40 per cent of his parishioners are from Puerto Rico and another 20 per cent from Italy.

Father sees this new community providing him with a challenge. The celebration of the parish centennial, he says, will not be "simply sentimentally journeying to the past. These are the days. Not 'Those were the days.'"

To this end, the parish council, which was one of the first formed in the area, has incorporated Office of Human Development leadership training into the fabric of centennial observance.

Father Ehmann said he sees the parish council "going strong — moving out from the materialities to a more comprehensive and dynamic spiritual involvement."

The priest singled out Nick Mendola, a former parishioner now living in Pittsford, as "certainly the human prime mover" behind the council.

Anti-Abortionists Open Birth Control Program

St. Louis [RNS] — Six Roman Catholic women — including a nun-gynecologist — have begun a program to publicize the so-called "ovulation method" of family planning here.

The six, who have been active in various separate anti-abortion organizations, have formed an organization called "Aware" in order to promote the use of the

ovulation method among the general public.

Developed and tested by a husband-and-wife team of doctors, Drs. John and Lyn Billings of Australia, the "ovulation method" involves a woman's self-observation of mucus changes during various phases of the menstrual cycle. A

woman trained to observe these changes is able to determine her fertile and infertile period, they state.

The Aware group here wants women to learn the Billings ovulation method "and to be able to resist the not-so-subtle pressure that Western civilization is putting on women today to manipulate them" by medical

means or "to have them deny their childbearing capabilities" by promoting abortion, said Mrs. John J. McCauley, a housewife and mother of eight children, who is a founder of the Aware group.

Classes, to be held weekly without charge in a suburban parish school building here, will be conducted by Dr. Hanna

Klaus, a Medical Missionary Sister. Dr. Klaus and other volunteers will also provide follow-up counseling on an individual basis for women using the ovulation method. Others in the group include a nun-midwife, a nun-social worker — both of whom have spent time in Third World missions — and two other lay women.