

An Admirable History of Blessed Sacrament Parish

The Church of the Blessed Sacrament, a Chronicle of the Years, by Grace L. Murray, privately printed for the parish, unpaginated.

By JOHN DASH

One of the greatest disappointments for any writer of parish histories is the hard fact that an insight one gains from research, a tantalizing anecdote which reveals a facet of the soul of an era, the background of a single influential figure, the one dastardly or saintly deed that reverberates throughout the generations of the community, cannot be told because of the economies of style, or reader interest, or the writer's own terrible inability to pull words to truth.

It is at the point of publication, the writer must comfort himself with the disappointment felt by far greater writers and artists, by far greater historians, and by the apologies which preface most accounts of the human drama.

Grace L. Murray is to be congratulated for she has produced an admirable text of history, an account of 75 years in the life of Blessed Sacrament parish.

Reviewer Dash has written several parish histories which have appeared in the Courier-Journal.

Published in conjunction with the community's diamond jubilee, her book needs no apology for lack of style or dearth of information on the mores, the lives, the times of Blessed Sacrament.

Not only parishioners of the area, but also historians will relish the information Ms. Murray has assembled.

She has placed the foundations and the growth of the parish in fairly broad contexts, and has sketched the moods as well as the accomplishments of the community and its leaders in relation to wider concerns and trends.

Ms. Murray, paradoxically, has given us this more extensive outlook by narrowing her field of vision. The booklet, available at Blessed Sacrament, is divided into several chapters and subchapters, each a "mini-history" complete in itself, of various aspects of parish life.

Blessed Sacrament has enjoyed

an unusual grace of prosperity and therefore the financial history, too, is recounted in this remarkable booklet, as is the course of entertainments hosted by or produced by the parish for the re-creation not only of its own people but by the folk of the city at large.

It is the people, in the long run, however, who grapple with the attention of the reader in the document. She has chronicled the lives of the pastors with compassion and discretion, yet is not above such zesty observation as this, written about the present pastor, Father John Norris:

"Because he has strong views on certain subjects, there has evolved a pleasant after-Sunday-Mass pastime among parishioners of baiting him outside the church and playing the Devil's Advocate to his arguments—which he usually wins."

The searcher of names amply will be rewarded by Ms. Murray's book as well. A pitfall for writers of



Photo by Susan McKinney

Joyce Yatteau, president of the Blessed Sacrament Parish Council, presents council minutes to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan during Blessed Sacrament's parish jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving Sunday, Nov. 7. The council was only one of the parish groups which made such presentations. Father John Norris, pastor, looks on.

parish history, is to neglect mentioning, at least in passing, a single name, whereupon the rightfully proud bearers of that name in the present generation are apt to dismiss the historian's work in whole.

One cannot imagine this occurring with the Blessed Sacrament book, even though the author states:

"There will be events and names which should have been included—and are not. We are sorry for these omissions. They are not intentional. A few names were selected to represent all those who remained in the parish to lend it their support from the early days and those who

carried the traditions of Blessed Sacrament into a wider world."

Presented with the excellence of her work one prays the omissions, if any, go unnoticed.

Blessed Sacrament is not a static community. It reflects the changes and growth everywhere in the world, and it is this to which Ms. Murray finally pays homage.

"However rough the road," she writes, "Father Norris, his congregation, and his army of volunteers, charge through the changes of the Vatican Council toward their promised bright vistas. Blessed Sacrament has never learned how to turn back."

Thumbnail Sketch

Pope Paul, President Gerald Ford and President-elect Jimmy Carter are among the dignitaries who have hailed Blessed Sacrament Church on the occasion of its jubilee.

A thumbnail sketch of the parish history follows:

1901—Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid names Father Thomas F. Connors to found the parish. The first lawn social is held. W. Foster Kelly designs the first church-school building and its cornerstone is laid.

1902—The first church is dedicated and the first parish bazaar is held.

1903—The first rectory is built. 1905—The first convent is purchased.

1911—The cornerstone is laid for a new church which is dedicated in 1912.

1914—St. John the Evangelist parish is founded, carved from part of Blessed Sacrament.

1917—The choir is completely reorganized.

1920—A second parish, Our Lady of Lourdes, is founded, also carved from part of Blessed Sacrament.

1927—The present church is designed by J. Foster Warner and Leo J. Ribban; the second

rectory is purchased. 1929—A new organ is installed, given high praise by professional organists.

1934—The first major refurbishing of the church facilities takes place.

1947—Father Connors is given the title of monsignor; the present rectory is dedicated.

1950—The Legion of Mary is founded in the parish. 1952—The Nocturnal Adoration Society also is founded.

1958—Pope John is elected and calls for the Second Vatican Council.

1963—Mgr. Connors is given the title of Pastor Emeritus. Mgr. James C. McAniff named pastor. Major renovation work begins on the church properties.

1966—Mgr. Connors dies.

1968—Father John P. Norris, present pastor, is named to head the parish. The aggiornamento of the Vatican Council begins to be felt.

1970—The first parish council is seated. 1971—Women admitted to the pulpit for the first time.

1976—The parish observes its Diamond Jubilee with jubilation from both the president and the president-elect as well as from Pope Paul VI.

New Members Join Ecumenical Panel

Some new members have been added to the diocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; it has been announced by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan.

The new members are Mr. and Mrs. Paul Menges, Mr. and Mrs. William Cannon, Sister Shirley Kitawaga, Mrs. Mrs. Marty Shramek, Mrs. Ruth Hauser and Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Spoor, all of Rochester. They will serve two-year terms.

Already on the commission are Father William Cosgrove of Clyde, Father Robert Kanka of Seneca

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to help at swine flu immunization clinics throughout Monroe County. Ed Hartman, volunteer chairman of the recruitment and training program organized by the Red Cross, said this week that 1,500 already had signed up, but that an additional 300 to 400 people would be needed each week of the inoculation project. Anyone interested may call the Red Cross at 275-9600.

Falls, Mrs. Irene Navatta of Elmira, and Mrs. Margery Nurnberg of Elmira.

The commission meets bi-monthly in Penn Yan and is concerned not only with the search for Christian unity but also with our relations with people of all faiths. It is founded on the principle that "The concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike."

Sister Kathleen Kircher, director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and chairperson of the Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said that "it is intended as an affirmative sign of the continued commitment of our diocese to ecumenical and interfaith efforts. Such efforts seek unity in essentials, diversity in non-essentials and charity in all things."

The next meeting of the commission will be Thursday, Nov. 11. Anyone interested in seeking deeper knowledge of ecumenical relationships within the diocese is invited to contact Sister Kathleen at the Pastoral Center, 328-3210.

Campus Fast Day Gives Others Food

A campus-wide fast day at Rochester Institute of Technology last month brought in \$417, according to Sister Shirley Pilot, adviser, and Jack Makowski, chairman. The money was given to two establishments that help fight local hunger, their report said.

The fast day was publicized as "an opportunity to relate to the feeling of starving people," and money collected from those who skipped lunch was "a second priority." The RIT Committee on Hunger sponsored the project. The committee is an offshoot of the college Catholic Parish Council, and it comprises people from all faith communities on campus.

DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Horseheads — Horseheads Council, Knights of Columbus, is sponsoring a day of recollection on Sunday, Nov. 14, at the Dominican Monastery, 1310 West Church St., Elmira, starting with an 8 a.m. Mass. George Walker of Rochester will direct the meditations. Reservations should be made with Harry Seebach at 607-734-2897. All are invited.

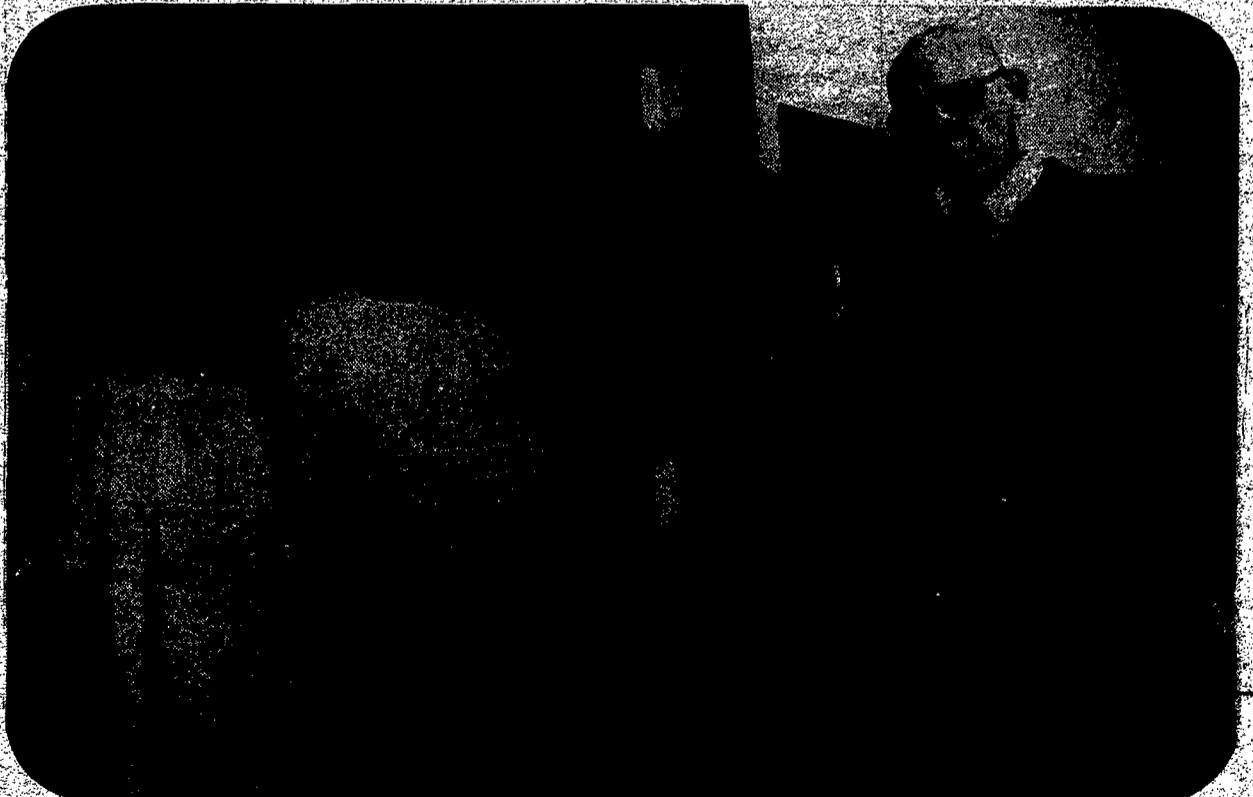


Photo by Susan McKinney

Hospital Wedding

Rev. Philip Miess, pastor at Basin Community Church in Bushnell's Basin performs the marriage ceremony for Ronald Wagner and Corrine Todisco in the doorway of Wagner's hospital room at St. Mary's where he is recovering from hepatitis. Although the ceremony was performed Nov. 2 Wagner will not be released from the hospital until this week and will then spend four to six weeks at home recovering.

Rural Conference

Continued from Page 1

programs concerning the special problems of rural ministry, Father Wiant reported. A non-metro workshop program written three years ago, he said, has been made available nationally through the National Federation of Priests Council. Another program, a slide-

talk show, soon will be obtained by the NCRLC for national distribution. The new program, Father Wiant explained, tries to explode the myth that rural America is populated only by farmers. He noted that the rural population is actually a "complex multiplicity of persons" from many walks of life.

Bishop Selection

Continued from Page 1

Diocese of Rochester

report would allow us to give a serious and careful response to the Detroit resolution calling for participation by the local Church in the selection of bishops.

The bishop has long been a supporter of the more open process, instructing his priests as far back as last March to begin it in the

When the news was aired last week that Bishop Hogan would present his statement at the bishop's assembly, Father James Marvin, president of the Priests Councils of New York State and of the diocesan Priests Council, thanked him for his action and remarked, "You're really putting your head in the noose."