

Auburn's 'Milestones'

The following brief history of Holy Family Church in Auburn, celebrating the year its incorporation was provided by Father Richard Smetal, assistant pastor.

The first Irish Catholic settlers in Auburn that we know about were John O'Connor and Hugh Ward, who arrived here in 1810. After having lived in Auburn for nearly six years without seeing a priest, they petitioned Bishop Connolly of New York City to send them one. At that time all of New York State was the one diocese of New York City.

Thus, in 1816, Bishop Connolly sent them Father Michael O'Gorman, whom he had ordained the year before in St. Patrick's Cathedral. It was the aforementioned O'Connor and Ward who bore the expenses of Father O'Gorman's long journey, in stages, to Auburn.

The morning after his arrival, Father O'Gorman celebrated Mass in O'Connor's home, which was on Water Street. This was the first Catholic Mass in Auburn.

The priest also preached and baptized several children during that first visit. O'Connor's home was used for similar occasional visits for several years, until 1821, when the courthouse was procured for the same purpose.

Auburn came under the custody of St. John's Church in Utica in 1819; and Father John Egan, pastor, made his missionary rounds and stopped to celebrate Mass at the courthouse July 11, 1819. An attempt was made to establish an actual church in 1820, but the project came to naught. It would take another dozen or so years of growth and immigration for such a parish to become a reality.

The coming of the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad to Auburn helped the entire city grow, including the Catholic population. In 1831, Father Francis O'Donoghue was named pastor of Salina (now Syracuse), and Auburn was one of his missions. It was during his pastorate that the first Catholic Church in Auburn actually became a reality. It happened thus:

The Methodists of the First Methodist Church of Auburn were moving to a new stone edifice on the corner of North and Water streets from their original church on Chapel Street. This building was sold to "Hugh Ward, Patrick Carberry, Thomas Fanning, Joseph Watson, and Matthew Walpole, trustees of the Roman Catholic Church of Auburn" for the sum of \$1,200 on May 15, 1834. During that summer, the building was remodeled and a belfry was added. Bishop John DuBois of New York City sent his vicar general, Msgr. John Power, to officially dedicate this church.

Thus, on Oct. 23, 1834, the Holy Family Catholic Church of Auburn was officially dedicated, thus becoming the first Catholic church in Auburn and the "mother church" of those that would follow.

The little church on Chapel Street was succeeded by the present church building on North Street in 1861, the year the American Civil War began.

Father Michael Crockett was the pastor who had this new church built at a cost of \$35,000. It was dedicated by Bishop John Timon of Buffalo (Auburn, by this time, was a part of the Diocese of Buffalo) July 7, 1861. Now the Cathedral of Auburn had a truly dignified and beautiful church building for worship.

The first Catholic school in Auburn was Holy Family



In 1939, Bishop Lawrence B. Casey, outlined four priests in Holy Family Church. Posing for the portrait are Msgr. Wilfrid Craugh, Father John Gormley, Father Paul Brennan, Father David Bishop Casey, Father Paul McCabe, Father John Dillon and Msgr. Emmett Murphy.

School, opened by the Sisters of Mercy in 1847. About ten years later, records show the school had eight sisters and about 500 students.

In 1868, Auburn became part of the newly formed Diocese of Rochester, under its first bishop, Bernard McQuaid. On Nov. 8 (the day preceding the feast of the Mother Church of Rome, St. John Lateran), 1885, Bishop McQuaid dedicated the new marble altar in Holy Family Church, and in the following year, he dedicated the new stations of the cross — both items important parts of the church today.

During the pastorate of Father John Hickey (1898-1923), many changes and improvements were made in the church and on the property. The most notable were the brass and onyx pulpit (still used today) and the marching band rail (removed following the Second Vatican Council). Father Hickey also added the now well-known "Ivan tower" on the front facade of Holy Family in 1912. The tower — and priceless — stained glass windows produced in Munich, Germany, were installed.

One of the most puzzling tasks at hand was the building of a new school which would be located north of the church on North Street. This new school was built at a cost of \$244,300 and was dedicated by Bishop James Hickey of Rochester in August, 1928. In 1930, Holy Family High School opened, sharing the same building as the grammar school. Father Conway was its principal, and the Sisters of Mercy were the faculty. Two years later, in 1932, Father William Davie became the high school principal, to remain so for the next quarter-century, until the school's closing.

It was during Father Conway's pastorate that Holy Family observed its 100th anniversary in 1934 with a special Mass and dinner. Later, Father Conway had a new rectory built — into which he and his assistants moved in February, 1942.

Msgr. Conway died Nov. 11, 1954, and was succeeded by long-time principal of the school, Father Davie, who remained pastor until his death in 1968.

During his pastorate, Father Davie opened a new convent (1957), redecorated the church with a new south side door (1959), and installed the beautiful rose window above the choir loft. He died suddenly in January and was succeeded by Msgr. Joseph Sullivan the following month.

Msgr. Sullivan's 14-year pastorate was marked by the installation of a new public address system in the church (1968), the receipt of the parish's share of money from the closing of Mt. Carmel High School (1972), the major repair of the church bell-towers (1974), the closing of Holy Family Grammar School with the consequent opening of St. Ann's School (1973), and the opening of the new Holy Family High School in 1975.

In June, 1982, Bishop Matthew H. Clark named Father Conrad Szedlmayr as the present pastor of Holy Family.

Over the years, Father Szedlmayr has headed the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (UBA) in Auburn, organized the symposium and built a new parking lot and a new front side door for the church, as well as conducted a fund-raising drive in 1978. He has also authorized a parish committee to plan a series of events throughout this year to help the parish celebrate its 150th anniversary.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Church Prefers Burial

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 11/1-45. (R1) Ez. 37/12-14. (R2) Rom. 8/8-11.

The theme of Sunday's readings is resurrection. Much is said about graves and tombs. Last week, I received a small package. It was the ashes of a former parishioner cremated in Florida. The tiny package sits in our rectory awaiting burial in our cemetery.

The incident sent me back to my books to refresh my thoughts about cremation.

Burial rites are deeply intertwined with religious beliefs. The Egyptians, for instance, did not cremate. They believed in an afterlife so they embalmed bodies and they buried their Pharaohs with servants and incredible riches to serve them in the next life. It was the pagan

Romans who had no belief in an afterlife who cremated their dead. The Hebrews, on the contrary, who at least from the second century before Christ explicitly believed in an afterlife and implicitly long before that, buried their dead.

Christ, being a Jew, also was buried. Resurrection followed.

Ever since, His followers too were buried in the hope of resurrection. Hence Christians call their burial places "cemeteries," dormitories. Both Christ and St. Paul spoke of death as a sleep.

Natural sensibilities for centuries revolted against cremation. It seemed too violent a removal of one's beloved. Christian reverence for a body that had tempted the Holy Spirit and had been anointed at Baptism and Confirmation refused to allow it to be treated as so much offal in an incinerator.

Cremation was first revived in Christian Europe in 1796. The atheistic, free-thinking French revo-

lutionaries who abolished Sunday and enthroned a prostitute on the altar of Notre Dame Cathedral as goddess of reason, resurrected cremation as a dramatic and imaginative way of attacking the doctrine of immortality. At first, it made little headway.

However, at the end of the last century, when faith began to weaken and Rationalism and Scientism became triumphant, people began to welcome cremation as a method that bespoke hygiene and social progress. In the 1880s cremation societies sprang up everywhere, being pushed by atheists in order to attack the doctrine of the resurrection. Naturally, the Church forbade joining these societies and using cremation as a sign of unbelief in an afterlife.

The ban remained in force until 1960. Then, people began to ask the Church to lift it, for reasons totally other than those of the godless.

Economy was one of the chief reasons. So, on Aug. 15, 1969, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, with the approval of Pope Paul VI, decreed:

"The Christian funeral service is to be given to those who have chosen cremation of their own body, unless it

is certain that in making such a choice they were motivated by reasons hostile to the Christian life..."

But the directive goes on to state that the "funeral rites are to be celebrated in such a way that one does not obscure the fact that the Church prefers the custom of burial in imitation of the Lord Himself, who wished to be buried."

So it stands at the present time.

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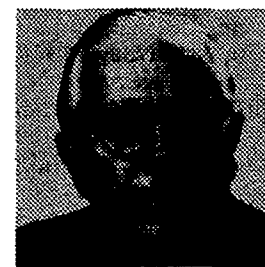
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