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## History

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to 121,000. The Sisters of Mercy grew to 98; the Sisters of St. Joseph, to 417. There were 93 parishes, 36 missions, 53 parish schools and 18,000 pupils. By 1910 one-sixth of the diocese's population was Catholic.

"What was significant for us, was the moving of the Southern Tier to the northern part of the diocese" in 1896, said Sister Jeanne Reichart, archivist for the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester. In 1901 the Sisters of Mercy in the Tier counties, formerly part of the Diocese of Buffalo, joined their Rochester sisters.

The Sisters of St. Joseph opened St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, in 1908. It had 35 beds and was housed in the former Academy of Our Lady of Angels.

Bishop Thomas F. Hickey (1909-28) founded Catholic Charities in 1912, as the Catholic Charity Guild. He and the bishop of Albany saw the state legislature adopt a bill to incorporate each diocese's charities.

In 1914 Bishop Hickey was in Rome to give an official report on the diocese, when World War I erupted. A relieved crowd greeted Bishop Hickey and his companions when they arrived at the Rochester depot Sept. 11, having cut short their stay overseas. The bishop urged the diocese to accept the strict neutrality President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, but this was sometimes difficult for those with strong attachments to their native lands.

The first Catholic settlement house in Rochester opened in 1917. Charles House was run by young women who wanted to work among Italian immigrants.

In 1917 three children reported seeing Mary at Fatima, Portugal. The six apparitions in 1930 would be declared worthy of belief, and Fatima today is a great shrine of the church.

1917 was the year of the Russian Revolution and the beginning of the rise of communism — and resulting persecution of the church.

The 1918 flu epidemic killed 1,100 Rochesterians, hundreds elsewhere in the diocese and 40 million worldwide. St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls buried 26 of its own in 24 days. Livingston County was said hardest hit, and at Mt. Morris the pastor himself dug mass graves.

The flu affected ages 20-40 primarily. The Sisters of Mercy lost two young nuns — one, four years professed and the other, five — from the flu. Sisters worked with the Red Cross in a temporary hospital and among various groups of sick. The Sisters of St. Joseph also lost one member, Sister Francis Xavier Byrnes, 48, principal of Sacred Heart School, who with other Sisters of St. Joseph had served at a Mt. Morris emergency hospital. Catholic Charities Aid Association opened a temporary nursery for children who lost their parents to the epidemic.

A ban placed on school sessions and church services (because of the flu) was



File photo

Bishop James E. Kearney and Father Joseph Cirrincione, at Family Rosary for Peace radio show, 1954.

lifted the day before Nov. 11, 1918, when news of the armistice came.

"We were all very happy," remarked Sister Mary Julia Ryan, RSM, whose elder brother, Francis, served in the war for about a year and returned home safely.

ALSO: Pope Pius X ordered in 1905 that a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine be established in each parish, and urged more frequent and daily reception of Communion ... During Bishop Hickey's era the practice of frequent Communion by children and adults began a gradual rise.

Pope Pius X also condemned Modernism ... The Code of Canon Law came to the Western church in 1918.

## 1920s

This decade saw the founding of many important buildings in the Rochester Diocese that are still thriving today. Among them are Our Lady of Mercy High School, in 1928; the new Sacred Heart Parish church — later Sacred Heart Cathedral — in 1927; Nazareth College, in 1924; and Aquinas Institute, the former Rochester Catholic High School, in 1925.

Margaret Lynch was in the first freshman class at Our Lady of Mercy, in 1928. She and her classmates, she recalled, embraced their roles as trail blazers.

"We were the beginners of all the things that were to come," said Lynch, who graduated in 1932. "We were in plays. None of us had acted, but we participated. We weren't afraid."

John McGrath was in the first graduating class at the new Aquinas Institute, in 1926. He said he's pleased that the high

school has been so well-preserved.

"I was in the building not too long ago, and its condition was as good as when it was opened up," said McGrath, who also worshiped at the new Sacred Heart Church.

ALSO: A 1926 Ku Klux Klan convocation drew 19,000 to East Rochester ... Rochester Bishop Thomas F. Hickey resigned in 1928, ending a 19-year reign ... Bishop John Francis O'Hern became the third bishop of Rochester in 1929 ... Pope Benedict XV died in 1922 and was succeeded by Pope Pius XI.

New York Gov. Al Smith, a Catholic, fell in the 1928 presidential election to Herbert Hoover amid a backlash of anti-Catholic sentiment.

In 1920 Great Britain partitioned Ireland into two political sections (a 26-county republic and a six-county portion in the north), touching off a civil war.

## 1930s

When the stock market crashed Oct. 29, 1929, the Great Depression began with a mighty jolt. Its effects were felt throughout the ensuing decade.

The *Catholic Courier* was transferred temporarily from lay to diocesan ownership in 1932 in order for the newspaper to survive. Also as a result of the Depression, several parishes established credit unions.

Catholic activist Dorothy Day visited Rochester in 1933, at the behest of Father Benedict Ehmman, and again in 1935. Soon her Catholic Worker movement was active in Rochester, and it is still active today as St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. Margaret Driscoll of Tompkins County

joined the Catholic Worker cause after meeting Dorothy Day in 1936. She worked at Catholic Worker houses in both New York City and Rochester.

"The fact that these middle class-people were in need, that certainly woke me up," Driscoll said. "In New York City, bread lines would go down the street and around the corner."

ALSO: Holy Family High School in Auburn, and DeSales High School in Geneva, both opened in 1930 ... Mercy Hospital in Auburn opened in 1931.

Bishop O'Hern died suddenly in 1933 and was succeeded by Archbishop Edward Mooney, later Cardinal Mooney ... Archbishop Mooney left Rochester in 1937 and was succeeded by Bishop James E. Kearney, who began a 30-year reign.

An anti-Nazi interfaith rally was held in Rochester in 1938.

St. Patrick's Cathedral was demolished after being sold to Eastman Kodak Company in 1937, and Sacred Heart Church became Rochester's pro-cathedral (a temporary substitute for a cathedral).

Pope Pius XI died in 1939 and was succeeded by Pope Pius XII.

## 1940s

Much as the Great Depression dominated headlines in the 1930s, World War II took America's life over the following decade.

Bishop Kearney responded to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor by issuing a letter stating: "They must be taught the deficiencies of civilization and obviously we must do it." The bishop, in his late 50s, even registered for the draft.

More than 30,000 Catholic men and women from the Rochester Diocese served in the armed forces during World War II. Among them were more than 40 diocesan priests who served as chaplains.

One of those chaplains, Father Elmer W. Heindl, received the Distinguished Service Cross for heroic action during the Luzon campaign. He now lives in retirement at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece.

One of the war's more controversial elements was the role of Pope Pius XII, who has been criticized for not taking a firmer stance against the Nazis. Yet Father Heindl said such accusations are unfair.

"We can be Monday-morning quarterbacks about what we thought he should do, but why do we say our spiritual leader has more (political) responsibility?" Father Heindl said. "That's just pointing a finger."

ALSO: Bishop Kearney, in his first formal pastoral letter as bishop, warned Catholics in 1941 not to utilize the numerous public contraceptive clinics that had been established ... The bishop appealed for emergency aid for homeless refugees stranded at Ellis Island in 1947.

## 1950s

Whereas the early 1900s saw many city-based ethnic parishes established, the post-World War II suburban boom fueled a new wave of parishes. In all, 20 new parishes formed in the diocese during the 1950s.

Nona Maginn and her husband, Ray, moved into a new house on Marwood Road in Greece in 1956. One year later, Our Lady of Mercy Parish was formed.

"We were upset that we had to leave Mother of Sorrows Church because we liked Father (Daniel) O'Rourke, but it

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