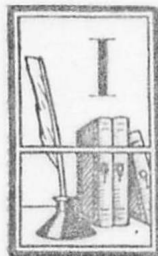


History of St. Mary's Parish



IN THE year 1865 Meeker & Company, of Chicago, offered to come to Joliet to establish a large iron works, if the city would give them a desirable bonus. Joliet offered and they accepted \$75,000.00. In a short time the works were started which were the means of bringing a great many working men and their families to the city, the majority of whom were Catholics.

In those days the city was small and there were only two Catholic Churches, namely St. Patrick's and St. John's, both on the west side of the river. In a short time there was an agitation for a new church on the East Side, and all were in favor of building it as soon as possible. A church on the East Side was about to be sold to satisfy a mortgage, so at a meeting held in the office of the late Judge J. P. Murphy, a committee was appointed to investigate and report on the feasibility of buying the property in case it was sold. The committee reporting favorably on the purchase, they were instructed to go to Chicago and get the consent of Bishop Duggan. The good Bishop gave his hearty approval and said that in case they did not succeed in getting the property in question to look elsewhere and try and get a good location, and when they came to a decision to notify him, and he would immediately send down a priest to start the new church.

The Rev. P. M. Duggan was the priest selected, and the church property in question not being sold he purchased two lots on the southwest corner of Scott and Van Buren streets, known as the Riley Block, in 1868, where he built a small frame church. He was pastor until October 12, 1868, when he was succeeded by the Rev. P. W. Riordan of Chicago (late Archbishop of San Francisco) whose pastorate extended to June 18, 1871. Father Riordan purchased the property where St. Mary's Church now stands from A. L. McArthur in 1870, for \$1,000.00, and not only gave his time but also his personal revenue to place the parish on a solid basis.

His successor, the Rev. J. Mackin, was appointed June 18, 1871. He built an addition to the original church in 1872, but on October 20, 1876, the entire structure was destroyed by fire, loss being \$12,000.00 with \$7,300.00 insurance. Young's Hall was then used for a time for Divine Services.

Following Father Mackin's transfer to St. Mary's Church, Elgin, March 16, 1877, the Rev. Thomas Murphy, of Aurora, took charge in Joliet. Father Murphy was certainly the right man to take up the arduous work of building a new church. He worked in season and out of season, and the building was well under way in the Spring of 1878, when he was taken suddenly ill and died. An incident connected with the erection of the new church is interesting: Ground was broken for the new building in the summer of 1877, under the supervision of John Mahoney. Men were put to excavate, but immediately their work was stopped by a writ of injunction served on Father Murphy against the erection of the building. He was cited to appear before Judge McRoberts of the Circuit Court at 2 P. M. the next day. To say the least, the counts in the petition were not at all complimentary. I will refer to only the last one—it said: "The ringing of the bells from 5 a. m. until late at night would be very distracting to the neighborhood", and for that and other reasons they respectfully asked for a permanent

injunction against the building of St. Mary's Church. After hearing arguments pro and con, Judge McRoberts gave the following decision: "I never heard of a church but what was a blessing to society, and I cannot find any law against ringing of church bells to call people to worship and can only say to the parties who got up the petition, 'If you cannot stand the ringing of the bells your only remedy is to move to a more desirable place.' The petition is dismissed." No doubt if those petitioners were to look today upon the two hundred and sixty-five stars on the Service Flag hanging in St. Mary's Church, each star representing patriotic service of a son or grandson of the people they wished to persecute, they would certainly say that the fathers of these heroes were not a menace but a blessing to Joliet.

When the untimely death of Father Murphy left the new church without a pastor, the Rev. Maurice F. Burke, of Chicago, (now Bishop of St. Joseph, Missouri) was appointed, and on April 27, 1878, came to Joliet, remaining our pastor until October 27, 1887, when he was consecrated Bishop of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Time and space will not permit me to state here the great work done by Bishop Burke while pastor in this city; suffice it to say: besides finishing our beautiful church, he built the spire, in 1879, at a cost of \$2,200.00, purchased the organ from Hoad & Hastings, Boston, in 1882, for \$2,327.00, the bell at a cost of \$1,645.00, and had the solemn dedication of the church in 1882. Father Burke purchased the Eastern Avenue property in 1885 and built the parochial School which was formally opened September, 1887. He also bought property and built the first Catholic School in Joliet where the Sacred Heart School is now located, and also purchased the first portion of the ground for Mount Olivet Cemetery. He also took great interest in civic affairs and helped to bring about many reforms which exist to this day, for all of which the parishioners of St. Mary's are under everlasting obligations to him.

The Rev. P. W. Dunne was the first assistant appointed to St. Mary's (February 13, 1880), and he proved to be a most zealous and ardent worker and rendered valuable service to Bishop Burke in the administration of the parish. After six years of faithful service, he was made pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Joliet, and is now irremovable rector of St. James' Church, Chicago.

October, 1887, saw the Rev. Thomas Mangan in charge of St. Mary's and he remained its pastor until his death, February 4, 1893. Father Mangan is still well remembered. His great work was the reduction of the enormous church debt which before his death was such as could easily be met by the congregation. His active work in the school and on sick-calls early and late, enshrined him in the memory of St. Mary's parishioners. His remains now rest in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Joliet, among the people he so well served. R. I. P.

The Rev. W. J. McNamee (now pastor of St. Patrick's in Chicago), was appointed February 19, 1893, and at once set about uniting the people by organizing the Altar and Rosary Society (which is the largest in the state outside of Chicago), the Young Ladies' Sodality, the Temperance Cadets, and the Junior Sodality. He made many improvements in the church, school and parochial residence, and by his encouragement and supervision secured a splendid attendance at the school and a high degree of efficiency in educational work. His pastorate closed July 15, 1911, with his promotion to the Chicago parish.

The Rev. J. B. Murray followed Father McNamee in serving St. Mary's people, coming August 26, 1911, and continuing pastor until July 6, 1916. He carried on his predecessor's good work and devoted his energies to the building of St. Bernard's Church, Ridgewood, property for which Father McNamee had purchased, and to many improvements in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

The people of St. Mary's all unite in heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Mundelein for sending us our present very able and energetic pastor, the Rev. T. F. Quinn, who was appointed July 9, 1916. He immediately began necessary repairs on the church, school and rectory, and it was not long before a wonderful transformation was noticed. The building of a new lavatory at the Eastern Avenue school, re-decorating the school building, stuccoing and thoroughly remodeling the parochial residence, re-decorating the church, erecting a new pulpit, installing new stained glass windows, a new sanctuary floor, the beautiful statues of St. Ann and St. Patrick, altering the center steps of the church and repairing the spire; remodeling the Loretto Academy for a parochial school and finally opening the Providence High School on Eastern Avenue and furnishing a house for the Sisters of Providence are some of the things Father Quinn in the space of two years has accomplished—to say nothing of his activities in all civic affairs and of the spiritual care of St. Mary's and Ridgewood parishes. On the material work he has expended about \$25,000.00, \$20,000.00 of which has been paid besides clearing the church of the \$7,000.00 debt which was on the building since 1893. The purchasing of six houses with a frontage of 396 feet on East Cass Street for Mount Olivet Cemetery at a cost of \$12,000.00 has met the hearty approval of all the people. The revision of Rules and Regulations for the cemetery and the introduction of the Memorial Mass on Decoration Day, 1917, on the cemetery grounds, have done much to please the people and to sustain their interest in Mount Olivet Cemetery, conceded to be one of the most beautiful and best kept cemeteries in the country. Father Quinn has been assisted in the parochial work by Father Heeney, who came April 5, 1917, and is now serving as Chaplain in the U. S. Army, and by Father Loughry, who was appointed June 16, 1917.

Such is a brief history of St. Mary's as I recall it. Shall we not in celebrating the Golden Jubilee heartily thank God for the many blessings bestowed upon us during the past fifty years and for the progress Catholicity has made in Joliet? Today there are twelve Catholic Churches in our city. Our Catholic people number fully one-half of the population, and adorn the legal and medical professions and the commercial life of the city. St. Mary's has not only a most beautiful church but also a splendid parochial school, conducted by the Ladies of Loretto, the Christian Brothers' High School for boys, and the Sisters of Providence High School for girls; making it one of the greatest Catholic educational centers outside of Chicago. Surely God has blessed the efforts of the priests, sisters, and people here, and the Golden Jubilee is a most fitting time to re-offer to God all the sacrifice we have made for Church, to pray for our deceased priests and people and invoke a special blessing on the years to come.

JOHN RYAN,

305 S. Joliet St.

I am indebted for information of the early history of St. Mary's to Mrs. John Lennon, Mrs. Jeremiah Mahoney, Mrs. David Murphy, and Mr. P. V. Scully.

Historical Facts--St. Mary's Records

The first marriage in St. Mary's register is that of Jeremiah Mahoney and Ellen Bean, November 11, 1862. Rev. P. W. Riordan officiated. Edward and Mary Bean were the witnesses.

The first baptism was that of Catherine Burns, daughter of John and Honora Burns. Sponsors, Hugh and Mary McPartlin. Baptized October 20, 1863, by Rev. P. W. Riordan.

The first burial in Mount Olivet Cemetery was that of Mrs. Catharine Ward, born in County Cavin, Ireland, Dec. 25, 1819. Buried April 7, 1837.

The Ladies of Loretto, at the request of Father Burke, opened the first Catholic school for girls in Joliet on Cass Street, September, 1832.

The Loretto Convent on Ottawa Street was built in 1836, and transferred to the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, July 26, 1914.

Aug. 2, 1914, Rev. Daniel Murphy, son of Mr. and Mrs. D. Murphy, 1105 Benton Street, celebrated his first mass at St. Mary's Church.

St. Anne's Novena inaugurated at St. Mary's, July, 1916.

Census of parish taken September and October, 1916.

The Dominican Fathers, Fannan and O'Neill, conducted a two weeks' mission, November 12 to November 26, 1916.

The Holy Name Society was organized September 26, 1916.

St. Mary's Church was solemnly opened after renovation Sunday, April 29, 1917. Bishop Burke pontificated and Father Peter Crumbley, O. F. M., preached the sermon.

Most Rev. Archbishop Mundelein confirmed a class of 204 at St. Mary's, May 21, 1917.

Catholic Total Abstinence Union held their forty-sixth annual convention at St. Mary's Hall, June 17, 1917.

St. Mary's Choir gave a sacred concert, April 29, 1917. Sermon on Music by Rev. P. C. Conway, L. L. D., of Chicago.

June 27, 1917, the boundaries of St. Mary's parish were changed to Marion Street and First Avenue on the south and extended to Center Street, Pine and Summit Street to Bridge Street on the west side.

Parish census taken September, 1917.

Triduum in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin conducted by Father John Joseph, Passionist Missionary, December 6, 7, 8, 1917.

May Festival, May 30, 1918.

Church cleared of all debt, August 21, 1918.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools opened high school for boys, September 3, 1918.

Sisters of Providence, from Terre Haute, Indiana, opened high school for girls, September 16, 1918.

Commercial
in St. Mary's on Eastern until 1919. *1919. Academy*

*St. Mary's
Elem School
moved in.*

*sold
nuns left 1919.*