

## **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History of Saint John the Apostle Parish Community**

On June 25, 1948, the Archbishop appointed Father Thomas F. Mulvaney as the first pastor of this new parish. On November 4, 1948, ground was broken for the new church and school building. Father Mulvaney took residence in one of houses across from the church and made it his temporary rectory. Here he said Mass each day for parishioners. Today, this building serves as our convent.

On January 27, 1949, Saint John the Apostle Church was officially incorporated, and on September 10, 1949, the laying of the cornerstone was conducted by Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh. The first Mass was held in the school auditorium the following day because the main church building had not yet been completed.

The official dedication and blessing of the Church and School was held on March 10, 1950, and was presided over by Archbishop Walsh.

In 1950 St. John the Apostle School opened under the direction of the first principal, Sister Mary Adele, O.P., who was also the Superior at the time. The registration number totaled 710 students. At the same time, the Sisters moved into their newly built convent. Until then, they resided in what is now the school's cafeteria.

As attendance grew within the school, it became necessary to build an additional third story on top of the existing main building. In 1952 the project commenced. With the third floor addition, the number of classrooms increased to twenty-two. Attendance at the school in 1963 totaled 739 boys and 730 girls. The double sessions were eliminated in 1964 when an annex building was added to the campus. The annex housed eight additional classrooms bringing the total of classrooms to thirty.

Msgr. Mulvaney celebrated his forty-fifth anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on March 7, 1970. Because of illness he retired at the end of April. Msgr. Mulvaney passed away on October 2, 1970; just twelve days after his retirement and testimonial dinner were held at Mother Seton High School. His words will forever live on in the hearts of his parishioners. He said, "This is your church, not mine alone. I am only here to serve. Long after I am no longer here, this will be your church in which to worship, enjoy in full, and help to pay the expenses." *Requiescat in pace.*

Succeeding Msgr. Mulvaney, Father Edward G. Price was appointed pastor of St. John the Apostle Parish on June 20, 1970. Under his guidance, the parish council flourished. He founded the Senior Citizens and the Sun and Fun Club, and was responsible for a very active CYO, a real basketball powerhouse, an active Search program and the Cursillo group. Many additional programs benefiting the students and community members of St. John's were also established. Also during his pastorate, the beautiful stained glass windows depicting the various scenes from St. John's Gospel were installed. (Msgr. Price passed away November 2003)

In 1980 Archbishop Peter L. Gerety appointed Father Alfonse Arminio to succeed Msgr. Price who was assigned to St. Genevieve's in Elizabeth. Under his pastorate the parish debt was paid off so much to the joy of the parish! Father Arminio's pastorate also saw the installation of new windows in the school and renovation of the school gymnasium.

In 1982 Father Arminio established a School Board to serve as an advisory council to the principal and pastor. This board continues to serve the parish today. In that same year Sister Donna Marie O'Brien, O.P. was named Principal of St. John the Apostle School, a position she holds to the present day. Presently, the school continues to provide a strong academic and Catholic education to approximately 350 students.

In 1988 Father Arminio, who had previously served as Chaplain in the U.S. Navy, resigned as pastor and re-enlisted in order to serve his country as a Navy Chaplain. Father Arminio passed away November 15, 2003.

In December 1988, Msgr. Richard M. McGuinness was appointed pastor to succeed Father Arminio. Msgr. McGuinness continued to serve as Vicar of Evangelization and later was appointed Director of the Archdiocesan Respect Life Office.

In 1994 Msgr. McGuinness set up a committee to conduct a drive to renovate the church and school buildings of the parish. The drive was very successful and over \$1,200,000 was raised. The renovations allowed for a more prayerful, functional, and permanent worship area. The use of stone on the sanctuary walls, the new marble altar, the enhancement of the lectern, the altar of repose, the Blessed Mother's altar, and the Baptistry with marble and stone signify strength, permanency and timelessness. The altar was moved closer to the people and the pews were angled to create a stronger feeling of being together at the table of the Lord. Likewise, the tabernacle was relocated to a place of central prominence within the church where it can be viewed by a majority of the congregation and a prayerful meditation area was created around it. A new hand-carved Crucifix (*The Suffering Christ*) was also designed and created to our specifications. In addition, a special location was created for the choir, adjacent to the sanctuary and facing the congregation, making music and singing a more integral part of our worship. A permanent and prominent Baptism area was also created in the center of the church in order to emphasize the centrality of this sacrament of rebirth and welcoming into our faith community.

Our original convent saw a decrease in the number of Sisters. In an effort to accommodate the Sisters in more of a homelike environment and to be able to maximize the use of the building, a home was purchased across the street from the church as a new convent for the Sisters. This home served as the original Rectory and daily mass was celebrated in the living room while the existing buildings were being built. A beautiful new daily mass chapel named Chapel of the Holy Family was renovated in the old convent to comfortably accommodate daily mass. This building is also currently used for Religious retreats, prayer groups and religious education. It also houses the Archdiocesan Office of Right to Life

In November 1996 Archbishop McCarrick gave permission to establish a Chapel for Perpetual Adoration of the Eucharist. About 600 people spend an hour of adoration there each week.

Msgr. McGuinness retired in June of 2006 and passed away two months later on August 9, 2006 at the age of 80. His image holding a baby lamb will forever be in people's hearts as they remember the shepherd who cared for St. John's for 18 years.

In July of 2006, Rev. Robert McBride was appointed as pastor of St. John the Apostle. Under his leadership the various clubs and organizations continue to flourish. The parish community of St. John the Apostle continues to thrive and grow spreading the Good News to the communities of Union County.