CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
The humble beginnings of Catholicism in Montague, NJ

“Father Senez was sent to Madison [NJ] in 1846 by Archbishop Hughes. He was tireless and unwearying in searching out the faithful scattered throughout Morris and Sussex and even Warren counties. Despite his unfamiliarity with the English tongue he attended "Vendues" and gatherings of every description where our people might be expected to attend, and peering into their faces addressed those who he thought were Catholics. In one of his journeys he discovered a Catholic family in Montagu, near the Delaware River, and baptized their infant son, now the Rt. Rev. Monsignor O'Grady of New Brunswick. “

“Rt. Rev. B. J. McQuaid, succeeding Father Senez at Madison, imitated him in his zeal, and by his repeated trips became acquainted with every nook and corner that gave shelter and a home to Catholics. And, indeed, in every quarter of the county Catholics were to be found. ..... In Montague a happy cluster always welcomed the priest; ... “

Excerpted from The Catholic Church in New Jersey by Flynn, Joseph M., published in 1904.
The Rt. Rev. Msgr. John A. O'Grady was the pastor of St. Peter's Church in New Brunswick for forty-three years before his passing on January 15, 1919 at the age of 70.

At his death, Mayor John J. Morrison of New Brunswick, issued a proclamation calling upon the people to place all flags at half-mast and the City Commission adopted resolutions of regret at his death.

Msgr. O'Grady was a Professor of Philosophy at Seton Hall College before becoming the pastor at St. Peter's Church. He was also a domestic prelate by creation of Pope Leo XIII.

Rev. O'Grady, was born in Montague, NJ on July 3rd, 1849 according to passport # 24540 off Ancestry.com, which he was issued while serving at New Brunswick.

1850 Federal Census: Michael Ogradee & wife, Bridget, and son, John, age 2 living in the Brick House area. The family moved away by 1860. John began studying for the priesthood at age 16 in Maryland and completed his education at Seton Hall College in NJ. After his ordination in 1874, he first became a private secretary to Bishop Corrigan of the diocese of Newark.
Assisting Bishop Thomas McLaughlin, the first bishop of the new Diocese of Paterson (1937), in opening churches in Sussex County - Msgr. Michael Donnelly, pastor at St. Joseph’s, oversaw the earliest missions. as per June 5, 1941 Sussex Register
Administrator of the Western Sussex Missions 1942 - 1944

Assigned To Rural Parish At Lafayette

Rev. John E. Hewetson, of Paterson, brother of Rev. Joseph Hewetson, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, has been assigned to the parish at Lafayette, by Bishop McLaughlin, of the Paterson Diocese, and conducted his first mass Sunday at 9 a.m. at Hainesville and at Lafayette at 11 a.m. Rev. Hewetson will live in Lafayette. His parish includes also Walpack, Montague and Sandyston.

St. Bartholomew Church - Chapel in Lafayette, NJ 1942 – 1951
Also a residence for the priest assigned to the missions until Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish was established in Branchville in 1950 and later St. James added its rectory.
Father Hewetson informed the Bishop: “Last Monday morning, the Commemoration of All Souls’, we held the first Mass in the township of Montague, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Staudt” in a letter dated Nov. 6th, 1942.

Pike County Dispatch April 8, 1943

Card Party at Staudt’s in Montague, benefit of St. James Mission, 8:30 p. m. Chickens, cakes and other prizes. Saturday, April 10. Donation 25c.
Rev. Matthew Sharkey was assigned to, but only stayed in Sussex County through Jan. & Feb. of 1945, before Father Warlikowski came to fill that vacancy.

Sussex Independent Nov. 22, 1945

The new parish of St. James the Great will cover the Township of Montague, and will be in charge of Rev. Francis B. Warlikowski, administrator of the Western Sussex Missions. He will continue as administrator of St. Bartholomew’s Mission, Lafayette; St. Matthew’s Mission, Walpack, and St. Thomas’ Mission, Hainesville.

Rev. Francis Warlikowski
Administrator of Western Sussex Missions 1944 - 1950

After being appointed pastor of St. James the Great Parish in 1945, Father still oversaw the other Missions and directed the construction of a church in Montague.
Both priests also assisted the mission churches and are recalled by long-time parishioners.

Rev. Anthony Spano, SDB
of
Don Bosco Seminary
Newton, NJ
1949-50

Rev. Hadelin Mueller, OSB
of
St. Paul’s Abbey
1950
Church was erected in this section on River Rd.
Aug. 30, 1945
NJ Herald
Rev. Francis Warlikowski
Larry Staudt, Robert Murray, Dick Pratschler,
Unknown, Lottie Henn, Lorraine Zitone
1947
Rev. Mancini and a Sister from St. Mary’s
Lorraine Zitone & Mary Lou Pratschler
Dick Pratschler & Robert Murray
Alice Aschenbrenner & Karen Ann Murray
1951

St. Jude Church in Budd Lake was its architectural cousin, built in 1946.

Rev. Sylvius Mancini
1950-1954
Built rectory at St. James by 1951 and was the first priest to reside in Montague.
The first Masses for St. Matthew’s Mission were held under a tent.

“Little Church in Walpack”

It sat across the road from St. Ann’s Rest - the Bishop’s summer residence up on the hill. Early on, Masses during the off season, were likely held in private homes.

Ellen Ringle & Russell Moffett wedding [recorded in St. James Parish Register]  

Souls: 20 Winter, Summer 450

The steps from Old Mine Rd. still remain – south of Pompey Road.
Rev. Peter Byron
1954-1961
Panaghiotes Flamiatos was his actual Greek name.
Father Peter held a popular 8PM Sunday evening Mass at St. James.
May 1954
Kenneth Sieperman on left

Aug. 1959
Rev. Byron with Mrs. Kavanaugh & altar server, Paul Brislin.

Rev. Joseph L. Ferrito
Temporary Administrator 1961-1962,
now Rev. Msgr.
Rev. John G. Tully

First assigned to St. Matthew’s Mission in 1957, and to St. James & St. Thomas in 1962. Due to the increasing number of summer residents and visitors crowding St. Matthew’s, Father opened a church in Sept. 1966 at Blue Mountain Lakes – named as Our Lady of Blue Mountain. He remained assigned here until 1967.

A former Army Chapel.
Corporal Leo Fanning served in Italy during WW2, where he met Padre Pio. When introduced to him, Padre Pio responded “It is Father Leo Fanning.” He indeed later became a priest. Minutes before his ordination he received a congratulatory telegram from Padre Pio, though he had never informed him of the exact day or time.
Rev. James Gacquin
Summer 1969
Temporary Admin. of St. James, and Missions of St. Thomas and St. Matthew; Director at Pope John XXIII HS

Rev. Remigio G. Rocco
now Rev. Msgr.
Rev. John O’Connor

Also assisting at St. Thomas and at the Walpack Missions until they closed:

Rev. John Boland,
now Rev. Msgr.
1969 – early 1970’s

Rev. Joseph Ryan
covered occasionally & would return as Parochial Vicar 1993-94.

Both were assigned to Pope John XXIII HS

Summer Assistants to Rev. Fanning
Some changes between 1960 - 1970:

[These notations were hand written in an 1962/63 Announcement book the priest carried to the churches where he was serving Mass.]

Please use the Mass leaflets and pray out loud the Prayers at the foot of the Altar up and including
The Kyrie Eleison
The Gloria, the Credo
The Orate Frates / “Pray, Brethren…”
The Sanctus, Sanctus
The Paternoster
The Domine Non Sumdignos / “Lord, I am not worthy."

By Dec. 1st most of these prayers will be said by the people in English.
First Communion - 1970
Note the open back pews.

L-R:
Kathleen Quinn, Mary Pollara
&
Tammy Viserta, Joanne Bea
Some items came to St. James upon the closure of Our Lady of Blue Mountain in Walpack. Pews were stored in Sparta & later acquired for St. Thomas the Apostle Mission.

1) Stripped church on the mountain
2) To St. Thomas:
   a) Altar;
   b) Cruet Table
   c) Kneelers
3) To St. James:
   a) Confessionals (installed)
   b) 3 vesting cabinets installed
   c) 6 Lights installed
Workmen Begin Job Of Moving Church

WALPACK TOWNSHIP — Workmen have begun to dismantle Our Lady of Blue Mountain Church, which will be moved to the campus of Pope John XXIII High School in Sparta for use as a large group instruction area and a library.

"It will relieve the present crowded conditions and it will afford faculty and students resources for independent study and research and team teaching," said Bishop Casey.

Pope John school officials hope actual moving of the church from the Tocks Island area to the school will take place in a week. The target date for completion of the change is early November.

The large instruction area will permit team teaching, large or small groups and will serve as an auditorium for assemblies, plays and concerts.

Included in the facilities will be a professional area for the faculty, a listening area for student use of tapes and records, a viewing area for individual use of filmstrips and films and space for 100 students to conduct study and research.

The existing school library seats 21 students adequately. The gymnasium-auditorium is used 100 per cent of the school day and the classroom-laboratories nearly 94 per cent of the day. This high use of facilities leaves no possibility of flexibility, school officials said.

Sept. 1970 OLBM

Father Gacquin would later return as pastor to St. James & St. Thomas following the death of Father Ted Michota in 1977.
On April 21, 1974, St. Thomas the Apostle Mission Church hosted its first Confirmation. Bishop Casey also confirmed those from St. James & the missions in Walpack.

Bishop Lawrence B. Casey seen standing behind the back row.

Back L-R:
Unknown boy; Kathleen (Kate) Quinn [blocked]; Beverly Benson [blocked]; Mary Pollara; Ailine Jerger; Unknown [blocked].

Front L-R:
2 girls facing each other are Unknown; Tammy Viserta; Unknown girl slightly behind them & ahead of Kate; Joanne Bea [wearing glasses]; Melissa Babcock; Unknown; Unknown.
Brother Mark Hyde
now Father Mark Hyde, SDB & the current Director of the Salesian Missions

Fifth grade C.C.D. Savios of Montague, N.J., pause from their religious instruction time for a picture with their moderator, Brother Mark Hyde.

L-R in back & front rows:
Mary Pollara, Ailene Jerger, Brother Mark Hyde, Kate Quinn, Melissa Babcock, Judy Klemm. Daniel Glerum, Beverly Benson, Tammy Viserta, Joan Bea.

Nov. 1972
St. James Church often held its First Communion and/or Confirmation jointly with its Missions, followed by a breakfast given by the Rosary Society in the parish hall.

Fr. Ted welcomed the Salesians of Don Bosco from Newton, NJ to assist with retreats and religious education.

Boys L-R: Matthew Avenatti, Charles Sharpe, Richard Hollyer, Robert Rough.
Girls as identified: 3rd and 4th from L - Patricia Benson & Jessica Perrini, 8th & 9th - Beth Olszewski & Renee Massett

Mark Iwanicky & Jose Monterrosa, SDB
Nov. 1980
photo by
Jean Dai
At present 135 of New Jersey's 710 parishes have only one priest. In Sussex County, Msgr. James Gacquin is the pastor of two parishes, driving the 12 miles between St. James the Greater in Montague and St. Thomas the Apostle in Sandyston Township, and then regularly taking another 14-mile trip to conduct services for juvenile inmates of the Mountainview Correctional Facility in Stokes State Forest. The constant travel, which adds up to 43,000 miles a year, evokes memories of the circuit rider ministries of an earlier age and brings east a taste of what is happening today in Catholic parishes in some Western states.

Lonely Life: One Parish, One Priest
By JOSEPH F. SULLIVAN,
Published: March 6, 1993  NY Times
L-R Josh & Doug Sandberg, Mike Car, & Walter Journey
On December 9, 1987, the Jubilee Year of the Diocese of Paterson, Bishop Frank J. Rodimer elevated St. Thomas the Apostle Mission (territorially the largest in the diocese) to full Parish status.

This parish will include the faithful living or having a canonical domicile or quasi domicile within the territory embraced by the following lines:

Beginning at the point where the Deckertown Turnpike crosses the New Jersey - Pennsylvania state boundary at the Delaware River, then proceeding east on the Deckertown Turnpike to the point where the turnpike crosses the Montague Township - Wantage Township boundary; then proceeding south along the municipal boundaries of the townships of Montague, Sandyston and Walpack to the Sussex County - Warren County boundary; then proceeding west along the Sussex County - Warren County boundary to the Delaware River; then proceeding north along the Delaware River to the point of beginning.

This Decree shall be effective on Wednesday, December 9, 1987, the 50th Anniversary date for the establishment of the Diocese of Paterson.
Rev. Edward P. Liptack, SDB was the first to be ordained from St. James. He celebrated his first Mass at the church on June 23rd, 1959.

Parish motto: +
+ Nizi Dominus Frustra +
“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

at
St. James’ 50th Anniversary Observance
July 24, 1993
As inscribed in Gaelic on the right hand door:

"Ar dheis
Dé go raibh
a anam"

Translation:
“May his soul be at the right hand of God”
August 1996  Father Rainforth’s Installation as pastor at St. James

Rev. Thomas Rainforth
1996 - 1997
Rev. Gerald F. Lewis
1997 Admin; then Pastor 1998 - 2003

Parishioner Wayne von Doehren was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate on May 5th, 2001 - with Fr. Lewis in attendance.
Upon Father Lewis’ retirement, 
**Rev. A. Richard Carton**
was appointed pastor: 
*2003-2007*

On January 1, 2007, 
the Monsignor James Gacquin Youth and Religious Education Center was dedicated.
In Father Varga’s words:

“Let us pray that the Lord will continue to bless us and help us to prosper. May our parish community remain strong in the Lord and continue to spread the Good News of His love.”
Special thanks to

Father Wayne Varga for offering the privilege to compile this history of St. James the Greater Parish and granting access to information; Rev. Msgr. Raymond Kupke for providing data and permission to use his Diocesan Archive photo; the information shared by Bishop Emeritus Frank Rodimer, Rev. Msgr. John V. Boland, Rev. Msgr. Joseph Ferrito, Rev. Edward Liptak SDB, and Salesians: Rev. Dave Moreno, SDB & Rev. Mark Hyde, SDB; The Beacon for permission to copy its articles and file photos; info Bob Quinn had compiled for the 50th anniversary; Alan B. Delozier and Kathleen S. Dodds of Seton Hall Univ.; information from Lottie [Henn] Durland, Pat [Henn] Long, Helen [Zitone] Gassmann, Emmy Massett, Charles Meloi, Maureen McHugh, Pat (Staudt) Walsh, and Josephine Yarosz; Joanna (Reinhardt) Muhlbeck & Betsy Reinhardt for Rock View info; Mike Milligan for copying the Luthman family’s image of St. Bartholomew Church; the National Park Service for sharing photos of Our Lady of Blue Mountain; Tom Costello for providing photos from Pope John XXIII HS Yearbooks; and for the photos shared by, with some included here, from: Paul Brislin, the Michael Car family, Jean Dai, Mary Flexer, Richard Hollyer, Mary LaRusso, William Liptak, Doris Sieperman, Mary (Pollara) Stoddard, Shirley Strong, Mary Tully, Deacon Wayne von Doehren, and Karen (Murray) Winters.

Fr. Fanning’s info was located online from in Padre Pio Newsletter, Issue 31.

Powerpoint created by Alicia Batko for the 75th Anniversary celebration of St. James the Greater Parish of Montague, NJ on July 22nd, 2018 and presented by Doug Sandberg