

Founded in Faith Alive in His Love

God's love brought a parish community together 100 years ago. Miners, railroad workers, laborers in the carbon works, farmers, women, and children all drawn by their Catholic faith to a little white church atop a wooded hill in Cabot. Founded in faith, the St. Joseph Church community has flourished now for a century, guided by the spirit of many priests who have served it. Beloved by so many families who have worshipped there and have marked the important events of their lives inside this church.

The centennial of St. Joseph Church is an opportunity to tell an extraordinary story about ordinary people whose abiding faith and unselfish devotion continue to keep this vibrant parish alive in His love.

A Church of Their Own

In the late 1700s, Irish and German immigrants, including many Revolutionary War heroes, settled the rugged, picturesque land in the southeastern corner of what would later become Butler County. It wasn't until 1854, just 50 years before St. Joseph Church was established, that Winfield Township was organized. In addition to great agricultural development, the abundant mineral deposits and fine water power of this rural land enabled many industries to flourish in the township's villages of Carbon Black (later renamed Cabot), Delano (now Marwood), West Winfield, Saxonburg, and Leasureville. The entire township's population hovered just above 1,000 at the turn of the century.

It was in Carbon Black where St. Joseph Church was founded just after the turn of the century. The tiny village got its name from a lamp-black factory where "soot" was made for paint manufacturing, and later, for automobile tires. A young Harvard graduate, Godfrey Cabot, owned the Carbon Lamp Black Factory where gas from nearby fields was backed up against a plate to make soot. The soot was then packed in 12-pound paper bags like flour and was shipped by railroad from Saxon Station to New York. Dr. Cabot took great interest in the town and was influential in helping the new Cabot Academy, a primary school and a training academy for teachers. He made such an impact on the progress of the town, that Carbon Black was renamed Cabot in 1902.

When the oil fields were depleted, the carbon black factory left the town in 1910. Dr. Cabot moved to Boston and turned his oil investments toward the Texas panhandle. Dr. Cabot wrote to friends in the early 1960s that he still had great interest in Cabot, the town that bore his name.

After the turn of the century, the few pioneer Catholic settlers living in the Cabot area of Winfield Township walked or rode horse and buggy for several miles to St. John's Church in Coyleville, or to St. Mary's in Herman to attend Sunday Mass. In May 1904, the Rev. Father Nicolaus Deinlein, O.F.M. Cap., a Capuchin Franciscan, professor at St. Fidelis Seminary and pastor of St. Mary's Church, West Winfield, walked the area asking the Catholic families of Carbon Black, Delano, and Saxonburg if they were willing to contribute toward the erection of a church of their own. With little hesitation the families answered yes, so Father Nicolaus obtained permission from the father provincial, the Very Rev. Father Charles and the Rt. Rev. Bishop Richard Phelan of Pittsburgh. Two lots were purchased from the Boyd family at the top of a hill just beyond the railroad tracks, on what later became Stoney Hollow Road, in Cabot.

Even before work began on the new church, the first Mass celebrated in the area was held at the Bassot House, owned by the Plate Glass Company, in Delano, on September 18, 1904. Ground for the new church was broken October 19 of that year and the baptism of baby Silvis Bocchi, the son of John and Catherine Martine Bocchi, on November 20, 1904 became the first recorded entry in the official records of St. Joseph. The founding families of St. Joseph gathered for Mass in the unfinished church the week before Christmas in 1904. That spring the church was completed and dedicated May 31, 1905 by Rt. Rev. Bishop Regis Canevin as a mission church of St. Mary's, in Herman.

St. Joseph Church's first congregation consisted of **five** families – Bocchi, Cypher, Kelly, Miller, and Rivers. Mass was celebrated in the white wooden frame church once a month. Rough boards were used as pews and statues and other essentials were purchased later as money and donors became available.

The Early years

Wishing to make the church an inviting place for his congregation, Father Nicolaus Deinlein, the founder and first pastor, asked a Butler man named Donnelly, to donate a bell for the new church. The bell, cast in St. Louis, continues to ring out in a refurbished bell tower, reminding parishioners of how far, through the grace of God, St. Joseph Church progressed in its short history. A work of art, the bell is inscribed:

"Nicholas was the beggar

Donnelly was the donor.

Stuckstede cast me

St. Joseph is the owner." February MCMV

As the bell tolled, calling parishioners to worship, most walked or came part way by horse and buggy. No road led to the church though a narrow path once lain out as an avenue ran through the woods. Father Nicolaus and succeeding priests would stay nearby at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Schiebel because the church had no sleeping accommodations.

The tireless, dedicated Father Nicolaus remained in charge until the time of his death in November, 1907. He was succeeded by Rev. Ferdinand Hartung, who remained pastor until 1909.

The little St. Joseph mission church was a box-shaped building, “very plain with no added frills.” People attending mass sat on rough-hewn boards. A local carpenter made the first pews a few years later.

The first decorative items added to the small country church came several years after its opening, and caused quite a stir for a group of local youngsters. A story about the arrival of the first statues for the church has circulated through several generations of parishioners. Catholics were not large in number in southeastern Butler County in those days.

It seems the group of youngsters was fascinated by what was being delivered to the church on the hill. A number of large boxes had arrived by train. Well, the curious kids waited for the boxes to be opened. The first large box was split and a life-like statue peered out at the youngsters through the cracked carton. The children thought the statue was a person and, terrified by what they thought they saw, they ran home as fast as they could. Even after they were grown, those once-frightened children still related the story of the statues they thought were alive. Two of those original statues – St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother – were moved and refurbished when the old church was torn down and still are displayed in Bauer Hall.

Soon after, an organ was obtained and Freda Keasey, a talented young musician, began St. Joseph's music ministry. Freda was so young and small that she couldn't see the priest or the altar over the organ. Frank Schiebel would stand beside her, turn the hymnal pages, and tell her when to play the songs.

A war had begun in Europe and soon Americans were called to join the battle. St. Joseph Church became a refuge of prayer amid the serious problems a world away. No sooner did the war end than a deadly influenza epidemic swept the country wiping out whole families. Not even peaceful rural Butler County was spared. The Spanish influenza and its companion malady pneumonia took the lives of thousands in Western Pennsylvania. The Catholics of St. Joseph again were drawn together for prayer and found solace in the company of each other at this time of loss. In a just a few short years, the fledgling mission church had drawn both Catholics and converts -- enough parishioners to warrant the celebration of one Mass each week. Funerals and weddings, however, continued to be performed at St. John's or St. Mary's.

Records from 1917 showed the church had grown to 27 families, adding the Alwine, Duffy, Ekas, Fleming, Gerrard, Gratzner, Hutzler, Lang, Mitchell, Osche, Pascarelli, Rhineland, Ragan, Spinetti, Stuebgen, Steigner, Traggai, Tolomei, Wilbert, and Weber families to the congregation.

Financing improvements strained the church's modest budget and the account book (1917-1934) for St. Joseph Church showed monthly entries for "pew rentals," a common practice in many churches at that time. While no one is sure just how the rentals at St. Joseph were used, the practice was a way for churches to get the funds to operate through charging church members a fee for using pews for their seating during Mass.

Entries of \$10.00 or \$5.00 appear as "receipts for pew rentals" with parishioners' names beside them. In 1920, the last year pew rentals appear in the ledger, \$54.00 was received for rental of pews.

The First Shepherds of St. Joseph

The missionary spirit of St. Francis indeed lives on in his sons—the Capuchin Franciscan Friars. Look no further than the priest, the Rev. Nicolaus Maria Deinlein, O.F.M. Cap., who walked the countryside to rally Catholics to build a church of their own in Cabot. Or his successors. In all, 20 pastors have served the congregation of St. Joseph Church since 1904. Among them an artist, several professors, a musician, a missionary to China and Australia, a golfer and an astronomer. They came from as far away as Germany, and as close as Great Belt, Butler County. Despite their diverse backgrounds and dissimilar interests, they shared a common faith, a

fastidious belief in following Jesus Christ in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. The order of Capuchin Franciscans, who began serving parishes around the Pittsburgh area in the 1870s, brought energy, enthusiasm, prayer, and service to their communities. They became beacons of God's word and human symbols of His love to countless thousands of people over the century that St. Joseph Church has stood.

Forging the path, Father Nicolaus Deinlein, 1904-1907, was the founder and the first pastor of St. Joseph Church. Not only did he establish the Cabot parish as a mission church, but he also founded St. Mary's Church in West Winfield, and served both churches until his death in November of 1907.

Almost immediately after the mission church organized, spiritual education for the children began. Marcie Gray, lifelong parishioner, remembers stories told to her by her mother about "Sunday School" being held every Saturday afternoon in the homes of parishioners. The classes were small, but everyone had a good time learning lessons of their faith and enjoying big bowls of popcorn. Father Nicolaus, who taught the older children, along with several parishioners, provided the religious instructions that all the children were required to attend until they were 16 years old.

When Father Nicolaus died, Father Ferdinand Hartung replaced him from 1907 to 1909. Father Hartung married Mr. and Mrs. Frank Scheibel, whose descendents still worship at St. Joseph. Father Bede Herrmann served as pastor for the next seven years. Described as a brilliant man who spoke fluent Greek, Latin, and German, he was known for walking to see each of his parishioners and many living in the area converted to Catholicism through his inspiration. Father Bede was said to have borne a strong resemblance to St. Francis, and, like the beloved saint, Father Bede had a great love for nature. He bristled at the mention of cutting trees, even dead ones, and he loved the animals who shared the woods with his little church.

As he left St. Joseph for a new assignment as master of novices at St. Mary's Monastery in Herman, Father Bede wrote a heartfelt note to the Schiebels, who had opened their home to the traveling priest. "Indeed fortunate is the priest who can rely on his people and is at home with his flock and finds support among his own and a comfortable home to live in."

Father Bede described St. Joseph as a parish that had "peace within" it. "May it grow and flourish from day to day. And if I cannot be with you any longer, and if your house can no longer be my home, my prayers are still for you," he wrote.

For the next several years, a series of priests from St. Fidelis monastery tended to the spiritual needs of the St. Joseph faithful. St. Fidelis monastery and seminary were founded in 1877 by the Franciscan Friars from Bavaria who had fled religious persecution in Germany five years earlier. The seminary taught some 4,000 students, including more than 500 who became priests, over its 103-year existence before closing in 1980. The Capuchins moved their seminary to Borromeo Seminary in Wickliffe, Ohio in 1977.

Following Fathers Nicolaus, Ferdinand, and Bede, in 1916 and 1917, Father Rudolf Blackinger led the congregation. He left to serve as a missionary to China, where he worked until 1920 when he was forced out by the war lords. It was said that Father Rudolph dreamed of working with the people in China. While he lived in Cabot, he would never eat rice because he said he would get enough rice in China. From the Far East he went to Australia where he celebrated his 50th anniversary in the priesthood. He died in 1969, having been a Franciscan friar for 62 years.

Father Hyacinth Steigner, 1917-1918, and Father Emmeram Kausler, 1918-1920 served brief tenures as pastor. In those years, the congregation grew to nearly 30 families, "145 souls" according to an entry in the church records.

Years of Growth and Service

With the tragedy of World War I and the influenza epidemic behind them, it didn't take long for the new parishioners to bond in religious and social activities. By the 1920s, church picnics were held each summer in Miller's Grove. Beginning in the 1930s, the tradition of holding a fall festival - still the church's largest annual event - was started with a seven-course dinner served in the church basement for 150 people. Because the church had no running water, water had to be carried from three nearby homes. The dinner probably was held to celebrate the completion of the basement, but it was so enjoyed that it grew to become an annual favorite held the Sunday following Labor Day each September, and feeding now about 3,000 people.

The memorable Father Benno Haggemiller, O.F.M. Cap., LL.D., served the St. Joseph parish for nearly three decades, 1920-1949. Known nationally as an educator, artist, and astronomer, Father Benno taught science and mathematics at St. Fidelis College for 42 years. He had attended dental school in Munich, Germany before coming to America to study for the priesthood at St. Fidelis. At the college, he designed and installed a ten-inch reflector telescope on the campus. On several occasions, he took parishioners to the observatory at St. Fidelis monastery to view the wonder of the heavens through his telescope. Fascinated by science and technology, Father Benno gained something of a reputation as a daring driver, first on his motorized bicycle, and later in one of his cars. A 1941 two-door Chevrolet sedan was his favorite. Most confessed to being terrified to drive with the daring priest.

Margarete Cypher wed William Ramm in the mission church's first wedding performed in January 1925. That spring, 23 young women dressed in white and carrying freshly picked wildflowers, walked in procession led by May Queen Marcella Schiebel Gray to adorn a statue of the Blessed Mother with a crown of flowers in the church's first May crowning. And the historic year for St. Joseph came to a close with the addition of a vestibule to the church and electricity being used for the first time on Christmas. With his love of science, Father Benno must have marveled at the wonder of electricity. Sadly, a year later, on April 20, 1926, pall bearers carried the casket of Annabell Osche through the woods to the church, marking the first funeral Mass said at St. Joseph.

Besides his teaching duties, Father Benno was considered a missionary to parishes in Butler and Armstrong counties. In addition to serving as pastor of St. Joseph, Father Benno tended St. Mary's parish in West Winfield, and founded a parish in Cadogen. During his tenure, the strong-willed priest brought stability to his flock as they suffered through the Great Depression and World War II. Though modest by today's standards, St. Joseph's finances remained in the black through the Depression years. Church records show that after all expenses, the church account showed a balance of \$139.45 in the John Berg & Co. Bank to start 1929. Nonetheless, through difficult times he inspired many improvements – a sanctuary was built, the vestibule was added, and Father Benno himself painted a beautiful scene of The Last Supper on the wall behind the altar. The basement was added in 1930, and in 1945 a second Sunday mass was celebrated to accommodate the growing parish. Father Benno, several lay teachers, and later, sisters from St. Mary's, Herman taught religious classes to the children.

Despite the hard times faced by many during the Great Depression of the 1930s, people turned again to St. Joseph, attending Mass and staying involved in church activities. The 30s and 40s were lean years for everyone with shortages of food and fuel commonplace. During those years, money for such extras as decorating the church for Christmas was hard to come by. So one December, several boys from the parish walked down the nearby railroad tracks toward Freeport to the first limestone quarry and found pine trees to decorate the church for the holiday season. Dino Bocchi, Jack Faulkner, Lee Hahn, and Jerry McDermott carried the large firs along the track and up the hill through the snow to the church. The railroad tracks also provided a path, however dangerous, for the Catholic children of Marwood to walk two miles to the Cabot church for religious instruction. The Schiebels, Regis, Leo and Evie; Dick Thomas; Norma Jean Thoma; and Jerry, Jake, Virgil, Gloria, and Chub Cypher followed the tracks whatever the weather for the long trek to St. Joseph.

During the hard times of the depression and war years, Father Benno kept the spirit of his flock alive. The beloved priest's fondest wish was to return to visit his homeland in Germany. The St. Martha's Guild (now the Confraternity of Christian Mothers) raised funds to help Father Benno make that trip in the late 1940s.

This gesture of friendship and kindness is not uncommon for St. Joseph parishioners. Over the years, the women of St. Joseph have been a strong force in the parish family through many acts of unselfish service. Typifying that strength and cohesion is the women's group, first founded as the Sodality in the 1930s. Sodality members were married and unmarried women of the parish. They met in each other's homes because there was no meeting space at church. Mrs. John Hutzler, Mrs. Walter Hutzler, Mrs. Nash Denny, and Mrs. Harry Lewis led the women. Annual dues of 10 cents went toward Mass offerings. The sisterhood was famous for their spaghetti and chicken dinners, and for reaching out to troubled members of the church. After one meeting, a table of beautiful gifts was unveiled for one member, Mrs. Harry Keasy, who lost many treasures in a fire at her home.

As St. Joseph grew, membership in the Sodality became quite large, so the women divided into two groups, one serving the interests of older women and the other meeting the needs of younger women. Through card parties and other activities, the groups raised money for extras such as buying a toy or a box of candy for each child in the parish at Christmastime, or buying carpeting or other decorative items for the church.

A third women's group, the St. Martha's Guild, formed in the mid-forties and in 1949 merged with the older women's Sodality to become St. Martha's Confraternity of Christian Mothers, still active today. The Christian Mothers are united by their mission to further the Christian education of children and foster a special love for all members, supporting them by fervent prayer to maintain a sound spiritual life in their homes and to be a source of help to the community.

One of the enduring traditions started by the Christian Mothers during the war years of the forties continues today. Helen Cypher, retired school teacher and a member of the Christian Mothers since its inception in 1949, described how the women gathered items "from home" to send to soldiers from the parish serving their country in all parts of the world, during war and times of peace. "Oh, the packages are nice, packed with things our soldiers couldn't get," explained Mrs. Cypher. "Tablets, envelopes and pens; shaving cream, soap and Chapstick; cookies and crackers; cocoa and dried soup mix; and, of course, gum." The packages, assembled so lovingly by the Christian Mothers over the years, have traced the globe from Europe to Vietnam, and today to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"A mother is not a person to lean on, but a person to make leaning unnecessary," Father Bertrand Roll, national director of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, told the members gathered to celebrate the group's 55th anniversary.

The Christian Mothers were kept busy assembling dozens of care packages in the years following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, many of the parish's young men enlisted in the service and the next four years were ones of hardship, heartache and prayer for many parish families. St. Joseph became an important haven where families prayed for the safety of loved ones in the armed forces, and prayed for peace. When World War II ended and the soldiers returned home, many weddings, followed by many baptisms, sent parish membership soaring. A second Sunday Mass was added. Having led his flock through years of change inside and outside the walls of St. Joseph, in 1950, Father Benno died of complications following a stroke. He passed away in the priest's quarters at the back of St. Joseph.

A story was told to later generations that Father Benno loved St. Joseph so much that he was going to ask God if he could be its guardian angel when he died. According to former parishioner Greg Benzy, who was active with the Youth Group, the story flourished and was retold at every youth group overnighter including the first one in St. Joseph's Hall after the original church was torn down. That evening, after the story of Father Benno was told, a gust of wind suddenly lifted the ceiling tiles from the front to the back the hall where the Youth Group was playing, as if Father Benno was passing through to check on the new hall. Ironically, Greg recalled, outside the air was calm that night.

Father Florence Kirchgessner administered during Father Benno's illness until 1950. Father Florence was a strict disciplinarian when it came to religious education. He appealed to parents to make sure their children attended Saturday afternoon catechism classes. Father Florence viewed the attendance as poor, and his neatly kept journal of announcements for Sunday Mass on Feb. 5, 1950, read: "Some of the children have been missing Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock catechism class without excuse. The next time they miss, their names will be read from the altar so that the parents will know that their children are not attending." The warning must have been taken to heart since no later journal entries referred to poor class attendance again.

Over the years, the parish family grew, pretty much doubling in membership about every 20 years to its present size of 1,200 families. To meet the needs of this growing faith community, a number of organizations formed -- the Confraternity of Christian Mothers (which celebrated its own 55th anniversary during the church's centennial year), The Holy Name Society, the Junior Sodality, the Youth Group, the Knights of Columbus, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the music ministry, an active CCD program, and even a softball team, to name a few.

In the 1950s, attention turned to improving the original building that the thriving mission church had quickly outgrown. An addition to the rear of the church housed a sacristy, office, and living quarters for the priest. A new altar and communion railing were installed.

Father Mark Linenberger, 1950-1957, and the trustees -- James Gray, Eugene Tolomei, Paul Thoma, Edward Weleski, Charles Bauer, and Frank Schiebel -- guided the completion of many projects. A section of the woods was cleared and a road and parking lot were paved. Additional rooms were added to the back of the church that provided living quarters for the priest. Until this time, the priest was provided meals and lodging at the nearby home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Schiebel. The Schiebel's large white home on Cabot hill, nearly became "an annex to the little mission church where priests who came by horse and buggy were offered lodging."

On June 2, 1951, the members of St. Joseph gathered for a day of happiness and celebration as they rededicated their entirely redecorated church. The church and sanctuary were refurbished with paneling, new windows, communion railing, pews and statues. The tower of the church was lowered and reinforced. Six additional acres of ground were purchased. After the rededication mass, a band from St. Fidelis Seminary performed a concert of sacred music on the church lawn.

His Excellency Bishop John Francis Deardon, Father Linenberger, and 16 visiting priests held confirmation rites in May 1953 for 100 children and adults, one of the largest gatherings in the history of St. Joseph Church up to that time.

By 1955, with much accomplished, St. Joseph paused to commemorate its golden jubilee. On Sunday, May 29, a mass of thanksgiving was celebrated and parishioners and visitors were invited to the church hall where dinners were served from noon until evening.

The baby boom that followed the war was evident at St. Joseph as the number of youngsters continued to grow. Many activities for youth were started at this time to keep children interested in and educated about their faith.

A native of Butler County, Father Adrian Conrad, pastor from 1957-59, guided and participated in young people's activities, where used his musical talents on the harmonica and concertina to engage young people in learning Christian doctrine. Known well for his appetite for fried fish, Father Adrian had an extensive record collection and especially loved Irish music. He also was a faithful visitor to the sick and aged parishioners. The Olesnevich strawberry farm yielded many sweet berries enjoyed by Father Adrian and other pastors of St. Joseph. Father Adrian was known to come to the farm and pick strawberries to make jam.

Father Adrian assisted a core of involved parents in forming St. Joseph's Boy Scout Cub Pack, introducing dozens of school-aged boys to the comradery and enjoyment found in working together to help others. Three dens were formed under the leadership of Cub master Angelo Cosentino and den mothers Mrs. Joseph Schmeider, Mrs. Cecil McWilliams, and Mrs. John Smith. A May 18, 1958 article in the Butler Eagle reported that "imagination was running riot and adult and youth worked together to put on an outdoor circus at St. Joseph Church with more than 100 people attending. Costumed clown cubs Bob Kochanowski, John Mahut, Gary Graham and Vincent Oliva kept the audience in a uproar. "Austin the Great" (Rev. Father Austin from Herman) did feats of magic and was the hit of the event.

Saturday evening Mass was added in the 1960s, as was a new education building with eight classrooms to provide for the religious instruction of the parish's children.

Likewise, Father Kenny Cox, 1959-1960, initiated the church's first baccalaureate services and breakfast for graduates. The Towards, Betty and her husband Russell, gave many hours to helping with the annual picnic dinner during Father Kenny's tenure and after. Russell, who was a maintenance worker at Knoch High School, was not a Catholic. Father Kenny asked Russell to scrub the basement floors to prepare for the dinner. Russell was so generous in giving his time, Father Kenny once told him he would baptize him with his own scrub water. Many years later, Father Louis Petruha did baptize Russell at his own request and he was received into the Catholic faith. Father Louis told the congregation at Sunday Mass that he had just baptized both the youngest and the oldest souls that he ever had.

During his tenure, Father Kenny served as spiritual advisor to the Holy Name Society, one of the parish's oldest groups that originally formed in June 1938. According to minutes from the society's first meeting, a motion was passed that each member contribute 25 cents monthly, and that those dues be doubled in case of an unexcused absence from the meeting. These parish men, among many projects, took an active part in a campaign to observe the solemnity of Good Friday by urging local shopkeepers to close their businesses from noon to 3 p.m. to honor Christ's sacrifice on the cross. James Gray, Edward Weleski, Clyde Osche, Joseph Sepich, Paul Rockar, and Cecil McWilliams Jr. led this active society during the fifties, then one of the largest in Butler County with 150 members.

St. Joseph parishioners and Catholics around the country watched with caution and pride as President-elect John F. Kennedy took the oath of office on Jan. 20, 1960. Many political opponents had voiced fears that the country's first Catholic president would seek ways to give his church a preferred position in American society. The St. Joseph congregation gathered for services with a special prayer in their hearts for their country's new leader.

During this exciting time, Father Killian Krings, 1960-1961, a native of Ford City, and an accomplished musician, became the next pastor. Again, improvements such as enlarging the parking lot and paving the road were made. The church was extended in the front and a new vestibule and bell tower was added. More pews increased the seating capacity for the growing congregation.

Father Killian created a territorial map of St. Joseph parish and had every family home marked.

Father Terrence Moffitt, 1961-1963, a native of Pittsburgh, was pastor. Father Charles Knoll, 1963-1964, a native of Butler County and an accomplished musician, followed as pastor. It was Father Charles who consoled and prayed with his stunned parishioners who flocked to the church all weekend following the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

Recognizing the importance of family during such a tumultuous time in the country's history, Father Charles formed the Family Christian Movement. Lanny and Betty Osche were among the couples who hosted gatherings with the pastor in each other's homes to discuss Catholic family life and how religion plays an important part.

In 1964, Father Edgar Schano, from Lawrenceville, began an 11-year tenure as St. Joseph pastor with a focus on educating the parish's youngest members in the faith. While he was known for his kindness and compassion toward the elderly and the sick, Father Edgar's greatest contribution was to programs for the children. He expanded the CCD staff, established a Vacation Bible School for children, and saw the need for a building for the classes. During his time as pastor, a CCD building was erected. Father Edgar knew the value of a solid religious education program for the children, and he encouraged CCD staff to update their knowledge and receive certification to teach. He made sure every child received a small gift at Christmas. Father Edgar welcomed families from St. Mary's in West Winfield to St. Joseph after their church was torn down in 1972. When he died in 1984, Father Schano had been a Capuchin for 59 years.

A New Era for St. Joseph

The most dramatic growth for the St. Joseph mission church occurred during the tenure of Father Howard Bich. On December 23, 1975, Vincent M. Leonard, Bishop of Pittsburgh, decreed that St. Joseph be elevated from a mission to the full status of a parish separated from parishes surrounding it. Bishop Leonard declared, "In order to provide more effectively for the welfare of souls, it has become necessary to raise the mission church known as Saint Joseph, Cabot, serving a particular area of Butler County, to the status of a parish. Father Howard Bich, O.F.M., Cap., administrator of the mission since last July, has been named pastor of the newly established parish."

The first parish council made up of laity was elected to help meet the needs of the new parish. Chuck Bauer, James Gray, Tad Keasey, Mrs. Arvilla Osche, Paul Rockar, Regis Schiebel, Gene Tolomei, and Edward Weleski comprised the first lay advisory group.

Elected by the parish community, the parish council remains an active group whose responsibilities include collaboration with the pastor to provide leadership within the parish community and assisting the pastor by coordinating and unifying all aspects of parish life – worship, apostolate, education, finance, and vocation.

Members of that first council had accepted a daunting task. Priests and parishioners alike had long recognized the need for a new church as the congregation swelled to 400-plus families and caused the renovated old church to overflow. Holy Days filled the church and often sent parishioners flowing out the double doors and down the steps. Father Howard Bich, the pastor, was appointed to direct the building of a new church. The new parish council pledged to assist. A new era for St. Joseph had begun.

Father Howard and the parish council guided the building of the new St. Joseph Church. With joyful music provided by St. Fidelis College students, Father Howard, and eight parish council members present, took the spade and shovel and, one by one, turned over the soil to break ground for the new church on a beautiful spring Sunday, May 15, 1977.

“We ask you to bless this ground, the site of our new church. Send your protection to keep it safe. Fill our new church with your love and give help to all who come to this site to call on You in faith,” Father Howard prayed with the parishioners as ground was broken. “We break this ground as a sign and symbol of a new beginning for our parish. For many years God our Father you have sent your grace and blessings upon our parish.”

For the growing parish, the groundbreaking symbolized the promise of a new and glorious church and a stronger faith community. A news account in the *Butler Eagle* described the \$395,000 contemporary structure as the “realization of a 30-year dream by the congregation of St. Joseph.”

“God’s love first brought your parish community together in 1904 and continues to inspire and sustain your growth to this historic moment,” wrote Brendan Malloy, OFM Cap., provincial minister of St. Augustine Province of the Capuchin Order, to the parish. “You have outgrown your former building, but you will never outgrow the reaches of God’s love. In new surroundings you will gather to praise and thank God for His love ever present in so many wonderful ways.”

Taking just over a year to complete, the new church had a contemporary design with a sloping floor to increase visibility of the altar and a wood beamed ceiling that arched approximately four stories high at its apex. Four banks of pews provided seating for 456 people and natural light poured in from skylights above the sanctuary and ten stained-glass sidewalls. The glass enclosed entrance etched with dark waves, stars and fish and is flanked by reconciliation rooms, storage areas, and rest rooms.

Fifteen months after the construction was begun, Father Howard congratulated the people of St. Joseph and thanked them for their loyal support and prayers as the congregation dedicated the new church. Despite their excitement, it was an emotional time for the congregation as they left the old church in procession behind Father Howard to begin their spiritual lives in a brand new church. Father Howard blessed the cornerstone and then celebrated the first Mass on July 2 at 9 a.m. Brother Ward Stakem delivered the homily.

Off-white wall sculptures of Mary and Joseph standing on the Tree of Life, and the Holy Spirit descending above the Tabernacle dramatically focused attention on the altar. There, a towering 16-foot tall sculpture of the Resurrected Christ with outstretched arms above the altar gave parishioners both a dramatic and welcoming symbol. The familiar chime of the treasured original bell, which meant so much to Father Nicolaus and his tiny flock, echoed down the hillside from a brand new bell tower. Just as it called the handful of families in the first congregation to worship, it rang again to welcome 450 families to their new church home.

“May our parish church always be a community of deep faith so that we might pray better, giving us the grace to live better,” prayed Father Howard as he welcomed all to the modern new church.

Just a year later Bishop Leonard returned to St. Joseph to celebrate a special mass on June 3, 1979. St. Joseph Catholic Church was observing the parish’s 75th anniversary, as Father Howard, its pastor during this historic time, marked a personal milestone – the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Father Howard left St. Joseph in 1983 for an assignment in Beaver County and later in West Virginia.

A parish is its people

The 25 years that followed the dedication of the new St. Joseph have brought growth and progress to this country church. The congregation nearly tripled in size during those years. Pastoral leadership and parishioner involvement brought great progress and, in less than a dozen years, the Friary was built, a new organ was installed, St. Joseph Hall was dedicated, and the parking lot was paved.

Father James Menkhus 1983-1989 was known as a dynamic speaker with a love of music. The Adult Choir formed in 1984 to enhance the parish’s music ministry. A diverse group—some who had many years of music training and others who could not read music—came together to express their faith in song. Those original choir members included Valerie Alexander, Gerard and Karen Conroy, Monica Crouse, Al and Vivien Drewnecki, Maureen, Carolyn and Maria Goldscheitter, Gary LeFevre, Eleanor Noah, Veronica Robb, Jim and Marie Salsgiver, and Dave Tomko. The purchase of a new Zimmer organ and sound system did much to revive the music ministry.

“By the time that truck backed up to the door of our church, I felt like the little boy in *The Music Man* who cheered the Wells Fargo wagon a-comin’, bringin’ something special for us,” said Father James, describing his joy on the day the new organ arrived. That organ with its more than 470 pipes, indeed, has stood the test of time and has enhanced the beauty of St. Joseph liturgies for nearly two decades.

Music has enriched the celebration of Sunday Mass and beautified many holidays and special occasions at St. Joseph. One such tradition was the “Tenebrae” service on Good Friday evening. Tenebrae, or darkness, focuses on the last seven statements of Christ during his passion, such as “It is finished.” “I thirst.” “Father into your hands I commend my spirit.” The emotion of those statements is dramatized in scripture and music. One such Tenebrae service about 15 years ago was packed with parishioners and many guests from other churches of various denominations.

The great drama and musical performance, and the extinguishing of candles throughout the service brought the church to the “darkness” of Christ’s death. In the pitch dark sanctuary, the emotional service ended with the drama of Jesus’ death. An actress’s voice cried “Come Back my sweet Jesus, come back...come back...” As the voice trailed off into the darkness, a little girl’s voice came out of the darkness, sobbing: “Don’t go, Jesus, come back...Come back!” The performance left the congregation in tears.

The revered tradition of educating the children of the parish was continued when Father James guided the expansion of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) hall to a permanent building, with an education committee, two religious education coordinators, a teaching staff of 35, and 465 students. The two-story brick structure housed nine classrooms, two offices, a print shop, restrooms, and a kitchen to accommodate social activities. Fourteen parishioners – James Boldy, Helen Cypher, Regis Huth, Dan Jonczak, Art and Jane Limbacher, Betty and Lanny Osche, Walter Robb, Bud and Karyn Roenigk, Virginia Ruediger, Regis Schiebel, and Peg Scholl -- led the building committee and countless volunteers during weeks of planning through every step of the project, from moving bolders to painting walls.

Father James pointed out the uncommon dedication of St. Joseph parishioners in his message at the April 9, 1989 dedication of St. Joseph Hall. “You fill me with a sense of pride, for you are what makes this parish what it is,” said Father James. “As the Church is built upon the cornerstone and foundation of Jesus Christ, so each of you are the bricks and mortar that help to complete this structure, the parish community of St. Joseph.” The parish rolls hit 700 families.

The philosophy of service to God, service to all guided the men of the parish, in 1994, to form the St. Joseph Council 11388 of the Knights of Columbus. Led by Grand Knight Morris Steinhiser, and officers Regis Schiebel, Howard Coller, and Lanny Osche, the 31 original members included descendents of the first St. Joseph congregation, Kenneth Bocchi and James Miller. Founded on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism, the Knights make a difference through service to the parish and the community. Through fundraisers such as their popular pancake and sausage breakfasts, the men raise money for the Bishop’s Project for McQuire Home, to fund the education of a seminarian each year, and to provide support to needy families in the community. Recently, under the leadership of Grand Knight John Ricchuito, the 85 Knights of Columbus commissioned an inspiring Memorial to the Unborn carved of rare African black granite that graces the front lawn of the church.

Chaplain to the newly formed Knights of Columbus in 1994, Father Louis Petruha, a native of Lawrenceville, had a very personal approach to his ministry. He knew everyone and remembered names as if he was a member of the family. On the first day he arrived at St. Joseph, Father Louis came upon Rita Shelton and Doris Robinson stuffing envelopes for the fall festival. Father Louis introduced himself and joined in the stuffing.

“He had a great sense of humor, was an avid golfer, and his spirituality was beyond measure,” Lanny and Betty Osche recall. Although he was somewhat of a jokester himself, he was easily embarrassed. Father Louis is now pastor of another St. Joseph Church, this one in York.

During his tenure, the parish honored a humble man, a fellow parishioner, Charles Bauer. Charles, or “Chuck” as most people knew him, worked for many years at Freehling’s Lumber Company in Cabot. He and his wife lived modestly, and spent many hours of their free time volunteering to help with church activities. When he died in 1989, Chuck Bauer bequeathed his entire estate to St. Joseph.

A passage from 1 Corinthians 15:3 aptly celebrated Chuck Bauer’s generosity: “I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn received.” The CCD building addition built in 1989 was renamed Bauer Hall, as a tribute to the generosity of a simple man who loved his church. At a blessing and commemorative service in October, 1991, Father Louis presided over the dedication of a plaque at the entrance of Bauer Hall inscribed with that passage from Corinthians. A shadow box that hangs just inside the door of the hall contains the distinctive straw hat that Chuck regularly wore to shield the sun as he worked in his prized home garden and while he directed traffic at the church’s busy Fall Festival.

St. Joseph parishioners are known for their abiding commitment to family—both their own biological family and the larger parish family. When any member is in trouble, facing sickness, family strife, the loss of a job—the parish community encircles them with prayer and genuine concern. That’s how it was when Butler’s Pullman Standard, and later the Moonlight Mushroom Company closed, disrupting the lives of many parish families. An urgent appeal went out from parishioner Roger Kelly who volunteered to assemble a list of job openings provided through fellow parishioners and post that list in the back of the church. “By helping these friends, we help strengthen their families. By strengthening their families, with strengthen our Parish community,” Roger wrote in a February 1994 issue of the *Voice of the Carpenter* parish newsletter.

Countless church members have dedicated themselves to the many activities that enrich spiritual life and reach out to those in need - pastoral council, the music ministry, Vacation Bible School, Eucharistic ministry, altar servers, the *Voice of the Carpenter* parish newsletter, and the community dinner program are just a few of the ways people serve their parish in good times and in hard times.

With the new church building and facilities for education and social activities, parishioners turned their attention to beautifying the church grounds and adding warmth and detail to the hilltop wooded space. In 1993, a landscape committee formed and through generous contributions of parishioners, red maples, variegated birch, dogwoods, larch and Japanese katsura trees were planted throughout the church grounds. A Shrine to Saint Francis of Assisi was planned for the grassy area beyond the north end of the parking lot. The shrine was dedicated to the saint who saw the love of God reflected in the beauty of nature, and symbolized the gratitude of a parish that had been served since 1904 by the order of priests founded by Saint Francis. Regis Schiebel, Dante and Kay Charlett, Francis Gehenio, Lanny and Betty Osche, Dan Przybylek, and Karyn Roenigk worked diligently to put together the shrine and adjacent half-mile nature trail, a place used by so many since 1997 for personal meditation and reflection.

As the new millennium began, parish membership surpassed one thousand families for the first time. An energetic young friar, Father Michael Greb, who matched the vitality of this growing congregation, began his three-year term as pastor. Father Mike inspired even more parishioners to reach out to the poor. He started the Crispin Fund, and worked alongside parishioners to prepare and serve meals to the hungry at St. Paul's Church in Butler. Comparing his experiences in other parishes, Father Mike characterized St. Joseph as having a strong spirituality, "a thirst for insight about God and a strong prayerfulness. I was deeply inspired with the consistently solid numbers for daily Mass, even on the worst weather days. The presence of young people, particularly among the teens and early twenties was way over the norm. We have some profoundly spiritual folks at St. Joseph's, and genuine holiness.

Father Mike also was impressed by the strong sense of family life both individually and how it strengthened the entire parish. Intelligence, charity, good humor, hospitality and faith characterize the best traits of this community, he said.

"The youthful spirit of St. Joseph's attracted new people. Our liturgies were splendid, the music programs, with Gerard Conroy leading the way, and the remarkable talents of so many of our choir and the folk groups have made praying at St. Joseph's both inspiring and attractive," said the young friar.

During Father Mike's tenure, the unspeakable tragedy of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center buildings, the Pentagon, and the plane that crashed in Somerset County broke the hearts of Americans and called upon faith communities, like St. Joseph, to comfort and nurture a country in shock. Father Mike established the Wednesday evening liturgies as a parish effort to respond to the tragedy of 9/11 with a renewed commitment to pray for peace for the world. The Mass continues to be well-attended with many young people.

"I love the way people in this parish rally for a cause as well," Father Mike explained. "When we had any kind of disaster relief to support, be it local or within the parish, or an outreach to a part of the world hit by any kind of tragedy, our people were awe-inspiring in their readiness to help. I love the way the people love the Church, the way they love being Catholic, yet are very much ecumenically-minded. Though St. Joseph's started out as a mission outpost of St. Fidelis Seminary, it has become in 100 years a living, breathing, vital presence of Catholic Faith and witness all over Butler County, and throughout the diocese. I am very grateful to God for the chance to have been part of that wonderful community. I carry all of that congregation in my heart."

Perhaps no one has a more complete understanding and perspective of St. Joseph than the woman who has managed the day-to-day business of the church and its members for 22 years. Karyn Roenigk, called the "Church Lady" by those who know her best, moved to the parish from Freeport with her young family in 1973. She decided to get involved with her new church by volunteering for the deacon. The church never had secretary. Volunteering turned into a part-time job, then a full-time job, and along the way, became a passion. At first, she answered the door and the phone, prepared the weekly bulletin, and handled mounds of paperwork generated by a growing parish.

“Over time, the paper turned into people,” said Karyn. “Each of the five pastors has entrusted me with a few more ministerial duties. People come in to the friary office with the delights of the day. Sometimes I’m the first to know they’ve lost a loved one and they need the opportunity to talk to someone about their loss.”

All of the pastors, Karyn observed, “brought their own charisms and strength, and different parts of our souls were enriched.” Each time a pastor leaves St. Joseph, she explained, the change is bittersweet. The parish becomes transplanted.

The “Church Lady” is pleased to witness the parish turning 100 from her unique vantage point. “The church is like a canvas that I’ve watched grow from one little white church, a dot on the landscape, to the wonderful setting we have today. The friary is a welcoming haven. And the halls and church we once thought were so spacious we are still outgrowing.”

As the 100th anniversary of St. Joseph parish came into focus, a new pastor was installed by Bishop Donald Weurl. Father John Getsy, OFM Cap. “came home” with a prayer that he would be able to continue to minister to the people of St. Joseph in the spirit of the great friars who preceded him. Father John was educated at St. Fidelis, where he later served as spiritual director for the college students, and he was guardian of St. Mary Monastery in Herman.

With the same devotion as the 19 Capuchin priests who served this congregation before him, Father John Getsy led St. Joseph Church through its historic centennial year.

“The founders of this parish were people of great faith,” said Father John. “They worked together, made the sacrifices, trusted in divine providence, and formed a community that through the goodness of God would continue to grow.” The Capuchin Franciscan friars have been privileged to give spiritual care and leadership to St. Joseph, he explained. And “every friar who served here would bear testimony to what a joy it has been to serve the people of St. Joseph. Our parish is blessed and is characterized by many faithful who are witness to Christian charity and fellowship.”

Several generations of Catholic faithful from Cabot, Saxonburg, Winfield, Freeport, and Sarver have made a home at St. Joseph Church. They continue to live the faith of the small band of Catholic families who came together to form St. Joseph a century ago. Since the pioneers greatest hardship often was just getting to the church for Sunday mass, the Bocchi, Cypher, Kelly, Miller and Rivers families would undoubtedly be pleased and amazed to see St. Joseph Church today. On any given day or evening, cars dot the parking lot and parishioners are found gathering for worship, education, fellowship, outreach to the community, or just pitching in to help with a parish project. They share their time, talent and elbow grease to enrich their church family and their community. From the ushers who greet each person at the front doors of the church with a firm, welcoming handshake and smile, or the Eucharistic ministers who carry Holy Communion and hope to the sick and those in nursing homes nearby. From the young altar servers to the lectors, to the talented singers and musicians of the choir and folk groups who make the celebration of Mass at St. Joseph so unique. To the CCD and Youth Ministry volunteers who make an important impact on the next generation of parishioners.

On Sunday, June 6, 2004, Father John welcomed Bishop Wuerl to the parish for a mass celebrating the St. Joseph Centennial. The choir was in magnificent voice and the vibrant decorations added to the pride and celebration of this special day.

In the midst of its centennial celebrations, the people of St. Joseph were already looking to the future, as the parish council led the development of plans to renovate and renew the worship space within the church. While thankful for their rich history, church leaders were resolved to continue looking toward the future, just as their predecessors had, ensuring that St. Joseph would be both a sacred and pleasing place for worship.

So within months of turning 100, St. Joseph Church began a liturgical renovation. The project considered the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' guidelines stressing that "the primary concern in the renovation of space for worship must be its suitability for celebration of the Eucharist and other rites of the Church."

Renovations focused on redesigning the sanctuary to set it apart and make it more of a focal point. The new design helped to define separate spaces for the baptistery, Blessed Sacrament Shrine, and choir. New lighting and sound system, a new marble altar table, seating and storage for the choir, improved accessibility for those with disabilities, and the addition of color, artwork, and decorative embellishments were all included in the renovation plan.

The parish's decision to revive its worship space is a fitting symbol for the centennial celebration, giving parishioners a renewed enthusiasm for the way they celebrate the sacred mysteries of the faith. Looking to the future as they commemorate a century-long heritage of faith and service, the loyal and still-growing congregation of St. Joseph Church will continue to serve God, steadfast in the expression of their Catholic faith and flexible in meeting the needs of their community.

St. Joseph Church celebrates its first 100 years with an abiding appreciation for the dedicated people whose faith and toil brought it to this special time. The once-tiny clapboard church of five families is in 2004, a thriving faith community of 1,200 families.

Most parishioners today don't know much about their church's humble beginnings. But they share a bond of faith and dedicated spirit with its founding members. With the same devotion as the 19 Capuchin priests who served this congregation before him, Father John Getsy has led the St. Joseph Church through its historic centennial year.

The vision of Father Nicolaus 100 years ago that "great crowds of people would someday come to the little church on the hill" is indeed a reality, thanks to the exceptional community of believers who are St. Joseph Church.

A poem written with love by Helen Cypher.

In a little white church
On top of Cabot Hill
A group of St. Joseph women
Met and formed St. Martha's Guild.

With nothing to work with
Little money besides
They prayed for the future
And God did provide.

We met in homes
Until a basement was renovated
Making plans for the future
And praying for new adventures.

With Fr. Benno's spiritual guidance
Parishioners, time, labor, and skills
Space was made available
And things started to till.

Spiritual groups now organized
Holy Name for young men
Sodality for the young ladies
And St. Martha's Guild for the women.

Fr. Bertin made a spiritual visit
Telling us all the benefits of joining the Arch Confraternity
And becoming Christian Mothers.

That day seems like yesterday
But it's past a little further
55 years has passed so quickly
Who knows, we might see sixty.

Fr. Bertin is also celebrating
Sixty years of religious teaching
God bless him with good health
Maybes he'll see his seventy one.

Our celebrating is ending
God bless you everyone
With God's help and protection
Let us celebrate our sixtieth one.

O Joseph, Mighty Patron

O Joseph, mighty patron,
Your love and strength bestow
Upon a pilgrim people
Who are the church below.
You were the Father's image,
Great prince of David's line;
Obtain for us God's blessing
That we may be his sign.

Great Saint, you cherished Mary,
Who loved and cared for you;
You taught and nurtured Jesus,
O teach us to be true.
True to the Church he founded,
Until we form above
A family united

The Pastors of St. Joseph

All of the shepherds of St. Joseph over the past 100 years have been Capuchin Franciscan friars. Capuchins have served in parishes around the Pittsburgh area since the 1870s. Clothed in brown, they sometimes are referred to as general practitioners when it comes to the Lord's work.

Capuchins derive their name from the capouch, or hood that distinguishes their order. The order originated in Austria. The three knots on their belts stand for their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Nicolaus Deinlein	1904-1907
Ferdinand Hartung	1907-1909
Bede Hermann	1909-1916
Rudolf Blockinger	1916-1917
Hyacinth Steigner	1917-1918
Emmeram Kausler	1918-1920
Benno Haggemiller	1920-1949
Florence Kirchgessner	1949-1950
Mark Linenberger	1950-1957
Adrian Conrad	1957-1959
Kenny Cox	1959-1960

Killian Krings	1960-1961
Terrence Moffat	1961-1963
Charles Knoll	1963-1964
Edgar Schano	1964-1975
Howard Bich	1975-1983
James Menkhus	1983-1989
Louis Petruha	1989-1999
Michael Greb	1999-2003
John Getsy	2003-2007
Ward Stakem	2007-present