

As St. Thomas the Apostle Church embarks on its second 25 years it is confronted with invoking the many pronouncements made by Vatican Council II affecting church liturgy and the role the clergy and laity must perform in our present day church.

In June of 1964 Father Joseph Fischer joined our staff of priests led by Msgr. Magnier who was assisted by Fathers McGrath, Danik, O'Brien and O'Connor. Four months later in October 1964 the parish mourned the death of Father McGrath.

Then in June 1966 Father Daniel Danik was designated CCD Regional Coordinator and left the parish to assume his new duties. Replacing Father Danik was newly ordained Father Gerald Matusiak.

As part of the CCD program, St. Thomas Pre-School was inaugurated in October 1966. Every Saturday morning during the school year it opens its doors to children from 3 to 5 years of age. Its purpose to make these children aware of the existence of God in their lives and to introduce them to art and music.

The parish experienced a major change in the presentation of the mass when in March 1967 the celebrant faced the congregation.

Father O'Brien left the parish in June of 1968 to assume the position of executive secretary of the Personnel Board. Father Thomas Swangin was then assigned to the parish.

After faithfully serving St. Thomas the Apostle parish for 15 years Msgr. Michael Magnier retired August 15, 1968. Leaving a congregation indebted to him for his spiritual contributions and guidance. On August 26, 1968 Msgr. Coburn was named to succeed Msgr. Magnier as pastor of St. Thomas.

The Christian Family Movement, more commonly known as CFM became a part of the parish in Sept. 1968, for the purpose of encouraging the exchange and formulation of opinions and their implementation in the Catholic and non-Catholic community.

Under the direction of Msgr. Coburn, the parish in 1969 set out on a \$240, 000 school improvement plan. The goals of which were subsequently achieved.

In Sept. 1969, Father Swagin at his request was transferred to Newark so he could devote his efforts towards the inner city program.

Herron Hall was opened on November 5th, 1969 and has since become the center of parish and school activities.

Further demonstrating his concern for Catholic education Msgr. Coburn in 1970 inovated a plan whereby, the fathers of children attending St. Thomas School took thir turn in donating about 3 hours of thair time each night for five nights out of the school year to clean the school building. The money saved a as a result of this volunteer cleaning program has been utilized to improve and enhance Catholic education at St. Thomas School.

February 1970 found the Parish Council Constitution being adopted and affording the parish an organized means of promoting dialogue as a method of expressing the needs of our Christian Community.

Also, in Feb. 1970 Father Vincent Doyle was assigned to our parish an a part time basis to assist our priests in addition to his principal responsibility as Secretary and Defender of the Bond at the Matrimonial Tribunal in the Newark Archdiocese.

The growth of St. Thomas School was evident with the opening of Magnier Library in 1970 which expanded the previously limited library facilities by offering the students more than 8,000 volumes and a seating capacity for 70 students.

In 1970 Fish came to St. Thomas'. It was launched by a group of individuals in the parish having a concern, love and a wish to serve all people in Bloomfield and Glen Ridge requesting assistance in time of need.

~~The Adult Education Program was held at St. Thomas Parish in 1970~~ The adults of St. Thomas Parish were provided with the opportunity to reexamine and advance their knowledge and understanding of Christ and his doctrine through the inauguration in 1970 of the Adult Education Program.

Recognizing the importance of a happy marriage, St. Thomas Church served as the host parish in June of 1971 by presenting a pre-Cana program offered to all couples contemplating entering the sacrament of matrimony both in and outside of our parish. Because of the enthusiastic response on the part of both the married couples at St. Thomas acting as discussion leaders and the number of unmarried couples ~~at St. Thomas~~ attending, the program was given again in November 1971 and will be presented in June 1972.

Keeping pace with the advancement of modern day education trends St. Thomas School in 1971 included chemistry in its school curriculum through the utilization of a newly acquired portable lab and science room.

As part of the Deacon Internship Program Rev. Robert Miller was temporarily assigned in 1971 to our parish.

In 1971 at a time when unemployment was at its peak due to a poor economy we witnessed the formation of the Parish Employment Council by a group of individuals who endeavored to locate jobs for those parishioners who were unemployed.

Finances are vital to the operation of any parish and consequently additional sources of revenue have been developed through newly created fund raising activities. To this end a dedicated group of parishioners have contributed a great deal of time and effort in planning and carrying out such programs as the monthly lottery, the pastoral ball, the mardi gras dance and the summer festival.

In the past couple of years St. Thomas has demonstrated that prayer and good fun are compatible by inaugurating such recreational activities as stoneage basketball, a travel club, and deep sea fishing outings.

We are now at the end of the present and should pause ~~in~~ to evaluate the fruits of our past endeavors and consider whether they would be pleasing in the presence of God. The parish should approach the future intelligently realizing that a church cannot truly love without faith which can only be substained by hope. There is no doubt that for most of us St. Thomas has been a symbol and source of spiritual solace, strength and direction. These attributes could only be achieved when you have a clergy and laity such as ours who contribute their time and resources for all who wish to hear and follow the word of Christ and share in his fruits. It is obvious looking back over the past seven years we have living testimony of a Christian Community at St. Thomas that has given of itself unselfishly. The foundation has been laid and built upon and so long as this Parish retains it charitable virtues, with the help of God, there will be no limits to the spiritual heights it will rise to.

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