

St. Mary Parish 90th Anniversary

A Faith Community in Kenosha, Wisconsin since 1929



Storefront Church at 3810 Roosevelt Rd 1929-1931



St. Mary Church and School 1931



Laying the Corner Stone of Present Church 1950

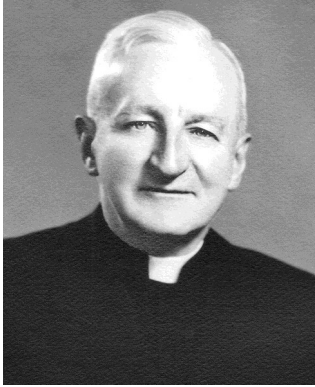


Interior of the Church 2019



Present Church Since 1953

Former Pastors of St. Mary Parish

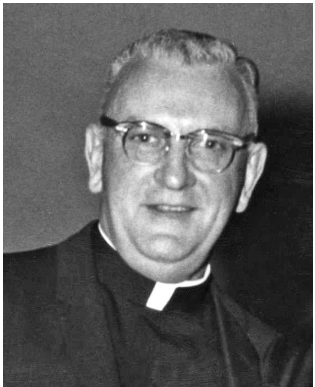


Fr. Raymond Bell, 1st Pastor 1929-1956

Born in Saukville, WI in 1895, Fr. Bell was ordained in 1922. He was appointed the task of establishing a new parish on the southwest side of Kenosha. The parish was named St. Mary in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

Fr. Bell said the first Mass in the temporary church, a storefront on Roosevelt Road, on September 8th, 1929. The first permanent church (our current gym) and school was completed in 1931. The convent was built in 1947. In 1950, construction began on our present church to accommodate the growing parish. The first Mass in our current church was said on Christmas Eve, 1953. Catholic education was a high priority in Fr. Bell's vision for St. Mary's. He expanded St. Mary Grade School to include a high school from 1949 until St. Joseph High School opened in the fall of 1958.

Fr. Bell died in his sleep at St. Mary rectory on August 18th, 1956. He was 61.



Fr. Raymond G. Leng, 2nd Pastor 1956-1971

Born in Portage, WI in 1911, Fr. Leng was ordained in 1936 in Rome. After serving as pastor of Mt. Carmel Parish, he came to St. Mary's in 1956. At that time, the parish faced many financial difficulties. Fr. Leng was the chairman of the Priest Commission for the formation of St. Joseph High School, which opened in the fall of 1958. The parish campus was expanded in 1958 with additions to the school and convent. The first Parish Council was organized in 1965.

Fr. Leng died on December 19th, 1971 at the age of 59 while still serving as pastor.

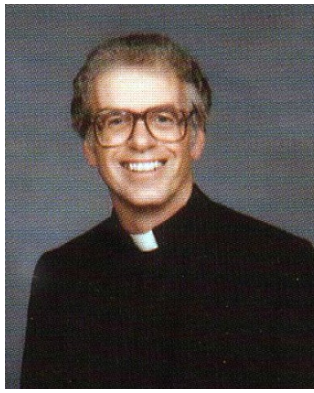


Fr. John Michael Murphy, 3rd Pastor 1972-1983

Born in Milwaukee on June 28, 1919, Fr. Murphy, known for his big Irish smile and warmth, was ordained in September of 1945.

He continued to implement the changes in the Mass that Vatican II instituted. Lay men and women took on a more active role in the liturgy. The Parish Council became a dynamic policy-making board that helped Fr. Murphy run the parish. During his tenure, St Mary's welcomed its first two permanent deacons, Ron Lesjak and Jim Francois. To commemorate the parish's Golden Jubilee, the church was remodeled in 1979.

Fr. Murphy was transferred to St. Alphonsus in Greendale, in 1983. He died on July 2, 2007 at the age of 88.



Fr. Gerald Brittain, 4th Pastor 1983-1995

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Fr. Jerry was ordained in 1962. After serving as an associate at St. Mary's since 1976, Fr. Jerry, known for his love of basketball, peanut butter and blue socks, became our 4th pastor in 1983.

He had a keen sense of discerning people's talents and encouraging them to share their gifts for the good of the parish community. In 1993, he graciously gave permission for St. Mary's to house the homeless on a weekly basis as part of the Shalom Center's INNS program. This ministry continued until the new permanent Shalom site was opened in September of 2017.

Fr. Jerry was transferred in June of 1995 to become pastor of Holy Angels Parish in West Bend, WI. He retired at the age of 80 in 2017.

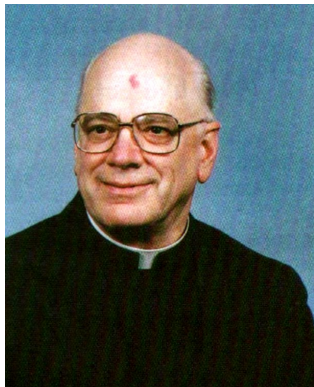


Fr. Howard Haase, 5th Pastor 1995-2000

Fr. Howard was raised on a farm in northwest Dodge County. He was ordained in 1983 and came to St. Mary's from Holy Name Parish in Wilmot, WI. He was known for his passionate preaching.

During Fr. Howard's tenure, an elevator was installed, making the church handicap accessible; the steps in front of the church were replaced; and a new roof was installed on the school and gym. Deacon Wilson Shierk was ordained as our third permanent deacon on June 1st, 1996. On July 9th, 2000, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and St. Mary Parish officially merged.

On July 30, 2000, Fr. Howard was transferred and became pastor of St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in Union Grove, WI.



Fr. Thomas LeMieux, Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas 1992-2000

For two and a half years, the parish merger task force, under the leadership of Fr. Tom and Fr. Howard, worked to bring together the parishes of St. Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas. The task force adopted action plans, established sub-committees, prepared days of reflection, and monitored established procedures to insure a merger of these two faith-filled communities. While the newly combined parish retained the name St. Mary, it reflected the thoughts, traditions, and history of both parishes.

Fr. LeMieux retired in July 2000 and resides in Milwaukee.



Fr. Michael Newman, 6th Pastor 2000-2012

Born and raised in Racine, WI, Fr. Mike was ordained in 1969. He came to St. Mary's in 2000 from St. Mary's Parish in Waukesha. Fr. Mike continued to work out merger challenges and foster cluster and collaborative efforts among Kenosha parishes. Fr. Mike directed church renovations, which included air conditioning, a new ceiling, refinished wood, and other improvements.

In more recent years, Fr. Mike made additional changes to the church—pews, altar space, the location of the choir. The most important innovation was the creation of a beautiful baptismal font which stands at the entrance of the church.

Fr. Mike was pastor until his retirement in 2012. This past June, the parish celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination. In retirement, Fr. Mike continues to be a vital part of the parish.

Deacon Ron, our first permanent deacon, has served at St. Mary since being ordained on June 16th, 1979. He leads the Baptism Preparation Committee, Jail and Prison Ministry, and the Church Landscape Committee, as well as coordinating the Usher Ministry and serving on the Prayer & Worship Committee. He also conducts communion prayer services at a local nursing home twice a month. Ron has been married to Gail for 53 years, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren.



Deacon Jim has served at St. Mary since being ordained on January 23rd, 1983. Jim makes home & hospital visits and prepares our 2nd graders for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. He also conducts communion prayer services at a local nursing home twice a month and is a Truck Stop Chaplain. Jim has been married to Judy for 62 years, has 11 children, 16 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

Deacon Wilson was ordained on June 1, 1996 and has served at St. Mary ever since. He serves as a leader in several ministries: RCIA, Dominican Republic Mission trips, Human Concerns Committee, and St. Vincent De Paul Outreach. He also writes a weekly bulletin column on the scriptures focusing on social justice issues. Wilson has been married to Sylvia for 44 years, has 8 children, and 14 grandchildren.



Fr. Roman Stikel, 7th and Current Pastor 2012-Present

Fr. Roman grew up on the south side of Milwaukee, where he attended St. Josaphat Parish. He was ordained in 1988 and came to St. Mary's on July 1st, 2012 from St. Elizabeth Parish, Kenosha.

Fr. Roman likes to use technology and social media to reach out to parishioners. He encourages hospitality and makes St. Mary's a very welcoming parish.

Dear Parishioners & Friends of St. Mary Parish,

Since 1929, as the writer of the Hebrews has mentioned, there has been a "cloud of witnesses" to the Catholic faith in this part of the city of Kenosha. St. Mary began with a group of parishioners who practiced their faith in a temporary building on Roosevelt Road. That cloud of witness continues to this day with a very large group of faithful people who continue to have their eye on Christ our Savior.

In the year 2000, the people of St. Thomas Parish merged with the people of St. Mary Parish to continue to witness to the Catholic faith and their salvation and the presence of God in their lives. Our time in salvation history is now to Pray, Love, and Believe here at St. Mary.

Peace and Blessings,

Fr. Roman