

HISTORY

The City of Bethlehem in 1954 was growing into what was then called the "Great Northwest", as new housing was under construction throughout the area known as Hanover and Schoenersville straddling the newly opened superhighway named Route 22. Companies such as Bethlehem Steel and Western Electric were attracting new employees and their families to the area.

In response to the need to provide new facilities for religious worship for the increasing number of Catholic families, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on February 11, 1954, authorized the establishment of a new parish to be located at Catasauqua and Kelchner Roads in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The site was a five-acre plot of land, part of the Werner estate, containing only a farmhouse and an old dairy barn.



THE BARN ... before the conversion into a church

Since 1954 was a Marian year, the new parish was named Notre Dame of Bethlehem, Notre Dame meaning Our Lady. Appropriately, it was founded on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Archbishop John F. O'Hara, C.S.C. appointed Rev. Thomas J. Doyle as the first Pastor of Notre Dame.

Archdiocese of Philadelphia
CATHEDRAL OFFICE
1712 SUMMER STREET
PHILADELPHIA 3, PA.

February 15, 1954

Rev. Thomas J. Doyle
SS. Simon and Jude Rectory
731 W. Broad Street
Bethlehem, Lehigh Co., Pa.

My dear Father Doyle:

This morning Archbishop O'Hara instructed me to inform you that you have His Excellency's permission to rehabilitate a barn on your parochial grounds as a suitable place to conduct temporarily Divine Services.

The Archbishop is aware that you are without funds. If you would be so kind as to inform me of the amount required to do the above work, I shall procure the Archbishop's permission to forward the same to you promptly.

I am very happy to inform you of the Archbishop's pleasure that you are on the job so early and trying to provide conveniences for the people.

My fondest wishes for your success!

Greetings for the Marian Year and best wishes!

Very sincerely yours,
Joseph M. Corr
JOSEPH M. CORR

SS. Simon and Jude Rectory
730 West Broad Street
Bethlehem, Penna.

February 16, 1953

Monsignor
Right Reverend Joseph M. Corr
Cathedral Office
1712 Summer Street
Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania

Right Reverend and dear Monsignor:

Thank you for your very kind letter of the other day.

After consulting a contractor and the building inspector of this city I find that I will be in need of about fifteen thousand dollars to accomplish the work required to rehabilitate the barn and farm house on the parish property.

The greater part of this amount will be required to resurface the roof of the barn, install a new ceiling and concrete floor, and erect a sacristy at the rear of the building, a small narthex at the front, and a small steeple.

The farm house will require an addition on the ground level to make it more serviceable as a rectory.

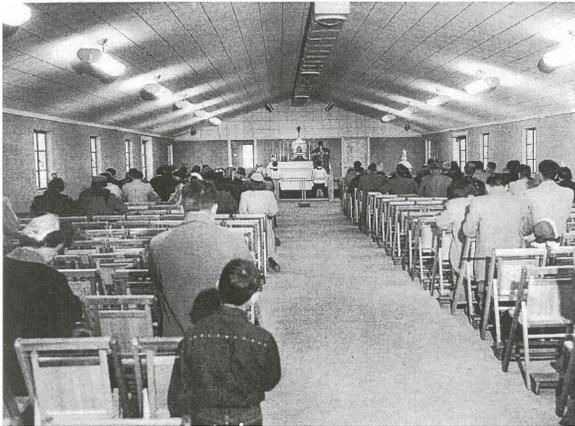
Since gratitude Please accept my *I want to thank you*
sincerely for your very kind and very prompt attention to the inquiries I have made. It makes the burden of the problems at hand very much lighter.

With every best wish, I remain,

Respectfully yours,
Thomas J. Doyle
Thomas J. Doyle

5

Fr. Doyle then visited and enlisted the aid of future members of the newly named parish and a contract was awarded to remodel the barn. The remodeled barn served as a temporary church while a refurbished farmhouse served as a temporary rectory. Two months later on Passion Sunday, April 4, 1954, the first Mass was celebrated by Fr. Doyle in the first church which seated 350.



Services in the “new” church



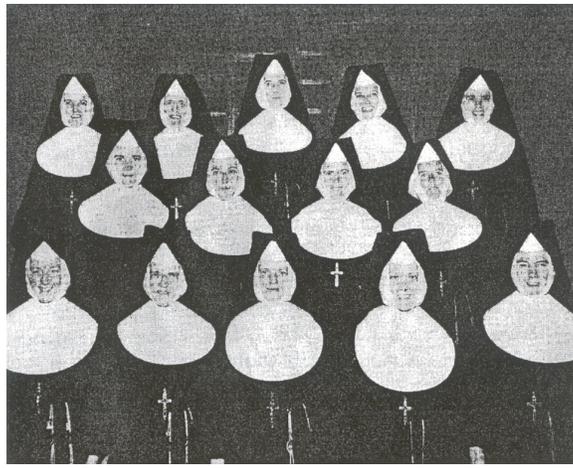
NOTRE DAME OF BETHLEHEM, April 1954



FIRST RECTORY, 1954

By June 1954, 280 families had been registered and by September 1955, the registered families had increased to 430 families, an increase of over 50% in fifteen months.

Noting the need for schools, an elementary school was the first building project which began in September 26, 1954. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill were asked to staff the school and provisions were made by including a convent in the building project.



Sisters of Saint Joseph who staffed the new, enlarged Notre Dame School in 1961

TOP ROW (left to right): Sr. Rose Lorena, Sr. George Aloysius, Sr. Clare Isabella, Sr. Ellen Cornelius, Sr. Rose Edward

CENTER ROW: Sr. Martin Maureen, Sr. John Joseph, Sr. Grace Eileen, Sr. Rita Marian

BOTTOM ROW: Sr. Regina Immaculata, Sr. Catherine Bernard, Mother Regina Angela, Sr. Caroline, Sr. Anna Dennis

Various fundraisers were undertaken, the first of which was a card party held at the Knight of Columbus on May 1954. Another fund raiser was the first Annual Parish Carnival held on August 18-21, 1954 in a rainstorm. Nevertheless, it was a social and financial success.

The plans for the school and convent were approved by the Diocesan authorities and on September 26, 1954, a ground breaking ceremony was held with the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Leo G. Fink officiating. It was estimated that the overall cost was about \$143,000 and it was expected that the school would be ready in time for the 1955-56 school year. The parishioners responded generously to the Building Fund Campaign initiated in October 1954.

On Holy Thursday in 1955, a new Repository, donated by the Holy Name Society, was exhibited in the church. The first Forty Hours Devotion was held on May 1-3, 1955. Most impressive was the attendance by numerous visiting priests and the procession which included the men of the parish. It should be noted that processions in those days used the center aisle, and side doors to the outside of the church and then back in the main doors.

The new school was dedicated by Archbishop O'Hara on September 25, 1955 with Sister Joseph Daniel serving as its first PRINCIPAL for a student population that numbered 240. The teaching faculty of SSJ nuns were temporarily housed at 1905 Catasauqua Road. The new building contained eight classrooms with health room, offices and storage spaces for school supplies. Accommodations would support 400 students and was built to allow for future expansion for a second floor.



NOTRE DAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1955

By 1955, enrollment had risen to 320.



FIRST GRADUATING CLASS, June 1956

STANDING: Donald Bicking, Daniel Rept, Theodore Polansky, Ronald Marich, Peter Beck

SEATED: Marion Halliday, Judith Casey, Fr. Doyle, Georgene Almer, June Clorise

The old farmhouse which served as the temporary rectory had to be demolished to make way for the widening of Catasauqua Road. A new (current) rectory was then built and completed on September 12, 1956.



RECTORY

By 1957, 600 families belonged to the parish and the school enrollment had risen to 400 in the 1958-59 school year. It was decided to add a second floor to the school in the summer of 1957.



NOTRE DAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1958

With the growth of the teaching staff, the construction of a larger and permanent convent building was began in August 1958, and occupied on April,1959.



CONVENT

In 1958, a shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary, under whose patronage the parish was founded, was built by the men of the parish and dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem.



OUR LADY OF BETHLEHEM

On July 1960, ground breaking for a new church was held and the first Sunday Masses were celebrated on June 25, 1961 with a 7:00 AM Mass and the first Solemn High Mass at 12:15 PM.

On January 28, 1969, the Diocese of Allentown was erected separate from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. On February 11, 1961, Bishop Joseph Mark McShea appointed by Pope John XXIII as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown and served until February 3, 1983.

In 1962, Pope John convened the Second Vatican Council which eventually ushered in many liturgical changes.

In 1963, Father Doyle was elevated to Domestic Prelate, with the title of Reverend Monsignor and was among the first group of priests to be so honored in the newly established Allentown Diocese.



Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Doyle, First Pastor

The renovation of the main altar allowing celebrants to face the people was completed in 1969. By April 1970, the new order of the Mass began at Notre Dame.

A significant occasion in the parish history occurred when the \$565,000.00 mortgage was declared paid on October 12, 1971. The occasion was marked by a ceremonial mortgage burning held in the parish Church Hall in November.

In October 18, 1975, a new shrine in honor of Our Lady was dedicated and located in the vestibule of the church and the Baptistry was relocated to the Sanctuary.



SHRINE OF OUR LADY

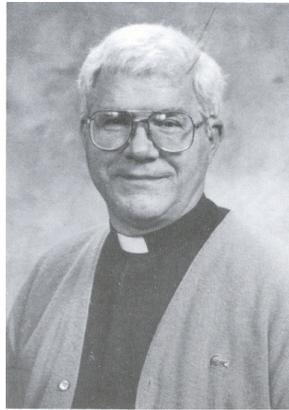
The 25th year was marked with celebrations on February 8-11, 1979.

On February 3, 1983, Bishop Thomas Jerome Welsh was appointed second Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown and served until December 15, 1997.



Bishop Thomas Jerome Welsh, Second Bishop

When Msgr. Doyle retired in 1984, Bishop Thomas J. Welsh, appointed Rev. Frederick J. Loeper as the second pastor of Notre Dame. The parish experienced continued growth in the eighties and nineties giving rise to new parish organizations.



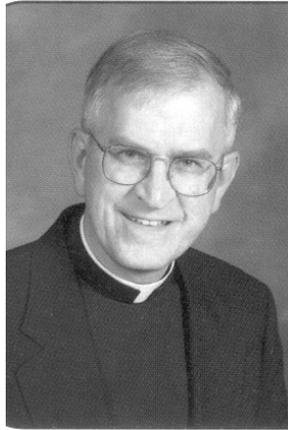
Rev. Frederick J. Loeper, Second Pastor

For the 40th anniversary celebration of the parish, a capital campaign in 1995 gave rise to an annex in the school, the refurbishment of the Church interior, and the addition of a new portico entrance.



NOTRE DAME CHURCH

However, Fr. Loeper was called by our Maker the day after his 68th birthday on August 31, 1996. With Fr. Loeper's passing, Bishop Welsh appointed Rev. Msgr. Joseph E. Kurtz as the third pastor of Notre Dame.



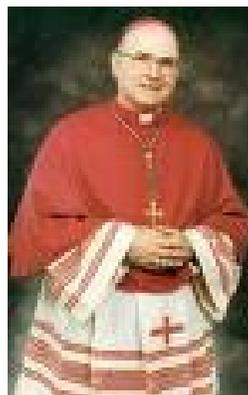
Rev. Msgr. Joseph Edward Kurtz, Third Pastor

On October 1997, the parish belatedly celebrated the 40th anniversary of the parish by rededicating the refurbished church and the dedicated the new annex of the school in memory of Fr. Loeper.



NOTRE DAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1997

On December 16, 1997, Bishop Edward Peter Cullen was appointed third Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown and served until May 27, 2009.



Bishop Edward Peter Cullen, Third Bishop

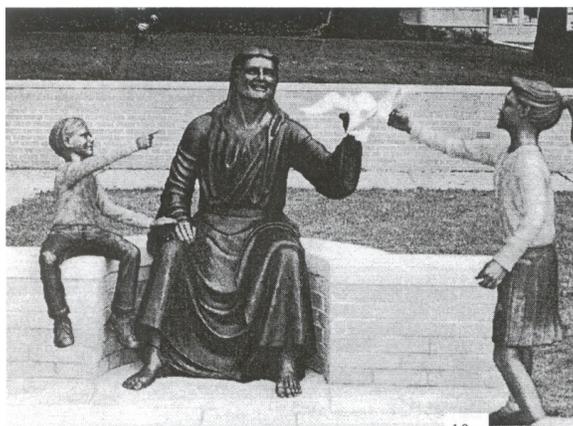
On December 8, 1999, Notre Dame lost Msgr. Kurtz to Knoxville, Tennessee when he was ordained and installed bishop of the Diocese of Knoxville.

Bishop Edward Cullen, third bishop of Allentown, appointed Rev. Msgr. William E. Handges as the fourth pastor of Notre Dame.



Rev. Msgr. William E. Handges, Fourth Pastor

On September 3, 2000, a statue of Jesus with Children was dedicated by Msgr. Richard E. Loeper, Bishop Kurtz, and Msgr. Handges in remembrance of Fr. Loeper.



On November 11, 2000, a special concert was held to dedicate the new Allen Organ which was donated in memory of parishioner Dr. Joseph Zaladonis.



Music Director Mary Green Loch at the new Allen Organ

For Notre Dame's 50th anniversary, Msgr. Handges headed a major and highly successful Diocesan Campaign which resulted in additional physical improvement to the church and the addition to the educational endowment plan. Over 50 years, Notre Dame experienced almost a ten-fold

growth from some 280 families in 1954 to over 2,200 families and more than 5,900 parishioners in 2004. Over the same 50 years, Notre Dame has seen 1,500 weddings, 4,200 baptisms, and some 250 conversions to the Faith. And today, Notre Dame has more than 50 parish organizations.

In June 2005, Bishop Cullen appointed Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Benestad as the fifth pastor of Notre Dame.



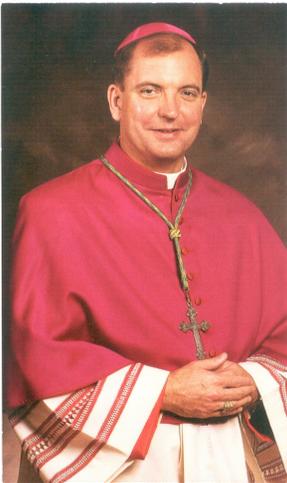
Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Benestad, Fifth Pastor

In February 2007, Msgr. Benestad went on a medical leave and in March 2007, Bishop Cullen appointed Rev. Thomas D. Baddick as administrator and eventually the sixth pastor of Notre Dame. On April 6, 2008, at 4:00 PM, Papal Honors were conferred on Fr. Baddick giving him the title of Reverend Monsignor.



Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Baddick, Sixth Pastor

In 2009 May 27, Msgr. John Oliver Barres was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI and in 2009 July 30, was ordained fourth Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown.



Bishop John Oliver Barres, Fourth Bishop



Diocese of Allentown

19610211 - 19830203	† Bishop John M. McShea
19830203 - 19971215	† Bishop Thomas H. Welsh
19971216 - 20090527	Bishop Edward P. Cullen
20090527 - present	Bishop John O. Barres

Notre Dame of Bethlehem Parish

PASTORS

1954 -1984	† Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Doyle
1984 - 1996	† Rev. Frederick J. Loeper
1996 - 1999	Rev. Msgr. Joseph E. Kurtz (Bishop in 19991208; Archbishop in 20070815)
1999 - 2005	Rev. Msgr. William E. Handges
2005 - 2007	Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Benestad
2007 - present	Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Baddick

ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT PASTORS

1958 - 1961	Rev. Edward W. McElduff
1961 - 1965	† Rev. Msgr. James J. McHale
1962 - 1969	† Rev. William H. Mooney
1965 - 1968	Rev. Msgr. Thomas E. Hoban
1965 - 1969	Rev. Francis T. Gillespie
1969 -1970	Rev. Robert J. Potts
1969 - 1970	† Rev. James J. Agosta
1970 - 1971	† Rev. Thomas M. Courtney
1970 - 1971	Rev. Leo F. Lenick
1971 - 1975	Rev. Edward G. Ganster
1971 - 1972	Rev. Richard C. Mushorn
1973 - 1975	Rev. Steven J. Safko
1975	† Rev. William H. Carter
1975 - 1976	Rev. John J. Denburger
1976 - 1977	† Rev. John G. Pasura

1976 - 1979	Rev. Joseph A. Lukach
1978 - 1979	Rev. William J. Nahn
1978	Rev. Joseph Allan
1979 - 1989	Rev. James J. Morgan
1979 - 1980	Rev. Joseph J. Champion
1980 - 1983	Rev. Stephen J. Radocha
1981 - 1983	Rev. Robert J. McConaghy
1982 - 1983	Rev. Francis P. Schoenauer
1983 - 1991	Rev. David W. Karns
1985 - 1987	Rev. William P. Jones
1989 - 1993	Rev. John A. Frink
1991 - 1992	Rev. Eric J. Gruber
1992 - 1995	Rev. Richard Brensinger
1993 - 1996	Rev. Thomas D. Baddick
1995 - 1997	† Rev. Richard W. Campo
1996 - 2000	Rev. Paul Rothermel
1997 - 2001	Rev. Gregory R. Karpyn
2000 - 2003	Rev. Joseph D. Hulko
2003 - 2004	Rev. Edward J. Essig
2004 - 2009	Rev. Joel E. Kiefer
2009 - 2013	Rev. Patrick Lamb
2013 - 2014	Rev. Jason Stokes
2014 - present	Rev. James Harper

IN RESIDENCE

1954 - 1963	Rev. Henry E. Strassner
?	Rev. John J. Duminiak
?	Rev. Paul L. Bader
?	Rev. Msgr. John A. Rusak
?	Rev. Walter T. Schaeffer
1989 - 2013	Rev. Bernard J. Ezak
2000 - 2005	† Rev. Msgr. John A. Auchter
2005 - present	Rev. Achilles O. Ayaton

PERMANENT DEACONS

1982 - 2001	† Mr. Lemuel B. von Leer
1995 - 2008	† Mr. Richard T. Sewald, Sr.
2006 - 2008	Dr. Hugh M. Carlin
2009 - 2013	Mr. Michael Doncsecz
2014 - present	Mr. William Urbine
2014 - present	Mr. Richard T. Sewald, Jr.

Notre Dame Elementary School

Date of Arrival	SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH (SSJ)
1955	Sr. Joseph Daniel Monaghan (Principal)
	Sr. Gabriel Marie MacDonald
	Sr. Anne Dennis Mara
	Sr. Edward Annice Quigley
1956	Sr. Alma Loretto Murphy
	Sr. Grace Eileen Forke
1957	Sr. Regina Meehan (S. Martin Maureen)

1958 Sr. Regina Immaculata Monaghan
 Sr. Katharine Doyle (S. Maureen de Lourdes)
 Sr. Catherine O'Brien (S. George Aloysius)

1959 Sr. Consolata Maria Dunleavy
 Sr. Ann Massarelli (S. John Joseph)
 Sr. Catherine Bernard Lowe
 Sr. Caroline Pout

1960 Sr. Anne B. Towey (S. Clare Isabelle)
 Sr. Rose Edward Carlin
 Sr. Patrick Francis McCormac
 Sr. Regina Angela Lawler (Principal)
 Sr. Rose Lorena Reilly

1961 Sr. Ellen Murphy (S. Ellen Cornelius)
 Sr. Rita Marian Connell
 Sr. Dorothy Patricia Quinn
 Sr. Clare Regina Cramsey

1962 Sr. Ellen McCarthy (S. Thomas Maureen)
 Sr. Marion Francis
 Sr. Therese Margarite McFadden
 Sr. Alice Elizabeth Moran
 Sr. Saint Hilda Clark

1963 Sr. Elizabeth Mercer (S. Mary Claude)
 Sr. Agnes Genevieve Kelm
 Sr. Miriam Carmelita Romanelli
 Sr. Regina Smith (S. Regina Raphael)

1964 Sr. Mary Patricia Gorman (S. Charles Joseph)
 Sr. Kathryn F. McTague (S. Edward Anglea)
 Sr. Mary Philip Robinson
 Sr. Elizabeth Ann O'Donnell (S. Helena)

1965 Sr. Marcia Ann Gehman (S. Marion William)
 Sr. Elizabeth Tomblor (S. Marie Eulalia)
 Sr. James Gertrude Millett
 Sr. Therese Gertrude Dougherty

1966 Sr. Marian Agnes Pearson
 Sr. Catherine T. Henry (S. Joseph Catherine)
 Sr. Ruth M. Snyder (S. Ann Agnes - Principal)

1967 Sr. Dolores C. Byrne (S. Catherine Edward)
 Dr. Dolores Burkhardt (S. Stella Joseph)
 Sr. Mary Esther Lee (S. Dorothy Therese)
 Sr. Mary Theresa Holmes (S. Margaret Fidelis)
 Sr. Miriam James McGovern
 Sr. Veronica Mary Batley (S. Dorothy Joseph)

1968 Sr. Veronica Anne Kaiser (S. Alice Veronica)
 Sr. Berenice Adams
 Sr. Diana H. Cerchio (S. Charles Christopher)
 Sr. Rita Therese Kehoe
 Sr. Christine Marie Farrel

1969 Sr. William Stanislaus White (Principal)
 Sr. Josephine Marie Tray (S. Mary Maud)

1970 Sr. Karen Marie Doyle (S. Denise Anne)

1971	Sr. Anne Patricia Meyers (S. Patrick Christine) Sr. Roseanne Orchon (S. Joseph Rosemary) Sr. Elizabeth Bowden (S. William Kathleen)
1972	Sr. Patricia Ann Brennan (S. Robert Loretta) Sr. Marie Francine O'Brien (S. Gerald Francine) Sr. Mary Ursula Lockhart
1973	Sr. Diana Stone (S. Florence Peter) Sr. Angela Hemler (S. Miriam Angela - Principal)
1974	Sr. Roberta Hoolahan (S. Roberta) Sr. Ann Marie Crowley (S. William Annice) Sr. Paul Christin van Thuyme Sr. Leah M. Jones (S. Mary Eunice)
1976	Sr. Deborah Lyn Miller Sr. Alma Patricia Giles
1977	Sr. Regina Consuela Kropp Sr. Maria Bernadette Zakreski
1978	Sr. Marianne C. Whelan (S. Mary Isabella) Sr. Mary Hugh Murphy
1979	Sr. Loretta Kathleen McGuckin Sr. Karen Anderson
1980	Sr. Saint Esther Ryan Sr. Dorothy Wilkinson (S. Vincent Martha)
1981	Sr. Helen Madara (S. Mary Palma) Sr. Mary Adalbert Chiswalk
1982	Sr. Mary of the Nativity McNamara Sr. Ann Sweeney (S. Regina Muriel) Sr. Marie Patricia O'Hagan
1984	Sr. Audrey Butler (S. Saint Madeline)
1986	Sr. Carol Ann Polack (S. Laura Edward - Principal) Sr. Mary O'Donnell (S. Michael Raymond)
1987	Sr. Eileen Kean (S. Thomas Dorothy) Sr. Mary Elizabeth Guyer (S. Margaret Eugenie - Principal) Sr. William Cecelia Whelan
1988	Sr. Ann Walter McAllister Sr. Rita Miriam McDonald Sr. Marie Lawrence Robinson
1990	Sr. Patricia Cullen (S. Joseph Raphael - Principal) Sr. Anita Joseph Wagner
1992	Sr. Virginia Stephanie Bator
1993	Sr. Marie Saint Mark McGrillis Sr. Mary Agnes Foy
1994	Sr. Marion A. Pfaff (S. Adelina)

LAY PRINCIPAL

? - 2006	Mrs. Christine Schwab
2006 - present	Mrs. Kathy Maziarz

Notre Dame Convent - SSJ In Residence

1976	Sr. Alma Patricia Giles
1978	Sr. Marianne D. Whelan
1979	Sr. Cecile Anne Reiley Sr. Rosemarie Lorenz
1980	Sr. Mary Elizabeth Kendall

1982	Sr. Catherine Loyola Tasker Sr. Marie Bernadette Conley Sr. Marie Adelbert Chiswalk
1984	Sr. Mary McCarron
1985	Sr. Mary Louise Piccone Sr. Francis Celine Bennett Sr. Marie Saint Mark McGrillis
1988	Sr. Saint Urban O'Donnell Sr. Mary Esdras Allwein Sr. Anne B. Towey
1993	Sr. Mary Audrey O'Connor Sr. Francis Dolores Meyers
1995	Sr. Frances Bernadette Dolan Sr. Eleanor Mary Bringenberg Sr. John Bernard Gallagher
1996	Sr. Elizabeth Agnes Zubaly Sr. Agnes Mary Foy
1997	Sr. Alice Loretto Brennan Sr. Elizabeth Ochs
2000	Sr. Mary Audrey O'Connor Sr. Eleanor Therese Day
2001	Sr. Jane Day Sr. Marion L. Steiner
2002	Sr. Agnes Leona Arnold Sr. Saint Urban O'Donnell
June 2008	CONVENT CLOSED

