

Blessed Sacrament Parish

Kenmore, New York

Parish History

Some parishioners of St. Joseph Parish had a vision to have a church in their neighborhood. After seeing enough petitions, Bishop Turner agreed to make a priest available for Mass if the people could come up with a suitable location.



The vision of the early parishioners bore fruit in October, 1929 when Bishop Turner assigned Father Michael Fitzgerald as the first pastor of the new parish. Father Fitzgerald chose the name "Blessed Sacrament" for the new parish because of his devotion to Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. †

Father Fitzgerald celebrated his first Mass for the newly formed parish on December 8, 1929 in the Kenilworth Fire Hall. A portable altar was built by the parishioners and an old organ had been donated by Father Klauder, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church. Thanks to neighbors, the altar and organ were kept in nearby homes during the week and then rolled down Hawthorne Avenue to the **Church** on Sundays.

Since the purpose of the parish was to bring the Word and the Sacraments to the people, ground breaking for a combination church and school took place on April 16, 1930.

On September 7, 1930, 112 students were able to attend a four room school. These students were taught by the sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

Despite the Depression the parishioners contributed \$3,200. To purchase the land, a whole block, 700 feet by 250 feet between Claremont and Wendel Avenues and from Chelsea to Berkley. Father Fitzgerald assumed a mortgage of \$72,000. when his first Sunday collection was only \$22.60 and a raffle of a bushel of potatoes brought in \$5.00.

While Father Fitzgerald was not too fond of parish organizations, he saw the need for the Altar Society, Holy Name and the Boy Scouts; a far cry from the many organizations in the parish today.

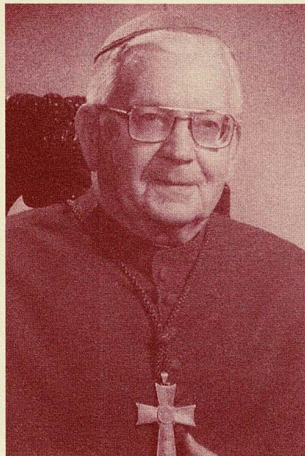
The rest of the story of the 30's can be summed up with Father Fitzgerald's many trips up and down the streets in his car to bring children to school, his battles with the banks, his contagious Irish humor and a parish that would not give up.

The era following World War II saw the start of a building program that would not end until 1979. In 1948 the church was expanded from a seating capacity of 360 to 860; there was a need for 13 classrooms and by 1950 this was not enough. A Primary Building with 6 classrooms was build and grew to 12 by 1959. In September 1972 the Felician Sisters came to Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur had left the school for other missions.

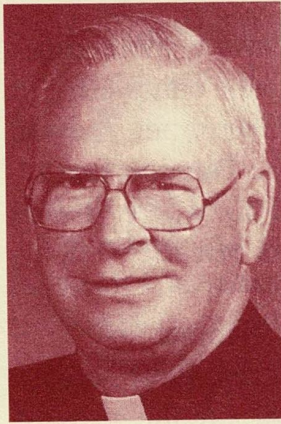
The original rectory had to be replaced with a more functional building and the present rectory was completed in 1950. The old rectory which stood on Claremont Avenue adjacent to the present one, was sold to the Dundon family. The house was moved to an open field to where it still stands on the corner of Wendel and Chelsea Streets.

A temporary church was built in time to celebrate Christmas Mass in 1959 and served the parish until August 1978, when it was closed to begin work on the present church. The need for a multi-purpose parish hall and gym versus that for a new church generated many heated discussions. In the end, the decision to build the parish center proved to be a wise one. The new church was again a dream.

Father Michael Fitzgerald served as Pastor for 32 years until ill health forced him to retire in 1960.

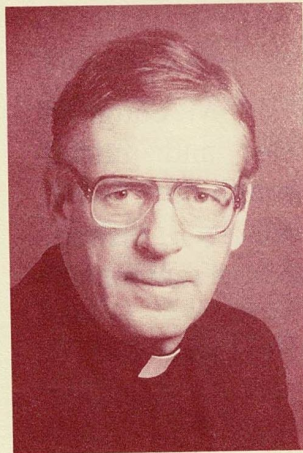


Monsignor Bernard J. McLaughlin was our second pastor and guided Blessed Sacrament through the 1960's. While here, he was ordained a bishop. He remained at Blessed Sacrament until January, 1972.



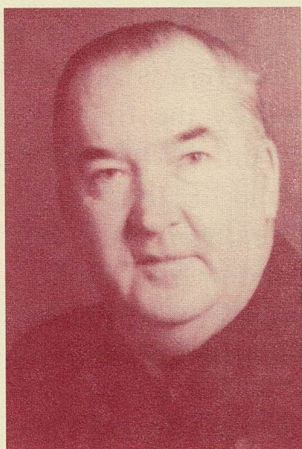
Father George Cotter was named pastor of Blessed Sacrament in January 1972. Having been an assistant at Blessed Sacrament for 16 years, he was well aware of the parish dream of a permanent church. In the fall of 1977 pledges amounting to over \$300,000. enabled him to go forward with plans for a new Church. A ground breaking ceremony was held on June 18, 1978. ✝

Community spirit soared as parishioners watched each step of construction. The church was dedicated by Bishop Edward D. Head on April 4, 1979. Bishop Head returned to Blessed Sacrament on March 16, 1980 for the solemn dedication of the church. The church was completely paid for and the congregation proudly participated in the ceremonial rites. Father Cotter saw his dream and that of the parish become a reality. He died two months later, on May 17, 1980.



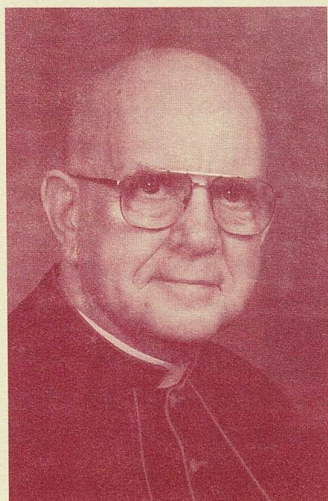
In July 1980, Rev. Robert G. Ochs became pastor. Father Ochs carried out other wishes of Father Cotter. One of these wishes was to find a home for the sisters. A home was purchased on Edgewood Avenue and is used as a convent. A carillon bell system was dedicated as a memorial to Father Cotter on May 17, 1982. Father Ochs became terminally ill in the fall of 1984 and died November 7, 1984. ✝

Another great loss for Blessed Sacrament Parish.



Bishop Head appointed Rev. Donald R. Hughes Pastor in January, 1985. Father Hughes had served in many positions for the Diocese of Buffalo and was Pastor of St. Stephen's Church in Grand Island before his assignment to Blessed Sacrament. †

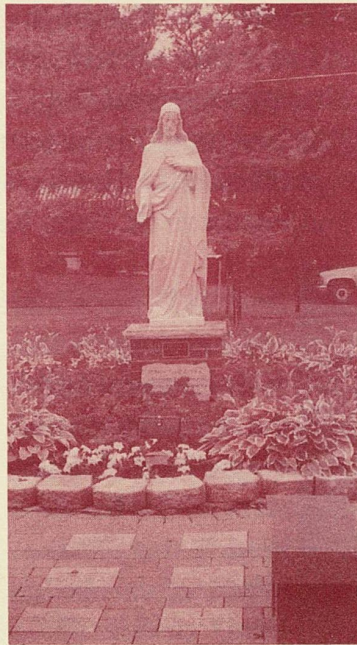
Monsignor Robert K. Golombek became the sixth pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish on December 1, 1990. Before becoming Pastor, Father Bob served as Associate Director of Buildings and Properties for the Diocese of Buffalo, was Chairman of the Diocesan Building Commission, a member of the Liturgical Commission, Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee, a member of the Clergy Personnel Board, an Auditor of the Marriage Tribunal and Pastor of St. John Kanty Parish.



In 1983 he founded and ran the Mother Angela Dining Room for the poor of east Buffalo with the help of the Felician Sisters. At the beginning of his Pastorate at Blessed Sacrament, Father Bob began Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament each Wednesday. In June of 1993 Bishop Head dedicated the Divine Mercy Chapel in which Divine Mercy Devotions are held weekly.

In December 2002, Father Bob established the Divine Mercy Clinic and the Parish Nurse Program. This program is funded by the Pantano Sisters Trust Fund and directed by the first Nurse Practitioner of the Felician Sisters Congregation. In December of 2003, Bishop Mansell appointed Father Bob to his third term as Pastor of Blessed Sacrament. In recent years, two trust funds have been established for Catholic Education; the Harold & Marion Diebold School Scholarship Trust and the Robert & Mary Masterson Trust. These funds will help educate children from Elementary School through College.

In the past 14 years the parish has grown spiritually under his guidance and physically and financially stronger.



*History from Welcoming Booklet by Sr. Suzanne Kush, CSSF.

More to come soon!