

Parish History--The Church of St. Anne

Following World War II the Mon Valley was busy adjusting to a peacetime economy, rationing had ended, the troops came home and families were anxious to return to normal. Among the priorities were getting back to work, receiving an education, having a family and building a new house. The wide open spaces of Rostraver Township were a clarion call to leave the city and go to the country, and many families answered the call. This migration to the countryside changed the demographics of the Township and placed new demands on the future expansion.

On May 20, 1951, Pope Pius XII created the Diocese of Greensburg by portioning the Pittsburgh Diocese and naming The Most Reverend Bishop Hugh L. Lamb as its first Bishop. This had an impact on Rostraver Township for it had no Catholic Church or an identity as a single community. Out of this isolation, St. Anne Parish and Holy Cross Mission became a reality.

Shortly after the creation of the Diocese of Greensburg, interested Catholics in Webster petitioned the Bishop to create a new parish in Webster and to assign a pastor. One of the first acts of Bishop Lamb after his installation on January 16, 1952, was to resolve the request for a new parish. On May 23, 1952, after a study by diocesan officials, Bishop Lamb approved the construction of a mission church in Webster. On March 1, 1953, Father Joseph A. Gajdosik from Holy Name Church in Monessen celebrated the first Mass in the Webster Dairy Bar. The residents of Webster worked to build the Holy Cross Church, a small but beautiful edifice for the community.

This did not stop John Yakubic and Chester Duda from continuing their petition for a mother church in the Fellsburg area. After several petitions and visits to the Bishop, they convinced him that the growing community was in need of a church. As new residents moved into the area, they continued to go to the church in their last community or, like the local residents, went to local Catholic churches in Donora, West Newton, Smithton, Monessen or Belle Vernon. Their efforts were rewarded when the Bishop approved the new parish and the first Mass was offered in the barn garage on the Kuma and Sabo farm on March 7, 1954, about one year after the Webster mission started.

This first step was a small stride towards the giant steps needed to establish a parish with a church. Reverend Gajdosik and his assistants, Fathers John M. Sabol, Stephen J. Drab, and Henry J. Marcinek continued to serve the community. But as the community grew, so did the demand for larger, more adequate space for Mass. A move to the Lebanon School for a short time provided some help in the spiritual needs of the new parish. Eager to make the parish flourish, the James Sabo and George Kuma and Joseph Kuma families erected a Quonset hut on their farm to be used as a temporary church. In an emotional way the first Mass was offered at Midnight, December 25, 1954. As Christ was born in a humble stable on that day 2000 years ago, Saint Anne Parish had its first reality on its way of becoming a formal parish, a reality realized three years later.

Thinking back, perhaps it was truly the handy work of God that brought an array of strangers together under one small and simple roof. Each month in those days brought new members to St. Anne Parish, this being the era of the post war exodus of people from the cities to the suburbs. It was in this crowded hut that strong bonds of friendship were cemented that provided the stimulus and motivation for the new congregation to construct a new church. As I remember, it was impossible to disappear after Mass as the parking lot had a single entrance and sufficient space only when cars were parked bumper to bumper. Because of this, everyone lingered at the church waiting their turn to move their car, and in these interludes St. Anne Parish truly became a united congregation.

St. Anne Parish was permanently established with the appointment of Father Andrew F. Hredzak as pastor of St. Anne and Holy Cross churches on July 3, 1957. Within a month, two Masses were offered to accommodate the growing Parish. The Quonset hut was approved to house the Blessed Sacrament making it truly the House of God, and daily Mass was offered throughout the week. With the liturgy established, the hard work starting from scratch to build a new church was under way.

Fr. Gajdosik, anticipating the huge task ahead, appointed the first Church Building Committee to guide the future of the new Parish. This is a time to remember those who, through their devotion and loyalty to God and their Church, helped bring us to the magnificent edifice devoted to St. Anne. For those no longer with us, may they be remembered in Heaven for their good works, and the living, our deepest appreciation for caring about the future of the church in Rostraver: George Dolnack, Oswald Dolfi, Chester Duda, Paul Farkosh, Dino Forlini, Charles Kaifes, George Kuma, Joe Kuma, Raymond Lacovicz, Frank Mizikar, Joseph Pasierb, Michael Rorke, John Yakubic and John Zollars. It was not long before the newest stranger was recruited and involved in the effort to build a new church.

With direction from The Most Reverend Bishop, the task of locating an appropriate site for the new church building was eagerly under way. Several sites were reviewed by the Church Building Committee, Diocesan Building Commission and consulting engineers. The present site was recommended and chosen by the Diocesan officials. The generous gift of the land was made by Mr. and Mrs. John Yakubic, 9.4 acres on Willowbrook Road. Richard B. Benn was chosen with the approval of the Chancery to design the church and rectory. On July 31, 1961, the Most Reverend William G. Connare officiated at the solemn ground blessing ceremonies of the new church site.

During the intervening years, the Christian Mothers and the Holy Name Society activities, along with church collections, had amassed a building fund of \$100,000.00. After numerous enjoyable Sunday communion breakfasts at Celapino's Stone Castle, the Church Building Committee and the Holy Name Society set up a fund drive in the Fall of 1961. The campaign directed by Dr. Arthur Varga and Dr. Regis Serinko resulted in collecting \$75,000.00 in pledges from the 160 families that then made up the congregation. This demonstration of effort and support on the part of the people led to the awarding of the contract in February, 1962, to Bendix Construction Company of Uniontown to construct the church.

Under the watchful eye of Fr. Hredzak, the daily work of the contractor soon took the shape of the new church. The excavation began in April, 1962, and Bishop Connare officiated at the laying of the cornerstone on February 24, 1963. The official dedication of the new modern church occurred on June 21, 1963. During construction, a new parish house was designed and built adjacent to the church. One must note this was not an extra, but a needed requirement for the pastor. Those who can remember will recall that we did not lavish luxury on the pastor. During this period, his home was the care taker's house at Sweeney's Restaurant.

It is true that history is the record of the acts of people and nature, and the unselfish devotion and effort of the people of this Parish is evidenced everywhere. Whether it was the donation of money, time or labor, this beautiful accomplishment could not have been achieved without every gift, large or small. The reward for this surely rests in equal proportions in the satisfaction of having contributed in some small share in God's work, which is its own reward. The final cost of construction was \$ 375,000.00 with a remaining debt of \$191,000.00.

The happiness of this achievement could be felt throughout the Parish. Sunday masses were happy occasions and a time for friendly meetings. Fr. Hredzak with his love of pomp and ceremony made holiday services sound like the Papal Mass in St. Peter's in Rome. It was not long after his pastorate that the rafters of the Church trembled from the resounding song that he patiently encouraged in congregational singing. It was rumored that we sang so sweet and loud enough for Pope John XXIII to hear.

The interior of the church abounds in religious and historical symbolism. Designed in beautiful stained-glass windows, statues and rich appointments, which blend into a symphony of serenity and beauty, one can imagine the captivating aura of Paradise while attending Mass. Observing the windows when you enter the Church, you are surrounded by symbolic prayer so magnificently portrayed by the artful rendering of biblical history and the very special meaning that it has to your faithful worship.

As this display of beauty and love are gifts of God, so is good humor. I could not go on without relating an event that at the moment seemed a tragedy, but today is remembered as a comedy of errors. Soon after the Church was completed, the Catholic Church was well on its way into the ecumenical movement. St. Anne Church, the newest Church, was selected by District-Six Holy Name to be the first Church to have an Open House for the general community. Our Christian Mothers and Holy Name Society, together with the Church Building Committee and Fr. Hredzak, planned this occasion for the Mon Valley. We were anxious that everyone could come to see our beautiful new Church. Invitations were prepared and sent to all denominational churches, Catholic, Protestant and Methodist, as well as Jewish synagogues. The best silver, crystal and china services owned by the parishioners were collected. The ladies brought their best linens and prepared their best recipes for the reception. The reception was arranged like a display at Tiffany & Co. in New York or Harrods in London; the finest of everything in the Parish was on display. On that Sunday afternoon, the men came in their best suits, white shirts and ties, and the ladies in their finest chiffons and white gloves. As an old saying goes, "We were putting on the ritz."

The guests arrived on time in great numbers to share with us this gem of a house of worship. God, however, must have sensed our overzealous pride for, at the time of the reception, He sent a tremendous rain storm down on us. In just a moment the Church basement was flooded with water and mud and the water was running under the kitchen door and down the basement stairs. Can you imagine the scene that followed this catastrophe--Fr. Hredzak and the men with their pant legs rolled up to their knees, in their bare feet, mopping up the mud and water as it continued to pour in; the ladies in their chiffon with mop and broom trying to hold back the flood. In about one-half hour, the flood was contained because the summer storm ceased. We returned back to entertaining our guests with dampened spirits, a little more humble at heart and a firm conviction to shoot the contractor when he should set foot on Parish grounds.

July 12, 1964, was a great day because we had shared with our friends from the larger community our achievement--St. Anne Church. If we have forgotten the events of that day, we should remember that God was telling us that things of the Spirit are more important than our material achievements that we had so carefully prepared. Knowing Fr. Hredzak very well, under his serious composure was a keen sense of humor. I believe that in his place in heaven he is looking down and is amused at the trivial events of life that teach us that tragedy is momentary but joy is everlasting.

As we review the course of events on what makes a viable congregation and successful parish, it is the participation that brings it to life. Nearly every man, woman and child were available to carry out the tasks around the Church, whether it be digging ditches, painting walls, selling tickets or cooking spaghetti or chicken dinners to raise money or cut costs.

In August, 1965, the Bishop decided that since Fr. Hredzak had completed his mission at St. Anne Church, the establishment of the Parish and the building of the Church, Father was transferred to St. Mary Church in Brownsville. Over the years, many priests served the Parish. What we learned is that each priest, like all of us, have human yearnings and interests, strengths and weaknesses, and are no more capable of being all things to all people than we are capable of pleasing all people. Certainly, the priest's efforts are far more divided, since his family is all of us, with our quarks and some time-irrational demands. And above all, their eternal commitment to serve God to the best of their abilities deserves the respect, love, and service of all of the parishioners.

In September, 1965, Bishop Connare appointed Fr. Francis L. Lesniak as the second Pastor of St. Anne Church. Those that recall him will remember that Father was athletic and liked to ski, and on an occasion he was seen riding around the Parish on his Honda motorcycle. His interest in sports was used to develop successful Parish programs for the youth. The ball field and little league baseball was one of the first projects. In this same month, Boy Scout Troop 1590 was organized. Serving as scoutmaster, I can recall the long hikes and the camp-outs in winter, which the boys thought were great. Father's interest and concern for children brought the children closer to the Church and Church activities. Baseball and basketball were soon added to the program.

During those years we had a priest in residence, Fr. Anthony F. Rakauskas a former Chicago physician who, following the death of his wife, entered the priesthood. He is remembered as a very gentle and compassionate person. Father was with us a short time; he died July 12, 1966. The Parish experienced its first burial of a priest in the Parish.

An occasion that created some excitement was the purchase of a new organ for the Church. The Holy Name Society had two great ticket sellers, Ralph Dominic and George Estok, who were always looking for a project. The Holy Name Society raised \$3,600.00 for the purchase. What we did not realize was that there were eight young people taking organ lessons, and they all wanted to be the Church organist. The problem was solved by giving all of them some time at the organ.

Father Lesniak will be remembered as a good priest who cared for God's children, old and young alike.

In June, 1969, Fr. Francis M. Ott was appointed pastor. He was an immaculate man, self disciplined, a scholar and a good administrator. Fr. Ott was the right man, at the right time, and took his responsibilities seriously in liturgically implementing the changes in Vatican Council II. His knowledge and priestly style were definite assets in getting those involved in the consultative process of the Church. It took a strong leader and humane listener to gradually involve the laity in responsible Church governance for St. Anne and Holy Cross Mission. Vatican II also brought forth the lectors, cantors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and the change from Latin to the vernacular in celebrating liturgy. Some of the original ministers continue to serve.

During Fr. Ott's pastorate, Fr. Apolinary Murawski, a refugee who was in Poland during the purge of the Catholic Church by the German Army in World War II, assisted him. A very slight and energetic man who liked to sip tea and remember the "Old Country," Father Murawski was given a new assignment in 1972. For a short period, Monsignor John L. Conway resided here and provided priestly assistance to the Parish. Fr. Ott's pastorate ended at this time, and he was reassigned in June, 1974.

In that same month, we received a new Pastor, Fr. Thomas B. Bayne. Besides having a degree in Cannon Law, he had a deep interest and love of sacred music and channeled much of his musical love on re-energizing the Church Choir. During this time, members of the Choir were located in the Church sanctuary. Through the generosity of the Holy Name Society, choir robes were purchased. The Choir exercised their ministry at the 11:00 a.m. weekend Mass, and special cantatas were prepared for the Christmas and Easter seasons. The talent and capability of our Choir was often recognized by the community, and by invitation they sang at other churches in the valley. The reputation of this group led to their being the nucleus of the all denominations choirs that performed for the Rostraver Township Bicentennial Program at Cedar creek Park. A television tape was made of a special Mass for public service. How blest the Parish has been to do extraordinary acts through song and praise in giving glory to God.

Another new experience in the Parish was the assignment of Deacon James M. Goldberg to serve his deacon internship prior to his ordination on May 1, 1976. His close friendship to the Parish was acknowledged when he requested the choir to participate in his first Mass at Ss. Simon and Jude Parish in Blairsville.

Pope Paul VI declared 1975 the Holy Year. In the Roman Catholic tradition a Holy Year, or Jubilee, is a great religious event. It is a year of forgiveness of sins. It is a year of reconciliation between adversaries, of conversion, of receiving the sacrament of reconciliation and, consequently, of solidarity, hope, justice, commitment to serve God with joy and in peace with our brothers and sisters. A Jubilee Year is, above, all, the Year of Christ who brings life and grace to humanity. A year of debt forgiveness was announced by Bishop Connare where parishes who owed the Diocese money would receive a dollar for a dollar payback. Father Bayne ask Dr. Regis Serinko to form a committee and to reduce the church debt of \$93,598.81 on the mortgage and approximately \$15,000 on other accumulated debt. After the Parish was informed of the project, the Christian Mothers, Holy Name Bingo Committee and the voluntary Reconciliation Committee went to work. The Parish was very eager to donate to this debt. In addition a financial reserve was established for future needs. With the mortgage paid, the Parish rejoiced in their liberation. They are the rock on which the church flourishes. We were grateful that we had received all of the blessings of the Holy Year. Due to health reasons, Fr. Bayne was placed on sick leave and decided to leave the Parish.

During the interim Fr. James M. Petonic was assigned as the administrator of the Parish. During that time, Holy Cross Mission was placed under the charge of Holy Name Church of Monessen.

In May, 1976, Father Renato F. Gianni was named Pastor and remained with us until his retirement in 1992. The best description of this kindly man is that he was a romanticist who viewed the world through rose-colored glasses, just the kind of pastor needed at this time to integrate the growing congregation where the new members were out numbering the old established families—a time when the responsibilities were shared between the old and young alike. Father will always be remembered by his motto, “*God loves you and so do I.*” He really meant it. The St. Anne Novena and picnic on the Church grounds vibrated with his operatic rendition of “*Oh Marie.*” It truly could be said no one enjoyed the Parish family get-together more than Father Gianni. He was a good man and God blessed him with the vision to see everyone as children of God and to shepherd His flock.

Among the many events that occurred under Fr. Gianni was the celebration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Parish on September 2, 1979. As I was honored to be asked to speak at the dinner, I thought I should tailor the talk to Father’s good sense of humor. I had recently returned from a trip to Rome where we had an extensive private tour of St. John Lateran Church, and what I saw prompted my comments. In the central nave, recessed in niches of the pillars, are massive statues of the twelve apostles, sculpted by the students of Bernini in the 16th century. Twelve feet tall and delicately carved, one is soon

captivated by the faces of the apostles in which you can find the expressions of all human emotions; love, anger, piety, happiness, sadness, serenity, doubt, faith, sacrifice and martyrdom. These great men of the Church were mere humans, capable of all of the strengths and weaknesses that each of us possess, to whom Christ had entrusted the establishment and growth of the Catholic Church. As these thoughts ran through my mind, I reflected on the events of our own little Church and how it came into being. As I remembered we, too, had the experiences of all of these human emotions; love, desire, anger, hope, doubt, sadness, happiness and sacrifice and, above all, enthusiasm. Then, the number twelve came to my mind and in some prophetic way we, too, have had twelve apostles in the last twelve years. Although the number matched, the names were somewhat different; John, Paul, James, Thomas, Francis(2), Henry, Stephen, Joseph, Andrew, Anthony and the name Renato. Since they were modern day apostles, their name and work could be found among some of the great saints of the Church. And their contributions to our religious lives were filled with understanding and a firm love of God.

On September 2, 1979, a Concelebrated Mass was given as a conclusion to a six-month celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the founding of St. Anne Church. That evening a dinner-dance was held to honor and congratulate all of those who helped make St. Anne Church a reality. The committee in charge was General Chairman, Raymond Yakubic, and Dinner-Dance Chairpersons, John and Mary Ellen Adams. The Silver Jubilee was a great success.

On September 9, 1979, Father took advantage of the Diocesan education sabbatical program at the North American College in Rome. At that time the program was especially geared for those ordained prior to Vatican II so that they would have the theological knowledge of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In addition, the study of sacred scripture of both the Old & New Testaments became more alive through Father's onsite visits to the Holy Land as they walked in the footsteps of Jesus.

During 1981, an anonymous gift of \$30,000 was received for the central air-conditioning of the Church. In 1986, Rose Sweeney Melenyzer donated \$100,000 for the Petty-Madden pipe organ, and on May 3, 1990, the organ was dedicated to the memory of her husband, Dr. Charles Melenyzer.

Time seems to fly by without our realizing how quickly life's events pass. After fifteen years, Fr. Gianni would retire on January 22, 1992. A farewell party was held which gave the parishioners the opportunity to thank this gracious man and good priest for his spiritual vision and ministry.

In January, 1992, Fr. Thomas W Rogers became Pastor. Fr. Rogers was a very close friend of Fr. Ott although they were polar opposites. Fr. Rogers was a very private person and had a slight smile but an aura of "don't ask questions." Fr. came to us in the vintage years of his ministry; and as he loved nature and the outdoors, he complemented the beauty of the grounds with the addition of the Sacred Heart statue in memory of a Parishioner, Mary Sirback.

One of the great joys in this Parish was the ordination of a native son, Fr. Val Zdilla, for the Diocese of Los Angeles on June 1, 1996. Fr. Val celebrated his first Mass on June 16, 1996, here at the Church of St. Anne, his home Parish, much to the delight in the pastorate of Fr. Rogers. Fr. Val is the son of the late Val Zdilla and Louise Zdilla.

With the closing of Holy Name Church, Monessen, the Mission of Holy Cross was transferred back to St. Anne Church. The Sunday Mass at 9:30 a.m. was served by a priest from St. Vincent Archabbey; however, due to a decline in the number of parishioners, as well as it being canonically relegated from a Mission to a Chapel of Convenience, it was ultimately closed by Bishop Bosco in January, 2000.

Fr. reached the canonical retirement age of 75 in January, 1998. His retirement was accepted by the Bishop in July, 1998.

On July 8, 1998, Fr. Ronald L. Simboli was installed as the eighth Pastor of the Parish. Father, native to this area having grown up in Belle Vernon and attending Belmar High School, was well aware of the habits and needs of the people he would serve. Within a short time, we learned that we had an astute pastoral theologian for our priest; and on Sunday when he approached the pulpit, it seemed as though he just came down from the mountain with God's "Word." Fr. will always be remembered for his homilies—a theological wisdom blended with a touch of humor—that made the homily a catechism of hope, desire and love. His homily message from September, 2007, stated, *"To be a true Christian, you must sacrifice and serve"*! He was also a very competent administrator.

Fr. Simboli will also be remembered for bringing us out of the past. He brought the Parish Office up to date in the 21st Century with multiple phone lines, computers, intercom and Fax, as well as a new Parish Office addition.

Fr. did not stop there. On the outside of the Parish complex, flat roofs for the rectory, office and Church were replaced, new lighting in the parking lot and walkways were added, the parking lot was resurfaced, a railing was installed on the steps into the front entrance of the Church, and attractive signs indicating the Church name and other signs designating various areas of the Church and Parish Office were added. As Fr. Ott previously stated, *"We hope during 1973, God willing, to provide a grade entrance into the Social Hall, construction of a ramp from the parking lot, to the front entrance of the Church, resurface the parking lot, etc .* Father Simboli not only satisfied these requests in one way or another during his pastorate, but also successfully completed an elevator project in September, 2000, making the Social Hall accessible to the elderly members and the physically challenged. The Lettrich Group architectural firm was retained for this project.

A new sound system and additional amplifier speakers were installed inside the Church, as well as a speaker upgrade and amplifier addition in the Social Hall. New lighting fixtures now beautifully illuminate and accent the Church, as well as the Social Hall. In the Church, the original lighting fixtures were ornate but failed to properly enlighten certain areas possessing numerous dead zones.

Other improvements included the renovation of the Social Hall restrooms, and for the first time on the main level of the Church, a restroom was installed. All of these are handicapped accessible. The old tile floor in the Social Hall was replaced with new tile, and the folding partitions were updated to enhance the many activities held.

In 2003, Reverend Monsignor Nicholas A. Mitolo retired and returned to Rostraver. For five years, the Parish had the good fortune of knowing this sincere and wonderful priest on the occasions when he would cover for Fr. Simboli when he was out of town for daily and weekend masses as well as funerals. It was with sorrow that we received notice of Monsignor's death on September 11, 2007, after a brief illness.

On July 3, 2007, a Mass opened festivities, and Fr. Simboli proclaimed that the Fiftieth Anniversary year of the Church of St. Anne would be celebrated with a year of planned activities ending with a Mass on Sunday, July 27, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. with Bishop Lawrence E. Brandt as celebrant, followed by a reception. The Fiftieth Anniversary Committee, chaired by Dolores Tegnalia, was in charge of these year-long activities.

We should remember the purpose of our service to the Church of St. Anne as stated in the Mission Statement:

**We, the Church of St. Anne, are a Catholic
faith-filled community in Rostraver Township
built with the love and dedication of
farmers, miners and other hardworking people.**

**We have progressed from those few
pioneering parishioners worshiping at the
Quonset hut to a rapidly growing Parish family
within the mid-Mon Valley.**

**We are committed to ongoing faith formation
nurtured through the celebration of
The Word and Sacraments.**

**We will continue to follow Christ and to share
His life and love, working to become a closer
Parish and community.**

The closing of St. Timothy Church, Smithton, named St. Anne Church the canonical successor Parish. After many months of listening sessions across the Diocese and the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Committee, the Regional Pastoral Council, the Strategic Planning Implementation Committee and the consultation of the College of Deans, St. Timothy Church was closed on October 30, 2008. St. Anne Church acquired St. Timothy Cemetery following the closure of St. Timothy Church.

On Wednesday, September 22, 2010, at a 7:00 p.m. Mass, we welcomed Fr. Vincent J. Gigliotti who was installed as the ninth Pastor of our Parish. We are thankful that God has so generously showered us with his presence as Pastor to share his wisdom and spiritual guidance.

The original Church Committee, the new Church Committee and the Christian Mothers, along with the Holy Name Society, and dozens of volunteers made up the operating structure of early years of the Church from 1960 until 1980.

Members of the original Church Committee included Oswald Dolfi, George Dolnack, Ralph Domenick, Chester Duda, Paul Farkosh, Dino Forlini, Kenneth Jones, Charles Kaifes, George Kuma, Joseph Kuma, Raymond Lacovicz, Frank Mizikar, Joseph Pasierb, Michael Rorke, James Sabo, John Yakubic and John Zollars.

Presently, Finance Council members include Sidney Cicchini, Joyce Collins and Frank Lorenzo; Pastoral Council members, Helen Carroll, Dr. Joseph Cicchini, Regina Civitello, Joyce Collins, Marsha Kanski, Dr. Robert Klanchar, Shirley Lazar and Homer Zucconi.

First Officers of the original Christian Mothers included Mary Hajostek, Virginia Jones, Frances Pasierb, Mary Roscoe, Viola Sollars, and Ann Yakubic; members, Kay Bruno, Frances Dalola, Mary Dolnack, Emily Dolfi, Jay Domenick, Helen Estok, Cecelia Farkosh, Helen Forlini, Helen Hajostek, Evelyn Kaifes, Kay Lacovicz, Marie Lannon, Margaret Matava, Jean Mood, Helen Noswarich, Marge Petrus, Anna Pivarnik, Dorothy Porzucek, Blanche Sholtis, Mary Soltis, Elizabeth Slobodnik, Norma Skraitz, Irene Strang, Anna Tomko, Olga Uram, Mary Wyvratt and Jean Zelenko.

First officers and members of the original Holy Name Society included George Dolnack, George Estok, Charles Kaifes, Frank Mizikar, Ted Stawovy, William Strang and John Yakubic.

Midway through the early years of the Church, 1980, members of the Christian Mothers also included Dee Codeluppi, Helen Estok, Frances Kopanic, Josephine Rago, Francis Rendulic and Yvonne Urban; Holy Name Society, Tony Costa, Paul Farkosh, Jack Kerr, Steve Slobodnik and Andrew Uram.

The Church of St. Anne has never had a shortage of participants when a need has been expressed from the early years of the Church until present. Lay leadership has developed into an efficient and effective team of devout parishioners. Liturgical ministers comprised of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, including those to Mon-Valley hospital and the homebound, greeters, lectors, servers, ushers; music ministers, the adult and youth choirs; Disciples of Prayer, the health-care professionals performing monthly blood pressure screening; Faith Formation catechists and aides; Finance and Pastoral Councils; supporting office volunteers, including stewardship counters; bereavement groups such as the Funeral Luncheon Committee, and supporting organizations, such as the Christian Mothers and Holy Name Society, are always available to serve.

Over the past fifty years, the Church of St. Anne has grown from 160 families to approximately 900 families, and the blending of the old with the new has created a constant team of parishioners ready to move forward into the future. The social events outside of Mass that helped form a family of strangers, have always had helping hands from the earliest Parish dinner in 1964 until the present. Change is inevitable, and we are witness to many changes in the way we worship and interact as a family. The St. Anne Festival in earlier years was the traditional festival with games, food and fellowship held on the Church grounds; now it is a Parish Family Picnic in Pavilion #1 at Cedar Creek Park where all can congregate with food and refreshments compliments of the Parish. The Ham 'n Egg and Turkey bingos began in the year 1960 by the Holy Name Society are now the Spring Bingo and the Turkey Bingo, and the Mother's Day Brunch and Father's Day continental breakfast are still popular events. Mardi Gras and Halloween have surfaced to be exceptional "holidays" that welcome an intermingling of parishioners renewing friendships, as do the donut socials on the lawn. Still enjoyed is the semi-annual Spaghetti & Meatballs and Ravioli Dinner, which is also a community event. Faith Formation students and Youth Ministry groups look forward to the liturgical celebrations for Advent and Lent, including the Advent parties for all level of the Faith Formation program, and the Parish rejoices with the newly welcomed Catholics at the Wine and Cheese Social held on Holy Saturday. Our Pastoral Plan has blossomed and satisfied many of the goals and objectives established: *evangelization* and liturgical booklets for daily prayer meditation; *stewardship* and recruitment of ministers for liturgy, as well as those for grounds keeping; *word* and programs offered to the very young through the vintage years; and *service* and outreaching socially through the "helping hands" objective of blood pressure screening and the Angel Tree dwelling on those who are appreciative of our efforts.

Many happy occasions have occurred and as the younger members of the congregation become the new leaders, we can look forward to exceptional progress in disseminating God's fruitful works in our journey of a lifetime. Those members who have devoted their time in keeping these events alive deserve the respect and admiration of their fellow parishioners.

For fifty years, the bells at the Church of St. Anne have called us to worship, as well as the carillon chimes. By Church tradition, each original bell is blessed and is dedicated to a saint and its donor. The large bell is named St. Joachim and Bishop Hugh L. Lamb and is dedicated to the original families of the Church of St. Anne. The second bell is named St. Anne and Bishop William G. Connare. On this bell is inscribed “in memory of John and Anne Yakubic and John and Anna Tomko.” The third bell is named for the Blessed Virgin Mary and Father Andrew F. Hredzak and dedicated “in memory of Joseph Pasierb, Jr.” by his parents.

As the final days of our Fiftieth Anniversary come to a close, we realize honoring those that brought us to this day is a moment of time for thanksgiving for the talent, determination and spiritual love that has made the Church of St. Anne a reality. One observes as the Church gets older, the parishioners get younger and the Church belongs to the future. The teaching of the Church is that the new life is in the future; and while we never revere the past, we must put our best efforts in the continuing work of the Lord. We congratulate those from the past who have made the present a success in bringing the Church of St. Anne to Rostraver, and encourage our young to be as vigorous as those in our past in continuing the good works that bring God’s love into the hearts of our parishioners.

**Regis J. Serinko, PhD
Parish Historian**