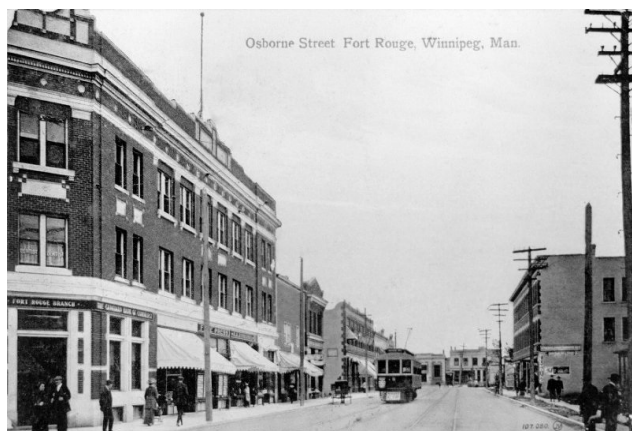


# Part One

## The Story of our Community



First Mass said at 109 Osborne Street  
(Photo Credit: Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

### St. Ignatius Parish, 1908-1929

By Martha McCarthy

These are the years of foundation of the parish. Consequently, the history of these years includes much emphasis on the actual building and financing of the parish structures – the church, school, and rectory. Although the people and clergy of St. Ignatius formed the parish community, a church, no matter how inadequate, was essential to the expression of that community in faith. Much of the time and energy of the priests and parishioners of the time went into providing a suitable church for a community which was often teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. This is not meant to imply that the life of faith of St. Ignatius parish revolved around fundraising for building purposes. Rather it is the reverse, the efforts which went into building arose from an inheritance of faith and a desire to pass that faith on securely to future generations.

To have a new parish in Fort Rouge was a dream long before it became a reality. The city of Winnipeg and the Church within it were in a period of tremendous growth and expectations were high that this growth would continue. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister, claimed that the twentieth century belonged to Canada. The people of Winnipeg shared that optimism, motivated by the fact that Winnipeg, a rail and wheat centre and the gateway to the West, grew from a small city of 42,000 in 1901 to a bustling metropolis of 150,000 in 1913. Many of these new residents came from eastern European countries and crowded into the city's North End. More prosperous citizens, who had lived for some time in Winnipeg, chose to move away from the congested older

areas of the city into the southern areas of Winnipeg. City services, including the transit system, were extended to these new areas, and this in turn encouraged more people to move to these less crowded areas.

Access to Fort Rouge had been established in 1882 when the first Osborne Street bridge was built. The Maryland Street bridge in 1894 added another route for the development of South Winnipeg, although rapid population increase in the Fort Rouge and Crescentwood areas came only after 1900.<sup>1</sup> This growth was almost entirely residential, not industrial, similar in that respect to the suburbs of post-World War II. The men of these families commuted to their work in the downtown or other areas of the city.

Some of the people who moved across the Assiniboine into South Winnipeg were English-speaking Catholics. Although it was convenient for the men to commute to work via the electric streetcar system, this system did not operate on Sundays because of the Sabbath observance laws. To fulfill their Sunday obligation most Catholics in Fort Rouge had to walk to church at St. Mary's, the only English-language parish in their vicinity. This was a very long walk, more difficult in winter and with small children. When they reached St. Mary's, it was to a very overcrowded church.

Faced with this situation, the parishioners of St. Mary's began to press Archbishop Adélar Langevin, OMI, to found a new English-speaking parish for them. Winnipeg at this time was part of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, which was responsible for the growth and financing of the Church. The rapid and massive population growth of the first years of the twentieth century, however, placed an enormous burden on the slim resources of the archdiocese. Many of the newly-arrived immigrants did not speak English or French, the two languages in use in the archdiocese, but spoke a variety of European languages. It was impossible to find priests multilingual enough to cope with this number of different languages existing within one parish geographical area, which was the basic unit in the structure of the Church.

To solve this problem new parishes were set up, based not on geographical boundaries but on services to

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations in the Footnotes:

CACRSB Corporation Archiépiscope Catholique Romain de Saint-Boniface, on deposit at the Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society.

AASB: Archives de l'Archêvêché de Saint-Boniface

AAW: Archives of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg.

Cf. Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg, An Illustrated History*, 70.

one language group. These were called national parishes and were staffed by Oblates of Mary Immaculate from Europe. Examples were Holy Ghost for the Polish-speaking, St. Joseph's for the German-speaking, and Sacré Coeur for the French-speaking in Winnipeg. Most of these language groups settled close to their national parishes, making it easier to conduct a parish for them.

The English-speaking Catholics, mostly of Irish origin, and many from Ontario, posed a more difficult problem. They spoke English and were scattered throughout the city rather than congregating in national groups. They were not resident in large enough numbers in any one area to support a parish. Most had to be prepared to travel to church on Sundays. Archbishop Langevin had bought some land in River Heights for a parish sometime in the future and had discussed with the Jesuits the possibility of staffing such a parish.<sup>2</sup> With all the other demands on his resources, however, he had felt obliged to postpone such an undertaking.

This was not acceptable to the prospective parishioners of Fort Rouge, who feared that the faith they valued so highly would be lost if a parish convenient to them was not soon provided. Their priorities for the growth of the Church in the West were not the same as those of the archbishop. It was a time when the whole of Canada was deeply divided over the questions of Catholic schools and French language rights. This discord was also evident in the Church of the time, exacerbated by the upsurge in "Irish" bishops replacing the former French bishops across Canada.

One school system and one language were proposed by those outside the Church as the only way to assimilate the new immigrants to a common Canadian nation. Within the Church both English-speaking and French-speaking Catholics maintained the necessity of a separate Catholic school system but differed over the language to be used in the schools and parishes. The Church in the West had been built up by French-speaking bishops, clergy, and faithful since the time of Bishop Norbert Provencher's<sup>3</sup> arrival in 1818 at Red River. With the help of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate his successor, Archbishop A.A. Taché, OMI, witnessed the extension of the Church into many new dioceses across the prairies, all of them staffed by French Oblates.

Archbishop Langevin, successor to Taché, faced very different historical circumstances with the rapid population and political changes in Manitoba in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Manitoba Schools decision had removed public support of Catholic schools. This motivated him to fight desperately to preserve what was left of French linguistic rights in the West, convinced as he was that the French language was the guardian of the faith. The English-speaking Catholics, on the other hand, saw themselves as the wave of the future. They were convinced that English would be the language of the Church as well as of the nation and that they were suffering as Catholics because of prejudices against the French, considered by many to be synonymous with Catholic. Langevin viewed all those who opposed him on the language issue as assimilationists, whether they were within or outside the Church. Neither side was able to comprehend or sympathize with the other's position. The fact that the leader of the French cause in the West was also the local authority of the Church made him the focus of the discontent of the English-speaking Catholics.

This dissatisfaction broke into the open in 1906. At a large meeting of St. Mary's parishioners, 25 November 1906, a petition was prepared to present to Mgr. Langevin.<sup>4</sup> Several of the signers of this petition had been active in presenting the Roman Catholic side in the court cases revolving around the Manitoba Schools Act and had worked closely with Archbishop Taché. Prominent in Winnipeg business and professional groups and large contributors to St. Mary's, they were unwilling to have their concerns overlooked or postponed. Their petition outlined actions the English-speaking Catholics of the archdiocese considered essential. They noted that the English-speaking population of Winnipeg had doubled in the previous five years but no parishes had been provided for them. They were convinced that the new immigrants would adopt the English language, further increasing the English-speaking numbers in the Church. The logical consequence, in their minds, was that the Church should make it a priority to provide more English-speaking parishes. They suggested also that Winnipeg should have an English-speaking bishop as suffragan to the Archbishop of St. Boniface and that an English college should be set up in Winnipeg for the education of young men in English.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> CACRSB L30817. E. Lecompte, S.J., to Mgr. Langevin, 7 June 1906.

<sup>3</sup> Norbert Provencher was assigned to Red River by the Archbishop of Quebec in 1818, following the invitation of Lord Selkirk who asked for a Roman Catholic priest to minister to the Metis and donated a large amount of land on the east side of the Red River. There Provencher began St. Boniface parish. In 1822 he was consecrated Bishop of the North West, with responsibilities for the growth of the Church to the Pacific and Arctic oceans.

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<sup>4</sup> CACRSB L24653-9. Petition of St. Mary's Parish to Mgr. Langevin, 25 November 1906.

<sup>5</sup> The Archdiocese of Winnipeg was established by Rome in 1915, shortly after the death of Mgr. Langevin. St. Paul's College began in 1926, initiated by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of St. Mary's Province.

Archbishop Langevin told the petitioners that the division of his diocese was outside their competence<sup>6</sup> and that there was no immediate possibility of establishing a Catholic English college in Winnipeg. St. Boniface College provided an English-language classical education, and that was all he could do for the present. As for establishing new parishes, he planned to do so, but would require both more priests and more money.<sup>7</sup>

On 3 April 1907, a new petition was sent to Archbishop Langevin, one which he apparently encouraged.<sup>8</sup> This request dealt only with the founding of a new parish in Fort Rouge and was signed by about 140 residents of Ft. Rouge, led by H.B. Brydges. In his covering letter Mr. Brydges said that most of the petitioners could not afford to subscribe much for the new parish but the prospects for the future looked promising. The area west of Nassau St. was becoming the favourite residential part of the city. A church there would attract numbers of well-to-do Catholics who would be able to support a parish. The petitioners were all anxious that something should be done that spring for them. They suggested that in several cases a church in the area would make a difference whether or not people kept their religion and passed it on to their children. The petition reiterated the reasons why a parish in Fort Rouge was such an urgent necessity, due to the distance and hardship involved in getting to St. Mary's and the overcrowding there. The petitioners also asked that the Jesuits take charge of the proposed new parish. "We think that a Jesuit Parish Church here would form a powerful stimulus to the Catholic religious life of this part of the City of Winnipeg, and surrounding district."<sup>9</sup>

This request was phrased so that Archbishop Langevin could accept it with grace. He had previously contacted the Jesuits about undertaking such a parish when it became feasible and the Jesuit Provincial had expressed an interest.<sup>10</sup> When Archbishop Langevin was ready to proceed with the plans, he offered Father Lecompte the new parish of "Fort-Rouge." Negotiations were carried on between the Archbishop and the

Provincial, working out the necessary legal agreements, safeguarding the interests of both in regard to church property, collections, reporting to the archbishop, and so forth. The Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa, Mgr. D. Sbaretti, was also involved. The English-speaking Catholics in the areas of the two proposed new parishes of Fort Rouge and St. Edward's had asked for his help, and he contacted both the Archbishop and the Jesuits on the matter.<sup>11</sup>

After the legal arrangements were worked out to the satisfaction of both parties, Langevin met with the Catholics of Fort Rouge in St. Mary's hall on 8 December 1907.<sup>12</sup> If they agreed to the terms of agreement with the Jesuits, the formation of the new parish could go ahead. Mgr. Langevin offered to transfer title to the twenty-two lots he held in River Heights to them for the new parish, but this was refused. He then offered \$1,000 in cash as his contribution, and this was accepted. Father Cahill of St. Mary's had prepared a list of prospective parishioners in Ft. Rouge, a total of 67 families, or 229 individuals. A church committee was set up to visit every family on the list and any others they might discover to ask if they would be willing to subscribe to the new parish. It was suggested at the meeting that a number of Catholic families would be moving into the area the next spring with the opening of the new CNR shops in Fort Rouge.

The businessmen of the church committee, however, considered the economic outlook so bleak that it would be impossible to finance a church at that time. This was an opinion which was shared by the Jesuit Provincial, Father Lecompte. He had originally suggested that St. Boniface College would advance the money to build a church, school, and rectory (estimated to be about \$25,000) if the people of the parish would subscribe to pay off the debt. He withdrew this proposal, however, because, as he said, circumstances had changed so much since he had first thought of it. At that time, there was a terrible financial crisis in the United States which would very likely affect Canada. Another factor influencing him was the results of the survey done by Father Cahill, showing only 67 families in the proposed parish, a number Father Lecompte thought too small to support a parish. If they were willing to go ahead, undertaking all expenses themselves, the Jesuits would be glad to supply a priest for the new parish. In that case, Father Lecompte suggested to Archbishop Langevin that the new parish should be called "St. Ignatius of Fort Rouge."

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<sup>6</sup> CACRSB L24659. Clipping from *Manitoba Free Press*, 19 December 1906, "Meeting of Catholics." This was a meeting held to consider Mgr. Langevin's reply to the petition. The *Free Press* stated that the archbishop had received this delegation very coolly "and practically told the members that he was the head of the church in the west and would not be dictated to by any parties." According to this report, "the English-speaking people were determined to stick together and if necessary would appeal to the Apostolic Delegate."

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 December 1906.

<sup>8</sup> AAW. H.B. Brydges to Mgr. Langevin, 3 April 1907.

<sup>9</sup> AAW H.B. Brydges to Mgr. Langevin, 3 April 1907.

<sup>10</sup> CACRSB L30817. E. Lecompte, S.J. to Mgr. Langevin, 7 June 1906.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. CACRSB L23172. Mgr. D. Sbaretti to Mgr. Langevin, 22 May 1908; L23158, Mgr. D. Sbaretti to Mgr. Langevin, 5 January 1908; L23167, Mgr. D. Sbaretti to Mgr. Langevin, 5 March 1908.

<sup>12</sup> AASB Memorandum, Mgr. Langevin to the Catholics of Fort Rouge, 9 December 1907.

On 2 February 1908, Father Lecompte again wrote the archbishop, saying that since for the time being a full parish in Fort Rouge seemed impossible, he would be glad to assign a Jesuit from St. Boniface College to begin a small-scale ministry to the people. Father Lecompte suggested that Father Lewis Drummond<sup>13</sup> would be suitable for this. Father Drummond had taught for years at St. Boniface College. For a time he had also been editor of the *North-West Review*, the English-language Catholic newspaper for the diocese. He was to continue to live at St. Boniface College and go to Fort Rouge to say Sunday Mass.



109 Osborne St., 2008

St. Ignatius was born in the midst of all this confusion and fears for the future. A small store at 109 Osborne Street was rented to serve as a temporary church for the part-time parish. The women of the parish cleaned it thoroughly, a temporary altar was set up,

and Father Drummond came to say the first Mass in the new St. Ignatius on 16 February 1908. He preached on the text “Go ye into My vineyard,” showing how the parish was the basic unit of the spiritual life as the family was the basic unit of the nation.<sup>14</sup> St. Ignatius was as yet at a very basic stage of development but with a priest and parishioners and a temporary church, development as a parish was now possible.

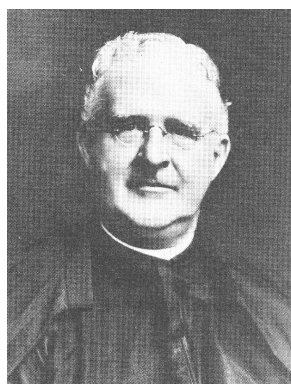
About 140 people attended the first Mass. The rented premises on Osborne Street soon proved inadequate for the community. On 5 April 1908, less than two months after the first Mass, a meeting was held of all those interested in the choice of a site for a permanent church. After looking around the area in the next few weeks, a site was selected at the corner of McMillan and Nassau Streets. At the time, the Baptists on Nassau Street were building a new stone church and no longer needed their little wooden building. The general meeting of St. Ignatius parishioners decided to buy this church and move it to their new site. A contractor was hired to do this, beginning on Monday morning, the intention being to hold Mass in the church on its new site the following Sunday. But by Saturday morning, the church had only progressed to the intersection of Nassau and Gertrude, where it blocked traffic in all directions, much to the unhappiness of residents and the city. It took all the next week, and the removal of trees and telephone poles, and the planking of the boulevard, before the church finally reached its destination. On that Saturday evening a walk was made to the front door, and the St. Ignatius church

was ready for its opening Mass on 10 May 1908, when it was blessed by the Rector of St. Boniface College.<sup>15</sup>



First Church Building, Nassau at McMillan  
(Photo credit: Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

An altar for the new St. Ignatius was made. The pews were bought cheaply from St. Joseph’s Church, which had recently burnt down. The confessional was built by a parishioner, Aladase Landry, and was described as “an airy, single-compartment model, with good acoustic properties.”<sup>16</sup> Duncan Turner and his wife, who rented a small cottage on the property, undertook the care of the church in exchange for free rent. It was considered unusual at the time for Scotch Presbyterians to do this for a Catholic church, but the arrangement worked out satisfactorily to all concerned.



Fr Lewis Drummond, SJ  
Founding Pastor, 1908

With the McMillan Avenue church, St. Ignatius was on the road to greater development, with high hopes for its continued growth. In September 1908 Father Drummond was given permission to say two masses on Sunday at St. Ignatius, an indication that the little blue church was already becoming overcrowded. Father Drummond was still living at St. Boniface College, walking over to say Mass at St.

Ignatius. In winter he would stop at the house of parishioners to warm up before Mass, and to have breakfast after Mass.<sup>17</sup> The parishioners decided to take the further step to a full parish life by providing a residence for the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XV, “Lewis Henry Drummond” by Martha McCarthy.

<sup>14</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, Father Drummond’s Diary.

<sup>15</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, Father Drummond’s Diary.

<sup>16</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, “History of St. Ignatius Parish” by A.E. Burns.

<sup>17</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, Correspondence from Margaret M. Burns.



priest, buying a house at 476 McMillan Avenue for this purpose. Father Drummond had been called back east, where he later became associate editor of the new Jesuit magazine, *America*. Father John Coffee, the new pastor, moved into this house in December 1908. St. Ignatius, within its first year of existence, had a permanent church, a full-time pastor, and a rectory – a contradiction to all the fears and hesitations surrounding its beginning.

Perhaps because of these signs of increased permanence for the parish, Archbishop Langevin promulgated the decree of canonical erection of the parish,<sup>18</sup> firmly establishing it as a part of the diocese. The boundaries of St. Ignatius were to be the area of Winnipeg south of the Assiniboine River, west of the Red, and from the junction of the rivers to the city limits. St. Ignatius was the first Catholic parish in south Winnipeg and its territorial limits were large and poorly-defined in a city whose limits were constantly changing. St. Ignatius was to serve all the Catholics resident within its boundaries, regardless of language or nationality. Any Catholics who wanted to go instead to one of the national parishes of the city were obliged to receive the permission of the Archbishop to do so.

In practice, the language of St. Ignatius was only English, though attempts were made to combine it with French at the beginning, and announcements and confessions were provided in French. There were several French-speaking members of the parish for the first census of the parish in 1909 listed 500 members of the parish, 350 English-speaking and 150 French-speaking. At the time the total number of Catholics in the eight parishes of Winnipeg was 18,000, making St. Ignatius one of the smallest parishes in numbers despite its large area.<sup>19</sup> In 1910 a more accurate census was taken; St. Ignatius totalled 837 people, including Swedish, Italian, French, French-Canadian, Syrian, Polish, though the largest number, 537, were English-speaking.<sup>20</sup>

Father Coffee, who had been a lawyer before entering the Jesuits, was considered an excellent administrator and financial manager. He and his board of trustees were far-sighted enough to recognize that the McMillan Avenue church was inadequate for the future of the parish. In the summer of 1909 alternative sites were considered; the parish of St. Ignatius took an option on the present site, a large block of property bounded by Stafford, Corydon, Jessie, and Amelia [Harrow] Streets. They had to negotiate with a total of twenty-two owners but managed to buy the block of land for about \$21,000. Many of the parishioners were shocked at this venture. They knew the parish had no money and in fact owed money on the little

church property. A loan was made with the Banque d'Hochelaga, on a note endorsed by St. Boniface College,<sup>21</sup> as had been suggested a few years previously; this was now considered possible because of the improvements in the economy generally, and in the position of St. Ignatius parish in particular. The parish of St. Ignatius was liable for the loan, but still had to use the credit of the College to get it.

This large block of property was considered by many to be far from any population growth of the near future and to be a very long-range investment for the parish. In fact, residential growth in the area followed quickly on the purchase. Many parishioners began to build in the area, even though they thought it might be years before any church was built on the site. The *North-West Review* gave a glowing report of the purchase of this huge block of land by St. Ignatius parish, claiming it an "example of the growth of Catholicity in Winnipeg," which would "eventually be adorned with a church and school which will no doubt be an ornament to Winnipeg's choicest residential section, as are the Jesuit institutions wherever found."<sup>22</sup>

By February 1911 the parish was ready to commit itself to building a church and a school and rectory on Stafford Street. Father Coffee toured the east, looking at the work of church architects there; Mr. Harry Rill of Detroit was commissioned to design a church for St. Ignatius. The church he proposed was a large imposing edifice, estimated to cost about \$150,000 to build, a sum far beyond the resources of St. Ignatius at the time, but which they felt would be possible some time in the not too distant future. The *North-West Review* ran a picture of the design for the new St. Ignatius, and described the project in terms reflecting the boom spirit of the time in Winnipeg:

The burden will be a heavy one for some years to come, but these pioneers of civilization and enlightenment realize it to the full and, imbued as they are with the true western spirit, nothing can dampen their ardor, or turn them from the accomplishment of their designs. They are fully alive to the fact that in the very near future the parish of St. Ignatius will be one of the largest in the city, and will number amongst its members a large percentage of our well-to-do Catholic families.<sup>23</sup>

The people of St. Ignatius parish were well aware that they could not finance this grandiose project as yet. A

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<sup>18</sup> CACRSB L23815. Decree of Canonical Erection of St. Ignatius, 1908.

<sup>19</sup> CACRSB L23192. Statistics for Winnipeg, 28 May 1909.

<sup>20</sup> AASB Census of St. Ignatius Parish.

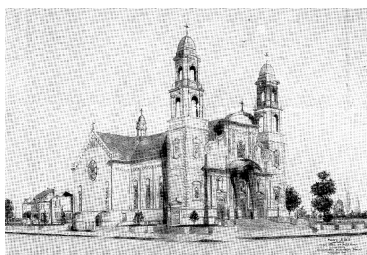
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<sup>21</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, "History of St. Ignatius Parish" by A.E. Burns.

<sup>22</sup> *North-West Review*, 14 August 1909.

<sup>23</sup> *North-West Review*, 8 April 1911.

start could be made, however, by building the basement for the proposed church and using it as a temporary church until such time as the superstructure could be completed. Archbishop Langevin authorized the parish to borrow \$50,000 at six per cent interest to build the basement, a school, and a house for the priests on Jessie Avenue. At this time the debt on the property was also transferred to the Corporation of the Catholic parish of St. Ignatius from St. Boniface College, a further recognition of the new maturity and good financial standing of the parish.<sup>24</sup>



Proposed Design

When tenders were called for the construction of the basement, however, they were all too high. One contractor suggested that he could build the basement for \$50,000 if the parish

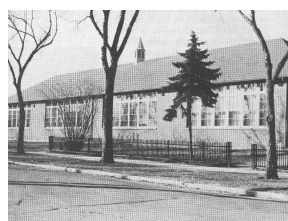
committee would accept masonry for the walls instead of the concrete called for in the specifications.<sup>25</sup> The trustees agreed to this and the work proceeded in the summer of 1911, with hopes that the new St. Ignatius would be ready for occupancy by the fall. These hopes were deferred, however, since it was a very wet summer, causing many delays in the work, and much added cost to the contractor, and the work was not finished until early in 1912.

The ceremony of laying the cornerstone was held, though, on 24 September 1911, with Archbishop Langevin officiating. A noted preacher from St. Paul, Minnesota, Father James Reardon, was invited to preach on the occasion. Special streetcar service was arranged for the day.<sup>26</sup> The *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 September 1911, reported that 800-900 people had attended the open air ceremony. This crowd included 300 members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in full regalia. Crowd measurement was apparently inaccurate in those days, too, since the *North-West Review* reported that 2000 people were there.

On 17 March 1912, Archbishop Langevin returned to St. Ignatius to bless the now-completed basement church, and Father Reardon, who had made such an impressive sermon at the corner-stone ceremony, was invited back to preach at the opening. The basement was very large, able to hold about 1300 people. It was divided by partitions to form a church holding about 800, with a hall taking up the other part.<sup>27</sup>

On March 18, 1912, the hall was opened with a performance of the play *Shaun Aroon*. The hall continued to be the site for many parish activities, often social occasions combined with fund-raising. There were regular card parties, pedro and whist, in a hall sometimes so cold that people huddled in their coats to keep warm while playing. There were musical and dramatic performances, speakers were brought in to speak on various topics, there were bake sales, and the famous bazaars.

Numerous organizations were developed in the parish to group together people of similar interests to further the work of the parish. The Ladies' Aid, organized right after the first Mass in 1908, contributed greatly to the growth of the parish. It was later replaced by the Catholic Women's League. The men formed the Board of Trustees, the Board of Management, and the School Board. The choir was an integral and active part of the parish life, adding to the celebration of the liturgy. The Sacred Heart League was set up, the ushers' group formed, the young people formed organizations, the boys joined the altar boys' society, there were hockey teams and tennis groups to play on the rinks and courts provided on the grounds. Much more of the social life of the community revolved around the church then than is the case today. The basement church and hall were a focus of both spiritual and social life. It was a vital community, with a great many people actively involved in prayer, work, and recreation together.



Cottage School, 1927

The parish school was one of the basic units of the parish, considered essential to reinforce the teaching of the church; it had been included in the original plans for the Stafford Street site. Like the opening of the basement church, the

school opening was delayed. In January, 1912, 19 children began their schooling at St. Ignatius School, in a small building next to the basement church – where the flat roof provided an irresistible attraction to many small boys to run over when the Sisters were not watching. The Holy Names Sisters who staffed the school lived at St. Mary's Academy and commuted to the school by horse and buggy. The first year there were two sisters teaching, Sister Ann Catherine and Sister Adelard. By September of 1912 the original enrolment of 19 had grown to 88 students, and another teacher was hired. By 1917 an addition had to be built to the original school, and an additional collection for the school was introduced.<sup>28</sup> The financing of the school continued to be a drain on the resources of the parish, but one which parishioners felt was justified.

<sup>24</sup> AASB Mgr. Langevin to Father Coffee, 20 April 1911.

<sup>25</sup> AAW Memorandum, Lailey vs. the Parish of St. Ignatius.

<sup>26</sup> *North-West Review*, 30 September 1911.

<sup>27</sup> *North-West Review*, 23 March 1912.

<sup>28</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, Parish announcements.

Since not all the children of the parish were able to attend St. Ignatius School, Sunday school instruction was provided for these children, as it had been from the beginning of the parish and before the opening of the school. In the 1920s a separate Sunday school for the children who lived far from the church, in the southeast end of the parish, was introduced, and for a time was held in the Park Theatre on Sunday afternoons.



Fr E.T. O'Gara, SJ  
Pastor, 1914-1934

The provision of the basement church, the school and the rectory on the Stafford St. site provided the basic structures for the growth of the parish on the new site. None of these buildings were regarded as being in their final shape but the people were optimistic that the future, with prosperity and full employment, would soon see their completion. No one in 1912 could foresee that the era of great immigration, on which was built much of Winnipeg's prosperity, was soon to end, that a period of economic decline was about to set in, nor that the First World War would soon engulf them. Within a few years the hopes and expectations of the plans of 1911-12 would appear naive and overly optimistic. The people of St. Ignatius had limited their design to what appeared feasible in 1911 but the payments even for that limited amount proved an enormous drain on the resources of the parish and a constant worry to the pastors. Father O'Gara had replaced Father Coffee as pastor in 1914. By 1915 he and the bishop were afraid that the parish would actually go bankrupt, with its debt then standing at \$90,000.<sup>29</sup> Somehow that crisis was survived, but by 1919 the debt was up to \$103,000. The pastor asked for all to help free the parish from this crippling burden.<sup>30</sup>

The outbreak of World War I brought many special collections for St. Ignatius to help those most directly affected by the war. These collections continued throughout the war, and were a means for the parish to extend beyond its own boundaries and concerns, pressing as those were. The parish also joined in the religious aspects of the peace effort, with the first Peace Sunday held 21 March 1915, at the wish of the Holy Father. On 23 May 1915 came the first request for prayers for the soul of a parishioner, John Underwood, killed in action; these continued to mark the Sunday announcements, increasing in numbers through the big push of 1917. At the end of

the war St. Ignatius, like all other public buildings, was forced to close its doors for six weeks because of the dreadful flu epidemic of 1918-1919.

The war years also brought a change in the organization of the Church in Winnipeg. In 1915 the city was detached from the Archdiocese of St. Boniface and became an archdiocese in its own right. Archbishop A.A. Sinnott was chosen as the first archbishop of Winnipeg. The Trustees of St. Ignatius sent him their congratulations, asking

to emphasize to him our pleasure and cordial appreciation of the wisdom of Rome in selecting one so eminent, so scholarly, and so near and dear to us in the language, habits and customs of our people as the first Head of our newly created Catholic Archdiocese of Winnipeg.<sup>31</sup>

After the war, St. Ignatius parishioners continued to worship in the basement church. Some children growing up in the parish thought that only Protestants had churches above ground. Others compared the church to a dugout or to the church of the catacombs. *The Ignatian* dealt with these attitudes in November 1925, claiming that

St. Ignatius Church in its unfinished state is but one of thousands of monuments to be found all over the West to the boom years and their inevitable collapse; to the curious effects of mass psychology which conjures up visions and makes them appear almost real, and makes the dim future seem almost actual.<sup>32</sup>

Yet despite the failure to realize the grand design of 1912, the basement church was still one of the largest Catholic churches in the city, well lighted and ventilated, with good acoustics, and no real ground for complaints.

The number of parishioners continued to rise in the 1920s and the collections increased, as some measure of prosperity returned to Winnipeg. By 1928 the total liabilities of the parish were down to \$45,000. There were 643 families in the parish, totalling over 3000 persons. The school, with 320 students, was bursting at the seams. With these figures in mind, the men of the parish met on 7 May 1928 to consider building a church over the basement. They decided to build an addition to the school at the same time. Finance and building committees were set up. Instead of pursuing the design of 1912, Messrs. Northwood and Chivers, local architects, were contracted to make a new design.<sup>33</sup> Pledges to pay off the existing

<sup>29</sup> AASB Mgr. Belliveau to Father Carriere, SJ, 27 November 1915.

<sup>30</sup> *North-West Review*, 27 September 1919.

<sup>31</sup> St. Ignatius Archives, Trustees' notes.

<sup>32</sup> *The Ignatian*, November 1925.

<sup>33</sup> *The Ignatian*, June 1928.

debt allowed the parish to float a bond issue to finance the new expenses. Archbishop Sinnott approved the borrowing of \$150,000 for the project, assuring Rome that the parish was large enough and affluent enough to support a debt of that size.<sup>34</sup>

The contract to build the new church was awarded to the lowest bidder, a parishioner, Mr. Tremblay. Even with his low bid, the costs were soon found to be larger than expected, and some revisions were made to cut costs, with the advice of the architect.<sup>35</sup> Construction of the new "Gothic" church proceeded quickly in the summer and fall of 1928. It required new piers of reinforced concrete and buttresses to carry it; the former foundations were only used to carry the outside walls. It was not considered necessary to repeat the ceremony of laying the cornerstone, since the church of 1929 was to be the completion, though changed, of the original intention to have a church on the site.



Original sanctuary

The church when completed was praised as a masterpiece of planning and of simplicity of design. The colour scheme was subdued, in dark oak with trimmings in pure Gothic taste. The panelled screen surrounding the

sanctuary gave a monastic idea which blended with the rest of the furnishings.<sup>36</sup> The pews were designed to fit in with the rest of the furnishing of the church "particular regard being paid to seating comfort."<sup>37</sup> Every attempt was made to provide good lighting in the church, a good view of the altar, and good acoustics for the congregation.

When the new St. Ignatius Church was completed, Archbishop Sinnott was away in Rome. He urged that the church should be used in his absence, and the formal consecration could be delayed until his return. On 10 February 1929, Father O'Gara opened the church with a solemn High Mass, amid much rejoicing from the people of St. Ignatius who had awaited the day with a great deal of impatience. The *Ignatian* of February, 1929, summed up the sense of pride in the achievements of the first twenty-one years of existence of St. Ignatius parish.

The parish is now in the happy position of having a new church, sufficient good school accommodation, a fine auditorium and a large

outdoor area, which just about rounds out the requisite secondary needs to provide for the many and varied interests which go to make it up.

1983



St. Ignatius Church, early 1930s

## St. Ignatius Parish, 1929-1945

By Richard Hanley Grover

### PART I

#### ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON PARISH FINANCES

The first mass in the newly built St. Ignatius Church was celebrated by the pastor, Fr. Edward O'Gara, SJ, on 10 February 1929. However, because he had been absent visiting the Pope in February, His Grace Archbishop Alfred A. Sinnott was not able to give his solemn blessing of our new church until Sunday, 6 October, the feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. Archbishop Sinnott celebrated this ceremony and a subsequent Pontifical high mass with Monsignors A.A. Cherrier and T.W. Morton and five other priests from St. Ignatius and other churches in the Winnipeg area.

The first census of the new church indicated there were 3,140 parishioners representing 643 families, of which 200 families were described as "newer Canadians." Seven "nationalities" were represented in this census: 2,069 English-speaking, 387 Ruthenians, 244 Poles, 152 Metis, 128 Italians, 112 Belgians, and 48 French-

<sup>34</sup> AAW. Letter of Archbishop Sinnott, n.d.

<sup>35</sup> *The Ignatian*, September 1928.

<sup>36</sup> *The Ignatian*, February 1929.

<sup>37</sup> *The Ignatian*, September 1928.

speaking.<sup>38</sup> Evidence indicates the majority of English-speaking parishioners were of Irish descent and extremely proud of this fact. With their new church in place, St. Ignatius parish next celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Pope Pius XI in February 1930. An entire issue of *The Ignatian*, our monthly parish bulletin,<sup>39</sup> was dedicated to the Pope and included a spiritual bouquet for him.

Unfortunately, the tremendous joy of the new church was shattered by the world-wide Great Depression that began with the crash of the Wall Street market in New York on Black Friday, 25 October 1929. Its cumulative effect, combined with the most prolonged drought in the history of the prairies, devastated the economy and the people of Canada. Wheat that sold for \$1.60 a bushel in 1929 dropped to 34 cents a bushel in 1932.<sup>40</sup> In 1929 the Manitoba Government had spent \$70,000 on public relief. By 1930 the figure rose to \$1,300,000 and to \$8,000,000 by 1932.<sup>41</sup> Per capita income dropped 49% in Manitoba from 1929 to 1932. In 1932, 600,000 of 10,500,000 Canadians were unemployed, and by 1935, 10% of Canada's population was receiving public relief.<sup>42</sup> Unemployment insurance, family allowance, Canada Pension Plan, pharmacare, and legal aid did not exist for Canadians during the Depression.

St. Ignatius felt the effects of the Depression almost immediately. After the first eight months of 1930, only \$16,893.01 had been collected in parish revenue, down \$9,357.00 from the anticipated budget figure. *The Ignatian* stated in September 1930: "This falling off in our revenue has been partly due no doubt to the general economic depression of which we hear so much, but a close examination of the total contribution of individual

parishioners shows conclusively that any extremely large number have been irregular and remiss in handing in their weekly and monthly envelopes."<sup>43</sup>

In the next issue parishioners were told that St. Ignatius' financial problems "... can easily be solved by a slight additional contribution by everyone... An honest comparison of one's Church contributions with one's outlay for superfluities and amusements may bring about a change of outlook in this field of practical religion."<sup>44</sup> Sadly, the Depression's effects would worsen and could not be dismissed "easily." A small notice in the same edition of *The Ignatian* appealed to the parishioners "to send in anything that they may have which will be useful in relief work. Clothes, shoes, etc. will be gratefully received. They cannot have too many. An obligation rests upon us to provide for our poorer brethren of the parish; and it is not easy to turn a deaf ear to the many appeals that are made each Friday afternoon at the Rectory."<sup>45</sup>

The most successful money maker in the 1930s was the parish Bazaar. Organized and operated by the ladies, the Bazaar of November 1930 was a three-day event, afternoons and evenings. As *The Ignatian* noted: "On the success of the Bazaar depends our whole financial situation. But for it, we should be unable to meet interest on our debt, and we should have to curtail our good works, refuse alms to God's poor, and turn our children out of their Catholic School."<sup>46</sup>

And what a success it was! \$4,500 was raised, a sum that would be the equivalent to at least \$22,500 by 1983 dollar equivalents. Featured at the Bazaar were a tea room, dining hall, games of chance, home cooking, fancy work, a fish pond for children, a doll booth, apron booth, and the raffling of twenty-six donated items, including a side of beef, \$10 and \$5 gold pieces, coal, skates, an eiderdown comforter, stationery, and other delights.

Summing up the benefits of the Bazaar, *The Ignatian* stressed the non-material values also derived – the charity, the zeal, the drawing of people together in an atmosphere of friendship and good feeling, "a means of drawing souls nearer to God." And at the end of all the work and fun – "Our trustees will smile, for now the poor can be looked after, our children education and our debts

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<sup>38</sup> *North West Review*, 45th Anniversary, 1930. The centenary of Catholic Emancipation 1829-1929, (i.e., the right of British Catholics to vote and sit in parliament, was heralded by the October 1929. *The Ignatian*, p.12). The Easter Rebellion in Dublin 1916, followed by the freedom from British rule by Eire or Southern Ireland in 1920-21, were proud facts of recent history. Fighting as a part of the British Dominions in World War II was a patriotic irony for some St. Ignatius parishioners of Irish descent.

<sup>39</sup> *The Ignatian*, published monthly from 1924 to June 1931, and from March 1936 to June 1937. *The Ignatian* ceased publication in 1931 "owing to the stress of circumstances," (ie, the Depression.) It resumed in March 1936 and finished in June 1937 upon request from Archbishop Sinnott, 8 June 1937: "I dislike giving orders, but were I to give an order, it would be to discontinue... I want everything concentrated on the *North West Review* ... of course, you can always have in the *Review* any reasonable space you desire for parochial notes."

<sup>40</sup> R.C. Kirbyson et al., *Challenge & Survival*, Prentice Hall Ltd., 1970, p.339.

<sup>41</sup> W.L. Morton, *Manitoba, a History*, University of Toronto Press, 1967, p.423.

<sup>42</sup> Kirbyson, op.cit., pp.339, 341.

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<sup>43</sup> *The Ignatian*, September 1930, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> *The Ignatian*, October 1930, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> *The Ignatian*, November 1930, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> *The Ignatian*, November 1930, p.8. Parishioners have explained to the author that during the 1920s and 1930s most women did not work outside of their own homes. Consequently, they had time to work on bazaars and enjoyed the socializing involved. Further, it should be noted that it was the men who provided the money for the bazaars and who managed the various games of chance.

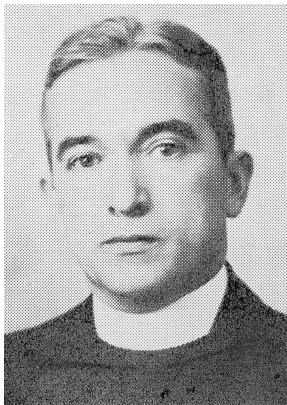
paid. And there will be a broad smile of relief and happiness on the face of the Pastor.”<sup>47</sup>

Debt from the new church and the ordinary yearly expenses of the parish continued to hound St. Ignatius throughout the 1930s. Not until mid-1941 was the finance committee able to announce a major reduction of \$6,638.30 in the church’s debt.<sup>48</sup> One method used to lower the debt was the formation of the Organ Club. Having gone to church in the basement from 1912 to 1929, parishioners were tremendously proud of their new organ. But \$8,916.75 still remained to be paid on its purchase price, so an Organ Club was formed in March 1931, and members were asked to join by making contributions of \$25, \$20, \$10, or even \$5.<sup>49</sup>

The Building Bonds loomed as the major debt and presented a dual problem. Not only did the principal have to be paid as bonds matured, but yearly interest also had to be paid. The St. Ignatius Board of Management, a committee of seven men and the pastor, struggled yearly with the bond problem. In 1932, they agreed to the sale of \$10,000 of the unsold bonds for \$8,200 and to canvass the parish for cash subscriptions or pledges of \$3,000.<sup>50</sup> In 1934 they succeeded in obtaining an extension of five years on the principal payments of the bonds. That same year, a special meeting had to be called to pay at least \$1,500 on maturing bond interest. A plea was made to reduce the interest on our church’s bank loan from 7% to 6%.

Fr. Ed O’Gara, SJ, who had been the pastor of St. Ignatius since 1914 was replaced 9 September 1934 by Fr. Joseph Primeau SJ. A heart condition forced Fr. Primeau to step down as pastor in December 1938, at which time Fr. Raymond Cadwallader, SJ, the assistant, became acting pastor of St. Ignatius. Fr. Erle Reddin SJ, a former

lawyer, guided St. Ignatius Church as its pastor from August 4, 1939 to 1947.



Fr Erle Reddin, SJ  
Pastor, 1939-1947

One of the first major decisions made during Fr. Primeau’s term as pastor was to discontinue the practice of pew rentals. Ranging from \$100 a year for pews for the front and centre aisles, to \$40 for pews at the rear and sides, the annual rental guaranteed a reserved seat at the Sunday high mass, 11:00 or 11:30 a.m., for the three or four people who might occupy such a rented pew. Name plates were placed on such pews, but because of the

embarrassment frequently felt by both pew and non-pew holders, and perhaps because of financial hardships of the Depression, the practice was discontinued at the end of 1934. Tables at the back of the church continued to be used to collect the customary 10 cents per person seat money. And 50 cent tickets were sold for parishioners who wanted to be sure of a seat for the Christmas midnight mass.<sup>51</sup>

An “Emergency Drive” in February 1935 unsuccessfully attempted to solve the financial problem by having the heads of families sign pledges promising a yearly contribution. School finances became such a problem that it was decided to create a special St. Ignatius School Board in January 1936. In April, the first Chairman of the School Board, Dr. P.H. McNulty, planned to raise the \$6,000 a year needed to operate the school by asking the heads of families with and without children in our school, to contribute \$2 per month towards paying the cost of educating one pupil. Realizing that many heads of families could not make such a contribution, the School Board also asked the young men and women of the parish (“young” later was defined to include people from 16 to 25) to support their parish school:

Young people are you doing your share? There are very few of you who do not receive some spending money for picture shows, candy, or the like. The majority of you are gainfully employed, you have money for cigarettes, etc. Stop and think it over. You, by the grace of God, have no doubt been privileged to attend a Catholic

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<sup>47</sup> *The Ignatian*, November 1930, p.9. One earlier Bazaar organized for and by the Archdiocese of Winnipeg was reputed to have raised \$100,000. Fr. O’Gara was loved by his parishioners, but not trained to handle the economic problems of the Depression. Apparently he had to be asked to surrender parish bills to the Board of Management, so embarrassed was he over the finances of St. Ignatius.

<sup>48</sup> *Rectory of St. Ignatius*, 21 January 1941. In place of the tremendous amount of organization and work to operate a bazaar, 100 St. Ignatius ladies in 1936 each pledged a \$10 donation to the church. A similar number of men pledged the same amount.

<sup>49</sup> *The Ignatian*, March 1931, p.14. The new organ had been built by the internationally famed firm of Casavant Brothers of St. Hyachinte, Quebec. Played by Mrs. Maurice Gelley, the organ became the center of the parish choir led both by her husband and also Mr. H. A. Rignold. In 1983, the organ was appraised at \$250,000 but in need of \$10,000 worth of cleaning and repairs.

<sup>50</sup> St. Ignatius Annual Meeting Minutes, 27 November 1932. Parish Archives.

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<sup>51</sup> Conversation with Mr. Jack Lindsay and the author, 7 January 1983, plus Board of Management Minutes, 26 November 1934, Parish Archives. Some Catholic parishes in the area at this time are reputed to have had ushers with metal money changers on their belts. The clicking of change could be heard during mass.



school.... We want you to contribute and to do so regularly. We are not asking very much, only one-tenth the amount you spend on amusements and pleasure. You who are earning good salaries, we expect you to assume the obligation of a head of a family ...<sup>52</sup>

The Statement of Income and Expenses for the parish in 1936 was released in February, 1937. It revealed a total income of \$30,705.86, but a net deficit of \$773.34.<sup>53</sup> Since not enough money was coming in to pay the half yearly interest charge of \$3,740 on the mortgage bonds, it was decided to launch yet another appeal from the pulpit. Further, in a letter to all parishioners Fr. Primeau wrote: "Would that I were not obliged to make this appeal! But since it is necessary I feel certain that you will not refuse to co-operate with me in providing all that is necessary for practicing our religion, than which nothing can be dearer to a Catholic heart."<sup>54</sup>

The appeal for funds the next year also was only a partial success. More bad financial news came when it was learned that the foundations under the steps and chapel of the church were sinking. Parishioners somehow raised over \$4,000 in October, 1938 to repair the damage with caissons.<sup>55</sup>

On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland, and on 10 September Canada declared war on Germany. At the cost of World War II, prosperity slowly began to reappear. Praising the parishioners of St. Ignatius for the success in their financial statement for the year ending 31 December 1939, Archbishop Sinnott wrote:

The net income of almost \$7,000 is something to be proud of and it augurs well for the future. Just keep that up and I will have no further worries. Please convey my congratulations and good wishes to your Church Committee. I admire their constance and devotedness in the work of the Parish for I have never seen anything like it elsewhere.<sup>56</sup>

War news was depressing in 1941, but the annual financial report showed a reduction of debt of

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<sup>52</sup> *The Ignatian*, April 1936, p.10.

<sup>53</sup> *The Ignatian*, February 1937, p.19.

<sup>54</sup> Parish Annual Meeting Minutes, 18 April 1937. Parish Archives. Fr. Primeau had been taught as a student at St. Mary's College in Montreal by Fr. O'Gara. Fr. Primeau gained some notoriety as the uncle of Joe Primeau who played for the Toronto Maple Leafs in the 1930s on the "Kid Line" with Jackson and Connacher.

<sup>55</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1938-39.

<sup>56</sup> Board of Management Minutes (hereafter referred to as B.O.M.), 12 February 1940. Parish Archives.

\$6,638.30.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, authorization was given to proceed with needed repairs to the sidewalk, steps, hand rail, and for a new roof to be placed on the school and chapel. Another surplus in 1942 allowed the painting of the rectory. 1943 brought an increase of \$4,000 in revenue over 1942 and permitted St. Ignatius to pay off \$3,000 on its bank loan.<sup>58</sup> For a short time, the Board of Management even considered buying the Radio Oil Company lot (now Chicken Delight) at the corner of Corydon and Stafford.<sup>59</sup> In September, 1943 a new furnace was bought for the church.

Despite the increased prosperity, but perhaps in the light of war-time sacrifice, it was decided to send special boxes of envelopes for Sunday collections to the boys and girls of the parish in January 1944. The 1944 surplus allowed plans for partitions in the school to make space for a music room and a small library. In January 1945, Fr. Reddin travelled to eastern Canada and persuaded the major bondholders, an order of religious brothers in Quebec, to postpone payment on the principal of the bonds. This resulted in a saving of \$20,000 during the life of the bonds.<sup>60</sup> In this era of financial affluence it was decided to spend \$300 for the installation of a "loud speaker" in the Church.<sup>61</sup>

On 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered, and after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered in August. Parish finances were so good that by the end of the year a total of \$10,000 worth of its outstanding bonds were bought back by the church. At a meeting of the Board of Management on 14 November 1945, Fr. Reddin suggested it was now time to discuss major alterations to our parish hall. Consequently, photographs were to be taken of the hall and mailed to a Toronto architect who had designed beautiful churches and who might have some suggestions for St. Ignatius.<sup>62</sup>

## **PART 2 ORGANIZATIONS**

The first part of this paper has focused almost entirely on the economic life of St. Ignatius Parish in the troubled years of the Depression and World War II. The social, spiritual, educational, and political life of the church continued on simultaneously with these economic hardships. In many ways the parish passed through the same annual liturgical cycle of Lent, Easter, Pentecost,

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<sup>57</sup> Rectory History, 21 January 1941. Parish Archives.

<sup>58</sup> B.O.M., 11 November 1943.

<sup>59</sup> B.O.M., 11 March 1943.

<sup>60</sup> B.O.M., 17 January 1945. Fr. Reddin was also able to have the interest rate on the bonds reduced from 5% to 3½ %.

<sup>61</sup> B.O.M., 19 April 1945.

<sup>62</sup> B.O.M., 14 November 1945.

Advent, and Christmas that we do today and that our ancestors have done for hundreds of years. But some of the practices of the Church from 1929-1945 were different, and the tremendous poverty and political instability in Canada and in Europe significantly affected our parish. It is these non-economic aspects of St. Ignatius Parish that this paper will now examine.

The St. Ignatius parish hall witnessed a steady stream of plays by groups such as the Dramatic Club, who ironically presented "the Millionaire" in April 1929, six months before the stock market crash. The parish hall had been completely renovated so that *The Ignatian* was able to proclaim "All from down town who visit the hall are unanimous in declaring it to be the best equipped hall for amateur theatricals in the city." Renovations had been done at great expense but only in the expectation that in a very short time, the hall would be paid for and become a very considerable help in increasing the revenue of the parish as well as becoming the centre of the social activities of the parish.<sup>63</sup> It is interesting to note that in the Sanctuary Society's production of the Passion Play, the Upper Room, in May 1930, thanks were given to St. Boniface College as well as St. Mary's Academy for the use of costumes. The Jesuit connection to St. Boniface was still present. Older members of our parish recall that the French presence in St. Ignatius parish and Winnipeg generally, was much more pronounced than at present.<sup>64</sup>

A number of parish organizations appeared during this era. The St. Ignatius Young Men's Sodality, having been approved by Archbishop Sinnott and the Jesuit General, held its first meeting on 2 February 1930, at which time 40 young men of the parish publicly consecrated their lives to Mary. It should be recalled that "young men" were defined as being between ages 18 and 25, and that "young women" were 16 to 25. Besides its spiritual dimension, Sodality members showed great interest in public speaking, debating, acting, athletics, and helping the poor of the parish. Members in 1931 toured the Central Steam Heating Plant, debated "the dole," heard talks on "the importance of team work among the members rather than individual organizing," and on "the widely misunderstood and miscondacted theory of evolu-

tion."<sup>65</sup> It seems that a Girls' Sodality did not exist at St. Ignatius until June 1939.<sup>66</sup>

The growing number of single, unemployed young men during the Depression presented a potentially explosive situation. The Canadian government hoped to solve this problem in part by the creation of "relief camps." Located far into the country where they would be less tempted by the rhetoric of radical urban orators, thousands of young Canadian men worked under paramilitary discipline cutting trees, building roads, and digging ditches for the sum of 20 cents a day plus board and room and a small cigarette allowance. The Regina Riot in 1935 of such relief camp young men, testified to the potential violence inherent in unemployment.

St. Ignatius Church founded a Boys' Club in October 1937 to "take care of the young men of the parish as well as counteract the evil of mixed marriages."<sup>67</sup> Renovations were made to give the Club its own space in the parish hall, where thanks to the gifts of benefactors and their own dues, they acquired three ping-pong tables, four pool tables, and a library of 600 books. As well, they had mixed parties, guest speakers, debated, and played tennis on the parish courts in the summer (today the site of the Education Centre) and hockey on the rinks in winter (today the school gymnasium, then referred to as O'Gara Stadium and reputed to be among the best outdoor rinks in Winnipeg). As in the Sodality, a Girls' Club was organized a short time later in January 1939. At about the same time, parish records indicate the formation of city-wide organizations such as the Saint Anthony's Club, composed of working girls and under the guidance of the Sisters of Service, and the formation of a retreat association for Catholic business and professional women in the parish, sponsored by the Convent of the Sacred Heart.<sup>68</sup> Reference is also made to a Catholic Women's Hostel that operated in Winnipeg.<sup>69</sup>

Ladies of the parish participated in the League of the Sacred Heart which had grown to approximately 500 members by 1931, all of whom received its paper, the *Canadian Messenger*.<sup>70</sup> The group that seemed most

<sup>63</sup> *The Ignatian*, 7 April 1929, p. 10. Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Latremouille produced many of the plays at St. Ignatius in this era.

<sup>64</sup> *The Ignatian*, 7 April 1929, p.10. St. Ignatius had been founded under the direction of Bishop Langevin and not until 1915 was the English-speaking Archdiocese of Winnipeg created. The Canadian Jesuits who managed our parish did not split into an English speaking unit until 1924, (i.e. Upper Canada Province speaks English, the Lower Canada Province speaks French). Thus, prior to 1924 Canadian Jesuits studied in the French language. Our first pastor, Fr. Drummond, SJ, walked to St. Ignatius from St. Boniface College in 1908.

<sup>65</sup> Sodality Minutes, 28 January and 23 September 1931. Parish Archives.

<sup>66</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1938-39.

<sup>67</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1937-38. Mr. Bill Luce recalls that skating with the opposite sex on the same rink was another evil that was to be counteracted among some Winnipeg parishes. He also recalls a miniature bowling alley operated by the Boys' Club in the parish hall.

<sup>68</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1937-38, and 1938-39.

<sup>69</sup> *The Ignatian*, April 1936, p.11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ignatian*, October 1930, p. 23. Ladies and men of the parish were warned of the dangers of class prejudice: "We can see to it that no social distinctions, no petty jealousy will blind us to the charity of Christ. We can stop being snobs as a step towards

active was the St. Ignatius Women's Guild, begun on February 3, 1935. The Guild raised thousands of dollars via memberships, teas, donations, special collections, and its entertainment committee. The entertainment committee promoted garden parties, bridge clubs, mite boxes, cook books, knitted dresses, doughnut sales, theatre parties, baking sales, raffles, and even telephone bridge. Over the five year period 1935-1940, the Women's Guild actually raised \$9,737.10. During the same period they found many worthwhile projects on which to spend their money including: donations to pay off the organ debt, masses for deceased members, furniture and dishes for the rectory, vestments and articles for the altar, and gifts to the priests. The School and Home Committee provided funds for the dressing of children from poor families for First Communion, books for the school, minor renovations to the school, carfare for poor children, and cocoa for school children on First Friday. There was also a hospital committee, a friendly visiting committee, and a press committee. But the heart of the Women's Guild seemed to be the Home Welfare Committee. It was this committee, working together with Fr. Pius McLellan SJ, which specialized in helping the poor of our parish.

Fr. McLellan spent twenty-two years of his priestly career working at St. Ignatius, from 1925 to 1947. His early work aimed at uniting the groups and classes of the parish – the River Heights section, the Crescentwood section of Fort Rouge, the people south of Corydon and east of Stafford to Pembina Highway, and the parishioners in the Riverview area and east of Osborne Street to Main Street south.

There being little association among the groups, Fr. McLellan began his missionary work by linking up the Riverview Catholics with the working classes west of the railroad tracks, consolidating his work as he went along and then he conceived the idea of parish parties – inviting all to come to the parish hall for entertainment.<sup>71</sup>

He knew every family in the parish and had many friends among the non-Catholics of the area, many of whom became converts because of him. The Metis and half-breed families living in shanties in Rooster Town and Moccasin Town, now the area of Grant Park Shopping Centre and the Pan Am Pool, were all visited by Fr. McLellan.

Many of them were extremely poor, and when in trouble he was their rescuer. He never hesitated to help the poor people. He and Fr. O'Gara had the rectory piled with clothes, food and wearing apparel for men, women and children. Few knew about this – very few.<sup>72</sup>

The Women's Guild appears to have reorganized into the Catholic Women's League in 1939. Our church's response to the C.W.L. was the best in the diocese – 255 members. At the National Convention of the C.W.L. held in Winnipeg in June, 1939, St. Ignatius women played a very active part.

Men of the parish formed the St. Ignatius Holy Name Society at a special meeting 27 October 1935. Over 150 members promised to receive communion as a group at the 9 a.m. Mass on the second Sunday of each month. Members also agreed to prepare the school rinks, and supply light for the rinks, stoves, and both dressing rooms. They took over the duty of looking after the Sunday collections, and provided transportation for a priest to the Headingly jail. Further, the Society met once a month to discuss spiritual items as well as study topics of social interest. A book used by the study session in the winter of 1936-37 discussed basic principles relating to human society, the state, forms of government, rights of men, rights of property, charity, and public relief. The Society also hosted "smokers" for its members and very popular annual Father-Son banquets. Later annual reports to the Jesuit provincial, the *Historia Domus*, would note that the Society "is not thriving as it should be," and that "for some reason it seems impossible to get the men here interested in this society."<sup>73</sup>

Children of St. Ignatius who attended the parish school averaged 380 per year, grades 1 to 8. All classes were taught by the Sisters of the Holy Name, who were driven back and forth every day from their residence at St. Mary's Academy. Signs of the Depression appeared in such debating topics in March, 1936 as "Resolved that Italy has a case against Ethiopia," "Resolved that Social Credit is an advantage to Canada" (the Rev. "Bible Bill" Aberhart's Social Credit party became the government in Alberta in 1935), and "Resolved that the press should be controlled by the government." Students at that time also benefitted from special trips to downtown movie theatres and guest speakers, such as the district examiner of postal service, who demonstrated the postal routine "by means of lantern slides and a talking machine."<sup>74</sup> Christmas

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being saints." *The Ignatian*, November 1936, p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Obituary of Fr. Pius McClellan, SJ, by Fr. John McCarthy, SJ, 4 August 1956. *Rectory History*. Mr. Dick Van Wallegghem, son of a Belgian dairy farmer in the area, recalls that serious crime in the Rooster Town area did not begin until white families later moved into the area.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1937-38, and 1938-39.

<sup>74</sup> *The Ignatian*, March 1936, p. 15. Students and families from the parish also made annual trips in the summer months to Camp Morton. This Catholic camp, five miles north of Gimli on Lake Winnipeg, was managed for many years by the dedicated

parties, picnics at City Park, sports competitions, crowning of the statue of Mary in Many, Junior Parliament elections organized by the Knights of Columbus, school patrols, skating parties, baseball, Junior Red Cross, the postponement of opening school for one week in September 1941 because of a polio epidemic, and many other events indicate the need for a recorded history strictly of the school itself.

Many of the older girls then, as today, went on to St. Mary's Academy, while the boys graduated to the Jesuit-operated St. Paul's College – a combination senior high school and university, located on the corner of Ellice and Vaughan Streets. St. Paul's connection was always evident through the Jesuits who came over to celebrate mass, hear confessions, and preach missions to the parishioners of St. Ignatius. Perhaps the most famous and beloved was the Rector of St. Paul's, Fr. John Holland S.J. who, in the midst of the economic and political turmoil of 1936 addressed the graduates of St. Mary's Academy:

If we cannot depend upon the graduates from our Catholic colleges to bring the world back to God, on whom can we depend? You are going to be sifted as wheat by a materialistic world. Yours is the great work of going out and spreading Christ's truths, and in so doing you will be an honor to your Church, your College and your God.<sup>75</sup>

St. Ignatius Girl Guides and Boy Scouts seem to have begun in January 1937, although the "History of St. Ignatius Rectory," a daily account written by the pastor, noted the opening of a newly formed Boy Scout Troop on 19 September 1940. The Troop was formed by transferring all the Catholic boys from St. George's Anglican Church Troop plus approximately twenty new boys from St. Ignatius school. One of the joys of the Scouts was a joint Christmas party with the parish Cubs during which "The Coca Cola Company showed talkies and distributed a bottle of Coca Cola to each boy."<sup>76</sup> A highlight for the Guides was winning the Bessborough Shield on 28 April 1942 for being the best guides in all Manitoba. The competition that year was in making a scrapbook on Canada's War Effort.<sup>77</sup>

All school age children were supposed to attend the parish school. Numerous articles in *The Ignatian* warned parents that "no school can prepare them to lead a truly Catholic life save a Catholic school ... what a folly to

imagine that the religious needs of the child are satisfied by the half hour catechetical instruction of a Sunday school."<sup>78</sup> However, an average of approximately 100 Catholic public school students did attend Sunday school, "though some who could and should come are never seen," noted *The Ignatian* in March, 1936. That year, Fr. Cormier S.J. was the superintendent and six ladies served as teachers. Catechism was also taught in the south end of the parish by Fr. Leahy S.J. at 719 Osborne (this site later shifted to the Park Theatre at 698 Osborne) and by Miss Dorothy Hodgson at 294 Oakwood where another 35 children attended. Sunday School then was held at 3 p.m., although during some years students were asked to come after regular school on Friday afternoons.

### PART 3 SPIRITUAL

The third part of this study of St. Ignatius Church 1929-45, will concentrate on the spiritual side of the parish. Doctrine has not changed since then, but there were differences in regulations, practices, and observations. This was the time when all masses were celebrated by a priest with his back to the people most of the time, removed from the people by an altar rail, speaking in Latin throughout the mass. Most responses were by the altar boys (members of the St. John Berchman's Sanctuary Society – girls were not permitted to serve mass), who gallantly replied to the priest's "Dominus vobiscum" with their fractured Latin "Et cum spiritu tuo." A solemn high mass might include the beautiful Gregorian chant of the Mass of the Angels. Communion was received kneeling and on the tongue, but only if the communicant had nothing to eat or drink from midnight on. Because of this rule, most people were married at special wedding masses held as early as 7 a.m. Mixed marriages, a Catholic to a non-Catholic, were not permitted in the main church. The couple would have to settle for a small side chapel wedding.

Nuns wore the long black habits of their foundress, and modestly covered their head and face with a wimple. Priests also wore long black cassocks much of the time. Visitations to the homes of the parishioners by the pastor and other Jesuit assistants was a regular event. Vocations to the sisterhood and priesthood were much more numerous. The parish thrilled to the first mass celebrated at St. Ignatius from boys who had been raised in the parish, such as Fr. J. Barker SJ, 1936, and Fr. Maurice Cooney in 1937.

The jubilee of Pope Pius X in February 1930 and the installation of his successor Pope Pius XII in 1939 were causes for celebration. Spiritual bouquets detailing numbers of communions, masses, rosaries, and "spiritual

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St. Ignatius layman, Mr. Bill English.

<sup>75</sup> *The Ignatian*, June 1936, p. 14.

<sup>76</sup> "Rectory History," 19 December 1940.

<sup>77</sup> "Rectory History," 28 April 1942.

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<sup>78</sup> *The Ignatian*, September 1929, p. 12.

ejaculations” would be offered on such occasions. First communion and confirmation on the same day by His Grace Archbishop Sinnott provided joy to children and parents. Missions were preached by visiting priests, and Fr. Woods could be heard many Sunday evenings at 6:30 in 1936 talking on Catholic doctrine and practise. The book rack at the back of the church was well stocked with literature from the Catholic Truth Society. With the growth of both fascism and communism during the Depression, the Pope encouraged Catholics to support their own press. The role of the Catholic press was “to correct and refute the lies and misrepresentations and appalling ignorance of the secular press.”<sup>79</sup>

Commenting on the Spanish Civil War, an article in the February 1937 *The Ignatian* observed:

We are witnessing a gradual division of the world into two camps, the followers of God and the haters of God. We see the results of the anti-God regime in Russia, Mexico and Spain... Catholics in Spain are enduring the acid test. How are we preparing for our hour of trial? How are we fortifying ourselves and the coming generation to check the calamity before it falls upon us?... Each separate family, each separate individual must be drilled and in fighting trim.<sup>80</sup>

On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the dedication of Canada to St. Joseph in March 1937, *The Ignatian* stated: “When nations are saved from some almost universal calamity, there is bound to be a saint at the bottom of it. There is a Noah for every deluge. May not Canada some day see that her salvation from the Communistic deluge was the work of St. Joseph... ?”<sup>81</sup>

The 1930s and 1940s witnessed great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Numerous articles on Mary appeared on the parish bulletin. Parishioners learned that the concept of dedicating the month of May to Mary originated from a Jesuit, Father Latonia, in 16th century Rome, and that “The original intention of starting this devotion was to counteract immorality and infidelity among the students.”<sup>82</sup> The month of October had been selected specially as the month of the Rosary, originating with the great victory of the Catholic navy over the Muslims at the battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571. “The Rosary has been the great weapon against heresy and infidelity, but it is also the chief safeguard for family peace and holiness,”... particularly ... “during times of storm and stress when the wolves of heresy threatened to

devour the faithful children of Jesus and Mary.”<sup>83</sup> The Holy Hour every Sunday evening featured the rosary, special readings, and Benediction.

Benediction and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament were the main features of the Forty Hour Devotion that ended on Sunday with the Feast of Christ the King in October. School children and the women of the parish would adore during the day, while the men and senior altar boys kept vigil during the night, usually under the direction of the Holy Name Society. The time of the Novena of Grace in honor of St. Francis Xavier was 4-12 March.

Fasting and abstinence regulations were much stricter than today. As mentioned, Catholics could not receive communion unless they had nothing to eat or drink since midnight, and this included even a drink of water or, in some instance, water for a toothbrush. Many a party had to make sure all food and drink was brought out well in advance, so that Catholics could make their midnight deadline. Similarly, meat was not to be eaten on Friday, so on Friday evening meats were not served until after midnight. Lenten regulations were particularly stringent. Everybody between 21 and 59 was obliged to fast on every day in lent except Sunday.

Breakfast may consist of about two ounces of anything but meat. One full meal a day is allowed and it may be taken at noon or in the evening. If at noon, then the evening repast should be about 8 ounces; if the full meal is taken in the evening a lighter (8 ounces) meal is taken at noon. To those who fast, meat is allowed at one meal on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, except of course the Saturday of Ember Week.

The exemptions are:

1. Those who are ill or whose health is such that a doctor advises against fasting.
2. Women in pregnancy.
3. Those who work, ether intellectual or manual, in such that fasting would be detrimental either to their work or their health. When there is a doubt, a priest, either the Pastor or Confessor, should be consulted.<sup>84</sup>

## PART 4: WORLD WAR II

The last section of this history of St. Ignatius will examine our parish during World War II, 1939-1945. On

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<sup>79</sup> *The Ignatian*, March 1936, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> *The Ignatian*, November 1936, p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> *The Ignatian*, February 1937, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> *The Ignatian*, March 1931, p. 5.

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<sup>83</sup> *The Ignatian*, May, 1936, p. 18. Perhaps this month was chosen because of its tradition as being “the merry month of May.”

<sup>84</sup> *The Ignatian*, October 1936, p. 8-9.

4 August 1939, Fr. Erle Reddin, S.J. was appointed the new Pastor. German aggression under Nazi Fuehrer Adolf Hitler in Austria and Czechoslovakia culminated in the 1.7 million men German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. By 10 September Canada had declared war against Germany. On 7 December 1941 Japan attacked the American navy at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii. The next day Japan struck the British Colony of Hong Kong, which was defended in part by Winnipeg soldiers in the Canadian army. Thus, Canada also declared war on Japan. The first sign in the records that St. Ignatius Church had become involved appeared on 27 January 1940, when it was noted that parishioners would be asked to support the Knights of Columbus effort to finance "army huts" in Winnipeg. The "army huts" were similar to a hotel where armed forces personnel could sleep, eat, read, or relax through an evening of entertainment and dancing.

In February 1940, the CWL members were given instructions on knitting for the troops by the Red Cross. Later the ladies would send packages of cigarettes. School children were encouraged to collect the silver paper from the cigarette wrappings, and mothers were urged to collect cooking fats for use in the production of explosives. Many trucks were set aside and horses put back into service, hauling wagons in the summer and sleighs in the winter. Gasoline, as well as being expensive, was rationed for the war effort, as were many other items.

King George VI requested that 26 May 1940 be designated as a special day of prayer for the Empire as the R.A.F. began the air battle for Britain. That summer Archbishop Sinnott ordered the Litany of the Saints to be prayed for successful crops. September 8th was designated as another Empire Day of Prayer. Several national days of prayer were to follow throughout the war years. The parish decided to pray for peace with victory at the conclusion of the Holy Hour every Sunday evening. The new Pope, Pius XII, requested Catholics throughout the world to pray for peace on 24 November 1940. Perhaps in part to assist in uniting Canadians for the war effort, St. Ignatius began Church Unity Octave Prayers on 12 January 1941 after each mass for the next eight days.

To further cement this ecumenical war effort, St. Ignatius welcomed the arrival of the Hon. F.F. McWilliams, the Lieut. Gov. of Manitoba, and his wife to the 11:30 a.m. high mass on 6 April 1941, Palm Sunday. With much pomp and ceremony the congregation and choir sang God Save the King as the Lieut. Governor's party took their seats. Fr. Reddin welcomed them and talked about the importance of praying for both King and Country. After mass the choir sang an adapted version of the lyrics of the famous O'Salutaris as a Hymn for Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen, first sung in England by Catholic children, and now sung for the first time in

Canada. A reception was then held where the Lieut. Gov. met the executive members of the parish organizations.

Sgt. Air Gunner Benjamin Kamedish was the first St. Ignatius parishioner to be killed while on duty. On 4 August 1941 a requiem high mass was offered for the repose of his soul. A similar mass followed for Flight Lieut. Byrne Jobin on November 19th. The record appears incomplete but does note the deaths in September 1942 of John Hargreaves RCAF, killed overseas, William Roddy RCAF, killed overseas, and J.J. Carey RCAF, missing over Germany. Canadians, including the people of St. Ignatius, were horrified to learn the results of the first major battle of Canadians since Hong Kong – the raid along the coast of France at Dieppe, 19 August 1942. Of the 6,000 soldiers on the raid, 5000 were Canadians and included Col. F. Eric Bell, husband of Mrs. Kathleen Bell (nee Hanley). Of the 5,000 Canadians, 900 were killed, 500 were wounded and 2,000 were taken prisoner.

At the parish level, most of the single unemployed men who had endured the Depression suddenly found work in the armed forces or war time industry. Parish records indicate most joined up during the fall and winter of 1940-41, the largest number joining the RCAF. Young ladies also found war work or replaced the men who went overseas. By 1942-43, "All but a half dozen of our boys over 18 have joined the forces, and most of our girls are working long hours..." Fr. Reddin noted an increase in both marriages and church collections because of the increase in economic prosperity, "despite the higher and additional taxes to which the people are subject..."<sup>85</sup>

Because St. Ignatius only went up to grade 8 our youths were ready only for Scouts and Guides. Older boys of the parish who attended St. Paul's were all enrolled in the College's navy cadet program. It must have been a thrill when the St. Paul's "rugby team" visited our Young Peoples' Club along with several members of the Blue Bomber team on 20 November 1941.

On 18 January 1942, the St. Ignatius Young Peoples' Club (Young Men and Girls' Clubs had been forced to unite because of declining war time youth figures) hosted 35 Catholic boys from the Air Training School. Their Chaplain, Fr. Levesque accompanied them and requested that they be allowed to return on a more regular basis.

That 22 April, the same St. Ignatius Club put on a special presentation of their play for the members of the Armed Forces. The play also toured to the St. Boniface Tuberculosis Sanatorium (today the St. Amant Centre).

To initiate and publicize the Victory Bond Campaign, 30 sailors came to the 11:30 a.m. Sunday mass on 18 October 1942. Ever aware of the parish debt, Fr. Reddin suggested in 1943 that 115 parishioners were estimated to be in the financial position of being able to buy \$100 War Bonds and then turn them over to St. Ignatius. Response

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<sup>85</sup> *Ignatian*, February 1936, p. 18.



to this proposal by the parishioners is not recorded.<sup>86</sup> War finances also were noted when government regulations required special War Risk Insurance due to the possibility of “damage from military aircraft.” Having seen the destruction done to London and other cities by bombing apparently frightened government officials. However, since the additional insurance premiums would have cost St. Ignatius an extra \$335 per year, the Board of Management decided not to insure.<sup>87</sup> War time restrictions on the necessary materials also forced St. Ignatius to abandon plans to install steam heat for its buildings, through the Central Heating Company in River Heights.<sup>88</sup>

The major event of 1944 in the parish was the arrival in Winnipeg on 4 May of the Bishop of Saskatoon. He had recently been appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Winnipeg to assist the apparently senile and often cantankerous Archbishop Sinnott. Archbishop Murray moved directly into the St. Ignatius rectory, as his residence, converting the recreation room into his office and using Fr. Reddin’s bedroom. Thereafter, a large number of the clergy from the diocese, including Archbishop Sinnott, came to St. Ignatius to visit the new Archbishop. To emphasize his position, Archbishop Murray was taken to the Catholic parishes in the diocese where Confirmation ceremonies were repeated at each parish.<sup>89</sup>

The beaches of Normandy in France witnessed the Allied Invasion of Nazi Europe on 6 June 1944. By 29 April 1945, the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini had been captured and executed. Rumours circulated that Hitler had committed suicide as Soviet soldiers captured Berlin. Finally, on 7 May 1945 the German government under Admiral Karl Doenitz surrendered unconditionally. The war in Europe was over! The American Air Force dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, on Hiroshima on 6 August and on Nagasaki on 9 August. Stunned, Japan agreed to terms of surrender 14 August, and signed a formal treaty of surrender on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, on 2 September 1945. World War II was over! The world and St. Ignatius Church could return to “normal.”

February 27, 1983.

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<sup>86</sup> *Historia Domus*, 1942,3. An appropriate plaque remembering those parishioners who died during World War II while fighting for Canada is an item some parishioners state should be placed in our church.

<sup>87</sup> B.O.M. 30 September 1943.

<sup>88</sup> B.O.M., 12 November 1942.

<sup>89</sup> B.O.M., 30 September 1943. Four-foot long logs of wood, as well as bunker oil was burned in the furnace. The wood was delivered by horse and sleigh from dealers near the railway tracks in the vicinity of Osborne & Pembina Highway. Poorer parishes sometime resorted to burning sawdust, which had to be shovelled into the furnace on a 24 hour basis.



St. Ignatius School, Last Addition and Gymnasium

## St. Ignatius Parish, 1945-1962

by Richard Lebrun

The years from 1945 to 1962 were, for the parishioners of St. Ignatius Parish as for most North American Catholics, a time of optimism and expansion. The Great Depression and the war years were behind. The prestige of the papacy was at an all time high. Pope Pius XII was revered for his efforts to humanize the war and for his appeals for respect for human rights. Catholics were proud of the Vatican’s help to war-time victims of political and racial persecution. Post-war optimism may have been tempered by the shadow of the A-bomb and the Communist threat, but North American Catholics were generally confident that the Church had all the answers of the problems of the world – if only the Church’s message was sufficiently known. Great faith was placed in Catholic magazines, newspapers, and Catholic pamphlet literature. At St. Ignatius volunteers from the Married Couples Sodality worked hard to ensure that every family in the parish subscribed to at least one Catholic periodical.<sup>90</sup> Parishioners were also encouraged to take advantage of the well-stocked pamphlet rack at the back of the church. When Father Daniel Lord, SJ, one of the most prolific and optimistic of Catholic pamphlet authors, spoke at the Odeon Theatre in 1950, he received a warm recommendation in the parish bulletin.<sup>91</sup> There was also great enthusiasm for Father Peyton; in September 1949 parishioners from St. Ignatius joined over 60,000 other Manitoba Catholics at his vast Rosary Crusade Rally at Polo Park.<sup>92</sup> A rosary a day, and the problems would all go away. Today we may perhaps look back with a smile at the innocence of that post-war world, but this was the period in which St. Ignatius Parish reached maturity.

The return of the men from the war was soon followed by a “baby boom” and a rapid growth in the number of pupils seeking admission to the parish school. This increased demand was also the consequence of the growth of Winnipeg to the south and west. “Roostertown,” the shantytown that once clustered along the railway right-of-way that ran where Grant Avenue runs today, gave way to new middle-class homes. Remembering perhaps the hard times of the 1930s, the

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<sup>90</sup> *Parish Bulletin*, November 1952

<sup>91</sup> *Parish Bulletin*, 17 September 1950

<sup>92</sup> *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 September 1949

initial parish response to increasing enrollment pressure was conservative. Classrooms were added piecemeal in an attempt to keep up. Although two classrooms were added in 1952, and another two in 1954, the fall of 1955 saw still another two classrooms being improvised in the basement of the church as enrollment soared to over 600 pupils.



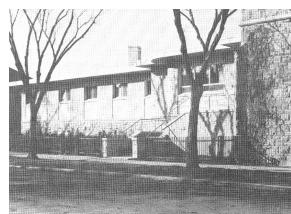
Fr Rod MacGilvray  
Pastor, 1947-1953

In 1946, the original parish boundaries had been restricted by the establishment of Our Lady of Victory Memorial Parish in what had been the southeast portion of the area originally served by St. Ignatius. The annual meeting of the parish in February 1948 was told that the new parish had cost St. Ignatius 46 "boxholders" and some \$3,000 in annual revenue.<sup>93</sup> But by the 1950s too rapid growth rather than "losses" became the crucial challenge.

Father Vincent Shaughnessy, who became pastor in 1953, provided leadership for a two-pronged attack on the problem. One of the first things that he did was to persuade the archbishop to establish a new parish to serve the southwest part of Winnipeg.<sup>94</sup> St. John Brebeuf Parish was begun in late 1955 as a "mission" under the care of the Jesuits of St. Ignatius. By the fall of 1955 a new school building was nearing completion at the corner of Fleet and Lanark, and St. John Brebeuf School classes began their term in the basement of St. Ignatius Church. This meant that St. Ignatius accommodated more than 670 pupils that fall.<sup>95</sup> About 345 families, considerable financial support, and the ministry of a Jesuit from the Jessie Avenue rectory (Father Clarey Hinphy) were contributions made by St. Ignatius to the establishment of the new parish. Perhaps one should also count Father Rod MacGilvray, who had served as pastor of St. Ignatius from 1947 to 1953 and who went on to become pastor at St. John Brebeuf in 1958.

With the establishment of St. John Brebeuf Parish and the possibility of stabilizing the population of the parish and the parish school, longer range planning was undertaken. Beginning in the fall of 1955, the Parish Board of Management started studying a master plan for the parish.<sup>96</sup> The problems were formidable. There were thought to be between 1,000 and 1,200 Catholic families

resident within the parish boundaries. The excellent reputation of St. Ignatius and its school meant that Catholics sought "frantically" to purchase houses in the district.<sup>97</sup> Even with a school accommodating 600 pupils, which is what was planned, about half of the Catholic children of the parish would still be attending the eleven public schools operating within the parish boundaries. Moreover, recent experience had shown that it was easier to meet the capital costs of new construction than to find the funds to operate new classrooms. In September 1954 school operating costs were contributing to an accumulating debt at the rate of \$1,200 per month.<sup>98</sup> The whole enterprise would have been impossible, of course, without the dedicated services of the sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary who in the mid-50s made up about 75% of the school staff.



The Convent converted  
from the old school

The master building plan that was presented to the parish in 1956 called for an eight-classroom addition to the school, a gymnasium, a convent (on the site of the original school), and a new rectory. The convent, planned as a residence for twenty-one teaching sisters, would be a great convenience. In those days the sisters were not permitted to have drivers' licenses and so were not able to drive themselves back and forth from their residence at St. Mary's Academy. Some blamed the obstinacy of the Mother Superior, but considering the limited peripheral vision allowed by the habit worn then, perhaps Mother knew best!<sup>99</sup> In any case the residence at the Academy was so short of space that some of the nuns who taught at St. Ignatius during the day had to use classrooms at St. Mary's for their bedrooms. The need for a new rectory had been discussed in the Board of Management as early as 1951.<sup>100</sup> With four or five Jesuits normally in residence, the old rectory at 924 Jessie was judged inadequate in living and office space.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes, Annual Meeting, 2 February 1948, Parish Archives.

<sup>94</sup> Letter, Fr. V. Shaughnessy to Father General Janssens, 12 January 1956, Parish Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Letter, Fr. V. Shaughnessy to Fr. Gordon George, 25 September 1957, Parish Archives

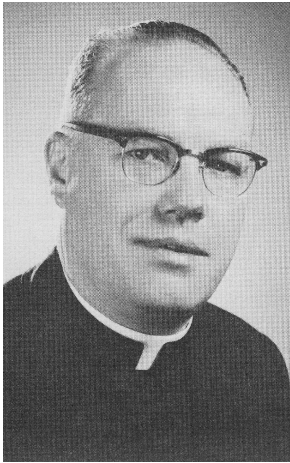
<sup>96</sup> Minutes, Board of Management, 26 October 1955, Parish Archives.

<sup>97</sup> Letter, Fr. Shaughnessy to Fr. Janssens, March 1955, Parish Archives.

<sup>98</sup> *Parish Bulletin*, September 1954.

<sup>99</sup> Letter, Fr. Shaughnessy to Fr. Janssens, March 1955, Parish Archives.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes, Board of Management, May, 1951, Parish Archives.



Fr Vincent Shaughnessy, SJ  
Pastor, 1953-1961

Parishioners responded with great generosity to the Master Building Plan Campaign that was launched in 1956 under the chairmanship of Mr. John Lindsey. The goal was to raise \$300,000, a very large sum at that time. It should be recorded that this was at a time when many from the parish were also contributing time and money to the fund-raising campaign in support of St. Paul's College and its move to the University of Manitoba campus. Construction of the school addition and the auditorium

was completed in the summer of 1958; this was followed immediately by the demolition of the original eight-room school and the construction of the convent in 1959. As part of the convent project, an enlarged sacristy was added to the church and the former "winter chapel" was converted for the use of the sisters. Except for the administration centre and rectory (which was constructed in 1964), the present "parish plant" had been completed. It should be added that the first post-war project had been an extensive renovation of the church basement in 1949.

In retrospect, it's perhaps a bit ironic that just as these parish construction projects reached completion and the material future of St. Ignatius Parish appeared well provided for, two things happened that led, within a decade, to a very different kind of Church than the mid-1950 planners had anticipated. The first event was the sudden availability in the early 1960s of the birth control pill. The second was the death of Pope Pius XII and the election of Pope John XXIII. Within three months of his election in October 1958, this saintly old man astonished everyone by announcing his intention of calling an ecumenical council. And as everyone knows, the Second Vatican Council, which opened in October 1962 and completed its work in December 1965, was to usher in an exciting and confusing era of renewal in the Church. But it should not be imagined that all the changes began with the Council. There were, in fact, many "antecedents" to Vatican II, and anyone who looks into the parish records soon discovers that pre-Vatican II currents of change were very much evidence in St. Ignatius Parish.

For most Catholics, the most striking and visible changes coming out of the Council were those having to do with the liturgy. Suddenly, we would have the Mass in English – and while many would welcome the gain in intelligibility and participation, others would lament the loss of familiar rituals and music and the sense of tradition, mystery, and transcendence that they had felt in the old liturgy. But while the "liturgical revolution" would seem to some to have come out of nowhere with astonishing swiftness, it was, in great part, the culmination of a century-old Liturgical Movement. This

movement had begun in the early nineteenth century in France with learned Benedictine monks who had sought the renewal of monastic life through the restoration of the traditional music and liturgy of the Roman rite. But by the early twentieth century the goal had shifted to include lay people. Lay participation in the official prayer of the Church would, it was hoped, deepen the spiritual lives of all Christians. These reform efforts were endorsed by Pope Pius X whose often quoted saying was "we must not sing and pray at Mass, but we must sing and pray the Mass." A vernacular liturgy was not the intention of the early reformers, but the logic of the Liturgical Movement would eventually lead to the realization that most people can sing and pray best in their own language.

It's hard to date precisely when the Liturgical Movement began to have a major impact at St. Ignatius, but by 1954 "pray the Mass" leaflet missals (with English and Latin texts on opposite pages) were available in the pews. A revised Easter Vigil Service and new rules for fasting for evening Masses were also introduced that same year. In 1959 the "dialogue Mass" (in which the Latin responses previously restricted to the altar servers were given by the entire congregation) was authorized for regular use in the parish.

Another thrust of the Liturgical Movement was the simplification of church decorations and architecture. This involved a reaction against the proliferation of plaster statues, vigil lights, and sentimental paintings that had often cluttered up Catholic churches. Here again, St. Ignatius felt the impulse of reform well before Vatican II. It was Father Shaughnessy who undertook simplifying the sanctuary to reveal the original architectural beauty of the church. This meant removal of the "ambulatory" (a curtained walkway that had gone around the back of the sanctuary) as well as the removal from the altar of two large light-bearing statues of angels. These changes were a topic of considerable controversy – the February 1954 annual meeting heard Father Shaughnessy joke about "the case of the disappearing angels."<sup>101</sup>

Change, it has been said, is a sign of life. The vitality of St. Ignatius Parish in these years was also evident in the transformation of old parish organizations and the appearance of new groups and activities. Some of the changes seem to have been the consequence of the rapid turnover of priests; in the sixteen years from 1946 to 1962, St. Ignatius had four different pastors and fifteen different assistants. Father Shaughnessy, for one, found these continual reassignments a cause for some complaint; new men would start new parish activities which then tended to wither on their departure.<sup>102</sup> But perceptions of needs changed too and new organizations and activities also reflected initiatives begun elsewhere. The Christian Family Movement (CFM), for example, was a form of family-oriented Catholic Action with its origins in

<sup>101</sup> Minutes, Annual Meeting, 23 February 1954, Parish Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, Fr. Shaughnessy to Fr. Janssens, March 1955, Parish Archives.

Chicago. By the early 1960s CFM took over the sponsorship of the Cana Conferences that had been initiated in the mid-50s by the Married Couples Sodality.

Looked at from today's perspective, three trends of interest can be discerned in the evolution of parish organizations during these years. One is impressed, in the first place, by the sheer number of groups and activities that grew up. When the parish celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1962, the commemorative brochure that was published listed twenty-one "auxiliary organizations." Secondly, there appears to have been a clear trend towards more responsibility for lay persons. A third trend, which was just beginning, was greater recognition of the importance of the role of women in the parish. It was not until 1958 that women were first invited to the annual meeting.<sup>103</sup> Father Shaughnessy wanted to invite the president of the Catholic Women's League to participate in the Board of Management, but the bishop cautioned that the time was not yet ripe. Greater responsibility for lay persons involved adjustments for all concerned. For example, when the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) began in the fall of 1957, it was introduced as a group that would be run by the young people themselves. But by the following April, the CYO chaplain, Father Bob Chase, was warning the young people that their movement was not "Catholic" enough – it was in danger of becoming just another community centre.<sup>104</sup>

If the maturity of the parish was evident in the near completion of the parish plant and the establishment of a full complement of parish organizations, it was also evident in services to the broader Catholic community. Here contributions by St. Ignatius and its parishioners would include numerous vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and solid and consistent support for St. Mary's Academy, St. Paul's High School, and St. Paul's College. St. Ignatius also played a leading role in preparing a unified Catholic brief to the provincial Royal Commission on Education in 1957 (an initiative that would eventually lead to provincial grants for students in separate schools). Two services to Catholics from all over Winnipeg were the provision of an Inquiry Forum or Information Centre for persons seeking to know more about the Catholic Faith, and the hosting of the pre-marriage course sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Looking farther afield, the parish also provided assistance to the Jesuit mission in Darjeeling, India.

But by the time the parish began its 50th anniversary celebrations in the fall of 1961, parishioners were also being called to look beyond the bounds of the Catholic community. (The 50th anniversary celebrations were keyed to the celebration of the first Mass in the basement church in March 1912 rather than to the actual establishment of the parish in 1908.) Father Hugh Kierans, who was then Rector of St. Paul's College, preached the sermon at the solemn pontifical Mass that

opened the 50th anniversary festivities in October 1961. Father Kierans reminded his listeners that "God's work is never done," and told them that "the challenge of 1961 to the men and women of this parish is no less exacting than the challenge of 1911." He suggested that "In North America it is very possible that in our pre-occupation with establishing the Church, we have spent little time on any problems but our own." But now, he went on, "the abyss of misunderstanding that divides us from others is the great challenge of our time. The time has passed when the parishioner could afford to occupy himself exclusively with the problems of his parish. A wide perspective is now opening before you."<sup>105</sup> Father Kierans' prophetic call was for the fruits of maturity – responsible Catholic participation in issues affecting everyone in the community. He expected the kinds of things parishioners of St. Ignatius are involved in today – the ecumenical movement, social justice, greater understanding and support for the native people in our city, respect for life, third world concerns, etc.

Growth towards spiritual maturity is more difficult to document. One would like evidence from ordinary Sunday homilies, catechetical methods, and the kinds of advice sought and given in the confessional. But there are a couple of items from the *Parish Bulletin* that suggest how different were attitudes and expectations of both priests and parishioners 20 to 35 years ago. The first bit of evidence is from a *Bulletin* from September 1945 in which parents were reminded of "their obligation in conscience of sending their children to a Catholic school." Citing a papal statement on the matter, the *Bulletin* proceeded as follows: "Dreadful is the guilt of parents who make light of their responsibilities in this regard. If Catholic parents disregard the words of Christ and his Vicar, then their love of their children is not true love, for it is not the love of Christ. And remember, to disregard His words is to take the responsibility and the guilt."<sup>106</sup> Pastoral practice today, happily, has shifted from manipulation of guilt feelings to a more positive and adult approach to conscience formation. Another item is from a pre-Lenten *Bulletin* in 1954 in which precise rules for Lenten fast and abstinence were spelled out. After noting conditions that dispensed from the obligation of abstinence, there was a warning: "When in doubt, consult." Parishioners were not, in 1954, encouraged to trust their own judgment on such matters. But at the same time there is evidence of the deep faith of the people of the parish. The major fund-raising and construction projects of the late 1950s surely demonstrates faith and hope as well as generosity. Moreover, Father Shaughnessy's letters to his superiors express the highest praise for his parishioners; he found them "most responsive to spiritual guidance and direction."<sup>107</sup> Again, in another letter he remarks that "the

<sup>103</sup> Minutes, Annual Meeting, 17 February 1958, Parish Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Report, "CYO Activities for 1957-1958," Parish Archives.

<sup>105</sup> *Our Sunday Visitor*, 15 October 1961.

<sup>106</sup> *Parish Bulletin*, 2 September 1945.

<sup>107</sup> Letter, Fr. Shaughnessy to Fr. Bolland, 28 April 1954, Parish Archives.

devotion of our people is a constant source of amazement to me – they respond with such enthusiasm.”<sup>108</sup>



Fr Daniel H. McLarnon  
Pastor, 1961-1963

Father Vincent Jensen of St. Paul's College has been in Winnipeg since 1947 and knows St. Ignatius well since for many years he came to help with Sunday Masses. In his view, the strengths of the parish in these years lay in two things. The first was a solid core of faithful families who were devoted to the welfare of the parish – families always ready to help with finances, to organize socials, or to do whatever else needed to be done. The

second strength was that the parish paid a great deal of attention to the needs of its young people. The men of the parish as well as the priests gave freely of their time and energy to organize groups and activities for young people. There were social activities and sports of all kinds. In the days before community centres, the church basement was the focus for all kinds of activities for the youth of the parish.<sup>109</sup> There was a third strength that Father Jensen as a Jesuit was probably too modest to mention. But any historian perusing the record would have to include the intelligent, selfless, untiring, and dedicated work of the Jesuits who served the parish so well.

February 1983



## St. Ignatius Parish: 1962-1983

By Sheila Grover

The year 1962 is an important one on the history of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII, that saintly servant of God, called for Vatican II to open that year. Vatican I took place in Rome in 1869, almost a hundred years before.<sup>110</sup> With the massive changes in the years between, a world council of the Church seemed like a good idea. This time, and for the first time, bishops came from all over the world, representing literally all nations and cultures. As well, there were theologians and observers from various other faiths, all aided by simultaneous translation and other means of modern communication. It lasted for two years, during which time its living spirit, Pope John XXIII died and was replaced by Pope Paul VI.

What did Vatican II accomplish? Many say that it “brought the Catholic Church into the twentieth century,” and that “it was a breath of fresh air into the Church.” It decided that we are all children of God, not just the ordained clergy, and that we all had a role to play and a responsibility to carry out Christ’s mission on earth. This mission was defined more clearly: the struggle for justice, the crying need for development and peace, and greater respect for human rights.<sup>111</sup> In other words, a call to action. Because we are all people of God, we must view members of other faiths, particularly Christians and Jews, as our brothers. It was time to put aside petty differences and get on with Christ’s mission.

Nearly twenty years have past since the close of Vatican II in 1965. We have come to take many of these for granted, but that is because the Church did change. Around the world, it responded to the teaching of Vatican II. It began slowly. Mass was said in English, French, or Cree instead of Latin. People suddenly knew what they were saying instead of repeating prayers learned by rote. The priests turned to the congregation in communal prayer. And most significantly, the laymen became involved as never before. “The Church” and “The People” became one.

<sup>108</sup> Letter, Fr. Shaughnessy to Fr. Janssens, 12 January 1956, Parish Archives.

<sup>109</sup> Interview, January 1983.

<sup>110</sup> Richard P. McBrien *Catholicism*, Winston Press, Minneapolis, 1980, 2:657-59

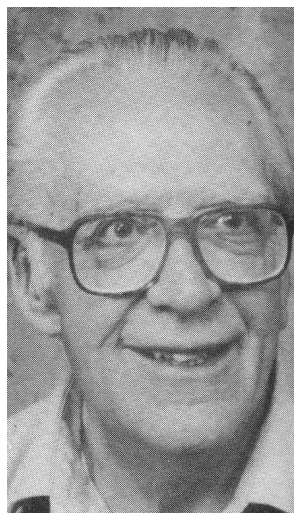
<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 686-89 and 709-10.



These changes inside the Church corresponded with events and developments taking place in the world in general. The 1960s was an era of protest and upheaval. It was prosperous for some, but often at a cost to third world countries who were beginning to articulate their anger. The Baby Boomers grew up, and in the process they questioned the values of their society – the acquisitive consumerism, the unchecked growth-at-all-costs, the atrocities of Vietnam. The Beatles had the answer; “All we need is love!” but sometimes love was the biggest element missing.<sup>112</sup>

St. Ignatius celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1962. Father McLarnon led a solemn Mass of celebration, followed by a great banquet and a fine reunion of parishioners. The city and St. Ignatius Parish were growing together, even though St. Jean Brebeuf built its new church in 1964, and Holy Rosary Parish on River Avenue siphoned off 250 families from St. Ignatius’ boundaries in 1967.

Besides the changes to the Liturgy, new laws for fasting came in, which allowed Masses to be said at a greater range of times. In the past, fasting twelve hours before going to communion meant people could not wait very late in the morning before going to Sunday Mass, getting home, and having breakfast. The 9:00 evening Mass began in 1964.



Fr Robert Chase, SJ  
Pastor, 1963-1966

In 1962, the St. Ignatius School Board was reorganized for greater lay participation in the school, but it was not until 1967 that the first woman was appointed to the Advisory Board, the forerunner of the Parish Council.<sup>113</sup> Members were still called to serve; it was not until some years went by that people were elected to the Council. Church democracy, as hinted at in Vatican Council, took a while to trickle down. We had had a fifty-year tradition of powerful pastors, and no one was about to give all that up, least of all the pastor.

St. Ignatius had several pastors in the 1960s, and generally no less than four Jesuits on staff. Father Daniel McLarnon gave the reigns to Father Robert Chase in 1964, with the good-natured assistance of Fathers Lonergan, Killorin, and Seasons. A

much-loved former pastor, Father Rod MacGilvray, was buried from St. Ignatius in October of 1964.<sup>114</sup> In 1965, our priests moved from the rectory in the big house on Jessie Avenue to the new residence in the Administrative Centre which opened that year.<sup>115</sup> This building completed the Master Plan that saw the school expanded and a new convent for the sisters built.

The Sisters of Jesus and Mary could now live beside the school where they taught, with sisters from St. Jean Brebeuf School living here as well. Attendance at St. Ignatius School began to drop in the 1960s,<sup>116</sup> but those students remaining were provided with a broader range of educational facilities. Since 1964, the provincial government provided textbooks to the school but its sole support continued to be parish donations. Needless to say, the school was more or less in dire straits financially most of the time. The sisters were paid virtually no wage for their dedication, but as the number of Holy Name sisters and other orders diminished, more and more lay staff had to be hired and paid cold, hard cash. By the way, the sisters were also brought into the twentieth century by Vatican II. By late in the sixties, Holy Name nuns gradually abandoned their traditional black habits and veils for more practical, modern clothes. Some older sisters have adopted a shorter black habit and simple veil.

What about parish organizations in the sixties? Some of the older groups faded away, like the Christian Family Movement and later, the Christian Youth Organization (CYO), but other groups grew stronger. The Catholic Women’s League was very active in providing the Church with a new Baptismal Font and a new sound system. The Darjeeling Club was extremely active raising funds with Bingo nights and more importantly, raising consciousness in the parish with talks and slide shows of the Jesuit Missions in India. In many ways the Darjeeling Club paved the way for the focus of several groups that are presently active in St. Ignatius. They were very outward looking at a time when many people, clergy included, were just trying to figure out in what new direction the Church was headed.

<sup>112</sup> The Beatles are a British rock music group who had an enormous impact on the popular culture of the 1960s and 70s. They were pacifists whose songs repeated the theme of love conquering all.

<sup>113</sup> Mrs. Mary Brookall, as president of the Catholic Women’s League (C.W.L.), was the first woman elected to Advisory Board in 1967.

<sup>114</sup> *Newsletter of the Canadian Jesuit Community* September-October 1964, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> The administrative centre and rectory, part of the 1956 Master Plan, was designed by the architectural firm of Libling, Michener and Associates. Work began in August 1964 and the fathers moved from the old residence on 23 June 1965.

<sup>116</sup> In 1967 there were 360 students at St. Ignatius School. By 1972, there were 250 students, six teaching sisters and three lay teachers. In 1983, there are 200 students, five teaching sisters and fourteen lay teachers and resource people.





1972 Darjeeling Fundraiser  
Mary Kiernan, Kitty Keegan  
Fr Harvey Seasons, SJ  
Yvonne Van Wallegham

The year 1968 saw just how far-reaching these changes had been. In that year, Pope Paul VI went against the majority of his advisors and handed down *Humanae Vitae*, the Encyclical concerning birth control. By the Pope, the supreme authority of the Universal Church, Catholics were told that at all artificial means of birth control were wrong. Canadians were thrown into a massive quandry, the circumstances of western society being what they are. Finally, the Canadian Bishops countered the hard line of the Vatican. Couples who use birth control “may be safely assured that whoever honestly chooses that course which seems right to him does so in good conscience.”<sup>117</sup> Not an undermining of Papal authority, but a concept of the informed conscience. As children of God, we were assumed to be thinking and responsible people, quite a departure from the years past. In order to be informed, priests and knowledgeable lay people sponsored seminars for the congregation to make them aware of the issues.<sup>118</sup>

Two other significant events occurred in 1968. Firstly, the Canadian Share Lent program was initiated, for all Christian Churches to become aware of the needs of underdeveloped nations. It started off quite small, but has grown to become an integral part of our Lenten preparations and an important channel in our growing involvement with Third World nations.



Fr Gerald P. McGinnis, SJ  
Pastor, 1966-1971

The second significant event in 1968 was Father Gerald McGinnis’ Mass where he brought together two old rivals, the Masons and the Knights of Columbus in an Ecumenical “first” in Western Canada. Father recalled the sight of the Knights with their swords and plumes and the Masons in their bibs seated together. This was one event of a series where Catholics and Protestants came together

through St. Ignatius, where this Ecumenical spirit did not exist before.

This brings us up to the 1970s, when Marshall McLuhan summed it up when he called life on this planet a “global village.” We began to realize that we could never again view ourselves in isolation, going about our business with little thought for others. We are all in this together, and we started to feel a relationship not just with the Lutherans down the street but with the poor in Bangladesh, the victims of apartheid in South Africa, and the social revolutionaries of Central America. Movements were seen in a global scale – the ecology, the power of the multi-national corporations, the proliferation of nuclear arms, and the growing demands of minorities – the poor, women, the unborn and the handicapped. We all have television. We could never again say “We didn’t know.”

While it was a gradual process, an evolution, much of the superficial change brought on by Vatican II had worked through the system by now. The time had come to bring about the other kind of change that the Council had encouraged: action. The living of a faith that will never accept social injustice and disparity. A faith that calls us all to be members of the Universal Body, to look out for and recognize our neighbour. To make St. Ignatius a community in contrast to the isolation and hollow secularism of much of our society. To reach out.

To usher in the seventies, St. Ignatius was given new priests; our two beloved Fathers MacDougall. Father R.J. MacDougall, who is with us now, came in 1973; and Stoney MacDougall. St. Ignatius was also blessed with a new Pastor, Father Elmer MacGillivray.<sup>119</sup> Since 1973, St. Ignatius parish has operated with only three priests, a reflection of the decline of vocations to the ministry, as surely as the smaller number of sisters teaching in our school. But, as always, we got top quality.

With the loss of the CYO, the youth of the parish received little attention, aside from the school. There was a “Truth for Youth” group of students from the public schools that met at 7:30 p.m. on Sundays, and there was a 9:00 p.m. Sunday Mass just begging to be used. It took the special genius of Father MacGillivray to put them together. Sunday evenings used to be dead. As dear old Father Lonergan phrased it “You get some stragglers in from the lake and some university kids who partied all the night before – lots of sleeping going on.” No one wanted the Mass, so Father MacGillivray asked for it as his special project.

He was fresh from a degree in religious education and was full of ideas for the dynamic youth Mass. He enlisted the help of a Grade IX student at St. Mary’s, who got two of her friends to help her. Rita Kelly Doer has been with the 9:00 p.m. Mass from the start. Rita and Father put together the music and nabbed a young scholastic at St.

<sup>117</sup> McBrien, op. cit., p. 1025. Bishops in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, France and the Scandinavian countries also issued statements to the same effect.

<sup>118</sup> Three lectures were given on *Humanae Vitae* on 17 and 24 November and 1 December 1968, with seminar discussions following. *Historia Domus* letter from Father H.D. Seasons S.J. to the Provincial, Father E.J. Dowling S.J., 28 June 1969. Also lectures by Dr. Paul Adams in 1968, from parish scrapbook, no date.

<sup>119</sup> Father Robert L. (Stoney) MacDougall and Elmer MacGillivray arrived in 1972 under the pastorship of Father Alf Colliard. Father Robert J. MacDougall arrived in 1973 when Father MacGillivray became pastor.

Paul's High School who owned a guitar. The 9:00 Folk Mass began in the fall of 1970.<sup>120</sup>

The Liturgy caught on fast. Within a couple of months, the Church was packed. The music developed in range and sophistication as musicians came and went, adding their special talents and knowledge. Sometimes Father Stoney MacDougall led the Mass, but generally it was Father MacGillivray. Young and old, people came from all parts of the city. Father MacGillivray fondly recalled watching the gathering crowds from the rectory window, as the Safeway parking lot began to fill.

Not only new songs and instruments were brought in (at times under criticism from conservative elements in the parish), but new mediums of expression of the gospel were introduced. Sometimes records or films replaced sermons and once the 9:00 p.m. congregation was treated to a dancer from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, dancing in the sanctuary to the popular song "Morning Has Broken." The kickoff for the 1972 United Way ceremonies took place at the 9:00 o'clock Mass.<sup>121</sup>

The early 1970s saw other changes too. An anticipated mass at 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays was permitted by the diocese in 1973. It was a first in the city. We also began a morning Folk Mass. In 1974 Megan Bromley suited up and quietly slipped onto the altar to become our first female altar assistant. Lots of girls followed her and women readers and Ministers of the Eucharist quickly followed. No longer confined to the CWL, women also joined the administrative bodies of the Church in good numbers. The Stafford Seniors organized themselves in 1973 and have continued as a dynamic group ever since.

The CWL also moved into an activist stance in the seventies. With other parishioners, in 1977 they initiated that very sacred institution "Coffee After Mass," which has grown to be an integral part of the community of St. Ignatius. The CWL stepped up its work with the poor and took a firm stance in the pro-life movement. As well, they now staff the drop-in centre at Immaculate Conception hall, for the poor downtown, and help to administer the annual Christmas Blood drive.<sup>122</sup>

Father Stoney MacDougall and Sister George Mary teamed up with several of the parishioners in January 1972 to organize a bible study and prayer group. Moved by the Holy Spirit, this core group grew to become the Charismatic Prayer people who now meet regularly in the school gymnasium. Now, over eighty members come together under the leadership of Ines Wilson to give service through intercessory prayer, Agape table, and healing teams.

The Charismatic Prayer group was one of several who worked together to sponsor our Vietnamese refugee families who arrived in 1979 and 1980. These boat people

gave the St. Ignatius community a vivid chance of living our faith. Approximately twenty-nine people were settled and cared for through the efforts and concerns of the parishioners.

This call to action was spurred on by the example of our new pastor, Father Robert Foliot, and Father John Perry, who is now working with the Jesuit missions in Bhutan.<sup>123</sup> We also gained and lost two Popes in 1978. Pope Paul died and was replaced, for only a few weeks, by Pope John Paul I. Following his tragic death, our present Pope became the Pontiff. That was also the year that our own Lady Pope, Frances Stratham, retired after running the rectory and the priests' lives for thirty years. Father Vince McGrath joined Fathers R.J. MacDougall and Foliot in 1979.

Other groups symbolized the changing role of the Church. The group of separated and divorced offered help to Catholics struggling with their faith, since the winter of 1979. Although the Papacy continues its hard line against divorce, the community accepts the fact with understanding and compassion. From the awareness of the plight of the poor in Winnipeg and around the global community, such groups as the St. Ignatius Native People Association and the Third World Justice Group were established in 1980. The Third World Group, as well as the Share Lent programs, has made strong efforts to understand and act upon the unjust political situations of such countries as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chile. Besides the work with native people through Rossbrook House and the activist stance over the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass, the Native Peoples' Association established an alternative school for Indian children, Wi Wabigooni. Grades four to six are taught an adapted curriculum, under the guidance of Sister Margaret Hughes. The results have been gratifying.<sup>124</sup>

St. Ignatius School now has a lay principal for the first time in its 75-year history. Ted Kowaliszyn replaced Sister Joanne Pundyk in 1980. The school still receives the majority of its support through parish donations, but now also gets a small grant from the Provincial Government that allows it to meet its financial obligations. The school remains a vibrant place, full of life, and dedicated teachers, both religious and lay, convey their knowledge in a Christian atmosphere of love and faith.

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<sup>120</sup> From a personal interview with Elmer MacGillivray 4 March, 1983, Winnipeg.

<sup>121</sup> *Jesuit Newsletter*, October 1972, p. 53.

<sup>122</sup> Each year, the churches and synagogues of Rives Heights jointly sponsor a blood donor clinic before Christmas. St. Ignatius always has a high turnout for this effort.

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<sup>123</sup> Elmer MacGillivray left the parish and the Jesuit order in September 1975. He is now married, the father of two children, and working in Edmonton.

<sup>124</sup> All these dates are from the *St. Ignatius Parish Bulletins* for these years.



Frs Robert Foliot and  
Vince McGrath, SJ

The parish was treated to a specific Act of Faith in April 1981, when our two priests, Robert Foliot and Vince McGrath received their final vows from Father MacDougall. It was a joyful event for everyone. If our parish has taken an activist stance lately, it is most certainly at the urging of these three men who have shown us how to be thinking Christians. They are of the finest tradition of strong Jesuits in this parish.

Lastly, let us not forget about the physical changes this beautiful Church has gone through. In 1978, the window behind the altar looked like it was turning to rot. A blue coating applied a few years before to cut down the glare had fused to the glass in an ugly mess. Something had to be done. Should we try to fix it, or replace it with stained glass? The decision was made to repair the window with non-glare glass because somehow it seemed inexcusable to spend so much on stained glass when so many others had so little. At that same time, St. Ignatius took the first step to accommodate the handicapped by adding a wheel-chair ramp to the entrance to the Church.

This same thinking carried us through the great 1981 epic "Caring For Foundations" – no one will ever forget that! The Jessie Street wall of the church had shifted and cracked to a dangerous degree. It turned out to be the classic home handyman's dilemma – the deeper they dug, the worse it got. It was decided to attend to several other items in the Church at the same time, all of which involved the raising of over half a million dollars. Someone came up with the brilliant idea of combining the canvas for funds with a parish visitation program. Volunteer visiting teams combed the parish. An opinionaire went out with the visiting teams, asking specific questions about the spiritual, pastoral, and social aspects of the parish community. The results were digested fully by the clergy and Parish Council, with the results to each question analyzed and published in the weekly bulletins. Everyone learned a lot from this poll, and it was generally very positive.

The results of "Caring for Foundations" were this: we got a stable water-proof foundation, handicapped access

and facilities to the whole Church, a more efficient heating and ventilation system, and a better playground for the school children. Under the determined supervision of Ed Smendziuk, these alterations were completed last May. It was a massive effort on behalf of the whole parish, something of which we can all be proud.

## IN CONCLUSION

The parish of St. Ignatius celebrates its 75th anniversary in 1983. It was founded in 1908 on a solid foundation of faith and good intentions but without the financial resources. The first two decades of the parish were a struggle in organization, symbolized by the congregation worshipping in a basement and dreaming of a new church.

When St. Ignatius Church was finally built in 1929, the congregation had little time to congratulate themselves before the Depression struck. Not only did the church debt become crippling but many families of the parish experienced great hardship. The community pulled together to survive.

If the second World War brought prosperity, it was at a terrible cost in human sacrifice. The community of St. Ignatius lost sons and daughters as did families all over the world. After the decade of economic depression and the years of the war, we can appreciate the relief experienced in the 1950s. It was a happy time for the church and school as the baby boom captured the parish's attention and energy.

Maturity came with the years surrounding Vatican II in 1962. Now an established parish, St. Ignatius was in a good position to respond to the demands of the modern Church. Through collective efforts, Catholics and Christians of the world have been called to bring Christ's peace to everyone.

Our history can be seen as a spiritual journey that is far from complete. Each member of the community of St. Ignatius contributes to that journey through their faith and commitment. With God's help and the continued dedication of the parishioners, we can meet our spiritual mandate and role within the world community.

Canadian society has undergone a period of vast change since 1962. The Church has responded to these changes. While some Catholics could not accept change as progress, the majority who stayed found a strengthened Church with a powerful commitment to Christ's mission. The community of St. Ignatius continues to serve as an institution of loving brotherhood to its members, but it also nurtures the mandate of an affluent society to work for justice in our world.

March 1983



Centennial Year Opening Mass

## St. Ignatius Parish, 1983-2008

By Richard Lebrun

Stability and continuity are the most striking characteristics of the story of the Community of St. Ignatius in the past quarter century. This contrasts sharply with the history of the parish in its first three-quarters of a century.

The period from 1908 to 1933 was a time of hesitant beginnings and frequent moves from a small store on Osborne Street, to a second-hand Baptist church on Nassau, and finally to a “basement” church on a large block of property at Stafford and Corydon. Parishioners survived the shock of World War I on their lives, but it was only in 1929 that the present church building was completed – just in time for the Great Depression! The second quarter century (1933-1958) brought financial crisis as the parish struggled to cope with its large building debt, the impact of World War II, the heady post-war years of the baby boom and expansion of parish facilities. The third quarter century (1958-83) began with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which ushered in an exciting but confusing era of renewal in the Church. There was also a relatively large turn-over of pastors in the earlier period; from 1908 to 1976, when Fr. Robert Foliot, SJ, was named pastor, the parish had fourteen different pastors, with an average tenure of a only little over four and half years. The most significant exception was Fr. Edward T. O’Gara, SJ, who was pastor for twenty years, from 1914 to 1934. In contrast, since 1976 St. Ignatius has had only three pastors: Fr Foliot, who served until 1991 – fifteen years, the second longest tenure in the history of parish; Fr Eric Jensen, SJ, from 1991 to 2001, and Fr Brian Massie, SJ, since that date. The turn-over of associate pastors during the past period has also been relatively low, with some, such as Frs Emmet Trainor, SJ (1983-1992), Peter Monty, SJ, (1985-86 and 1997 through 2008), Joseph Johnson, SJ (1994-2007 officially, but Fr Johnson had already been helping out in 1993), and Earl Smith, SJ, (1997-2006), working in the parish for extended periods. There has been time for both pastors and associates to bring their new initiatives to fruition.

It was during the last years of Fr. Foliot’s tenure (1983-91) that the most momentous events in the life of the parish in the past quarter century occurred. Fortunately, at the same time as the parish prepared to launch a Renew Program (1988-91), in cooperation with a three-year diocese-wide program of spiritual renewal, it was determined that the church building needed some major renovations. Following a parish consultation in the fall of 1988, it was decided to launch “Renewing our Sacred Space ‘89.” And it was in April 1991, during the last year of Fr. Foliot’s tenure, that the parish was informed that the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary would be moving from the convent attached to the rear of the church building; this announcement led to another parish consultation, which was still in process at the date of Fr. Foliot’s departure, but which led to decisions to allocate parts of the former convent to the groups judged to be of great service to the community and to utilize the remainder for a St. Ignatius Education Centre.

Preparations for Renew began in the fall of 1987, with a planning committee meeting a number of times in the winter and spring of 1988. Using materials prepared by the Paulist Press and working in cooperation with a diocesan-wide program, the program was launched in the fall of 1988. Under the leadership of co-ordinators Ed and Diane Ryz, Renew activities included large events such as the Festival of Friends (a reincarnation of what had once been the annual parish picnic), lectures, and prayer vigils. The focus was on renewing the faith and prayer life of the parish, and a great deal of effort went into organizing some thirty small prayer groups of about eight members each, meeting once a week. There were six additional groups for the Spanish-speaking community, and a special Youth Renew group as well. Renew was organized in five sessions, each six weeks in length: fall 1988, winter 1989, fall 1989, winter 1990, and fall 1990. A Renew Prayer network committee established links with some 225 worldwide “prayer partners,” which included Jesuit missions, priests, religious, seminarians, religious orders, lay people, school children, thirty scripture study groups, the elderly, and shut-ins. This network committee continued after the completion of Renew to become the Monday Morning Prayer Group (later renamed the Intercessory Prayer Group), which is still meeting twenty years later. By the last Renew session in the fall of 1990, hundreds of parishioners had participated in one or more of the activities sponsored by the program.

After the completion of Renew, the Co-ordinating Committee evaluated what had been accomplished with respect to each of the thirteen goals that had been formulated at the beginning of the program. In their “Final Report to the Parish,” the committee concluded that it had promoted faith sharing and the creation of a number of vibrant groupings in the parish. Ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, scores for particular goals ranged from a high of 4.7 for socializing and having fun to a low of 2.7 for reaching out to people who don’t come to church. Long-term effects still remain evident many years later. For example, in addition to the transformation of the Prayer Network Committee into the Intercessory Prayer Group, a new



committee was struck in 1991 to find ways of enabling everyone in the parish to reach out to inactive Catholics. Today that initiative is reaching fruition in the Catholics Coming Home program that was launched in the fall of 2007.

It was a false alarm that sparked the process that became "Renewing our Sacred Space '89." At first it was feared that the foundations of the church building would require major repairs, but by June of 1988, a Building Committee, which had been appointed to advise the pastor on renovations, had determined that the foundations were structurally sound and required only minor repairs. The committee engaged the services of Michael Boreskie, a church architect, to provide a "Design Study" to offer suggestions and alternatives for the renovation of the interior of the church. A letter from Fr. Foliot to parishioners in June 1988 invited all who were interested in the future of the parish and the church to reflect on the meaning of "sacred space," and to prepare for meetings to take place in September and October. Following three open consultations held on 22 September, 6 October, and 20 October, the Building Committee brought forward two projects for consideration. Project One called for much needed repairs to the flooring, redecorating the interior of the church, some changes to the sanctuary (raising, extending, and carpeting the floor), refinishing the pews and repairing the kneelers, new lighting, and new sound equipment. Project Two envisaged an addition to the passageway that joins the church to the administration centre, the addition to house a stairway and an elevator that would provide access to three levels (the church, the administration centre, and the church hall). By November a report from the architect had determined that the proposed addition was "precarious, unwise, and cost prohibitive" (as reported in the Parish Newsletter).

Consequently, it was essentially Project One that went forward in 1989. A fund-raising campaign was organized to fund the renovations, and some of the work, such as washing, staining, and revarnishing the pews was done by volunteers (Joe Byrnes and Fred Curry). Contractors were engaged to repair the roof of the church building, refurbish the sanctuary, and redecorate the interior of the church. To accomplish the latter two tasks, it was necessary to close the upper church from 12 June to 19 August 1989. As a consequence, all scheduled religious activities (Masses, Baptisms, the sacrament of Reconciliation, and funerals) took place in the Church Hall – in effect, it was a return to the Basement Church where the people of St. Ignatius had worshipped from 1912 to 1929, until the superstructure was built. Finally, in October, Archbishop Exner was invited to participate in a liturgy blessing the restored church.

The letter from the Provincial Superior of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of 17 April 1990 was not entirely unexpected. In her letter, which the pastor distributed to the parish with the Sunday Bulletin, Sr. Léonne Dumesnil recalled an earlier conversation with him in the fall of 1988 and a meeting with the parish council in January 1989, and then went on to inform Fr. Foliot that the sisters had reached the decision to leave St.

Ignatius Convent (which had been opened in March 1959) at the end of the 1990-91 school year. In June 1990, the Pastoral Council had established a process to address the issue. This involved an Open House (10 June), a Convent Development Committee, which began a series of meetings, a gathering of preliminary suggestions, study of these suggestions, and the scheduling of a Parish Information Evening on 2 October. The process, in fact, turned out to be somewhat more lengthy than had been originally envisaged, but by March 1991 the Pastoral Council had drafted a Parish Mission Statement (intended in part to provide direction to the planning process). At an Open Forum held on 7 March, the mission statement was approved and later that month the Pastoral Council approved the Convent Development Committee's recommendation for a multi-purpose centre, with one part to be retained as a reserved area for Adult Education and the rest to be used by other invited groups for activities that could contribute to the community in return for donations that would at least cover operating costs.



Farewell party for Fr Foliot

Before these plans for a Parish Education Centre reached fruition, the parish experienced a change of pastor when Fr. Foliot, who had served so faithfully for so many years, was transferred and replaced by Fr. Eric Jensen. Fr.

Foliot was bid a fond good-bye at a Thanksgiving and Farewell celebration on Thursday, 8 August 1991, an event that included a concelebrated Mass (with the Choir, the Spanish Choir, the Folk Group, and Discernment) in the church, followed by an outside summer party. To honour Fr. Foliot for his many years of dedicated service, a fund was set up in his name, with the investment revenue designated for work that had been dear to his heart; for example, the first year's allocation was divided among refugees outside Canada, Catholic education and Native people in Manitoba.



Fr. Jensen had been serving at St. Paul's High School prior to his appointment as pastor at St. Ignatius and so he was no stranger to Winnipeg or the parish; the transition from old to new appears to have been relatively seamless. However, after taking into account an anticipated

decrease in availability of Jesuit priests for service in the parish, the new pastor indicated in the February 1992 parish newsletter that consideration was being given to hiring an Administrative Assistant or Pastoral Minister.



Deacon Hal Graham

In June 1992, it was announced that Hal Graham, a deacon with long experience as a teacher and fund raiser (at St. Paul's High School), on the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, as a representative to the Manitoba Catholic Schools Trustees Association, and responsibility for running the Diaconate training program, had been invited to fill the position of Pastoral Assistant (on a half-time basis). It was explained that as a deacon Hal would be able to assist at baptisms and

weddings, and that he could be expected to strengthen the St. Ignatius School Board as well as to assist with various administrative tasks. In fact, Hal Graham would serve the parish in his new role during the entire term of Fr. Jensen's tenure as pastor, until 2001.

Continuity was clearly evident with respect to the transformation of the Convent, the first steps of which were described above. By December 1991 agreements were made to house Sr. Léonne Valois' Centre for Audio-Psycho Phonology (a psychological counselling centre), a Montessori Day Care, and the River Heights Life Education Centre (supported by the churches of the area) as well as an Education Centre. After some essential renovations, such as the installation of a ramp, an alarm system, and a wheelchair accessible washroom, an Open House was held on 9 February 2002, followed by a second Open House on 8 November to show off the Centre's newly completed Resource and Lending Library. By that time Barbara Anderson had been engaged as the Co-ordinator of the Centre and the Library. Furniture and other furnishings came from the former Jesuit Residence at St. Paul's College and generous parishioners. The Monday Morning Prayer Group took responsibility for repainting the chapel and other rooms.



Barbara Anderson

In its early years, the Education Centre included only the chapel, a kitchenette, the library (the old parlour), an office for the co-ordinator, and three small meeting rooms. When the counselling centre gave up its space in 1995, the space available for

the Education Centre almost doubled. Two walls were removed – one to provide a "Board Room," and the other to expand a small classroom area to a space able to accommodate 50 to 60 people. In the same year Valerie Forrest Muzychuk replaced Barbara Anderson as the Co-ordinator of the Centre and its library.

Since 1995 the facilities have been used intensively by many groups and for various activities. From an early date, following a survey of parishioners about their needs and wishes, the focus has been on faith education for adults, prayer, and formation in spirituality. Already by the spring of 1997 it was reported that at least twenty-five groups were using the facilities regularly.

In recent years, prayer-focussed groups and activities using the Education Centre include the Intercessory Prayer Group, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and retreats of many kinds for different parish groups. Faith education activities include ongoing formation programs such as RCIA, marriage preparation, baptism preparation (for parents and godparents), the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Finding God in the Dark (which involves using films in another version of the Spiritual Exercises), and more general educational activities such as seasonal Advent and Lenten lecture series, and individually featured talks. Many parish ministries, such as the Parish Pastoral Council and other administrative committees, the Refugee Committee, the Stewardship Committee, the Environment Committee, and Formation for Healing Ministry also utilize the Education Centre space for their meetings. Christian Life Communities and an Ignatian Lay Volunteer group (both made up of people who have made the Spiritual Exercises) also meet regularly in the Centre. The Library and Resource Centre welcomes people who come to borrow books, videos, and DVDs on a wide range of subjects, including the Bible, church teachings, church history, spirituality, the sacraments, the liturgy, contemporary culture, media literacy, and environmental concerns. The new and vibrant use of what once was a convent for the Sisters of the Holy Names and a winter chapel for the parish may be seen as part of a larger shift from religious sisters to parish laity who have taken over the administration and teaching roles in St. Ignatius School as well as in adult education and faith formation.

Both continuity and change are evident in the list of ministries and groups that were active in 1983 compared to the ministries and groups active in 2008, twenty-five years later. Appearing on both lists are ministries and activities that were long-established in 1983 and that continue today to serve the parish community, such as St. Ignatius School, the School Board, the School Parent Association, the Sunday School, the Choir, Discernment (the 9 pm Sunday evening folk music group that dates from 1969), the Parish Pastoral Council, the Finance Council, the Liturgy Committee, and other groups associated with worship (such as lectors and ministers of the Eucharist). Others, most often in the category of "intentional communities," have been less stable. A list of those that have disappeared would include those associated with scouting (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, Brownies, Guides, and Pathfinders and associated Auxiliaries), the St. Ignatius Community of the Separated and Divorced, People in Growth, Grapes, Stafford Seniors, Roses, Single Parents, a group in support of Native People, the Darjeeling Mission group, and Rummage Sales (the last as recently as 2007). With



respect to the Guides, it should be noted that the Guides still use our space for weekly meetings, even though that is the extent of direct parish involvement in that activity.

One major casualty of change was the Catholic Women's League, whose activities in the parish dated from 1939. In May 1990, when it became impossible to find women who had enough time, desire, and ability to take on leadership roles, it was announced that the council had decided to become "inactive" for a year. Over the next couple of years there were various attempts to have this decision "reconsidered," including the selection of an "Executive Committee" in lieu of the election of a President and Council (in March 1992) and a series of "Come and Learn" sessions in early 1993, but these efforts failed to revive the CWL in the parish.

On the other hand, the story of the Knights of Columbus at St. Ignatius has been one of success. For many years, men from the parish had been active in the "Winnipeg South Chapter of St. Ignatius and St. John Brebeuf," but it was only in 1995 that, following the dissolution of that Chapter, a new St. Ignatius chapter, number 5808, held its first meeting. By September 1996, it had become St. Ignatius of Loyola Council No. 5808. In subsequent years this Council has become very active in the life of the parish, taking responsibility for coffee after Sunday masses, sponsoring pancake breakfasts and an occasional dinner, hosting receptions associated with many parish events, renovating the kitchen in the church hall, raising funds for the parish and other charitable causes, and providing "manpower" for such outreach activities as the Immaculate Conception drop-in centre and renovations at the House of Hesed (a downtown hospice for persons living with HIV/AIDS).

The St. Ignatius Refugee Committee, which had been organized in 1979 in response to the plight of the Vietnamese "boat people," continued in existence after the boat people crisis ended in the early 80s, and then took on new life with the arrival in Winnipeg of many government-sponsored refugees from Central America. Fr. Foliot, who had spent a sabbatical in Nicaragua in 1984 and who spoke Spanish, organized a Spanish language mass at St. Ignatius, which led in turn to a Spanish community within the parish. The Refugee Committee soon became involved in a major effort sponsoring refugees and helping them to settle in the city. Since 2000, the Canadian government has slowed down processing refugee applications, and so the committee has put on hold processing requests from family members already in Canada. [See the separate story on the Refugee Committee by Winn Leslie.]



St. Ignatius Spanish Music Group

The 3:40 pm Spanish Mass begun by Fr. Foliot in 1987 led to the organization of a Latin American community as part of the larger community of St. Ignatius. A Parochial Council of the Hispanic Church was created. With Fr. Foliot's departure in 1992, Fr. Joe Newman took over as the celebrant of the Spanish Mass until his own departure in 1994. Since then priests from other Winnipeg parishes have assisted our staff in celebrating Mass in Spanish. Most recently, in the fall of 2006, the charismatic segment of the Spanish community in Winnipeg have moved to their own church in St. Boniface – the Iglesia Catolica Hispana "Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion." However the usual 3:40 pm Spanish Mass at St. Ignatius continues to be celebrated. The Latino community that comes to this Mass has been especially active in the Festival of Friends (also known as the Fiesta des Amigos) and the annual Fiesta dinners that raise funds for the El Sitio project. (See the separate story on El Sitio by Nerina Robson.)

Music ministries have traditionally and rightly been held in high esteem in the parish. On occasion, as well, their work has been highlighted. In October 1994, our Sunday 9 P.M. "folk group" Discernment celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and was presented with a commemorative plaque "for 25 years of musical glory to God in the community of St. Ignatius." It was in October 1969 that three St. Mary's girls and a guitar player from St. Paul's were asked to lead the music at what until then had been a quiet mass for cottagers coming back from their weekend away. Within a couple of months attendance at the Sunday evening Mass soared. As time passed the membership gradually changed and the repertoire was expanded. Drums, bass guitar, and piano were added, and, on occasion, even liturgical dance (in 1972 a dancer from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet offered her interpretation of "Morning has Broken"). The name "Discernment" was chosen in 1980, by which time the group was accepting invitations to appear on CBC and producing tapes of its offerings. From the beginning down to the present, Rita (Kelly) Doerr as vocalist and Jeff Doerr on keyboards have been mainstays in the group.

In June 2002, it was the turn of organist and choir director Chas van Dyck to be honoured by the parish for 25 years of music ministry service. He began as a nervous young music graduate directing choral music for Midnight Mass at St. Ignatius in 1977. As well as preparing and rehearsing organ and choral music for 11 a.m. Mass every Sunday, he has developed an award-winning Junior Choir and led the St. Ignatius Choir with other church choirs to sing for memorial services at various venues. The choir also joins voices with choirs from other parishes to present an annual Advent Service of Lessons and Carols.

Ecumenical activities have been another feature of parish life, albeit low-key, during the last quarter century. For example, the Sunday Bulletin of 16 January 1983, announced an "Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue with Dr. Arthur Thompson from St. George's Anglican Church." Beginning in January 1984, there was for many years an annual sharing of ecumenical prayer services with Harrow United, the venue alternating between the St.

Ignatius and Harrow United. In November 1999, parishioners were invited to a joint Lutheran-Catholic Worship Service at Lutheran Church of the Cross to mark the Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany. In 2002, parishioners were invited to a gathering at Bethel Mennonite Church to participate in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. During 2006-2007, St. Ignatius parishioners participated in a Catholic-Mennonite dialogue with members of the congregation from Charleswood Mennonite.

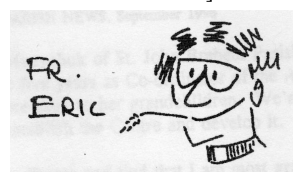
Abba House of Prayer at 959 McMillan was a ministry that was established within St. Ignatius Parish in October 1980 by Sr. Betty Gropp, who had previously had a House of Prayer in Elie and then in an informal centre at her apartment on Corydon. Abba House offered a place of prayer and times of quiet as well as spiritual direction and a large library of religious books. Sr. Betty was also involved in various ministries within the parish, including preparation for the sacraments and RCIA. In May 1993, the decision was made to move Abba House to new quarters in north Winnipeg, where it was maintained by Sr. Betty until her retirement in February 1999. The establishment of the Adult Education Centre at St. Ignatius in 1992 provided a place for others to address some of the needs that had been met by Sr. Betty's ministries.

It was in 1984 that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius began to be offered to lay persons in the parish in a systematic way. This version of the Exercises, a year-long program known as "Annotation 19," has since that date been making an ever-growing impact on the life of the parish. An increasing number of parishioners who have made the Exercises, many of whom remain "connected" to this Jesuit form of spirituality through participation in Christian Life Communities, are to be found among the most active members in the various groups and ministries of the parish. Beginning in the fall of 2005, a film series called "Finding God in the Dark" has offered another way of doing the Spiritual Exercises. Since 2006, many alumni of the Exercises have been participating as well in the Ignatian Lay Volunteer group, through which they offer their services in hands-on street level ministry beyond the boundaries of the parish. Volunteers give a minimum of two hours per week to such volunteer organization as Micah House, the Immaculate Conception Drop-In Centre, Welcome Home, Agape Table, and the House of Hesed. Participants meet once a month in a faith-sharing community in which individuals can pray together and reflect on their volunteer experiences. They are also offered directed retreat days three times a year. [See the separate article by Chris Butterill.]

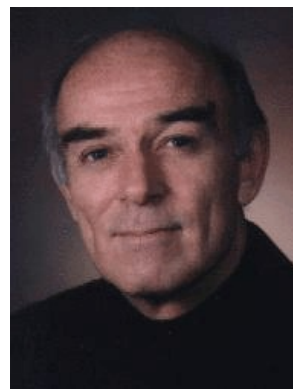
If there were many groups and activities that disappeared in the twenty-five years following 1983, there is also an impressive list of new ministries that made their debut in the parish in these same years. Some proved transitory for one reason or another, but others have become seemingly integral fixtures in the life of the

Community of St. Ignatius. Even the ministries that proved short-lived can be seen as evidence of vitality. A "Shut-In Ministry," for example, was envisaged as an extension of the ministry of bringing the Eucharist to parishioners who are unable to come to Mass in the parish church. It was thought that such people might appreciate regular visitors from the parish, but it was soon discovered that these "shut-ins" can find themselves overwhelmed with too much attention from professional caregivers and consequently find "welcoming" additional visitors a burden. Similarly, an attempt to organize a "Singles" group foundered from a lack of interest on the part of the target population.

Other new ministries, on the other hand, have flourished. Many of these new ministries have been the result of initiatives taken by individual parishioners. The Healing Team Prayer Team Ministry, for example, was introduced into the parish by Paul and Josephine Chipman, who had heard of the program elsewhere, and who arranged a three-year training course to prepare team members for the exercise of the ministry. The first group of thirteen people graduated from the "Formation in Healing Ministry Program" in the spring of 1992, and the ministry has continued to flourish since that date. [See separate article by Bea Goussaert.] Other ministries owe their existence to initiatives that originated outside the parish. The Community Health and Well-Being Program came about as a result of an initial invitation from Reverend Art Veldhuis, pastor at Harrow United (inspired in turn by his friend George Neufeld at Misericordia Hospital) to neighbouring church communities to meet and explore possibilities for an ecumenical parish-based health clinic. St. Ignatius, along with other churches in River Heights, responded, and as a result since that date there have been monthly presentations on health-related issues as Temple Shalom. [See the separate article by Andre Goussaert.]



present by Barbara Fawcett, the *News* provides



Fr Brian Massie, SJ  
Pastor, 2001-

Another "ministry" that appeared with its first issue in September 1993 was *St. Ignatius Parish News*. A monthly multi-page insert to the Sunday Bulletin, ably edited from that date to the present by Barbara Fawcett, the *News* provides parishioners with lively stories about the activities of our numerous ministries, various parish developments, comments on liturgical seasons and events, a venue for a pastor's column, book reviews, and even poetry. The self-portrait cartoons that decorated Fr. Eric's "word from your pastor" were always a delight.

The cartoons left with Fr. Eric when Fr. Massie replaced him as pastor in 2001, but like

his predecessor Fr. Brian has maintained the custom of penning a regular column for the *Parish News*.

In most other ways as well, Fr. Massie's tenure as pastor has been characterized by continuity in parish life and ministries. Nevertheless the new pastor brought his own particular gifts to the community of St. Ignatius, in particular wonderful homilies illustrated and enlivened by stories from his years of ministry in Jamaica.

It was Fr. Massie who initiated the Prison Ministry (monthly visits to Stony Mountain Penitentiary by groups of parishioners and a priest from St. Ignatius – see the separate story by Jessica Stratton).

Until recent years, new ministries and activities at St. Ignatius grew a bit like wildflowers, springing up as various individuals scattered seeds, with some taking root and finding a place in the life of the parish. However, since 2005, the process of initiation has become more formalized, with proposals for new ministries being reviewed by the Stewardship team in the first instance. If approved there, the proposal is forwarded to the Parish Pastoral Council for final approval. The Stewardship team itself began as a committee of the Pastoral Council in 2004 (see the separate article by Suzanne St. Yves), and became a separate group in the fall of 2004, when it launched the first Stewardship effort of Time and Talent. The Stewardship forms that were distributed and collected as part of this effort invited suggestions for new ministries in the parish. As a result of this initiative and this new process, several new ministries have come into existence, including the Environment Committee, the Shawl Ministry, Social Justice Sundays, and the Catholics Coming Home series.

In contrast to the crises and struggles of earlier years, the story of parish finances during the past quarter century is largely one of good news and noteworthy accomplishments. Not only were the renovations associated with Renewing Sacred Space '89 financed successfully, but the parish has also been able to undertake other projects, such as the transformation of the old convent into a Parish Education Centre.



Mural, North Side of the School Gymnasium

Perhaps the greatest financial accomplishment of the parish, however, has been the continuing funding of St. Ignatius School, which operates without charging tuition to parents who are parishioners. Since the departure of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, this has meant paying the salaries of an all lay staff and all the other costs of maintaining the school. Hard-won increases in government funding on a per pupil basis have helped. In February 1990, the Minister of Education announced

an increase in funding to Manitoba's independent schools, with grants to increase (over eight years) from 50% to 80% of what the public schools receive as a per pupil grant from the Province. To put this increase in perspective, however, it must be understood that the Province pays only a portion of the actual costs of education in the public schools. Public schools receive the balance from taxes levied on property owners. Independent schools, such as St. Ignatius School, receive none of this tax money, and there is no public funding for capital expenditures.

What this means for the school and the parish can be illustrated by looking at the school expenditure budget for one school year. In 1992-1993, for example, when total expenditures and receipts came to some \$836,051, the largest single cost, some 74.7% of expenditures, was for salaries and benefits. A little over 60% of the revenues were from the government grant, but the parish contribution, \$272,743, covered 32.7% of total revenue. In short it takes tremendous effort and contribution by teachers, parents, and the community of St. Ignatius to provide a Christian environment in which children can be educated both academically and spiritually.

The work of the school was temporarily interrupted in February 2007, when a fire that began in the overhead ceiling fan in the boys' washroom caused significant damage to the Smendziuk Wing. Fortunately, prompt and efficient evacuation of the building by Principal Richard Querat and the teachers ensured that there were no injuries. The District Fire Chief praised staff and students for "doing everything right"; everyone had been well drilled for the potential of fire, the evacuation was prompt, and all doors were closed to slow the spread of smoke and fire.

By 6:30 pm the day after the fire, 90% of the cleanup of adjacent sections of the school was complete. A "St. Ignatius Fire Fund" was established immediately to handle the insurance deductible and other non-covered expenses. Staff from the Child Guidance Clinic of Winnipeg met with the teachers and offered counselling services to children and parents as needed. Other Catholic schools and nearby Grosvenor public school promptly offered support and assistance. Only one week later, the school was reopened. With creativity and effort, the staff reassigned classroom and labs to make room for all the students to remain in the same building.

On 11 October 2007, the restored Smendziuk Wing was opened for classes, and on Sunday, 13 January 2008, it was blessed and rededicated. Finally, the next day, Monday, 14 January 2008, a Grand Re-Opening Assembly was held at the school. It seems that in the year following the fire everything had been "done right." Immediately after the fire a Rebuilding Committee was struck and began work immediately. Students and teachers adapted to the limitations of working in their interim spaces. Area schools shared resources. The rebuilding included a new science lab in the main wing of the facility.

Remarks made by Principal Danielle Kolton at the Re-Opening Assembly nicely summed up what the whole episode meant in the life of the school and the parish. She

said: “Today, we have much to celebrate: No one was hurt, our community rallied, classes resumed, and we have restored the physical building that had sustained the extensive damage. Some people talk about this event as a tragedy; this was not a tragedy. A tragedy involves irreversible consequences. Rather, this was a misfortune, out of which resulted many unanticipated benefits, physical and otherwise. Because of the work of so many dedicated professionals and community members, we have a spectacular new wing of primary classrooms ... [T]he tenacity, resiliency, and determination of the staff at St. Ignatius School is inspiring. These professionals were driven entirely by a need to help their students finish the school year in the least-disruptive way. They lost years of teaching materials, relocated their classes, shared their classrooms and resources, and encouraged one another to persevere... [U]sing adaptation, flexibility, and patience, the students did a great job of making the necessary changes to keep their community together. ... St. Ignatius School is comprised of an outstanding community of involved parents and students and dedicated teachers, priests, and support staff. As the newest member of this community, I can attest that the camaraderie has been overwhelming and I feel truly privileged to be a part of something so exciting. In the front lines and behind-the scenes, it is the collective determination and commitment of all these people in this community that sustains this institution.”

Danielle Kolton’s comment to the effect that “it is the collective determination and commitment of all these people in this community that sustains this institution” might aptly be applied to the parish as a whole. At its centennial, St. Ignatius parish displays a determination and commitment that bodes well for its second hundred years. It is indeed exciting to be a part of this vital and alive community.

When the parish celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1983, the celebratory booklet that was published was entitled *St. Ignatius, a Growing Community*. Since the date, the parish has continued to grow. In 1955, it was thought that there were some 1,000 to 1,200 families in the parish, and this was after 345 families, formerly members of the parish, had become a part of the new parish of St. John Brebeuf earlier that year, and other families had become members of Our Lady of Victory parish in 1946. Moreover, in 1967, another 250 families became members of Holy Rosary Parish. In 2008, on its centennial, with 3,975 families registered as parishioners, the community of St. Ignatius is obviously attracting families from far beyond the original parish boundaries. Clearly, it is not only the school that is “doing things right.”

July 2008

#### **A Note on Sources**

The sources for almost all the information contained in this essay were the files of Sunday Bulletins and the *St. Ignatius Parish News* maintained in the parish archives.

I am most grateful to the staff in the Administration Centre for allowing me free access to these materials.

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