

Our Lady of Fatima Church
**Twenty-five Years
of Growth**
1948-1973

**25th Anniversary
Celebration**

Our Lady of Fatima Parish

WILMINGTON MANOR

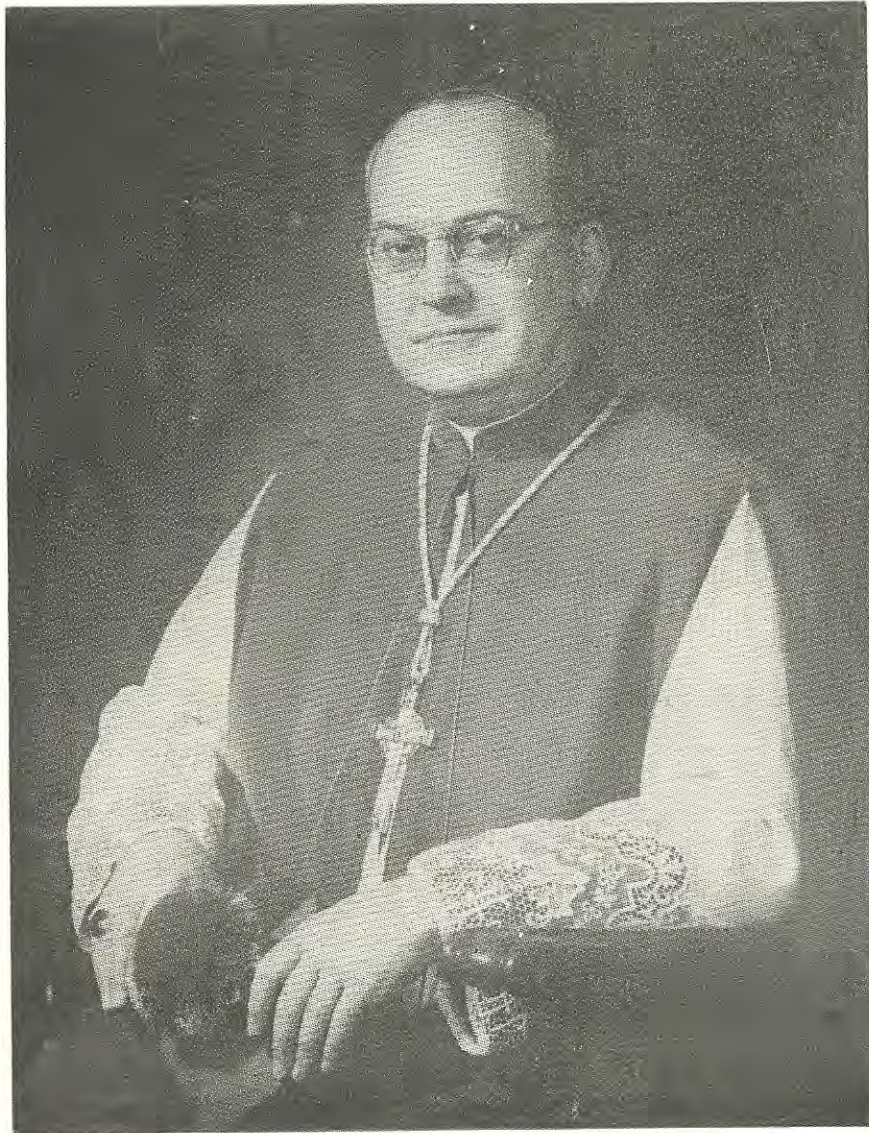
NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE

Sunday, May 6, 1973

CAVALIERS COUNTRY CLUB



HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI



MOST REVEREND THOMAS J. MARDAGA, D.D.
Bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington

OUR LADY OF FATIMA

On this Silver Jubilee of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, it is good that we pause and reflect on the history of this parish.

To those who were here at the beginning . . . you look back now and remember the first Mass said in the Civic Club on August 19, 1948.

To those who are here now, May 6, 1973 . . . we see a small parish community in Wilmington Manor growing to a parish that numbers today over 1500 families.

Both of these facts are history, yesterday and today. Throughout these twenty-five years of history, many priests, religious and laity have given of themselves for the good of this parish. We must never for a moment forget these great people of the past. They are the foundations of this great parish.

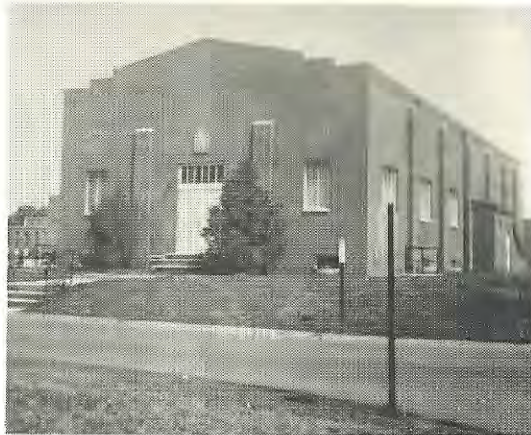
Today let us continue in the steps of our predecessors.

Let us look to Our Lady of Fatima and ask for her prayers and strength — that we might continue to grow and work together as a parish community.

To the memory of all who have contributed to the life and growth of our parish family, we dedicate this commemorative booklet.

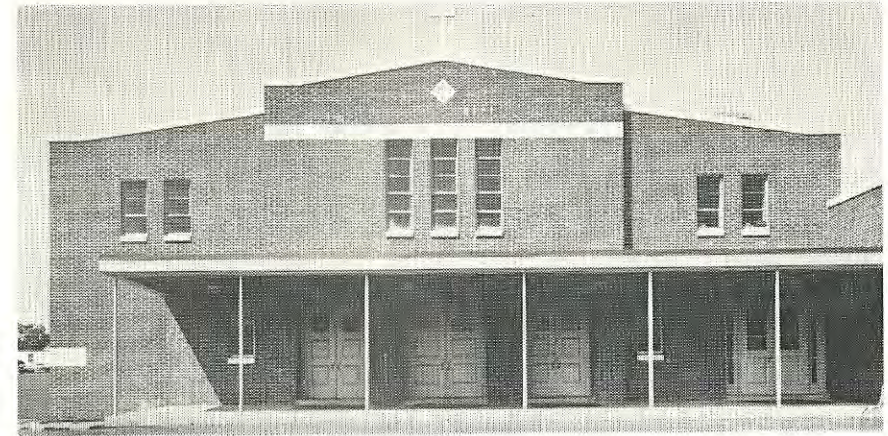
FR. JOHN F. O'BRIEN
Pastor

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH



On September 14, 1942, the Stahl Realty Co. had conveyed a tract of land bounded by the Dupont Boulevard, Pennsylvania Avenue, Grant and Harrison Avenues to the Diocese of Wilmington with the intention of establishing a parish. This area belonged to St. Peter's Parish of New Castle. Father McElwaine, an assistant there at the time, took up a census and found it evident that Wilmington was no exception to the building boom following World War II and areas once considered rural, fast developed into heavily populated suburban communities.

On August 5, 1948, the Most Rev. Bishop Edmond J. Fitzmaurice established Our Lady of Fatima Parish with the appointment of the Rev. Edmund J. McDonough, as pastor and founder of the church to be developed in the Wilmington Manor Area. Father McDonough was an assistant at St. Elizabeth's in Wilmington and principal of its high school. Mass was celebrated for the first time in the Civic Club on August 19, 1948. Father McDonough commuted from Wilmington to celebrate Mass every Sunday and Holy Day, using the kitchen of the Civic Club to don his vestments. On February 27,



1948 Mass was said for the first time in the newly constructed 400 seat chapel on Pennsylvania and Harrison Avenues. At this time there were 483 homes in Wilmington Manor.

Purchase of the present rectory and surrounding grounds took place on March 18, 1949 doubling the size of the property, extending the boundary to Roosevelt Avenue. At this time there were approximately 300 families. The original First Holy Communion class received the Holy Eucharist on May 14, 1950.

Father McDonough died suddenly on February 23, 1952. Until another pastor was assigned Father Leo Montgomery was appointed Administrator.

Bishop Fitzmaurice conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on members of the parish for the first time in April 1952.

Rev. Roderick B. Dwyer was officially named pastor on May 14, 1952. Father Dwyer had been pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Chestertown, Maryland. Under his leadership the parish was still to develop and customs and devotions established. The first devotion of the Forty Hours opened on November 23, 1952 and twenty-nine priests of the diocese were in attendance on closing night.

As a result of the rapid population increase, the new pastor was confronted with the need to replace the temporary school and overcrowded church, and finding a home for the nuns. To help with this task the Bishop assigned an assistant, Father Henri L. Foltz, in July 1953. The parish was formally incorporated on March 5, 1953 by Bishop Fitzmaurice, Msgr. Joseph Sweeney, the Vicar General, Father Dwyer and the trustees Daniel Matassino and William Smith.

The following year on September 30, 1954, a contract for building a church and school, designed by Philadelphia architects Gleason and

Mulrooney, was signed between Father Dwyer and C. J. Dougherty and Sons, at a price of \$242,363. Contractors Greggo and Ferrara broke ground on the following day. A building fund campaign was initiated with Henry G. Hoffman as General Chairman using the theme "At Least a Day's Pay a Month for Thirty Months."

Father Dwyer sang the first Mass in the new church at midnight on Christmas of 1955. In January 1956, Father Anthony DiMichele had succeeded Father Foltz as assistant pastor. The building was actually dedicated on November 25, 1956 by Bishop Hubert James Cartwright, the Coadjutor to the Bishop of Wilmington; this was the first parish event at which Bishop Cartwright presided after his arrival in the diocese. The cornerstone of white marble bears only the date "A.D. 1955" and a cross. In it were placed religious medals, a booklet containing the history of the parish, pictures of Bishop Fitzmaurice, Coadjutor Bishop Cartwright; Father Dwyer, Father McDonough, Father DiMichele, the original first communion class, and views of the exterior and interior of the new church and school and school buses. A copy of the Morning News with a story and picture of the building was also placed in the cornerstone. At the time of the dedication the parish numbered 900 families.

A diocesan census, entitled the "Survey of Souls," planned by Bishop Cartwright, was taken on March 30, 1958. It was a memorable event in the life of the parish and an authentic piece of Catholic action. Hundreds of our men worked hard and produced unprecedented results; one of its immediate effects was the definite setting of our parish boundaries.

Father DiMichele was transferred on June 12, 1958 to become pastor of St. John's in Hockessin and was replaced by Father Bruce Byrolly. Another assistant was added in September 1958 with the arrival of Father Bernard Pagano.

One of the last great acts of the reign of Pope Pius XII was the instruction of September 4, 1958 on the active participation of the people in Holy Mass. Within two months our school children put the Dialogue Mass into full effect at their weekly Masses. The Dialogue Mass was introduced to the parishioners for the first time on Sunday, February 1, 1959 and was received with great enthusiasm, thanks to the untiring efforts of Father Byrolly. The adult choir with the assistance of Mrs. Louise Gam, the parish



organist, sang for the first time, all the sacred texts required by the Holy Week liturgy.

On February 4, 1961, Msgr. Francis J. Desmond was assigned as pastor and Msgr. Dwyer was transferred to Christ Our King Parish.

The renewal of the Catholic Church inaugurated by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had its impact on the worship and life of Our Lady of Fatima Parish. Under the leadership of Bishop Hyle, the parishes of the Diocese introduced the liturgical reforms approved by the Church; the Mass celebrated facing the congregation popular participation in prayers and hymns and laymen serving as lectors and commentators. Father Bruce Byrolly, assistant pastor, was instrumental in accomplishing many of these changes.

By 1964 the parish had grown from the original 300 families to nearly 1300 families. Over-crowding of the church and school continued as the main problem facing the pastor. Plans were made to build a new church and Fletcher and Buck of Greenville were selected as architects, with Tim O'Connell & Sons as the General Contractor. On May 24, 1964 ground was broken for the new church. The church is circular in design with nine aisles leading to the altar which is located in the center. It was designed to accommodate 800 parishioners with no member of the congregation more than 40 feet away from the altar. This was the first church in the Diocese built "In The Round" with a free standing altar.



The church was dedicated on April 9, 1965 by Bishop Hyle. In his letter to the parishioners commented about the structure, "Facing a busy highway, it serves as a reminder to all who pass by of the presence of God among his people. . . ."

A sophisticated public address system was built into the new church. The celebrant wore a wireless transmitter under his vestments and his voice amplified through speakers mounted in the lighting fixtures. This system was abandoned because of interruption of church services by radio messages from the fire board and air base tower.

Call for greater involvement of the laity in the Church's life extended beyond the liturgy to include all phases of parish activity. Along with other parishes in the Diocese, Our

Lady of Fatima established its Parish Council. After a period of preparation the first meeting was held on November 22, 1965 and John J. Traynor was elected the first president.

Msgr. Desmond served as pastor until June 9, 1967 when he was transferred to St. Helena's. Rev. Leo Montgomery returned as pastor.

On May 31, 1972, Father Montgomery was reassigned and was succeeded by Rev. John F. O'Brien.

Joseph DiMauro of our parish, an Oblate Seminarian, was raised to the office of Deaconate in February of 1973. Rev. Mr. DiMauro will be ordained to the priesthood in June and will offer his first Mass in our church.

On February 25, 26, and 27, 1973, a special observance in honor of Our Lady of Fatima was held to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of its founding. Two neighboring parishes, St. Peter, New Castle and Holy Spirit, Garfield Park, joined in the celebration. The focal point of the three days was the hand carved wooden statue from the Fatima Shrine in Portugal.

The appointment of Extraordinary Ministers of Communion brought about another great change in the parish. Under Vatican regulations on the reception of Communion, which allows the bishop to give pastors the power, Father O'Brien appointed Robert K. Bupp, James A. LeNoir, Hugh Ryan, Edward J. Summerton and James Stott lay ministers. Assisting with the distribution of Communion at certain Masses began in April 1973. Coincidentally, the practice of receiving the Holy Eucharist in the standing position started at the same time.



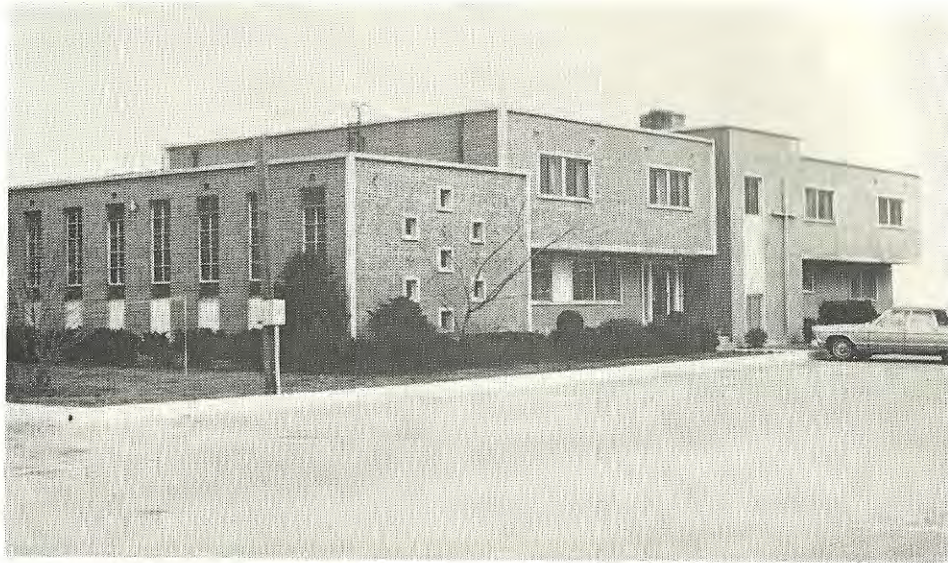
HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL

The first classrooms of our parish school opened in September 1949 using the basement of the rectory. Two Benedictines, Sister Dolores and Sister Marie Consolata taught 22 children in the first grade and 13 children in the second grade. The sisters commuted daily from the Sacred Heart Convent in Wilmington with Father McDonough as their chauffeur. On October 29, 1952, a motel on the southwest corner of Dupont Boulevard and Lincoln Avenue was purchased and converted into a home for the nuns. A year later they moved in, terminating the daily trip from Wilmington. The teaching staff now numbered four — Sisters, Elizabeth, Carmelita, Kevin and Margaret Therese.

When the new school opened in September 1955 the number of nuns doubled. Sisters Rosalia, Kevin, Margaret Therese, Marita, Regina Marie, Stephen and Agnes taught grades one through seven with Sister Elizabeth, Superior and Principal. At this time the parish consisted of 900 families with an enrollment of 450 children in school. Of these there were 92 pupils in the first grade and 87 in the second grade.

The first class, consisting of 26 pupils, graduated from Our Lady of Fatima School in 1957. Most of these graduates were then enrolled in our





High School using newly renovated classrooms in the old hall. After two years the High School was discontinued and the children transferred to established high schools. The hall was subsequently utilized completely by the elementary school.

As our school grew and required more sisters, a larger convent had to be provided. To make land available the parish was granted ownership on February 21, 1955, of that portion of Grant Avenue which divided the property. Father Dwyer engaged F. Leonard Slagle, a Washington architect, to design the building. The contract signed by diocesan authorities, the pastor, lay trustees — Daniel Matassino and Howard Weston was awarded on July 3, 1958 to Facciolo Construction Company of Wilmington at \$116,000. On Thursday, July 10, Father Dwyer blessed the ground and construction began. At the end of August 1959, the convent was completed at a total cost of \$154,000 and ten sisters, including Sister Dolores, the Superior, occupied their new quarters.

The parish membership increased every year and reached a point where over 100 students were enrolled for the first grade. Having facilities to house these children, it was an easy decision to establish two first grades. However, Monsignor Desmond found it impossible to staff the school with nuns and in September 1961 Miss Gwen Hession (now Mrs. Page) joined the faculty.

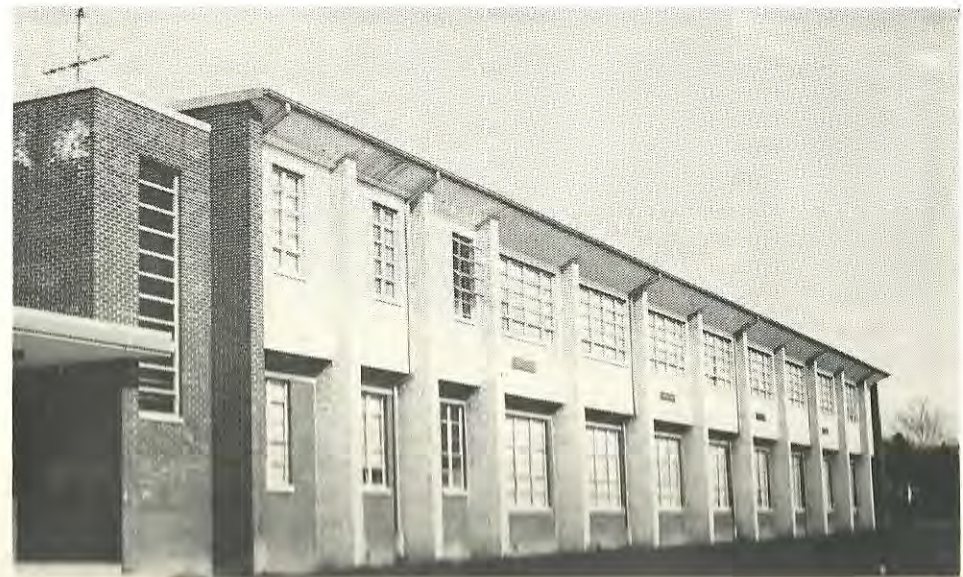
In November 1961, transportation for the nuns was satisfied by an extraordinary project. Under the leadership of the Blessed Virgin Sodality, 1125 S&H Green Stamp Books were collected. These books were redeemed and an eight passenger station wagon was purchased and donated to the good sisters.

During the next several years fewer nuns were assigned to our school and the number of lay teachers increased. This was not the most pressing problem, however. Double grades necessitated expanding our school facilities quickly. This was accomplished in 1964 by renting "Little Red Schoolhouses." These prefabricated classrooms were assembled in the parking area and relieved the crowded conditions until the second floor was added to the school. After Christmas vacation in 1966, all children were housed in one school building which included a larger library, spacious office for the principal and secretary, plus two unoccupied classrooms.

On Friday, October 14, 1966, the students and faculty of our school were thrilled when the President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson stopped to chat and shake hands. They had lined the highway to observe the President's motorcade heading to the airport from Wilmington. Cindy Skibicki was elated when the President shook her hand three times.

During the next five years no significant changes were made to the school building. Paying the salaries of the constantly increasing lay faculty became one of the greatest problems encountered by the people of our parish. Our financial status was at its lowest peak and closing of the school was seriously considered. After a thorough evaluation of a carefully prepared budget and a favorable response from the parishioners it was decided to continue the school in September, 1971.

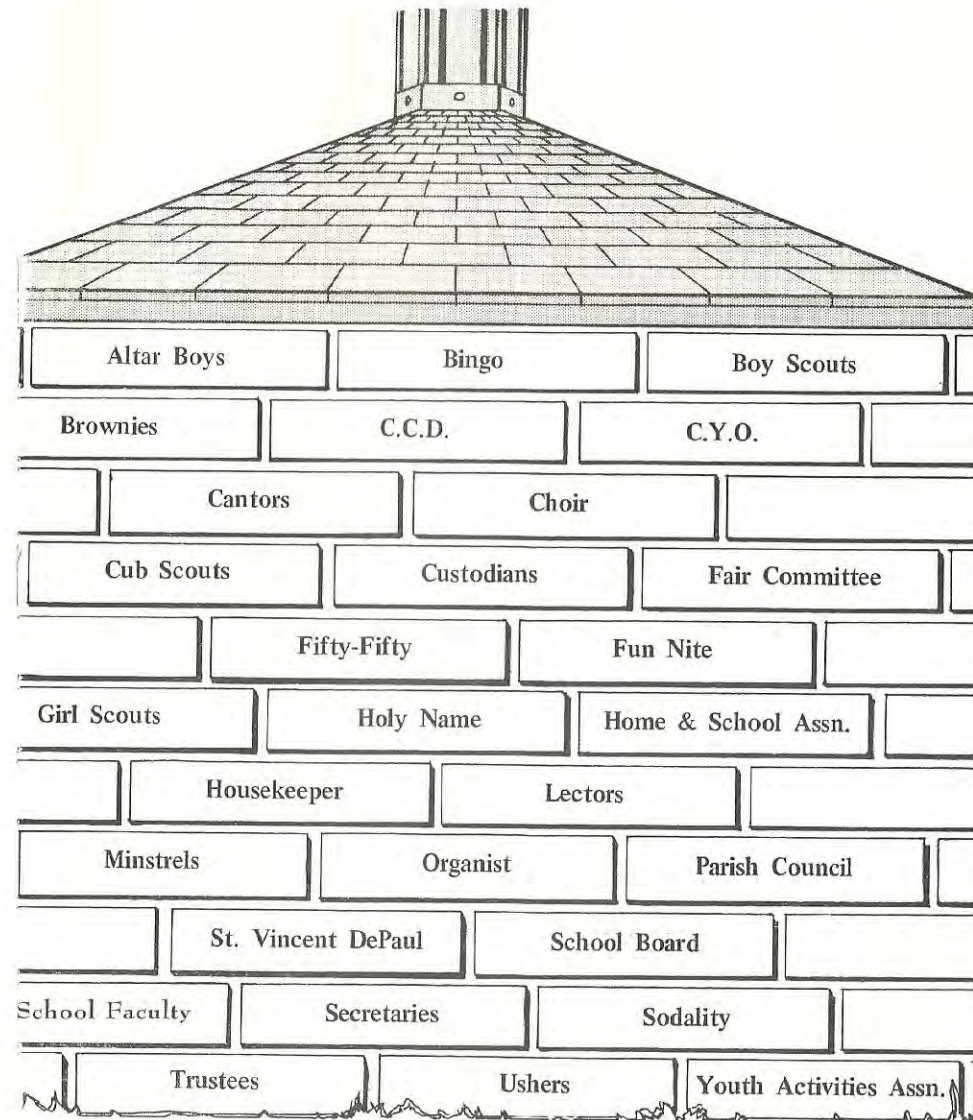
The 1972-1973 faculty is made up of five nuns and thirteen lay teachers.



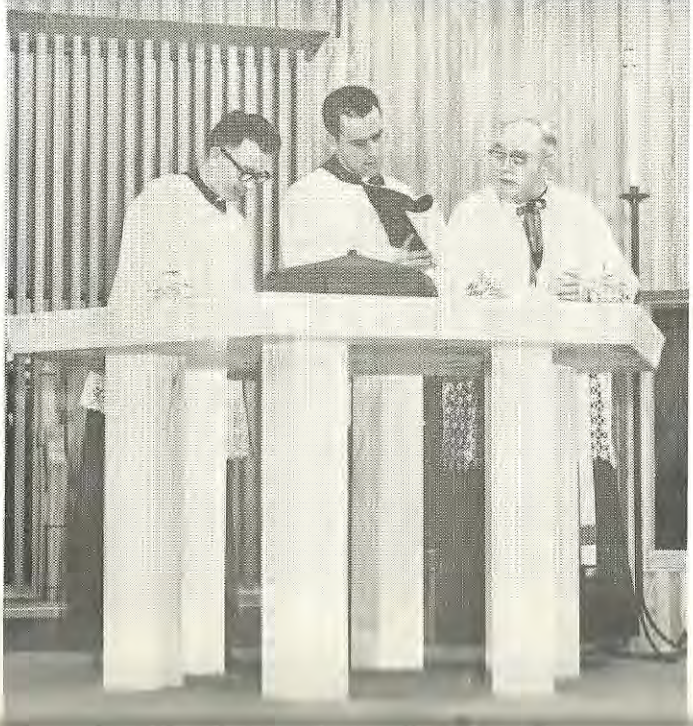
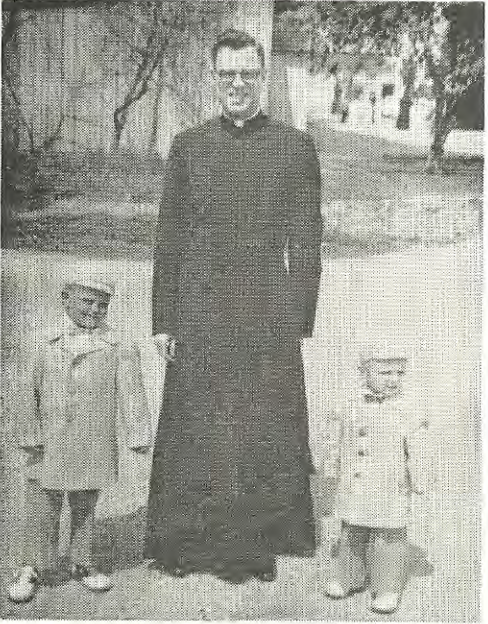
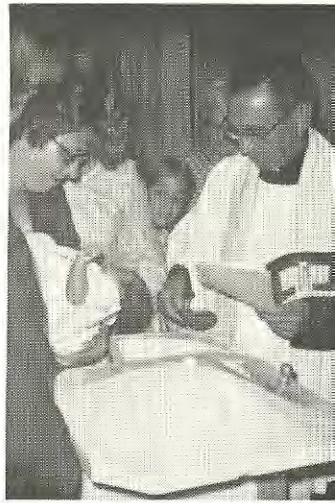
"Thank you for a job well done," is the only way to recognize the following sisters and lay teachers who have taught in our school.

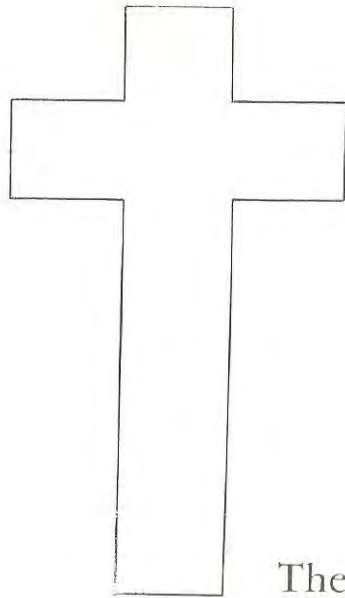
Sister Dolores	Sister Mary Joseph
Sister Marie Consolota	Sister Daria
Sister Carmelita	Sister Mercedes
Sister Elizabeth	Sister Hubert Marie
Sister Margaret Therese	Sister Gabriel
Sister Kevin	Sister Martin
Sister Jeannette	Sister Marjorie
Sister Mary Andrew	Sister Mary Paul
Sister Jerome	Sister Ann Marie
Sister Stephen	Sister Concetta
Sister Marita	Sister Gervase
Sister Regina Marie	Sister Angela
Sister Rosalia	Sister Crescentia
Sister Mary Ellen	Sister Stephanie
Sister Dorothy	Sister David Marie
Sister Gregory	Sister Ann Peter
Sister Damian	Sister Immaculata
Sister Mary Louise	Sister Mary Jude
Sister Leona	Sister Mary Ann
Sister Victorine	Sister Ann
Sister Edith	Sister Frances Cabrini
Sister Mary Agnes	

Mrs. Page	Mr. Keating
Miss McGrath	Mr. Baldini
Miss Doyle	Miss Schilling
Mr. Kowalski	Miss Feeney
Mr. McKeefrey	Miss Pietlock
Mrs. Rice	Mrs. Conley
Mrs. Sitko	Mrs. Puican
Miss McGovern	Mrs. Martin
Mrs. Engle	Miss Bradshaw
Mrs. Bradley	Mrs. Ricketts
Mrs. Kwaiter	Miss Giannell
Mrs. Rosenberger	Mrs. Brittingham
Mrs. Pasimeni	



The words and pictures contained in this book recollect only a few of the many reasons why the dreams of the founding pastor have been realized. It is with great pride that those who have been associated with Our Lady of Fatima for each of the 25 years, or any portion of it, can view the accomplishments. Many who have served, both religious and laity, will not be formally recognized because of the tremendous number of people involved. The recognition of the vast number of people involved can best be illustrated by bricks forming a "foundation" which now sustain the entire church community. Sharing with others is a most gratifying feeling. It is very rewarding to glance at the "foundation" and observe the number of bricks required and visualize how many men, women and children are involved. Most importantly we recognize, and humbly thank God for His graces and pray that they continue to flow into the hearts of the people of Our Lady of Fatima.





The officers and directors of the Spicer-Mullikin Funeral Homes are pleased to have this opportunity to join with so many others in paying tribute to Our Lady of Fatima Church for twenty-five years of selfless service to God and the Community. May the inspiration of this splendid record help each of us to grow in the knowledge and love of God and mankind, and to continue in His service with renewed dedication.

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