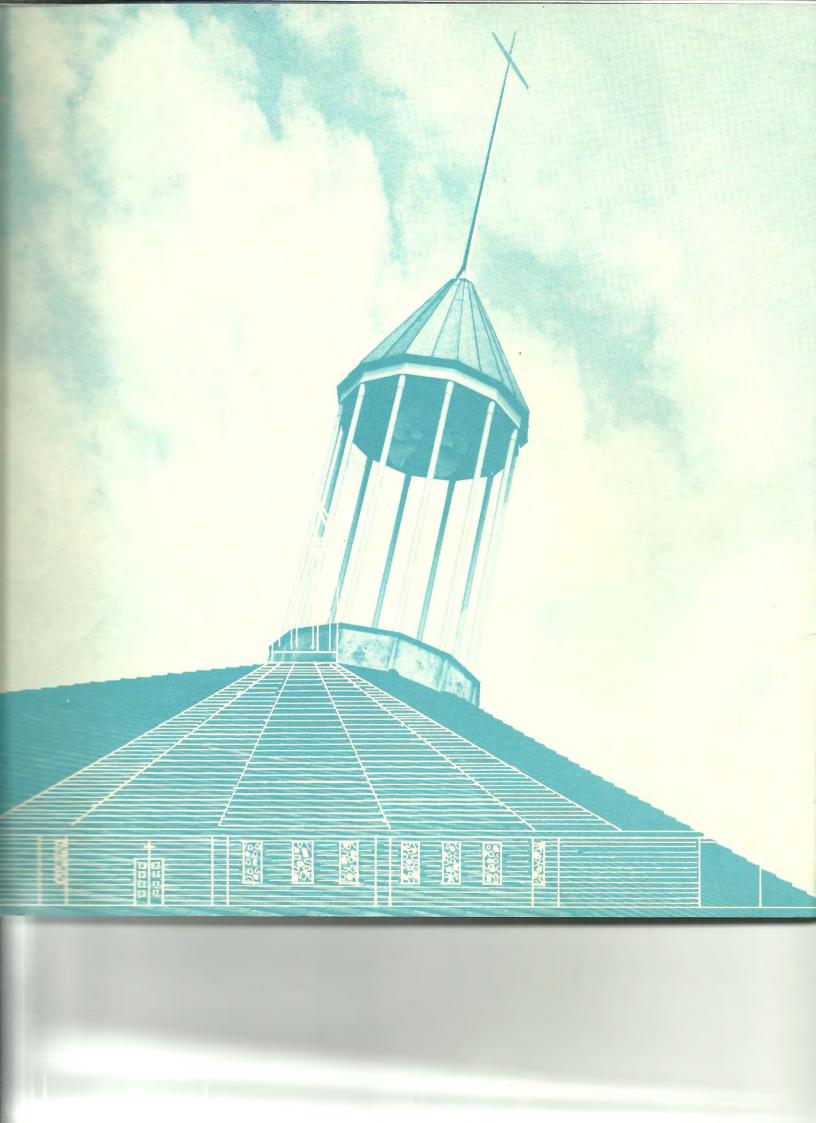


OUR ADY
OF STATIM

OUR LADY OF FATIMA CATHOLIC CHURCH, WILMINGTON MANOR, NEW CASTLE, DELAWA

OUR ADY

OF ATIMA





CHANCERY OFFICE
P.O. Box 2030
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19899
OLYMPIA 6-7769

April 9, 1965

To the Priests and Members of Our Lady of Fatima Parish:

The founding and development of a Catholic parish as an important unit in the family of God is a matter of great interest to all God's People. While the internal formation of the spirit through faith and love is the most important work of the parish, the external manifestation of that spirit is indicated in the actions and lives of the people.

Traditionally, a very important expression of Catholic faith and love is found in artistic structures in which the People of God may not only be instructed, but also be united together in the common worship of God, by sharing in the Liturgy of the Church. The new church of Our Lady of Fatima, so well adapted to that purpose, is a beautiful expression of the faith and love existing among the members of the parish. Facing a busy highway, it serves as a reminder to all who pass by of the presence of God among His people – it is a rallying point for priests and people to gather together in the unity of faith for mutual encouragement and help – it is a Holy Place where God and His people encounter one another in prayer and in the Sacraments – it is a shrine where all can drink from the fountain of eternal truth and be nourished with the Bread of Eternal Life. It is a House of God and a Gate of Heaven, where all men of good will may find peace and rest for their souls.

May Our Lady of Fatima obtain special blessings for all of you as a reward for erecting this beautiful temple for her Divine Son - our Teacher, our Redeemer, and our God.

Your devoted Bishop,

+ Michael W. Obyle Most Reverend Michael W. Hyle, D.D.

Bishop of Wilmington

FOO'S HOLY PEOPLE

"O God, who fashions an eternal dwelling for your majesty out of chosen and living stones, help your suppliant people, so that your Church's material growth may also bring spiritual increase."



GOD gathering together

in union and love, hear these words during the Postcommunion prayer in the Mass for the Dedication of a Church. They remind us, as we prepare to carry Christ in ourselves back out into the City of Man, that we are indeed in some wonderful way God's special possession, dearer to Him than all other people.

Because God loved us from the beginning of time, He gave us and continues to give us life, even when our sins have made dead men of us. And the beauty of it all is that He gave us true life in Christ.

We are God's people. We Christians are truly set apart, a holy and chosen people. We are the parts and members of God's household, as St. Paul reminds us, with Christ the head and its chief cornerstone.

"In Him the whole fabric is bound together," says Paul, "as it grows into a temple, dedicated to the Lord; in Him you too are being built in with the rest, so that God may find in you a spiritual dwelling place."



Brothers and sisters with one another in Christ, we gather together as a worshiping people, the community of God's people, to hear the proclamation of His Word and to celebrate the Eucharistic banquet-sacrifice.

This gathering of ours, this "liturgy" ("people's work"), is also an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. That is why every liturgical celebration, because it is an action both of Christ our head (and chief priest) and of His Body (which is the Church), is a sacred action surpassing all others.

Our liturgical services are therefore not private functions, but celebrations of Christ's Church. They are a "sacrament of unity", namely, the holy people of God united and ordered under their bishops in a particular parish, guided by pastors who take their place.

The parish is the visible Church in the world. One of its aims, then, is to represent Christ in the world today, at the same time encouraging a sense of community and belonging within the parish itself. As the Vatican Council points out, for God's people, in this or any parish, the most appropriate way to do this is to celebrate Sunday Mass.

In the "paschal banquet" of the Mass, we parishioners reunite ourselves with each other and with Christ during the mystery of faith. This is the great action in which "Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us". In this action we are not strangers or silent spectators.

We are helped in this by having a church building constructed, as the Constitution on the Liturgy recommends, such that "... the very arrangement of places and things will be a clear sign and faithful echo of the sacred assembly, which is the congregation of the people of God, composed of the 'servants' of God and the 'holy people' duly united together."





THE CHURCH FOR A CHURCH

Seeing is believing, so to speak, when it comes to church buildings. Every group of God's holy people needs a structure to house its Eucharistic assembly, and also one which will shine forth to the world the sacredness of this particular visible community of the faithful.

As for detailed plans, standards, regulations, or blueprints for such a structure, there are none. All that is needed is a building to serve as a "Mass-house", as the English writer Belloc called it.

For our Mass-house there exists a treasure house of ideas. Over the centuries the Church has allowed and encouraged the development of nearly every size, shape, and style of church building imaginable. She has welcomed modes and fashions from every age, depending on the natural talents and cultures of God's people, and the needs of the various liturgical rites within the Church.

What looks like a church to us may not at all suit the tastes of some other century or country or climate. What is important, though, is that our parish Mass-house help us, in this particular century, country, and climate, see spiritual truths visibly expressed through the sacred image of our church. (To do otherwise would be like asking the builders of Notre Dame in Paris to have imitated the cane and bamboo churches of the South Pacific islands.)

The only real regulation or blueprint that Holy Mother the Church gives us, as it turns out, is that the building be suited to its purpose: "And when churches are to be built, let great care be taken that they are suitable for the celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful," says the Constitution on the Liturgy.

This is the blueprint we have followed in developing, planning, and erecting the new church for Our Lady of Fatima parish. It is a functional plan. The entire structure is designed, as C. A. Reinhold writes, "for the meeting of the congregational, hierarchically organized Body of Christ and the celebration of his Mysteries."

Our Lady of Fatima's church follows the same guidelines of artistic functionality that inspired the magnificent cathedrals of the middle ages, the ornate Byzantine basilicas, and even the early Christian churches. They all met the demand of their times. Their creators expressed the liturgical spirit of their own day, with skill and art.



THE JOUSE OF OUR GOD

The new church of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, then, is not really a complete innovation as far as the demands of church architecture go. It stands as a clear sign for what it is supposed to be: a meeting-place for the holy people of God, a Mass-house. Outside, it draws the eye to God, ever-present in our lives and in the entire world; inside, it draws us to Christ, present on our altar and pervading the entire interior.

The advantages of the relatively unusual arrangement of this new church are obvious, both from the viewpoint of the people present and from the very reason why the building exists in the first place.

A centralized altar focuses all attention on the sacred action taking place there. But it does something else as well; it emphasizes our participation in the sacred banquet as a "we-you" affair.

The priest-celebrant, surrounded by his people, is at once both one with them and at the same time their spiritual leader. The members of the parish family, of whom he is also the spiritual father, more easily unite with him and with one another in offering the sacrificial gift, their bread and wine, for him to transform into the person of Christ, so that they may share with him and with each other the "food of angels".

Plan fulfills purpose — In the plan of our church, all eyes aim easily at the liturgical focal point: Christ crucified, symbolized by the welded steel crucifix suspended over the altar table.

This six-sided marble table, elevated two steps above the floor of the sanctuary, is flanked by two welded steel candle holders, serving to define the sacred space encompassing the altar. Centered on the altar is the tabernacle, fashioned of welded steel, actually a six-sided model of the church itself.

To one side of the altar table stands the ambo or lectern for the lay commentator. The sedes praesidentialis a chair for the presiding celebrant during the sacred liturgies, is directly behind the altar table.

The pulpit blends with the other altar furniture, and forms a simple but suitable place from which sacred Scripture may be read and where the celebrant may deliver his homilies on the word of God.

From floor to ceiling behind the sanctuary rises the vertically-grooved wooden wall, drawing the eye upward, from the steel sculptures of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph behind the altar, on up to the central "oculus" or "lantern" in the roof. The oculus is located directly over the altar table.

The altar rail surrounding the sanctuary is supported by a series of circles, and symbolizes the timelessness of eternity.

Also of welded steel, it blends harmoniously with the other altar furnishings.

The people's area — Planned to accommodate 800 worshippers, Our Lady of Fatima Church has graceful wood-and-steel pews, placed in smaller groups than are usually found in a church built to hold this many people. Nine aisles extend outwardly from the altar to the walls of the church, like the spokes of a wheel. No member of the congregation is more than 40 feet away from the altar throughout the liturgies.

Just outside the sanctuary is located the choir area and organ console. This arrangement is designed to aid members of the congregation in more actively participating in singing during the liturgies, and to link more closely the role of the "schola" (or choir) with that of the people.

The chapel is also on the same side of the church as the choir. With its own movable altar (on which weekday Masses are celebrated), this chapel doubles as extra seating space for the congregation during the Sunday and holyday Masses. The windows in the chapel face the sanctuary and main altar, and may be opened for distribution of Holy Communion.

On the other side of the church is a specially-designed "crying" room, where parents may take their children during Mass if they wish. This room, too, faces the sanctuary, and its windows also open for Communion.

Confessionals are located at the rear of the church, on either side of the main entrance. There are also confessionals at the rear of the chapel and crying room. For persons wishing to receive the Sacrament of Penance outside the regular hours, a buzzer system connects the chapel confessional with the priests' sacristy.

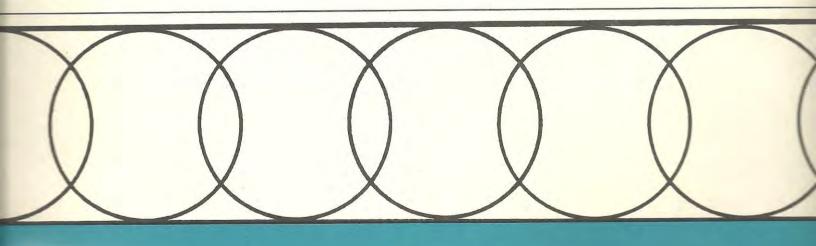
The Stations of the Cross are represented in the fourteen specially-constructed stained glass windows of the church, seven on each side of the building.

At the left and right sides of the narthex (or vestibule), as one enters the church, are the baptistry and small sacristy.

The baptistry, where new Christians are received into the life of Christ in his Church, forms the second of the two poles about which revolves the sacramental life of the Church, and has the same six-sided shape as the main altar table.

The church doors each have eight small etched-glass windows, depicting typical symbols used in Christian art. The meanings of these symbols are:

Other features — Our Lady of Fatima Church actually has three sacristies, one each for the priests and for the servers at the rear of the church, and a smaller sacristy just off the narthex, opposite the baptistry.



On either side of the ambulatory or hall leading from the sacristies to the sanctuary are rooms for storage as well as leavatories. The ambulatory is readily accessible from the church nave.

Good architectural practices have been followed in the design of the church. The interior acoustics were balanced by the proper choice of materials for walls, ceiling, and floor. The floor of both sanctuary and nave is entirely carpeted, serving several functions, such as enhanced color effects, sound absorption, and simplified maintenance.

Lighting fixtures suspended from the ceiling in the church also contain the public address system speakers, helping to diffuse evenly the amplified speech of the celebrant and his ministers throughout the building. All interior lighting is controlled by dimmer switches, so that light-level intensities may be varied to suit the liturgical occasion.

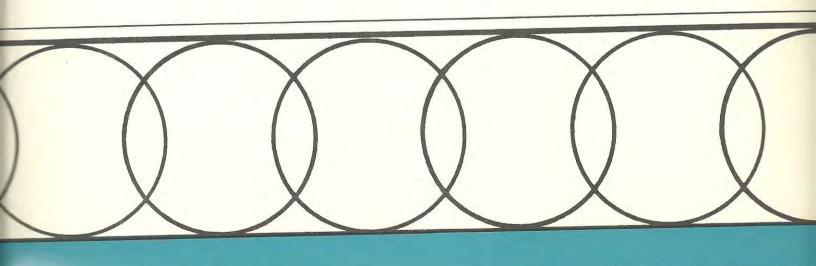
In addition to the main lighting, twelve spotlights shine down on the main altar from the dome above the oculus. These are complemented by a second circle of twelve lights aimed upwardly from the dome at the bell tower for night-time illumination.

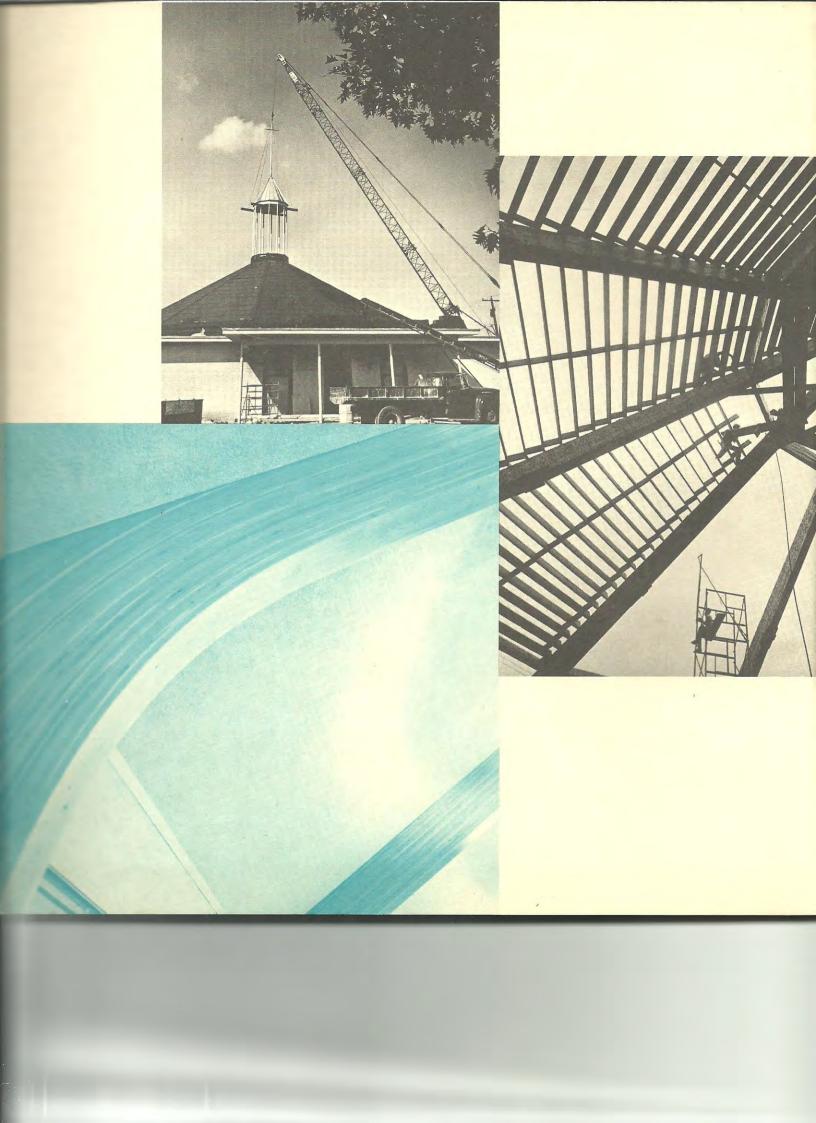
An electronically-operated carillon system is installed in the tower. The system is programmed to ring Mass calls and the Angelus. It may also be operated manually for ringing on special occasions.

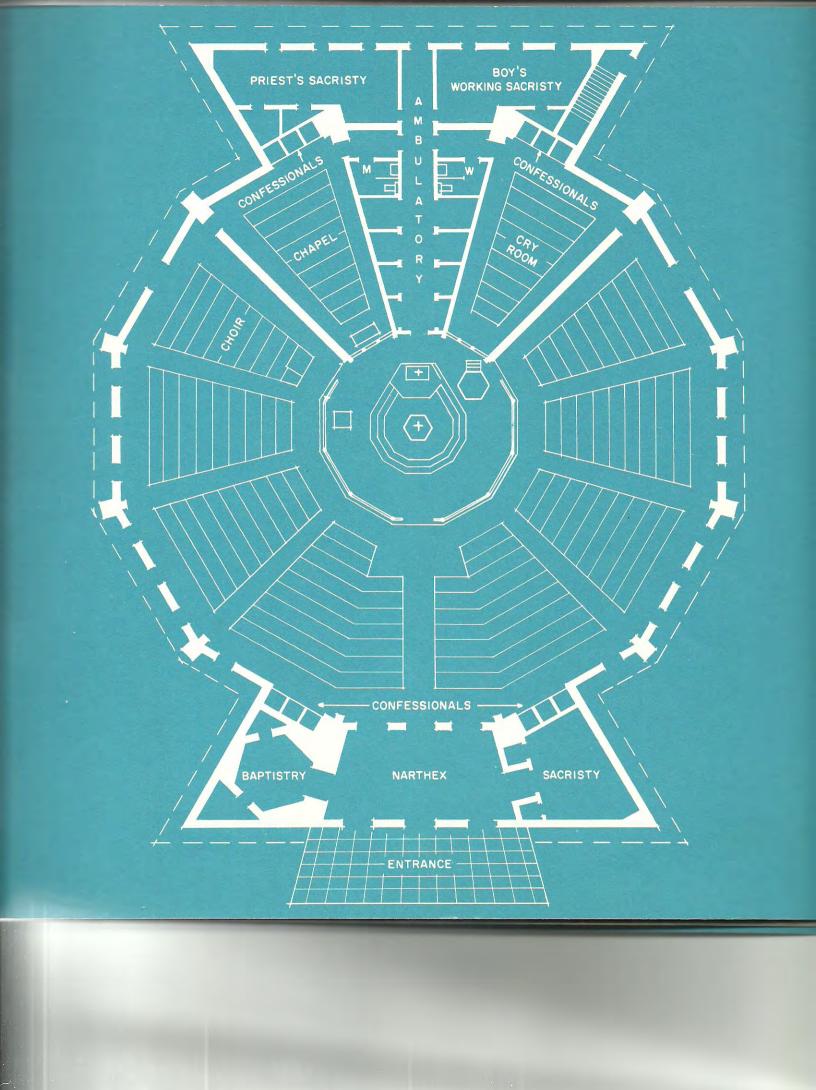
The organ speakers are concealed behind the wall at the rear of the sanctuary, situated so as to radiate their sound outwardly from the wall to provide a balanced organ sound throughout the church.

The natural wood finish on the walls, woodwork, pews, cabinetry, and main support arches was selected to blend harmoniously with the cool blues in the carpeting and the colors of the stained glass windows. The windows' color character is emphasized by their being set into simple brick, painted an off-white, and the cement mullions that hold the glass chips in place blend evenly with the walls. Supplementary lighting for the windows has been installed on the outside of the church by means of recessed spotlights under the eaves.

Finally, it should be noted that conceiving a chuch structure to properly fit the land available was no easy task. With limited space available due to the plat size and set-back restrictions, area requirements alone could have justified this type of church. Yet to do this so deftly, and at the same time to fill so many other functional needs for a Christian church, represents a remarkable architectural achievement.















he church doors each have eight small etched-glass windows, depicting typical symbols used in Christian art.

The meanings of these symbols are:

Ship — the Church, with symbol of Christ on sail

Cross — alpha and omega, the first and last

Hand — the right hand of God

Lily — the Blessed Virgin

Heart and crown — Our Lady, Queen of Sorrows

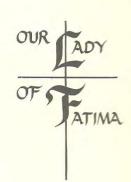
Desending dove - the Holy Spirit

Three fishes — the Trinity and Christ

Three crowns — God working through Mary

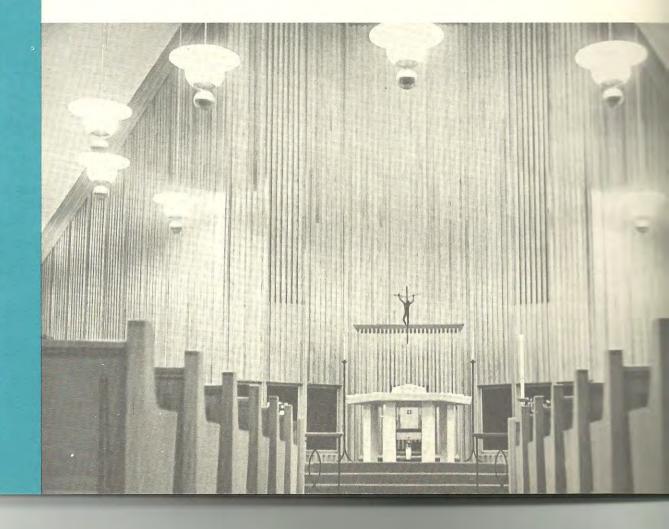












ORIGINS THE ARTS

There is no set form for a Christian church. We might expect to find something approaching the ideal if we went back to the times closest to Our Lord, when the new community of Christians began building the City of God in the City of Man. Unfortunately, from the very beginning the Christians were persecuted, so what the early Christian churches actually looked like is still one of the most debated matters in the history of art.

We do know, from the Acts of the Apostles, that the Christians celebrated the Last Supper and preached in a large room, usually some part of a private house. Persecuted severely during the second and third centuries, the Christians could scarcely emerge into the open and advertise their presence by ostentatious churches. Apparently they converted the interiors of many private houses for the holy services.

The Church did not finally emerge from hiding until the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. When she did, she rapidly blossomed forth, adopting the fully developed Roman architecture of her day. The very first church building reflecting Christianity's coming of age under the Emperor Constantine in 313 was the Church of the Redeemer, later renamed St. John Lateran, in Rome, and now officially (but not so well known as) the Pope's cathedral.

The Roman house plan, which served so well for two and a half centures, soon blended with Roman basilicas (or public buildings). Many of these basilicas were built throughout the Empire to house civil courts, markets, baths, and temples.

Yet as far as we can determine, the earliest form of Christian Mass-house was simple and clear, based on the typical family dwelling (usually that of a more wealthy Roman, to be large enough for the Christians in the neighborhood).

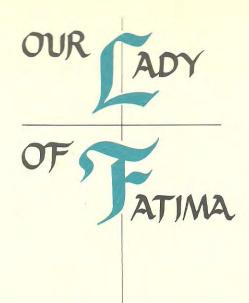
Nearly all these church-houses were rectangular, divided into three parts:

- the apse, usually a bulge-like area at one end for the altar and clergy,
- the nave (and aisles, in the case of larger churches), facing the apse, where the people congregated during the paschal banquet, and
- the **narthex**, or the vestible, at the opposite end from the apse. The baptistry was frequently located here, symbolizing the Christian's entrance into the life of God.

Gradually, however, this "house-plan" concept came to merge with the public basilica (which tended to have an inward-ly-directed floor plan, leading the people toward some central focal point, such as a judge's throne or altar). This combination also included an area at right angles to the main aisle, known as the transept, giving the building a cross-shaped plan when viewed from above.

Until the fifth century, there was no fixed orientation of the church. Frequently, however, the priest celebrated Mass facing east, with the people facing him, to the west. This eventually changed so that the altar was placed at the east end of the church, with the priest thereby having to stand with his back to the people at many parts in the Mass, since everyone faced east.

This type of altar-placement lasted until the middle ages, but the custom of the priest celebrating Mass with his back to the people has persisted right up until our own day, only now being officially changed by the Church.



Our Lady of Fatima Parish, in the Diocese of Wilmington, dates back to August 5, 1948, then it was formally founded on land given to the Diocese six years earlier by the Stahl family Wilmington. Before 1948, the Parish tract, located in Wilmington Manor on the Du Pont Eghway, formed part of St. Peter's Parish, New Castle, Delaware.

Fr. Edmund J. McDonough, original pastor of the new Parish — then comprising only 300 amilies — celebrated the first Mass at Our Lady of Fatima on August 19, 1948. Early the folowing year, on February 27, he offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the first time in the newly-opened Parish hall.

In September 1949, the Benedictine Sisters began teaching in the Parish School. Classes at time numbered only 35 students.

On February 23, 1952, Fr. McDonough died. Bishop Edmond J. Fitzmaurice then appointed Roderick B. Dwyer to succeed Fr. McDonough. Fr. Dwyer was made pastor officially on May 1952.

Another spiritual landmark in the Parish was April 1952, when Bishop Fitzmaurice conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on members of the Parish for the first time.

Several significant events took place during 1955. The new Parish church opened in January, and the main school building was ready for classes in September. Also during that year, Bishop Fitzmaurice appointed Fr. Henri I. Foltz as assistant pastor. Fr. Anthony F. DiMichele replaced Fr. Foltz in February 1956.

The year 1957 saw the first class of 23 pupils graduate from Our Lady of Fatima School. It was also during this year that plans were announced for the high school that was to have been developed in the Parish. As it turned out, the project was suspended, and the building that had been erected to serve as part of the high school facilities has since been adapted to the elementary school.

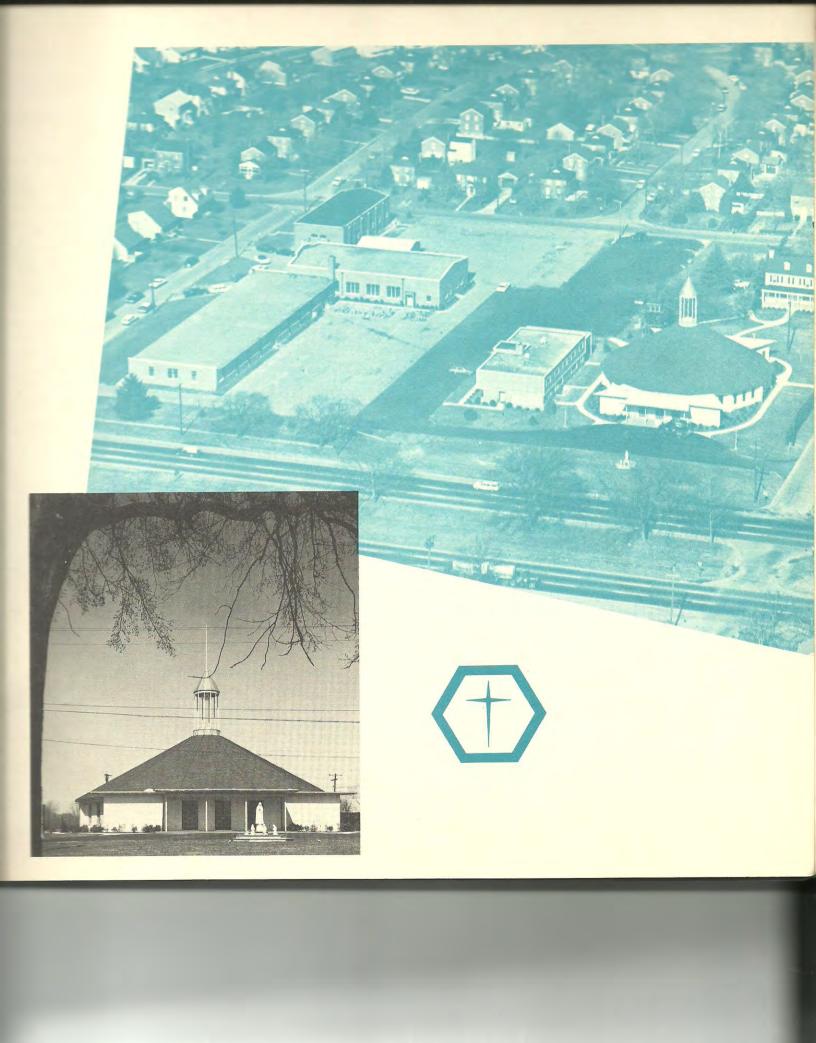
By 1959 the new convent for the Benedictine Sisters had been completed and was dedicated. Members of the resident community also include Sisters assigned to St. Catherine of Siena School, until their new convent is opened.

In June 1958 Bishop Fitzmaurice named Fr. Bruce Byrolly as assistant pastor, succeeding Fr. DiMichele. The Bishop also assigned Fr. Bernard T. Pagano to the Our Lady of Fatima in September, 1958, due to the increasing pastoral needs of the Parish. Fr. Ronald C. Powell replaced Fr. Pagano in September, 1959.

Msgr. Francis J. Desmond came to Our Lady of Fatima on February 4, 1961, when Msgr. Dwyer was transferred to Christ Our King Parish.

Most recently, Fr. Patrick A. Brady was assigned to succeed Fr. Byrolly as assistant pastor, in June 1964. And by this time, Our Lady of Fatima Parish had grown to the point where there were nearly 1,300 families, and the school enrollment totaled 620 students in all eight grades.

Ground for the new church was broken on May 24, 1964, as a fitting sign of the strong faith of the people of God in Our Lady of Fatima Parish.



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