

# The Second Twenty Five Years



## 1974 thru 1978

■ In 1974, Sister Marcella Marie was appointed as the first Director of Religious Education and music coordinator. The original folk group was organized at this time.

■ Due to the closing of St. Peter's Cathedral for repairs, Our Lady of Fatima hosted a diocesan ordination ceremony. The Reverend Paul F. Jennings, Jr. and the Reverend Clemens D. Manista, Jr. were ordained in the special rite officiated by Bishop Thomas J. Mardaga.

■ After 25 years of teaching at Our Lady of Fatima, the remaining five Benedictine Sisters were withdrawn from the school by their Order in 1976. With the departure of the nuns, the school opened in September with a staff comprised entirely of lay teachers, the first school in the diocese to do so. The convent has been used since that time as a semi-retirement home for the Sisters of St. Francis at Glen-Riddle, Pennsylvania.

■ Mike McMahon was hired as the first salaried Director of Liturgy and Music in the parish.

■ The first musical reviews were organized and presented in the parish under the direction of Father Paul Mast whose successful presentation of "Fiddler on the Roof" was the group's first offering.

■ In February of 1977, the new Rite of Reconciliation became effective. The former baptistery in the church vestibule was converted for this purpose and finished to express an atmosphere of comfort, quiet and joy.

■ September 1977 saw the opening of two half-day sessions of

kindergarten with a total of 50 children and helped maintain the student enrollment of some 617 children.

■ On January 22, 1978, a covenant was ratified by Our Lady of Fatima and Asbury Methodist Church, the first such covenant in the United States between Catholic and Methodist Churches. The covenant is based upon the belief that Catholic and Non-Catholic religious groups should seek to promote harmony and goodwill as they embark upon programs of mutual interest. The covenant includes the announced offering of prayer for one another at various services, ecumenical worship and sermonizing, cooperative youth programs and the sharing of church facilities. The covenant was signed by our Pastor, Father John O'Brien and attested to by Henry Metz of Our Lady of Fatima, while the Reverend Thomas Short and Delvin Burns did likewise for Asbury Methodist Church.

■ The June Fair, an outgrowth of the original "Strawberry Festival," became a regularly scheduled June event and soon became the single, top fund raiser for the parish.

■ Bingo likewise experienced a resurgence among the church members and has become a popular Tuesday night outing for a large number of dedicated players.

■ On June 7, 1978, having experienced tremendous growth, it was determined by the diocese that a new parish was needed to serve the needs of the growing catholic population. The southern section of Our Lady of Fatima parish was reapportioned and the new parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton established on Route 7 in Bear.

### 1979-1983

■ On May 10, 1980, John W. Freebery became the first permanent Deacon at Our Lady of Fatima, a member of the first class of permanent Deacons ordained in the Diocese at St. Peters Cathedral by Bishop Thomas J. Mardaga. Below the minimum age requirement at the time, Deacon Freebery was granted a special dispensation for ordination.

■ In 1981, the Parish Outreach Office, organized to give physical and spiritual assistance to the less fortunate in our parish, was



established. Pat Wham gave impetus to the program as its first director and it expanded rapidly under her direction. Food, clothing and other basic necessities were made available to those in need. The Angel Tree at Christmas, through which hundreds of presents are made available to the needy, is an extension of this very worthy endeavor as well as Meals-On-Wheels, a hot meal home delivery service and the Emmanuel Dining Room project, wherein parishioners unselfishly volunteered their time and efforts to prepare meals for hundreds of needy at Emmanuel Dining Room.

■ In 1982, Father John F. O'Brien, Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima for the past ten years, was reassigned as Pastor of St. Elizabeth's Parish in Wilmington. Replacing Father O'Brien was Father Stanley J. Russell, Pastor at Holy Rosary Parish in Claymont.

■ The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was officially organized within the parish by Father Russell. The program includes a process of faith development designed to welcome adults into full membership of the Catholic Church through the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Also welcomed are baptized Catholics and Christians from other denominations who need to complete their Sacraments of Initiation.

■ The first Parish Life Committee was organized in 1982. The primary goal of this group was to organize the parish family by coordinating all parish activities, including fund-raising efforts, and oversee the parish calendar.

■ In a special ceremony, Father Russell had the honor of burning the mortgage on the church property.

#### 1984-1988

■ The Kitty Wilson Award was established in her memory, recognizing the many years she unselfishly donated her time and efforts to a host of projects within the parish. The award is presented annually at Thanksgiving Day Mass to a parishioner who has made outstanding contributions to parish ministries.

■ In September 1984 a full-day session of kindergarten was added to the school for twenty-five new students.

■ On June 7, 1985, the first Pat Wham Humanitarian Award

was presented. Following Pat's untimely death, the award was established by Outreach volunteers. It was presented to an eighth grade student who most displayed Pat's Christian qualities of service to church and school.

■ In September of 1985 the initial "Latch Key" program was instituted at the school. Children, who would perhaps have to go home to an empty house, are now able to remain after school in a safe, supervised environment. The parish school also received complete accreditation by the Middle States Accreditation Bureau.

■ A Memorial Award in remembrance of Richard Frechette, a devoted sports enthusiast and coach within the parish was established this same year. The award is presented annually to an eighth grade boy and girl in recognition of their outstanding athletic ability.

■ In March, 1987, Joseph Romans was welcomed as the second permanent Deacon in the parish, replacing John Freeberry who moved to St. Mary of the Assumption in Hockessin. Deacon Romans was ordained by Bishops Robert Mulvey and James C. Burke at St. John the Beloved Church.

■ From July to October 1988, the church was closed for renovations with approximately \$200,000 being invested in the project. The entire cost of the renovation was raised through donations, with those contributors being acknowledged by a Scroll of Recognition in the main vestibule and the Remembrance Tree in the side vestibule. The undertaking included the replacement of all carpeting and kneelers and the construction of chapels for the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Fatima. Replaced by the two chapels, the cry rooms were relocated to the two side vestibules. The audio system was completely refurbished and the organ and choir space relocated to the opposite side of the altar. Sufficient quantities of original iron and oak were salvaged during restoration to take care of all the needs of renovation. Sunday Masses and all other religious services were moved to Msgr. Dwyer Hall during this period, sparking memories of days long passed.

■ The newly renovated church, in conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parish, was rededicated at a special Mass by Bishop Robert Mulvey.



## 1989-1993

■ May 12, 1989 witnessed a special ceremony following confirmation in which Bishop Robert Mulvey blessed our new shrine honoring Our Lady of Fatima. The beautiful, hand-crafted statue of Mary with three children and their sheep were carved by artists from the Alpine area of northern Italy.

■ On July, 5, 1989, the first general meeting of the Our Lady of Fatima Leisure Club was held. With more than 40 parishioners attending, bylaws were adopted and Jim Corcoran elected the club's first president. Planned primarily as a social club for parishioners 55 and over, it has fulfilled this objective admirably and expanded to become an enthusiastic, readily available service resource group.

■ In 1990, Mary Lou May joined Our Lady of Fatima as the Choir Director and Coordinator of Cantor Ministry. Her duties were later expanded to include the coordination of music ministry and liturgy. Since her association with the parish, the cantor program has been initiated and a Youth Choir organized. Music within our liturgies has been greatly expanded and enhanced by the use of ensemble instrumentalists and increased participation by the entire assembly. The adult choirs have grown not only in size but in the quality of their musical presentations.

■ The diocesan wide "Renew" program was instituted in all the parishes. It was designed to afford parishioners the opportunity to strengthen their faith and understanding through prayer, scripture readings and discussion within small groups. Some 224 parishioners within 22 groups took advantage of this opportunity, meeting weekly for six week periods from 1991 to 1994. The individual small groups all endeavored to take on worthy projects, one of which resulted in the collection of more than 80 blankets, later distributed to the homeless.

■ The annual Our Lady of Fatima May procession took on special meaning in 1992, as it also marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mary's appearance to the children of Fatima, Portugal in 1917.

## 1994 thru 1998

■ In 1995, the Diocese officially notified the parish that the position of altar server would be open to all in the parish, regardless of gender. The parish quickly adopted this policy and now had a large contingent of young men and women contributing to the parish ministry.

■ The parish registry has grown from 1,500 families in 1973 to a current count of some 2,700 families.

■ On April 11, 1994, a group of dedicated volunteers who had been active in the Renew program, and intent on providing the opportunity for parishioners to increase their faith and knowledge of the church, assembled for the first time. Thus the Adult Education Committee was founded and immediately embarked on a program to accomplish their mission. By August they had scheduled their first education session and by September had established a lending library of video tapes and printed material for individuals and groups within the parish.

■ In 1994, Father Russell was reassigned as Pastor to St. Helena's in Bellefonte. He was replaced as Pastor by a former Our Lady of Fatima associate, Father Michael J. McDermott.

■ On December 15, 1994, the Knights of Columbus became a reality in the parish when Our Lady of Fatima Council #1469 was issued a charter. Dave Cloughley was elected the first Grand Knight by the 52 men who comprised the new council. Primarily dedicated to service within the community, the Fatima Council is placing special emphasis on the youth of the parish. The Knights' motto: "Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism" best sums up their lofty mission.

■ On June 27, 1996, both the Rev. John J. Mink and the Rev. Mr. Thomas J. Protack were assigned to the parish as Associate Pastor and Deacon respectively.

■ In anticipation of the parish's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998, Father McDermott called for the organization of committees to formulate plans for the upcoming celebration. Newly formed liturgy, history and social committees, with the help of many established parish groups, worked hard for several months planning meaningful religious and social events to celebrate the Jubilee. The inaugural event featured



"Return Day" Masses with informal receptions and a parish picnic, to which special invitations were extended to all former clergy, religious and parishioners. Liturgical events held throughout the Jubilee Year featured special emphasis on the anniversary as well as expanded devotions to Our Lady of Fatima.

- Deacon Thomas J. Protack was ordained to the priesthood in a ceremony at St. Peter's Cathedral in Wilmington. The newly ordained Father Protack remained at Our Lady of Fatima as an Associate Pastor.

- Father McDermott resigned as Pastor. Rev. John J. Mink, associate pastor, was appointed Temporary Administrator to oversee the affairs of the parish.

- Members and leaders of the parish Youth Group traveled to Paris, France in October 1997 for the World Youth Day Mass. The Fatima pilgrims presented His Holiness, Pope John Paul II with the first of our pewter medallions designed for the Golden Jubilee celebration.

- On May 8, 1997, Father Protack earned the Pontifical Post-Graduate Degree of a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) This degree, granted in the name of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, and the Vatican, recognizes Father Protack as a Theological Scholar. The degree grants him the privilege of the Papal Mandate in the name of the Church. He is able to teach as a member of any Theological Faculty and Catholic University in the World. Father Protack uses his talents of teaching by offering lecture series in the parish on the liturgy, church history, and moderates the R.C.I.A.

- In a move to keep up with our fast-changing world, Our Lady of Fatima school expanded the roll of the computer education teacher to a full time position that includes instruction in grades 3 through 8. As of our Golden Jubilee year, the school enrollment stands at some 595 students, with twenty five-full-time teachers, four part-time teachers and eight classroom aides.

- In September 1997, Sister Theresa Ulshafer joined the parish as the Coordinator of Pastoral Care. Sister Theresa is responsible for outreaching those in the parish who find it difficult to participate actively without assistance, primarily shut-ins, the sick, and the hospitalized.

- The first parish Young Adult Ministry program for those from

18 to 25, was initiated by Father Mink and Father Protack at Our Lady of Fatima in October 1997 and soon included nine, new lay Eucharistic Ministers from among them. The program is designed to establish an atmosphere wherein more dedicated and religious young people can readily enter into the mainstream of parish life.

- On March 12, 1998, Father John J. Mink, who had been Temporary Administrator, was appointed Pastor by Bishop Michael Saltarelli and officially installed at a special ceremony on May 24, 1998.

- Effective May 1, 1998, Rev. Joseph J. Narinattam, formerly Chaplain at St. Francis Hospital, was appointed an Assistant Pastor at Our Lady of Fatima.

- On Sunday, September 27, 1998, Our Lady of Fatima officially closed its year-long Golden Jubilee celebration at a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Saltarelli, followed by a sumptuous catered dinner in Msgr. Dwyer Hall.

## Epilogue

Our Lady of Fatima parish has made great strides forward since those memorable moments in 1948. It has taken the loving labor of hundreds of dedicated people, both religious and laity alike, most of whom are unnamed but not forgotten in this condensed account of our history.

Although not planned, the two twenty-five-year capsules of the history of Our Lady of Fatima appear to reflect two separate, equally important, phases of the parish's development. The first 25 years, while certainly not ignoring the spiritual needs of the parish, were most notable by the seemingly never-ending construction. Not one but three churches, along with the convent and school, were constructed, a rectory acquired and renovated, and the former churches converted for much needed church and school functions. All this was necessitated by the rapid growth of the Our Lady of Fatima family. The parish today is a living testimony to those who labored in those early years to physically, spiritually and financially support the church. Some of the very active, early formed committees, including the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality, established in 1949 and still a highly involved and



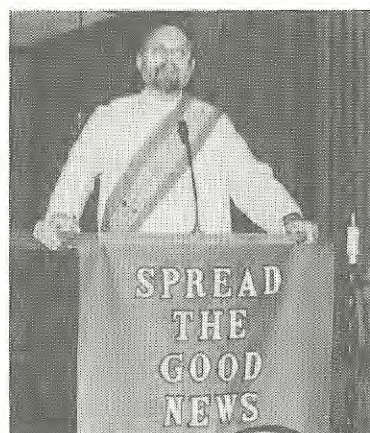
esteemed resource group at Our Lady of Fatima, the St. Vincent DePaul Society and the Athletic Association, who administer to those in need and the youth of our parish respectively, were the building blocks for today's multiple activities.

The second twenty-five years have given witness to an unprecedented explosion in the number of parishioners and the obligation to service that growth. There are now no less than forty organizations involving hundreds of caring parishioners and clergy, constantly addressing the daily expectations of our ever-growing parish and those of our neighbors in need. Whether you want to work with the elderly or our youth, clean the church or spread the Word of the Lord, administer to the sick and homeless or add your voice to our liturgies, there is certainly a group within the parish that can satisfy those interests.

What will the next fifty years bring to Our Lady of Fatima? Only God knows the answer to that question, but with His help and the continued commitment from our dedicated parish family, it is sure to be a an extension of the success and joy we have experienced for the first 50 years. Our Lady of Fatima parishioners can then proudly proclaim, as we do now: "Celebrating 100 Years as a Community of Faith."







## Golden Jubilee Committees

### *Executive Committee Chair*

Madeline Romano

### *Liturgy Committee*

Madeline Romano - Chair

Joan Berl  
Richard Berl

Ann DiGennaro  
Mary Lou May

### *Social Committee*

Joan Berl - Co-Chair

Leslie Collins - Co-Chair

Charles Barone  
Ruth Barone  
Jean Barone

Lucy Denning  
James Lenoir  
Mary O'Neill

### *History Committee*

Patty Collins - Chair

Richard Berl  
Ann DiGennaro  
Lorraine Grier

James LeNoir  
Mary O'Neill  
Joseph Tucker

### *Publicity*

Richard Berl  
James LeNoir