

Saint Francis Xavier

Petoskey, Michigan

1879 - 1979

“See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God. Yet that is what we are.” (1 John 3,1). These words of God identify our presence upon earth. They also proclaim our vision. They point to our future. St. Francis Xavier of Petoskey is privileged to accept the grace of God as it celebrates one hundred years of its life. “Dearly beloved,” the Word continues, “we are God’s children now. What we shall become has not yet come to light. We know when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based in him keeps himself pure, as he is pure. If you consider the holiness that is his, you can be sure that everyone who acts in holiness has been begotten by him.” (1 John 3, 1-3). “Love has no room for fear, rather perfect love casts out all fear. And since fear has to do with punishment, love is not yet perfect in one who is afraid.” (1 John 4, 18).

With these words echoing in our hearts, we begin our second century as a Catholic parish in Petoskey. We trust in God’s continued blessing. It was with the same trust in God’s providence without fear that our forefathers began their lives of faith in northern Michigan. In faith we now remember their lives and their struggles. They began with their own visions of a future. They heeded the call of God and had their glorious day. We glory in it with them. Today we have our call. Tomorrow’s people will also experience God in their midst. The inspired message of God continues to echo through the ages. The prophet Isaiah first gave expression to it in these memorable words, “I will cut a road through all the mountains and make my highways level. See, some shall come from afar, others from the north and the west. Sing out, O heavens and rejoice, O earth, break forth into song, you mountains . . . Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” (Is. 49, 11-12, 15).

Therefore no matter how we might hurt today or cry tomorrow, no matter how alone we might feel, how angry we might be, how lost or how adrift in insecurity and fear we might find ourselves, we are always God’s people in the palm of his hands. We aim to be attentive to his call and pray over his message. The way God has chosen to reach us is through his own Son, Jesus the Christ. It is in Jesus and the Good News he proclaims that God has fully and

visibly communicated himself to us. He invites us to reflect upon this great mystery. The indescribable happening was Paul's privilege to put into words. We read them in his letter to the Phillippians. "Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on the cross! Because of this God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus's name every knee must bend in the heavens and on the earth." (Phil. 2, 6-11). Jesus chose to live among us and to reveal himself to us through his human personality. He committed himself to our human condition. He experienced everything that is fully human except sin. He tasted poverty. He knew work and its sometime drudgery. He experienced the excitement of periodic visits to the big city Jerusalem for temple and Jewish feasts. He experienced the anxiety and pain of adolescence, the questioning of his parents and their probing his preoccupation with his Father's business. He went to weddings and feasted at banquets. He got angry when appropriate. At times he stayed silent and sturdy in the face of malice and murder. He was compassionate. He was wearied by long journeys, amused by Peter in the water and surprised by his impetuous moves and words. He felt himself a child of God with its not always clear future. He wrestled with his hopes, lived in holiness of life. He was the only begotten Son of God. He feared often, but found his fears embraced by love. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," were his final words.

Our forefathers followed this life. They were baptized and confirmed into the Body of Christ. They were baptized into his body knowing that walking through this life, in his footsteps of joy, pain abnegation, trust and love, they would also rise to glory with him. Through His life He taught them. He was their way, their truth and their life. Our forefathers were chosen by God for the same life. They might not always have been certain of their future, but they knew that God in Jesus understood their joys and their sorrows, hopes doubts and failures. They recognized Jesus in his unconditional love. They heard his message. They had his love. They did not pay for it, earn it or deserve it. They were however, open to it and received it.

They knew the message of Jesus would be easy, if it limited itself to God loving them and calling them to love him in turn. In God there is no unpleasantness, no ugliness or ingratitude. It becomes difficult only when we realize it cannot be divorced from love of others, love of neighbor. Our forefathers knew and believed this. It meant loving cranky, dishonest men, alcoholics, drug addicts, strangers, the selfish parent, the welfare cheater. It meant loving the ungrateful son or daughter. It meant loving those who differ in race, color, creed and culture. The difficult people. Certainly fellow-travelers can be painful to live with. Our forefathers did. They had to! But in their lives they perpetuated a vision. they did it in stone, mortar, brick and in depth by width. They did it in buildings and in geography. They perpetuated it also in a faith community, in a people of God. They left a heritage and a history. In brief words this is an attempt to give that history, not so much in dates, figures and dimensions, that too, but especially in its meaning. The monuments they built therefore are twofold. They are the buildings they erected and the faith they bequeathed.

It is from this vantage point that this short account of the building in the mortar and stone of St. Francis Xavier is written. The stone, the brick and the mortar, the wood and the artistry of these buildings reflect the faith of our predecessors.

The first Catholic Church built in Petoskey was in 1848 or 1850 under the patronage of the famed Indian missionary St. Francis Solanus. Bishop Baraga, the first bishop of Marquette, blessed the edifice and celebrated the liturgy in it. The church still stands on the shores of Little Traverse Bay, Lake Michigan. From its patron saint it is obvious it was meant for the Native Americans of this area. It served however, also as a place of worship for the first non-Indian settlers. From it they received the light of faith. The church stands now as a monument to the intrepid faith of the first missionaries. The nostalgia of our past drifts over the land. It is a wholesome thought and a holy movement. St. Francis Solanus as a parish church in this area continues at Bay Shore and is served out of St. Francis Xavier, Petoskey. At the original St. Francis Solanus the priests of Petoskey celebrate Mass once a year on the feast of St. Francis Solanus, July 14.

St. Francis Xavier began its independent life three decades later. In the year 1877 ten Catholic families lived in Petoskey. The next year the number of families grew sufficiently large enough to warrant organizing a parish church apart from St. Francis Solanus. In the year 1879 the Catholics of Petoskey translated their hopes into a visible reality. They established St. Francis Xavier and built the first structure in 1879 under the supervision of Fr. Zorn of Harbor Springs. Fr. Zorn made it a practice to come to Petoskey once a month to serve the needs of the Catholics. The Native Americans worshipped at the Church of St. Francis Solanus until 1896. St. Francis Xavier was built on the corner of Howard and State Streets, the location of the present church. The lots were purchased for \$200.00. By the year 1881 the first church became inadequate and was therefore replaced by a second church. The number of families had increased to an estimated 20 or 25. For an additional \$100.00 another lot was purchased. As in the case of the first structure, so also in the second building, the parishioners provided both the material and the labor. Family names, still recognized today, appear on the work list of 1881. They are such names as John Wachtel, Casper Wegemer, Frank Wegemer, Adolph Fochtman, W.L. McManus, Aaron Kopp, Martin Feile, John Coveyou, Henry Fochtman, Gerhard Fochtman, Donatus Fettig, George Trautman, John Foerester, John Hofmann, F.X. Schultenhofer, Peter Meister and T.A. Bremmeyr. In that same year 1881, Fr. Gustav Graf was appointed first pastor. Since the parish had no rectory, he lived with parishioners. The building of the rectory began in 1882. July 25, 1886 Henry J. Richter, Bishop of Grand Rapids dedicated the church. Subsequent pastors are listed elsewhere.

The early Catholics valued their faith and spared no cost or effort to have their children in a Catholic school. As early as 1883 St. Francis Xavier opened a school with one classroom. It was situated in the rectory. The first teacher was Mr. Phillip Schmidt assisted by Bessie Dunnigan. He continued in that capacity until 1890. In that year the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity from Manitowoc, Wisconsin took over the teaching in the school. Beginning with 3 sisters in a two room classroom the school grew to sixteen classrooms in a grade school and a completely equipped high school. Over 300 Franciscan Sisters have taught at St. Francis during their 90 years of service.

In the annals of the rectory there is a reference to a school being built in 1885. History is unclear in the matter. Seemingly the parishioners built this first bona-fide school building facing Howard Street. In 1902 when it was moved into the present school yard, it faced Michigan Street. It was used until 1927 when it was replaced by the present grade school. It had nine classrooms. This is the older portion of the present building. A high school curriculum was added with the first class in 1941. The present new building was erected in 1954. An addition to the nine room grade school was built in 1963. Unfortunately, due to mounting costs, the high school closed its doors in 1971. There are still divided opinions on the matter. Some believe it could have been kept open; others are just as vehement on the other side of the controversy. Where however convictions are strong enough, the reality of a high school is always possible. Values mean everything in life. They brook no opposition. If we value a product highly enough, we will pay for it. If we really believe in a goal, we will sacrifice to attain it. Faith can move mountains.

The year 1980 however, is a year when expansion has again touched into the community. St. Francis Xavier will have a kindergarten for the first time in its history. The school presently also houses the Title I programs, the Char-Em Intermediate School District classes and the Montessori school.

In conjunction with the coming of the Franciscan Sisters from Manitowoc, it is interesting to note that scarcity of Sisters is not a new phenomenon. In 1889 the parish tried to obtain the services of the Notre Dame Sisters from Milwaukee. They considered the request impossible, not through lack of interest or dedication, but through their inability to free up any Sisters. The Benedictine Sisters of Elk County, Pennsylvania also found it impossible, due not to any reluctance on their part, but due to the resistance of their bishop. "This may be the holy will of God," they replied, "May it be done. Sometime, when our holy bishop goes on a trip to heaven, it may perhaps be possible for us to go to a mission outside of this area."

The Franciscan Sisters from Manitowoc have served us well. Former students speak highly of the education they received at their feet. Some few remember difficulties encountered and differences experienced. Teaching methods in an earlier day differed not only in Catholic Schools under the Sisters, but in all segments of education. Discipline in former days took a much harsher course than it does today. What has not changed is the lofty place of faith in the schools under Catholic auspices and in the presence of the Lord. In a Catholic school that important presence can be explicitly articulated and encouraged. St. Francis makes a difference. It is a faith nourishing difference. It supports not only the child but the family as well, the parents, brothers and sisters.

The first pastor of St. Francis Xavier was Fr. Gustav Graf in 1881. In 1884 the Franciscans of the Sacred Heart Province at St. Louis, Missouri took charge of St. Francis Xavier at the request of Bishop Richter of Grand Rapids. Petoskey was then in the Grand Rapids Diocese. The Gaylord Diocese came into existence in 1971 with Bishop Edmund C. Szoka as the first Ordinary. Bishop Richter first called upon the Franciscans to take over the Ottawa Indian missions in the Northern lower peninsula including Harbor Springs and Petoskey. The pastor of Petoskey however, lived in Harbor Springs and served St. Francis Xavier as a mission. That arrangement continued until 1897 when St. Francis Xavier was chosen as the Franciscan center. The Franciscans served missions henceforth out of Petoskey. It remains true today with stations at Bay Shore, Pellston and Cross Village, though the latter two are independent parishes.



In the year 1902 the parish of St. Francis Xavier chose to build a new church to replace the second frame building on the corner of Howard and State Streets. Since the parish elected to build on the same spot, it moved both the church building and the priests' residence to Michigan Street. Two years later in 1904 the convent and school were also moved to the back of the old church. The combined buildings were used as classrooms and a community hall until 1927. At this time all the buildings were torn down to make room for the new school. One of the classrooms in the old building counted as many as fifty students. At times there were even more per teacher and classroom.

As a note of historical significance it is revealing that the church of St. Francis Xavier in the year 1902, when the new church was begun, counted only 200 families. They were an ambitious parish family. The farmers brought the building materials themselves. They were stone (hardheads) cut at home, timber, sand and gravel. All donated. Donated work included 504 days of labor, 451 days with teams, 87,000 feet of lumber, 112,000 feet of logs, 102 cords of stone, 1,000 loads of gravel, 2,000 loads of sand and all the posts for the scaffolding.

Quoting now from the 1971 history of St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Adolph Thillman, O.F.M. has the following to report; "In the excavation, dug by horse and scraped by the men of the parish, builders began laying the footings on April 6, 1903. Unlike the steel reinforced solid concrete of today's technology, the footings of our church consist of large boulders placed in a trench with concrete poured around them. The stone basement walls measure about three feet thick. The dimensions of the church are: 160 feet in length, 60 feet wide and 84 foot through the transept. The cornerstone of the new St. Francis Xavier Church was laid on May 21, 1903. In our friary the following was written: 'The 25th anniversary birthday of the village of Petoskey, typified in the St. Francis cornerstone laying was a glorious remembrance for the future. From the first words of the Pontifical High Mass in the morning, May 21, Thursday to the closing remarks of the chairman of the evening, James Buckley, the celebration of the cornerstone laying for the new St. Francis Church was an unqualified success. The Rt. Rev. Joseph Richter, Bishop of Grand Rapids celebrated the Pontifical Mass.'"

In a later paragraph of the same journal we read this description of the cornerstone contents; "A copy of the Petoskey Record Independent Democrat and Petoskey News and the following document in Latin: 'In the year of our Lord 1903 May 21 on the feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; Leo XIII, in the 25th year of his Pontificate; Diomedeo Falconio, Apostolic Delegate; Joseph Richter, Bishop of Grand Rapids; Fr. Hugolinus Storff, O.F.M., Minister Provincial; Fr. Cyriac Stempel, O.F.M., Pastor of the Parish; Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States of America; Aaron Bliss, governor of this State of Michigan; George Reycraft, mayor of this city of Petoskey; on the 25th anniversary of this city of Petoskey, before a large crowd of people and many priests, the Bishop of Grand Rapids has placed this cornerstone in St. Francis Xavier Church. The stone contractor has been Koepke Brothers. Brother Sebastian Maier, O.F.M. wood contractor. Signed by Fr. Cyriac Stempel.'"

Included in the construction of the church is the present day friary attached to the church building. The Franciscan Friars themselves paid for its erection at the cost of \$16,728.00 The church was built for \$45,389.56. Not all the work and construction was done however in 1904. Much of the interior was done in later years, most of it in the years between 1904 and 1908. In 1909 the main altar, side altars, the confessionals and the communion rail were installed. The bells came in 1915 as well as the pipe organ.

Besides the names of Franciscan Brother Adrian, the architect of the church and friary, Brother Sebastian, who did much of the wood selecting, Brother Christopher, who repaired the steeple, parishioners who played a prominent role in the construction and repairs of the buildings are: Charles Trautman, Mke Kopp, Henry Mania, Joe Hegener, Joe Paulus, Andrew, Eugene, Louis and Fred Hoffman, Henry Dombrowski, Gerry Grosskopf and "Mac" McCarthy. This does not include the many other faithful parishioners from the Holy Name who spent many devoted hours on the maintenance of our buildings. They still do. The society presently conducts Bingo for the support of the same projects.

Among the more recent and important improvements the erection of the ramp on the south side of the church must be counted. It was constructed in 1976. Its users are most grateful for the convenience it affords them. Entering the church has become so much easier. It is also a great asset for funerals. It obviates the need to struggle with the extended steps at the Howard Street entrance to the church. It is interesting to note that the ramp in 1976 cost as much to build as the entire church in 1903.

Complimenting the ramp for usefulness is our most recent construction on the north side of the church. In 1980 the obsolete and dangerous north side stairway was replaced by a basement entrance in to the church. The stairway was always icy in the winter and treacherous in every season. The parish feels good about the choice it made in improving the facility.

There are other happenings of note. On July 20, 1972 the Holy Name society promoted the installation of electronic carillons in memory of E.A. Bremmeyr. The bells are the gift to the church on the part of Elizabeth Bremmeyr, the relatives and friends of the family.

Following the construction of the ramp, the trustees of that time, under the supervision of the pastor, Fr. Robert Behnen chose to continue the Ramp Fund under the new title of the Building Improvement Fund. It has served the parish extraordinarily well in the solicitation of donations and memorials for the support of further improvements of the buildings. They take

the form of energy conservation measures in the heating department, in insulation, in the brick work, in window repair, roof repair, new equipment, stairway constructions and in other extraordinary maintenance projects.

November 12, 1973 the Holy Name introduced the church to bingo. The proceeds from the games have been invaluable especially in supporting the school and the church. Bingo also enables the church to meet the many charitable needs of the area. Bingo serves another purpose. It is an opportunity for the retired, for those seeking community interaction and recreation, to find fulfillment in the weekly gathering of similarly minded men and women. They form a special bond among themselves to say nothing of the dedicated workers who respond to their needs and the needs of the parish. No more committed assortment of man and woman at work could be found in any community.

For years the Altar Society has sponsored our Annual August Dinner. It has become a tradition at St. Francis Xavier for the parishioners, for summer residents, for tourists and for visitors. The financial gift the Society offers the church is an annual blessing.

Every Catholic, every parishioner knows brick and mortar, important as they are, do not make for the complete Catholic Church. It is a community of faith, believing in the Gospel as mediated through the original tradition of the early Christians. They bequeathed to us their experience of the Lord. It comes to us through the voice of the teaching church. They cherished the truth He proclaimed to them, the way He pointed out to them and the life He gave them to live. He formed the original nucleus around the chosen twelve, the called out seventy-two and the thousands of others who followed Him. We are recipients of that heritage. We call ourselves one holy catholic and apostolic. That is what Jesus has called us to be. Pre-eminently we are called to holiness. He gives us Himself Eucharistically in the sacrament of His Body and Blood. He gives us Himself in the proclamation of the word. We experience Him in the other sacraments as we come to life in baptism, are strengthened in confirmation, are forgiven in the sacrament of penance in community, anointed in sickness, united to each other in the Lord in marriage. Some limited few are called to ministry in ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood. St. Francis Xavier is the Catholic Church at Petoskey, Michigan.

Our worship and education ministries are of utmost importance. We value our liturgies extending from Sunday worship and inspiration to weekday commitment. We cherish our teaching and outreach. The purpose of St. Francis Xavier and every Catholic Church is to build faith and to bring redemption and salvation to the community. For that reason our call at St. Francis is to serve not only those who are in the forefront of the church, but to reach out to the unchurched, the alienated and the members of minority groups. Our greatest affection is directed to the Native Americans who preceded us to this land and for whom the first Church at Petoskey was founded.

St. Francis Xavier in the course of her history experienced the thrust and the stress of many tongues. As letters in our files attest to in November of 1917 "another change was made in order to meet the just wishes of the Polish members of the congregation. Fr. Lullus Seeboth was transferred to Cleveland, Ohio and Fr. Ladislaus Czech was assigned to the church to minister to the wants of the Polish members." The next year Fr. Virgil Walkowski, O.F.M. was "appointed to look after the spiritual needs of the Poles and Slovianians (sic) at

Petoskey." The rhythm of the interest is still visible to those who study the patterns of the saints in the statues in the church. The variety of nationalities appear clearly in the variety of patron saints.

To enrich the life of the church we are blessed at Petoskey and at St. Francis with the presence of the Sacramentine Sisters, a cloistered community of women dedicated to prayer and adoration of the Lord in the Eucharist. They came to Petoskey July 1, 1960. They are living sources in our midst in intercession and in grace. We are very fortunate to have them with us. As a means of support, but also as a service they conduct a Retreat Center for men and women wishing to come closer to the Lord. In today's world this is a need felt by millions. The need expresses itself in different movements at different periods in the church and world. One of the most popular today is the Marriage Encounter movement. The movement is centered at the Sacramentine Retreat Center. It is unsurpassed in promoting a healthy family life. It has gifted many couples and families with an uplifting power and with an enriching depth in their marital love.

One of the most important features of today's renewal efforts of the church can be found in the sacrament of reconciliation. The new Reconciliation Rooms at St. Francis are however only a sign of the renewal. In April 1976 our baptistry in one corner and the store room in the other were transformed into Reconciliation Rooms. The revised rite of penance affords the penitent the opportunity to better experience a face-to-face confession and sense of forgiveness. It affords a better opportunity to go deeper into the sinful failures of those who confess. It does so, without depriving those who prefer to stay with the traditional form before a screen. The New Rite makes it easier to imitate penitents like Mary Magdalene to humbly confess to the Lord and to hear the Lord assure them that their sins are forgiven, but that they sin no more. The rooms invite the penitent to a more in-depth confession and more personal counseling.

What could be the most far reaching of revisions in St. Francis and in all Catholic churches comes under the heading of Parish Councils. During the year 1977-1978 the Parish in its steering committee studied long and diligently, met often and discussed thoroughly the best form for the Parish Council to assume. The parish during the same year elected its first council members. The members met formally for the first time in September of 1978. No great progress however will be made until such time as a Parish Council recognizes itself as the leader not only in the mechanics of a parish, but in its fundamental and important purpose, the holiness of life on the part of the individuals and the community. Members are chosen in election because they are devoted witnesses in their lives to the Gospel and witnesses too to their Catholic life. All other qualifications are decidedly secondary. In conjunction with Parish Councils and under their aegis, a myriad of other ministries have come to life. They were dormant in the church for many years, though they were always present in some form. In apostolic times they were more prominent. The Acts of the Apostles reveal their importance and power in the infant church. Mothers and fathers, singles, the old and the young teach now in adult classes and in CCD grades. They are found in all forms of religious instructions and formation. Mostly they witness by the power of their own lives. They lector at liturgies in proclaiming the message of God to the world in the word. They minister the Eucharist to each other as servants of the Lord. They visit the sick. They lead in singing and sing in choirs. They

usher in church to facilitate Sunday and holyday worship. They come together in prayer in charismatic communities and in other forms of praising the Lord.

Fortunate is the parish which affords itself an accomplished organist. For twenty-six years Mr. August Huybrechts has enhanced our liturgies with a special character. The church in her documents often tells us that good liturgies build up faith whereas poor liturgies destroy it. St. Francis Xavier is blessed therefore. Its choir under Mr. Huybrechts leadership is known far beyond the limits of Petoskey.

November 9, 1969 the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity of Manitowoc, Wisconsin celebrated their centennial as a congregation of religious women in the church. They take the seraphic saint, Francis of Assisi as their patron. In their work as teachers at St. Francis Xavier since 1890 they have been the life blood of faith for the students and parents of St. Francis. They have 90 years of devoted service in teaching at St. Francis Grade and High School. The faith has flourished at St. Francis because the Sisters have been religious women witnessing to their own faith for others. Through them parishioners in the thousands have been inspired to a vibrant faith. They have inflamed the light of faith. They have supported the parishioners in their hopes. Today the number of Sisters teaching in our schools has diminished considerably. We do not therefore despair. We trust in God's providence. We rely on the dedicated services of our lay teachers. In choosing them we have chosen them for their academic qualifications. We have chosen them even more for their faith.

No Church has ever existed, much less flourished, without its religious organizations and societies. More professional and not classified as societies every church has its Boards of Trustees, School Boards and Home and School Associations. Beyond these every Franciscan Church has the III Order, now called the Secular Franciscans. The Order has graced the life of the church of St. Francis since its inception as a parish. It is an Order with ideals to match the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi himself. For those who are acquainted with the saint, to accept his ideals is no small challenge. The church looks to its Secular Franciscans for examples of contemplation in the forum of the secular world.

The Holy Name society venerates the name of Jesus, knowing that in venerating the name, they promise to take him whose name they respect, as their goal and pattern of life. They are witnesses to what the Lord Jesus can do in the hearts of sinful men upon earth. The Holy Name at St. Francis always has been in the forefront of church activities. Witness the bingo dedication, the consistent donation of manual labor in times of need, in charitable works and in patriotic activities.

The Altar Society has always been devoted to the altar with its Eucharistic Lord. Members in their work near the altar are near the Lord. They have made vestments, sewed the linens, decorated the altars, cleaned and scrubbed the church. It is their way of praising God in the worship we offer in the temple of God. More importantly they are themselves called to be temples of the Holy Spirit. In more recent years the Altar Society has expanded to sponsoring dinners, especially the well-known August Dinner. The Gaylord Diocese being divided into Regions geographically, our women attend the N W Region Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

At St. Francis we are proud of the Boy Scouts, Girls Scout, Brownies and Cub Scouts. In an older vein, the Daughters of Isabella are related to the church of St. Francis as one of the church auxiliaries. No church is complete without its roster of altar boys. They enhance the liturgies.

Impressive at St. Francis are the Knights of Columbus. They are men fiercely devoted to the church and for what it stands. They are defenders of the faith in the best sense of that term. Though the Knights are not strictly a parish organization, they are Catholics to the core in their ideals and devotion to the parish churches which they represent in their membership. They often cut across parish lines. Our own council -923 is a strong supporter of St. Francis spiritually, financially and in devotion. St. Francis is proud to have them. We have been mutually supportive.

Every Catholic Church prides itself on a cemetery. It is the hold place where our earthly remains rest until the day of judgment. The cemetery is a plot of sacred soil created by God and redeemed in the blood of Christ. It speaks to us of the resurrection of the body. In the cemetery we are on our way to the eternal kingdom in its fullness. St. Francis Xavier Cemetery began with a purchase of the oldest section of our cemetery from a Margaret Aniwaw-be alias Margaret Nevbi of Bear Creek Township for the sum of \$240.00. It was deeded to Bishop Joseph Richter of Grand Rapids July 2, 1886. The present day football field was purchased from Ralph Schluttenhofer, executor of the estate of Albert Schluttenhofer, deeded July 7, 1953 to Bishop Francis Haas of Grand Rapids. November 12, 1958 the church purchased the Kellogg Estate, the present day softball field. The cost was \$5,450.00. Finally the property adjacent to the original cemetery and the complex known as the athletic field, comprising both ballfields, was purchased October 22, 1963 from Roselle Coveyou Severer and deeded to Bishop Allen J. Babcock of Grand Rapids, courtesy of Jerry Leshner.

Cherished in every devout parish is a vocation to the religious life and to the priesthood. Another sign of a holy parish is a flourishing of Catholic marriages lived in holiness and integrity of life. Our marriage books include them all. As we look upon St. Francis we look with pride upon the long list of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. The list is long and hopeful. The names of vocations to the religious life and the priest hood follows:

SONS OF THE PARISH, PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

- 1 Fr. Theobald Kalamaja, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1895 - Died July, 27, 1952
- 2 Fr. Callistus Wegemer, O.F.M. - Ordained June 27, 1903 - Died Sept. 20, 1911
- 3 Fr. Salvator Wegemer, O.F.M. - Ordained June 29, 1911 - Died April 19, 1952
- 4 Fr. Ludger Wegemer, O.F.M. - Ordained June 26, 1914
- 5 Fr. Francis Fochtman, O.F.M. - Ordained July 2, 1915 - Died June 12, 1957
- 6 Fr. Vincent Fochtman, O.F.M. - Ordained June 29, 1920 - Deceased
- 7 Fr. Sylvester Saller, O.F.M. - Ordained June 29, 1922 - Deceased
- 8 Fr. Edwin Fochtman, O.F.M. - Ordained June 27, 1924 - Died Sept. 29, 1953
- 9 Fr. Walter Coveyou, C.P. - Missionary Apostolic in China murdered by bandits
- 10 Fr. Clementine Grosskopf, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1927 - Deceased
- 11 Fr. Wilbert Hegener, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1936
- 12 Fr. Paschal Wodek, O.F.M. - Ordained May 28, 1938
- 13 Fr. Paulinus Grosskopf, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1938
- 14 Fr. Cronin Murphy, O.F.M. - Ordained June 22, 1944
- 15 Fr. Mark Hegener, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1945

- 16 Fr. Donald Paulus, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1949
- 17 Fr. Jonathan Foster, O.F.M. - Ordained June 24, 1960
- 18 Fr. Michael Fowler, O.F.M. - Ordained June 5, 1976
- 19 Fr. Charles Hart, O.F.M. - Ordained June 2, 1979
- Brother Wolfe Price, O.F.M.
- Brother Ronald Pickarski, O.F.M.
- Mr. John Pagel, Deacon

DAUGHTERS OF THE PARISH, SISTERS

- Sr. M. Elrita Beer
- Sr. M. Paulette Beer
- Sr. Mary Noel Brown
- Sr. Pauline Marie DeRina
- Sr. Malachy Donnelly
- Sr. Mary Noel Fochtman - Deceased
- Sr. Andrea Kelbel
- Sr. Helen Kelbel
- Sr. Gabriel Kerner
- Sr. Anne Liegl
- Sr. Ruth Lewis
- Sr. Noel Palamateir
- Sr. M. Kristin Pollak
- Sr. Lucretia Schantz
- Sr. Mercedes Spalding
- Sr. Margaret Speigl
- Sr. Regene Delores Sobleski
- Sr. Callista Wegemer - Deceased
- Sr. Emily Wegemer - Deceased
- Sr. Regina Wegemer - Deceased
- Sr. Roberta Wolff
- Sr. James Ellen Woolsey
- Sr. Barbara Yobest - Deceased
- Sr. Francella Yobest
- Sr. Leola Yobest

Because the church at St. Francis Xavier looks for holy marriages, it is with that hope that we are ready at this time to implement new guidelines for preparation for marriage. Marriage is one of the most arduous of Catholic vocations. It requires therefore adequate preparation! The purpose and goal of the new guidelines is only one. It is to ensure that faith and perseverance will be an integral part of every bride and groom, in the father and in the mother and in the children.

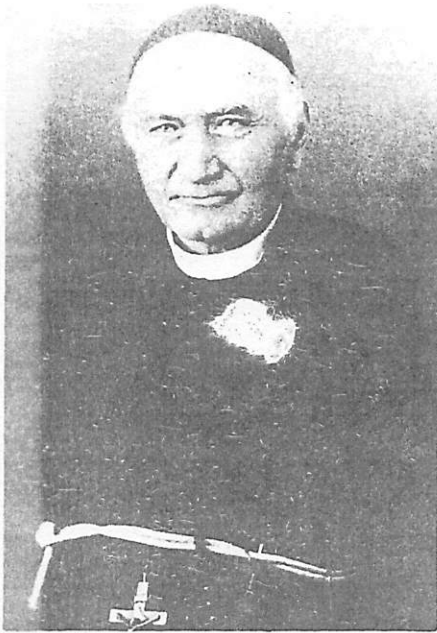
As we begin another century of growth in holiness of life and in history, we listen to the words of the apostle Paul "You are strangers and aliens no longer. No, you are fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God. You form a building which rises on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through Him the whole structure is fitted together and takes shape as a hold temple in the Lord: in Him you are being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2, 19-22).

"My prayer is that your love may more and moe abound, both in understanding and in wealth of experience so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter, up to the very day of Christ. It is my wish that you may be found rich in the harvest of justice which Jesus Christ has ripened in you, to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1, 9-11).



Interior of Saint Francis Church 1980

FORMER PASTORS OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH



Rev. John Weikamp, O.F.M.



**Rev. Norbert Wilhelm, O.F.M.
1887-1893**



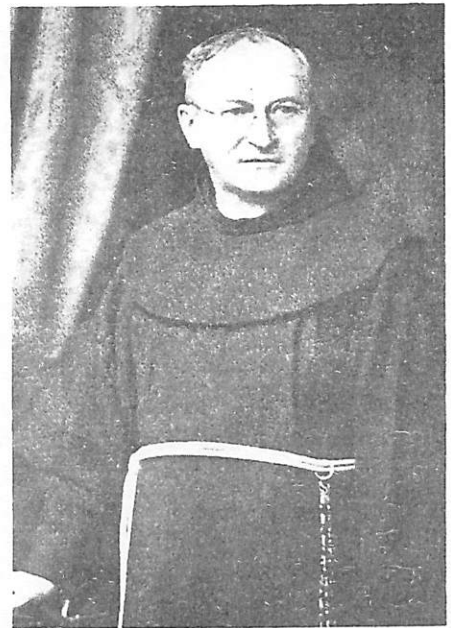
**Rev. Marion Glahn, O.F.M.
1893-1894**



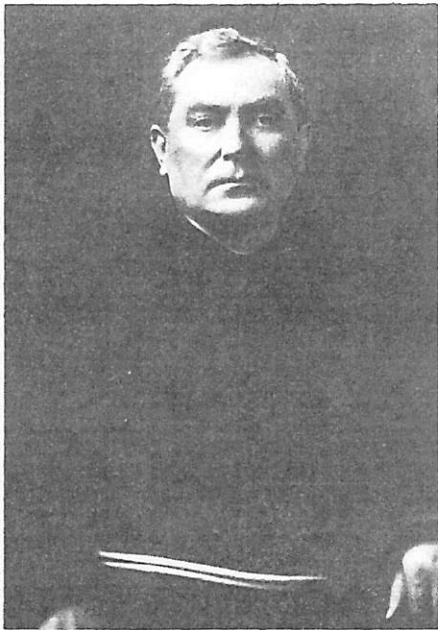
**Rev. Columban Valentin, O.F.M.
1897-1900**



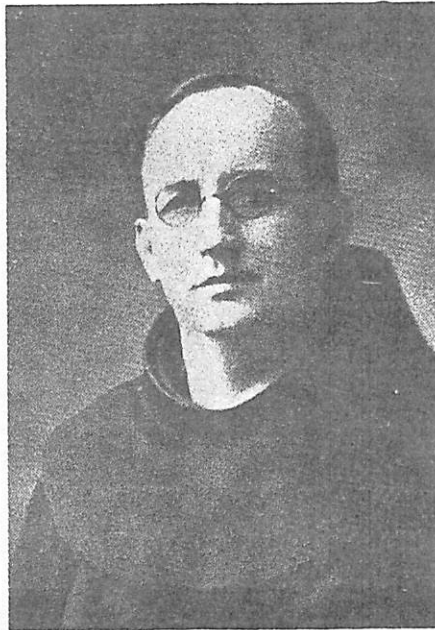
**Rev. Cyriac Stempel, O.F.M.
1900-1906**



**Rev. Valerius Nelles, O.F.M.
1906-1907**



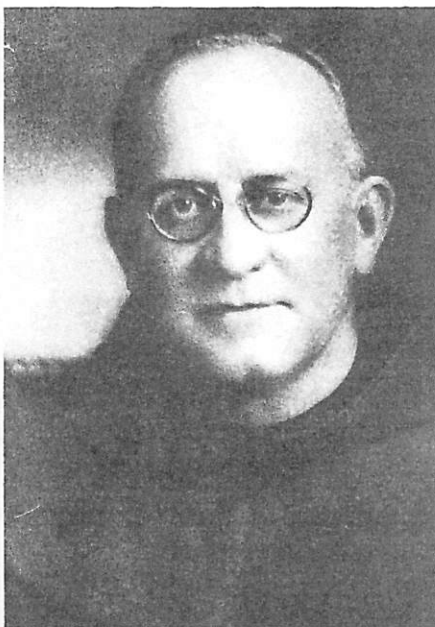
Rev. Bruno Torka, O.F.M.
1909-1917



Rev. Gaudence Worm, O.F.M.
1917-1924



Rev. John Curry, O.F.M.
1924-1930



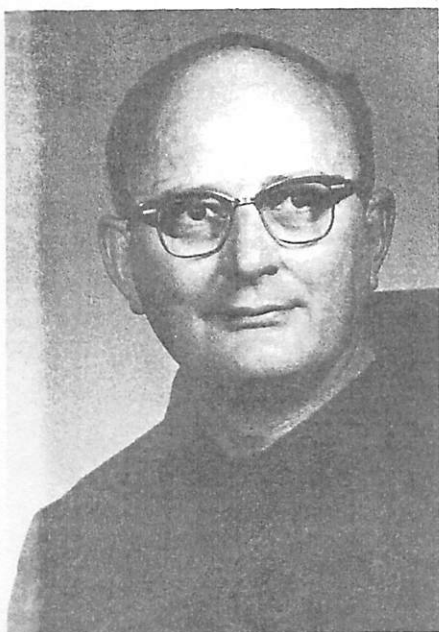
Rev. Donulus Evers, O.F.M.
1930-1938



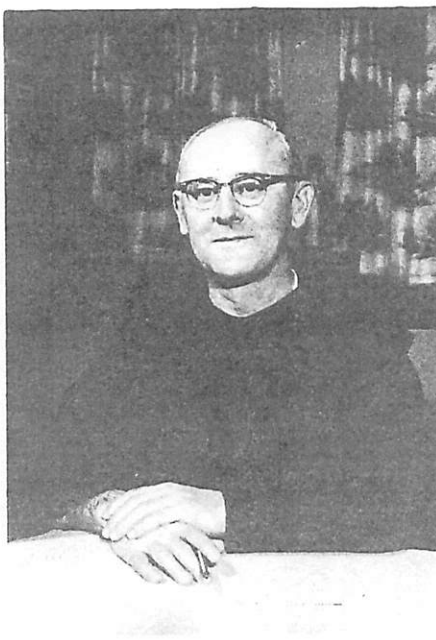
Rev. Austin Monaghan, O.F.M.
1938-1945



Rev. Hugolinus Kiener, O.F.M.
1945-1957



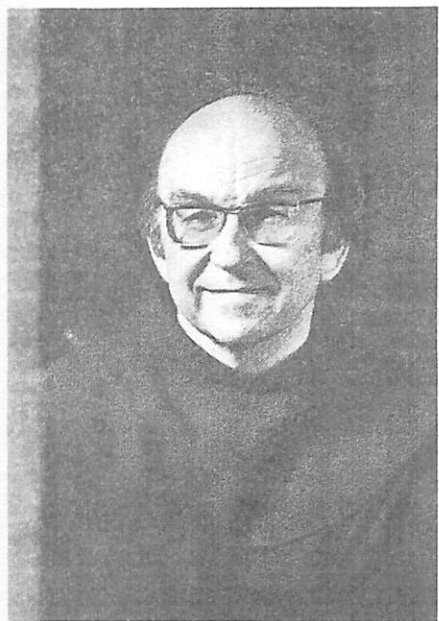
Rev. Laurin Buzynski, O.F.M.
1957-1960



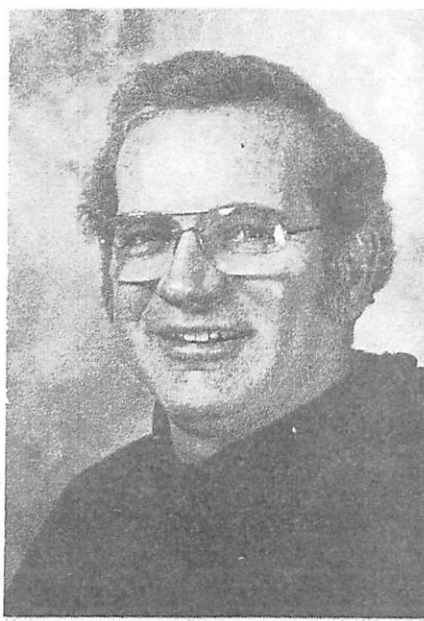
Rev. Jarleth Sobczyk, O.F.M.
1960-1963



Rev. Conwan McCurren, O.F.M.
1963-1966



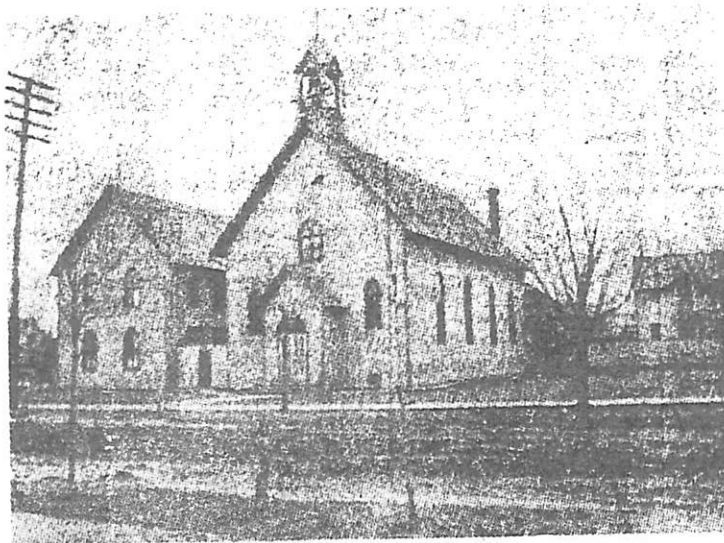
Fr. Medard Buvala O.F.M.
1978 -



Fr. Robert Behnen O.F.M.
1975 - 1978



Fr. Adolph Thillman, O.F.M.



The Parish Buildings in 1890

School, built in the eighties. It faced Howard St. until 1902, after which it was moved to the present school-yard, facing Michigan St. It was used until 1927. Church, built 1881, dedicated July 25, 1886. Moved to make room for the new church in 1902. Remodeled into a hall and some classrooms, and used as such until 1927.

Priests' house, built 1881. The parish school was begun in a room of this building Jan. 9, 1883. Used as a Friary 1897-1903, and as a convent for the Sisters since that time.



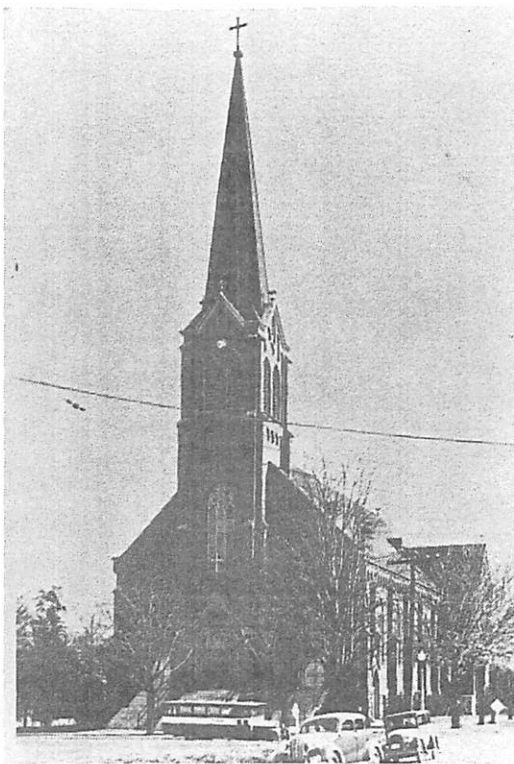
**Phillip Schmitt, the first
teacher at St. Francis. Taught
for \$20 per month from 1883-1890**



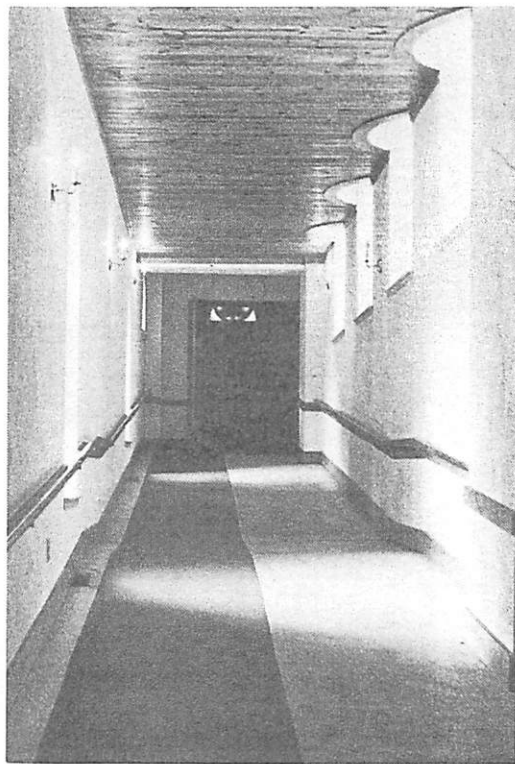
St Francis Solonus



Interior photo of St. Francis Xavier Church in 1980.



Church in early 1940



Ramp for the Handicapped constructed in 1978



The Sisters Convent completed in 1952 having 20 private rooms plus ample living quarters.



Kindergarten was added to St. Francis School in the Fall of 1980.



In 1978 a ramp was built to accomodate the handicapped. In the corner of the photo is part of the Friary.



Laying of the cornerstone by the Most Reverend Francis J. Haas, Bishop of Grand Rapids at the Sisters Convent February 17, 1952.