

A History of Holy Family Parish



Shrine of the Holy Family

A streetcar might seem to be a curious place of origin for a parish. But it was the old Burien-White Center, car number 4 that brought together the Catholics of Seahurst, Lake Burien, Hazel Valley, Mt. View, Oak Park, White Center, Highland Park and Dumar.

At these and other stops, the car would pick up people with names such as Charbeneau, Collins, Donaghy, Grant, Kinerk, MacInnis, McKinnon, Menard, Morrison, Stoskopf and Sullivan. They were on their way to Mass at "5th and Jeff" the old Church of Our Lady of Good Help in downtown Seattle. Other families took the bus on 35th Ave. S.W. and attended Mass at Holy Rosary. These included the Frank Schmieders, T. D. Walls, Richard Traceys and B. Cunningham. A few people had cars. The Michael O'Day family drove a team of horses to Our Lady of Lourdes in South Park in spite of the constant worry that one of the horses might stumble on the rough steep wagon road.

Since the streetcar ride was long the Catholic commuters came to know each other well. Naturally, they talked about their need of a Church.

On August 19, 1919, a meeting to discuss the prospects of a parish was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. O. Menard. The meeting was occasioned by the following incident. Sister Margaret Mary of the Sisters of Mercy, a daughter of the Menards had come home on a visit. As her rule required that she attend daily Mass she made the long trip to the Cathedral each day. Before returning to her convent, Sister called upon Bishop O'Day, accompanied by her mother and Mrs. Charles Morrison. They discussed the need of a parish in the Burien-White Center area. The Bishop gave encouragement and the meeting at the Menard home followed.

A committee consisting of Michael O'Day, Theo Scheuer, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Morrison, Mrs. M. Mayo was selected to choose a suitable location for a church. Another committee consisting of Mr. F. Stoskopf, M. O'Day, D. A. Collins, McLaughlin, Theo Scheuer, C. O. Morrison, Muirhead and Mrs. M. Mayo representing various parts of the area was selected to present the petition to Bishop O'Day.

By April of 1920 they were able to acquire for \$1200.00, three-

fourths of an acre, the site of the present church. In January of 1921, Father John Gibboney, with the assistance of the Cathedral Conference of the St. Vincent dePaul Society began regular catechism classes at White Center and Oak Park. About 40 children attended.

As a result of a subsequent meeting a subscription campaign was organized. Enough money was pledged to warrant starting work on a church. Members of the building committee were Theo Scheuer, Michael O'Day, L. O. Menard, James Duggan, Charles Morrison and Peter Kamerer.

The plans were ratified by the Bishop and construction began early in July 1921. The church could not have been much more than a shell when the first Mass was offered in it by Father Gibboney on July 24th. The first baptism was administered that day to Agatha Marian Furlong, daughter of the Thomas Furlongs.

A petition requesting that Father Gibboney be appointed pastor was sent to the Bishop. Signers were E. J. Stull, Mary Ambaum, A. C. Connolly, E. T. Kinerk, Mrs. Boudgoust, Mr. A. McPherson, Dan McEachern, Duncan MacInnis, J. J. Hefner, May McKenzie, D. C. McDaniel, C. M. Winter, Bart Flynn, J. J. Grant and Sam Charbeneau, as well as those serving on the committees.

Father Gibboney took up his residence in two rooms behind the church and Holy Family became a Parish. Before long the St. Vincent dePaul Society, the Holy Name Society, the Ladies Sodality and the Anadel Club for young people were organized.

Among the first weddings in the Church were John F. Reilly and Marie Sullivan in 1923 and Mario DiMartino and Josephine Mastro in 1925.

The Church was dedicated by Bishop O'Day on April 30, 1922. As the congregation grew the indebtedness was paid off. The occasion was made memorable by a High Mass of Thanksgiving, a picnic style parish dinner followed by the burning of the mortgage. Afterwards the adults gathered in the parish hall to make plans for a school. According to an article sent to the Northwest Progress by Father Gibboney \$8500.00 was pledged in fifteen minutes "official time." The same article de-

scribes how 4 year old Louis Kinerk marched up the aisle to give Father Gibboney a dime, the first cold cash to be received and the inspiration for the children to pledge \$297.10.

In the Spring of 1927 Fr. Martin Bourke was assigned to Holy Family Parish as Assistant Pastor. Two more rooms were built behind the church. At this time the Des Moines area was attached to Holy Family as a Mission. One Mass was said there each Sunday and Holy Day.

Holy Family School became a reality. It was dedicated on August 28, 1927. The building had been designed by Mr. L. O. Menard, parishioner and architect who had also designed the church. The contract for the school had been let for \$29,401.00. The classrooms on the upper floor were left unfinished. It was foreseen that the total cost of the school furnished would come to \$45,000.

With a faculty of five Sisters of Providence Holy Family School opened September 1927. The sisters were Sister M. Ignatius of Jesus, Sister Judith, Sister Celine Marie, Sister Reardon and Sister Mary Afra. The Providence Sisters had operated private academies. This was their first parish school. With the aid of Mr. Andrew Wetterauer the Sisters called upon the families in the parish to encourage them to send their children. When the school opened they had an enrollment of 110 students.

In August of 1929 it was decided that the time had come to divide the parish. The area had grown and greater growth was anticipated. St. Francis of Assisi Parish was established at Seahurst with Father John Gibboney as Pastor. He was succeeded at Holy Family by Father Patrick Farrelly who had been Assistant Pastor in Holy Rosary Parish. Father Bourke moved to Holy Rosary as Assistant Pastor.

Father Farrelly administered Holy Family for the five most trying years of its history. Scarcely two months after his coming there occurred the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression. Holy Family Parish was much smaller than it had been a few weeks before and much poorer. Most of its parishioners were laboring men who were thrown out of work. Very little of its debt had been paid off. And while the

new Parish of St. Francis had assumed part of that debt there was very little now that the people of Seahurst could do.

Through Father Farrelly's heroic efforts Holy Family School remained open. He himself went looking for jobs for the men of the parish. He rallied the help of the women and the able assistance of Mrs. Nick Huhn in particular. They served frequent parish dinners in the school hall. They operated a food concession at the Puyallup Fair. There were a few individuals who helped Fr. Farrelly financially. Through its pastors efforts, self-sacrifice and leadership Holy Family School managed to remain open through the most difficult years of the depression.

Monsignor Farrelly died only last year after more than fifty years in the priesthood. He had been pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Enumclaw for many years.

He was succeeded in Holy Family in 1934 by Father Michael Hayes. The third pastor of the parish was a very young and very kind priest. The problems of his parishioners became his problems personally. Before long his health broke. He died on May 2, 1936 a few days after undergoing surgery.

Father Ailbe McGrath became the fourth pastor of Holy Family Parish and remained for thirty-three years.

The people of Holy Family Parish acknowledge a tremendous debt to Monsignor McGrath. White Center was still a small and somewhat depressed area when he arrived. Before long it began to grow again and Holy Family became a large Parish. Many demands were made upon its pastor. In time the debt was paid off, the Church enlarged and the school expanded.

By the end of World War II a building program had become a necessity. The first need was for a convent. For some years the original parish hall remodeled had served as a convent. Later it became a temporary rectory. The sisters then resided at Mount Saint Vincent and commuted. In 1949 the present convent was erected. Two years later a permanent rectory was constructed. Then the new church was built. It was dedicated February 7, 1954. Architect for the three buildings

was John W. Maloney. Father McGrath had acted as his own general contractor. Seven years later the stained glass windows were installed, the debt paid off and Holy Family Church was solemnly consecrated by His Excellency the Most Rev. Thomas A. Connolly, Archbishop of Seattle, June 12, 1961.

With the establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish to the North and St. Bernadette Parish to the South, Holy Family Parish was divided twice. It remains a parish of approximately 1000 families.

Monsignor McGrath died May 25, 1969. His ability as an administrator and builder, his personal charm and his eloquence will long be remembered.

He was succeeded by Rev. Cornelius J. Harrington the present pastor. Father Harrington is one of the several priests from the parish. Others who have been ordained from Holy Family are Rev. Fathers Joseph Marquart, James Eblen, William Evans, Donald Werner and Blase Feeney, O.S.B.

Besides Father Martin Bourke the following priests have served as Assistant Pastors of Holy Family Parish. Reverend Fathers Ronald Belisle, Jan Bogusz, Joseph A. Buck, M. J. Cody, Joseph H. Doogan, Peter J. Duggan, Claude Farley, Charles G. Harvey, John McLaughlin, George McLean, Frederick E. O'Hearn, Patrick G. O'Neill, Thomas J. Phelan, Leonard Rafalowski and John F. Resch.