



EXTERIOR OF ORIGINAL CHURCH



INTERIOR OF ORIGINAL CHURCH

FROM A HUMBLE BEGINNING

The parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel traces its origin to the formation, around the turn of the century, of a small railroad community of mostly Italian immigrants who settled in what was then called Trenton Junction. In order to house the one hundred or so men who were employed by the railroad, a large dormitory type building was constructed off of Railroad Avenue.

By 1912 these workers had formed a small community of families. Small modest homes were built by the men themselves with the help of their wives and children.

While almost all of the immigrants were Catholic, they were without a church in the area. It was therefore necessary to ride the train to Trenton to attend Mass at St. Joachim's Church.

On April 24, 1918, Palm Sunday, the first Mass was celebrated publicly for the people of Trenton Junction by the Reverend Alfonso Palombi, then pastor of St. Joachim's, in the mess hall of the dormitory type building which had earlier been "home" for so many of the immigrants.

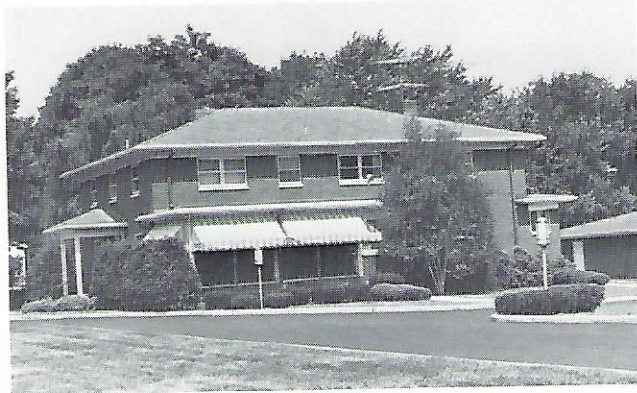
Father Palombi continued whenever possible to come to Trenton Junction to celebrate Mass on the front porch of the home of Mr. Guiseppe Croce (Cross), and in the homes of the other families of the area, who together with Mr. Vincenzo Gazzillo and Mr. John Tyman were to pioneer the efforts of the small community to form a parish of its own.

In the middle 1920s the Presbyterian Church assured the Catholics of West Trenton that they would be provided with the basic needs of life for themselves and their children if they would become members of that Church. Fortunately, the faith of the people was strong and they were unwilling to give up their Catholic heritage. The great majority therefore refused the offer. The Most Reverend Thomas J. Walsh, then Bishop of Trenton, was informed of what had happened and made a personal visit to the home of Mr. Croce (Cross). The Bishop was greeted by many of the faithful who took him on a tour of the area. As a result of this meeting, a small parcel of property was purchased on Grand Avenue as a site for a future church. (Now the property of the West Trenton Post Office.)

Around 1929 the people of Trenton Junction, by then also known as West Trenton, were advised that their spiritual needs would be provided for at the Blessed Sacrament Church, Trenton, which was not as distant as St. Joachim's. Nevertheless, it was still far for many to travel and a language problem made the arrangement impractical for others.

In the late 1920's the Most Reverend John J. McMahon, then Bishop of Trenton authorized the construction of the frame church under the patronage of Our Lady of Good Counsel, which would serve as the Catholic center of worship in West Trenton for the next thirty years. The building cost \$5,188.00. Dedication exercises were held on Sunday, November 1, 1931 with the late Monsignor Maurice R. Spillane, then vicar general of the Diocese of Trenton, officiating as delegate of Bishop McMahon.

The Reverend Walter A. Greene, chaplain of St. Francis Hospital, Trenton, was named by Bishop McMahon as administrator of the new church while remaining in residence at the hospital. Those with a language problem were advised to attend St. James Church, Trenton, which was established around this time rather than St. Joachim's since it was much closer. Others attended Mass at Villa Victoria. Nevertheless, under Father Greene the parish continued to develop so that on July 17, 1942 it was finally incorporated as the "Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Trenton, N.J."



THE RECTORY
609-882-3277

Father Greene served admirably amid his other duties until September 8, 1944, when the Most Reverend William A. Griffin, then Bishop of Trenton, made the West Trenton church a mission of St. James Church, Pennington, with the Pennington pastor, the Reverend Francis S. Zgliczynski appointed as administrator. Assisting Father Zgliczynski in providing the spiritual care needed by the people of West Trenton was the Reverend James A. Reilly, then curate at Blessed Sacrament Church.

Because of the growing Catholic population, Bishop Griffin declared the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Trenton to be a full fledged parish on November 14, 1947 with St. George Church, Washingtons Crossing as a mission, and appointed the

Reverend Bernard C. DeCoste, then an assistant at Blessed Sacrament Church, as first pastor. Under Father DeCoste a home was purchased in 1949 across from the church on Grand Avenue to serve as the rectory.

On July 20, 1951 the Most Reverend George W. Ahr, present Bishop of Trenton, transferred Father DeCoste to St. Paul's, Burlington and at the same time appointed the Reverend Joseph W. McLaughlin to the pastorate of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, West Trenton.

By 1958 the church and the rectory with its basement meeting room were inadequate to serve the needs of the rapidly growing community. A new and larger church and hall were required. The original church could seat only 120 persons. The construction of a new brick church with a seating capacity of 920 was approved.

Through the efforts of Father McLaughlin 10.77 acres of land were purchased from the State of New Jersey at West Upper Ferry and Wilburtha Roads and ground was broken on July 3, 1960 for the spacious new church, basement hall and rectory.

Two years later on Sunday, December 16, 1962 Bishop Ahr officiated at the dedication of these imposing structures. Thanks to the generosity of so many of the parishioners the total cost of the project — over \$700,000 — was completely paid off by 1971, two years before Father McLaughlin's sudden and untimely death on June 12, 1973.

On May 31, 1972 the mission church of St. George, Washingtons Crossing was made an independent parish and assigned its own pastor, the Reverend Nicholas C. Murphy. Foreseeing such a development, Father McLaughlin had years before begun to keep separate sets of records which were then turned over to Father Murphy. Father McLaughlin likewise gave the new pastor "hospitality" until he was able to find a place to live in the new parish.

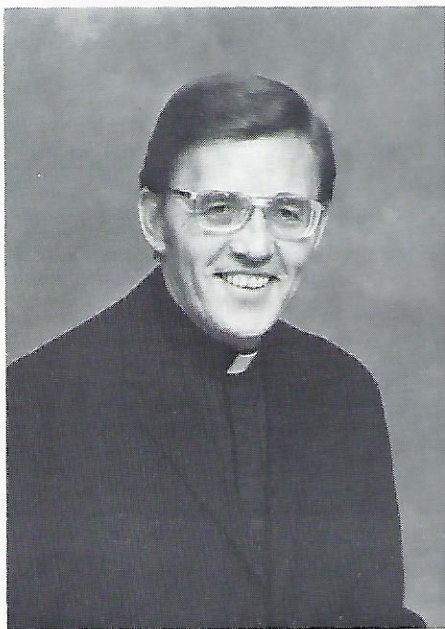
During the early years of Father McLaughlin's pastorate, he was at various times assisted in the case of souls by Reverend William H. Murray and Reverend Charles P. Platt, assistants at Blessed Sacrament Church. In 1966 the Reverend Edward D. Strano was assigned by Bishop Ahr as the first assistant pastor in the history of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. In 1967 the Reverend Thomas C. Ryan replaced Father Strano and remained for six months.

During most of Father McLaughlin's years in West Trenton, Monsignor Theodore A. Opdenaker, director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, served as a weekend assistant, a position which he fulfills even to the present.

On August 17, 1973, after serving three months as administrator, Monsignor William F. Fitzgerald, Chancellor of the Diocese, was appointed as the third pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel and in the summer of 1974 the Reverend Francis D. Bruno was appointed as the assistant pastor. Father Bruno was replaced by the Reverend Thomas J. Dzurenda on June 6, 1976.

No history of the parish would be complete without mentioning those CCD teachers, who over the years helped with the instruction of the children and young adults in the fundamentals of the faith — the Franciscan Sisters of Glen Riddle from Blessed Sacrament, the Sisters of Mercy from the Cathedral, the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart and the Religious Teachers Filippini from Villa Victoria, assisted by ever so many dedicated laywomen, too numerous to name. Through their efforts the faith has been passed on intact from generation to generation.

Lay Trustees, so important in the development of any parish, must also be given grateful recognition, John Tyman (1932-37; 1941), Vincenzo Gazzilo (1932-37; 1941), Joseph A. McCabe (1938-40; 1943-50), Guiseppe Croce (Cross) (1938) Ernest Vagnozzi (1939-40), J. Ferd Convery (1942; 1952-55), Guistino De



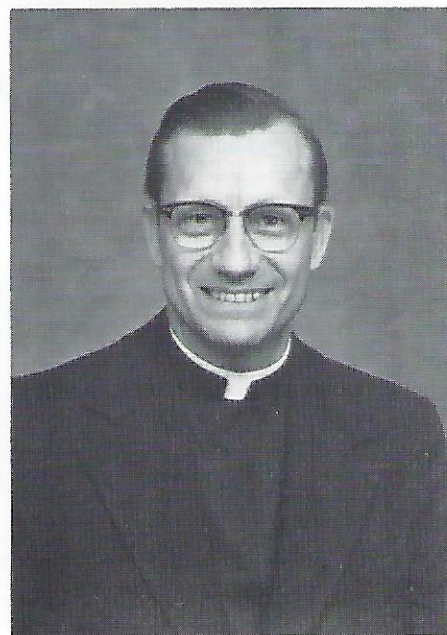
MONSIGNOR WILLIAM FITZGERALD
Pastor

Remigis (1942), Francesco DiFrancisco (1943-47), Mariano Rossi (1948-71), Roger G. Magown (1951), George P. Bernard (1956-75), Paul J. Rossi (1972), Frank L. Gazzilo (1973-76), and Frank Hindley (1976).

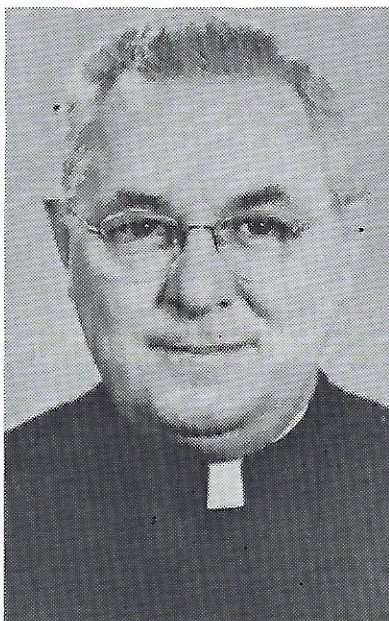
Parish societies, without which no parish can function, have not been lacking in the history of Our Lady of Good Counsel — the Rosary and Altar Society, the Holy Name Society (now inactive), the Sodality (now inactive), the Senior Citizens Club, the CYO, the Social Activities Club (which also serves as the Parish Council), the Altar Boys, Commentators and Choir. Each society has its own history, some of the recent origin, some dating back to the earliest years of the parish, but all have this in common: men, women or children who gave and are giving much of themselves that this church dedicated to our Blessed Lady and this community of faith of which we are a part may continue to flourish and expand for the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

At present the parish is made up of some 800 families (2,300 individuals) of all nationalities who reside within the parish boundaries: North — Jacobs Creek; East — Scotch Road and Upper Ferry Road; South — Lower Ferry Road, Reading Railroad and Trenton city line; West — Delaware River. Religious instructions are provided for all ages: Pre-school Bible classes in the Church hall during the Sunday Masses; Elementary school classes at Villa Victoria on Tuesday afternoons; High school classes in the Church hall on Sunday evenings; and an Adult Lecture Series also in the Church hall on Monday evenings.

Church services include Baptisms on the last Sunday of the Month (12 Noon); Weekday Mass (7:30 A.M.); Saturday Mass (5 P.M.); Sunday Masses (8, 9:30 and 11 A.M.); Confessions — Saturdays and eves of holy days (4 to 5 and 7 to 7:30 P.M.); and the Miraculous Medal and St. Jude Novenas — Mondays (7 P.M.). Among the many special services throughout the year are the Stations of the Cross on the Fridays of Lent; Forty Hours Devotions in November; a Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary in May; evening Mass on First Fridays, etc.



FATHER THOMAS DZURENDA
Associate Pastor



FATHER JOSEPH McLAUGHLIN
Deceased

Get Acquainted breakfasts each month, Communion breakfasts, semi-annual Parish Dances, a Labor Day picnic, trips, a blood bank, suppers, card parties and fashion shows are among the activities which round out the full life of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in this, the year of our Lord, 1976.