

NOTRE DAME OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH CEDAR KNOLLS, NEW JERSEY

Interesting facts about Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel Church in Cedar Knolls, NJ as noted by Gloria Benson from Dec. 1962 to June 1980 during the tenure of Fr. Gilbert and Fr. Mark., and into the 1980's during Fr. Regis's tenure as pastor before new church was built. Fr. Jude was his Asst. for the first time at that time. Perhaps some of this information can be added to the Church's on-line web site history.

Rev. Gilbert Maurice Crawford, OSB, was Pastor in Nov. 1962 when we moved here. I do not know the actual date he took over as Pastor out of St. Mary's Abbey, but was here until I believe 1966-1967 when he retired to the Abbey. He lived in the old church on the third level as his rectory. During his time at ND, parish priests in the Paterson diocese were asked by Bishop Casey to get funds to build Catholic Schools on their properties. No additions were allowed for old church buildings. It took a while but funds were raised from the small community of parishioners and I believe money borrowed. We did have a beautiful and functional school bldg. It ran as a Catholic school for a while, but unfortunately not enough children in the parish continued to enroll to keep it going. We no longer needed the teaching Sisters, not sure of their order but believe out of Elizabeth NJ. I do remember that they wore habits and lived in the small house on the property on Halko, now part of the parking lot. The school building became Notre Dame's mainstay. It was used every day and for Vigil, Sunday masses and special holidays.

Fr. Gilbert died June 5, 1989 at the Abbey, and is buried in the Abbey Cemetery.

Rev. Mark William Confroy, OSB, Pastor, 1967-1980. His retirement from Notre Dame was to St. Mary's Abbey. The Abbot assigned Fr. Mark other priestly duties at St. Anne's Villa and Villa Walsh. Notre Dame became very well known to all religious denominations during Fr. Mark's tenure as we began to improve and enhance many programs that were big time fund raisers to put Notre Dame on the map so to speak. All of us were disciples of the church as Hanover Twp. grew and brought in more parishioners. The school building continued to be put to good use 24/7 with a section rented out and bringing in revenue for Notre Dame. Our CCD religion classes were held in the building for years. Most of the teachers were lay teacher volunteers like myself along with some priests from the Abbey like Fr. Anselm Murray.

The old house the Sisters had lived in when the school was in operation became the Rectory. Dorothy Mensinger was the church secretary, and a house keeper was hired, so when you phoned or went to the old rectory there was always someone there to answer your call or speak to you. Kitty Walsh was the housekeeper. A wonderful woman. They both stayed on for a while after the new Rectory was built. Dorothy retired and Kitty left in 1987 to work at St. Elizabeth's in Linden. Then in the 90's moved to Florida.

ANNUAL EVENT

Every Spring Fr. Mark would plan a party in the gym for all parishioners who did anything for the church during that year. The parties usually had a theme, and because almost every parishioner did one or more things for Notre Dame the turnout was fantastic. Everyone had a good time as there was good food, punch, music and dancing. I know many pictures had been taken at many of the church functions, but have no idea where they would be. I would presume Dorothy Mensinger's old files for the church.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We had a female religious persons in charge of the Religious Ed classes, sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We had a woman from Caldwell College for a couple of years who went on to become a Sister. We also had lay people, but the wonderful woman I remember was Sister Geraldine Brady of St. Elizabeth's in Convent Station in the 1970's and early 80's. As I recall, she was our last Religious Director before Lay people took over. A wonderful, striking teacher and leader with her short bobbed red hair. A wonderful director and friend to all. She did not live at ND but came to us on her scheduled days from St. E's. Sister Geraldine did not wear a habit but different dark tailored suits. The younger children and the teens loved her and related very well to her as she ran a very efficient CCD program. A couple of sisters from St. E's who attend our 5PM Sat. vigil mass tell me they hear from her from time to time as she is now out west.g

It was difficult for many of us to see Fr. Mark leave, as he was like an institution. We had all hoped he would be approved for another 6 years. He had a great dialogue with Rev. Tony MacNaughton of Hildale Park Presbyterian church and we began the yearly ecumenical services that were usually held during Thanksgiving Week. Both churches borrowed each others equipment for their special programs. The choirs of both churches would sing as one choir at these services. We alternated services at both churches every year. It became so popular that other Christian churches in Hanover Township joined in our group for several years and we rotated around the township every year.

Father Mark passed away the fall of 2002 at the Crestwood Nursing and Rehab center in Whippany. I had gone to the Nursing Home to visit him on that Sunday afternoon, and he was so excited that the family was bringing his vestments and he was going to say mass that evening with his family there for his birthday. I was going to see him after school in a couple of days, when I was told that Monday that he had died very suddenly after the festivities. Thank goodness he went happy as a lark. Father Mark is buried at St. Mary's Abbey Cemetery.

SOME BENEDICTINE BROTHERS & PRIESTS WHO WERE PART OF OUR CLERGY DURING THIS EARLY TIME PERIOD

There were many priests who came to us for a short time, too many to list here, but some of the most influential ones were Rev. Thomas Joseph Confroy, OSB (younger brother of Fr. Mark) A Colonel and Chaplain in the Armed Forces, served in Vietnam, awarded many medals. Came to say mass at ND many times while in the US Army. Fr. Thomas was installed the 9th Abbot at St. Mary's Abbey from 1998 to 2006. Abbot Thomas died Aug. 23, 2010, and is buried at the Abbey.

Rev. William M. Norman, OSB, Assistant Pastor at Notre Dame 1971-74. Adults and children alike loved Fr. William and we hated to see him leave. We had all hoped he would come back to us on Fr. Mark's retirement. Unfortunately Father Norman was killed in an automobile accident on a major highway when his small car was struck from behind by a large truck and pushed into a truck in front of him. He was returning from the Abbey in Morristown to his Pastoral Assignment in Maryland on March 18, 1977 when he was killed. Fr. William is buried at the Abbey cemetery.

Brother Patrick Hurley, OSB who was with us a couple of years before he took his vows at the Abbey and then became our Asst. Pastor to Fr. Mark at Notre Dame. He stayed with us until after Fr. Mark

retired. In 1983 he was assigned to Holy Name Parish in Ketchikan, Alaska. When he came back to NJ he was re-assigned to St. Mary's Abbey where he stayed for many, many years.

Fr. Regis Wallace assigned as Pastor upon Fr. Mark's retirement in June, 1980. He was Fr. Mark's student as well as Abbot Clarke at St. Benedict's, Newark. Fr. Regis' assignment began the new wave at Notre Dame. Bishop Rodimer was in favor of replacing old churches with new ones in the Paterson Diocese and renovations to the more stately churches.

Fr. Gerard P. Lair, Asst. Pastor to Fr. Regis. He was a great blessing to Notre Dame. Was our first priest to explain many readings to the congregation before mass that were difficult to comprehend. Upon his leaving us and being re-assigned to St. Mary's Abbey, he later on became their 8th Abbot from 1995 to 1998, succeeding Abbot Clarke who had been Abbot for 20 years retiring at age 65.

VOLUNTEER BEAUTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH IN THE SCHOOL GYM

Brother Patrick, and then as Fr. Patrick was in charge and worked with a committee of men who put up and took down the church every weekend in the gym. There was a portable altar, altar chairs, candle holders, ambos, microphones, sound system, piano, and many racks of folding chairs used to set up the gym in a semi circle to seat hundreds who attended every mass there. This was quite a fete as the gym was in constant use for so many functions. Father Patrick knew I was an Art Major and asked me to make new, huge Liturgical banners to dress the church up. All materials were provided to me. The Gym was also an auditorium and had a stage with drapes, so everything could be stored on the stage behind the drapes, and the banners hung from above.

MUSIC – VOLUNTEER MUSIC MINISTERS

Music in English for the US had now become an integral part of the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II. Clergy and sisters would lead us in song at each of the weekend masses held in the gym. Volunteer professional music people then took over in both the old church and gym church. Jan Hayes and Terry Smith on piano and organ along with two of Sal Iannacone's young sons who played at different masses. Bob Smith, Terry and Jan also would organize groups of our talented young Junior School and High School students to form a small Orchestra to play at special masses.

FUND RAISERS REVENUE – Rosary Altar Society and Events

Rosary Altar Society women played an important part in raising money to do many things as repairs to the physical plant of the old church. Starting as a very small group of devoted women, the new developments in the Hanover Township, Morris Plains, Morris Twp., Convent Station, Morristown, Parsippany area brought many new members to Notre Dame. These new parishioners choosing ND over St. Virgil (Morris Plains), OLM (Whippany), Assumption (Morristown), St. Christopher (Parsippany) St. Rose (East Hanover)

Rosary Altar Society would meet Sept. to June with Fr. Mark in attendance. Up coming events within the church would be discussed, repairs and replacements needed as well as Diocesan mtgs., luncheons, workshops. Special programs would be given at our mtgs. such as Representatives from JCP & L, PSE & G, Jewelry show co-coordinators, Home Goods parties, How To Arts & Craft instructions, Indoor/outdoor plant parties, History of wines and wine tasting by Ralph Melora, parishioner, Tupperware, Revere Ware etc. You name it, we had it.

Assigned groups of women alternated with the washing and ironing of church vestments, linens and keeping the small church clean.

Roberts Rules of Order was used at all meetings. The Rosary Altar Society consisted of a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary. We had many wonderful women lead us, Mrs. Morgese, Mrs. Patella, Mrs. Lieto and myself to name a few. I was Secretary for a while and voted in as President for my 4 year stint. It was a wonderful experience for me as I was able to represent Notre Dame at Diocesan Mtgs. and the Bishop's functions throughout NJ. I represented the Rosary Society at Bishop Rodimers installation in 1978. A wonderful experience for me at St. John's Cathedral in Paterson. When Fr. Regis became Pastor in 1980 and during his first 6 years, he asked me to represent Notre Dame at the Vatican exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. As I was already a member of the Museum it was a wonderful privilege to do that. When plans were being made to build the new church, I was called upon once again as a Notre Dame Music Minister to travel around Northern NJ and listen to organ recitals given by different organ companies and to go into Carnegie Hall in NYC to hear the Rogers Organ. Bishop Rodimer would only approve Pipe Organs but unfortunately we could not afford a pipe organ. He approved the one I recommended from Rodgers because it was the only Organ Co. who had an organ that could be converted to a pipe organ when and if needed. That electronic Organ is the one we are still using at Notre Dame.

YEARLY ROSARY ALTAR SOCIETY FUND RAISING EVENTS

1. Spring Card Party and Fashion Show in the School Gym using the stage and portable runway. Local dress-shops in the Morristown area would provide the clothing and some of us woman and children would model them. We also at one time wore our own creations we had made. Professionally made pastries, coffee and tea was served. Permit from town also was included to have a fund raising raffle.
2. Christmas Bazaar and Raffle in School Gym. Many hand made items brought in huge funds. Even small hand made furniture and wood turnings. Out side dealers could buy a space to sell their wares. We had arrangements with other churches to borrow their tables when needed, with our men driving to pick them up.
3. Car Raffle - Many tickets would sell as men and women of our parish would sign up to car sit at food markets in Whippany, Cedar Knolls, Parsippany, Morristown, East Hanover and at our church and our sister catholic churches in the area.
4. We usually had a once per month bake sale at weekend masses. A very good system used. One woman would oversee around 6 or seven in her own home area. Calls would be made. Type of cake and for what mass would be available for purchase. Volunteer sellers were provided at every mass. The best part was that most were made from scratch. Some of the women became famous for their recipes that would be shared at rosary Society Mtgs.
6. Notre Dame had an established Boy Scout Troop that was quite successful. They held their fund raisers, like spaghetti dinners at the church, car washes and collecting newspapers from those in the congregation who would leave their newspapers at the curb for them as they traveled around town with their father's picking them up. They would have a special Boy Scout Sunday Mass, and special programs they completed around Hanover Township for their Eagle Scout awards.

5. The Rosary Altar Society held a Christmas Party/dinner every year for all the women in the parish and guests, with a guest speaker, good food and music as entertainment. I know that first hand as I would be the entertainment many times with a music minister and teacher friend of mine from OLM and another pianist friend from Hildale Presbyterian who would be my guest and play for me as I sang Broadway tunes to entertain. The President of the Association would give a report on the accomplishments of the year.

6. Many of our men and women volunteered under the direction of Mrs. Diprimo, a Notre Dame parishioner to cook for, and feed homeless families on a monthly Sunday schedule in Morris County with Interfaith churches and Temple B'Nai Or, Morristown, where the families would be housed for several days at one of the home bases. The children were picked up and delivered to and from school with their very own donated back packs and lunch boxes. I was privileged to be part of this committee.

BINGO REVENUE

Bingo was held in the school gym once per week. It became very popular and attracted so many people from all over NJ to Notre Dame, who came every week to play. Many commented we were the best in NJ. In particular the home made Pizza made on the premises in the professional school ovens by our volunteer Bingo committee people who called the games, sold the snacks, and the hot and cold non alcoholic drinks.

GYM USE – revenue from games, snacks and drinks

Notre Dame had a gr. 6-8 CYO Boy's Basketball Team that included boys from OLM. Tom Tighe and John Hayes were the coaches. They were coached well and became a winning team. Gloria Benson typed up publicity for the Sports page in the Hanover Eagle during basketball season and delivered it to their office that was in East Hanover and Rte. 10, at that time. It was wonderful for the boys to see their names in the paper with a blow by blow accounting of the game whether we won or lost.

Cheer Leading Squad – Coaches Fran Tighe and Gloria Benson started this program. We held tryouts for these girls who were 9 to 12 years old. Guest cheerleaders from Whippany Park HS and Bayley Ellard gave instruction and came back to judge the girls at another time. Those who were chosen as cheerleaders attended all home and away games at Catholic churches throughout Northern NJ. They wore matching gold turtleneck sweaters with navy blue felt ND on the front and Navy Blue pleated skirts. No Pom Poms. Girls did strictly gymnastics.

MUSIC – Music became a most important factor to enhance the mass

Sat. 5 PM Vigil mass. - In the early 70's – Cantors Sal Iannacone and Gloria Benson then just Gloria Benson until 2002. Sal being Mayor of Hanover Twp. for so many years took up much of his time so could not be available many times.

Sun. 7 AM – No music – This mass was known as quiet mass.

Sun. 9 AM – Music, piano, (Terry Smith or Jan Hayes) Cantor, Gloria Benson to 2002.– children attended this mass and some went to CCD after it, if they did not go after school once a week or usually Wed. evening for the Junior School age children. Later on High School students when confirmation was changed from age 11 to Sophomore Year HS.

Sun, 10:30 AM - This was a popular Mass called the Guitar Mass. A female adult guitarist was brought in (unfortunately I have forgotten her name) to lead this mass with several Notre Dame young people playing guitars and singing along. She did this into the early 80's.

Sun. 12:00PM – This was the Notre Dame Choir mass for many years and they also sang on special occasions at other masses.

Usually the Holy Days of obligation with music were held in the Gym to accommodate all of those in attendance which would include Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, etc. Novenas, funerals, and memorial services were held in the old church with the exception of a couple of church members who brought out hundreds for the funeral of Agnes Laughlin's husband and a well known figure in town, and parishioner, Leo Halko.

ALTAR BOYS – WE DID NOT HAVE GIRLS SERVING AT THIS TIME

Most of the boys served right on through high school in the old church and the gym.

MALE USHERS

We had many assigned male ushers for all masses. The woman did not usher at that time. Collections were taken and then locked up until the volunteer counters could do this after the last mass. Many of the ushers also helped to take down church after last mass.

LECTORS. EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS, DEACONS ADDED AFTER VATICAN II

Many prayers that had been recited in Latin were now in English. Father Mark invited many in the Parish to become Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers. This was new for Lay people in the church, as well as there was the re-installation of Deacons in the Catholic Church after many centuries without them. Those who were interested in becoming Lectors attended instructional sessions in the old church lower meeting room. These were conducted by priests from the Abbey to hear us, guide us, and evaluate us. One Lay Lector was to read both readings at mass, in the beginning. It was done this way for many years. Fewer Lectors needed to be assigned each week by the lector in charge who did the scheduling. Many years later it was changed by Fr. Jude to include two Lectors per mass. I believe Ray Baylun and I are the only original Lectors still Lectoring.

1980's - Things went on as usual for a while and our new pastor, Fr. Regis concentrated on raising funds to build a new church that was completed Aug. 1985. Slowly the many programs we had started began to be disbanded. Fr. Regis no longer wanted our church involved with Bingo and having a car raffle so they were the first to go. CYO Boy's Basketball, Cheer leading, Boy Scouts had also been dropped. After a couple of years the Rosary Altar Society was dropped, and things that went with it like Card Party, Fashion Shows, Bake Sales, Banner Making, Christmas Bazaars, Special programs for women in church.

We were busy, but a different kind of busy from what we were used to, as there were plans of the type of church we would have built, and a new rectory. We did not have the Parish Council at the time, but a committee of people including myself, who were part of the church planning. What we decided on and approved unfortunately was not what we ended up with. The architect talked Fr. Regis into changing the original plans of the new church by its sanctuary size, cutting out rows of pews to make a bigger meeting area, move the altar forward to put a chapel behind it, and to sell the school building for money for a bigger rectory.

On a personal note, my three daughters were Baptized at Notre Dame.

Gloria Jean Benson, (born July 22, 1964) Sept. 20th, 1964 – Fr. Daniel Downey, OSB, Asst. Pastor
Regina Elena Benson (born April 16, 1969) July 29th, 1969 – Fr. Edward Davey, OSB, Asst. Pastor
Victoria Elizabeth Benson (born Jan. 4, 1971) March 28, 1971 – Fr. Mark Confroy, OSB, Pastor