



The Recorder



Newsletter of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

June 2021

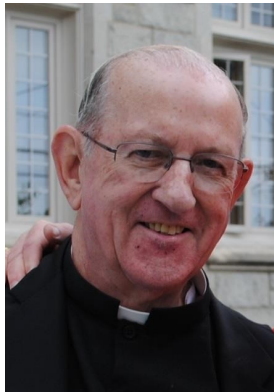
Volume IV, Issue 1

Remembering Monsignor Francis R. Seymour, KHS (1937–2018)

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Monsignor Francis R. Seymour, KHS, who served for many years as the first Archivist for the Archdiocese of Newark when he was named to this position in 1969. He was also a founding member of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission in 1976 and became Chair of this organization in 2009. The contributions Monsignor Seymour made to the Monsignor William Noé Field Archives & Special Collections Center were many and memorable. Counted among his most important and lasting works are his careful organization of research files related to the priest community and his collecting of important documentation, from autographed photographs to memorial cards to parish histories and many other items and objects related to the story of Catholic New Jersey.

It was in the personal sharing of his knowledge and recollections where he really brought history to life. His memory for details was remarkable and brought both enthusiasm and a gentle touch to his interactions with the many people he touched during the course of his life. On a personal level, Monsignor Seymour will be remembered fondly and missed greatly by the many individuals who had the privilege to learn from his example and had the privilege to call him a colleague and friend.

More information about the life and accomplishments of Monsignor Seymour can be found via the official [announcement](#) issued by the Archdiocese of Newark.



Left: Msgr. Seymour in recent years

Right: Msgr. Seymour with St. Mother Teresa

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Executive Director's Message

Tibi gratias ago pro Lectio. We wish to extend a warm and appreciative welcome to the readership of our resurrected newsletter known as *The Recorder*. The appearance of this journal coincides with the 45th anniversary of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission and its service to the community. We are proud to present stories that feature the history of religious life in our state, but also chronicle present and future events that define the Catholic experience for future generations of academics, information professionals, and the general public. We hope you enjoy the content found in this issue and future editions alike. Comments and submissions from the community are most welcome in order to make this a truly collaborative enterprise. Thank you in advance for your interest and being a part of our ever-expanding and appreciative community!

Ala Delany, D.Litt.

Saint John Neumann and the Diocese of Trenton by Father Edward M. Jawidzik

A Note of Thanks

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission wishes to thank the Latin Rite bishops of New Jersey, who are the benefactors of the Commission. We extend personal gratitude to:

Joseph W. Cardinal Tobin, C.Ss.R.,
Archbishop of Newark

Most Reverend
David M. O'Connell, C.M.,
Bishop of Trenton

Most Reverend
Dennis J. Sullivan,
Bishop of Camden

Most Reverend
Kevin J. Sweeney,
Bishop of Paterson

Most Reverend
James. F. Checchio,
Bishop of Metuchen

and

Most Reverend
Dominic A. Marconi,
Archdiocese of Newark,
Chair Emeritus of the
New Jersey Catholic
Historical Commission.



It is a safe bet that not too many people have witnessed a bishop being rowed down a creek in a boat and hopping onto the bank. But that is exactly what any greeting committee there might have seen on April 16, 1853, when Bishop John Nepomucene Neumann, who would later be a canonized saint, first set foot in New Jersey as bishop at the time when it was part of his Diocese of Philadelphia.

On Good Friday 1811, March 28 of that year, our beloved saint was born to Johann Philipp Neumann, a stocking knitter, and Agnes Lebis in the obscure mountain village of Prachatitz in Bohemia, which is the Czech Republic today, but was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His native name was Johann Nepomuk Neumann. He was named after the holy Bohemian martyr Saint John Nepomucene. He was the third of six children and from his earliest years he evinced a studious and pious character.

Having consistently earned the highest marks during his six years of primary education, the youth was recommended for advanced studies at the Academy at Budweis for eight years. Sensing that he had a vocation to the priesthood and, despite the fact that in those days the seminary was overcrowded (today, a bishop's most wonderful dream!) and would only accept 20 out of 90 candidates that year, John applied and was accepted at the Diocesan Seminary at Budweis, where he spent two happy years.

John had an ambition to become a missionary, so he entered the Archepiscopal Seminary at Prague University. However, Prague University was still incubating the error of "Josephinism," named after the enlightened despot Emperor Joseph II of Austro-Hungary. This heresy was anti-papal and anti-Catholic and, had the victim of these sad circumstances been anyone less than the courageously determined John, he probably would have lost his vocation. This may have been the means by which Our Lord intended to purify him and to prepare him for his holy career.

Soon, due to the over-abundance of priests in the Diocese, the Bishop postponed all ordinations in Budweis indefinitely. However, a kind priest encouraged John that there was an urgent need for German priests in America, and he should set out for the New World immediately and receive Holy Orders there. On February 8, 1836, John quietly slipped away from home to find his way to America. On April 20, John boarded a crowded ship and arrived on the 47th day of the journey, on the Feast of Corpus Christi in America!

The next day, John found his way to the residence of Bishop John Dubois of New York, who was in desperate need of German-speaking priests. The overjoyed bishop told him to begin immediately preparing for ordination. Two weeks later, on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, young Neumann received the diaconate, and the following day, June 25, he was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at Old Saint Patrick's on Mott Street in Manhattan.

Father Neumann was sent to the sprawling "parish" of Buffalo, the Church of Saint Peter and Paul, Williamsville, New York, spreading some 900 square miles from Lake Ontario to Pennsylvania. On June 12, 1836, he arrived in Buffalo, a growing town in the midst of the sparsely settled frontier region. He was to assist the sole priest, Father Alexander Pax, and John chose to minister to the outlying districts while Father Pax tended to the populous town of Buffalo itself. It was a grueling assignment, and the saint, who was of diminutive stature, standing 5 ft. 2 1/2 in. tall, energetically ventured forth to every corner of the vast territory nevertheless, on horseback and on foot. He became the first pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church from 1836 until 1840 in North Bush, now part of Tonawanda. *(continued on page 7)*

St. Peter's as an Immigrant Church

by James P. Niessen

(Most of a talk James P. Niessen of Rutgers University Libraries gave about New Brunswick's Catholic history as part of a series about religion and local communities at the New Brunswick Free Public Library was based on a series of columns he wrote for the weekly bulletin of St. Peter's parish in New Brunswick several years ago. He entitled the column Early St. Peter's as an Immigrant Church. The complete text of those columns follows.)

Most Catholics in New Brunswick, as in the rest of the U.S., were Irish. They seem to have comprised most of the parishioners at St. Peter's after its founding in 1829, and especially after the potato famine, in the 1840s, brought new waves of Irish immigrants. During the first half of the 19th century by far most of the Catholic immigrants to the U.S. were Irish, exceeding a half million in 1850 and then again in 1860.

The annual numbers of German Catholic immigrants reached half as many in these years, and then exceeded the Irish for the rest of the century. The baptism of Germans at old St. Peter's on Bayard Street is documented for the 1860s, when German-language churches had already been established for German Protestants with the Third Reformed Church in 1851 and the Livingston Avenue Reformed Church in 1861. The first German Catholic bishop in the US served in Philadelphia in 1852-60, St. John Nepomuk Neumann. The motive for his appointment and the creation of the new German parish in New Brunswick was the same: concern that German Catholics might gravitate to the German Protestant congregations or stop practicing any religion at all under the influence of liberal German refugees of the revolutions of 1848.

The completion of the new St. Peter's Church on Somerset Street in 1865 prompted the timing for the foundation of St. John the Baptist. German immigration to the U.S., on the rise before the Civil War, rose even more rapidly after its conclusion. At the end of 1865 the bishop of Newark granted permission for the new parish, and within a year its construction was concluded on Neilson Street.

German parishes were known for their emphasis on ritual, music, and Christmas and Corpus Christi. Non-Germans soon adopted their practice of celebrating Christmas in the family with trees and gifts. The Corpus Christi procession was revived in New Brunswick this year.

Growing immigration after the Civil War made the American church more ethnically diverse. Irish immigrants had previously been the target of nativists, but many of them now joined the establishment and made common cause with the advocates of Americanization. German Catholics, by contrast, were more socially conservative. They insisted on parish schools, both to keep the German language alive and to combat what they saw as godlessness in English-American culture. The bishop of Newark, Winand Wigger, was a German who favored the founding of non-English parishes and threatened with excommunication those parents who did not send their children to parochial schools. "Americanizers" among the bishops were often Irishmen who complained of German separatism. Father Patrick Corrigan of Hoboken conducted a pamphlet war against alleged German tyranny over English-speaking Catholics in the diocese.

By the time of Father Corrigan's pamphlet war, New Brunswick was no longer in the Diocese of Newark, however. In 1881 the city came under the authority of the Diocese of Trenton and its first bishop, Michael J. O'Farrell. Two years later the bishop convened an organizational meeting in the basement of St. Peter's to create the city's second territorial or English-speaking parish, Sacred Heart on Throop Avenue, from the first and second wards that had belonged to St. Peter's. Seventy heads of families were present at the meeting, and Fr. B. J. Mulligan became the first pastor of the new parish. According to the historian of the Diocese of Trenton, "this church was located improperly by its proximity to St. John's, impairing its future usefulness." St. John's founders had included Irish Catholics as well as Germans, and some of them joined the new parish. Perhaps the new parish was a competitor of St. John's, but it flourished. The current church was completed in 1886, and in 1889 Sacred Heart opened its school on the plot of the old St. Peter's cemetery, which it had bought for \$200.

The next New Brunswick parish to be founded from St. Peter's was St. Ladislaus in 1904. Hungarians had come in small numbers to New Jersey since colonial times, but their massive influx only began after 1888, when the first Hungarian family settled in New Brunswick. Industrial jobs attracted them to the city, especially the cigar plant on Somerset Street and Johnson & Johnson that acquired its plant near St. Peter's in 1891. By 1915 one-fifth of the population were Hungarians, possibly the largest percentage of any American city its size, and they were the largest foreign-born population in the city. *(continued on page 4)*

St. Peter's as an Immigrant Church

(continued from page 3)

The Hungarians' unique, non-European language made it hard for them to learn English and accentuated their tendency to stick together. In 1905 and 1915 only 1% of New Brunswick Hungarians had non-Hungarian spouses. Hungarian Catholics were also distinctively national in their veneration of saints, favoring those who originated in the country's medieval royal family like Emerich, Margaret, and Ladislaus. In 1899 New Brunswick Hungarians founded a St. Emerich (Imre in Hungarian) Society that collected dues to pay for burials and take care of the sick. St. Ladislaus (László in Hungarian) was a king of Hungary in the 11th century who protected Hungarian Christians from pagan attacks.

Not long after their arrival, the Hungarian Catholics began to worship in the basement of St. Peter's under the care of their own Hungarian priest. We saw how the establishment of ethnic congregations for German Protestants determined the timing for the founding of St. John the Baptist in 1865. In the same way, the foundation of the First Magyar Reformed (later Bayard Street Presbyterian) Church in July of 1904 galvanized the Catholics to found the new parish in October of the same year. The cornerstone for the church on Somerset Street was laid a year later, and it was consecrated in July of 1906. A Hungarian school and convent followed not long after.

Many Italians and Poles settled in the U.S. beginning in the late 19th century. Their heaviest concentration in New Jersey was not in New Brunswick, but here, too, they established new ethnic parishes early in the 20th century. In 1910 the Italians were the largest group of Catholic immigrants to enter the U.S. Poles were also numerous, but their numbers are difficult to determine because authorities only identified immigrants by country of origin and the Poles came from Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia.

"German Catholics...were more socially conservative. They insisted on parish schools, both to keep the German language alive and to combat what they saw as godlessness in English-American culture."

These people differed from the earlier immigrants in that nearly all were Catholics. Both in their own way felt uncomfortable with the dominant Irish style of religious practice in the U.S. Italian religiosity was more informal, with the veneration of local saints and celebration of street festivals with food and fireworks. Many Italian men came to the U.S. with a distrust of bishops and clergy due to tension between the Italian state and Holy See back home, and left churchgoing to the women. Catholicism had been a marker of Polishness in the face of foreign rule of the homeland by three empires since the Partitions of the 18th century. Distinctive Polish practices included the Christmas Eve supper (*Wigilia*) with *oplatek* wafers, *wianki* (wreath tossing) that reminded them of their rural roots.

The Italian parish was born in much the same way as St. Ladislaus. Like the Hungarians at St. Peter's, the Italians worshiped at first in the basement of an existing parish, Sacred Heart. In 1905 St. Mary of Mount Virgin was established on Sandford Street. The formation of the Polish parish took a longer and more complicated route. After the settlement of the first Poles in New Brunswick in 1888, they congregated at St. John the Baptist, the German parish, until 1906 when they moved to St. Peter's. Perhaps German leadership was too much for Polish immigrants just escaped from foreign rule, or perhaps the new arrangement was simply more convenient because St. Peter's had for years accommodated Hungarians in its basement. The Poles were there for 20 years, and a series of Polish priests ministered to the Polish section of the parish during these decades. Finally, ground was broken for the new Polish parish of St. Joseph on Somerset Street in 1924. The first Mass was celebrated at the church on Easter Sunday of 1925.

Research on the Father Comesañas Papers

by Emma Regan

(Emma Regan, a student in the Rutgers School of Information Science, is working at Seton Hall University to organize the papers of Rev. Raul Comesañas, leader of the Cuban American community in Newark, with the support of the NJCHC. Here she reflects on her experience working with this unique collection.)

When I first began working on the Father Raúl Comesañas papers, I did not have an idea of what I was getting into. There was little about Father Comesañas online, so all that I knew about him was from what I was told in the job description. Little did I, and my co-workers at Seton Hall, know that Father Comesañas was a more complicated individual than we originally anticipated.

I began this project at the end of September of 2020, thinking this process would be incredibly straightforward. I was given a timeline of each series within the collection that I would work on, the expected size of each series, and guidance on the best practices to preserve this collection. Before this project, I had had some experience working with collections, but I had never worked on a collection this large on my own. Most of the work I had done before was numbering, rehousing, and exhibit designing, so processing a large collection felt like a massive undertaking.

Quickly, it became clear that the collection was much more than we originally thought. Early on we also scanned several photo albums, which helped me get a sense of who Father Comesañas was, but I found out that there was even more. Besides just *La Nación* and *El Clarín*, two papers that Father Comesañas edited and published early in his career, we saved other local papers that did not have copies in other archives around the country. One of these papers included *La Vanguardia Católica*, a Spanish-language Catholic newspaper sponsored by la Fundación Católica Cubana-Americana Inc., of which Father Comesañas was a board member. We did not even know about this paper before processing nor did we anticipate how much research value these local newspapers would contribute to the collection, which was exciting and overwhelming at the same time.



Above: Image from the Father Comesañas papers

As of December 2020, I have processed about 20% of the collection and completed 25% of the work I am expected to. I have found so many things that have told me more about who Father Raúl Comesañas was. One of my favorite things was a caricature drawing of him in support of his run for the United States House of Representatives. Other really amazing things I have found are pamphlets that he wrote in the late 1960s about American foreign policy, especially relating to Cuba; correspondence between Father Comesañas and some major American political figures (Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, George H. W. Bush, and Gerald Ford, just to name a few); and letters between Father Comesañas and others when he was studying to become a priest. My favorite letter is one in which he wrote that he was up at four o'clock in the morning writing to a friend, which as a student I understand more than anything. All of these pieces give me insight into Father Comesañas's life, and sometimes it feels like I know him more than I know myself. I am so excited to continue to work through his papers and to see what else is a part of the collection. We went into the project thinking that Father Comesañas was just a priest, the director of Union of Cubans in Exile Northeast Division, the first Cuban American to run for the U.S. House of Representatives, and the editor and publisher of three Spanish-language Catholic newspapers. Through reviewing his papers, we have discovered that he was on the board of a third newspaper, the associate director of the Advisory Committee on the Education of Spanish Speaking, on the Committee to the Supreme Court on Minority Concerns in the state of New Jersey, and on Governor Thomas Kean's Hudson River Waterfront Development Commission in the mid 1980s. I look forward to getting to know more about Father Comesañas as the months go on, and to learning more about how to preserve these priceless resources to be used by scholars for years to come.

The Comesañas papers will be made available to the public at the Monsignor William Noé Field Archives and Special Collections Center at Seton Hall in the fall of 2021. The finding aid and selected digitized materials from the collection will be viewable at <https://archivespace-library.shu.edu/>.

The Monitor – First Edition of New Jersey’s Catholic News Vanguard

by Alan Delozier, D.Litt., Executive Director

Introduction

“Propagation Number: Faith, Truth, Unity, Peace.” This became the semi-official maxim for one of the earliest media outlets christened *The Monitor* which featured local religious news and wider Catholic New Jersey stories for their readership community. September of 2021 marks the 115th anniversary of when the premier issue of this publication made its way to the printing press. In the process, this organ has been acknowledged in many quarters as one of the most cohesive and comprehensive early attempts by the Catholic community of the Garden State to have a journalistic outlet to promote the Church statewide.

When *The Monitor* saw print for the first time on September 15, 1906, this weekly 16-page tabloid published out of their control center in Newark was quite well-received especially among pastors and parishioners at churches who were anxious to learn more about what was news in regard to their fellow Catholics. During the early 20th century, New Jersey proper was serviced by the Dioceses of Newark and Trenton which hosted a combined 360,000+ faithful between the two Sees with over 300 priests and nearly 150 parishes, according to the reference-based *Catholic Directories* published during this era. Those who elected to secure their own issue and read *The Monitor* paid a total of five cents per copy, or \$2.00 to subscribe per year.” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 1-5)

As with any new publication, those responsible for *The Monitor* had to consider format, style, editorial policy, and the ultimate presentation of the newspaper—they designed an aesthetic vision for the publication. Making their production unique was a vision embraced by the first editing team attached to *The Monitor*. The physical layout combined with the stories and photographs chosen connect to the aforementioned standards, but also tie into the distinctive mission established within the pages of this journal.

The Mission of The Monitor

A mission statement is usually articulated in words that propose a high ideal of service and devotion to the best of society, and *The Monitor’s* was no exception. Even though most fledgling newspapers include their mission statement on the front page or within the editorial section, the publishers for *The Monitor* offered an extensive outline of subject objectives found on page 8 of the September 15th edition.

The core mission of *The Monitor* became a means of disseminating what they found as *the truth* à la keeping in mind that what was published would become gospel and veracity. Upon establishment, the Right Reverend Bishop John J. O’Connor (1855–1927), Bishop of Newark, wrote an endorsement and commendatory letter on behalf of this publication as a tool “for the defence of Catholic truth and the promotion of Catholic interests....The principles which it will propagate and defend will be Catholic principles; the doctrine it will teach will be Catholic doctrine; the interests it will serve will be the Church of God” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 8). (*continued on page 9*)

THE MONITOR

POPE LEO XIII.
and
The Catholic Press

A Catholic newspaper in a parish is a perpetual mission. Let all who truly and from their souls desire that religion and society defended by human intellect and literature should flourish, strive by their liberality to guard and protect the Catholic press, and let every one in proportion to his income support it with his money and influence, for to those who devote themselves to the Catholic press we ought by all means to bring helps of this kind, without which their industry will either have no results or uncertain and miserable ones.

In our times the work of Catholic journalism is one of the most useful—nay, one of the most necessary—in the whole world.—*Leo XIII.*

Subscribe for “The Monitor”

We desire to call the attention of every Catholic family in New Jersey to the Letter of Approval of the Right Reverend Bishop which appears opposite here on the editorial page and the admonition of the late Holy Father Leo XIII. which is printed above in these columns, urging all of our people to be regular readers of a Catholic journal such as *THE MONITOR*. To secure *THE MONITOR* every week regularly, the only sure way is to subscribe for it and receive it through the mails. In this way you will receive your copy every Saturday morning, and by paying \$2.00 for a year's subscription save seventy-five cents to a dollar a year, since above the cost of 5 cents per copy, or \$2.60 per year, the special issues of Christmas, Easter, etc., will cost more than the regular issues. For this reason we have outlined below a blank form, which may be filled out and mailed with your remittance to enter your subscription. To every one sending us their order by Wednesday evening the paper will be mailed the following Friday.

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Subscription card for The Monitor

Saint John Neumann and the Diocese of Trenton

(continued from page 2)

In 1840, due to his herculean burden of labor and penance he imposed upon himself, he was a sick man, coughing up blood and suffering violent attacks of fever. But his holiness bore fruit. When Bishop Dubois made a pastoral visit, he was astonished to find out just how much the saint had accomplished. With the extraordinary humility of this magnificent soul, Father Neumann reported, "In respect to our Holy Religion, affairs are progressing well. Catholicism is spreading and the zeal of the faithful is on the increase." When he says matter-of-factly "Catholicism is spreading," we must realize that since he was the only priest roaming the Buffalo wilderness, it was HE who was doing all the spreading!

However, in addition to his strained health, and isolated as he was in this raw wilderness, Father Neumann found himself deprived of satisfactory spiritual guidance. An acquaintance, Father Joseph Prost of the Redemptorists, mystically sensed the young priest's spiritual plight when, in writing to Father Neumann, he closed the letter with the scriptural admonition, "Vae Soli!" ("Woe to him who is alone!" Isaiah 5:21). This, of course, was to suggest that John consider joining the Redemptorist Congregation. Father Prost's pointed counsel struck its mark squarely, for Father Neumann, a long-time student of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, had much in common with the Redemptorist spirit. The young priest promptly decided to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. On October 13, 1840, having obtained Bishop Dubois' approval, the priest set out for the Redemptorist foundation at Saint Philomena's Church in Pittsburgh.

John Nepomucene Neumann became the first novice of the newly established American branch of the Redemptorists on November 30. Almost immediately, he was sent into the field, preaching missions, assisting parish priests and settling parochial disputes. His residence was changed that year no less than eight times.

On January 16, 1842, after a long and arduous novitiate at Saint Alphonsus Church in Huron County, Ohio, Father Neumann became the first Redemptorist to make his vows in America. He was first assigned to Saint James Parish in Baltimore. From this base, he regularly traveled to distant mission posts, bringing the consolations of the Holy Faith to the vast number of immigrants who long had been deprived of them in the New World. In recognition of this outstanding work, the pious Redemptorist, in March of 1844, was appointed rector of Saint Philomena's Church in Pittsburgh, where he began his novitiate four years earlier, and later to Saint Augustine's Church in Elkridge, Maryland, from 1849 to 1851.

During these years, so generously did Father Neumann give of himself without letup that his old illness returned, this time exhibiting more serious symptoms. Finally, on orders from his superior did he see a doctor, who diagnosed a tubercular condition that could be fatal if the saint did not leave Pittsburgh immediately and rest. On this word, he was promptly ordered to convalesce in Baltimore.

The rest was not to be a long one. At the end of two weeks, on February 9, 1847, Father Neumann received a letter from Holland, sent three months earlier by the Provincial, naming him vice-regent of the American Redemptorists. As far from his heart though the desire for this new post was, Father Neumann, out of obedience and love of his congregation, accepted the assignment with all its weighty problems, and promptly went to work, never giving any thought to his illness. The priest was naturalized as a United States citizen on February 10, 1848.

When Father Neumann's tenure as American superior of the Redemptorists ended, he returned happily to his ministry work. In 1851, he was appointed rector of Saint Alphonsus Church in Baltimore. But his peaceful period of relative obscurity did not last long.

Toward the end of 1851, the new archbishop of Baltimore, Francis P. Kenrick, former bishop of Philadelphia, chose Father Neumann for his confessor. Deeply impressed by the profound wisdom, radiant holiness, and keen administrative abilities of this soft-spoken little priest, Archbishop Kenrick was soon convinced that Father Neumann was the best candidate to replace him in the vacant see of Philadelphia, and eagerly sent that recommendation to Rome. One day, to John's horror, the archbishop hinted to John that he might soon have to get himself a mitre, upon which John, falling to his knees, tearfully pleaded with the prelate to spare one so "unworthy" of so high a dignity. *(continued on page 8)*

Saint John Neumann and the Diocese of Trenton

(continued from page 7)

In spite of his vociferous protestations, even to the procurator general of the Redemptorists in Rome, when the future saint returned to his room one day, he discovered on his table an episcopal ring and pectoral cross, left there by Archbishop Kenrick. Father Neumann, now Bishop-elect Neumann, soon received the Papal Bull, wherein Pope Saint Pius IX had written, “I command Father Neumann under formal obedience to accept the Diocese of Philadelphia without further appeal.”

Bishop-elect Neumann exclaimed, “Passion of Christ strengthen me!” This sentence became his motto as bishop. On Passion Sunday (now Palm Sunday) 1852, March 28 that year, also Bishop Neumann’s birthday, John Nepomucene Neumann was consecrated bishop at Saint Alphonsus Church in Baltimore by Archbishop Kenrick, assisted by Bishop Bernard O’Reilly, amidst solemn ceremonies. Back when Father Neumann became the first Redemptorist to make vows in America, a chronicler light-heartedly recorded the event with a German pun, “In truth, a new man (Ein neuer Mann) for our congregation.” Once again in his life, this reality occurred!

The Diocese of Philadelphia, then as now, one of the largest and most important in the United States, at that time embraced 2/3 of Philadelphia, the western half of New Jersey, and all of Delaware. It consisted of 113 parishes, with only 100 priests to minister to a Catholic population of 170,000. It offered many a trying challenge to the new shepherd, including enormous debts and a critical need for more churches and schools.

Authorities in Rome had been anxious to have Father Neumann consecrated a bishop at an early date in order that he could participate in the First Plenary Council of Bishops to be held in the United States in Baltimore, a 10-day Council to be convened in May of 1852. Among the pressing matters before the Council was that of education and schooling for Catholic youth. Two catechisms composed by Bishop Neumann were heartily approved and subsequently used for 33 years before being replaced by the Baltimore Catechism in 1885. But more significantly, Bishop Neumann was a leading figure in winning the Council’s support for an ambitious proposal to open more and better-organized parochial schools.

One of his acts as Bishop of Philadelphia was to marshal and head the Central Committee for the Education of Catholic Youth, whose purpose was to map out a complete practical system of education for the diocese, making him the first bishop in the country to arrange a diocesan school system. This venture proved so successful that it served as inspiration and pattern for other dioceses to follow. Rightly, then, is Bishop Neumann hailed as the “Father of the Parochial School System.” Having an intense love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop John was eager to introduce Forty Hours Devotions in this country. The saint expedited an order for all parishes in the Diocese to schedule the devotion.

Bishop Neumann was likewise a devoted client of the Queen of Heaven. What great joy, therefore, he must have experienced in October of 1854 when he received a formal invitation from the Holy Father to be present, along with 53 cardinals, 139 other bishops, and thousands of priests and laity, in Rome on December 8 for the solemn promulgation of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, defined by Pope St. Pius IX ex cathedra as dogma! Upon his return, he would issue a letter extolling the Immaculate Queen of Heaven and asking all pastors of the diocese to celebrate her triumph in their churches with a triduum in her honor.

In the 80 months that John Nepomucene Neumann served as Bishop of Philadelphia, he founded 80 new parishes—one for every month of his tenure—in addition to overseeing the completion of the magnificent Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. Under his administration, the number of parochial schools in his diocese increased from one to 200! We can roughly gauge his enormous administrative burden from the fact that in 1868, a few years after his death, the see of Philadelphia was divided into four separate dioceses, with Harrisburg, Scranton, and Wilmington created as new dioceses.

Late during his tenure, Bishop Neumann begged to be relieved of Philadelphia’s charge and to be given a smaller one. But the authorities in Rome valued the holy and capable leadership of the saint too highly. Instead, they appointed a coadjutor with right of succession, Bishop James Frederick Wood, to assist him.

The Monitor – First Edition of New Jersey’s Catholic News Vanguard

(continued from page 6)

Further details were outlined in line with the adopted mission of *The Monitor* when it came to its audience and geographical coverage in particular:

The State of New Jersey is a promising field for the work THE MONITOR has in view. Within its confines are two important dioceses, the great diocese of Newark and that of progressive Trenton. Both are growing in population—reaping, besides their natural growth, the overflow of New York and Philadelphia. Both are bound to become in the near future crowded centers of Catholic life. THE MONITOR will appeal especially to the Catholics of New Jersey. Comprehensive in its scope, it will treat everything that might be of interest to the New Jersey Catholics. Their thought, their opinions, their feelings, their lives will be mirrored in its columns from week to week. THE MONITOR will always act in unison with the authorities of the Church, and will strive to merit the approbation of the clergy and Bishops of New Jersey. It comes as a unitive force in New Jersey. It will focus Catholic strength and make it felt as it never was before. The whole world is constantly singing the power of the press. That power will be wielded in the service of our holy religion, supplementing the authority and the living voice of the pulpit. With eagerness, therefore, THE MONITOR begins its mission – the organ of the Catholic Church in the State of New Jersey. (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 8)

With this statement in mind and now in action, the publication crew at *The Monitor* would find and publish articles that ascribed to themes that would appeal to their Catholic-centered information-seeking constituency living statewide.

Feature Stories & Catholic News in Context

When viewing the inaugural edition of *The Monitor*, one finds a variety of different areas focusing upon Catholicism from representative articles on the papacy to various parochial news stories from local sources to those found across the globe, along with the establishment of regularly scheduled and specialty columns. On the cover page, for example, are the following narratives – “Pius X, A Study in Contrasts,” “Silver Jubilee—St. Aloysius, Newark,” and “Corner-Stone, All Saints’ Church, Jersey City” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 1).



Above: First page of the first issue of *The Monitor*

Within the inside leaves of *The Monitor*, other titles found include the following items: “School News,” “Archbishop Farley Welcomed Home,” “New General of the Jesuits,” “Thrifty Polish Catholics,” “Blue-Robed Nuns,” “Irish History in Schools,” “The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and its Work,” “Parish Notes,” “Old Italian Celebration in Trenton,” “Holy Name Societies in Parade,” “Our Lady of Sorrows – Anniversary at South Orange,” “News from Rome,” “Catholicism in America,” “Funds for Catholic University,” “President Roosevelt’s Address,” “Bishop’s Column,” “The Catholic World,” “News of Trenton,” “The Social World,” “Catholic Fraternal Societies – Knights of Columbus, AOH,” “At Home With The Family – Poems and Advice,” and the pointedly entitled: “Tommy Tod and the Lotus Tree Deceitfulness of Sin” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 2-16)

In addition to the stand-alone articles and columns in the first edition and subsequent issues of *The Monitor*, advertising would help to financially sustain the operations of this publication, as with any commercial enterprise. The first patrons of the new enterprise included such “Brick City” retailers as Beatty-Montgomery Company of Newark (Cloak, Suit, Waist, Fur, Skirts, Fur, and Millinery Works), Mathusehk & Son of Newark (Grand and Upright Pianos), Quigley Men’s Furnisher and Hatter, and R. Walsh (Candy) (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 2-16). (continued on page 10)

The Monitor – First Edition of New Jersey's Catholic News Vanguard (continued from page 9)

“The Value of the Catholic Press”

Along with the mission statement and the associated subject matter, *The Monitor* also printed a detailed, full-length story on what they deemed “The Value of the Catholic Press,” which made reference to Irish statesman and politician Edmund Burke (1729–1797), who noted that the press was the “Fourth Estate of the realm, adding that it was the most powerful of them all” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5). Additionally, a question was posed as to whether if Burke had lived in the 20th century, where the modern press had attained a “ubiquitous importance” and “eclipsing with its fiercer light those inferior orbs,” he might proclaim that the vital nature of the press in its value to society and a nation is either “blessed or cursed” with a press system in a “civilized country” to report on trends and the voice of the people, tone, and sentiment (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5). Otherwise, the goal for those affiliated with *The Monitor* was to print articles demonstrating a high level of focus and adherence to Catholic ideals. In fundamental terms, the most vital part of the press system in their view was to report both the news—good and bad—without reporting on the private lives of those who read and did not alike. The concept of love was also addressed, as the text also noted that “a healthy public opinion, a love of justice, freedom from corruption and other suitable conditions in the community concerned” is also necessary among citizens and within society on the whole (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5).

When it came to Catholic-based news objectives in particular, “The Value of the Catholic Press” relayed in further depth: “It is the object of this paper to say and to maintain that Catholics as Catholics underrate the immense power for good or evil of the public press” (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5). By way of a model, the editors looked at the American path of the freedom of the press as a valuable asset of their efforts from the start and moving forward.

In their own words, authors attached to *The Monitor* noted that there is one fact they acknowledge as a truism regarding the religious press and punctuated their statement of this tenet by questions to connect to their major points:

Of one thing I am persuaded, and that is, that we entirely underrate the power of the press, and that Catholic interests in many lands are suffering thereby. It is all very well to say that we must trust to supernatural means and leave aside all carnal weapons. On the contrary, we are to make use of all natural means first, and surely the public press is a thing at least indifferent in itself, and can be turned into an engine for effecting untold good. Why would we not recognize facts? Is the cause of Christ, of His truth, of His Church, to be allowed to go by default? Is it not worth every effort and deserving of our warmest enthusiasm? (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5)

The article went on to raise further questions about defending the Church and its message:

“Surely Catholic newspapers – not necessarily what we call religious journals, but journals conducted by loyal and intellectual Catholics themselves, would have a large field of endeavor and effective good before them, a career of precious usefulness! Would it not be their function in all things honest and honorable to compete with secular journals, and with fairness and ability to explain, or, if need be, to defend Catholic faith and Catholic practices from ignorant or mendacious attack? How can Catholics be said to love the Church of which they are members (those of them who have the necessary equipment), if they will not step down into the arena and do their bravest for the noblest cause that can nerve the hand or the brain, or stir the devotion and enthusiasm of the heart of man? If we would move the world we must have our hand on the mighty lever which directs its motions, or else we must step aside, and with folded arms see it turn in the direction contrary to that in which we wish it to revolve. (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5)

This gave further depth to their vision of a responsible faith-based press within the framework of American Catholic thought and advocacy, upon which they elaborated in the following passage:

the phrase “knights of the pen,” and, in truth, I think it not so ill chosen, for the pen may be turned into a mighty chivalrous weapon, and literature and the press may do what the knights of old performed—stay injustice, defeat oppression, protect weakness and virtue, and fight the manly battle for all good causes. And I would say to all those who can safely wield this cunning weapon of the pen—“Gird ye to the fight and quit ye like men!” Put your spear in rest and splinter a chivalrous lance in behalf of Christ and His sacred cause, His Church, His truth! (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5) (*continued on page 11*)

The Monitor – First Edition of New Jersey's Catholic News Vanguard

(continued from page 10)

the phrase “knights of the pen,” and, in truth, I think it not so ill chosen, for the pen may be turned into a mighty chivalrous weapon, and literature and the press may do what the knights of old performed—stay injustice, defeat oppression, protect weakness and virtue, and fight the manly battle for all good causes. And I would say to all those who can safely wield this cunning weapon of the pen—“Gird ye to the fight and quit ye like men!” Put your spear in rest and splinter a chivalrous lance in behalf of Christ and His sacred cause, His Church, His truth! (*The Monitor*, 15 September 1906, 5)

Further details went forward, and above all else, truth and solemnity were part of the goals the editors strove for within the finished product of article as found within the first edition. Upon release the reading audience would express their own observations on how, and to what degree the content presented resonated with them. This would help to chart their future publishing course.

The Monitor - Reviews of the First Issue

The editors reported on initial response to the publication in the second edition of the newspaper dated 22 September 1906. The transcripts found in the pages of *The Monitor* are clear representations of correspondence received after those who read the edition from the week before and offered their observations. Examples include the following pieces.

We have our own idea of what constitutes Christian modesty and find ourselves really at a loss how to reconcile that idea and the publishing of the phenomenal success which has attended the first issue of THE MONITOR. But in justice to all concerned and especially to our reading public the truth must be told, and here it is: The first issue, which taxed the presses until 1.30 o'clock, Saturday morning, was sold out early on Sunday morning, and the office besieged by demands for more copies. Besieged, nay actually raided by some of our enterprising agents, as the following inimitable document left on the editor's desk will go far to prove:

Sunday morning.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

DEAR SIR: as we ran short of papers, we came here (the caretaker admitted them) and took the last nine that were on the table.

Boys of St. Patrick's:

HARRY HILL.

W. MAHER.

F. McQUADE.

Nor was this all. These “Boys of St. Patrick's,” seized upon the first issued copy of THE MONITOR, which the manager had religiously put aside with the purpose of having it framed to adorn his sanctum, thus leaving the office practically depleted.

Another boy-agent in Elizabeth to whom we had promised 75 copies, but could only send 25, appeared early at the office of THE MONITOR, peremptorily demanding an explanation. “You send me 25 copies,” he exclaimed in high dudgeon, “and here I have orders for 77.”

We are sadly forced to admit that we have received endless complaints from news-agents and others pitched in the same key and demanding larger supplies of copies for the future. The following communications tell their own story and this story has been uniformly the same:

ST. ALOYSIUS' PARISH, JERSEY CITY.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

Enclosed find money-order for 30 of your MONITOR, which I sold very easily, and I think you might send 150 for next Sunday.

EDWARD McLARNEY.

(continued on page 12)

The Monitor – First Edition of New Jersey's Catholic News Vanguard (continued from page 11)

HOLY ROSARY PARISH, ELIZABETH, N.J.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

I sold the 100 copies of THE MONITOR sent to me. Please send me about 150 papers next week, as I can easily sell that number. I have been promised a yearly subscription at the end of the month.

JAMES HASSAN.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S PARISH, JERSEY CITY

Manager of THE MONITOR,

I received the papers Saturday evening and sold 125. Kindly send the same number next week.

A.J. SHINE.

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH, ELIZABETH, N.J.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

I have sold all the copies of THE MONITOR you sent me and could have sold at least 25 more. For next Sunday please send me 50 copies, as I think I can easily sell at least that many more. I have not found any subscribers, although in a few days I think I can have at least 10 subscribers.

WILLIAM WETZEL.

-

ST. VALENTINE'S PARISH, BLOOMFIELD, N.J.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

Inclosed find money order for the returns of the 25 papers which I received on Saturday. Kindly send me 50 papers next Saturday, and oblige,

JAMES HUGHES.

-

SACRED HEART PARISH, ELIZABETH, N.J.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

Yesterday I sold all the Catholic MONITORS you sent me. Please send me 60 for next Sunday at your earliest convenience.

BERNARD BRADY.-

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH, ELIZABETH, N.J.

Manager of THE MONITOR,

I received the 25 copies of THE MONITOR sent me and disposed of all of them this morning. I could have sold a few more copies, only the agent did not send me as many as he promised to.

RAYMOND C. BENDER.

These are a few out of the many, and it is needless to say that we are in full sympathy with all our young agents. Cheer up, boys! You shall have all the copies you want this Saturday. (*The Monitor*, 22 September 1906, 3)

On this note of checking appraisals, *The Monitor* would regulate their presses and become more successful as they pursued more depth in regard to story ideas, reporting, and other features. An increase in advertising not only of Catholic-based church goods, but also of other mainstream items including patent medicine, clothing, other retail items, and more helped in terms of financial support. Until the *The Monitor's* demise in the late 1910s-early 1920s, this newspaper continued to serve their readership among the Catholic population of New Jersey.

Bibliography

The Monitor, Volume I, Issue 1, 15 September 1906.

The Monitor, Volume I, Issue 2, 22 September 1906.

News from the Archives of the Benedictine Abbey of Newark by Rev. Augustine J. Curley, O.S.B.

The archives of the Benedictine Abbey of Newark (popularly known as Newark Abbey) preserve the records of St. Mary's Parish (founded 1842), the Benedictine Abbey (founded in 1857 as St. Mary's Priory; since 1968 known as Newark Abbey) and St. Benedict's Prep (founded in 1868). The archives are housed in the Fred and Alice Radel Library.

One of the projects that we were able to begin recently was the transfer of the abbey library book collection to the room that had housed the archives, and the archives to the room that had housed the abbey book collection. Because we had to begin by moving the archives out to the main reading room to make room for the books, before we could move the archives into their new space, we had the chance to go through boxes that were in the archives, but unprocessed. This brought to light much material that helps to document the history of abbey, parish and schools.

One of the projects that benefited from this move was the history of St. Mary's Parish, currently being written by Fr. Augustine Curley. Many pastors' papers that had been put in storage when the monastery was renovated a number of years ago, as well as more recent papers, have again seen the light of day and have been processed. The papers of Father Gregory Schramm document the renovation of the church in the 1930s. The papers of Fr. Maurus McBarron, who became pastor just weeks before the riots of 1967, document the response of the urban parishes to the plight of the African-Americans. Papers from the pastorate of Fr. Luke Edelen document a parish that was fairly dormant during a period of parish restructuring in the 1980s, and the repopulation of the parish by African immigrants, mainly from Nigeria and other parts of west Africa. Their experience, in terms of some ethnic rivalries and the desire to see that their American-born children learn the language and traditions of the mother countries, mirrored similar issues among the early German immigrants, for whose benefit the parish was originally established, who came from different German-speaking areas before Germany was united, and often disagreed among themselves about how "American" they should become.

The records for Saint Mary's Grammar School which, unfortunately, are extant only from the 1930s on, document what became in practice an inter-parochial school long before that term became popular. African American Catholics from Queen of Angels Parish attended St. Mary's until Queen of Angels opened its own grammar school. Puerto Rican Catholics from St. Bridget's enrolled in St. Mary's after St. Bridget's School was closed to allow the school building to be renovated to take the place of the church, which had been destroyed in a fire. There were even students from St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church just down High Street.

Coinciding with the move, we are beginning to use AtoM (Access to Memory) for archival description and access. Only a few collections have been entered so far, but these can be found in a Google search (e.g. a search for Henry Barkhorn Papers will lead to our AtoM entry) and all of our collections will eventually be searchable on ArchiveGrid.

[The History of St. Benedict's Prep in 100 Documents](#)

As we continue to reorganize and catalog the archives of Newark Abbey, I have started a series, "The History of St. Benedict's Prep in 100 Documents," I scan in appropriate documents illustrative of the history of the school and send them as email attachments to the faculty and staff. It is a way letting them know about the tremendous amount of material in the archives documenting the history, and reminding them of the importance of making sure the archives receives copies of all publications, and that administrative files, and any other relevant material, should be transferred to the archives when they are no longer needed for immediate access.

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Priest Recounts Papal Visit of John Paul II 25 Years Ago

by Msgr. Richard F. Groncki

(Msgr. Richard F. Groncki, Rector Emeritus of the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, penned this article in the fall of 2020. In this retrospective, written to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Pope St. John Paul II's visit to New Jersey, Msgr. Groncki recalls events that many of us remember, but from the perspective of someone who was involved in planning the historic events of the papal visit. This article is reprinted with permission of Msgr. Groncki and the Archdiocese of Newark. Further news and reflections of this type can be found at rcan.org/news.)

October 4 brings back memories of a quarter century ago because it marks the 25th anniversary of the Papal Visit of Pope John Paul II to New Jersey and to Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart – a once-in-a-lifetime event and probably the most memorable experience in my 54 years of priestly service. Although I actually met the Holy Father in 1976 two years before he became pontiff, nothing could prepare me for the unforgettable meeting we would have in 1995. This is that story and more. The Papal Visit was originally scheduled for October 21-22, 1994. The Holy Father's sudden indisposition (he broke his right leg in a fall in April) forced a rescheduling. The extra year turned out to be a blessing for the planning process. I was part of the local planning committee for His Holiness' visit and was the local master of ceremonies and chaired the committee responsible for preparing the liturgy for the evening prayer service at the Cathedral and the Mass at Giants Stadium.

The very thought of the pope in Newark and the celebration of Mass with the Vicar of Peter was a thrill beyond description. At a press conference before the event I was asked about the significance of the Mass and was delighted to reply that it is what Catholics do every Sunday, but the pope's presence makes it extra special.

I can recall a meeting with the Vatican Team at which the papal master of ceremonies was asked if the pope is obedient to his directions to which he replied, "Yes, ...but so is the master of ceremonies to the pope."

On October 4, 1995, following a reception at the airport, the Papal Party arrived at Newark's cathedral. The Holy Father went directly to the Residence of the Archbishops of Newark — the cathedral rectory — where he met in private audience with President Bill Clinton. The church of Newark now boasts in being the only such place in the country where the pope and president met. A modest plaque in the hallway commemorates the occasion.

It was awesome to be in the sacristy as the president and first lady nodded and smiled as they passed by me and were escorted to their places in a front pew in the cathedral for the evening prayer service.

Following the meeting of Pope John Paul II and President Clinton, the pontiff was driven in the popemobile to the front of the cathedral. Given the Pope's indisposition, the vehicle drove over the plaza and pulled right up to the front doors. A liturgical entrance procession had been planned, but when the master of ceremonies invited him to vest, the pope waved the vestments off and indicated his preference for a less formal entrance. And so, he entered dressed in his house cassock. As soon as he became visible within the cathedral the assembly broke into thunderous applause and shouts of welcome which drowned out the organ music.

It was at that point that the thought of the Vicar of Peter in our cathedral became overwhelming. Pope John Paul II slowly walked up the aisle reaching out both arms to members of the congregation. It was not easy for many to maintain their composure, I among them. The faithful stretched out their arms in an attempt to shake the pontiff's hand and Pope John Paul II took a moment to speak with some of them. Finally, the Holy Father and his staff made their way to the head of the aisle. He greeted the Clintons and ascended the steps of the sanctuary. At this point the organ rumbled all the more loudly and the continuous roar of the crowd grew. *(continued on page 15)*

Priest Recounts Papal Visit of John Paul II 25 Years Ago

(continued from page 14)

For years it had been the custom in the Archdiocese to burn incense in a brazier during the singing of the first psalm of evening prayer, the classic Psalm 141 — “My prayers rise like incense....”. When the Holy Father passed by the brazier in the sanctuary he asked the papal master of ceremonies, Msgr. (now Archbishop) Pierro Marini, what that was and the pope, who was reported to like incense, nodded in approval. It was quite a sight to see the smoke rise from the brazier and slowly waft through the nave of the cathedral. Since that experience the smoking brazier has appeared at papal ceremonies in the Vatican, the most recent being the Urbi et Orbi papal blessing during the time of pandemic. This is Newark’s little contribution to the liturgy of the Universal Church!

When the Holy Father arrived at the cathedral, the master of ceremonies again sought to vest him in the liturgical vestments for evening prayer, but the pope declined, and put a simple stole over his cassock. The stage was set for evening prayer.

It was so inspiring to witness the president of the United States and Mrs. Clinton participating in the service so wholeheartedly, especially in the singing of Saint Francis’ Canticle of the Sun, the evening prayer hymn chosen for the occasion, the Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi. Its strains still ring in my ears after all these years. The evening prayer was a powerfully moving experience! Following the service, the Holy Father circled the edifice in the popemobile on his way to the helicopter pad in nearby Branch Brook Park. In passing he blessed the recently completed Archdiocesan Center. The pope was on his way to New York City where he would address the United Nations the following day.

“When it was my turn to speak with the pontiff, I had a surprise for him.”

All this was preliminary to a Mass in Giants Stadium in East Rutherford the following day, October 5, 1995. The stadium was filled with 90,000 rain-drenched people. A torrential downpour continued all through the day into the evening. People were required to arrive hours in advance of the late afternoon Mass. By the time the Papal Mass began everyone was soaked through and through. No one seemed to mind (very much). A choir of several hundred choristers was in a sheltered position behind the island-like sanctuary. A pre-Mass musical program occupied some of the waiting time.

The local committee was alerted to the pope’s immanent arrival as his motorcade entered the Lincoln Tunnel. Because of the inclement weather the altar was hurriedly dressed at the very last minute. Luckily, anticipating a breezy day, weighted palls were on hand to cover the patens and chalices.

A major issue was planning how to minister Communion to such a large assembly in a reasonable amount of time. Fr. (now Bishop) Michael Saporito was in charge of that detail and figured it all out spectacularly well. A question regarding the use of flagons for the precious blood to accommodate the extraordinary number of concelebrants became an issue with the Vatican team. Flagons were unheard of in Rome! Having raised the subject several times, the papal master of ceremonies responded in slightly accented English and some exasperation, “No, when Pope goes to Rome you put the flagon!” I understood. End of discussion!

The placement of the presidential chair had to be addressed. It was located outside the altar canopy in the heavy rain. Not good! It was too large and heavy with its enclosed iron protective shield to put near the altar. The use of one of the cardinal’s chairs was more suitable but was too low for the pope to sit comfortably given his recent indisposition. It was decided to raise it to ‘papal height’ by nailing 2x4s beneath. It looked awful, but it worked, and given the circumstances I doubt if anyone noticed.

Cardinal Keeler’s rain-soaked mitre collapsed when he tried to put it on after Communion. He looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. We both smiled. (continued on page 16)

Priest Recounts Papal Visit of John Paul II 25 Years Ago

(continued from page 15)

The New York Giants' locker room, emptied of the lockers, was set up as a sacristy for the cardinals, bishops and papal party. An adjoining office became Pope John Paul II's private sacristy. Its furnishings and decorations, including refreshments, were specified by guidelines from Rome.

The pope retired there after the Mass. He took his time. We all waited anxiously. When he finally emerged, I was at the far end of the room. He hesitated in the doorway and then began to move slowly across the room. It took me a while to realize that the pope was moving in my direction. (The magenta choir cassock must have caught his eye.) I froze and was numb (and teary eyed) to think that the pope is coming to me.

He thanked me and then kept repeating to my embarrassment, "You are a good master of ceremonies. Yes; very, very good!" It was humbling, but I thanked him and thought he must say that to everyone.

A friend asked, "Do you realize what a compliment that was from the Holy Father himself?" Now I do!

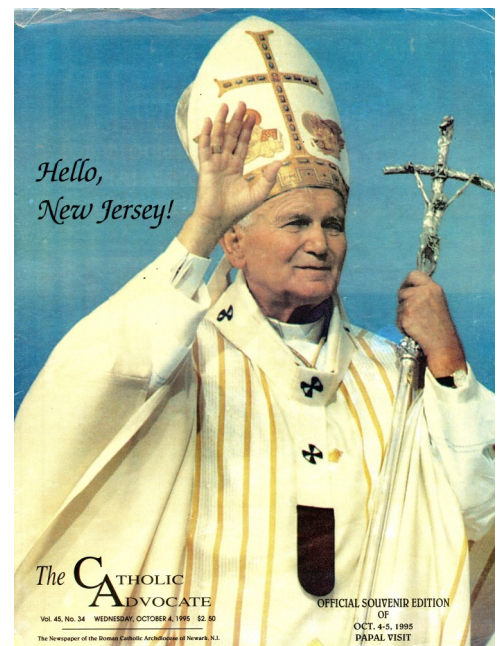
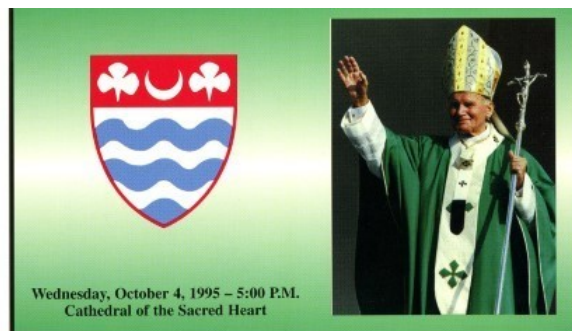
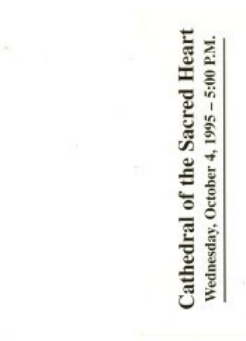
The next day was Saturday and there was Papal Mass in Brooklyn. On Sunday the papal party was leaving from Newark Airport for a final Mass in Orioles Park at Camden Yards, Baltimore. Invitees assembled at the airport for an informal farewell. The pope was very gracious and took his time going from one person to another engaging each in conversation.

When it was my turn to speak with the pontiff, I had a surprise for him. You see, I had met the pope in 1976 at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia when he was the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow. I had a couple of pictures, which I had kept in my breviary ever since, taken with him. Bishop Joseph A. Costello, my pastor at the time, told me to "treasure those pictures because some day he will be Pope." I thought to myself maybe I'll be able to show them to the Holy Father. When he came to me, I pulled them out and the Holy Father looked and looked and finally said, "Philadelphia, 1976!" I was amazed and now every time I pull them out, I say, "Saint John Paul II, pray for the church in Newark!"

Travel Back in Time to the 1995 Papal Visit to New Jersey

Would you like to explore primary documents and artifacts that commemorate Pope St. John Paul II's papal visit to New Jersey? NJCHC Executive Director Alan Delozier published a [post on the blog of Seton Hall University's Special Collections and Gallery](#) to commemorate this once-in-a-lifetime series of events. The post includes images of souvenirs from the visit, as well as links to finding guides for use by those who would

Below and right: Souvenirs from the Papal Visit of Saint John Paul II to the Archdiocese of Newark in 1995.



Springsteen and Me: Two Stories From St. Rose of Lima

by Daphne Lombardi

My family and I moved from South River to Freehold, New Jersey, when I was four years old. They immediately enrolled me in St. Rose of Lima, where I would spend the next ten years receiving an education that combined academic excellence with the traditions and values of Catholic faith. As a second grader, I was nervously preparing for my First Confession. My parents pointed to the chair in the St. Rose of Lima Church where I would sit and confess to the priest. Noticing I was hesitant and somewhat fearful of taking this seat, my teacher quickly approached and whispered quietly in my ear. She told me that a famous musician once sat in that same seat and gave his First Confession. His name was Bruce Springsteen, and he used to live in the house just behind the school parking



The author in 2007, when she was in first grade, at St. Rose of Lima School, Freehold Borough

lot. At this age I had no idea who Bruce Springsteen was, but because I was told he was famous I chose to sit next to the priest and begin to recite my confession. The Catholic New Jersey experience weaves itself into our lives in many different ways. We see it in our Catholic schools and universities, such as St. Rose of Lima School and Seton Hall University. We experience it as we attend mass every Sunday at our beautiful local churches. We read about it in books and view it in its most beautiful form in artwork displayed in a multitude of settings. Locally, here in Freehold, the music of one of our own continues to influence the lives of New Jerseyans as well as others all over the world. Stemming from his early years at our local Catholic school, Bruce Springsteen's music is deeply rooted in his Catholic upbringing and faith. Many of his songs concentrate on principles entrenched in the Catholic religion. Salvation, redemption, prayer, hope, faith, and sense of community are themes seen throughout his musical career. Therefore, I propose that this New Jersey musical legend be recognized for his contributions to the Catholic New Jersey experience, as his songs continue to this day to inspire people in this tradition. I, too, am a product of this New Jersey Catholic experience dating back to my days at St. Rose of Lima School. Although I may not be as famous as Bruce Springsteen, we share many similarities in how the Church and school has influenced our path, our relationship with God, and our desire to inspire and help others.

Bruce Springsteen grew up in Freehold, New Jersey, just three miles from where my family and I have lived for the last 16 years. As he writes in his recent autobiography "We live, literally, in the bosom of the Catholic Church, with the priest's rectory, the nuns' convent, the

St. Rose of Lima Church and grammar school all just a football's toss away across a field of wild grass" (Springsteen 5). He goes on to write "Though he towers above us, here God is surrounded by man—crazy men, to be exact" (Springsteen 5). Here, Springsteen describes how he and his extended family of aunts, uncles, and grandparents occupied the many houses in the Freehold neighborhood that surrounded our church and the important role this Catholic community played in his childhood. He completes an early chapter in his autobiography by writing, as if it were lyrics in one of his songs: "Here we live in the shadow of the steeple, where the holy rubber meets the road, all crookedly blessed in God's mercy, in the heart-stopping, pants-dropping, race-riot-creating, oddball-hating, soul-shaking, love-and-fear-making, heartbreaking town of Freehold, New Jersey. Let the service begin" (Springsteen 7). As I read how Springsteen describes his youth and hometown, it is evident how the nearby Catholic church and community has influenced him. Living with St. Rose of Lima in the background, Springsteen references God's mercy and the church's steeple, clearly demonstrating how Catholic traditions and beliefs have influenced his writing style. In writing, "Let the service begin," it almost sounds as if he is preparing to present a homily at a Sunday Mass to us as readers, as he embarks on telling his autobiography. In reading this brief excerpt from the book, I asked my parents, both avid Springsteen fans, if this is truly how he acts. They responded to me with a smile, remembering a four-hour Springsteen concert they enjoyed years ago. They informed me that the show was a combination of great music from superb musicians combined with great storytelling from a man who at times acted as a preacher. It seems clear that his early life around the Church has played an integral role in who he is as an artist. *(continued on page 18)*

Springsteen and Me: Two Stories From St. Rose of Lima

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In order to appreciate the effect that St. Rose of Lima Church had on Springsteen and his music, we must first trace the history of the church and its patron saint. Saint Rose of Lima was born in Lima, Peru, in 1586. She grew up in a family that neglected her passion for the convent and expected her to marry. As Kendall W. Brown explains,

From an early age, Rose showed strong spiritual yearnings and profound mystical abilities. She preferred prayer, meditation, and solitude to social interaction. Her mother had difficulty accepting Rose's childhood vow of virginity, for it frustrated her hopes to improve the family's prospects through her marriage to a wealthy husband....Rose was determined, however, to reserve herself for a mystical marriage with Jesus Christ.

Rose preferred the secluded life full of prayer and dedication to Christ; therefore, she lived in her own home for the majority of her life. Rose made space for prayer in a section of her home; additionally, she transformed another room into an infirmary. Rose would care for the ill and house homeless children in this room. Her compassion and faith were exercised every day in the setting she created to honor God. As Brown explains, "From a modern, secular perspective...the life of Saint Rose of Lima raises questions of psychological abnormality. Rose's own culture, however, gave far greater credence to ascetic mysticism than does ours." During her time, her way of life was not normal; living to pursue her faith was more or less not an easy task. On August 24, 1617, Rose died and would later, in 1671, be canonized by Pope Clement X. Rose's passing

touched off a wave of popular mourning in Peru. A tumult erupted at her funeral as worshipers struggling to obtain relics seized pieces of her clothing and her corpse. Officials stopped the rites and buried her secretly. Within a year after her death, Church authorities began official inquiries to determine if she qualified for canonization. (Brown)

Today, she is the patron saint of Peru, Latin America, and the Philippines, known for the chastity and piety she embraced throughout her lifetime.

In the early 19th century, Reverend John Scollard purchased land in Freehold, New Jersey, that would soon grow into a beautiful parish community, St. Rose of Lima. Four years later, a school was built next to the Church in order to provide religious education to children in the area. It was not long until the leaders of the parish realized the impact of St. Rose of Lima Church within the nearby community as well as the increasing population of parishioners. After several renovations, the church developed more worship space and was able to properly welcome everyone into the arms of God. St. Rose of Lima Parish currently provides services to a very diverse surrounding community. Located in the borough, the church has welcomed families of several different cultures and evolved into a beautiful place of worship in the heart of the town and as a model for the New Jersey Catholic experience.

"In order to appreciate the effect that St. Rose of Lima Church had on Springsteen and his music, we must first trace the history of the church and its patron saint."

In Springsteen's recent autobiography he describes how he grew up in this borough in a poor household. He was surrounded by a loving mother and grandparents, but was forced to deal with the demons of an alcoholic father. Regardless, the "Church Next Door" played a significant part in his daily life. Springsteen and his younger sister, Virginia, rode their bikes regularly around St. Rose of Lima Church, past the rectory and convent, and back to their home. At times, the nuns would shout from the windows of the convent to chase them away. He describes his young life as "drifting to school, to home, to mass, to school again, our lives inextricably linked with the life of the Church" (Springsteen 14). He remembers the smell of incense, the Friday Stations of the Cross, the funerals and weddings that he could hear and see from his home. His early years were dominated by Catholic traditions. He even goes on to recall, "I think about the hours I spent devising a list of acceptable sins I could spout on command" (Springsteen 14), something I can appreciate having made my First Penance in the very same church. Springsteen speaks of his days as an altar server, a role I also filled from second grade until I graduated from high school. He recalls tales of his experiences with the nuns in his school: "the nuns at St. Rose could play pretty rough" (Springsteen 16) and his feelings of emotional strain that this Catholic world had placed on him. He does reflect on an experience with his fifth-grade teacher, Sister Charles Marie, after a priest embarrassed him for making a mistake as an altar server. She handed him a small holy medal to lift his spirits, an act of kindness he states he will never forget—a small act so true to our Catholic faith, forever reminding us all to be kind to others at all times. He writes: "This was the world where I found the beginnings of my song. In Catholicism, there exists poetry, danger, and darkness that reflected my inner self. I found a land of great and harsh beauty, of fantastic stories, of unimaginable punishment and infinite reward" (Springsteen 17). Springsteen writes that at times he struggled to fit into this life but learned to work through his conflicts to find his faith. He points out that he has a "personal relationship with Jesus. He remains one of my fathers, I believe deeply in his love, his ability to save" (Springsteen 17). (continued on page 19)

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While living next to St. Rose of Lima Church, he fondly recalls the church bells ringing, representing a wedding, a funeral, or a birth. He and his sister would clean up either the thrown rice from the weddings or the fallen flowers from the funerals. At a young age, through the eyes of the Church, he equated rice and flowers with life and death, happiness and sadness, heaven and hell. These countless experiences in Freehold, New Jersey, helped build a foundation that shaped how Bruce Springsteen approached his music and the stories he wanted to tell.

"I don't often participate in my religion but I know somewhere...deep inside...I'm still on the team" (Springsteen 16), Springsteen reports as he now looks back on his life. He often writes on how, as he grew up and began his career, he distanced himself from the Catholic Church. In our local town, stories circulate on how he was not a favorite amongst the clergy at St. Rose of Lima and how he grew to defy the authority of the Church as he found his calling in music and the quest to become a rock and roll star. However distant he may have become from the Church, his Catholic roots were ever present from the release of his first album, *Greetings from Asbury Park, NJ*, to his most recent release nearly 50 years later. Early in his career, theologians wrote in review of this first album, that "evidence can be found for the recurring role that his Catholic upbringing would play in his lyrics. There are mentions of Jesus and Mary, nuns and priests, angels and devils, sinners and saints, and even the Vatican" (Chapman and Reinhard 2). Although Springsteen's relationship with the Church is described as complex over the course of his career, his faith seems to have grown stronger over the years with continued overtures of Catholicism appearing in his music to this day (Chapman and Reinhard 2).

"The imagination is religious and religion is imaginative" (Greeley 3) writes Fr. Andrew Greeley in his 1988 essay entitled "Andrew Greeley on the Catholic Imagination of Bruce Springsteen." Greeley insists that Springsteen's lyrics and artistry are tightly linked to religious imagery and that he is indeed "profoundly Catholic" because his imagination is heavily influenced by Catholic symbolism he adopted from his exposure to the Sacraments (Greeley 3). Greeley proposes that Springsteen's current album at the time, *Tunnel of Love*, was indeed an important Catholic event in the United States, comparing it to the visit of Pope John Paul II (Greeley 3). Greeley goes on to explain that while the Pope addressed the masses with religious doctrine, Springsteen wrote songs dealing with religious realities such as sin, temptation, and hope in a manner that average Americans could relate to. He makes the case that Springsteen's use of religious imagery allows his music to touch more Americans than the Pope himself (Greeley 3). In Springsteen's *Tunnel of Love* album, Greeley contends that Springsteen combines themes of tragedy with hope. The songs on the album reference light and water, symbols we often associate with Easter and baptism. Greeley feels this album expresses religion more so than any of Springsteen's prior works. God, Heaven, and prayer are themes running through these songs, while religion is used to deal with ordinary human conflicts such as love, sin, and rebirth (Greeley 3). In one of Springsteen's songs, "Two Faces," Springsteen writes that he is two men, one good and one evil: "one sunny, one dark; one that says 'hello' and one that says 'goodbye'" (Greeley 3). The song continues with Springsteen writing "at night he gets down on his knees and prays that love will make that other man go away" (Greeley 3). Greeley points out that it is apparent that Springsteen is referring to the Christian doctrine of original sin with his song, a theme that has existed in the Church for centuries. Finally, Greeley contends Springsteen's "Valentine's Day" is the most religious song on the album as it references the patron saint of romantic love, St. Valentine. Vivid Catholic images dominate this song as the characters experience "God's light came shinin' on through" and "the water and wind rushing through their arms." Finally, in the song, the singer realizes he is dreaming and that the wind, water, and light are actually his wife. The song concludes with the man then asking her to be his Valentine. It is a song about love, but Greeley insists it is based in "Catholicism, pure and simple" (Greeley 3). Greeley concludes that Springsteen's music proves powerful and rich, as it combines spiritual imagery with ideals of hope, love, and rebirth from tragedy. He feels Springsteen, born and raised in Freehold, New Jersey, should be viewed as a treasure to Catholics as he provides a reminder of how special our Sacraments are and encourages us to embrace the imagination that religion permits us to have (Greeley 3). (continued on page 20)



Bruce Springsteen playing baseball in Freehold Borough in 1965. The building in the distance is St. Rose of Lima School.

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Springsteen's reputation as a spiritualist continues to this day. Thirty years after Greeley's essay on Springsteen, author Brian Conniff revisits this topic in his article "The Enduring Catholic Imagination of Bruce Springsteen." He revisits Greeley's theories, pointing out how Springsteen has continued to present his songs against the backdrop of his New Jersey Catholic experience and upbringing. He insists that Greeley's essay serves as the key reference point for the link between Springsteen's music and religious themes (Conniff 4). Conniff feels over the 30 years since Greeley's essay, Springsteen has used his Catholic imagination to convey themes of hope and renewal in the effort to overcome tragedy. Conniff points to other albums that incorporate traces of Catholicism throughout the lyrics. Springsteen's song "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City" from his first album makes multiple religious references from "I was the pimp's main prophet" to "the devil appeared like Jesus through the steam in the street" (Conniff 4). Springsteen's song "Lost in the Flood" presents characters from a drag racer named Jimmy the Saint, to the "Bronx Apostle," and a "storefront incarnation of Maria" (Conniff 4). His characters, clearly inspired by his Catholic background, flow seamlessly through each other's lives, searching for meaning and understanding in their lives. Conniff stresses how in these songs, Springsteen's Catholic imagination helps us recognize the connections between "the lost and the redeemed and the sinners and the saints" (Conniff 4). From Springsteen's iconic album *Born to Run* is the famous song "Thunder Road." Conniff describes how a young man, who only has a car, approaches the house of his love, named Mary. He hopes to convince her to join him in his car to escape the constraints of his small town. The young man rejoices as "Mary dances across the front porch to the sound of Roy Orbison singing to the lonely" (Conniff 4). At this point, redemption and hope become possible for the man, and his dream seems attainable. Here, Conniff points out that "the path to salvation might turn out to be nothing more exotic than the New Jersey Turnpike" (Conniff 4); however, this is enough to give hope. Interestingly, the love interest in the song is named Mary, most likely a reference to the Blessed Mother (Conniff 4).

Conniff outlines many other famous Springsteen songs that promote his theme of hope and redemption. Epic songs such as "Rosalita," "Jungleland," and "No Surrender" all describe stories involving struggles within society. Springsteen combines his religious imagery with the economic or social plight of many Americans in such a way as to promote hope so that "down the road there might be a 'promised land'" (Conniff 4). Of particular significance was Springsteen's work after the 9/11 tragedy. Springsteen's songs "My City of Ruins" and "The Rising" focus on revival after this national disaster and became rallying cries for so many as our nation healed after 9/11 (Conniff 4). Conniff brings attention to Springsteen's firefighter in "The Rising" climbing the steps in a burning World Trade Center tower wearing a cross (Conniff 4). The song references Mother Mary and visions of children dancing, which Conniff links to "modern reliving of the crucifixion and the resurrection" (Conniff 4). In these songs, Springsteen continues to interweave Catholic symbols and themes to tell his stories with a goal of inspiring and giving us hope of a better day.

Finally, Conniff details the significance of Springsteen's recent tour on Broadway, entitled *Springsteen on Broadway*. Conniff is convinced that this show represents Springsteen's ultimate maturation into an understanding artist with the goal of exploring struggles while expressing hope. Springsteen can only fulfill his goal by using the tools he has gained from his Catholic background. In many ways, Conniff insists, the show is as much a confessional as it is a musical (Conniff 4). Conniff sums up by saying that Springsteen "has emerged from the shadow of St. Rose of Lima as a new kind of minister, of remembrance, repentance, recovery, resolve, and redemption, in a church that serves the people even more profoundly than Father Greeley would have imagined" (Conniff 4).

Even at 70 years of age and after five decades as an artist, Springsteen continues to use spiritual language and imagery in his songs. Most recently in 2020, he released his latest album *Letter to You*, a collaboration with his E-Street Band for his fans in light of the pandemic. Again, Springsteen writes of hope and faith as we endure a catastrophic worldwide crisis. A beautiful song entitled "The Power of Prayer" uses biblical language to recall the memory of a prior romance. When interviewed about this album, Springsteen states that *Letter to You*

is partially a reflection and meditation on time passing and loss of friends. The subject matter led to a natural undercurrent of spirituality derived from his Catholic upbringing....Those little three-minute records and the 180 second character studies that came through pop music were like these little meditations and little prayers for me....And my faith came in and filled those songs, and gave them a spiritual dimension. (qtd. in Lowe)

I must confess, I really did not have an appreciation for the music of Bruce Springsteen when I started this project. As I sit in the study of my home in Freehold, behind me on the wall is a clock we gifted to my parents several years ago. It is a replica of Springsteen's *Born to Run* album with the album cover beneath it. My parents and I obviously share different musical tastes, so I asked my parents to recommend a song that might help me appreciate Springsteen, his message, and how it might be linked to our shared Catholic background at St. Rose of Lima. They recommended the song "Land of Hope and Dreams," so I looked it up and studied the lyrics. The song speaks of optimism and hope as he recites the line "Meet me in a land of hope and dreams." Springsteen sings about sunshine and a better

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tomorrow, darkness passing and of a train that “carries saints and sinners...losers and winners...and lost souls...into a land of freedom where our faith will be rewarded.” He implores, “People, get ready...you don’t need a ticket...just get on board...thank the Lord.” In analyzing this song, I could not help but feel the religious imagery in the words. I listened to the song with my parents and began to feel uplifted by the musical arrangements and its message of hope to the many who endure hardship in their lives. As a Catholic, I have been taught to sympathize with others in their suffering and take on the challenge of serving my community with a goal of providing hope for better days, just as Bruce Springsteen sings in this song and so many of his other works. I have added this song to my running playlist as it is inspirational and reminds me to always be the best version of myself. I hope, through my Catholic faith, to similarly inspire others and provide hope.

In Springsteen’s autobiography, he returns to his origin at St. Rose of Lima and reflects on his past. He states.

Once again in the shadow of the steeple, as I stood feeling the old soul of my tree, of my town, weighing on me, the words and a benediction came back to me. I chanted singsong, unthinkingly, endlessly in the green blazer, ivory shirt, and green tie all of St. Rose’s unwilling disciples. Tonight they came to me and flowed differently. Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver from evil...all of us, forever and ever Amen. (505)

Here Springsteen has returned, some seventy years into his life, to the origins of his faith, now with a mature appreciation for the impact St. Rose of Lima Church has had on his life and his career. I feel I am lucky because I also share this appreciation with Mr. Springsteen and am quite grateful. Today I drove by my old school and church. It has not changed much since my elementary and middle school days. In recent years, my family and I joined parish that is closer to our home in Freehold, but occasionally we return to St. Rose of Lima for Mass. At my current Church, in addition to being an altar server, I have played an active role in my youth group and parish, helping others and serving my community. I realize that my time in Freehold Borough at St. Rose of Lima laid the foundation for who I am and what I aspire to be. It is a tradition in my family that whenever we pass a church or cemetery we make the sign of the cross and say a brief prayer. Today I pulled over for a minute to reflect on my time at St. Rose of Lima. I remember my friends, the Sacraments I received, and the time with family we shared in the Church and at school functions. I, too, recited the Our Father prayer, similar to Bruce, and felt a sense of peace. Springsteen concludes in his book that in telling his story his goal was to “know the whole story...understand as much of it as he could...in order to free (himself) of its most damaging influences...and honor its beauty” (505). In this account of his life, Springsteen states he has presented us with a “long and noisy prayer, my magic trick” (505). He hopes that his music, writings, and stories might strengthen and “help make sense” of our own stories and implores us to tell our own stories (505). Much of my story is yet to be written. I look forward to becoming a nurse and helping people in the true Catholic tradition. I look forward to having a family one day and sharing my stories about my Catholic upbringing in New Jersey. I would never have imagined that I could be linked to Bruce Springsteen, but I am. Our stories both began with the New Jersey Catholic experience at St. Rose of Lima. We both recognize challenges in our lives but lean on our faith, our families, and a hope we hold dearly and closely to our hearts. Although I may not be able to inspire others with music, I am confident I can contribute to the lives of others with love, respect, optimism, and hope. I accept Bruce Springsteen’s challenge to tell my story and look forward to writing it for years to come.

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Keeping the Keys to the Kingdom: Sacristans at Seton Hall

by Isabel Finan

The Honeymooners, a sitcom filmed in black and white, that first aired in 1955, offered some useful advice in the art of sacristan-ing. In an episode titled “The Babysitter,” Ralph Kramden, the main character, informs his wife, Alice: “I am the captain of this ship, do you understand that? You are nothing but a lowly, third-class seaman. That is what you are. Your duties are to get the mess, swab the deck, and see that the captain feels good. That is all you have to do.” As a Seton Hall sacristan, I have heard this quote my fair share of times from Fr. Nick Figurelli, Director of Campus Ministry and overseer of sacristans. He has a point in saying this. It is the duty of a sacristan to ensure that things run smoothly and are taken care of. Although Fr. Figurelli may try to have us believe he is the captain of the ship, in reality the captain of the ship is truly the community of Seton Hall; it is the sacristan’s duty to see that the members of this community feel good by being true servants and attending to the needs of the faithful and faith-seekers.

A sacristan, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, is “an officer who is charged with the care of the sacristy, the church, and their contents,” and is a derivative of two different jobs in early Catholicism “*ostiarii* [and]...*mansionarii*” or doorkeepers and treasurers (Goggin and Kelly). A sacristy is “a room in the church or attached thereto, where the vestments, church furnishings and the like, sacred vessels, and other treasures are kept, and where the clergy meet and vest for the various ecclesiastical functions” (Meehan). On Seton Hall’s South Orange campus, in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, the sacristy is located behind the altar and is where sacristans are able to find the supplies necessary for every Mass that takes place on campus. At Seton Hall, there are several chapels that must be accounted for by the sacristans. These chapels include the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, or the main chapel; St. Joseph’s Chapel located in Boland Hall; Oratory Chapel in Presidents Hall; as well as Xavier Chapel in Xavier Hall. Within these chapels, all liturgical items and books must be accounted for and prepared before Masses.

For the Liturgy of the Eucharist, a sacristan must prepare for the Mass. Kept in the sacristy and essential for the celebration of Mass are a variety of objects and books. First, the sacristans at Seton Hall are granted a large set of keys. It is the responsibility of the sacristans to lock and unlock the chapel, the sacristy, and other closets and such. Once inside the chapel, the sacristan must unlock the sacristy as well as the door for the priest to enter from the priests’ garden, a walkway from the seminary to the main chapel. First, the sacristan prepares the lighting and sound equipment for the Mass and performs other housekeeping duties. Then, the chasuble must be laid out for the presbyter on the counter in the sacristy along with the stole, and cincture in the shape of an “M,” for Mary. The priest’s alb is hung and the books are sorted using an Ordo, for the correct readings and prayers to be said depending on the day. Next, the items for the Eucharist are prepared. These include a chalice, a paten with hosts, water and wine cruets, an ablution cup in order for the priest to purify his hands, a finger towel, a corporal and a purificator. Lastly, the sacristan lights the candles at the altar, appoints lectors or acts as a lector, and appoints Eucharistic ministers.

Along with this, the sacristan gets the opportunity to work closely with the priests who serve at Seton Hall. This may be one of the best aspects of the position. According to an article in *The Setonian*, Mary Molnar, a former university sacristan, agrees that the relationships made with the priests on campus really enhance the life of the sacristan: “‘A lot of these priests I would have never met had I not had this job,’ Molnar said. ‘[Fr. Francis and Fr. Brian] really love the Seton Hall community. They put time and effort into getting to know the students and getting to know me’” (Seda). More than 40 priests that are part of the priest community on campus. Working closely with these men of faith allows the sacristans to grow in their own faith and seek out opportunities to grow closer with Christ.

Aside from daily Masses and Sunday Masses, the university sacristans help to serve at the countless baptisms and weddings that take place in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. Known for its rich history and beautiful stained glass windows and exterior, the University Chapel is a highly sought-after spot for alumni to tie the knot. This requires the sacristan to ensure that the guests visiting the chapel understand the rules regarding safety and management of the chapel, as well as coordinating with visiting priests as well as photographers. Baptisms also occur frequently in the chapel and require the preparation of the Holy Chrism, baptismal font, baptismal candle, and baptismal garments. Aiding at these sacraments is another joy of service for sacristans on campus. To help the continuation of the Church in this way, though small, brings fruit to the work done by the sacristan.

Within the past few years at Seton Hall, sacristan positions have been left to undergraduate students enrolled in many of the different areas of study. However, this was not always the case. Upon interviewing Fr. Figurelli on his knowledge of this position over the years, I learned that up until recent decades the position was held by men in seminary on campus. Immaculate Conception Seminary required one or two seminarians to serve as sacristan for the entirety of the campus. Although the frequency of Masses has varied from then to today, this would have been a time-consuming duty in addition to schoolwork and other requirements of seminary life. In fact, seminary life in the days of seminarian sacristans was not a cake walk. (*continued on page 23*)

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According to records, seminary life in the 19th century meant that “during the school year, rising was at 5 a.m., with prayer and meditation in the chapel from 5:30 a.m., preparing for Mass at 6 a.m.” (Wister). The day did not end there, however: “the morning was spent in class or teaching and proctoring the collegians. Noon was the time for prayer and a particular examination of conscience, followed by lunch and time for study and spiritual reading. Classes and other activities resumed at 2 p.m., continuing until 6:45. Then it was time to return to the chapel for prayer and the rosary, followed by the evening meal. The day ended with night prayer and a general examination of conscience” (Wister). For those select few who served as sacristan, in addition to a schedule such as this, they were required to carry out their duty as servants and keep up with the schedule allotted.

Sacristan positions began to be held by undergraduate students sometime after the 1950s or so. This allowed for lay students to be able to take part in liturgies in a special way, aside from being a Eucharistic minister or lector. Over the years these students have come from many different backgrounds, have been involved in several different areas of study, and also have participate in lots of different activities and clubs on campus. There are six university sacristans at a given time, primarily. Among the six, one is usually considered to be the head sacristan. This individual is in charge of overseeing and training the other sacristans and of keeping inventory of all chapel items and orders, if needed. The head sacristan also carries a larger, more extensive set of keys that are referred to as “keys to the kingdom,” colloquially. One chapel to maintain and other duties are spread among the remaining five sacristans. These include bringing soiled linens to be cleaned, bringing collection money and documents to the campus ministry office, checking the bulletins, changing the message board, steaming clean albs, and more.

Fr. John Francis Morley graduated from Seton Hall Preparatory High School “in 1954 as Valedictorian of his class, Seton Hall University in 1956, and Immaculate Conception Seminary in June 1958” (O’Keefe). Fr. Morley also oversaw the “University [sacristans] from 1967-1992” (O’Keefe). Fr. Morley was a very prestigious member of the Priest Community at Seton Hall and unfortunately passed away in April of 2020. Fr. Morley is remembered for his service as Head of Sacristans during that time as well as being “recipient of the McQuaid Medal in 1991, the Humanitarian of the Year on April 14, 2002 of the Rose Thering Endowment at Seton Hall” (O’Keefe). The director of the sacristans, like Fr. Morley, and the current director Fr. Figurelli, provides guidance and leadership for the student workers. These men have aided and continue to aid the sacristans in not only their work but their spiritual lives as well. In the article written for *The Setonian*, the former sacristans touch upon this: “The people that I work with in Campus Ministry and everyone I’ve encountered [have] enriched my life in a way I didn’t think this job would initially” (Seda). The article also added that for the former sacristan Nicole] Floyd, “her job with Campus Ministry has become a home” (Seda). Fr. Figurelli also added that “I think it reinforces their faith” (Seda). This reinforcement of faith is very real. To be able to take part in the liturgies and feel responsible in some way for the Mass allows a person to have a different kind of relationship with God—one that is not just to listen, pray, and receive the holy Eucharist, but one that also enables the sacristan to be a steward of Christ’s love and service to his people.

“Sacristans serve students, faculty, and clergy, but in doing so, the sacristans serve their Lord and Maker.”

Serving with a spirit of love and giving allows God’s children to be drawn closer to him because of the attempt to embody Christ. We know this when God tells us that “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (New American Bible, 1 John 4: 16). There are many different ways a Catholic can serve. Many serve within their parish by teaching CCD or singing in the choir. Other times, people choose to do service via other channels such as going to a soup kitchen or taking part in Habitat for Humanity. The sacristans on campus give back and serve the priest community, the community of students here, chapel visitors, and Christ. Although the tasks may be mundane, it is of the sacristans’ doing that these little steps can become prayers when they are offered to God in sacrifice and thanksgiving. The job may simply include putting cups and books out on tables, or lighting candles and folding linens, but by doing so with a humble spirit and offering these small actions to God, they can be monumental actions. By giving up their time and by taking on these responsibilities as well as this lifestyle, the university sacristans have a special opportunity to grow closer to Christ. There is a wonderful prayer called “The Sacristan’s Prayer” that can be said by the sacristan while they are working. One line is especially thought provoking: “guide my hands and my steps that I may fulfill my duties with grace and devotion.” These words can allow one’s actions to become truly the actions of Christ, one of which is making one’s work a prayer. (continued on page 24)

Keeping the Keys to the Kingdom: Sacristans at Seton Hall

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Seton Hall is one of the best campuses on which to practice one's faith. For those who seek it, celebration of faith is available at one's fingertips and in every facet of the university. In an attempt to understand some of the feelings of the sacristans who are among the faithful in our university, interviews were held to gather feelings and attitudes toward the role they play on campus. Many students in their first year venture to Campus Ministry and meet other students wanting to keep their faith alive in their new home. For some of the current sacristans, this was the place that deepened their faith more than they had experienced before. For Dan O'Shea, Class of 2021, "[he] discovered a renewed passion and interest in my faith," through Campus Ministry and pursued the sacristan job because he "saw becoming a sacristan as, first, a step in better understanding the most foundational aspect of the Catholic Church in which I grew—the Mass—and, consequently, as a new way to grow in my own faith journey." Campus Ministry and getting involved in their faith life on campus is the main way many sacristans hear about the position; additionally, knowing former sacristans is a way that sacristans learn about this role. Mary-Cate McGlone, Class of 2023, comes from a long line of Seton Hall sacristans, in fact. She said,

I have a few family members that have held this position, especially my older brother who was a sacristan for three years. I was able to witness the personal and spiritual growth that resulted from the job. Personally, I saw growth in how he was able to communicate clearly and confidently with people of all ages, ranging from elderly clergy to young parents coming for a child's baptism. On a spiritual level, I saw his relationship with God and with the people around him change for the better.

It is a special experience to see how one's own life is touched by God, but being able to meet God in the same way as you have seen him work in someone close to you is also very special.

The Catholic Mission of Seton Hall University enables the Lord to have encounters with students willing to seek Him out. One significant aspect of the values and traditions a Catholic school has to offer is the call to service. At Seton Hall, this may mean community service through DOVE, or Habitat for Humanity, or being involved within a Greek organization. However, serving those within the community can be truly life changing, as seen in the lives of the university sacristans. Sacristans serve students, faculty, and clergy, but in doing so, the sacristans serve their Lord and Maker. In this service, sacristans can be developed as leaders in mind, heart, and spirit, just as the founders of the University intended. Although the job has changed through the years, the fruits it bears have not just remained but multiplied.

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(This is an excerpt from a paper that Ms. Finan wrote for the course The New Jersey Catholic Experience, sponsored by the Catholic Studies Program at Seton Hall University under the directorship of Dr. Ines Angeli Murzaku, and taught by Professor Alan Delozier, D.Litt., at Seton Hall University. For the complete paper, including additional interviews with current Seton Hall sacristans, please visit the [New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission blog](#).)

COVID-19 Chronicles: NJCHC Members on Catholic Life During the Pandemic

During the past year, daily life has changed dramatically for nearly everyone. In the following reflections, three of our members share how their experience of Catholic life in New Jersey has changed since February of 2020—and how it has remained the same. While we all look forward to our “new normal,” which we hope is just around the corner, it is interesting to consider how our experiences during the past year have influenced even the most subtle of our thoughts and actions.

Eileen L. Poiani

Special Assistant to the President/Professor of Mathematics, St. Peter's University

Since mid-March of 2020, my world and that of my colleagues and students has flattened. I live in a 2-D environment reduced from 3 by the novel coronavirus. My vocabulary has increased exponentially with Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, and more. Existing words like *platform*, *ransom*, *link*, and *handshake* (even though we cannot share them in person), have taken on new meanings.

When I emerge from the 4 walls of my house and keep 6 feet away from others, I am confronted by faces which have shrunk to 2-eyes peering from above a mask. Some eyes are barely visible behind foggy eyeglasses. Smiles and teeth are hidden behind the masks. Returning home, I am greeted by my makeshift cleansing station and make a dash to wash my hands thoroughly to the beat of two “Happy Birthdays.” Sometimes I wear disposable gloves in public places and make sure that my PPE are responsibly discarded. All these precautions are truly needed to contain the virus. These are the same precautions used to stem the 1918 influenza pandemic that took the lives of both my young grandmothers.

These precautions did flatten the curve for COVID-19 transmission. But now the curve's slope is climbing across the country and the globe. Predictions imply that we will be living in a 2-D canvas for months to come.

My Eucharistic Ministry at my home parish has paused with so few parishioners attending Mass in 3-D. My Sunday Mass on Facebook with the Jesuits serving at St. Aedan's: The Saint Peter's University Church is the highlight of the week. The meaningful homilies bring us into the realities of the day from the timeless messages of the Gospel.

Although my university role does not relate directly to archives, I am engaged with archival searching as Saint Peter's University prepares for its Sesquicentennial in 2022. In the hallowed space of the archives, the world is still 3-D.

And so, let us pray that the curve will flatten permanently and that our virtual world will inflate to its three-dimensional space.

Rev. Mr. Carlo J. Santa Teresa

Seminarian and Transitional Deacon, Diocese of Camden

Graduate Student, M.A. in Ecclesiastical History, Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology at Seton Hall University

As a newly ordained deacon, it is a rather surreal and exhilarating feeling to know that one of the major steps of my vocation occurred at key moments of COVID-19's effect on the Church in New Jersey. I was originally scheduled to be ordained on May 16, 2020, but due to the pandemic, it was postponed until June 13. In that time, living and working in a parish helped me to appreciate the moments, actions and circumstances that create the different narratives that make our history, whether it parish, diocesan or statewide, rich and vibrant. It also helped me to find time, between my online seminary studies, to pursue historical interests at the parish level as well as doing my own independent research on certain figures in New Jersey Catholic history which helped me to deepen my understanding and appreciation of our state's Catholic roots as I further pursue my studies.

Perhaps the pinnacle of the experience was my Ordination Mass, which was also the first major public event (albeit with proper restrictions in place) in the Diocese of Camden since the suspension of Public Masses in March. Knowing that this moment would be remembered as a major step in returning to some form of normalcy, and being a key actor in it, made a day that was already filled with immense joy in saying God's will even more special and unique.

**Rev. Santa Teresa wrote this piece while a seminarian; he has since been ordained to the priesthood.*

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COVID-19 Chronicles: NJCHC Members on Catholic Life During the Pandemic

(continued from page 25)

Clare H. Holmes
NJCHC Intern
Graduate Student, M.A. in Museum Professions, Seton Hall University

There is no doubt that the pandemic has had an effect on every individual in unique ways. I have been a master's student at Seton Hall for the past two years and have weathered the storm of the coronavirus making its way to our main campus, and so I have a bit of an inside scoop on how it has changed the environment on a day-to-day basis. Since the drastic end to the Spring '20 semester and the return to campus at the end of August '20, campus has never felt quieter or more deserted. In saying that, the students who braved the return to dorm living kept their spirits high by taking advantage of the expanded tents on the green and additional lawn chairs for some vitamin D while studying or frisbeeing or throwing the football, you know "normal" college things, just with masks on. However, it was still evident that loneliness and isolation were key issues for the students this year. One of the main places I found actively combating this was in the return to in-person Masses at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

For me, as a devout Catholic, one of the biggest was being unable to attend Sunday Mass and find solace in the sacraments. I was most grateful in returning to campus to see the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception upgraded with safety protocols with hand sanitizing stations, mandatory mask wearing, and roped off pews with indicated seating protocols (a strange thing to be comforted by, I will admit), but these steps allowed the chapel to remain open for students and faculty to pray and receive the sacraments both in person and through live streaming. This is where I found familiarity, comfort, and community in a strange, unpredictable environment. I am grateful for the active faith community on campus in these tumultuous times.

Guide to Online Resources on New Jersey Catholic History

The Seton Hall University Libraries provides its student body and faculty with specialized subject-based information sites known as Library Guides (LibGuides), which help the researchers find a number of different academic-oriented and other high-quality information leads in one location found on the Internet. While designed with the Seton Hall community in mind, these LibGuides are available to all visitors to the Seton Hall University Libraries website. The reference source focused on New Jersey Catholic History can be found via the following link: <https://library.shu.edu/nj-catholic-history>.

The screenshot displays the Seton Hall University Libraries website. The header includes the university's name and logo, along with navigation links for Hours, My Account, and Donate. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for Find, Services, Research Help, and About. The main content area is titled "New Jersey Catholic History" and includes a brief description of the site's purpose. A sidebar on the left lists various resources, and the main content area provides an introduction to the New Jersey Catholic History research guide, including a list of links to related resources.

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New Jersey Catholic History

This site is designed to provide those interested in learning about Catholic history pertaining to New Jersey a resource for connecting to relevant materials on this subject.

Home

- Writing & Citing
- What is a Primary Source?
- Archdiocese of Newark
- University Archives
- Books
- Catholic Reference Works

New Jersey Catholic History - An Introduction

- Welcome to this research guide dedicated to reference sources related to various institutions, events, individuals, and other milestones that constitute the New Jersey Catholic History experience. This resource is designed to help you discover introductory reference works and published information related to this subject in various forms. This site will be updated on a regular basis with continued usership encouraged and appreciated.
- [New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission](#)
The principal purpose of this Commission is to produce scholarly and popular histories of the Catholic Church and of Catholics in the State of New Jersey. This site provides information about different activities within Catholic New Jersey and helpful source links.
- [Catholic New Jersey History Links \(Diocesan Sites\)](#)
- [Catholic New Jersey Archival Materials & Rare Book Reference](#)
- [New Jersey - Catholic Encyclopedia \(1911\)](#)
- [Flynn, Joseph M. The Catholic Church in New Jersey \(1994\)](#)
- [New Jersey Catholicism Bibliography Project - Father Augustine J. Curley, O.S.B.](#)
- [Early History of the Catholic Church in South Jersey](#)

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission in the News



Above: New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission member Carl Ganz Jr. in a June 2018 visit with Heribert Neckermann, Bürgermeister of Sonderhofen (right) and Ludwig Mühleck, former Bürgermeister of Sonderhofen (left) standing before the house in Sonderhofen, Germany, where Dean Martin Gessner grew up. Dean Gessner was pastor of St. Patrick's in Elizabeth from 1873 through 1912. Gessner is also the most renowned individual to come from the town of Sonderhofen, a village of some 900 inhabitants some 12 miles south of Würzburg. Born in Sonderhofen in 1827, Gessner emigrated to the United States in 1850 where he became one of the most significant parish priests in New Jersey history. The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission was featured in the local newspaper when a journalist interviewed Ganz about his biography of Gessner entitled The Grand Old Man of the Port.

“Union with God, then, is the spiritual height God calls everyone to achieve....

The imitation of Christ in the lives of saints is always possible and compatible with every state of life. The saints did but one thing — the will of God. But they did it with all their might.”

— Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich (1901-1927)

New Members of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission is pleased to welcome its new members: Clare Holmes, Brianna LoSardo, and Tanya Taylor-Norwood! We would like to introduce our new members to you.



Clare Holmes

I am an international student from Glasgow, Scotland, currently pursuing my master's degree in the Museum Professions program at Seton Hall University. I received my undergraduate degree from The University of Glasgow in Historical Studies followed by an internship at The Hunterian Museum in Glasgow. This is where I really discovered my love for everything museums! Upon graduating, I served as a mission leader for University Christian Outreach (UCO) at Grand Valley State University in Michigan and invested in the faith formation of students during my time there. Upon returning to Scotland, I worked for several non-profit organizations including the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF), whose work serves many developing countries. It was from this position that I left to pursue my passion for museum work and am now completing my final

year of studies. Interestingly, my thesis topic is how Catholic-focused collections are being interpreted in the 21st-century American museum, and I have no doubt the commission will provide some very beneficial context for this. I am excited to be able to intern with the commission and learn more about how the Catholic faith has been lived out in New Jersey.

Brianna LoSardo

I have been the Archivist for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark since August of 2019. I have a lot to live up to, as my predecessor, Msgr. Francis Seymour, held the position for nearly 50 years! My responsibilities include arranging and describing the collections, acquiring and appraising material for the archives, assisting researchers, and providing guidance to Archdiocesan offices on how to handle their paper and electronic records. I became familiar with the Archdiocesan Archives in 2014 when I started working at Seton Hall University, where the Archdiocesan Archives are housed. In my work at Seton Hall, I assisted with genealogy research in Catholic sacramental records and also helped to process both Archdiocesan and University collections. I received my M.A. in Museum Professions from Seton Hall University in 2018.



Tanya Taylor-Norwood

By way of Mobile, Alabama, I found myself here in New Jersey with my sights set on being a fashion buyer. My business administration degree from Stillman College in hand, I started my retail journey. Those were *my* plans, but I found myself at AT&T, too, and loving the IT world. I moved from temp to permanent employee in no time with many promotions along the way, computer tech to system admin, to team lead of change, to project manager, to estimation manger, to change manager—this role was the absolute best! AT&T sold the IT Team to IBM, all 500 of us; this is when the process of trimming down began. Three months shy of 25 years, I found myself being laid off. Now what?

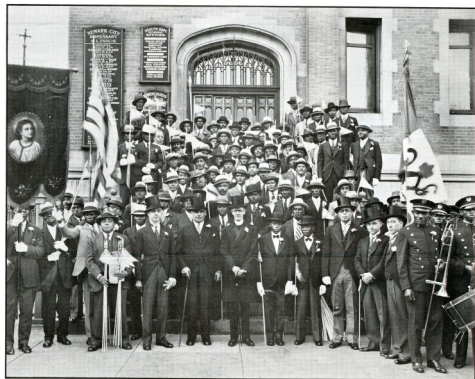
Having more time, I ended up going to daily Mass and was asked to become a Sacristan. Within two weeks of my saying yes and being trained, my 18-month stint of being unemployed was over, and I found myself on Wall Street. Two glorious years as a contractor, and I found myself out, yet again!

At every turn of transition, I turned to my parish to volunteer my time because I genuinely believe whatever you put out into the world you will get back. I was asked to become a Sacristan for funerals, but I said no! My mom told me to go back and say “yes,” and again in 2 weeks I landed, again! Tiffany wanted me, the contract ended in 6 months. On my last day, that Wall Street company wanted me back, and now I had moved into Compliance. A little over a year later, that role ended. *But* I had somewhere to go—even if I was not going to be paid. (continued on page 29)

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission Celebrates 45 Years

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission is proud to announce that we are in the midst of celebrating our 45th anniversary this year. We will have more details on special events, ceremonies, and tributes in the near future. For more information on our history and current events, please visit our homepage at <http://blogs.shu.edu/njchc/>.

Thank you in advance for your interest and support of our activities.



Participants in the first Holy Name parade (ca. 1930) held by the Queen of Angels parish in Newark (a Black national parish). The NJCHRC recently accessioned an oral history interview with one of the parish's founding members.

Saint Peter's University to Celebrate Sesquicentennial



Throughout the 2021-22 academic year, Saint Peter's University, the Jesuit University of New Jersey, will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding. Since its inception, Saint Peter's has been dedicated to providing an excellent Catholic education in the Jesuit tradition, welcoming and providing opportunity to generations of enthusiastic and dedicated students from of all walks of life. During its sesquicentennial year, Saint Peter's plans to undertake a wide variety of initiatives and to host events celebrating the University's Catholic history. These programs will include original research, historical exhibits, and the dissemination of information via a variety of venues and media. Details about the sesquicentennial will be released later this year. In the meantime, the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission is delighted to support the 150th anniversary celebration.

New Members *(continued from page 20)*

Tanya Taylor-Norwood

Wall Street called me again and made me an offer. I signed the paperwork but never received a start date. It was fine! Sometimes the noes are your best setup for something great! Faith.

In September of 2018, a role called Diocesan Archivist opened at the Diocese of Trenton. Not really a title I understood at the time, but the position had everything that I wanted—I thought I had everything it needed.

In January of 2019, the role was posted again, and the door opened. I bring not only my knowledge of project managing, managing documents, compliance, my Sacristan duties, my being a Carnival Committee team member, a Peter Claver Court #172 Lady, but also—and most importantly—my faith and wanting to learn more, a lot more about the changes that have taken place over the years in the history of Catholicism. What an awesome feeling, being able to work at the Diocese and join the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission. Apparently, others were feeling that way too, as I was given additional responsibilities and am now supporting the Office of Clergy, as well as serving as the Diocesan Archivist.

It is an honor and privilege to be able to bring and use my talents at the Diocese of Trenton, with the hopes of being able to offer something to the Commission.

Follow Us on Facebook!

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission has an active Facebook presence. Please follow us for updates on events, to participate in discussions, and to learn about New Jersey Catholic History. Find us at www.facebook.com/NJCHC.

Keep in Touch!

- ◆ Would you like to share a story or photo?
- ◆ Would you like to tell members and friends of the Commission about an upcoming or recent event of interest?
- ◆ Do you have friends, family, or colleagues who would like to be added to our mailing list?
- ◆ Has your contact information changed?

Please keep in touch with us!

Contact the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission by emailing Executive Director Alan Delozier at Alan.Delozier@shu.edu or Editor Maura Logue at Maura.Harrington@shu.edu.



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Rev. Augustine Curley, O.S.B. (Newark Abbey)
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Ms. Clare Holmes (Seton Hall University – Graduate Internship Student)
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