

HOLY ROSARY HISTORY

History 1916-1991

Introduction

“Whilst we grow with rightful pride, we must not forget to thank God, from whom all goodness flows. Grateful, indeed, we are to live in a country in which we have freedom and liberty and the right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience.”

This quote is taken from a book which was written in 1955, the “Souvenir Book of the Dedication of Holy Rosary School and the Convent.” But these words, or ones much like them, might easily have been written by an immigrant Catholic man or woman living in southwestern Pennsylvania near the turn of the century. This Catholic man or woman, new to America and its virtues, would be full of hope for the future, and grateful for the opportunities offered in this land far from home.

In 1916, in the small coal mining town of Republic, PA, such immigrant hopes and gratitude eventually gave birth to the Parish of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of its founding, the members of this parish remember their roots, celebrate growth, and continue to give thanks to God for their parish.

Beginnings: Southwestern Pennsylvania

The area to the west of the Allegheny Mountains in Pennsylvania has a history quite different from the eastern part of the state. The east is known for William Penn, the Constitutional Convention, and the Revolutionary War; the west for abundant resources, and the French and Indian War. Less than an hour from Republic, Fort Necessity Battlefield is now a national monument. British General Edward Braddock lies buried near the site. In 1763, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, the British colonies took all French land east of the Mississippi, including what is now southwestern Pennsylvania.

Along the banks of three powerful rivers (the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela), where Native Americans had hunted and fished for hundreds of years, settlers now built mills. In Pittsburgh, by century’s end, this waterpower produced glass and iron, and further south along the Monongahela, small towns grew up around paper mills, sawmills, and gristmills used for the refining of wheat. Tributaries of the Monongahela River wound through arable lands. By the late 1700’s, settlers arrived who would become the first citizens of a township which is now known as “Redstone.”

Republic: Hub City

The Township of Redstone, from which the town of Republic would later emerge, was formed in March, 1797. Redstone was named for a creek on its northeast boundary. This name

was inspired by the reddish stones which were the by-product of coke production in the area. Early settlers of Redstone Township were farmers, millers, carpenters, and tavern-keepers.

Using Republic: Hub City as a resource, the history of the town describes the beginnings of modern Republic.

Throughout the 1800's, the Industrial Revolution was taking shape around the Redstone area. Brownsville became noted for shipping, Connellsville was known for coal mining, and Pittsburgh became a center for steel mills.

In 1905, Republic Steel located an abundance of coal in the Redstone area. The initial cost of the coal investment ran roughly two to three million dollars. Approximately one hundred houses were built for the miners and their families. During full production, Republic Steel employed 600 men on its 1300 acre property.

In 1913 and 1914, bee-hive coke ovens were built in Republic, PA. Considerable work was done at the Republic Mine to increase coal production and to assure a sufficient supply of coal for the Youngstown Steel Works, as well as for the coke ovens in the area.

Republic is surrounded by outlying towns, or "patches," which sprang up around numerous other area mines. Each of these small communities took as its name the name of its mine such as Thompson #1, Tower Hill #2, Allison #2, and Ralph. The names of these communities can be found on the Fayette County map. Republic became known as the "Hub" because of its location in the center of a series of railway lines which ran out to the mines and to other communities. Small businesses and stores were established in the town to serve the needs of area families.

Most of the families who made their living in the mines had recently immigrated from central and southern Europe. Some had come to escape from poverty; some, like the Slovaks, also fled from political tensions in their homeland. Though the majority of the population was composed of Italians and Slovaks, there were also Polish, Czech, Yugoslavian, English, Welsh, Irish, Croatian, and Hungarian immigrants. This great mix of people of different tongues, traditions, and cultures shared a common bond – their Catholic Faith. The nearest Catholic Church was miles away in Uniontown. Without a local place of worship, this Catholic bond could not be strengthened.

Early in 1911, a group of people from the Republic area travelled to Uniontown to see Father James Vocca, the pastor of St. Therese, and explained their plight to him. He promised to help them.

By May 24 of that year, Father Vocca had established St. Callistus Church as a mission in Republic, PA. This original church building stood near the site of today's Holy Rosary School.

For five years, Sunday Mass was celebrated at St. Callistus Church by the priests from St. Therese Church. As the population of the area increased, however, it became obvious that the Republic area needed a resident pastor. An appeal was made to Bishop Hugh Boyle of the Pittsburgh Diocese, who in 1916, agreed to send a pastor to establish a parish. In July of that year, St. Callistus Mission Church became the parish of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. Reverend George Malinak, who had been ordained just a month before (June 29, 1916), became its founding pastor.

Many of the old timers still remember stories of Father Malinak: his intense activity, great love for singing, and strong determination to get things done. They tell stories of Father Malinak walking through town at 8:00 at night chasing the youngsters home because it was past their bedtime. Children who had walked an extra two blocks to avoid choir practice or some small chore Father had given them were surprised to find him waiting on their porches for them.

Father's parishioners were no less energetic and determined than he, and supported his efforts to stabilize the new parish. Within a year, a parish house was purchased to insure that Father Malinak could continue on as their resident pastor.

In the years between 1919 and 1926, Father Malinak performed 1,535 baptisms, 98 marriages, and 330 funeral Masses. By 1922, parish numbers had swelled to such a point that it became apparent that a larger church building would have to be erected. Just as this project got underway, there was a coal strike. Miners who earned only a dollar or two on workdays, which could last up to eighteen hours, demanded higher wages and better working conditions. The Republic Mine Company and the miners both remained firm in their positions, and the strike wore on resulting in many families being evicted from company owned homes. These families set up tents outside their houses for the duration of the strike, giving rise to a part of town known as "Tent City." Non-miners in the community lent the strikers what comfort and support they could.

In the middle of these tension-filled times, the building of the new church continued. Parishioners dug the foundation by hand, and helped to erect the walls. Every day, groups of men could be seen hand-mixing cement and laying brick.

Parishioner Joan Brosky remembers what her father, Ralph Benucci, told her of the building of the church:

"When the church was being built in the year of 1924, there was very little money to pay the workers who were building it, so in order to pay the men, Mr. Sam Capuzzi (Capuzzi Market) donated the bologna (minced ham), and Ralph Benucci (baker and owner, Republic Baking Company) donated the bread and rolls, as payment for their services. Also, my grandfather, Arlando Benucci, being a blacksmith at the time, repaired all the masonry tools, and built iron fences for the inside and outside to the church."

When the strike was settled, many of the men working on the church returned to the mines. Although construction lagged, the building was finished before the end of the year.

The old church building was converted into a parish school. By this time, the parish numbered an estimated 1100 members, and many children filled this small school. Father Malinak found it impossible to handle their education alone. He contacted the Vincentian Sisters of Charity in Pittsburgh, PA to staff the school. Late in 1924, a house near the school was obtained for the Sisters. The original group of Sisters sent to Republic were Sister Mary Caroline, Sister Mary Colomana, and Sister M. Hyacinth.

According to Millie Rogula, a long-time resident of Republic, the school at first accommodated only students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. In 1926, there were 36 students enrolled. The first eighth grade class, composed of eleven girls and five boys, graduated from Holy Rosary School on June 27, 1927.

Vincentian Sisters of Charity continued their ministry at Holy Rosary School for 67 years. Throughout these years the Sisters served as principals, teachers, sacristans, and a variety of other services within the parish.

Holy Rosary Parish holds a special place in the history of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity. St. Mary, Uniontown, PA, St. Matthias, Youngstown, OH, and Holy Rosary, Republic, PA, are the oldest established missions of the congregation.

On Sunday, October 6, 1984, a banquet was held observing the 60th anniversary of the Sisters' presence within the parish. Many of the Sisters who were once assigned at Holy Rosary attended. Parishioners and former students also celebrated this memorable event.

In the eight years from 1916 to 1924, Father Malinak and the parishioners transformed a mission parish with a small church into a thriving spiritual center for the region, with a new church, a rectory, a school, and a convent. They also began a parish cemetery. In January, 1928, Father George Malinak received word from the Bishop that he was to be transferred to St. Gabriel's Parish, on the North Side of Pittsburgh. He had worked hard in his first pastorate, and left Holy Rosary Parish firmly established in Republic.

Father Malinak died on July 9, 1946.

Priests and Parochial Vicars who have served at Holy Rosary Parish:

Pastors

Rev. J.A. Vocca	1911 – 1914
Rev. Charles Jonda (pro tem)	1914 – January 1916
Rev. George M. Malinak	January 1916 – January 1928
Rt. Rev. Msgr. Andrew J. Balok	March 3, 1928 – June 3, 1965
Rev. Francis R. Gresko	June 3, 1965 – September 4, 1968

Rev. William Gavron (Administrator)	June 20, 1967 – September 4, 1968
Rev. William Gavron (Pastor)	September 4, 1968 – June 11, 1971
Rev. Fabian Oris	June 11, 1971 – May 2, 1973
Rev. Henry Marcinek	May 24, 1973 – January 21, 1982
Rev. Stanislaus Walczak	February 2, 1982 – June 6, 1983
Rev. Michael J. Sciberras	June 7, 1983 - 1993
Rev. Gregory Flohr	1993 - 1996
Rev. Mark Purnell	1996 - 2000
Rev. Stephen Bugay	2000 - 2010
Rev. William McGuirk	2010 – June 25, 2013

Parochial Vicars:

Rev. Carl Milano	August 4, 1954 – June 29, 1955
Rev. Andrew Chupela	June 29, 1955 – July 2, 1957
Rev. Richard Molnar, OFM	July 2, 1957 – January 1, 1960
Rev. Thomas McDonald	December 31, 1959 – June 28, 1960
Rev. Apolinary Murawski	?
Rev. Henry Marcinek	June 28, 1960 – August 4, 1965
Rev. Thomas Lukac	August 4, 1965 – June 29, 1967
Rev. Stan Walczak	October 7, 1967 – June 11, 1971
Rev. Joseph Szredzinski	June 7, 1972 – May 29, 1974
Rev. Angelo Ciuffoletti	May 1979 – February 9, 1982

Holy Rosary Church is the home parish of the following men and women religious:

Rev. Francis Kondrla	Ordained June 22, 1924
Rev. John P. Zubak	Ordained June 7, 1941
Rev. Michael Vecchio	Ordained June 11, 1950
Rev. Basil Gaspar	Ordained June 8, 1957
Rev. Lawrence Manchas	Ordained May 6, 1978
Brother Charles Varnak, C.S.C.	Professed August 15, 1948
Brother Emery Latsko	Professed February 2, 1937
Rev. David Nazimek	Ordained 1993
Sr. M. Polycarp Zubak, VSC	Professed May 20, 1920
Sr. M. Tharsilla Kopinsky, VSC	Professed January 23, 1925
Sr. M. Claudia Voytek, VSC	Professed August 15, 1948
Sr. M. Emerentia Voytek, VSC	Professed August 15, 1956

Reverend Andrew J. Balok was ordained on June 25, 1922. Then on March 7, 1928, he was transferred from St. Michael Parish in New Castle, PA to Holy Rosary Parish in Republic, PA. This pastorate was to last 37 years.

When Father Balok assumed charge in 1928, he enlarged the school, and installed a boiler room and new lavatory facilities. During his pastorate the debt incurred by the construction of the church was satisfied.

For the next two decades, though the parish remained faithful in its worship and continued to support the church, other matters overshadowed parish growth.

The 1930's were challenging years for the entire country. Republic and its neighboring towns saw many mines either closing or working on skeleton shifts. Many families were financially desperate; morale was low. Government agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and the Public Works Administration, were active in the area providing employment as well as food and clothing.

During these difficult years, the mere presence of the Church helped to keep the community from losing hope. Church social and religious organizations were a strong presence, serving both to raise money for parish expenses and to lighten the spirits of troubled parishioners. Weekly picnics featuring homemade foods and dancing, were held on the farm property of Mr. and Mrs. John Kvortek at Thompson #1.

Many unique ethnic traditions had survived the transition from Europe to Republic and were regularly practiced in the life of the parish.

- Oplatky (wafers served with honey at Christmas dinner) were made and sold by the Sisters.
- Easter baskets were blessed, with Father travelling from patch to patch on Easter Saturday morning, then returning to Republic to bless Easter Baskets in church. The baskets were filled with a variety of food including Easter eggs dyed with onion skins, specially baked bread (paska), and other traditional Easter food.
- There was an annual blessing of homes during the season of Epiphany.
- At 10:30 am Mass on Sunday, the sermon was in English and Slovak.
- To celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, a homily was given in Italian by a visiting priest. The statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was carried in procession through the town. All returned to the church for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Following Benediction, entertainment was provided at the Sons of Italy Hall.

Some of these traditions have fallen away with time, but others have been retained or resurrected in the parish today.

According to Republic: Hub City, "Hard times showed the strength and will of the people to continue forward, even when money, food, clothes, and shelter were scarce."

During the early 1940's mines, coke ovens, and steel mills flourished. People were constantly reminded of the war as their family members were called to defend our country. Throughout these war years, the parishioners remembered their loved ones in prayer and devotions.

The latter 1940's saw the war end with our service personnel returning home. At the same time, the Republic Mine closed leaving hundreds of men out of work. Fortunately, however, other mines were working which provided some employment.

In the 1950's our country was engaged in war – the Korean Conflict. Unemployment once again became a problem. The only jobs in the area were in the coal mines or local businesses.

In spite of the economic changes in Republic, its people continued to support their church. After having survived the depression and two wars, Holy Rosary Parish experienced tremendous growth. Spiritually, the parishioners became more actively involved in existing and in new parish organizations, renovation and new construction.

By 1954, it was evident that the old school building and the convent were in need of replacement. A building plan was undertaken, and a School Campaign Committee was organized with the goal of raising \$50,000 towards the cost of construction. On April 20, 1954, Father Balok turned the first spadeful of earth in a ground-breaking ceremony.

The cornerstone of the new Holy Rosary School was blessed on Sunday, September 26, 1954. The sermon, preceding the blessing and laying of the cornerstone, was delivered by Father Anthony Hardy, pastor of SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Fairchance, PA. The Very Rev. Francis S. Kondrla, pastor of St. Mary Church, Leckrone, PA, laid the cornerstone as the official representative of His Excellency, The Most Rev. Hugh L. Lamb, Bishop of Greensburg.

The new school had eight classrooms, a modern cafeteria, library, and a first-aid room. The parishioners of Holy Rosary Church had reason to be proud of one of the most modern elementary schools in the diocese.

A breezeway connected the school with the newly remodeled convent, which better provided for the Sisters' needs. Some of the remodeling work was completed by parishioners, who helped with painting and cleaning. At the time of the remodeling, the Sisters teaching at Holy Rosary School were: Sister Mary David (Grades 1 & 2), Sister Mary Dolores (Grades 3 & 4), Sister Mary Desideria (Grades 5 & 6), Sister Mary Placid (Grades 7 & 8), and Sister Mary Blaise (Home Economics).

In September, 1961, Bishop Lamb approved the church renovation. In 1962, a \$60,000 renovation of the 37 year old church was underway.

The renovation was extensive and impressive, altering the appearance of the building. Two small wings providing additional exits were added to either side of the main entrance. The four stained-glass doors depicting symbols of the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, replaced the old wooden doors. In the baptistery, the windows depict the Baptism of Christ. The windows in the wing opposite the baptistery contain the symbol of the Seven Sacraments.

A new heating and cooling system was installed. The interior was repainted: lights, confessionals, Stations of the Cross, and the sanctuary were completely redone. A new free-standing altar was surmounted by a huge, imported, carved wood crucifix. Originally, a red drape hung behind the crucifix. Later, a parishioner, as a memorial to his wife, donated the mosaic which now provides a backdrop to the cross. Pews and flooring were replaced. A new communion rail was installed.

On July 8, 1962, the church was re-dedicated to the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. The Most Rev. William G. Connare, Bishop of Greensburg, presided with Father Balok offering the Solemn High Mass. The sermon was preached by Father Francis J. Tambellini. Seven other priests assisted in the celebration of the special Mass.

Other changes occurred in the early 1960's. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) instituted new Liturgical Norms, which included the altar facing the congregation. Vatican II stressed, among other things, the importance of the role of lay people in the Catholic Church. The reform of the Liturgy made the Mass and other liturgical celebrations more meaningful and understandable to most Catholics as music, shared responses, and the use of Lectors, Commentators, and Eucharistic Ministers encouraged more active participation.

On June 24, 1961, in recognition of the spiritual guidance Father Balok had given his parishioners over the preceding decades, and also of the challenges he had faced and overcome in updating the physical aspect of the parish, Father Balok was named and invested as a domestic prelate with the title of the Right Reverend Monsignor. The following day Monsignor Balok celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination as a priest.

On June 3, 1965, Monsignor Balok was transferred to Visitation Parish in Mount Pleasant, PA. The Reverend Francis R. Gresko was named to succeed him at Holy Rosary Parish. On March 28, 1991, Monsignor Balok, at the age of 94, passed away at Mount Saint Macrina Nursing Home, Uniontown, PA.

After 50 years, in the booklet entitled "Golden Jubilee, 1916-1966," the church committee which had helped to organize a celebration of the event wrote this dedication:

"This booklet is most gratefully and humbly dedicated to all the members of Holy Rosary Church who through their unselfishness now are enjoying the Golden Jubilee; to all the organizations who have endured much to make Holy Rosary what it is today; to all the priests who have worked hard to spread and teach the word of God; to the sisters whose toils never end;

to those deceased ones in God's resting place; to the visitors who stop in for Mass; to the men and women who have served their country well, even in Vietnam today."

In a time of great social upheaval – the war in Vietnam, assassinations, civil rights, and changes in moral attitudes – Holy Rosary parishioners, nonetheless, found reason to gather together and give the Lord praise. They gave thanks for having remained a community united under God for 50 years. In those five decades 4,491 baptisms were performed in the church, 943 couples were married, and 1,438 funerals took place.

At the Golden Jubilee on Sunday, October 2, 1966, Bishop William G. Connare led a concelebrated Mass, along with Father Gresko, Monsignor Balok, Father Michael Vecchio, Father Andrew Chupela, Father Thomas McDonald, and Father Henry Marcinek. Following the Solemn Mass, a banquet was held at Shady Side Inn, Uniontown, PA. Mr. Nicholas Zoretic chaired the Golden Jubilee Committee; Mr. John Kupets and Mrs. Mary Centofanti were co-editors of the jubilee yearbook.

In November, 1967, Father Gresko and Father Gavron moved into the former home of Dr. Charles Ryan. "No doubt your memories of Dr. Ryan will remain," wrote Father Gavron in the weekly bulletin about this change in the pastor's residence, "and instead of pills and vaccination shots, you will find the spiritual consolation that comes with renewed faith." Also during this time, the Church Hall was renovated, with the kitchen being moved to the area where the stage once stood.

On September 4, 1968, Father Gresko was named Pastor Emeritus of Holy Rosary Church and took up residence at St. Anne's Home in Greensburg, PA. The parish gave Father a farewell dinner on October 7, the Feast of the Holy Rosary. In the Church's Sunday bulletin, the new pastor, Reverend William M. Gavron, said of Father Gresko:

"To succeed Monsignor Balok who had been here for almost forty years would have been a tremendous task by itself. Father Gresko certainly put forth his best efforts to be a priest representing Christ among his people. His patient, but determined will to be a good priest was not in vain. He was a man of faith, of prayer, and of deep humility."

Father Gresko died on August 5, 1970.

During the height of the Vietnam War, the parish, at the request of the Holy Father, observed the New Year's Day of Peace with great solemnity. "No effort in Paris or Vietnam or Washington," wrote Father Gavron in 1970 in the weekly bulletin, "will be as powerful as your ability to spend some time in prayer for peace; and then show your ability to extend forgiveness to your neighbor..."

On October 18, 1970, Bishop Connare on the occasion of his 10th anniversary accepted an invitation to celebrate Mass at Holy Rosary Church. Bishop Connare expressed his

appreciation to all the people of Holy Rosary Parish for their fine cooperation throughout the years.

Father Gavron, suffering from ill health, resigned in June, 1971, and was succeeded by Father Fabian Oris, a native of Uniontown, PA. "The hills and valleys of this county always seem to beckon me to return," Father Oris wrote in his first bulletin. However, like Father Gavron and Father Gresko, he did not stay long in Republic, leaving in May, 1973. The parish had enjoyed continuity with Father Balok for 37 years, but it had now seen three priests come and go in less than a decade. Father Oris went on to a larger parish in Uniontown, PA, and also became the Supreme Chaplain of the First Catholic Slovak Union, Jednota of the USA and Canada. For several weeks after his departure, Father Joseph Sredzinski was named temporary administrator at Holy Rosary Church.

At the end of May, 1973, Father Henry Marcinek, a former parish assistant, returned to the parish as pastor. "Welcome Back, Father Henry! Surely this is the answer to many prayers and a joy to so many. Truly, we say welcome back" read the church bulletin on his first Sunday as pastor.

One of Father Marcinek's first goals at Holy Rosary was the building of a new parish rectory. In December, 1974, Father received permission to seek bids on the project and construction began the next spring. A campaign to raise \$65,000 for the rectory began. The old rectory was razed the following spring. In November, 1975, the new rectory was completed and an open house was held for the parishioners.

The war in Vietnam ended with a cease-fire in 1973. On Memorial Day that year and for years afterwards, Father Marcinek remembered the soldiers and others of that war in a service conducted in the parish cemetery near the monument. At the ceremony in 1974, he said:

"It is good for us to remember these dedicated men who gave not only their time and service but even their lives for this great country. Their memory should spark each and every one of us to rededicate ourselves to the statement of the late President John F. Kennedy: 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.' In this age we are living in, it would do well for all Americans to remember this sentence."

Father Marcinek also encouraged an evening candlelight Mass at the cemetery for the souls of the faithful departed on all Souls' Day. "In various shrines throughout the world," he said, "they have candlelight processions for the living – can we not do as much for the dead?"

Priests and parish joined in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Greensburg in October, 1976, especially remembering Pope John XXIII, who created the diocese. One member from each organization in the parish was invited to attend a special ceremony at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Greensburg, PA.

Holy Rosary Parish received a Pastoral Aide in the person of Sister Norbert Keller, CSJ. Sister Norbert served with Father Marcinek for almost two years after which she was reassigned to St. Joseph Church in New Kensington, PA. Several Vincentian Sisters continued this ministry along with various social service projects.

During Father Marcinek's pastorate, a coal miners' strike occurred. Coincidentally, a Concelebrated Mass was offered for the miners on Sunday, April 2 at St. Thomas Church, Footedale, PA, to give them moral support on the 80th anniversary commemorating the establishment of the first eight-hour day in the coal industry. This strike lasted only three and a half months.

During the crisis in Iran, when Americans were held hostage in that country, the members of Holy Rosary Parish, at the urging of the pastor, said the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel after each Mass.

In January, 1982, Father Marcinek was transferred. He left the parish after serving 14 years.

For the next year and a half, the Reverend Stanislaus Walczak was Holy Rosary's pastor. He left in June of 1983, at which time the present pastor, Rev. Michael J. Sciberras arrived.

In many ways Holy Rosary Parish has experienced a spiritual renewal and growth in developing a faith community. This growth is due to the efforts of a team composed of the pastor, parishioners, and school personnel who are eager to see the parish thrive.

Father Mike came to Holy Rosary Church in June, 1983, from a pastorate at St. John the Baptist in Heilwood, PA and its two mission churches. At the time, he was also the Spiritual Director of the Cursillo Movement in the Diocese of Greensburg. "I pray that we can grow more and more like a Catholic family," he wrote in the first weeks of his pastorate at Holy Rosary, "with Jesus Christ as the very center of our lives and homes within the parish."

Along with his spiritual leadership Father Mike has attended to the physical needs of the parish. The parish has remodeled its church hall, constructed an access ramp for the handicapped, and made other improvements which benefit the entire parish.

Once a month coffee and donuts are served in the church hall after each Mass to help foster the spirit of community among the parishioners. Through all these efforts Father Mike reiterates words from a sermon he gave during the first years of his pastorate in Republic:

"...Prayer is the most important means we have to grow as a family, by taking time out of our busy days, to turn to the Lord and ask for His guidance in difficult matters that confront us. God should be the first source we turn to, not the last."

Father Mike maintains as his priority the growth and spiritual life of the parish. In 1990, Father Mike introduced the R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). This is a program designed to invite non-Catholics and those who would like to return to the Catholic Church, an opportunity to inquire about the teachings of the Catholic Church. The program, for those who continue in it, culminates in the Rites of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil Mass. Study in the Catholic Faith continues until Pentecost or sometime after.

Two converts were admitted to the Church through Holy Rosary Parish in 1990, and five in 1991.

Father Mike instituted Parish Weekend Renewals, an intensive series of talks aimed at fostering greater spirituality and cooperation among parishioners. Many have found these weekends to be a time of personal growth and discovery, realizing through the program how much they need the church and one another.

Instructional sessions were held for the parents and sponsors of children who were to be baptized. Interviews were held with parents and candidates preparing for the reception of First Communion and Confirmation. Religious instructions were taught to children attending public school at grade and high school levels. Marriage encounter weekends and various retreats have also been encouraged for members of the parish. Father Mike faithfully visited area shut-ins and patients in hospitals.

In the 1960's and 1970's the parish studied the future of Catholic education in Republic, PA. Beginning in the 1970's with an organization known as PRIDE (People Really Interested in Developing Education; a precursor to today's PTG), the parish made a commitment to continue its support of the school. Years of work, of fund-raising, planning and promotion, have produced a place of education of which Holy Rosary Parish was justly proud.

In 1991, Holy Rosary School completed "Verifying the Vision," a Self-Evaluation Instrument for the Catholic Elementary School. This evaluation was submitted to Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools – Assembly of Elementary Schools. The members of the Middle States Team strongly concurred that there was much evidence of a school philosophy which pervaded the entire school. The spirit of unity, peace and excellence was sensed by the visiting team. The support of parents, school volunteers and the professional staff was commended for their sense of belonging and ownership of Holy Rosary School.

Sister Corrine Giel, VSC, has been the principal of Holy Rosary School since 1983.

Persian Gulf

The 75th anniversary year saw the conclusion of the military conflict which was waged in the desert of Saudi Arabia and was called Operation Desert Storm. The one hundred hour combat

stirred the patriotism of the entire nation. Once again Holy Rosary parish joined in prayer for peace and a safe return of the men and women involved in this action. The following members of our parish served in Operation Desert Storm: Technical Sergeant, Arthur E. Jeffers, Jr.; Captain Judy Kovell; and Private First Class Thomas L. Pavone.

Much of this narrative has focused on the leadership afforded Holy Rosary by its pastors, but it is important to acknowledge the contributions made by various groups of dedicated parishioners over the years. Holy Rosary's religious, social, and educational organizations with some of their history and accomplishments are described below.

Altar Boys

Holy Rosary Parish has thirty altar boys to assist at the celebration of Mass and other special liturgical services. The Knights of the Altar, a special society of Altar boys, was initiated in the parish on September 11, 1973.

The Arch-Confraternity of Christian Mothers

The origin of this organization was described in a church bulletin in 1967: This society had its origin in Lille, France in 1850. It was formally established in 1856. Once the society became very popular in Germany, it was raised to an Arch-Confraternity in 1871. The Capuchin Fathers were the first promoters of the Arch-Confraternity in the United States. In 1881 the Confraternity of St. Augustine Church, Pittsburgh, PA was raised to an Arch-Confraternity with the right of aggregating other such societies in all English speaking parishes. The Arch-Confraternity has for its purpose keeping married women conscious of the ideals of Christian womanhood, wifhood, and motherhood.

In Republic, the Christian Mothers have been active since March 3, 1953. Today, the Christian Mothers and Guild work with and assist other parish organizations. They provide food for Thanksgiving baskets to share with the needy, and provide treats for shut-ins. Their purpose is "to assist all mothers in their various needs, pray for all parish families, assist in parish functions, to grow in their awareness as Catholic mothers and in being role models in our society."

Present officers are: Blanche Knupsky, President; Naomi Crapp, Vice President; Irene Orbash, Secretary; and Mildred Guerrieri, Treasurer.

Cemetery Committee

The cemetery committee was reorganized in 1987. The committee updated the cemetery records by comparing all the church records against the results of an actual on-site cemetery survey.

The committee at its regular monthly meetings documented all burials, prepared easements for the sale of lots, and recorded all payments received on account. An overall map of the cemetery, showing sold and unsold lots, was prepared.

In 1983 and 1989 additional property was purchased by the parish for future needs.

The committee also worked in conjunction with the caretaker and other cemetery personnel in supervising the proper care and maintenance of the Church cemetery.

The committee consists of Joseph Mayersky, Chairman; Dominick DeRose, Co-Chairman; Mildred Danko, Blanche Knupsky, and Lucy Mariotti.

Choir

The Choir at Holy Rosary took different forms over the years. At one time, there were four different groups of singers in the parish: the Men's Choir, the Sodality Choir, the Children's Choir, and the Slovak Choir. In the 1960's, with organist Joseph Kovalik, there was an all-male choir and a separate mixed group. Doris Kovalik, wife of the late Joseph Kovalik, served as an organist. The choir is presently comprised of 16 active members and provides music for Sunday Masses and special liturgical occasions. Before Christmas the choir goes caroling in the community and visits shut-ins at personal care homes.

Eucharistic Ministers

There are presently 24 Eucharistic Ministers. Their function is to assist the pastor in the distribution of the Holy Eucharist at Sunday Masses, and to take Communion to those who are unable to attend Mass, as well as to those in nursing homes. They have been active in the parish since 1983.

Holy Name Society

The Holy Name Society of Holy Rosary Church was formed to remind Catholic men of the respect due the Holy Name of Jesus and their duty to live their lives in an exemplary manner. Although no longer active in the parish it played a large part in parish affairs for many years. The group was formed early in Father Balok's pastorate. The Society spread quickly during the thirties, swelled after World War II, and was at its height in the fifties and early sixties. "The Holy Name men held many fund-raising affairs over the years. Monies from their efforts went toward: the Building Fund for the new school, the church renovation, the sponsorship of baseball and basketball teams, Christmas treats for parish children, Father-Son Communion breakfasts, a new car for the Sisters, sorting through donated clothes during the annual clothing drive, study clubs, spaghetti dinners, smokers, attending National Conventions of the Society, and Days of Recollection. The men also helped with the yearly Street Fair and with the Junior Holy Name.

Home Visitors

The Home Visitors began their ministry in the parish in 1989 with 15 members regularly visiting our parish shut-ins, the sick, and the elderly in their homes as well as hospitals and nursing homes. The Chairpersons were Frank and Vincenza Congelio.

Lectors

The 13 lectors assist in the celebration of the liturgy by proclaiming the Word of God.

Ministers of Hospitality

The 16 Ministers of Hospitality (ushers) welcome and assist parishioners and visitors who come to worship.

Parent-Teachers Guild

On February 20, 1956, the Parent-Teachers Guild was initiated in the parish with the stated purpose of “helping parents fulfill their obligation of giving their children a Catholic education, establishing a close relationship between the home and school, and giving the parents an opportunity to discuss problems with teachers.” The PTG is an enormous asset to the school. Through a variety of fund-raisers they have provided the students with many educational and social benefits.

Parish Council

Formerly referred to as the Church Committee, this group has operated in the parish since its very early days. In the late 1960’s, the Committee of seven elected members was expanded to twelve, with other members being chosen from the Holy Name Society, the Christian Mothers, and the PTG.

The purpose of the Parish council as stated by Vatican II is, “The Council as a group, by their suggestions and input are advisory, lending assistance to the Pastor in his administration of Church affairs, and strive to serve the needs of the parish, spiritually, materially, and socially to enhance Catholic life and to make our presence as a Catholic community felt in our area.”

The Parish Council now has 15 members who are elected to serve a three-year term. The officers are: Mildred Danko, President; Dominick DeRose, Vice-President; and Francine Pavone, Secretary.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

In 1990, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was introduced at Holy Rosary Parish. Three parishioners assisted Father Mike in this work and eventually the number grew to nine

members on the team, which helps prepare catechumens and candidates on their journey of faith toward full reception in the Catholic Church through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Stewardship Committee

Since 1983, there have been 24 parishioners, comprising six teams, who help to tabulate Sunday collections.

St. Vincent de Paul Society

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was first established in Republic, PA, in the early 1960's. The purpose of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is "to help in any material or spiritual want or need. Their work is done anonymously." One of the regular projects of the group is to provide food for the needy.

In 1991, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was re-established. Presently there are six members: President, Frank Conelio; Vice President, Dominick DeRose; Secretary, Vincenza Congelio; Treasurer, John Varhach; Ethel Charles and Dorothy DeRose.

Youth Ministry

Preceded in the parish by the CYC (Catholic Youth Council) and later, in the 1960's, by the CYO, the Youth Ministry held its first meeting on May 20, 1990. The group under the guidance of moderators Kathy Balabon and Pamela Mancino currently has 15 members. Students between seventh and twelfth grades sponsor an Easter Egg Hunt, hay rides, car washes, and dances. The purpose of the Youth Ministry is "to make available to the youth of the parish opportunities for social, religious and cultural development, and to participate in the parish life of the church."

Organizations of the Past

Other parish organizations which, in the past, made valuable contributions but are no longer active include: the Sodality, the Legion of Mary, the Rosary Society, and the Young Ladies Sodality.

Grotto

The 75th Anniversary Year also saw the construction of a grotto, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, situated on the west side of Holy Rosary Church.

The 75th Anniversary

On Sunday, October 6, 1991, the 75th Anniversary Dinner was held at the Holiday Inn, Uniontown, PA at 6:00 pm. It is fitting that the dinner was held in October, the month of the Holy Rosary. Holy Rosary Parish will have much to remember, to celebrate, and to appreciate.

Republic of the future will be closely bound to the Catholic parish in its midst; and this Catholic parish has the faith and ability not merely to survive, but to thrive. This small community has been thoroughly tempered by challenge, and today, with its mixture of old traditions and new visions has strength. God is evident in the descendants of immigrant hope, and in the hopes of the children of Holy Rosary School. With His help, and with that of His Blessed Mother, this anniversary year was a joyful milestone in Holy Rosary Church.

The Anniversary Committee: Lucy Mariotti, Joseph Mayersky, Francine Pavone, and Mildred Danko.