

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part1:

In 1925, Rego Park was, simply, a nameless stretch of country where, approximately, ten farmers -most of them of the old German and Dutch stock -- raised truck vegetables which they sold in Manhattan. Sixty-third Drive was a cow path -- none of the present streets existed -- and the farmhouses had neither gas nor electricity. The Rego Construction Company had purchased three farms, which comprised approximately forty-five acres. The name "Rego Park" was adopted to mean "Real Good" - a description of the quality of the homes they intended to build. This farmland was bounded [triangularly] by 63rd Drive, the Long Island Railroad, and a line of about 200 feet east of Eliot Avenue. Many of our "pioneer" parishioners were the proud purchasers of these homes when they were completed.

Meanwhile, Rego Park was springing up like an adolescent youth. The cornerstone of P.S. 139 was laid in 1928, and the school was opened in 1930. Next, the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour was opened in 1931. Noticeably, 63rd Drive also appeared to be shaping up. Families were rapidly moving into this lovely and convenient section of Queens and so, in keeping pace with this development, his Excellency, Bishop Thomas Molloy addressed the spiritual needs of his people. Therefore, in 1926, Rev. Francis Scullin was appointed to found a parish in what was, then, the outlying section of St. Bartholomew's Church in Elmhurst. There were many problems facing Father Scullin [and his parishioners] foremost, of course, was finding the most suitable location to build a church that would serve all the people. A temporary church was constructed by the parishioners on 55th Avenue in Elmhurst. It was called the Church of the Ascension of Elmhurst. Over the years, improvements have been made to this very "homelike, and "peaceful" church. The probable date of the first Mass was February 28, 1926. Our first baptism consisted of twin boys, James and Robert Mullaney. They were baptized by Father Scullin on March 7, 1926. The first wedding took place on June 19, 1926. The groom was George Renhardt and his bride, Eleanor Coddington. Father Scullin "officiated" at their marriage. For the convenience

of many parishioners, arrangements were made to schedule the Sunday Mass celebration in the Rego Park Community Club House, on 62nd Avenue.

In 1931, Father Scullin was transferred to Lynbrook and Rev. Henry Hald became the newly assigned pastor. By this time, it was evident that the most important need of the parish would be a parochial school. After much searching, Father Hald finally succeeded in obtaining a very suitable piece of property, located on Wood haven Boulevard, 61st Road, 85th Street, and Eliot Avenue. This area comprised about seventy-five city lots. Once again, our pastor was transferred but, we were so very fortunate to have Rev. Patrick F. Feely assigned to lead our flock. Our new pastor had the obligation of selecting an architect to build the school and church. His choice was a very wise one, and we are grateful today as we all admire, and benefit, from our school building. Now, we were really on our way! So, where there once were unsightly refuse and open lots, there appeared, finally, the beautiful edifice of brick and stone - The Ascension School and Church. The cornerstone was laid in July, 1938.

Fr. Feely had requested the Sisters of Charity of Halifax to staff the school. So, Sister Miriam Constance, Ph.D. was assigned to be the first principal. On September 11, 1939 our beautiful Ascension School was ready to open the doors to all the children of the neighborhood. We had an exceptionally large enrollment of 520 pupils in grades up to [and including] 5A. The first pupil to be registered was Mary Cox, a daughter of the recently deceased, Bea Cox. Our school was one of the most modern in the Eastern part of the country. We had an RCA system installed, which made it possible for Sr. Miriam Constance to speak [and listen] to the teachers and pupils -- while remaining at her desk. Of course, this is the same intercom system in use today. [But, remember, in 1939, very few schools enjoyed anything so modern]. Remarkably, within just one year after opening its doors, the necessity arose to have both a "twelve classroom and an auditorium ADDITION" built onto the original structure.

[Home](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part2:

During these early years of building our parish on this new site of Woodhaven Blvd. [61st Road, 85th Street, and Eliot Avenue.], we were also blessed to have the Trinitarian Sisters as part of our parish staff. They worked with our children, visited the sick and homebound, and started our first parish census. One of the more extraordinary members of this religious community was Sister Mary Angeline. It was she, who gave many years of dedicated service to this parish. To this date, many of our elderly parishioners remember her with love and affection.

Of course, none of the priests, the Sisters of Charity, or the Trinitarian Sisters lived in the buildings we now see as part of the parish. Way back in 1930, the parish priests lived in the rectory on 55th Avenue in Elmhurst [the rectory connected with the site of the first church, Ascension of Elmhurst.] In 1940, the priests moved into a private house located at 85-16 61st Road. The Trinitarian Sisters then vacated the rented house they resided in, located at Bourton St. and moved into the, then, vacated rectory at 55th Avenue in Elmhurst. At the same time, the Sisters of Charity were living on the top floor of the original school building.

But -- as many long-term members of this community know -- parish life did not remain static. Already, by 1941, the school had an enrollment of 1051 pupils. Fr. Feely decided to purchase four houses located on Eliot Avenue and 86th Street (later known as "Weber Yard" and now the site of several multi-dwelling homes) and convert these houses into a convent for the Sisters of Charity. This would provide some privacy for the sisters, but also allow the top floor of the school [their previous convent] to be converted to additional classrooms. In a short period of time, those classrooms were filled with more students.

Unfortunately, tragedy now entered into our parish story. Fr. Feely, at the age of 52, died on December 6, 1943. He was deeply mourned, not only for what he had already

done for the parish, but also for the loss of what more he really would have done for the parish -- given his zeal and potential.

At that time, Bishop Molloy assigned David J. Lynch as the new pastor of our parish. Within two years of Fr. Lynch's arrival, Bishop Molloy decided to assign Fr. Lynch's senior associate, Thomas J. Dunnigan, to be the pastor of our original church "Ascension at Elmhurst". However, this decision created a major pastoral problem that was not resolved for many years since there now existed "Ascension Church in Elmhurst", and "Ascension Church in Rego Park". Folk lore described the former as "little" Ascension and the latter as "big" Ascension. But, confusion still hung over the fact that two churches [with the same name] were no more than 30 blocks apart from each other! As you can imagine, something much more definite had to be done about this dilemma. And, it was done -- to be exact -- in 1951!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part3:

Part II concluded with the co-existence of two parishes -- both with the same names - Ascension, Elmhurst and Ascension, Rego Park. More accurately, back in 1945, the latter was called Ascension, Middle Village. The purpose for that distinction was due to the fact that the Post Office [in Rego Park] had not, yet, been established.

Adding to the confusion, the Diocese had reestablished "Ascension, Elmhurst" as a totally new parish on July 10, 1945. This act resulted in the transferring of all books: Baptismal, Confirmation, and Marriage Registers [dating between 1926 and 1945] from Ascension, Elmhurst, to Ascension, Middle Village (Rego Park). Clearly, the Diocese was stipulating that the church -- established at Elmhurst, in 1926 -would continue its existence at a completely NEW site in Middle Village (Rego Park). The Diocese incorporated this new site as a religious corporation on November 26, 1945 under the title of Ascension, Middle Village (Rego Park). This latter move was done for legal purposes, e.g. to establish bank accounts, credit ratings, etc. But, that didn't clarify the confusion nor, stop the "squabbling" between the two parishes.

To begin with, the pastor in Ascension, Elmhurst, continued to claim that his parish was established in 1926 and, not in 1945, as the diocese contended. At the same time, Fr. Lynch in Ascension, Middle Village (Rego Park) refuted that claim.

Therefore, in 1949, both pastors wrote to Bishop Molloy and asked for further clarification. The Bishop's secretary, William F. Daley, responded on October 27, 1949 with the same letter to both Fr. Dunnigan and Fr. Lynch. The letter clearly stated that Ascension, Middle Village (Rego Park) was legally -- and canonically - organized as a church in 1926 at Elmhurst, Queens. In 1949, therefore it was celebrating its 23rd year of existence. Furthermore, the remaining church, Ascension, Elmhurst was canonically, and legally, established in 1945. This meant that Ascension, Elmhurst was "celebrating its 4th anniversary".

Even the force of that letter did not bring an end to the argument. Finally, in 1951, Fr. Lynch [more in conciliation than in ceding the argument of "which parish came first"] requested that "Ascension, Rego Park be given a NEW name. Bishop Molloy decided upon the name, "RESURRECTION-ASCENSION", Rego Park which is -- and continues to be -- the parish attributed to have its start in 1926 and then, moved to its present site in 1939.

Should you ask some long-time parishioners of Ascension, Elmhurst, they will probably tell you that their parish dates back to 1926. Similarly, if you ask some longtime parishioners of Resurrection-Ascension, Rego Park, they will probably tell you their parish began with the "opening" of our present church and school in 1939. But, the challenge [for one-and-all] is to look beyond "buildings" and to realize a "parish" is only called into existence through the working of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the decision of the Diocesan Bishop!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part4:

Shortly before his premature death -- at the age of 52 -- Fr. Feely had planned a magnificent church for the parish of the Ascension, Middle Village (Rego Park). He envisioned a Gothic building -- having as its main entrance, 61st Road and 85th Street. The sanctuary, an 8-sided structure, would have graced 85th Street at Eliot Avenue. As you may well imagine, this "dream" was expected to encompass all the land now occupied by the rectory, and the garages. The southern wall of the church was to have run along the fence, to the left of our present Marian Shrine. In addition, it was visualized that the seating capacity would have accommodated, approximately, 1,000 persons.

Unfortunately, due to the ramifications of our country's committed involvement in World War II, Fr. Feely's vision could not be "kept alive" by his successor, Fr. David Lynch, especially since all the steel produced in the United States was prioritized -- and earmarked -- for war production.

When the war ended -- and such restrictions were lifted -- Fr. Lynch faced even more pressing problems than that of building a Gothic church. To begin with, the Trinitarian Sisters had moved out of the old rectory at 55th Avenue in Elmhurst because it had become the "new parish" of Ascension, Elmhurst. At his point in time, they had been residing in what was considered to be -- "temporary" quarters. At the same time, the Sisters of Charity were becoming over-crowded in their "multi-building quarters" located in "Weber Yard".

Consequently, Fr. Lynch decided to build -- for both communities of Sisters -- a new and even more suitable convent. His vision evolved into TWO convents -- "cheek by jowl" -- on 61st Road - their present site. At the same time, he had also built an impressive rectory for the four priest associates and himself, just across the street from the convents -- at its present site.

Having established residences for both his clergy and the Religious Sisters, Fr. Lynch next turned his eyes to the education of our parish school children. He invited the Marist Brothers to reside at RA with the purpose of establishing a "Boys' Department". The Marist Brothers, graciously, accepted that invitation and arrived in 1954. The Brothers then "took over" -- as their personal residence -- the buildings in Weber yard, which had already been vacated by the Sisters of Charity.

As you may well imagine, the parish of RA had, come into its own. The church was over-flowing with parishioners. Remarkably, the school was educating at least 1200 students. Furthermore, both Communities of Sisters (the Sisters of Charity and the Trinitarians), as well as the Marist Brothers, and the parish priests, were happily, and gratefully, "sheltered" in very suitable residences.

The future seemed very, very promising. R.A. was destined to become one of the BRIGHTEST STARS in the Diocese of Brooklyn. And then came the 60's -- a period of very significant CHANGES, and ... a ... RE-BIRTH!!!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part5:

The decade of the 60's began with a set-back. Our very large parish was dissected to give birth to a new parish - Our Lady of Hope. With that decision, R.A. was no longer among the largest and more affluent of the parishes in Queens County. Tellingly, over the next thirty years, Our Lady of Hope would match -- and surpass -- us in its Catholic population. But, what seemed, initially, as a set-back, in 1960, actually proved to be a God-send for R.A. In retrospect, we would never have been able to [adequately] minister to the spiritual and educational needs of so many newcomers. At the same time, it was also a blessing for these newcomers of Our Lady of Hope to "grow up" with a new parish -- expanding, commensurate with their needs.

Unfortunately, just two years later [in 1962] on New Year's Day, Fr. Lynch died. His successor was Fr. Adam Weber. As Fr. Weber began his pastorate, Vatican Council II (1962-65) commenced. One of the earlier documents coming from that Council concentrated on Liturgy. Among many other changes, the Council decrees called for Churches to undertake renovations so that the altar of sacrifice -- and the celebrant -- faced the congregation. Fr. Weber, faithfully, responded to that challenge when R.A. Church was renovated.

Such efforts, however, drained Fr. Weber's energy and he felt that he could no longer adequately serve as the pastor of R.A. Bishop Mugavero accepted his resignation. In 1967, Fr. Charles Clark was appointed as the new pastor of R.A. Nevertheless; Fr. Weber continued to reside here as pastor emeritus.

Shortly thereafter, Fr. Clark encountered one of the unforeseen "fall-outs" of Vatican II. Religious men and women "exited" their communities seeking dispensations. This situation (seriously) impacted among our own Marist Brothers and the Sisters of Charity within our parish community. To say the least, it was a particularly

“upsetting” and “confusing” time for the parish, as well as its pastor.

In 1970, Fr. Clark realized that the declining number of Marist Brothers could not adequately staff the Boys' Department. Therefore, he recommended that this community withdraw from the parish in order that the Sisters of Charity could graciously stepped forward to "staff" the entire school -- which was then converted to a co-ed operation.

A year later, Fr. Clark died -- rather suddenly -- and Vincent Dooley was appointed the "new" pastor of R.A. As many of our current parishioners can attest, Fr. Dooley came with:

- a wealth of experience,
- a firm faith,
- a great sense of humor, and
- an endless charm.

In short, Fr. Dooley utilized ALL of these wonderful gifts which brought our beloved parish of Resurrection-Ascension to a NEW SPRING!!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part6:

In 1971, when Fr. Vincent Dooley arrived, as pastor, he found this parish seriously shaken by a "rash of set-backs".

In the previous ten years, from 1961-1971, the parish had lost three pastors -- two, to death -- and one, to early retirement. At the same time, the parish school had lost its Boys' Department. In addition, the parish community had witnessed some of the Marist brothers -- as well as Sisters of Charity -- leave their respective communities for the purpose of returning to the lay state. Obviously, with the combination of such "distressing" factors, the parish was "crying out" for stability, for direction, and for unity. Fortunately, Fr. Dooley [ably] brought these three desires, or dreams, to a state of reality.

In the meantime, just one month before Fr. Dooley began his appointment as pastor, the school had a new principal, Sister Miriam Clare. By means of a relatively short period of time, she managed to put our school "back on its course" by means of superb academics, solid religious formation, and intense parish loyalty.

On a broader scale, within the parish-at-large, further improvements surfaced when Fr. Dooley focused on rebuilding both the parish spirit, and its financial base. In the latter situation, Ethel Doyle had become the driving force for our weekly booster club. However, any "extra income" from this source proved to be "inadequate" due to the growing financial demands of our school stemming -- in no small part -- from the increasing number of lay teachers.

To address this "pressing" situation, Fr. Dooley sought the efforts of Fr. Martin Igoe by encouraging him to introduce a parish BINGO and a Spring outdoor Bazaar. Thankfully, both projects resulted in TWO huge" successes - financially, and in the restoration of a much needed "parish spirit".

During this same period, our parish was also, richly, blessed to experience the dedication -- and service -- of Sister Patricia Wilson as it's Liturgy Coordinator. Sr. Pat sensed -- in the person of Fr. Dooley -- the encouraging [and supportive] leadership that paved the way for the celebration of our Sunday liturgies in a manner [considered to be] truly festive and alive.

Within two years, [1973] Fr. Thomas Catania had been assigned to R.A. Fortunately, he had the "magnetic" personality capable of encouraging parish leaders to "revitalize" the Sports Program and bring it -- once more -- into high gear.

Due to the above accomplishments, the parish was now moving along quite happily because of its sense of achievement. Along with such developing potential, the parish community began preparations for a very appropriate celebration - the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Ordination of its pastor emeritus - Fr. Adam Weber. The time was June, 1975. On the day of this celebration, shortly after the Anniversary Mass had just begun, Fr. Weber -to the consternation of all -- collapsed at the altar steps. It appears that he suffered a fatal heart attack. As you can imagine, the shock was numbing, as well as awful. Gradually, however, people collected themselves and found the strength to share [now] in a Mass for the repose of his soul. Many were consoled only by the belief that their beloved, Fr. Weber, was now "CELEBRATING HIS GOLDEN JUBILEE WITH THE LORD".

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part7:

A major "parish" event took place on March 14, 1976 - the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of Resurrection-Ascension Church. On that occasion, our Bishop, Francis Mugavero was the main celebrant. The homilist was Msgr. Joseph Parks -- a fitting choice -- who had served at R.A. for 27 years. Remarkably, no one, then, [or to this day] has ever come close to his tenure. For the Mass celebration, the celebrants were Fr. Dooley, our Pastor, along with Fathers Doody, Igoe and Avvento and our formerly assigned priests, namely, Fathers Fagan, Masaitis, Haggerty, Connelly and Msgrs. Asip and Dunnigan.

Within two years after that great celebration, the parish experienced some changes in personnel. To be exact in 1978, Sr. Pat Wilson transferred, followed by both Fr. Doody and Fr. Avvento. Fortunately, for the parish, two younger priests were appointed to this parish. Fr. Ceriello was the first to arrive. He "took over" both the coordination of the liturgy (Sr. Pat Wilson's responsibility) and, eventually, the BINGO and Spring Bazaar when Fr. Igoe transferred to Connecticut. Very shortly, thereafter, Fr. Ceriello was joined by Fr. Murphy who, literally, "took over" the HEARTS of the parish.

For the next four years, life was very tranquil in R.A. However, in October of 1982, another serious tragedy struck when Msgr. Dooley died of a heart attack while sitting in his own living room. The parish, once again, was visibly shaken and saddened. Although Msgr. Dooley had been here for only eleven years, it seemed like he had been with us much longer -- simply because of that special, and endearing, relationship which had developed between himself and the parishioners.

Shortly before the end of 1982, Bishop Mugavero appointed Msgr. Joseph P. Bynon to succeed the deceased, Msgr. Dooley. Subsequently, in January, 1983, Bishop Mugavero [personally] installed Msgr. Bynon as the 8th pastor of Resurrection

Ascension Church. Frs. Murphy and Ceriello, on their part, cooperatively and generously, "familiarized" Msgr. Bynon to the parish before they moved on [one and a half years later] -- Fr. Murphy to a new assignment and, Fr. Ceriello to the US Navy as a chaplain.

One of the initial challenges Msgr. Bynon encountered was the growing "disenchantment", within the parish, toward the Spring Bazaar. It is noteworthy that at this time, the social climate was also changing whenever such "open-air" gatherings took place. It appears that our Woodhaven Blvd. location attracted too many young adults and, with them, came all the social ills of the 80's - drinking, smoking pot, and reckless behavior.

Consequently, the Parish Council recommended measures that would include deterrents such as better lighting, and more police attention. However, even these significant improvements did not change the situation for the better. Finally, in 1984, with the approval of the Council, Msgr. Bynon had no other alternative but to cancel the Spring Bazaar.

To offset any loss of income, the parish, in January 1985, adopted the practice of tithing - or sacrificial giving. This notion, based on the Scriptures, called for contributing a specific percentage of one's income to God's Church. The response was quite gratifying. Notably, the parish had, voluntarily, equaled the income that was previously generated by the Bazaar.

Nevertheless, despite this accomplishment, there lay, on the horizon, a few "gut wrenching" situations -- of greater concern than stabilizing the income!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part8:

The next five years [1985-1990] were quite "satisfying and exciting" To begin with; the parish opened a "Winter Shelter for Homeless Men" in 1985. This "humanitarian" service was located within the rectory and encompassed the space (ordinarily used as the Rectory Meeting Room) and the suite of rooms (bath, bedroom, sitting room) normally used by visiting priests. This shelter -- coordinated in a quiet and responsible manner by Deacon Frank Ott, and his wife, Eileen -- had been capably staffed by volunteers [exclusively] while successfully, remaining in operation for eleven winters. However, as citywide services increased, our facility was becoming underutilized. Consequently, there appeared to be no further need to provide this service (within our parish), which [officially] closed in 1997.

In the meantime, another departure (regrettably) ensued, in 1985, when our second Deacon, Patrick Cline moved to New Jersey. He was well-known -- and highly respected -for serving this parish [since 1978] as the coordinator of our Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation Program. Notably, however, during the following year, 1986, the parish "reveled" in the joy of celebrating its 60th year of life. And, what a celebration it was! Strictly speaking, the jubilee comprised three major events: the Special Journal, a magnificent Dinner-Dance, and an overwhelmingly enjoyable "Family Picnic" in Juniper Valley Park.

Then, with the following year, 1987, Fr. John Pagan designated our rectory facilities as a highly suitable place to "house" a half-dozen "boarder babies" for the duration of four months. It is noteworthy that due to such warmth -- and "open-heartedness" [on the part of the parish] to provide sensitive and loving care to babies deprived of a "familial human touch" -- these infants were now receiving the crucial human contact and psychological need which often promotes healthy human development. As a result, Fr. Pagan was fully able to take advantage of the necessary -- as well as valuable -- time required in order to "seek out" a permanent settlement for such

"boarder babies" through foster care, or adoption.

At the same time, in the Fall of 1987, our Marian Shrine -- located in the middle yard -- was officially blessed. Subsequently, as many present-day parishioners can readily attest, this Shrine has always remained a special place of prayer-and quietude for parishioners and visitors alike.

However, experience also reminds us that not all occurrences in parish life were as "happy", or jubilant, as the two events described above. For example, in 1988, the parish engaged in a cooperative effort with our "Diocesan Catholic Charities" as they attempted to "seek out" properties which came be developed into low-income, senior citizens' housing. One such possibility, or site, was our own Fr. Weber Yard. Within a short period of time, such "housing" [which became quite volatile for many people] resulted in parish withdrawal of our endorsement, as well as a total abandonment of the project.

Despite the turmoil and pain of the above failed proposal, this parish [fortunately] surged forward as attention NOW focused on a "timely" and "upbeat" project to celebrate the 50th Anniversary -- commemorating the existence of R.A. School. On this special occasion, a jubilee Mass was celebrated for all school alumni -- coupled with a "school open house" that reunited, socially, both teachers and fellow alumni. Notably, teachers and students heightened the joy of this occasion as they "reminisced", and shared stories about their past experiences. For example, on a somewhat humorous level, although many students attempted; apparently, very few could STILL sit behind their old school desks! At any rate, this momentous occasion culminated with a dinner-dance at Terrace on the Park, in Flushing Meadow Park. Astonishingly, approximately seven hundred people attended. Without a doubt, this festivity resulted in a truly a nostalgic, and pivotal, evening - one not to be forgotten for a very long time to come.

However, even in the midst of such joyous events, there may, inevitably, come a time -- as experienced in previous years -- for tears as well. To begin with, in June, 1989, the Sisters of Charity [Halifax] announced that they were unable to supply administrative, and teaching personnel, for our school. But, God's Divine providence smiled on "dear old" R.A. School. The Sisters of St. Joseph (Brentwood) consented to staff our school by designating Sister Margaret Sweeney, CSJ to be the new principal in September, 1989. As many of you may well know, Sr. Margaret remained our competent -- and amiable -Principal until the end of the 2002 school year.

During that same year (1989), this "upbeat" feeling gained momentum as it carried over into a very successful campaign -- organized and designed -- to raise money for the renovation of our church. The project was completed on Christmas Eve, 1989. To this day, many refer to this accomplishment as one having superb and, profoundly meaningful, timing - "a NEW CHURCH was BORN to welcome the birth of the Christ Child"!!!

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part9:

After 6 1/2 years of service at RA., Fr. John Tosi was appointed as the Diocesan Director of Liturgy. This assignment began in June, 1991. During that same month, Fr. Frank Lynch arrived to replace Fr. Tosi.

In September, 1991, Sr. Angeline of the Trinitarian Community retired to her Mother House in Philadelphia -- after 20 years of devoted, and very fruitful, service to this parish. The following Spring, 1992, Fr. Joseph Miller, with the approval of Bishop Thomas V. Daily, resigned from his priestly ministries. He had served this parish- for 2 1/2 years, starting in June 1990. Unfortunately, the Diocese had no replacement for Fr. Miller. Therefore, Fr. Lynch and Msgr. Bynon were the only two parish priests on staff until December 1, 1992, when Fr. George Stack was assigned to us.

With the onset of a new year, 1993, "parish life" was somewhat stable and pleasant. In June of 1993, Fr. Lynch was appointed as pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Astoria, N.Y. With this move, the rectory staff was reduced once more to the pastor - Msgr. Bynon - and one associate - Fr. Stack. Fortunately, as the Pastoral Staff assumed more responsibilities, the parish, itself, remained stable.

Then, the supreme test for the parish. -- as a whole -- took place on, Columbus Day, 1993. To be specific, at 2:30 AM, a workman, while returning home, happened to notice flames -- and smoke -- escape from the Church. Immediately, he pulled the fire alarm and rang the rectory bell to inform the priests. As many parishioners have witnessed, our beautiful, renovated Church was in danger of becoming completely destroyed! However, the firemen, steadily -- and methodically -- worked their way through the dense smoke, which engulfed the front lobby and staircase. They managed, to gain entry into the rear of the Church and snuffed the flames "right then and there". Thankfully, these brave men saved the Church from very severe damage.

Unfortunately, the school suffered far more damage than the church. To begin with: an entire stairwell had to be replaced; the fire alarm system needed extensive repairs; many windows and lights had to be replaced. As you may well imagine, it took a "mammoth cleaning effort" to restore the school to an adequate status for the purpose of conducting routine school activities. Amazingly, initial -- but still limited -- access was possible in a mere 5 days, and 5 nights. Consequently, the first phase was done -- and done extremely well. In due time, both church and school took on the appearance of their "pre-fire" glory.

It is noteworthy that the "grace" attached to this tragic event is attributed to the generous outpouring of support from school parents and parishioners. Undoubtedly, both groups did all that they possibly could do to help clean up our church and school -- to which we are forever thankful and appreciative.

From another perspective, it appears that this same tragic event -- difficult as it was -- prepared the parish for its next loss - the sudden, and shocking, death of Deacon Frank Oft on March 14, 1994. Many parishioners -- as well as his family -- can attest that Frank was a remarkably "good man" -- a man committed to his parish -- and one who truly gave his TIME and TALENT to serve the homeless through our parish shelter. Because of his well-organized efforts, our Homeless Shelter continued for an additional two winter seasons. Soon, however it became obvious that the provision of increased city-wide services signaled that our shelter-- like many others -- was being underutilized. In view of that reality, the only reasonable alternative was to terminate this service, permanently.

Less than a year later, on January 1, 1995, the parish was "put to the trial" when Fr. Stack requested a sick leave. A few weeks afterwards, Fr. Blauvelt was assigned to R. A. In addition, during June of the following year (1996), Fr. Amato was assigned to our parish. Notably, for the first time since April 1992, this parish had once again been restored to its full complement of a pastor, and two associates.

In 1996, parish life continued to operate smoothly and, at a rather fast pace -- particularly with the Ministry Fairs, which enabled inquirers to speak with other parishioners, already participating in a specific parish ministry, or activity. These "Ministry Fairs soon became annual events and, ultimately, attracted almost 400 parishioners to participate in some phase of parish life. In relation to a vast array of parish ministries, "Appreciation Parties" [an evening reserved to specifically thank those involved in 39 different kinds of ministry throughout the parish] have been scheduled each year. [Currently, this takes place shortly before Thanksgiving Day.]

It is worth commenting that, at this same juncture, in June, 1996, we found ourselves in a very appropriate -- and peaceful -- time period, to celebrate. And, celebrate; the parish of R. A. did -- with a Spring 1996, 40th Anniversary Mass, and party, for its pastor, Msgr. Bynon. By all accounts, this was a "magnificently enjoyable ", and a truly "memorable" occasion!

During this same month, the parish commenced its participation in the diocesan "Alive in Hope", Campaign. Here, R. A., once again, demonstrated its very generous spirit, and faithful commitment by far surpassing the assigned goal of \$409,000. Consequently, through our sharing with the diocese [in the monies raised] the parish benefited by having additional funds which afforded us, the opportunity to "put on a new face": new sidewalks in front of all the parish buildings, pointing, and new windows at both convents -- as well as the rectory and a complete sprinkler system throughout the parish grounds.

In September, 1998, Gerard Sauer joined the parish staff to engage in a year of "ministerial" living and working in preparation for his ordination in June, 2001. Gerard introduced a Youth Ministry. At the same time, he captivated the youth with the dream of participating in the "International Youth Rally" to be held in Rome, during the Summer of 2000. That dream became a reality, which resulted in the shared pleasure of the entire parish.

Now, the parish was moving into 1999. But, by that June, we would experience another change of personnel -- Fr. Bob Blauvelt would be "moving on" to Our Lady Queen of Martyrs -- and. Fr. Kevin Cavalluzzi would be assigned to replace him at R. A.

To date, it has become more apparent that quietly, and over time, this parish would be undergoing another significant change - welcoming new people into our church and school. While these newcomers [especially our Hispanics and Indonesians] have brought their cultures -- and their languages -- into our community, the parish has been finding the heart to accept [and appreciate] these new residents -- who have demonstrated a sincere love for the church and, an extremely high reverence for Catholic education.

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Next](#) [Site-Map](#)

Resurrection Ascension Church

Our History

Part10:

As many new ministries were introduced into the parish, our "Parish Stewardship Commitment" took its place, front and center. A Stewardship Council of parishioners was formed. This Council created an awareness of the principles behind stewardship through "witness talks" and opportunities to, both, discover, and to participate, in the many activities operating within the parish. To date, "Stewardship" remains at the heart and life of our parish.

To cite a few examples, at Thanksgiving, in the year, 2000, the parish began to sponsor a holiday meal for those who would be eating alone on that day. And, for those individuals who were homebound, a Thanksgiving meal was prepared, packaged, and delivered to their doors. This last Thanksgiving, over 60 people were fed in Fr. Feely Hall or, within their homes.

In addition, during the Advent Season, the "Giving Tree" is set up in our Church's Narthex. This "tree" enables parishioners to provide a gift for a needy child, or teenager. Also, Fr. Kevin, and the parish Cultural Committee, created our first Multi-Cultural liturgy, as well as an International Food Festival. Both were celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany. This event has become, for many, a much enjoyed, and anticipated, annual celebration.

During this same period, the Elizabeth Ministry [developed by Mrs. Jean Maffia] also came into existence. This was a "like to like" ministry - i.e. a woman who had experienced a situation such as: a miscarriage, adoption, infertility, infant crisis or, even, a normal pregnancy "reached out" -- in prayerful support -- to another woman, undergoing a similar situation. Sister Barbara Buckbee, CSJ, as choir member, and a resident in our convent, took over a faltering Annual Blood Drive and gave it the prominence needed to become a truly supportive and effective effort.

Looking to the immediate past, the time period from 2000 to 2001 was, obviously, a momentous one for the parish. That time frame offered the opportunity to celebrate the 62nd Anniversary of our school, and the 75th Anniversary of our parish. From October 2000 to October 2001, there were many events centering on those two anniversaries. All the school Alumni, and teachers [from 1943 to the present], were invited to a series of reunions. Each reunion provided food and drinks, raffle prizes, a crowning of an Alumni "King and Queen", tours of the school, and the opportunity to view a film recalling the history of R.A. - its teachers, its priests and its people. A dinner-dance was also held on April 27th for 550 people. On this occasion, Msgr. Joseph Parks, and Msgr. James Asip, were honored. Notably, each guest, at that dinner, was given a beautiful souvenir journal.

Finally, this year-long celebration culminated with an anniversary Mass that took place on Sunday, October 28, 2001 at which time our Bishop, Thomas V. Daily, was the celebrant, and Msgr. Robert Thelen consented to be the "Alumni homilist".

Approximately one month after the above anniversary Mass, Msgr. Bynon announced that he would be "71 years of age on November 17, 2001" and, therefore, "eligible for retirement." His official retirement would take place on December 31, 2001. Prior to this date, Msgr. Bynon celebrated a farewell Mass, followed by a reception on Saturday, December 15th.

In mid-December, Msgr. Vincent F. Fullam was appointed to succeed Msgr. Bynon as the new pastor of Resurrection-Ascension. He began his pastorate in January, 2002 and was installed by Bishop Daily on February 4, 2002.

Shortly into the year 2002, Sister Margaret Sweeney, CSJ announced that she would [at the conclusion of the school year] relinquish her role as Principal, thereby completing 13 years of Administration at R.A. School. While her departure entails the end of a long-time tradition of Religious Sisters appointed as administrators, we look forward to the able leadership, and administration of Mrs. Joanne Heppt, who will, undoubtedly, become a significant role model for any future lay administrators.

Also, during the Spring, of 2002, Fr. Kevin Cavalluzzi was appointed pastor of St. Paul's Church in the Coble Hill section of Brooklyn. He reported to that parish on, or about, June 24th.

With the above series of events and personnel in mind, many of you are aware that such occasions, and activities, obviously need PEOPLE:

- who -- CARE about their church and school;
- who -- believe that "TOGETHER" wonderful things can be accomplished;
- who -- have IDEAS;
- who -- will COMMIT some of their TIME and TALENT to bring about an EXTRAORDINARY REUNION of past parishioners and alumni -- as well as many other WONDERFUL OCCASIONS to celebrate what our parish and school have done;
- who -- will assist in PLANNING for the FUTURE years.

[Home](#) [Back](#) [Top](#) [Site-Map](#)