

Pope John Paul II Regional Catholic Elementary School History

Pope John Paul II Regional Catholic Elementary School has a rich history dating back to the early 1900's. The school traces its lineage from four Coatesville parishes: St. Cecilia (1870), St. Stanislaus Kostka (1907), Our Lady of the Rosary (1916), and St. Joseph (1924), St. Peter, established in Honey Brook (1963) and Our Lady of Consolation, established in Parkesburg (1904).

From their inception until 1971, St. Cecilia parish, St. Joseph parish, and St. Stanislaus Kostka parish all had independent parish schools. Two of these parishes, St. Cecilia and St. Joseph, enjoy strong roots with the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary



St. Cecilia School 1921

St. Cecilia School History

In the early 1900's, when Father James Holahan became pastor of St. Cecilia Parish, he dreamed of starting a Catholic School. As early as 1903, he requested the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from the Motherhouse at Villa Maria in West Chester to conduct catechetical classes on Saturday mornings. In pursuit of his dream, Father Holahan sought the hospitality of his parishioners until a new rectory could be arranged and had his rectory converted to a school with a convent on the top floor. In January of 1906, six Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters traveled two days by horse and buggy to open St. Cecilia School. Two hundred children from the town and surrounding countryside registered immediately. By 1907, increased enrollment necessitated a larger building and in August of 1907, the cornerstone for the new school was laid. The new school, consisting of eight grades and a two-year high school program, opened on March 18, 1908. In April 1908, Bishop Prendergast blessed the building and administered Confirmation to the first class prepared in the school.



St. Joseph School History

In 1924, St. Joseph Parish was established in order to serve the spiritual needs of the Slovak people who migrated to Coatesville to work at Lukens Steel. The first two pastors had very short terms of office, however, Father Michael Metro arrived at the age of thirty-four and remained for forty-one years. In the late 1950's, Father Metro asked if the IHM sisters from West Chester would staff a new school. Mother Maria Pacis and her administration promised sisters for the 1960-61 school year. Many dedicated men from the parish lovingly built the convent for the sisters, even designing a beautiful wooden altar for the chapel. To keep construction costs to a minimum, many parishioners contributed their time and talent to construct the school, called St. Joseph Slovak Elementary School. With 101 children registered, the new school and convent opened on September 8, 1960 with three IHM sisters teaching combined grades 1 to 8.



St. Stanislaus Kostka School History

In 1912, two classrooms were prepared in the basement of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church by Father James Ploszaj. This was the beginning of the Saint Stanislaus Kostka School in Coatesville. The classes were conducted by two Bernardine Sisters of St. Francis whose motherhouse was in Reading. Mother Clare was the first superior. In 1917, Father John Mickuin became the Pastor. He converted one of the parish homes into a convent and a four classroom school including a recreation hall was built. The children received their education in double grades, 1 to 8. The school also provided the study of the Polish language in its early years. Approximately 176 Bernardine Franciscan Sisters were missioned at St. Stanislaus Kostka School until June 1983.



Top: Sr. Marie Edwin, IHM Conducts a Reading Session with St. Cecilia's First Graders in 1953



Left: Students from the First Communion Class from St. Stanislaus Kostka of 1922



Graduating Class of 1947 at St. Stanislaus Kostka



Top: Third and Fourth Grade Students at St. Stanislaus Kostka in 1957



Left: First Grade Students at St. Joseph's 1962



May Procession at St. Cecilia's, 1966