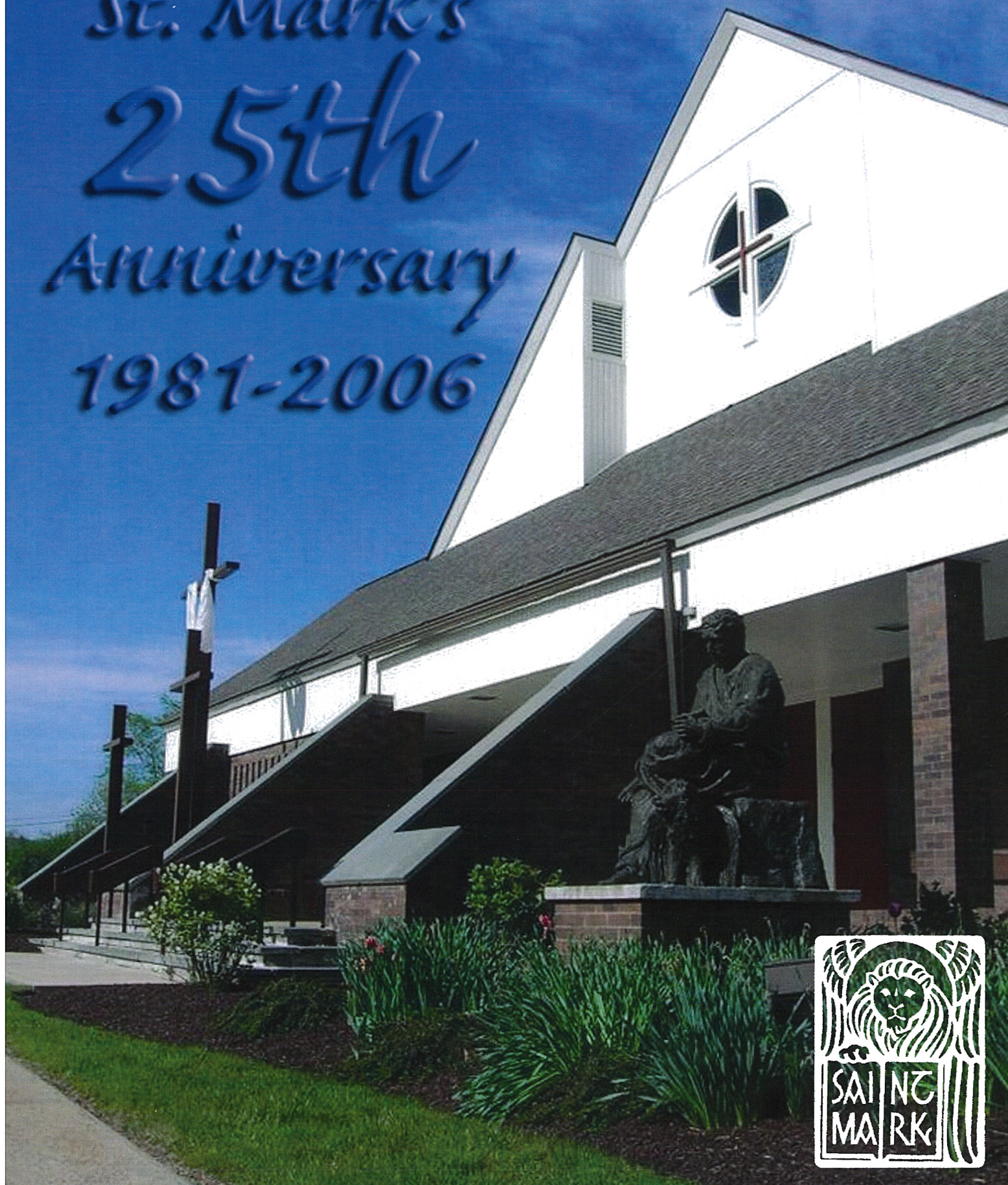


*St. Mark's
25th
Anniversary
1981-2006*



PREFACE

As the twenty-fifth anniversary of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish approaches—November 1, 2006—and before my memory goes completely, I decided to attempt to write a history of our parish. I am not a historian, as will be evident from this attempt, but I did during my pastorate try to save things that I thought would be of some historical value in the future. I hope this will give future generations some idea of what a Catholic parish was like in these days. I have tried to go beyond just mentioning facts like when the church was built, etc. to add stories that would reflect the real life of the people of St. Mark's.

Like any young parish we were concerned with trying to pay for our new church but at the same time the people of the parish went beyond their parochial needs and reached out to people with greater needs. This was characteristic of this parish and its people right from the start. I am proud to have been a part of such a dedicated group of people, and have given this aspect of parish life special emphasis.

I have tried to include names of people involved in so many aspects of parish life because such people are so easily forgotten. Perhaps, fifty years from now, some relative of these people will be surprised to read of the good deeds of some great-great-grandmother. I am especially grateful to Marilynn Heitman who not only corrected my grammar in the first part of the history but also wrote the history covering the period of time when I was no longer pastor—2000 through 2006.

I enjoyed preparing this history and hope you will find it interesting. My thanks to all those people who worked so hard to make St. Mark's Parish a means of bringing joy, peace and happiness to all people in need.

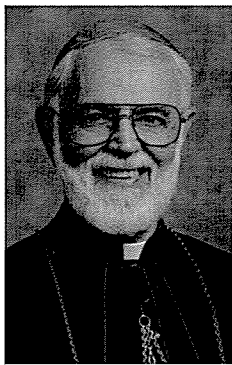
Again, I hope you enjoy reading this history as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Fr. Tom Bresnahan

THE BIRTH OF A PARISH

Most parishes are simply created at the word of the bishop. St. Mark's, however, was quite different in origin. One might say it had a unique beginning.

At a Salem Deanery meeting back in 1979, the need for a parish in the southern part of Londonderry was mentioned. Many of the priests present felt that St. Jude's in northern Londonderry and St. Thomas in Derry were overcrowded. The southern part of Londonderry was actually in the boundary lines of St. Jude's but, because of the overcrowding there and for other reasons, many of the people in the southern part of Londonderry were worshipping at St. Thomas Aquinas in Derry. It was evident to the priests at the meeting that there was a need for an additional parish in the area



Bishop Odore Gendron

The priests took their concerns to Bishop Odore Gendron, the head of the Diocese at that time. They requested that the Bishop allow them to study the feasibility of establishing a new parish in the southern part of Londonderry. Fr. Paul McHugh, who was in charge of diocesan planning, met with the priests and suggested that they form a committee of interested parishioners in the area. The priests went one step further at the suggestion of Rev. Karl Dowd, the dean of the area. They decided to employ Sr. Marion Sheehan, a School Sister of Notre Dame, to conduct a study. The priests of St. Thomas Aquinas in Derry, Fr. James Haller, the pastor, and Fr. Pierre Baker, the associate pastor, agreed to help in the project.

Sr. Marion began her study to assess the need for a parish in the area by conducting a door-to-door census. She recruited people to accompany her on this mission. Frequently, she and her companions were suspected of being members of the Jehovah Witnesses as they went door to door searching out Catholics.

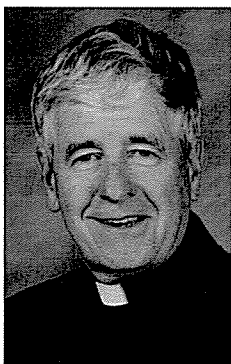


Nancy Conner, Barbara Gingrow, Sandy Czuchry, Sr. Marion Sheehan, Yvette Bowman, Maureen St. Jean

As a result of this census 450 families of the Catholic faith were found in the area. Many were traveling to their old parishes in Massachusetts to worship and some were just not going to church at all. Sr. Marion's work confirmed

the fact that a church was definitely needed in the area. She began to develop committees to meet the essential needs of the people—religious education, liturgy, finance, and building committees were formed.

In April of 1981 an interim Parish Council was formed to coordinate the efforts of these established committees. The Interim Parish Council established prayer groups, visited homes, assessed needs, identified parishioners, and gathered census card information. The officers of this first Council were Donald Goduti, President; Peter Kinney, Vice President; and Fred Chamberlain, Secretary. The co-directors of the Religious Education Committee were Barbara Englund and Maureen Chamberlain. Arlene Cody and Barbara Gingrow were in charge of Liturgy and Communications. In the spirit of this duty, Barbara produced the first parish bulletins.



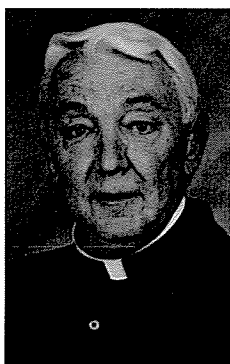
Rev. James Haller

The newly formed community of Catholics in south Londonderry began to grow under the leadership of Sr. Marion. The bishop asked the clergy of St. Thomas Aquinas in Derry to provide at least one weekend Mass for the people. Arrangements were made to rent the gymnasium of South School for services. (Oddly enough, the same architects who designed South School, Isaac and Isaac, would eventually design St. Mark's Church.) The first Mass for this newly formed community was offered in South School gym at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, November 29, 1980, by Rev. James Haller, Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas.

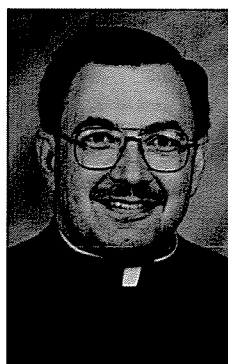
Starting with that first Mass in November of 1980, Masses were offered every Saturday evening at 6:00 P.M. Fr. Pierre Baker, associate pastor of St. Thomas, Fr. Paul McHugh, director of Diocesan Planning, and Msgr. Thomas F.

Hansberry, Vicar General,

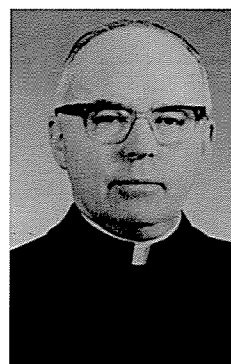
also led liturgical celebrations for the new community. Of course, since the gym at South School was not designed for church services, holding Mass there presented some challenges. The boiler room served as the sacristy and other unusual adjustments were made.



Rev. Paul McHugh



Rev. Pierre Baker



Msgr. Thomas
Hansberry

Sr. Marion's work and the consistent offering of the liturgy on Saturday evenings led to the identification of over 500 families in the southern section of Londonderry. St. Mark's, though still unnamed, was a community, but not a parish. It was a church of people, but people without a church.

The Interim Council petitioned the bishop to establish a parish and appoint a pastor. However, there seemed to be some reluctance on the part of the bishop to do so. In view of the declining vocations to the priesthood, Bishop Gendron hesitated. To quell the rising anxiety of the enthusiastic community, he eventually told them that a decision would be made in the fall.

While patiently waiting for the bishop's decision regarding the formation of a new parish and the appointment of a pastor, the people busied themselves in selecting a name for their new community. The following article appeared in the *Derry News* on February 5, 1981.

NEW CHURCH NEEDS NAME

Londonderry: The new Catholic community in South Londonderry is in need of a name. Every adult, 18 years of age and older, who attends Mass on Feb. 14th will be eligible to cast one ballot for the name of his or her choice, or may send one ballot by mail. Ballots should be sent to Alicia MacDonald, 11 Hampshire Lane, Londonderry, NH.

You are asked to select names from the following list and indicate your first, second, and third choice. The list includes: Blessed Trinity, Holy Cross, Holy Family, Holy Spirit, Church of the Risen Lord, Prince of Peace, Resurrection, St. Elizabeth Seton, St. Gabriel, St. Isaac Jogues, St. John Newman, St. Julia Billiart, St. Patrick or St. Sebastian.

While the selection of a name for the parish created a great deal of interest, planning continued and discussions ensued concerning the direction the community should take. A special meeting was held on February 9, 1981. Present were Fathers Haller, McHugh, Dowd, and Hansberry as well as Mr. Joe Forbes, Chairman of the Diocesan Building Committee, and Sr. Marion Sheehan. The minutes of this meeting reflect the confusion that existed in the early days of our history. The first question posed was, "Who is in charge?"

After Fathers Haller, McHugh, and Dowd spoke of their relationship to the new community, Sr. Marion reported on her home visitation activity. As she gave her report it became clear that her work had been confined solely to Londonderry. Msgr. Hansberry then stated that he was under the impression that the abutting areas of northeastern Hudson and western Windham were also to be included in the study. This came as somewhat of a surprise to those present who had all believed that only the southern section of Londonderry was being considered for a new parish. The addition of two new areas opened up many more possibilities than had previously been considered.

Sr. Marion reported that the “name the parish” program was moving along quite nicely. Msgr. Hansberry suggested that the five most popular names be submitted to the bishop—adding that he, personally, favored dedicating the community to the Holy Spirit. This aside might explain a future suggestion made by the bishop to name the parish the ‘Church of the Divine Paraclete’. (Fr. Tom B’s reaction to this suggestion was, “What a mouthful!”)

The meeting concluded with an agreement by the staff of St. Thomas Aquinas to accept the responsibility of serving the new community, in view of the reluctance of St. Jude’s to do so. The possibility of expanding the new community’s boundaries would be given further study.

At every step of the way the community was kept informed regarding meetings, needs, and happenings. Quite often the local news media was utilized to accomplish this. On March 4, 1981 the following article appeared in the *Derry News*.

PARISH COUNCIL TO MEET

Londonderry: The parish council of the new Catholic church being organized in Londonderry will meet tonight at 7:30 P.M. in the South School Library.

The Council will hold a bake sale on Saturday and those who wish to make donations may call Maryellen Maffei.

More lectors are needed and those interested are invited to a meeting on March 8 at 7 P.M. at St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

The children’s choir will rehearse from 2 to 8 P.M. Monday. Arlene Cody is in charge.

A supper is planned for March 21, and a retreat for the weekend of March 13.

Those interested in having a Mass on Sunday should call Pat Neos.

A meeting to discuss forming neighborhood CCD groups for parents who live on Chase Road will be held at Janice Nezballa's house on Chase Rd. People willing to host one evening presentation for parents in their area are asked to call Barbara Englund or Sr. Marion's office.

Those interested in joining an adult folk group should call Sandy Czuchry.

Our early parish bulletins tell a story of a new, young, and growing community. The following clippings taken from the May 1981 issues show this.

NEW LIFE Congratulations to three sets of parents: Bob and Patti McDonald, a boy, Kevin; Larry and Kris Cate, a girl; and Norman and Diane Ducas, a girl, Dominique.

SPAGHETTI SUPPER Tickets are available from May 2nd until June 6. (Adults, \$2.50 and children under 12, \$1.50) No tickets will be available at the door. If you wish to help, call Maryellen Maffei.

OFFERTORY The May 9th collection was \$107. Thank you.

NEW EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS Eric Reinert, Nancy Reinert, Pierce Cody, Arlene Cody, Janice Nezballa, Dick Dupont, and Sr. Marion Sheehan will be commissioned by the Very Rev. Karl Dowd, Dean of the area, this Sunday.

PRAYER GROUP If you are interested call Arlene Early.

The Interim Parish Council kept the community informed about the search for a pastor and other aspects regarding the establishment of their new parish through the South Londonderry Mission Church Bulletin. This excerpt is taken from the bulletin published on Pentecost, June 7, 1981.

In an effort to bring you up to date, the following is the latest information we have concerning a pastor and a building for our new community. Consideration is being given to our needs and desires, but no priest has as yet been appointed. I am sure we all pray that it will be soon. Concerning a building, initial research and planning has begun. The information being gathered will provide alternatives from which to choose after a priest has been appointed. No decision regarding a building will be made until a priest has been appointed. If anyone has any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Periodic updates will be published in future bulletins.

Don Goduti, President of the Interim Parish Council

The Diocesan Personnel Board had a meeting to discuss naming a pastor for the new community in south Londonderry. Fr. Thomas Bresnahan, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Nashua had expressed an interest to Bishop Mulvey to serve in this capacity. (Bishop Mulvey was the chairman of the Personnel Board and would later become Bishop of Wilmington, DE and Providence, RI.) He would present the request to Bishop Gendron.

On October 5, 1981 Mr. Don Goduti, president of the Interim Council, received the following letter from Bishop Gendron.

Dear Mr. Goduti:

I am pleased at this time to announce to you that present personnel in the Diocese and other pastoral circumstances permit me to canonically erect a new parish in South Londonderry, and to appoint a full-time Pastor for this new parish. The date of the foundation of the parish and of the assignment of the new Pastor will be November 1, 1981.

The first and founding pastor of this parish will be the Reverend Thomas J. Bresnahan, who will be leaving his present assignment as Pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Nashua to serve the Catholic Community of South Londonderry.

After much prayerful consideration of the potential names for the parish that were submitted to me, and discussion of these names with Father Bresnahan, it

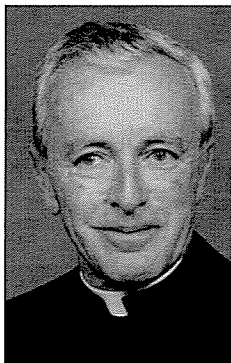
appeared clear to us that the main concern of your community was that the name of the parish be distinctive and, if possible, not representative of the names of other parishes in the Diocese. For this reason, I have chosen to name the parish Saint Mark the Evangelist, in honor of the author of the first gospel. There is no other parish in the Diocese named after this great saint and it seems most fitting that he, who has contributed so much to our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and whose Gospel remains one of the founding documents of the Church, be so honored.

I am sure that the people of South Londonderry who have waited so patiently for their own parish will be pleased with the parish and priest now made available to them. I am sure, as well, that Father Bresnahan can count on the tremendous support and cooperation that already has been evidenced in the area to build up Saint Mark's into a Catholic community of Faith which will be fully alive.

With every good wish, I am

Cordially in Christ,
Odore J. Gendron
Bishop of Manchester

The news of Father Tom's appointment as the first pastor of St. Mark's was announced in the following *Derry News* article, dated October 10, 1981.



Rev. Thomas
Bresnahan

ST. MARK'S WILL HAVE A NEW PASTOR

The Most Rev. Odore J. Gendron, D.D. Bishop of Manchester has announced the appointment of Rev. Thomas Bresnahan to the newly formed St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in South Londonderry. The appointment is effective Nov. 1, 1981.

Father Bresnahan, a native of Manchester, was ordained to the priesthood in 1960 at the American College of the University of Louvain, Belgium where he received his Masters degree in Religious Education. He served as associate pastor of parishes in Portsmouth, Concord and Berlin. He later served

as co-pastor, with Rev. James Haller, in team ministry at St. Patrick's Parish in Jaffrey, N.H.

From 1969 to 1975, Father Bresnahan was director of vocations for the Diocese and coordinator of the deacon internship program. He also served as chairman of the religious education department at Bishop Brady High School in Concord and as chaplain of Rivier College in Nashua. Most recently Father Bresnahan served as the pastor of St. Joseph parish in Nashua.

Having obtained a list of names of families in the Londonderry area from Sr. Marion Sheehan's work, Fr. Tom contacted the pastors of St. Matthew's in Windham and St. John the Evangelist in Hudson to get a listing of the families who lived within the area now designated as St. Mark's. It was noted that the area of southeastern New Hampshire now had three gospel writers in the area: Saints Matthew, John, and now Mark. Only Luke was missing.

The following letter was sent to all known parishioners. Some found the transition to a new parish too difficult, but the majority was enthusiastic, cooperative, and most supportive in facing the challenges ahead.

Dear Parishioner,

It is rather strange to be writing a letter to someone you don't know. Yet, in spite of the fact that we have never met, we are united through Baptism, our faith in Jesus Christ, and our membership in the Catholic Church.

Our Bishops have asked me to come to this rapidly growing area of our diocese to serve the people of Hudson, Londonderry, and Windham as their spiritual guide. Having just completed five years of service at St. Joseph's Parish in Nashua, I fully realize how painful departures can be. I am sure it is difficult for many of you to leave parishes that have been your homes for years. However, the Church of Jesus Christ can only grow when we are willing to experience such pains for the love we have for our Catholic faith.

Many of our immigrant ancestors, through their sacrifices, built the churches and the parishes we have called home for so many years. In a sense, it is now our turn to do the same for future generations. I sincerely hope and pray

that you and your family will enthusiastically share this task with me.

The home I extend to you is now only a field on the corner of Mammoth Road and South Road. Our Masses for the time being can only be offered in school halls and whatever other facilities the Lord will open up to us. We are truly the “pilgrim” church in need of a home.

I am enclosing a copy of what might be called our baptismal certificate. It is the official decree of the formation of our parish and defines the area our parish covers.

Looking forward to meeting you personally, I am

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Tom Bresnahan

**DECREE OF ERECTION
PARISH OF ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST
LONDONDERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Having considered the tremendous growth taking place in the southern area of Londonderry, as well as a similar growth in western Windham and that part of the Hudson community known as the Robinson Road area, and given the pastoral initiative taken by the Pastors of the surrounding parishes, as well as the Catholic people of this area, I hereby erect and declare erected a new parish to be known as the Parish of St. Mark the Evangelist, in the southern portion of Londonderry, NH. The effective date of this erection will be noon, on November 1, 1981.

The first pastor of the parish of St. Mark the Evangelist in southern Londonderry will be the Reverend Thomas J. Bresnahan.

The decree then goes on to describe the territorial boundaries of the new parish. It is dated October 5, 1981 and is signed by Bishop Odore Gendron.

The land for the new church on the corner of South and Mammoth Roads was said to be eleven acres and had been purchased by the Diocese on March 12, 1979. (Fr. Tom was later told it was really seven acres.) The purchase price was \$66,000. This debt, along with the salary expenses involved in Sr. Marion’s ministry, were turned over to the new parish.



Mass in Londonderry
Presbyterian Church

At a meeting of the Pastoral Council on October 22, 1981 plans were made for our first Masses as a named community. With the assistance of Mr. Robert Read, a friend of Fr. Tom and at that time a member of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Rowland Westervelt and the Board of Trustees of the Londonderry Presbyterian Church were asked if St. Mark's might use their church facilities. They

welcomed us in a spirit of true Christian charity, and the Catholic Community began worshipping the Lord in a Presbyterian Church. Thus, Londonderry Presbyterian Church was the site of baptisms, first communions and weddings until our new church was built. It was noted that such an event would probably shock the Catholics and Presbyterians in Londonderry, Northern Ireland since they were experiencing a great deal of conflict at this time. Let it be noted that the first hymn sung by our Catholic community in this Presbyterian Church was "Faith of Our Fathers."

In these early days our Masses were being offered literally, "all over the map" (well, at least the map of Londonderry). Mass would be offered on Saturday at the Presbyterian Church on the corner of Mammoth and Pillsbury at 4:00 P.M.; Mass would take place at 6:00 P.M. in South School. On Sunday there would be an 11:30 A.M. Mass at the Lions Hall next to the Methodist Church on Mammoth Road. Jimmie Falvey designed a map to show the various locations of Masses; this information, along with the Sunday Bulletin, was mailed to all parishioners. In fact, for the first three months of our existence the parish bulletin was mailed to all known parishioners.

Our community is truly grateful to Rev. Rowland Westervelt and the Londonderry Presbyterian Church for welcoming us and allowing us to use their facilities. Their kindness is noted on a plaque located at the entrance of St. Bridget's Chapel. Rev. Rowland Westervelt was instrumental in the formation of the Londonderry Clergy Association. He is pastor emeritus of the Londonderry Presbyterian Church and eventually retired to Limerick, Maine. We note the change from Londonderry, **Northern** Ireland to Limerick, **Southern** Ireland.

The use of the Lions Club facilities was obtained through the kindness of Fred Campbell, a member of the local club. The use of their facilities ended



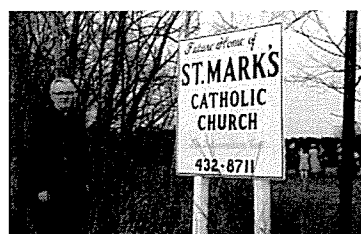
First fair in Londonderry Lions
Club

when we were able to use the function room at the Londonderry Bowling Alley (now the site of the Workout Club and Wellness Center). We are grateful to the Lions Club for their assistance in our time of need.



Blessing of land at South & Mammoth Roads

One of our first bulletins also announced that the land on which the future church would be built was to be blessed after the 11:30 A.M. Mass on the following Sunday. The congregation left the bowling alley on that Sunday with some hesitation since it was raining heavily. As they approached the future site of the Church they noticed that it was not raining at this corner of Londonderry. Yet it seemed to be pouring everywhere else. A miracle? Divine intervention? This led Fr. Tom to claim greater power over the weather than the Pope. (The Pope's visit to Boston earlier in the year was met with a continuous downpour.)



Fr. Tom at future site of church

The parishioners were also informed that, through the kindness of Msgr. Duffy, pastor of St. Matthew's in Windham, Father Tom would be living temporarily in St. Matthew's rectory.



First Thanksgiving Day Mass at Londonderry South School

In November of 1981 the first Thanksgiving Day Mass was offered at South School. Canned goods were collected for the Nashua Soup Kitchen. Fr. Bresnahan was the main celebrant and the concelebrants were Fathers Baker, Haller, Dowd, McHugh, and Msgr. Hansberry. Sr. Marion Sheehan served as Lector. It was announced at this Mass that a full schedule of Sunday Masses would begin the following week at the Londonderry Bowling Center at 8:00, 10:00 and 11:30 A.M.

Our meeting in a bowling alley led to some humorous comments. "Father, your homilies are right down our alley!" Or, "Bowling for Jesus." The use of this facility also would lead to some very interesting incidents in the future.



Bob Vachon arranging chairs at the bowling alley

While the use of the function room at the Londonderry Bowling Alley was a tremendous help in gathering the community together, it did present some unique situations. The room accommodated 200 people. At times, to adequately seat everyone, the children were asked to come to the front of the room and simply sit on the floor surrounding the altar. On one occasion,

during the thanksgiving after Communion, the Pastor was seated to the side of the altar in deep prayerful reflection. Suddenly, three year old Katie, daughter of Robert and Barbara Mullen, stood and walked up to him with her naked Barbie Doll in hand. She held it up right in front of his face. Needless to say, Father blushed a little and then began to laugh. He said he never expected to have such a graphic anatomy lesson in front of two hundred people.



Mass in Londonderry Bowling Center

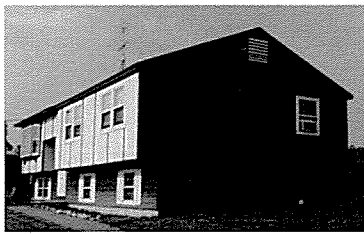
Located next to the function room in the bowling alley was a restaurant-lounge called T.R.'s (Teddy Roosevelt). On entering the bowling alley one either took a left into the lounge or a right into "our" church (no political implications intended). On one occasion the pastor was completely vested for Mass when he discovered that there was no wine available for the Eucharist (shades of Cana). He quickly found the janitor and asked him if he could borrow some wine for Mass. The two of them set out for the lounge. What a picture that would have made for our parish history ... Fr. Tom garbed in his vestments standing behind the bar in T.R.'s searching for wine! Fortunately, they found some and Mass began only a few minutes late.

Fr. Tom was residing at St. Matthew's in Windham during these early days and so on Sunday December 8, 1981, he arose quite early excited that a full schedule of Masses would finally begin that day. However, once he looked outside, his excitement diminished greatly—at least twenty inches of snow had fallen during the night.

He left St. Matthew's rectory aware of only one way to reach Londonderry. To his dismay, a huge tree had fallen in front of the Windham Nurseries and his route was blocked. He turned around and, after some time, fortunately found Route 128 that eventually led him to the bowling alley. Nothing had been plowed and it was now 7:30 A.M. (The female editor of this history,

Marilynn Heitman, added here, “I am sure all the women reading this narrative noted that although Fr. Tom didn’t know how to get to Londonderry, he never stopped to ask for directions. It’s a male thing.” My response to that remark was, “How many places were open? How many people were walking the streets in the middle of a major snowstorm at 7 A.M.? I asked the Lord for directions and he came through. Amen.”)

The attendance at Mass that day was sparse. The 8:00 A.M. Mass had seven people; the 10:00 A.M. had 30, and the 11:30 A.M. Mass had a total of 40 people. In the early days of our parish there were no collections during Mass. Instead, a basket for offertory donations was placed at the entrance and people simply made their donations as they entered. The total offertory on this snowy Sunday amounted to \$103.00. Father Tom breathed a sign of relief—the \$100.00 rental fee could be paid.



House purchased for the rectory

The next task was to find housing for the pastor, a rectory. A house was found at 1 Griffin Road, fairly close to the site of the proposed church. This house was purchased on December 8, 1981 for a cost of \$62,000. Robert Carr, of Grinnell & Bureau, a member of the parish, was most helpful in arranging the purchase. The owner was an African American, Barry Austin. (This is mentioned because of the following incident that took place a few months later.)

Some of the women in the parish felt that some interior decorating was necessary for the new rectory and so volunteered to come in and do some painting and wallpapering. For Father’s convenience they began their work when he was away on retreat. They chose an extremely hot summer day to begin their work and so knowing that Father wouldn’t be around they dressed in comfortable clothing because of the excessive heat. The secretary at that time was Mary Perkins who arrived at the rectory and saw this huge wooden cross leaning up against the door. Perhaps thinking of the Ku Klux Klan she called the police.

The women were in the middle of their work when the police officer arrived at the door. Mary explained to the officer that this was a rectory, the home of the priest. As she was doing this one or two of the ladies could be seen going up and down the stairs with paint and wallpaper, dressed in their very cool and comfortable clothing. The police officer asked her if she was sure

this was a rectory, it certainly didn't look like one to him with all these women running around the house!

Maureen and Fred Chamberlain were kind enough to host a "Shower for the Pastor" in their home on Sparhawk Drive. So many Catholics lived on Sparhawk Drive that it was referred to as a Catholic ghetto. Many generous parishioners attended and gave gifts to furnish the rectory. Armed with kitchen utensils, Father Tom moved into the rectory on December 23rd, just in time to celebrate his first Christmas as pastor of St. Mark's. But he was not alone.

The house had been vacant for over a month before he took occupancy and a group of field mice decided that it would be a perfect dwelling for them. There was Fr. Tom on Christmas Eve reciting the poem, " 'T was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring..." except every mouse!



Christmas Mass in Londonderry
South School

Bishop Robert E. Mulvey, then auxiliary Bishop of Manchester, offered the first Christmas Eve Mass at 6:00 P.M. in South School. Over 500 people were present. Bishop Mulvey, always so thoughtful, brought Christmas gifts for the altar servers. When Fr. Tom noticed this, he sent one of the altar servers to ask the Bishop where the pastor's gift was. The Bishop quickly replied, "Tell him I have already given him his gift. It's the Parish of St. Mark's."

Because of the limited finances of the parish (with a debt of approximately \$142,000, and not much to show for it except a vacant lot and a rectory), the parish bulletin ran a column entitled "Can You Help?" The November 15, 1981 bulletin included the following announcement:

NEEDED: A typewriting table (no computers at that time)
Information on a good deal for a copy machine
An adding machine
An office desk

Since the parish bulletin was mailed out every week, many people responded to our appeals for help and their assistance is still remembered. Some of the items that immediately come to mind were a dining room set donated by Msgr. Duffy from St. Matthew's, a refrigerator from Betty and Jim Eppeson,

an adding machine from Tess Schmidt (she said it was an antique, but it served us many years before “retiring”), a recliner from Nancy and Eric Reinert, dishes and kitchen utensils from Kathy and Paul St. Louis, a television from Louise and Mike Dromgoole, and many other household goods. The kindness of these people and many others will not be forgotten.

In an effort to improve the financial picture of the parish, Peter Kinney, a Parish Council member, suggested we introduce a monthly drawing called “The 1000 Club” with a monthly prize of \$1,000. We were never able to get enough members to do this, but a \$500 first prize was possible. Over the years this fundraiser enabled us to purchase items for the parish not included in our budget. We are grateful to Peter and to all those who supported this effort.



Daily Mass in the rectory

For our first Lenten schedule in 1982 daily Mass was offered on the dining room table in the rectory every morning. About 12 people attended daily Mass. Eventually, the rectory basement was finished and a large room and two small offices became available. All this basement renovation was done by volunteers Phil DeCarolus, Jim Epperson, Phil Nezballa, Paul St. Louis, and others.

Our first Holy Week Services were held on April 19, 1982. The Vigil was celebrated at 6:00 P.M. at South School and Easter Sunday Masses were offered at Matthew Thornton School at 8:00, 10:00 and 11:30 A.M.

Our first, “First Holy Communion” was held in the Presbyterian Church on April 17, 1983. Twenty children received the Eucharist for the first time. Each child was given a particular role within the liturgy to help them be a special part of the Mass. One young boy, Tim Whall, was supposed to ring the bells during the consecration. Unfortunately, we couldn’t find any bells. Just before Mass was to begin, Bob St. Jean came to our rescue. He said he had a bell at home and he would go get it. We were quite surprised when he returned and we saw that the bell was actually a cowbell. However, in an emergency, anything will do. At the end of the Mass the pastor directed a few comments to our Massachusetts visitors, “Since many of you Massachusetts residents refer to New Hampshire as ‘Cow Hampshire,’ you can now go home and tell your friends that we even use cow bells at Mass up here.” It was definitely time for our own church building!

Building a church entails a great deal of work prior to actual construction. Selecting an architect, conducting a fundraiser, presenting plans to the Town, and obtaining approval from the Diocesan Building Committee all had to be accomplished. In addition, we needed to obtain funds from the bordering parishes. (When a new parish is established from other parishes, a dowry from these parishes is given to the new parish. In our case St. Matthew's in Windham, St. John the Evangelist in Hudson, and St. Jude's in Londonderry were supposed to provide this dowry. Over a three-year period this amounted to \$40,000 that greatly assisted St. Mark's.)

The architect selected was Andy Isaac of Isaac and Isaac in Manchester. Andy and his brother were responsible for the design of many buildings in the area, for example, South School and St. Anselm's College Church. Unfortunately, Mr. Isaac died during construction of St. Mark's causing further complications in the construction of the church.

The site plan was submitted to the town as the following *Derry News* article reports:

SITE PLAN FOR ST. MARK'S GOES TO PLANNING BOARD

Londonderry: Planning Board members last

Wednesday began considering a site plan for St. Mark's Church proposed for South and Mammoth Roads and will continue discussing the plan at next Wednesday's meeting.

An open field at the corner of the two roads awaits the church, following the beginning of the parish in 1981 and a major fund raising drive to pay for the church and a parish hall.

Board members approved most of the plan. Building Inspector Kevin Lynch will have to check the drainage areas, and a revamping of the intersection may be considered to minimize potential dangers. In addition, some board members said they'd like to see the entrance to the church on South Road alone, and not on Mammoth.

Parking for 100 cars is provided in the plans, with future expansion and handicapped access included. An overall seating capacity of 526 seats is planned as well.

A total of \$400,000 was pledged by parishioners for construction of the church. While waiting, services have been

held at, among other places, the Londonderry Presbyterian Church, the Londonderry Bowling Alley, and at South Elementary School.



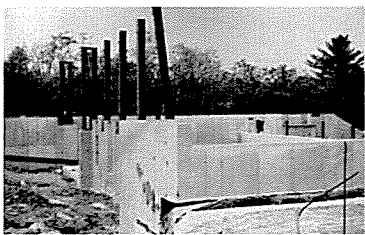
Church Fund Raising Committee

A Fund Raising Committee was established and the drive to raise funds for our new church was off and running. Jack Falvey was chairman and was assisted by Kathy Carr, Bob and Eileen Early, Mary Falvey, Chris and Joe Holahan, and Jeannie and Dick Iannacone. The Martin J. Moran Co. served as the fund-raiser with the task of raising \$400,000—half of the projected cost. Mr. Edgar J. Holmes, representing the Moran Co., directed the effort and, thanks to his enthusiasm, the appeal for funds was most successful.

The contract for construction (a projected cost of \$734,000) was awarded to Arenius and Associates of Ashby, Massachusetts. Construction was to begin in April 1982. Our choice of a building contractor eventually became a problem because the company went bankrupt in the middle of construction. However, they were bonded and construction, although delayed with the death of the architect, the bankruptcy of the construction company, and a steel strike, was eventually completed. Thanks be to God.



Andy Issac, Sr. Marion, Fr. Tom



Church construction begins

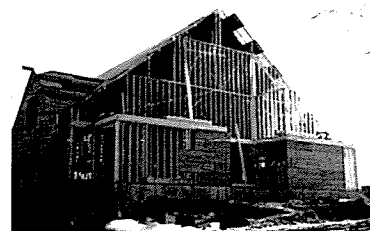
These unfortunate developments forced the pastor into areas of expertise quite foreign to his training. His impatience led him to call a meeting with the bankruptcy lawyer and all the sub-contractors. He informed the lawyer and sub-contractors that the bishop was quite upset about the slow construction and he wanted to know exactly what was happening. He then placed a tape recorder on the table noting that this made the group a little uncomfortable—exactly his intention. Thinking himself quite clever with this approach, he returned to the rectory to play the tape. Nothing. A lesson learned. Henceforth he would never trust his technical skills at recording!

It was around this time that the parish employed Mary Perkins as a secretary. Mary, in spite of her many health problems (unknown to most people), would soon become more than a “girl Friday.” She would become the first Director of Religious Education and would serve the parish in many capacities over the years.



Sal Sperlazza with Fr. Tom

Our building committee, headed by Sal Sperlazza, continually pushed the contractor to complete the construction of our church. As bricks were laid and work



Church construction

progressed, other parish activities continued.

In September of 1983 Jim St. Louis received his Eagle Scout Award for his many services to the community. Since the previous March he had worked with our first group of altar boys (girls hadn't yet made the scene). The following announcement appeared in the March 14 bulletin:

ALTAR BOY CANDIDATES

The following boys have indicated a desire to serve as altar boys in our parish. They will make their request as a group at next Saturday's evening Mass at South School. Steve Fredrich, Thomas DuPont, Jeffrey Boucher, Steve Chamberlain, Bill Zinsmeister, Scot Englund, Daniel Mullen, John Matuszewski, Steven Davis, Kenny Poole, Gary Poole, Joe Pfyffer, Ken Goduti, Joe Lynch, and Garry Iannacone.

The Knights of Columbus, mostly members of St. Jude's Parish, donated albs for the use of our new servers.

As stated previously, whenever a new parish is started in the Diocese, the parishes from which it is formed give a dowry or financial donation to assist the new parish. In our case, three parishes were involved. St. Mark's received \$20,000 from St. Jude's, \$10,000 from St. John the Evangelist and \$10,000 from St. Matthew's. By September of 1983 the average weekly income only amounted to \$1,200 and we were required to make large interest payments on the debt already incurred. Two weekly offertory collections only covered the interest on our debt.

To help defray some of our expenses, innovative ideas came to the fore. Even the land on which the church was to be built became a source of income, as indicated by this October 1983 bulletin.

LOAM FOR SALE

We are pleased to announce that one of our parishioners has found someone who will deliver loam to your home. It is being offered in loads of eight yards. A donation of \$60.00 per load is requested and payment should be given to the driver at the time of delivery. The loam is available for inspection at the site of the new church and is located at the intersection of Mammoth and South Roads. Parishioners are being given the first opportunity to purchase this loam. Next week, it will be offered to the general public. Checks should be made out to St. Mark's Building Fund. If interested, please contact Paul St. Louis on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of this week between the hours of 5 and 9 P.M.

The young people of the parish were also involved in raising funds for the new church. They pledged the sum of \$5,000 for the baptistery. Through the use of weekly envelopes, the youth of the parish eventually completed this pledge.

The construction of the church building continued in spite of another obstacle, a steel strike. As Christmas of 1983 approached, it appeared that we would not be able to celebrate our Christmas Masses in the new church. However, with a lot of finagling, we finally did manage to do so.



Church construction

There were a few problems—one major one was electricity. In our determination to use the uncompleted Church, a call was made to the director of NH Public Service. He pointed out that the contractor had failed to apply for a permit. However, being the good Christian that he was, he said, "Father, what kind of a guy do you think I am who would refuse to give light to a church on Christmas Eve?" One problem solved.



First Mass in church basement

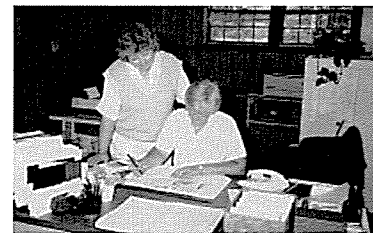


First Christmas celebration in church basement

Now, what were we to do for heat? The contractor had some huge space heaters but, in addition to producing heat, they produced an awful smell and a great deal of noise. We used them to take the chill out of the air but turned them off an hour before Mass to reduce the odor. So it was, like the Holy Family, with little heat and little light we were enlightened and warmed by the Presence of

the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, as we celebrated our first Christmas in our new but incomplete parish hall. The hall would not be used again until Easter of 1984.

As the parish continued to grow, Mary Perkins not only wore the hat of parish secretary but she was also the Director of Religious Education. In September of 1984 Anne Lasnier accepted the position of parish secretary and worked with Mary on many parish activities. They were affectionately called the “Church Ladies.” When they let their



Church ladies Anne Lasnier, Mary Perkins

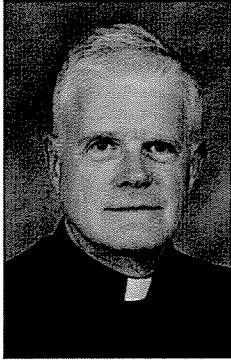
hair down at parish functions they were a source of great humor to all. Mary once convinced Fr. Tom to play Father Time at a New Year’s Eve Party. However, her greatest achievement by far was to get her husband Ken to put on a diaper and come to the party as Baby New Year. What a sight!



Ken Perkins as Baby New Year

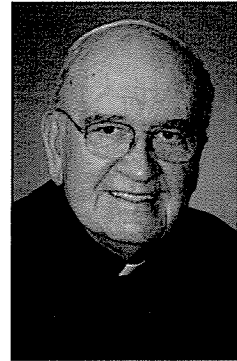
In spite of the parochial concerns of the new parish, the people continued to reach out to the broader community through the Community Affairs Committee. Fr. Tom convinced Nancy Kinney to chair this group by telling her that there was little work involved in this ministry. Much to his surprise this group became one of the most active groups in the parish.

As soon as church space permitted, they began holding an annual clothing drive that boasted tremendous success (rumor had it that Fr. Tom got his wardrobe from this event). They also sponsored blood drives, blanket collections, and winter coat collections. They were involved in the annual appeal of New Hampshire Catholic Charities and saw the parish ranked fifth or sixth out 130 parishes in the state. The 1985 appeal reached an all time high of \$50,000 thanks to the generosity of the people of St. Mark’s.



Rev. Edmund
Crowley

For the past several years Fr. Tom was offering five Masses every weekend. Eventually other priests came to assist him: Fr. Edmund Crowley, Msgr. Phil Kinney, Fr. Norman Boyd, Msgr. John Molan, and Fr. Benedict Mawn. Msgr. Molan continued to offer one Mass each weekend here until Fr. Tom retired in the year 2000. Fr. Mawn, who belonged to the religious order of the Passionist Fathers, served here until 1997 when his failing health forced him into a nursing home in Connecticut. He died in 1998. We are indebted to these priests who contributed so much to the ministry of St. Mark's.



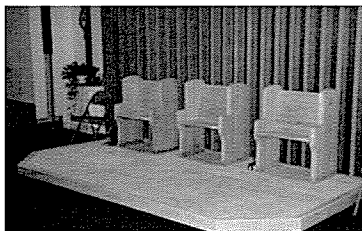
Msgr. John Molan

During this time of community building, two very successful discussion and study programs were held in various homes in the parish. Over 100 people were involved. Sue Bourgault, Diane Ducas, and Alicia Mac Donald were instrumental in promoting these two programs.

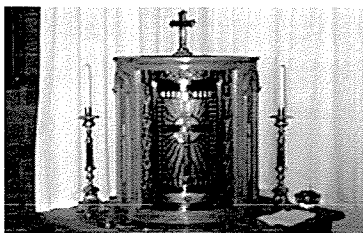
There was a man, sent by God. His name was John. Jn I, 6

For St. Mark's there was a man, one sent by God, but his name was George, George McCullough. Fr. Tom was in possession of a gift of a tabernacle he obtained from St. Patrick's Parish in Jaffrey, NH. St. Patrick's was Fr. Tom's first parish as pastor. He hoped that this tabernacle could be framed in wood for use at St. Mark's. When George appeared on the scene, a retired gentleman who was a talented carpenter, Father asked for his assistance in framing the tabernacle.

As he discussed this issue with George, he pointed out some other needs as well: altars for the main church and the chapel, a baptistry, a pulpit, holy water fonts, tables in the altar area, etc. He also showed George some old pews he had picked up at St. Patrick's in Pelham and asked if George could make some chairs for the sanctuary area. (It seems St. Patrick was quite involved in this new parish. Maybe that's how St. Bridget got in.)



Building church furniture



Tabernacle

At the completion of all this furniture—yes, he did it all—George finally got around to the tabernacle. We are grateful that there was a man named George, and we believe he was sent from God. George died June 8, 1999 and his funeral Mass was offered in the church he had helped to build. May he rest in peace.

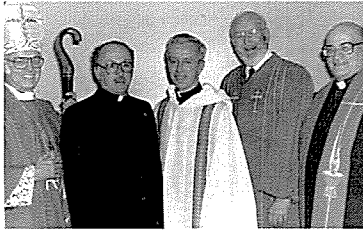
The history of St. Mark's is indeed characterized by many wonderful and generous volunteers like George McCullough. No doubt, many of these people will remain nameless in our history, due to the faulty memory of the pastor. It is to be remembered that the people behind the scenes, although remaining nameless, contributed to the growth of this parish in many ways.

Since the pastor had trouble balancing his own checking account, we were fortunate in having Marie Bouchard serve as parish bookkeeper for many years. Marie not only took care of this matter but also was actively involved in other ministries. For example, our custom of donating various kinds of greeting cards to men and women in prison for their use throughout the year began with Marie. Upon her departure in the summer of 1995, Kathy Vachon volunteered to take her place as parish bookkeeper. Her service in this capacity continued until late 2001. The work both of them provided is deeply appreciated.

The Liturgy Committee continued to enhance the liturgical life of our community and with great joy planned and participated in the first Mass to be offered in our new church. The date selected for this first Mass could not have been better—Holy Thursday. Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Mulvee was the main celebrant. Things were tense for a while, trying to get everything done and ready. Fortunately, the installation of the carpet for the new church was completed five minutes prior to the start of this Mass!

One little known incident took place within this Mass that Fr. Tom was concelebrating with the Bishop. Just after the consecration he realized that he had not set aside a sufficient number of hosts for the Good Friday Service. He whispered this to the Bishop who was a little calmer than Fr. Tom at this point. Bishop Mulvee told him that since this was an emergency situation, he, Fr. Tom, could offer another Mass that evening. (This was quite unusual for Canon Law dictated that no Masses be offered after the Holy Thursday Mass of the Last Supper until the Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday evening.)

As adoration was coming to a close in the chapel that evening, Fr. Tom enlisted two sisters of Holy Cross to join him for a special Mass. The three of them gathered around the altar in the now empty church to offer the Liturgy. And so, even though Bishop Mulvey offered the first Mass in St. Mark's new church on Holy Thursday, Fr. Tom was not far behind. He offered the first Mass in St. Bridget's Chapel.

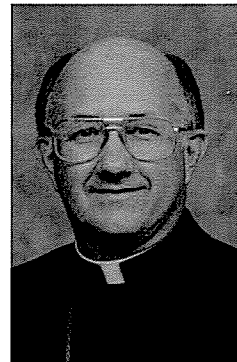


Dedication and blessing of church

The next major liturgical event in the history of the parish—the dedication and blessing of our church—took place October 13, 1984 at the Saturday evening 4:00 P.M. Mass. Most Rev. Odore Gendron was the main celebrant of the Liturgy assisted by Rev. Karl Dowd, Dean of the Salem Deanery, and Fr. Tom. Special guests of honor were Rev. Rowland

Westervelt of the Londonderry Presbyterian Church and Rev. Milton Smith of the Londonderry Methodist Church.

During his visit to the Parish the Bishop spent time consulting with the Parish Council and rendering his pastoral advice. He also invited any other parishioners who desired to speak with him personally and privately to come and do so. Accompanying the Bishop was Msgr. Francis Christian, now the Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese, who also contributed pastoral advice to the Council.



Bishop Francis Christian

THE IRISH CONNECTION

The year 1985 was a very important year in the life of St. Mark's. We now had a church and parish hall and the programs we had been prevented from implementing due to a lack of facilities could now be undertaken.

One unfortunate incident that took place that year was the visit of a Presbyterian minister from Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Ian Paisley. He came to Londonderry, NH with the desire to establish one of his own churches. He had separated from the official Presbyterian Church and was noted for his anti-Catholicism. It was an embarrassing situation because of our good relationship with the local Londonderry Presbyterian Church. Jane E. Wicks, Executive Director of the Presbytery of Northern New England, made it abundantly clear that the Presbyterian Church of Northern New England did not wish to be identified with Rev. Ian Paisley.



Bishop Edward Daly & Fr. Tom in Ireland

What was not known by many was that Fr. Tom, in a recent visit to Londonderry, Northern Ireland, had met with Bishop Edward Daly, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry. Father was shocked at the war-like conditions that existed in Londonderry—armed soldiers and military vehicles everywhere. In the course of his conversations with Bishop Daly he invited him to come to Londonderry, NH for the planned dedication of our St. Bridget's Chapel, which is dedicated to peace in Northern Ireland.

Upon returning to NH Fr. Tom sent news clippings of Rev. Paisley's visit to Bishop Daly in Londonderry. The Bishop's response to these clippings regarding Rev. Paisley's visit was that now under no circumstances would he visit us in Londonderry, for it would be interpreted as a political move.

It might be interesting to note that the names of the cities of Derry and Londonderry have always been controversial. St. Columba founded the city in northern Ireland during the sixth century. It was given the name Derry and it retained this name for hundreds of years.

When the English colonized this part of Ireland in the sixteenth century, the name was changed to Londonderry. However, the official name change did

not affect the locals. To this day, most of the local citizenry still call Londonderry “Derry.” The official name of the city is still Londonderry, although the name of the electoral district has recently (1980) been officially changed to Derry.

All of the churches in the area use the old name of Derry. Bishop Daly is known as the Bishop of Derry, the Anglican Bishop is known as the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry, and the Presbyterian Moderator is known as the moderator of the Derry Presbytery.

As far as our own town history goes, the area now known as Derry and Londonderry was originally called Nutfield. It was founded in 1719 by sixteen Scotch Presbyterian families from the northern part of Ireland. They had previously fled persecution in Scotland and moved to Ireland. During the siege of Londonderry in Ireland, they fled to the United States. It is said that they brought with them the crop of Ireland—the potato. (That is the correct spelling, Dan Quayle, even though future generations will not understand this comment.) If this is historically correct—that the first potato, now an American diet staple, was first planted in the United States right here—doesn’t it seem strange that we don’t brag about this? Let the real historians research this.

In 1722 the town’s name was officially changed from Nutfield to Londonderry. But, as in Ireland, changes were still to come. In 1827 a petition with 295 signatures was submitted requesting that the town of Londonderry be split in two. The petition was granted and Londonderry became the towns of Londonderry and Derry as they exist today.

THE EARLY YEARS

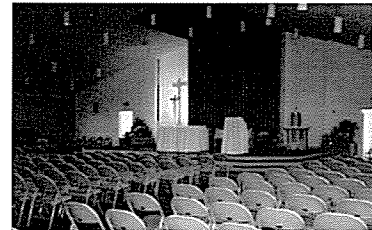
In view of the parish debt of \$700,000, it was necessary for the parish to focus on fund raising activities—both to reduce the debt and to purchase additional furnishings for the church. As usual, the parishioners of St. Mark's responded with great enthusiasm.



Chef Tom Kelly

A monthly debt reduction envelope was introduced. With the help of Alicia MacDonald the parish participated in a Proctor and Gamble survey which raised a considerable sum of money. This program continued for many years. Other fund raising activities which helped the parish were: a yard sale promoted by Mike Dromgoole; the annual Country Cupboard Fair promoted by Kathy White, Susan Lamb, Corinne Garofalo, and Fran Coate; the New Year's Dance promoted by the Social Committee. Our participation in the Londonderry Olde Home Days—with Tom Kelly's BBQ pork steak sandwiches sold in the traveling booth built by Phil Nezballa—also added to the coffers.

All of these fundraisers enabled the parish to purchase pew seats for the church (comfortable ones, as a result of the Presbyterian influence) and return the folding chairs to the parish hall. We were able to install a new organ, to put in a sound system, and to place the American and Papal flags in the church. The Hynes family of Windham graciously donated a piano in memory of Francis X. and Mark Timothy Hynes to complete our church's musical needs.



Folding chairs in church



Clothing drive

While certainly concerned with the parish debt and with the necessity of completing the furnishings of the church, the parish community was not indifferent to the needs of people outside the parish. The Community Affairs committee sponsored its first clothing drive and over 2,500 pounds of clothing were collected. Catholic Charities received \$12,000 in its annual appeal.

Assistance was sent to earthquake victims in Mexico; sheets were collected for Mother Teresa's missions and baby clothes for Birthright. David Spahn offered a course in CPR for interested parishioners.

Nor was the spiritual dimension of the parish neglected. Two prayer groups were formed. Dr. Phil Cunningham, a member of our parish, offered a course entitled “How to Understand the Bible.” At that time, he was the Director of the Salem Christian Life Center. Later he would serve as co-director of Graduate Theology at Notre Dame College in Manchester.

Deacon Abbott was a good friend of Dr. Cunningham and through his intervention Dr. Cunningham prepared introductions to the weekly Sunday scriptures which were used for many years at St. Mark’s. These introductions were published in a book by Dr. Cunningham entitled *Proclaiming Shalom*. He dedicated this book to the Catholic Community of St. Mark the Evangelist, Londonderry, NH. Dr. Cunningham is presently the executive director of the Center for Christian Jewish Learning at Boston College. We offer our gratitude for all that he did to assist our parish.



Classroom dividers

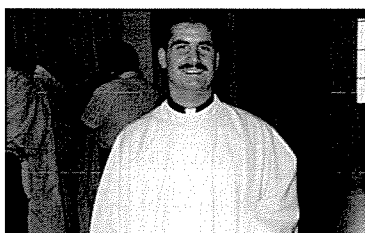
At this time, the religious education program was headed by Mary Perkins. Ann Lasnier, our parish secretary, assisted Mary in this task. Teaching a large number of students in our open parish hall required some innovative ideas. Once again, George McCullough came to the rescue. He built dividers on wheels to create individual spaces for our classrooms. On Labor Day, appropriately, a group of volunteer parishioners painted the dividers, thus continuing to share their talents for the benefit of the community. These dividers (now repainted) are still in use in our parish hall.

The dividers were great, but now we needed desks. Fr. Tom began the search. He soon discovered that Holy Angels Parish in Plaistow had some combination desk/chairs for sale. Summoning all his business skills, off he went. He courageously offered the pastor of Holy Angels \$1.00 per desk chair. The pastor, no doubt anticipating a better offer, declined. But Fr. Tom persisted with a “final offer” of \$2.00 per chair. The pastor accepted the deal, and St. Mark’s made use of these chairs for years.

As for other necessary items, the Lord provided. A projection TV and VCR were donated to our CCD Program in memory of Jim Farrell, a very dedicated parishioner. After some successful fund raising, the parish purchased a computer and Mary Perkins and Anne Lasnier mastered this new technology very quickly. Fr. Tom kept his distance. In the late 1990s he tried occasionally. Every few months he would come to the secretary—

by then, Marilyn Heitman—and ask, “Now how do you turn this thing on again?” In fact, it wasn’t until the 21st century, after retiring, that he finally came into the computer age. (Now he’s an avid web searcher and e-mailer who takes his laptop with him on his trips to Florida.)

Liturgically, during 1985 we began an explanation of the various parts of the Mass. These presentations were given during Mass on three consecutive weekends. The commentaries were well received by parishioners and most agreed that they gained a better understanding of the Liturgy.



Seminarian Maurice Laroche

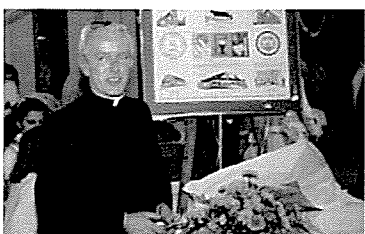
The Diocesan Vocation Department assigned Maurice Laroche, a third-year theology student at St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, MD, to our parish. Young “Moe” impressed all of us with his devotion and dedication to his coming role as a priest in our Diocese. Little did he realize that one day, after serving as pastor in All Saints Church in Lancaster, he would return to St. Mark’s as the second pastor in our history.

Now that we had a hall, Diane Ducas was able to organize an excellent pre-school Sunday program for our young ones. We are grateful to her for her many years of service. Following Diane as director were Diane Marchand, Donna Chisholm, Roberta Davis, and current co-directors Donna Hume and Jen Ruigrok.



Diane Ducas Sunday Pre-school

On the social level, in June of 1985, we joined St. Jude’s Parish for a picnic at Camp Sargent in Merrimack. The picnic began with a concelebrated Mass with Fr. Tom and Fr. Bill Shanahan, pastor of St. Jude’s at that time. A great time was had by all.



Fr. Tom's 25th Anniversary

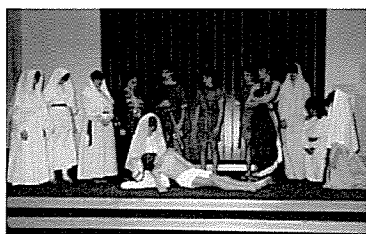
June also saw the parish join with Fr. Tom in celebrating his 25th anniversary in the priesthood. A liturgy, with some of Fr. Tom’s priest friends, was followed by a dinner in the parish hall. Father was presented with a beautiful sketch—prepared by Mary Lynch—of all of the parishes in which he had served during his 25 years. This beautiful, framed remembrance still hangs in his office.

Through the efforts of Betty Epperson, the program started by Sr. Marion Sheehan at the birth of the parish was revived. The intent of this group, called Neighborhood Helpers, was to have a parish representative in every geographical area of the parish to especially welcome new members and to minister to them according to their needs.

During 1985 the Parish Council made an overnight retreat at the Carmelite Monastery in Peterborough, NH. This gave the members an extended time to discuss parish affairs. Msgr. Norman Bolduc, a member of the Bishop's staff, was the main speaker. The Council also made plans to travel to New Jersey to view the proposed crucifix being made by Mr. Joseph Holahan.

Since the rectory was lacking both a cook and housekeeper, Eileen Lussier of Hudson was hired and served in this capacity for many years. The only mistake she ever made was serving the pastor pork chops one Good Friday. (No one will say whether he ate them or not!)

Father Tom, wanting to meet the parishioners on a more informal basis, came up with a brilliant idea (at least he thought it was brilliant at the time). It was called "Dinner with the Pastor." Families that were interested would sign up to share dinner in the rectory with Father on a Saturday evening. (Was the real reason he came up with this the fact that he didn't have a cook on weekends and wanted a good meal?) One family would bring the main dish, another a salad, and the third a dessert. Needless to say, there were occasions when he had to improvise—especially when the main dish didn't show up! He always had hot dogs and beans available just in case. This program eventually ended, but not until Father had had enough lasagna to last a lifetime!



Confirmation students present
Stations of the Cross

Holy Week saw the introduction of a special Children's Stations of the Cross on Good Friday afternoon. In addition our Confirmation students, under the direction of Mary Ann O'Brien, presented a dramatic presentation of the Stations of the Cross for the entire parish.

Now that we had a kitchen and a stove, a very successful Thanksgiving Dinner was held under the supervision of Olivia Hayes. The first Ecumenical Thanksgiving Day service involving the churches of Londonderry was held this year. Sr. Pauline Plante, a Holy Cross Sister, was the main speaker.

We also began a lasting tradition this year with our first joint penitential service with St. Jude's Parish. This tradition continues to this day and joint penitential services are offered both during Advent and Lent.

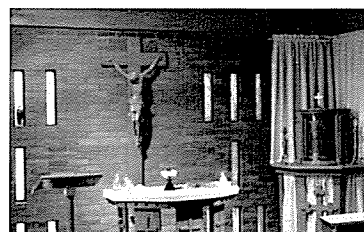
Our parish family had grown from 500 families in 1981 to 850 families in 1985.

The year 1986 marked the fifth anniversary of our parish community. In conjunction with this, the people of St. Mark's observed a number of special events. On October 20, 1986 the following article appeared in the *Derry News*.

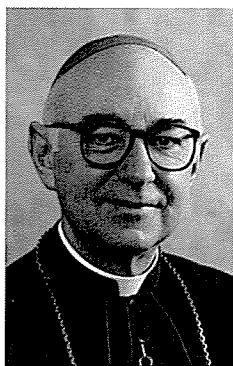
ST. MARK'S CELEBRATES ITS 5TH ANNIVERSARY

Londonderry: St. Mark's Catholic Church was established in November of 1981. In conjunction with this anniversary, a special ecumenical service will be held in collaboration with the Londonderry Presbyterian Church on Sunday, October 26th at 7:00 P.M. St. Mark's is located one mile south of Crossroads Mall at the corner of Mammoth and South Roads. The general public is invited to attend.

A chapel will be dedicated to St. Bridget, patroness of Ireland, as a special place of prayer for peace in Ireland. Leading the participation in this event will be Bishop Joseph Gerry, O.S.B., Auxiliary Bishop of the Manchester Diocese, and Mrs. Jane Wick, executive presbyter of the Presbyterian Church of Northern England.



St. Bridget Chapel dedication



Bishop Joseph Gerry

A close bond of friendship exists between the Londonderry Presbyterian Church and the Catholic Community of St. Mark's. The people of St. Mark's prior to the construction of their own church building used the facilities of the Presbyterian Church. At that time, it was noted how unfortunate it was that members of these two traditions in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, were unable to settle their differences peacefully.

Special guests of honor will include Rev. Rowland Westervelt, former pastor of the Londonderry Presbyterian Church, Mr. William Matthews, representing the British Consulate General and Mr. Patrick H. Curran, the Consulate General of Ireland.

At the 5th anniversary celebration, Mr. Randall Pierce of the Aleppo Temple Pipe Band of Wilmington, MA provided bagpipe music. The choir was under the direction of Mr. Allan Fernald, who has continued to serve the musical needs of our parish from its first days to the present. Eleanor Bell was the organist from 1981 to 1996. We are indebted to these parishioners for having served the parish for so many years.



Statue of St. Bridget

The celebration also included a blessing of the statue of St. Bridget executed by Mrs. Patricia Verani, a local artist. St. Bridget holds an image of St. Mark's Church in place of the traditional church with which she is usually depicted. Sculptor Patricia Verani has been the recipient of many awards. A feature article in the July/August issue of *Modern Maturity* explained that she was a gold medal winner in two Olympics ... and she didn't even compete in a sport. She made her award-winning efforts in invitational coin design. Her latest, the "Flag Bearer" motif, showing a procession of athletes of various ethnic backgrounds, fronts the \$5 gold commemorative coin the U. S. Mint issued to honor the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta.

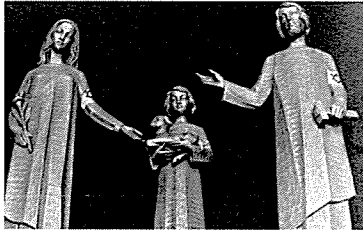
Another part of our anniversary celebration invited the entire community and people from the surrounding towns to an open house. This article appeared in the *Derry News*.

OPEN HOUSE AT ST. MARK'S

Londonderry: In conjunction with the 5th anniversary of St. Mark's, an open house will be held Sunday, November 2nd from 2 to 4 P.M. St. Mark's serves the people of Hudson, Londonderry and Windham. Guided tours of the church will be provided by parishioners. Of special interest to visitors will be the artwork that decorates this fairly new Catholic Church.

The crucifix in the main church was designed by Joseph Holahan, Sr. Mr. Holahan is a liturgical artist from Pompton Plains, NJ. The artist depicts a corpus on the crucifix representing both the death and resurrection of Christ.

The statues of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph vary from the traditional representation of the Holy Family. Each of the figures is wearing the yellow Star of David armband required to be worn by the Jewish people by Hitler during World War II. It

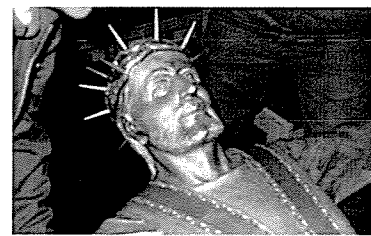


Mary, Jesus, and Joseph statues

is done in this representation in imitation of a Catholic Bishop at that time who instructed his pastors to place a Star of David on all the statues of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. This was done to remind the Catholic people of this day of their Jewish heritage and it continues in our day as a similar reminder. These statues serve as a

memorial to both the Jewish and Christian people murdered in the Holocaust.

Our much-awaited crucifix finally arrived earlier in 1986. The artist was Catholic University graduate, Joe Holahan, the father of Joseph Holahan, a charter member of St. Mark's. He created this original crucifix in a period of six months. The following excerpt from an article appearing in the *Beacon*, the diocesan paper of Paterson, NJ, gives us his background.



Crucifix arrives

AGES OF FAITH

Pequannock man finds faith expression in Liturgical Art. Expressing his deeply held faith through art is what Joe Holahan lives for. "I was born three or four hundred years after my time" Holahan said. "I would love to have been a Middle Ages man. It was the age of faith."

Since retiring as head of the art and production studio of an advertising agency ten years ago, Holahan has devoted himself full time to doing liturgical art in his Pompton Plains home that also serves as his studio.

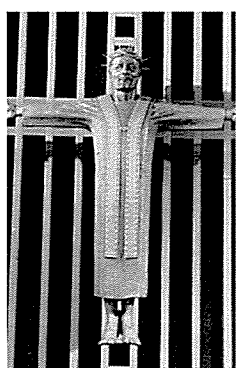
"There is a distinction between liturgical art and religious art" Holahan explained. "Liturgical art should raise the hearts and minds of the whole congregation to make them pray better. Religious art is inspirational only to certain people." He recently sculptured a six-foot Christ for St. Mark's Church in Londonderry, NH.

"This figure depicts Christ wearing real thorns and displaying 'real' wounds made with nails and spears." He said he is theologically opposed to doing a sculpture of a resurrected Christ without showing that He was crucified. Holahan spent six months, working seven hours a day, sculpting this latest Christ figure.

A further explanation of the crucifix was provided by the artist himself in these words:

The new statue behind the altar is the sculptor's representation of our Resurrected/Crucified Lord. Obvious to all is the fact that there never would be, nor could be, a resurrection without a crucifixion and death. Conversely, as St. Paul tells us, without the resurrection our faith is in vain.

Many art historians maintain that in the early depictions of the crucifixion the Christus was clothed and that undraped figures became popular much later. Here at St. Mark's our



Crucifix in place
behind altar

Lord wears the alb and stole of a priest—Christ the High Priest who offers Himself as victim to the Father—the resurrected High Priest, the King of Kings, with a crown of precious gold and a robe of silver. Yet, looking more closely, you can see that the silver robe is woven of humble homespun, the royal golden crown is made of real thorns that pierced all of his sacred head. Those glorified, gold-lined, cruciform wounds in his wrists, feet, and side were first inflicted by real nails and a real spear.

His features are Semitic because he was born a Semite. His hair is pulled back off his face since he probably wore it that way for so many years in St. Joseph's carpenter shop. Finally, his gaze—since no one can imagine, that is, form an image of Divinity, how can the artist portray the God/Man? He really cannot.

Every so often, the slightest indication of that for which you're searching shines through the eyes of this piece. I have tried to make those on your Christ look at each one of you with individualized love—as though He sees only you. But sometimes you look into the eyes and He seems to be looking off into infinity. Each of you will read into the piece what you see there, and that is how it should be.

The figure required six months of sustained work in clay. It is one of a kind, since the mold was destroyed. It was cast in state-of-the-art resins and fiberglass, saturated with aluminum powder and burnished to a high gloss at Hoheb Studio in New York. They (the Hoheb Studio) are world renowned having been involved with the Egyptian King Tut and the Imperial Chinese Exhibits, the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, and



Under construction

the refurbishing of the Statue of Liberty. Back in the sculptor's studio, it was painted and finished with 23 karat German gold leaf applied in two separate layers under clear acrylic and wax.

St. Mark's ecumenical efforts did not end with our 5th anniversary celebration. The following article appeared in the *Derry News* on January 16, 1986.

CHURCH LAY LEADERS TO MEET

Londonderry: In conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Clergy Association of Londonderry will meet with lay leadership of their churches to discuss ecumenical efforts within the Londonderry community.

A dinner meeting will be held Thursday, January 16 at 7:30 P.M. in St. Mark's Church Hall. The Community Affairs Committee, under the direction of Nancy Kinney, will host the event.

Participating will be clergy and laity from the following churches: Londonderry Presbyterian Church, Church of the Nazarene, Londonderry Methodist Church, St. Jude's Church and St. Mark's Church.

Further completion of the physical plant of St. Mark's continued in 1986. The parish kitchen was completed with the addition of a refrigerator, stove and ovens, and a serving window. The parking lot was finally surfaced with the assistance of Frank McCourt. The fieldstone wall in front of the church was erected by a dedicated group of volunteers.



Building the fieldstone wall



Uneven fieldstone wall

In order to give parishioners a deeper sense of ownership and participation in St. Mark's, families were asked to bring a stone or rock from their own home to help build a fieldstone wall. For months, rocks arrived and were deposited in front of church. Various volunteers would come whenever they had time and the pile of rocks gradually

became a low wall. If you look closely you will note that parts of the wall are quite thick, while other parts are not. How the wall was built just depended on the whim of whichever volunteers happened to be working on any particular section.

Unfortunately, the church cornerstone marked “1984” disappeared. Even though questions were asked, searches conducted, and messages were placed in the bulletin, it was gone for an extended period of time. One day it just suddenly reappeared—unfortunately too late to be placed in its intended spot. It was finally installed when our outdoor statue of St. Mark was completed in 1990. To this day, no one knows where it went—or how it was finally recovered. If you know the answer to this mystery, please tell us. We would really like to know.

It may be of interest to note that the crucifix in the chapel, donated by Matt and Arlene Sochalski, originally belonged to Matt’s uncle, Fr. Paul Foley, a diocesan priest from Massachusetts. The crucifix was made in Oberammergau, Germany—a city famous for its Passion Plays and items carved from wood.

In 1986 we celebrated with Fr. Maurice Larochelle, the seminarian who had served our parish in the past. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 10, 1986. Many of our parishioners were present at the ordination ceremony.

We bid farewell to Rev. Roland Westervelt, pastor of the Londonderry Presbyterian Church and a good friend to St. Mark’s. He retired this year after many years of service to the community.

We rejoiced with Msgr. Philip Kenney, a volunteer assistant at St. Mark’s, as he received the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year Award for his work with the poor and the homeless.

We joined with Bishop Gendron as he confirmed our first Confirmation class in our new church on May 5, 1986. Confirmed were: Joe Boldeia, Amy Boulter, Deek Bourgoine, Heidi Brown, Gregory Conner, Trisha Conway, Kathy Couture, David DeCarolus, Troy DeRego, Ken Dromgoole, Candace Dziergowski, Chris Fillion, Jeannine Fiorello, Renee Follo, Sean Getchell, Wanda George, Cindy Gilchrest, Ken Goduti, David Guzzardi, Tim Gyorda, Julie Hanover, Dianne Hartsock, Maura Hogan, Joe Hubbard, Alexandra Kennedy, Linda Lafond, Josee Lainesse, Derek Larkin, Scott LeBlanc, Kayley LeFaiver, Joe Lynch, Maureen McLaughlin, Jennifer Milioto, Jay Mitchell, Chris Neos, Mark Nezballa, Chris O’Keefe, Kelley O’Malley, Christine Osborn, Christine Pope, Dawn Schottler, Pat Sharkey, Heather St. Jean, and Denise Yemma.

On Dec. 6th we welcomed the Interfaith Choir to our parish for an enjoyable concert of church music. Our annual Country Cupboard Fair was a

tremendous success under the leadership of Ann Marie Rich and Arlene Vogt. The annual appeal for Mother Teresa's Missions produced hundreds of pill packets, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, towels, rice, etc. for those in need. In March we hosted the Church Women's Day of Prayer. This is a movement that brings Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox women together in one community of prayer for peace. On Holy Thursday we introduced the custom of having a collection for our elderly retired religious sisters of our diocese. Eventually, the Bishops of the United States would follow St. Mark's example and institute an annual national collection for this cause.

In 1986 Fr. John Tabor visited our parish. Fr. Tabor, a native of Jaffrey, NH had served in the military during the Vietnam War. Following the war he decided, while still in Vietnam, that he wished to become a priest there. After six years of study in a Vietnamese seminary, he was ordained to the priesthood in his home parish in St. Patrick's in Jaffrey. He returned to Vietnam only to be expelled by the Communists. His missionary spirit led him to Thailand where he continues to work to this day.

While visiting our parish he spoke of the needs in these missionary lands. The parish community of St. Mark's, through the efforts of our Community Affairs Committee, has continued to send support to Fr. Tabor every year.

By the end of 1986 St. Mark's had grown to over 990 families, and the growth continued. As the parish entered its sixth year of existence (1987) the following pastoral letter appeared in the parish bulletin.

PARISH INCOME TAX

Dear Parishioner,

At this time of year most of us are preparing our income taxes. Many people list their charitable contributions. I thought it might interest you to know what you have done in the way of charity through your parish.

In addition to supporting your own parish, you have reached out and touched the lives of many of your brothers and sisters throughout the world. In collections for the foreign missions you contributed over \$4,500 (Bishops Relief, Holy Land, Fr. Tabor's mission in Thailand, LaSalette Missionaries, Manchester Mission in Colombia, and Propagation of the Faith).

On the local scene you helped Black and Indian Missions in our own country, and you helped care for retired religious

priests and sisters in our own diocese. You assisted in spreading the message of Jesus Christ in the communication efforts of the Church on both the diocesan and national level. You contributed to Marathon House, a drug rehabilitation center, and you helped the poor help themselves through the Campaign for Human Development. You donated to the Catholic University of America to help keep our faith strong. The total amount given for all of these projects amounted to \$5,971.03

You also showed your tremendous support for the excellent work done by NH Catholic Charities throughout our State—helping hundreds of people. To this cause you contributed \$19,262.46

You contributed over 3,690 pounds of clothing to Catholic Relief Services and sent needed articles to Mother Teresa's mission in Haiti.

Within our own parish, families in need were assisted by you to the amount of \$2,226.39. You responded to the needs of people at Christmas and Thanksgiving by providing food, clothing, and cash donations. You donated clothing to Birthright for young children and mothers in need. You assisted soup kitchens in Manchester and Nashua with food and cash donations. The actual financial outlay of all this charity (not including food and clothing) amounted to \$32,573.94.

These works of charity may not appear in the headlines of our newspapers but they are known to "Him" who has called us to serve the needs of one another. You may not get any credit on your income taxes for these kinds of work, but many people have been helped because you responded. Thank you.

Fr. Tom Bresnahan

With a strong desire to eliminate the parish debt, parishioners came up with many innovative ideas. Pat Neos suggested a "Gala Ball" as a fundraiser. With the assistance of dedicated committee members (Carmela Armano, Jim Blake, Elaine Cormier, Anne and Joe Costello, Geri Cox, Phil DeCarolis, Corinne Garofalo, Michael Haarlander, Nancy Kinney, Janice Lefebvre, Jane Leonard, May O'Malley, Andreanna and Bill McCabe, Bev Piveronus, Arlene and Matt Sochalski, and Rozanne Taylor) plans were set in motion.

Tickets for this extravaganza were \$250.00 per couple. Only one hundred tickets would be sold and, from those one hundred, some lucky couple

would be the winner of a \$10,000 Grand Prize. In addition, area merchants donated other valuable gifts that were awarded at various times throughout the evening.



Gala Ball

On March 7, 1987 the parish hall was lavishly decorated for the gala ball. Couples, dressed in tuxedos and gowns, arrived and were invited to have a professional photographer take their picture beneath the flower-bedecked arbor. Fancy hors d'oeuvres were served during the cocktail hour.

This was followed by a sumptuous meal with, depending on the year, a choice of prime rib, chicken cordon bleu, chateaubriand, shrimp scampi, or swordfish. An excellent band, Matinee, provided music for the dancing pleasure of the formally dressed crowd.

During the evening, while the band took some short breaks, door prizes were awarded—all leading up to the final prize of \$10,000. To increase their chances of winning “the big one,” couples often pooled their ticket with the others at their table. They would then agree to split the winnings if any one of them won. This gave them three more chances of at least winning \$2,500.

Fr. Tom attended these gala balls each year to show his support of this parish fundraiser. He bought the ticket himself and invited his sister, Mary. One year Mary insisted on paying for her half of the ticket and Fr. Tom relented. (What else could a little brother do?) Of course this was the year that someone at Father's table won the \$10,000. Thus he had to split his share of the winnings with Mary and only ended up with \$1,250. He was heard to comment, “Figures it would be **this** year!”

The Gala Ball was attended by many non-members of our parish, also. This one event helped reduce our parish debt by \$7,000. However, the balance of \$466,000 still challenged us; we had a long way to go. The Gala Ball was repeated for a few more years, reducing our debt even further.

In January 1987 we began a relationship with Roy and Laurretta Seabeck of Gilford, NH which has lasted many years. The Seabecks started a lay missionary group—named after the “Smiling Pope”—called the Missionaries of Pope John Paul I. Their purpose was to collect and deliver items needed by the missionary sisters working for Mother Teresa in Haiti.

The Seabecks have come to St. Mark's several times to give slide presentations—both to the entire parish and to our Confirmation students. Our students have also visited the Seabeck's home in Gilford, spending the day packaging hygiene products and small Christmas gifts for the Haitian children. (The Seabecks have converted their home into a retreat gathering space, and a collection, storage, and shipment facility. Often one may find a sea-shipping container parked in their driveway.) Any student who has visited there found it a very moving experience. Since the Seabecks welcome any help, you may wish to visit them yourself!

In addition to providing financial support, St. Mark's has collected, made, and donated hundreds of items to this group over the years. When the Seabecks asked for diapers one year, our K of C purchased some cotton material and a group of parish women met on a Saturday to cut and sew hundreds of diapers. The service and support of this mission has become an annual parish project sponsored by our Community Affairs Committee. The Seabecks, whenever possible, travel to Haiti and deliver such items to the Sisters.



Haiti children

In addition to helping the Seabecks, in June we welcomed Brother Michael Geilenfeld, Director of St. Joseph's Boy's Home in Haiti. Brother Mike brought with him 22 young boys who were rescued from the streets, the dump, and youth detention centers. The boys entertained us with lively songs and dances from their native land. Parishioners provided housing for the boys and our Youth Group treated them to an Ice Cream Social.

Still other activities took place this year proving that St. Mark's was an active, vibrant community. Our first Father's Day Breakfast was held on June 21, 1987. Following the Liturgy, Jim Blake, Francis Hynes, Dave Spahn, and Bob Vachon spoke on behalf of fathers. Over 250 people enjoyed a ham and egg breakfast prepared by our "Parish Chef," Tom Kelly with the assistance of our Social Committee. Tom Kelly and his wife, Agnes, have since returned to their roots in the mid-west. They were a great blessing to St. Mark's and we shall always remember their dedication to our parish community.

Not only was St. Mark's continuing to grow with new Catholic families registering, our R.C.I.A. program was active as well. On Pentecost Sunday,

several adult converts were welcomed into full membership in the Catholic faith. Richard Bailey, Gloria Frank, Melanie Gillick, Linda and John Miles, Jan Mullen, and Jean Valenti became the newest members of our parish community.

In 1987 a questionnaire was sent to all parishioners seeking their input about parish life. It was also a means of encouraging parishioners to become more actively involved in various ministries in the parish. The following article appeared in the *Derry News* on July 16.

Londonderry: In an effort to evaluate the work of the parish staff, St. Mark's is presently conducting a parish evaluation.

Evaluation forms covering the various ministries of the parish were distributed recently to all parishioners attending church services. Parishioners have been asked to express their opinions on a variety of subjects involved in parish life. The questionnaire seeks opinions on church music, homilies, reception of the Eucharist under both species, and suggestions and ideas.

This evaluation is a follow up on a recent call for involvement sent through the mail to over 1000 families. Both the ministry involvement and parish evaluation may be returned at church services or mailed to the rectory.

Throughout the year the parishioners continued to respond to the needs of others. In August two young boys, Timothy and Andrew Brown, were severely burned. The parish sent a donation of \$1,000 to assist the family. The Nashua Soup Kitchen (the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry was not yet in operation) was having difficulty in providing food for people in need. Thanks to the efforts of Marty Bove, Mary Guilfoyle, and family and friends, our parish family donated hundreds of cans of soup and vegetables. The Dean Rich family was kind enough to deliver the mountain of food to the soup kitchen.

It became evident with the large number of children in our parish that there was a need for some kind of preschool program. At that time, the parish produced a quarterly newsletter called *Markings* (edited by Jay Cormier, a very talented member of our parish). A survey was conducted through *Markings* to test the need and desire for a new nursery school in our area. Instrumental in the eventual formation of such a program were Barbara McGrath and Kathy Urquhart.

In November 1987 our parish was honored by a visit from our auxiliary bishop, Bishop Joseph Gerry. The following appeared in the *Derry News* on November 25.

Londonderry: St. Mark's Parish will be honored on Thanksgiving Day to have as its guest, the Most Rev. Joseph Gerry, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Manchester. Prior to his appointment as auxiliary bishop he served as the abbot of the Benedictine Community of St. Anselm's College.

Canned goods will be collected for the poor.

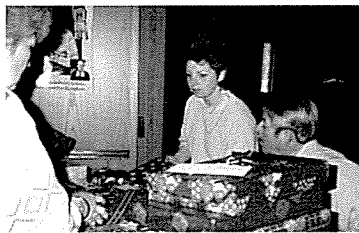
(Bishop Gerry eventually became the Bishop of Portland, Maine. He is now retired.)

Not only did the tradition of collecting non-perishable food items for the offertory at the Thanksgiving Day Mass mark our generosity toward the poor. In the November 22nd bulletin the following article appeared promoting the first town-wide participation in the Christmas Basket program.

CHRISTMAS BASKETS



Nancy Kinney with Christmas basket food



Helen Finnegan, Dianne Spahn, Jim Epperson with gifts



Paula Duyon, Barb Gingrow, Dianne Spahn & Jerry O'Neil loading baskets

St. Mark's will be involved this year in an effort to assist families in our community who are in need. This program is a coming together of God's people to help our fellow neighbors enjoy the pleasure of Christmas by sharing our abundance of food and gifts with them.

This effort is sponsored by the Community Affairs and Liturgy Committees of St. Mark's in conjunction with the Londonderry Police Department, and St. Jude's Parish. For more information, contact Diane Spahn or Nancy Kinney.

Judy Newcomb and Kathy Vachon undertook the formation of a special Christmas youth choir. For several years Jeanel and Greg Gliebe served as directors for this annual event. The Gliebe family eventually moved to Ohio but they are remembered with heartfelt thanks for all they did in sharing their musical talents with us for so many years.

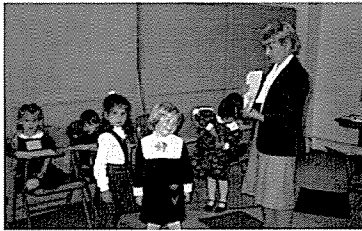
In 1987 we also began a relationship with St. Basil's Salvatorian Center in Methuen, Massachusetts. Our tenth grade students, as a part of their preparation, were sent there for a weekend of prayer, study, and reflection prior to receiving the sacrament of Confirmation. Fr. Martin Hyatt served as the director and we are grateful to him and his staff for serving the needs of our youth for so many years.

The spiritual formation of the parish was not neglected either. Gail Newcomb and Alicia MacDonald directed a ten-week program of Bible sharing on the Gospel of Mark. A special Lenten program, sponsored by our Knights, was well attended. It took place on Wednesday evenings and featured interesting guest speakers along with a free simple meal of soup and a sandwich.

Just for the record, the Benjamin Dibble family became the 1000th family to join our parish. They didn't receive any prize but we welcomed them as we reached another milestone in our parish community.

According to diocesan spiritual report the parish is required to submit yearly, there were now 1,045 families in the parish. Public school students numbered 633 while 10 children attended Catholic Schools. Eighty-eight children were baptized, 68 children made their First Holy Communion, 54 young people were confirmed, seventeen couples were married, and eight members of our parish died.

THE PARISH GROWS AND SETTLES



Cathy Urquhart in St. Mark's Nursery School

In January 1988 the Parish Council approved the creation of St. Mark's Nursery School. No time was wasted and in September three- and four-year-olds began to experience the joys of learning in our church hall. Cathy Urquhart and Barbara McGrath served as codirectors.

Eventually, Jackie LeCompte would serve in

this capacity. Kindergarten was added at a later date and other adjustments were made as the times dictated. The first Board of Directors members were Jim Blake, Kathy Carr, and Mary Falvey.



Barb McGrath, Diane Ducus, Pat DuPaul, Cathy Urquhart, Jackie LeCompte

A continuing tradition began this year with the formation of the Quilt Makers. Sally Nelson had a brilliant idea for a fundraiser. Through the bulletin, she asked others to join her in making quilts to be raffled off at our annual fair. Kathy Bove, Fran Coate, Audrey Demerle, and Marilynn Heitman responded and our first quilt became a reality. After Sally left, Fran died, and Audrey moved away, Kathy and Marilynn recruited other friends to help keep up the tradition. Sheila O'Brien, Doriene Steiniger, Joyce Schmidt, and Dianne Zdankiewicz joined them. The quilts kept coming and a considerable amount of money was raised to help pay the debt. (It is interesting to note that after Fran Coate's death, Sheila O'Brien bought her house. Kathy and Marilynn are sure that Fran looked down from heaven and sent them another quilter to take her place!)

One of the major problems facing the parish in 1988 was finding a custodian to handle the maintenance of the church and the rectory. For the first four years of our existence, a number of part time people were employed to maintain the church. A more permanent person was needed. The parish bulletin of November 20th addressed the problem stating, "Part-time Janitor Needed for our Parish."

Eventually, George McCallan, a retired F.A.A. air traffic controller, answered the call. Just as there had been a George McCullough who came forward to make so much of the necessary furniture for the church, there now appeared another man named George (actually Gregory George) McCallan. For the next ten years this George served our parish with great



devotion. He faced many a winter storm with snow shovel in hand; he took great pride in the cleanliness of the Church. He anticipated every need of the parish and he always served with a warm and gracious smile. Father Tom in introducing George to the Bishop once said, “This is the most important man in the parish.” Unfortunately, George retired in April of 1998, so once again the search was begun. (Will a third George come forward?) Eventually, John Robinson served our maintenance needs and with the additional duty of caring for the Parish Center, Gil Jandreau was hired. In 2005 Bob Leonard joined our maintenance crew and John Robinson, after two hip replacements, retired.

The year also saw several new faces on the parish staff of St. Mark’s. In May Msgr. John Molan, former director of Catholic Charities and Vicar General of the Diocese, began assisting at weekend Masses. Msgr. Molan has been a most faithful priest in assisting our parish—not only on weekends but whenever needed. We are indebted to him for his years of service.

We also added Beverly Mattson to our music ministry this year. Bev is the music director at the Londonderry Methodist Church in addition to serving as our organist. Bev has done a great job in providing music at our 5:00 P.M. Mass—not to mention all the weddings and funerals—over the years.

Sr. Monica O’Keefe, a Marianite Sister of the Holy Cross, also joined us in 1988. She began by assisting Mary Perkins in our Religious Education Program. She served as assistant until her appointment as director in 1993. Ann Cormier followed her in 1995 and served until 2000 (during a time of tremendous growth in the parish). When Ann took a position as Pastoral Assistant at Resurrection Parish in Nashua, Marilynn Heitman succeeded her. She moved from her job as parish secretary, better utilizing her background in education. When Marilynn quit the position to be able to travel and enjoy her first grandchild, Cathy Kinnon stepped in. For years Cathy had been Ann and Marilynn’s invaluable assistant. We are extremely grateful to Sr. Monica, Ann, Marilynn, and Cathy for serving in one of the most important—and we might add, most difficult—positions in the parish. They touched the lives of thousands of children in our parish. Thank you.

As stated previously, Cathy Urquhart and Barbara McGrath founded our nursery school in 1987. At that time there was a growing need for preschool services in the area due to the increasing number of young families in the

parish and community. The school began with a developmentally appropriate morning program for three- and four-year-olds. In 1989, an afternoon kindergarten program was added. In September of 1995 Cathy accepted a full-time teaching position in the Manchester School District. Barbara continued as the school's director with Jackie LeCompte, kindergarten teacher, assuming the position of administrative assistant. Jan Howarth taught with Jackie in the kindergarten classes while Pat DuPaul and Christine Hoyt taught the preschool children. Other staff members over the years have been Linda Luciano, Diane Ducas, and Mary Hensel. Upon Barbara's retirement Jackie LeCompte took over as director of the program.

A new tradition was started at St. Mark's in 1989. In fact, it was such a wonderful innovation, that the diocese soon adopted the practice. We invited all married couples to renew their marriage vows at a special liturgy. Invitations were sent to those couples celebrating a momentous anniversary—their 10th, 25th, 50th, etc. After the liturgy everyone was invited to a social gathering in the parish hall. We give our thanks to Darlene D'Anna and Gert Sirois, who were responsible for introducing this event. Our Social Committee has continued this tradition, usually scheduling this special liturgy on or near Valentine's Day.

The March 26, 1989 bulletin announced our upcoming parish mission with the statement that we had obtained the services of an outstanding speaker, Rev. Robert Hunt. The mission was directed to all the people of the parish but especially to our high school students. A special invitation was extended to people who had been "away" from the Church: "Come home ... we love you and want you with us."

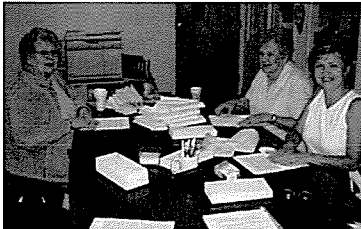
The mission took place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings, April 24th through the 26th, from 7:30 to 9:30 each night. It was so well attended that we had to accommodate the overflow crowd in the parish hall ... thank God for closed circuit TV!

It was also announced in the bulletin that:

MISSION TO BE FOLLOWED BY OPEN FORUM

On Thursday, following the mission, we will conduct a "listening" session. This will be an opportunity for questions, comments, yes, even complaints regarding our Catholic faith. This would be an ideal time for those having problems with the Church to come and be heard. We invite parishioners to invite friends and neighbors to this gathering.

Our Social Committee was quite busy during 1989. They sponsored a Mother's Day breakfast in May and a square dance night. Both events were very well attended. A new idea came to the fore and "A Nite at the Races" began. They also sponsored a booth at Londonderry's Old Home Days featuring Tom Kelly's famous barbecued ribs.



Money counters: Dorothy Gillespie, Helen Finnegan, Elaine Matuszewski

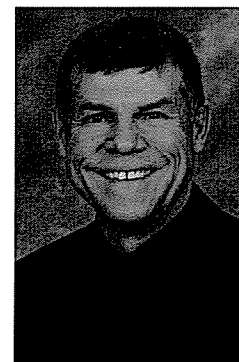
Fund raising efforts to reduce the parish debt continued with our "1000 Club" sales. The monthly winner was usually drawn on Monday mornings in the parish offices (which, at that time, were located in the lower level of the rectory). This was because we had to have witnesses on hand. The "money counters," a group of faithful women, were always present on Monday mornings. They were (and still are after all these years) Helen Finnegan, Dottie Gillespie, Elaine Matuszewski, and the late Helen Kelley. Their presence added a great deal of joy to the rectory and we deeply appreciate all the work they have done over the years behind the scenes. Thank you.

On one such Monday morning Fr. Tom was just about to draw the \$500 winner when Arleen Potter appeared at the door. Arleen jokingly called out to Father to draw her name. Guess what happened—he did! Arleen left the rectory \$500 richer. Who says it doesn't pay to visit the rectory?

A new addition was added to St. Mark's staff this year. The following announcement appeared in the June 11th bulletin.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

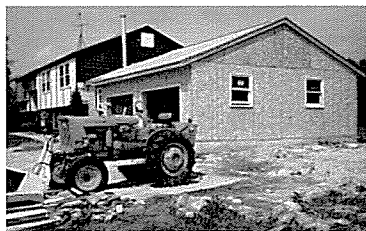
We are pleased to announce that Mr. Lee Abbot has been appointed as a Pastoral Assistant to serve the people of St. Mark's Parish. Appointment of lay people to serve the needs of the people is a national trend. We, here at St. Mark's, welcome Lee to our community and promise him our wholehearted cooperation as he undertakes his duties. More information concerning Lee's work in our parish will be forthcoming.



Lee Abbott

Lee was introduced to parishioners on June 25th and began his ministry here in July of 1989. He has prepared hundreds of parents for the baptisms of their children, prepared and counseled young couples preparing for marriage, and assisted in the administration of the parish.

Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days. (Eccl.)



Garage construction at rectory

In May of 1989 a group of dedicated men and women—under the leadership of Bob DeSantis (now deceased)—began construction of a two-stall garage at the rectory. After several bad winters, Fr. Tom looked forward to not having to scrape snow and ice off his car. A local contractor/parishioner (who will not be named for obvious reasons) stepped forward to help. Not only did he help in the construction of the garage but he added a new roof to the rectory as well. The rectory's facelift was made complete with vinyl siding.

Because of all the volunteer labor and the generosity of this contractor, the total cost was about \$30,000. We had allotted a certain amount for the contractor and a balance of \$1,900 remained. We felt obligated to pay the contractor for having contributed so much. He declined the offer and suggested that the money be put aside for our charitable fund to help parishioners in need. Sad to say, this particular contractor faced financial problems later on in the year. It was our pleasure to come to his assistance with a donation of \$1,900. How true it is, *"Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days."*



Rectory facelift completed

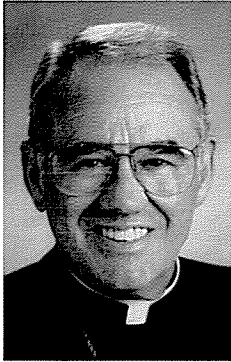
In January the parish held a "healing service" under the direction of Fr. Marc Montminy of St. Marie's Parish in Manchester. As Father Marc was getting out of his car, a pregnant pig in the parking lot greeted him. He commented, "I knew I was coming to rural New Hampshire, but really!" A call was quickly made to the Animal Rescue League. The poor person who answered was a little baffled by the question, "What do you do with a loose pregnant pig?" Not to worry, the animal was swiftly, and safely, returned to its owner.



Marty Bove chasing cows

For those of you who sometimes think the church lawn has just been fertilized, we have news for you: yes, there was actually a pig farm across the street from the church. Not only that, but St. Mark's has also been blessed with visiting cows. In fact, Marty Bove gained hours of experience in trying to capture these loose cows. Of course, with

our open door policy, there have been dogs in attendance at some of our church functions, too (sometimes at the most inopportune moments.) What can we say; we're a popular parish, a great place to be!



Bishop Leo O'Neil

1989 was not only a good year for the parish but for the Diocese as well. In October we welcomed a new coadjutor bishop, Bishop Leo O'Neil, from Springfield, Massachusetts. Being named a coadjutor bishop meant that Bishop O'Neil would succeed Bishop Gendron as head of the Manchester Diocese upon Bishop Gendron's retirement.

Bishop O'Neil was appointed Bishop of Manchester in late 1989. In an effort to acquaint himself with the diocese and its people, he decided to visit all the parishes. He was welcomed to St. Mark's on March 25, 1990 where he offered the 10:00 A.M. Mass and also preached at the 11:30 A.M. A reception was held in the parish hall after the Masses to allow parishioners a chance to meet and talk to their new bishop. All in attendance were delighted with Bishop Leo's wit and gentle kindness.

On his first visit to the parish, Bishop O'Neil walked down and stood in the midst of the people to deliver his homily. His opening line quickly caught the attention of the congregation. "I am impressed with your pastor for I see him at many continuing education programs which is an indication to me that he wants to be a good pastor to you. But I am a bit disappointed with you ... you don't love him." After a prolonged pause he added, "For if you did, you would get him to stop smoking." This comment was met with applause.

At the conclusion of the Mass Father Tom went to the podium to express his gratitude to Bishop Leo for his visit—and he also could not resist a response to the Bishop's comments. He pointed out that he only went to these continuing education programs because the food was good. He then stated that the people probably got the impression that Bishop Leo was very friendly by the way he walked into their midst to give his homily. But the truth was that if he stood behind the podium, no one would see him! The Bishop got the last word in by shouting from the side that the pastor had the podium built according to his specifications. Fr. Tom later learned from the Bishop himself that he, too, had been addicted to tobacco—so much so that he would have a cigarette before he got out of bed. To this humble admission Fr. Tom replied, "Well, I'm not that bad."

Bishop Leo returned to the Lord on November 30, 1997 after a battle with cancer. He was most appropriately referred to as the “People’s Bishop,” for indeed he was. We are grateful to the Lord for having sent us such a man.



Construction of St. Mark statue

In April it was announced that Mrs. Sylvia O’Neil had been commissioned to create a statue of St. Mark. Mrs. O’Neil had previously designed statues of St. Anselm and St. Benedict at St. Anselm’s College in Manchester. Parishioners, especially those who had joined the parish later and had not pledged money to erect the church, were asked to pledge their support of this project.

These newer families were asked to donate \$500 toward the statue of our namesake if possible. In addition to the pledges of parishioners, the effort to purchase the statue of St. Mark in front of the church involved many fund-raising events. For example, Claudia Dunigan conducted a sweater sale that raised over \$500.00.

Now that the parish was well established, meetings were held to assess our efficacy as a parish, to discuss our future, and to put our philosophy into formal words. The June 3, 1990 bulletin announced the following:

NEXT SUNDAY PARISH INPUT NIGHT 7:00 P.M.

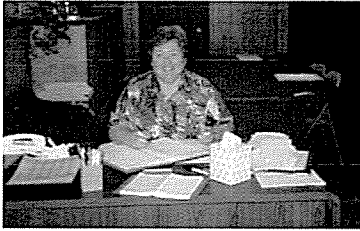
Our Parish Family will be meeting next Sunday, June 10th at an informal gathering in our parish hall to discuss the future of our parish.

- + Given the shortage of ordained priests, how will we face this problem when it affects St. Mark’s?
- + Given the continued growth of our parish, how can we maintain a strong religious education program—not only for our youth but for our adults as well?
- + What is the purpose of this parish? What are our strengths, our weaknesses? What is it that the parish should be doing but is not doing?
- + Our young people complete their formal religious education in Grade 10. How are we maintaining their relationship with the Church after that?
- + In a parish of almost 1300 families, approximately 400 worship on a regular basis every Sunday. What are we doing to reach the other 900?

This is an opportunity to help us draw up a mission statement for our parish and set goals for the coming year.

Your presence is most important. Come and share your wisdom with the Pastoral Council.

One of the major concerns of the people of the parish was the religious education and formation of their children in the Faith. With an ever-increasing enrollment, we were faced with the need for additional staff to supervise this program. Enrollment had reached over 800 students.



Kathy Bove

Kathy Bove, an active parishioner, was appointed as Assistant Director to help Mary Perkins. The parish hall continued to serve as classrooms and it was evident that these conditions were not conducive to good learning. Something had to be done to correct this situation; it would be done as soon as parish finances would allow. It was eventually addressed through the generosity of many parishioners. More on that later...

In July 1990 an informational night was held in the parish hall. The guest speaker was George Filteau, a representative of the K of C. C. Douglas DeCosta was instrumental in inviting Mr. Filteau to speak to the parish. The meeting proved to be a great success and St. Mark's Knights of Columbus Council was formed. The following were very active members from the very beginning: Dan Bever, Jim Blake, Rich Boucher, Marty Bove, Kevin Carney, Bob DeSantis, Rick Engler, Chris Fallon, Larry LeBlanc, Bob McCool, Kevin McGrath, Gerry O'Neil, Larry O'Sullivan, Jerry Sirois, Joe Stokes, Stan Swiderek, and Bob Valway. A list of the charter members appears on the Notice of Formation of the Council in the parish hall.

The First Degree Installation took place on August 16, 1990 and the first meeting of St. Mark's K of C #10488 was conducted on September 27th. Doug DeCosta was elected as the Grand Knight to lead the Council. Our Knights of Columbus received their Council Charter on December 27, 1990.

From its very beginning the Council has been a source of assistance to various parish and community projects. The Christmas tree sale began in 1991 and has continued to this day. They have helped LEEP and PIP programs, sponsored baby-sitting programs in the parish, supported Sunday school programs, purchased part of our office copiers, and assisted many people and organizations with financial support. All funds raised by our K of C are given to charity.

Our K of C annually sponsors a free-throw basketball contest for the youth of the area. Rick Boucher presented Kenny Stewart with the Council International Free Throw Award in 1993. Way to go, Kenny!

Over the years our Knights of Columbus Council has been involved in numerous activities to help the parish and community. For a number of years they have participated in Londonderry Old Home Days. They were responsible for a parish picnic—providing games for the youth of the parish. They assist the parish on major feast days by directing parking, and they made a most generous contribution of \$10,000 for the construction of our new Parish Center.

The men who have led the council with great dedication over the years are:

1990-91 Doug DeCosta
1991-93 Joe Stokes
1993-94 Rick Engler
1994-95 Kevin Carney
1995-96 Larry LeBlanc
1996-97 Jim Blake
1997-98 Larry LeBlanc
1998-99 Tom Cox
1999-00 Bill Hamilton
2000-01 Larry LeBlanc
2001-02 Mike Dromgoole
2002-03 Larry LeBlanc
2003-04 Tom Cox
2004-05 Dennis Pedley
2005-06 Kevin Waterhouse
2006-07 Ron Turcotte

The Lord has blessed St. Mark's with a great K of C Council. We are grateful to all the members for serving the needs of our parish and the greater community as well.

In the fall of 1990 many people were faced with the problem of unemployment, especially in the New England area. To assist these people Jerry O'Neil began a weekly support group meeting here at St. Mark's. NH Catholic Charities also sponsored workshops on unemployment.

Our neighboring parish, St. Jude's, responded to a growing need in our area. They began a Separated/Divorced Support Group. These meetings provided not only valuable information on carrying on after a divorce, but also understanding and moral support. In the mid 1990s this group continued its meetings here at St. Mark's.

In September 1990, Fr. Benedict Mawn, a retired Passionist priest living in Derry, began helping with weekend Masses. He was well liked by the people and his death on July 17, 1998 left us all saddened. Many parishioners traveled to Massachusetts for his funeral.



Fr. Benedict Mawn

Father Mawn's Masses were always an adventure. People will long remember the little jokes he would tell at the end of each Mass. They remember, too, the way he had to keep adjusting his hearing aid during his homilies. (Can you ever get that whistle out of your head?) During one Mass, as Father bowed during the consecration, the large host sailed off the altar and landed on the floor underneath it. Jay Cormier, seeing this, crawled under and lifted up the host at the back of the altar just at the point where the priest raises it. Without missing a beat, Father Mawn took the host from Jay, raised it as proscribed, and proceeded with the Mass. Then there was the Mass where he forgot to read the Gospel and just gave the homily. At some point during the rest of the Mass he realized what he had done. So, at the end, he went back to the ambo and stated, "Well, you've all heard the homily. Now I want you to go home and read the Gospel."

As his health failed, so did his memory. In one Mass we all said three "Our Fathers" because Fr. Mawn didn't recall that he had already completed that part of the Mass. Eventually he was no longer able to say Mass for us. Jo Lavoie and Rita Griffin pitched in and organized a group of ladies in the parish to prepare meals for him. He was a delight and his "fire-and-brimstone" sermons always kept our attention. God rest his soul. He is missed. The following excerpt from Lorraine Lordi's column in the *Derry News* probably says it best.

This old priest who had come out of retirement was standing in front of the altar with a huge grin on his face, ready to tell a joke. And when he did at the end of the Mass a

wonderful sound rang out in that building. It was the sound of laughter—a spontaneous, joyous, natural kind of laughter.

He was often late. “My hearing aid was off, so I snored right through the alarm buzzer,” and he frequently skipped or mixed up parts of the Mass. But that gentle, kind, old man didn’t have anything to make up to us.

So what if he overlooked a few minor things? Like the battery to his hearing aid. Or once, his false teeth. And so what if he usually forgot that Mass was celebrated in English?

In truth, no one could predict what would happen when Fr. Mawn celebrated Mass. What joke would he tell? Would he try to harmonize with the teen choir? Would he break-dance on his way out of church? Would he have his teeth? Would he be able to hear us?

“Oh my good brothers and sisters,” his voice pleaded during one of his final sermons last year, “what can I tell you but to love one another. Love the little children. Love the teenagers, too. They aren’t finished yet—that’s a good thing! And love yourselves. Oh, remember how important that is! And find some love for old, forgetful people like me.”

He didn’t have to instruct us on that last point. We all loved him. How could we not? This frail old man who made us laugh in spite of ourselves. Who reminded us what it meant to be human. Who inspired us with the wisdom of his many, many years.

Yes, we loved him. We thank God for the gift of him. We know that he is watching us from above—with a twinkle in his eye, a chuckle on his tongue, and warmth in his heart.

Note from Fr. Tom: “Yes, Fr. Mawn was indeed a gift of God to us and to me personally. His jokes at the end of Mass led one young child to stop me after Mass one Sunday and, with some irritation, tell me that I had forgotten something at Mass—the joke. She thought that this was a part of the Mass! I sometimes do what Fr. Mawn used to do. No, I don’t forget my hearing aid—or my teeth—but I do tell a joke now and then. The only problem is I forget the punch line. Another comment I would like to make about Fr. Mawn’s presence in our community is that when he was sick and living with another Passionist priest, Father Scanlon, parishioners, on a rotating basis, would bring dinner to these two elderly priests every evening. This is just another example of the good that goes on within a parish family. Thank you, ladies.”



Fr. Tom, Sylvia O'Neil, & Bishop
Leo O'Neil (no relation)

On Sunday, November 1, 1990 (the 9th anniversary of the parish), Bishop Leo O'Neil blessed the new outdoor statue of St. Mark and the cornerstone. As stated previously, during the construction of the church the cornerstone disappeared and then suddenly reappeared many months later. To this day, no one knows what happened. However, at the point it reappeared, it did not fit into the space in the church wall designated for it. (Note the different look of the brick just to the right of the front church doors.) Thus our cornerstone finally found its resting place in the base of the new statue.

The cornerstone contains the names of the charter members of the parish and all those who contributed to the construction of the church. Fr. Tom can't remember (like Fr. Mawn) the other contents included in the cornerstone, but he claims that if it is ever opened, there will be some surprises.

While the Bishop was here Fr. Tom, who had been ordained 30 years this year, renewed his commitment to service as a priest and the congregation joined with him in renewing their baptismal promises. Canned goods were collected for local food pantries as a part of the celebration. Fr. Tom was presented with a stole with the emblem of St. Mark on it to commemorate this special occasion.

The ninth anniversary celebration appropriately came to an end with an enormous donation of canned goods contributed by parishioners for the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry. The generous response of parishioners exceeded all expectations and George McCallan, Marty Bove, and Jimmie Perkins delivered two truckloads of canned goods to the pantry.

Everyone has a sweet tooth including the guests at the soup kitchen. In November of 1990 our Community Affairs Committee began its Salad and Dessert program in response to a need expressed by the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry. Once a month Claudette Mallory would put a dessert sign-up sheet in the church vestibule to encourage parishioners to donate desserts. Kay Bakanec, Pam Dina, Margaret Balboni, Mary Lou Benson and others gather in our parish kitchen on the second Monday of the month to prepare salads. Kay then delivers the salad and donated desserts to the Derry facility.

After many hours of discussion and countless meetings, our Pastoral Council issued a Mission Statement for St. Mark's Parish. This statement was adopted in 1990 and it appears on the cover of the parish bulletin. It reads as follows:

As sharers of the one baptism and the one Spirit of the Risen Christ, we have come together as the parish community of St. Mark the Evangelist to proclaim our identity as the People of God.

The Eucharist is the center of our life and work together. Through the one bread, we become the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise.

In our worship of God, the author of life and holiness, we proclaim our hope in the life of Christ's Resurrection; we open our hearts and minds to the spirit of God dwelling in our midst.

In our work together, we seek to enable our children to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God; to accompany our young sons and daughters on their journeys of discovery toward adulthood; to deepen our faith commitment through prayer and study; to be present to one another in the joys and sufferings, the victories and struggles of life; to give witness to the Gospel of justice, and compassion to our hurting world. We welcome to our parish family all who would share our Catholic faith and traditions and our search for God in all things.

Through the efforts of Jay Cormier, our parish liturgist, we introduced Vespers to our Lenten Program in 1991. Several guest homilists, coming from a variety of ministries, were invited to participate in this program. Among them were Rev. Gerald Belanger, Director of the Office of Pastoral Ministries, Rev. Kendrick Child, professor at Boston University's School of Theology, Sr. Pauline Plante, C.S.C., Co-director of the Londonderry House, and Fr. Jude Gray, O.S.B., professor at St. Anselm College.

Mr. Cormier not only began this program, but he also brought his knowledge of the Liturgy to our parish—especially enriching our Holy Week liturgies. He kindly dedicated one of his books entitled, *Lord, Hear Our Prayer* to our parish community. He is the editor of a homiletic service for priests called *Connections*. Our thanks to Jay for all that he did for our community.

On Sunday, March 24, 1991 someone broke into the rectory and stole the offertory from the Saturday night Mass. The words “broke into” aren’t quite accurate. Actually, the rectory’s garage door had been inadvertently left open that morning—not by Fr. Tom—so really all the thief had to do was walk in. Although this was an unfortunate incident, Fr. Tom was able to find some humor in it.

During the previous year, Father was robbed and mugged while visiting in Massachusetts. The thieves beat him and took his watch and the little money he had. During the mugging his ankle was shattered and he spent a few weeks in the hospital and much more time in a cast. While he was recuperating, Mary Perkins gave him a watch so that, while in the hospital, he would at least know what time it was. In giving it to him she mentioned that it was “only a cheap watch,” and Father thanked her for her kindness.

The thieves, who took the collection and anything else of value, left the watch on the top of Fr. Tom’s bureau. Father Tom told Mary, “You were right, Mary, it was a cheap watch. Even the thieves wouldn’t take it.”

Still we continued to live out our parish mission statement... *to be present to one another in the joys and sufferings, the victories and struggles of life; to give witness to the Gospel of justice, and compassion to our hurting world.* In the March 31st bulletin we read,

An opportunity for single Catholics to serve the poor in rural Appalachia. For one week, you will live with other volunteers on a farm near Vanceburg, KY experiencing firsthand working with the poor of Lewis County. It will be a time of service, education, prayer, reflection, and community sharing.

Two parishioners, Kaley Le Faiver, and Mike Perkins responded to this invitation. Through this effort they became aware of the clothing needs of many young children who would be starting school in the fall. In response to this need, our Community Affairs Committee, led by Barbara Gingrow and Nancy Kinney, began a collection of sneakers, jeans, socks, etc. for the children of Appalachia.

The year 1991 saw some sad and difficult times. Fr. Bill Shanahan, retired pastor of St. Jude’s, died in March. Rev. Christopher Ives, pastor of the Londonderry Methodist Church, was transferred to another assignment. We remember both of these fine men and are grateful for their ministry in our

community. We also remember with affection Mr. Joseph Goergen, a very dedicated parishioner, who died in July.

Conflict in the Gulf continued. Wanting to help, parishioners collected reading material for our troops. Military from Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, then stationed in Saudi, Arabia, sent a letter of thanks.



Michael Reardon's Gospel of St. Mark

This year also saw our tenth anniversary as a parish. To celebrate this occasion Bishop O'Neil visited us on Friday evening, November 1, 1991. He then returned on Saturday to witness a dramatic presentation of the *Gospel of Mark* by actor Michael Reardon. Mr. Reardon had committed the text of all four gospels to memory and he proclaimed them all across the United States and in several foreign countries.

We were privileged to have him with us proclaiming the *Gospel of Mark*, our namesake. The special lighting and visual effects created a memorable experience of the Word of God. A reception followed in the parish hall.

On September 8, 1991 we announced a new staff member to serve the needs of St. Mark's youth—a young man, Gary Aramini, who would help our young people grow in wisdom and knowledge of God. Unfortunately, Gary's health was not the best and after only a few months of service he had to resign. In such a short term of service Gary touched the hearts of many of our young people, leading them to a greater love of God and neighbor. Thank you, Gary.



Gary Aramini

The latest statistics from the Vatican report that there are 919 million Catholics in the world—17% of the world population. From 1985 to 1990 St. Mark's population had increased by almost exactly 100 families for each year. Oddly enough, exactly 107 families moved from the parish this past year and 107 moved into the parish. Consequently, 1991 is the first year that there has not been an increase. Our parish population stands at 1316 families.

Our religious education program enrolled 722 students with 51 volunteer teachers. Baptisms fell from 141 children in 1990 to 81 children this year. Our First Holy Communion class comprised 115 children, while 62 students received the sacrament of Confirmation. There was only one death for the entire year.

The April 1992 bulletin announced that St. Mark's was offering scholarships to graduating high school seniors. To be eligible, the student was required to write a 250 word essay on one of the following topics: "What My Catholic Faith Means to Me," "How I See My Faith Supporting Me in the Future," or "How My Parents Shared Their Faith with Me." Judges for the essay contest were Phil Cunningham, Jack Falvey, and Lorraine Lordi. Winners of the 1992 scholarships were Heidi Chmielorz, Jayne McCoy, and Mary Ellen Seavey.

In June 1992 Mary Perkins, who had been both the parish secretary and director of religious education, resigned due to her declining health. Kathy Bove, who had been assisting Mary for the past four years, continued as parish secretary. The religious education program was turned over to Sr. Monica O'Keefe. Susan Lamb, who had also assisted in the office since 1988, now took over the position of cook and housekeeper—replacing Eileen Lucier who moved to Nashua.

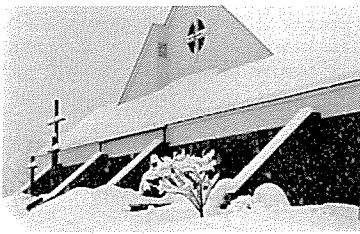
Also in June Fr. Tom went bike riding with his niece's son, Marty. Suddenly he felt himself about to fall. Painfully aware of his previously broken ankle, he tried to prevent injuring it again. Thus, he tried to break his fall by landing on his hip instead of the leg. He was soon in the Exeter Hospital with one broken hip. In a note to parishioners to explain this mishap he said, "Just one point of clarification... I may be a klutz, but I did not fall off a stationary bike as some may attest. It was a real ten-speed—with no training wheels!"

Since he once again had to use a cane for several weeks and it was difficult to set it down while offering Mass, Lee Abbott came up with the idea of placing Velcro on the cane, the altar, and the lectern. This allowed Fr. Tom to "hook" the cane in place, without having to worry about it falling down or having to bend to retrieve it. A brilliant idea, Lee, but what will future archeologists think years from now when they dig up the ruins of the church and find these strange pieces of loopy fabric glued to various pieces of furniture? (Indeed, the next pastor, Fr. Moe Larochelle, wondered what the Velcro was doing there.)

In late July 1992 the Celebrant Singers came to St. Mark's. This group of young people—from all over the country—put on an exceptional performance. It included spirit-filled singing, a live orchestra, sharing and personal testimony, and signing for the deaf. Diane Spahn, a member of our Community Affairs Committee, arranged the event and our Social Committee prepared a special dinner for the group. Many St. Mark's families opened their homes to host the young people overnight. It was a most enjoyable event.

In late September we joined with members of the newly built St. Peter's Episcopal Church for the dedication of their new facilities on Mammoth Road. St. Mark's came to the assistance of this community when it first began by giving them folding chairs. We were happy to join them for this celebration. We also were pleased to welcome their first rector, Rev. Marjean Bailey, who was an active supporter of the ecumenical events held in our community.

With hope for families, and especially children, we made a concerted effort to promote the sanctity of life. John Matuszewski, a parishioner strongly dedicated to the pro-life movement, spoke at all the Masses in January 1993 and invited parishioners to attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C. All parishioners were invited to attend a prayer service, liturgy, and reception in celebration of life in Manchester.



Snowstorm church closing

Winter this year was particularly difficult. It snowed, and snowed, and snowed some more. Our poor plowing company had great difficulty keeping up with the task at hand. One Sunday morning during an especially heavy snowstorm, it was impossible to get into the church. Although Fr. Tom and some volunteer parishioners tried valiantly to clear off the steps and sidewalk, the job proved too daunting. The snow fell faster than it could be cleared.

Brave souls who ventured out to Mass were met by Fr. Tom in the parking lot giving them dispensation from their Sunday obligation. Many of them tried handing their Offertory envelopes to Fr. Tom before they drove off. He became so embarrassed by this—feeling that it looked like he was asking for their donations by greeting them at their cars—that he went back in the church and hid. It was the first time Sunday Mass was not offered at St. Mark's Church since we had a pastor.

Under the direction of John Boucher, who was serving as temporary youth minister, our young people participated in the Derry Crop Walk to help fund area soup kitchens and pantries. The walk raised a total of \$5,509 for this worthy cause; St. Mark's youth was responsible for over \$3,000 of this amount. (It is interesting to note that John would return to St. Mark's in the early 2000s as a seminarian.)

As part of our Religious Education program, Mr. Paul Groleau spoke to our eighth, ninth, and tenth graders on "Teen Dating and Sexuality." Parents were invited to attend with their children.

In June 1993 it was decided that something had to be done to eliminate the necessity of painting the exterior of the church so frequently. We also needed to revamp our sound system. Our parish debt was now down to \$200,000. When Fr. Tom recovered from the "cost shock" of these proposed projects, it was decided to promote a fund-raising program. The new Filene's store opening at the Pheasant Lane Mall in Nashua invited us to participate in its Charity Day. For \$5.00 per ticket, holders were invited to preview the store, participate in special drawings, and enjoy refreshments and entertainment. Thanks to our parishioners' participation, \$2,000 was raised from this event to help defray the cost of these maintenance projects.



Mary Perkins

Mary Perkins died on October 9, 1993 after many years of service to the people of St. Mark's. Her wake was held in the church where she spent so many hours serving the needs of others. The number of people in attendance, both at her wake and funeral Mass, was more than the church could hold. Kathy Bove, who had assisted Mary since 1988 as both secretary and Religious Ed Coordinator, now became the full-time parish secretary. Sr. Monica O'Keefe took over Mary's duties in the religious ed department.

In our October 17th bulletin it was announced that our former parish secretary and religious education director, Mary Perkins, had died. It stated:

The community of St. Mark's wishes to express its gratitude to the Perkins Family for sharing Mary with us. Her dedication to service, in every aspect of our parish life, will long be remembered. She touched the lives of so many of our young people in our CCD program. She took a special pleasure in preparing hundreds of children for their first reception of the Eucharist. May the Lord grant her eternal

happiness, for she brought so much happiness into our lives and the lives of her family and our parish community. Thank you, Mary!

The following article, written by a parishioner, Lorraine Lordi, appeared in the *Derry News* shortly after Mary's death.

DID SHE KNOW HOW SPECIAL SHE WAS?

It's a glorious season. Dazzling foliage, deep-blue skies, cool days, crisp nights. But despite this brilliance, I just can't do it. Much as I'd like, I can't write about anything amusing or clever today.

Late Saturday afternoon, a woman I had known for nine years died of cancer. Her name was Mary Perkins. Many of you may have known Mary from her presence in Londonderry schools with her four children. My encounters with Mary, however, were through St. Mark's Church. She was in charge of the CCD program, and I was one of her teachers.

Over the past several months, it was no secret that Mary was dying. For nine years she had battled with cancer. She had operation after operation. She had as much chemotherapy as her body could take. She had radiation treatments and experimental medicines. And still, the cancer kept spreading.

So in my mind, I thought I'd feel some sense of relief when I heard that Mary was finally free from all of that suffering, all of that pain. After all, how much struggling could this one woman endure?

But ever since hearing the news of her death, I've had this lump in my heart that feels heavy, like some great sorrowful blockage. And sometimes, especially if I talk about Mary, my throat closes up, and I can't seem to breathe out the right words.

Why is that, I wonder?

Is it because I know whenever I see the children at St. Mark's I'll think to myself, "All of these children who know what true love is, know it because of Mary"?

That's one reason, yes.

Is it, too, because whenever I start thinking how tough life can be—you know, driving the kids everywhere, cooking

the meals, doing the laundry, paying the bills, going to work, doing the errands, I'll think of Mary and how, as soon as she recovered from her surgery or chemotherapy, she would spend her time visiting with the kids in the church hall, just so they wouldn't worry about her?

Yes, that's a part of it, too.

And is it because, in the vastness of the church hall, I'll still expect to hear her voice, made hoarse from too much radiation, when the children start getting rambunctious before a Christmas play? I'll hear her whisper, "As you can tell kids, my voice isn't working too well today. So maybe you could help me out and quiet down a little. Because I'd really like to talk with you about what Christmas means, but I can't do that if I have to shout." And then all of the children will be quiet, and the children will listen.

Yes, that's a good reason, too.

But I wonder, could it also be that I can't shake this sorrow because I'm not sure, after nine years of working with Mary, that she really knew how incredibly special everyone thought she was?

Could she tell by my smiles how much I cared for her, this woman who sported a different wig from year to year because of cancer's cruelties, yet she never complained.

Could she tell, by her teachers' grateful expressions, how much we appreciated all of her time, this woman whose blue eyes never failed to twinkle, no matter how nauseous or weak she may have been feeling?

And could she guess, by looking into the children's faces, just how much she meant to them, this woman who never failed to know when any child was hurting because, although she never let on, she was hurting a great deal, too?

Looking back on it, I'm sure Mary didn't know how much we all cared for her. You see, she was never one to worry about such things. Her concerns were with other matters—like how much she could care and how much she could give. The rest, one got the feeling, was not her business.

So although I knew you never needed to hear it, Mary, for my part I need to say it now. You were one great lady, Mary Perkins. A fighter and a believer, a true child of God, from the beginning to the end.

In January 1994 a serious earthquake took place in Los Angeles and a free- will offering of \$1,165 was sent to aid our brothers and sisters in California. Londonderry was selected as a drop off site for donated items for the earthquake victims. Many of our parishioners not only donated blankets but also gave of their time and effort preparing boxes of clothing and household necessities for distribution in Los Angeles.

At the suggestion of Dottie Gulezian, we held a free Bone Marrow Testing Program in March. Four hundred and fourteen generous people participated—ready to give the gift of life to those in need.

The Lenten season was once again chosen as a time to assist Mother Teresa's Mission in Haiti. Flour and lightweight clothing were the items most in demand. Our Community Affairs Committee sponsored this collection and 475 pounds of flour, 100 clothing items, and \$400 were sent to Haiti.

In 1994 Bishop O'Neil appealed to all the parishes of our diocese to help ease the suffering of the people of Rwanda. With the approval of our parish Finance Committee, one week's entire Sunday offertory collection was forwarded to Catholic Relief Services—\$4,376.

Following this action, a parishioner's letter appeared in the bulletin.

“I want to express my appreciation to our Finance Committee for its willingness to go beyond our own parochial needs to help the suffering people of Rwanda. It made me proud to be a parishioner of St. Mark's.”

The people of St. Mark's have always supported NH Catholic Charities' annual appeal in a most generous way. In 1994 we reached an all time high of \$48,000 for this largest social service agency in the State. Such generous support has enabled this organization to expand its services to help those in need throughout our State. *“Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me.”*

As 1994 was coming to an end, it became more and more apparent that we were outgrowing our facilities. On some evenings meetings or events were being held in the parish hall, the church itself, the cry room, and even the sacristy. Something had to be done. As a result of many fund-raising

activities, especially our annual Country Cupboard Fair, our parish debt had now been reduced to \$84,000.

As part of a trend in Catholic parishes to collaborate in sharing staff, Lisa Astrouski was hired to serve as youth minister for both parishes of Londonderry in November of 1994. She served in this capacity with great devotion and was instrumental in uniting the youth of both parishes in many projects. Unfortunately, her husband's work called for a transfer to Tucson, Arizona, and so Lisa had to leave us in June of 1999. (Fortunate for her—no more cold, snowy winters!) We are grateful for all she accomplished in this five-year period. Thank you, Lisa! What did you ever do with all those sheets for King Arthur's court?

In early January 1995, a letter from Bishop O'Neil appeared in our Sunday bulletin. Just a short time before, an armed man from our seacoast area walked into two abortion clinics, shot several people, and killed two young women—one from Salem, New Hampshire and one from Boston. Bishop O'Neil presented us with a challenge as seen in the following excerpt from his letter:

Commenting on this tragedy, Cardinal Law said, "These wanton slayings must not be allowed to escalate hostility. An issue as divisive as abortion demands prayer. It demands civil discourse. It demands mutual respect." I wish I had said that because that statement concisely and precisely puts a challenge to all of us. I urge all who believe in the sacredness of human life to work to change minds and hearts in the most effective way—through the calm voice of reason, quietly, intelligently, steadfastly, logically presenting the truth that all life is a gift that must be respected—and then allow the Creator of Life to accomplish the transformation through His divine grace. So, on January 22nd, we will gather at the Cathedral in silent witness to the sanctity of all human life... as a people who keep prayerful, repentant vigil with our Savior who gave His life to atone for the violence that His creatures wreak on one another.

The January 1, 1995 bulletin began with a farewell letter from Fr. Tom who was off to Indiana for a six month sabbatical at the University of Notre Dame. (Did he choose Notre Dame because he's a fighting Irishman? Or did he just love football?) He asked that we extend a cordial welcome to his replacement, Fr. Jerry Timmerman.

It was also announced that Ann Cormier had been assigned as our new Director of Religious Education, replacing Sr. Monica. Ann would serve in this capacity for the next five years with great dedication.

As a community we were very proud to have the contributions of some of our parishioners formally recognized. Niamh Oolders was chosen by the Diocese of Manchester to receive the *National Eagle of the Cross Award* in recognition of her participation in activities within our parish community.



Sandy Czuchry, Tanya O'Neil,
Mike Allen

The Diocese also presented Mike Allen the *For God and Youth Award* for his service to our youth. For many years Mike worked with our teens and directed them musically for our folk Mass. The kids were devoted to both Mike and his wife, Mary. Lisa Astrouski, our youth minister, was also awarded the *For God and Youth Award* for her work in setting up and running our Youth Group.

Mike Allen will never forget, nor will we, an incident that took place while he was singing the beautiful Exsultet at the solemn Easter Vigil. Mike had put a great deal of time in practicing to sing this particular piece of music. Unfortunately, with all the candles at this service, the fire alarm went off right in the middle of his Exsultet. Needless to say, the alarm's cacophony did nothing to enhance the hymn! I think of this every Holy Saturday night—and I'm sure Mike does, too. We all survived.

Fr. Tom returned on Pentecost Sunday; coming from the blue, gold and green of Notre Dame, he was welcomed by a congregation all wearing red. We bid farewell to Fr. Timmerman and thanked him for his months of service in our parish.

June also saw Kathy Bove's leave-taking. Kathy had helped Mary Perkins with office work and religious education from 1988-92 when she then became the parish secretary. However, she also had a personal business—she was a "Pampered Chef" consultant. When in June of 1995 her business demanded more of her time and attention, she graciously handed over the helm of the parish secretarial duties to Marilyn Heitman who would, in the year 2000, replace Ann Cormier as Director of Religious Education.



Marilynn Heitman

Kathy Urquhart, co-director of our Nursery School and Kindergarten, also said farewell this summer. She accepted a job with the Manchester School District as a special education pre-school teacher. Jackie LeCompte, our kindergarten teacher, took over Kathy's duties and became Administrative Assistant to the Director, Barb McGrath.

A Building Feasibility Committee was formed this summer. An information meeting was held for all parishioners to gather their ideas and suggestions on what exactly was needed. It was the beginning of our new parish center.

In August letters were sent to every family in the parish explaining the need for a parish center. With increased enrollment in our religious education programs (now up to about 1,000 students), classrooms were needed as well as additional office space. The basement of the rectory was too small for the ever-increasing duties of the staff.

The need for additional facilities was evident, but could we swing it financially? As usual the people responded. Fr. Tom was a bit reluctant to undertake another building program after his church building experience... the architect died, the contractor went bankrupt, a steel strike took place, etc. It was his turn to "trust in the Lord"—a theme he often preached to us.

Jay Dunnigan, now chairman of the Finance Committee, spoke eloquently at all the Masses and shared his thoughts about plans to build this new parish center. We were ready to meet the challenge. Other members of the Finance Committee were Marie Bouchard, Marty Bove, Dennis Connelly, Jerry Gillespie, Don Sommese, and Bob Vachon.

Tom Kelly stepped forward and agreed to chair the fund drive for our new Parish Center. The campaign drive to raise the funds necessary for this building undertaking officially began on September 24, 1995 with the following announcement in the parish bulletin:

Today, we formally begin our campaign drive for our new Parish Center. This building will not only help us answer God's call to teach our youth of His love, but it will benefit our entire parish family as well. We hope, with your support, to reach our goal of \$650,000 so that we can begin construction within the next few years.

There will be an informational meeting this evening in the parish hall at 7:30 P.M. Please pray for the success of this drive and God's wisdom and guidance each step of the way. May we, with His help, make our parish a true community of God, serving one another... both now and in the future.

Over two hundred people came to the parish hall for the informational meeting. Fr. Tom announced on October 1, 1995 that he had already received pledges toward the new parish center totaling \$115,000. In order to conserve funds, it was decided to run this campaign completely in-house, without the services of a professional fundraising company. Letters requesting pledges were sent to all parishioners and volunteers were asked to canvass the parish to pick up pledges on "Visitation Sunday."

The October 22nd bulletin announced:

Visitation Sunday, conducted by generous volunteer parishioners, was a tremendous success and is a sign of the vitality and enthusiasm of the people of St. Mark's. Our sincere thanks go to these volunteers. This program, as proposed by professional fundraisers, was to take 12 to 14 weeks. The people of St. Mark's have done it in only four weeks.

The good news is that we have received \$493,000 in cash and pledges for the new parish center. There are still a number of parishioners who intend to make their pledges next week. We have a way to go, but with God's help and your cooperation, I am confident we will reach our goal.

Thank you.
Fr. Tom

The youth of our parish, using weekly envelopes, pledged \$5,000 and our loyal Knights of Columbus pledged \$10,000. Donations of \$1,500 or more would be recognized on a plaque to be placed in the finished building.

A WELL ESTABLISHED PARISH COMMUNITY

Our parish continued to grow—in spirit and generosity—throughout the last half of the 1990s.

On Sunday, October 15, 1995 Bill Donroe, a member of our parish, spoke at all the Masses about a movement within our diocese that promised to be a source of spiritual strength to the men of our parish and their families. A brochure explaining the purpose of the Men of St. Joseph was included with the bulletin. Over the years this group proved to be a true spiritual shot-in-the-arm for many of the men of our parish. Thank you, Bill.

Later that same month another bulletin announcement appeared regarding an additional aspect of our spiritual life as a parish.

Almost a year ago a chapter of the Nocturnal Adoration Society was started in our parish. The society holds a nighttime vigil before the exposed Eucharist on the first Friday of each month. Our gratitude goes out especially to Tom Kelley and Don and Alicia MacDonald for being instrumental in the formation of this group. Thank You.

Our Community Affairs committee held a coat drive on a couple of weekends in November. New and used coats, clean and in good condition, were collected for the poor and homeless in the Manchester area. Of particular need were children's snowsuits for the long winter ahead. They also asked for old and new twin bed sheets for families in crisis in Manchester. These would be put to good use at New Horizons, a homeless shelter where Sr. Monica O'Keefe, our former Religious Education Director, now worked.

Speaking of religious education, our program was alive and flourishing under the direction of Ann Cormier. All parishioners were invited to attend a talk given by Mrs. Helen Wertheimer, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. Steve Curtin, a parishioner who was helping Lisa Astrouski with our youth program, obtained this speaker for us. Her presentation for our eighth grade students as part of their study of Church history was opened to the entire parish. Tuesday, November 12th saw a large crowd gathered in our church hall to hear her story.

As a part of their study of church history our eighth grade students also traveled to Manchester on December 5th to tour the Cathedral, the parish of our Bishop. Parents were invited to join them on this field trip.

Our Community Affairs Committee also sponsored our Christmas Basket Program again this year. In the December 3rd bulletin we read:

This is the final week to make your selection. Members of the Community Affairs Committee are available in the Cry Room after each Mass to assist you and answer questions. Gifts of food may be left in the back of the church in the boxes marked "Christmas Boxes." Next Sunday, December 11th, a wrapping party will take place after the 10 A.M. Mass. We need people to help in a variety of ways. Make it a family affair... a time to thank God for his many blessings.

(Thirty-one families had a joyous Christmas in 1995 as a result of this annual Christmas Basket Program.)

The year ended on a very positive note with a report on our building fund drive. By now the amount pledged was \$592,994.87 and the amount paid to date was \$90,577.96—impressive results by anyone's standards! It was interesting to note that the cost of running this drive was approximately \$1,500 (for printing and mailing) as opposed to the \$30,000 professional fundraisers would have charged. (The fund-drive volunteers, headed by parishioner Tom Kelly, and the organizational skills of the parish secretary were to be congratulated for this savings.) The outstanding generosity of our wonderful parishioners, of course, was making our dream a reality.

Our fifteenth anniversary year, 1996, was a busy and productive time for us. The parish sponsored a special program on child development and family relationships to assist our many young and growing families. The program featured a member of our own parish, the nationally known and renowned speaker, Jack Agati. Parishioners filled the church on the first three Sunday evenings in January to hear Jack speak on "Goals of Kid's Misbehavior—Why are they doing this to me?" (January 7th), "Managing Misbehaviors—Are our kids becoming guests in our homes?" (January 14th), and "Art of Encouragement—How do we get beyond chocolate chip cookies?" (January 21st). Thank you, Jack!

We also held a healing Mass this January. This celebration consisted of Liturgy, musical praise, prayer and healing. Fr. John Grace presided with area priests concelebrating. Healing Masses are a time to present ourselves, in all our brokenness, to the Lord... a time to experience physical, emotional and spiritual healing through the power of the Holy Spirit. After this service a reception was held in the Church Hall.

January 21, 1996 was Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Our bulletin invited all parishioners to mark this special occasion:

Today we celebrate the sanctity of God's greatest gift to us—life itself. We are called by God to live joyfully, to embrace life fully, to protect and defend life in all its forms. As Pope John Paul II said, "To defend and promote life, to show reverence and love for it, is a task which God entrusts to everyone, calling each as His living image to share in His lordship over the world." Join with us as we celebrate life.

Celebrate Mass with Bishop Leo O'Neil in St. Joseph's Cathedral today at 11:30 A.M. Following Mass Eucharistic Adoration will take place until 3:00 P.M. Bishop O'Neil will lead a Holy Hour from 3 to 5 P.M. in the Cathedral.

On Monday evening, January 22nd, we will meet in St. Bridget's Chapel at 7:00 P.M. to pray the Rosary and participate in Eucharistic Adoration.

Our Knights of Columbus were also very active and concerned about the sanctity and dignity of life. Bishop Leo O'Neil stated it best in a letter to the K of C.

As you can well imagine, women who are victims of abuse have their own dignity taken from them. They must, for their own safety, escape to a shelter for battered women with their children. Anything we can do to restore their self-esteem will allow them to move from self-doubt to confidence in themselves and in their future.

To answer this call, St. Mark's Knights of Columbus collected goods for the battered women's shelter again this year. Items needed were many of the things we all take for granted—canned goods and household items such as shampoo, toothbrushes, deodorants, aspirin, etc. Once again, parishioners answered the call most generously.

Now that our parish was fifteen years old, Fr. Tom felt that documenting our history was extremely important. However, he found the task most daunting. At the suggestion of Marilynn, our parish secretary, we began to present brief items in the bulletin each week called, "Our Beginnings... ." Parishioners were asked to contribute any recollections, facts, anecdotes, or incidents that they thought might be of interest. These brief installments of our history began in the February 11, 1996 bulletin and they continued for another four years. They are the basis for the history you are now reading.

Our youth were very active this year both in parish activities and in the community as well. We were pleased to announce in our bulletin that Erin Mitchell, a high school student from our parish, received the *Prudential Spirit of Community Award* for New Hampshire. After working with the Special Olympics, Erin formed the "Girl's Group." This organization helps the disabled by providing activities such as theater trips, bowling, and camping, in which girls, with and without disabilities, can participate. Congratulations Erin!

On Sunday, March 17th (St. Patrick's Day), our confirmation students met with Msgr. Francis Christian to discuss a variety of topics—euthanasia, capital punishment, and other moral issues. Little did they realize that he would return to our parish as the Auxiliary Bishop of our diocese to confirm them. On May 14, 1996 at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Manchester, Msgr. Francis Christian became Bishop Francis Christian.

On June 23rd, our youth choir presented an excellent concert for our parish community. Mike Allen, once again, worked most effectively in drawing forth our young people's talents. A free will offering was collected at this concert and a donation of \$500.00 was given in support of Birthright. The concert was professionally recorded and audiocassettes were made available.

On August 15, 1996, the Feast of the Assumption, the statue of Mary on the southern front corner of the church was blessed in memory of Bernadette Curran, Robert Demmerle, Rita Gendron, Mary Perkins, Daniel Valway, and Jeanie White. Since we were struggling to raise money for our new parish center, it was not a new statue. Fr. Tom discovered it in a garage at St. Joseph's in Nashua and "confiscated" it. Since it was in need of some repair, George McCallan performed some plastic surgery on it. Our George was indeed a man of extraordinary talents! Since its arrival, many parishioners have prayed the rosary at this sight, giving praise to Our Lady. The children of the parish have also honored Mary by planting flowers here and by participating in several May crownings over the years.

In an effort to unite members of our parish and help newcomers to get to know everyone, our Social Committee began sponsoring "State Dinners." Every few months potluck suppers would be held in the parish hall for parishioners hailing from selected states around the country. Families sharing this one piece of commonality would bring the kids and a dish to share after the 5 P.M. Mass on Saturday. After dinner games were played and prizes awarded. These family affairs were well attended and much enjoyed.

An effort was made this year to reach out to our college students and help them continue to feel a bond with our parish family. In the September 22nd bulletin this item appeared.

If you have a daughter or son attending college away from home, please hand in their address. We will send them bulletins from time to time and invitations to special events. Most college students love to receive mail, and this will help them keep in touch with what's going on with their parish family.

A momentous occasion occurred in late 1996 ... we became debt free! This was announced in our bulletin in the fall.

Our thanks to Bill Space, chairman of the Finance Committee, and Rich Goodus, President of the Pastoral Council, for leading the Parish Community last weekend in the burning of the mortgage. This has been a major goal for the past few years and because of your generosity we have achieved it. We would also like to thank Bill for his excellent presentation of the financial picture of the parish.

It took us fifteen years but we did it. This was a relatively quick repayment of our diocesan loan to purchase the land and build our church, but it would be far outdone by our upcoming repayment of the loan to build our Parish Center.

At this point in our parish life, although the majority of our parishioners were young families, our Community Affairs Committee never forgot our senior citizens. Two or three times a year events were planned for them—dinners, games, talks, etc. Seniors and their friends and families were invited. If a senior needed a ride to any of these events, our Community

Affairs Committee members were always at the ready. This particular autumn social for seniors was held on Sunday, November 2nd from 2 to 4 P.M. in the parish hall. The special guest was Jenny Trigg of Gym Ken, a specialist in fitness for senior citizens. Those interested in attending were asked to sign up after Mass or call Barb Gingrow.

In late 1996 our bulletin published some exceptionally good news for some—NH Catholic Charities opened its adoption list for all childless couples. To qualify for this program couples had to be residents of NH, married a minimum of three years, under age 40, and actively practicing their Catholic faith. The agency also accepted mixed-faith marriages. Those interested were asked to please forward a letter of intent to NH Catholic Charities.

On Sunday, November 3, 1996 there was no priest available to celebrate Mass at St. Mark's due to a communications mix up. Fr. Tom was away and the priest who was scheduled to offer Mass was unavailable. From the bulletin of November 17th we read:

In accordance with Canon Law, Lee Abbott, our pastoral assistant held a Communion Service. Canon Law 230 #3 states: "When the necessity of the Church warrants it, and when ministers are lacking, lay persons ... can supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the Word, to preside over liturgical prayers ... and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of the law."

This only happened once in the history of St. Mark's, but it may be a sign of things to come in view of the shortage of priests.

Once again this year, the Fred Fuller Oil Company provided us with religious calendars for the New Year. They started this practice for us in the early 1990s and continue to provide us with calendars each year. Parishioners were asked to take one as they left church and to remember to thank the Fuller Oil Company the next time they had an oil delivery. We are most grateful for their generosity.

Occasionally one or more of our advertisers was featured in our bulletin. Parishioners were often asked to consult the back of our bulletin when they had a particular need and to utilize our advertisers whenever possible. It is through the generosity of these advertisers that our bulletin is published each week. We appreciate their support.

The year 1997 started off with another “State Dinner” sponsored by our Social Committee. This one was expected to be huge since the ‘locals’ were invited—those who hailed from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont. All these fellow New Englanders were to participate in this potluck dinner. A banner crowd was expected for the “home team,” and they did not disappoint; the hall was filled.

The original members of the Social Committee, Alicia and Don McDonald (chairperson), Jeannie Guldin, Bill Hamilton, Dianne and Paul Hoppe, Larry and Vivian Perry, and Susan Lamb Peterson, held an information night to try and recruit more members. Many hands make light work! They were joined by several couples: Myrna and Henry Dupont, Marilynn and Jim Heitman, Sheila and Pat O’Brien, and Doriene and Tom Steiniger. This group was now host, not only for the State Dinners, but also for many other events over the next few years.

St. Mark’s Youth Group, still under the direction of Lisa Astrouski assisted by Steve Curtin, came up with a great idea. They asked parishioners to take part in the Super Bowl—or, rather, the Souper Bowl. This was an effort to glorify God while helping those in need. Each person was asked to contribute \$1.00 as they left church on Super Bowl Sunday. Our youth were at the exits with soup pots and bowls to collect the donations. All money raised was given directly to Kid’s Café (a Manchester soup kitchen for young people), the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry, and St. Jude’s Food Pantry. Once again our parishioners were very generous.

Our Community Affairs Committee had also heard that the increased demands and lower donations to area food pantries and soup kitchens were causing bare cupboards. Thus, they, with the support of Fr. Tom, declared one Sunday each month as “Brown Bag Sunday.” Parishioners were asked to bring donations of canned goods and non-perishable food items in brown paper bags and leave them at the church entrance. The food was then delivered to food pantries and soup kitchens in the area.

On Mother’s Day this year all expectant mothers and fathers were invited to St. Bridget’s Chapel after Mass for a special blessing. This practice was carried on for several more years.

It was announced that our building committee was currently interviewing and evaluating various architects. Financially, 467 families (out of the now

1380 families registered in the parish) had pledged \$584,000. Including money received from fund-raising events and anonymous donors, we actually totaled \$376,850 in pocket—not bad for a fund drive started less than two years previously.

One of the fundraisers that helped us reach our goals and pay off our debts was the Product Survey. It was conducted by a major company (we're not allowed to tell you which one) and was held in our parish hall. For every volunteer who was willing to come two times—once each week—and spend one hour of his or her time, we received \$12.00. Participants were given free products to evaluate in their homes, and the parish received \$2,000 to \$3,000 for our building fund. This fundraising event occurred three or four times during our first twenty-five years.

On May 15th we celebrated Police Memorial Day—a day to remember and honor those officers who had given their lives protecting the citizens of New Hampshire. At all Masses during this week we asked God to protect and help the officers of our community to honestly, faithfully, compassionately, and safely fulfill their duties. We asked God's blessings for all of them.

In response to our Police Memorial Day prayers, Sgt. Lloyd Wiley of the Londonderry Police Department wrote: "I wish to thank all of you for praying for us... there is no way to measure the value and benefits of your prayers except that I know that prayer is powerful and will have far reaching results for us here and for the Town of Londonderry as a whole."

It is also of note this year that our own John Mortimer, who was a student at the University of Michigan, was selected as the *Union Leader's* Athlete of the Month for May. John qualified for three NCAA Big Ten Track and Field Championships. He had an outstanding time of 8:54.50 in the 3000 meter steeplechase, followed by a solid 30:42.43 in the 10,000 meter run. He was voted "Athlete of the Meet" at the Big Ten Championships. Way to go, John!

Our Nocturnal Adoration Society continued to hold its monthly vigil before the Blessed Sacrament from 10 P.M. on Fridays to 7 A.M. Saturday. All parishioners were invited to join this vigil—to spend an hour in prayer before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Don MacDonald was the coordinator of this group and members attended this vigil each month on a rotating schedule.

Our Pastoral Council members for 1997 were Sue Bourgault, Bill Hamilton, (K of C representative), Richard Goodus, (Chairman), Henk Oolders, Tom Kelly, Tom Steiniger, Bill Space, Pauline Engler, and Bill Powers.

Our Pastoral Associate, Lee Abbott, who had been certified through the Diocese of Manchester, was honored, along with other pastoral associates, at a certification ceremony. The Bishop offered a special Mass at the Cathedral and presented certificates to the first group of certified pastoral associates in the Diocese of Manchester.

In an effort to get more parishioners involved in parish ministries, this letter appeared in our bulletin. It was written by Jan McLaughlin.

SHARING TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE

In a week, there are 168 hours. What percentage of time do you give to God? One hour—Mass on Sunday—is less than one percent (1%) of your week.

About 18 months ago, I was told that they needed a leader for the youth choir at the 8 A.M. Mass. Not being the most talented musician, I hesitated. I then remembered how the music sung by these young people had added so much to my “time with God” on Sundays and I didn’t want to lose that. So, I volunteered. And I must say that you folks, and the kids especially, have been most patient with me as I learned how to do my job.

That one little step, saying yes to a ministry in my church, only requires 1.7% of my week. And the benefits have far outstretched the efforts I put into the choir. When I was young, about the age of my choir members, music was such a part of my life. I sang in youth choirs, several of various denominations, simultaneously. I wrote songs and poetry. I painted. Over the years in the rush and confusion of college, marriage and raising a family, I somehow lost touch with that very important part of me.

In the beginning of my service in the music ministry, I was just treading water and panicked about getting it right. But what I began to notice was that slowly, I was singing more. Tunes that no one could hear were playing again in my head—I was composing songs again. I am still deeply busy and some Sundays it would be great to sleep in, but I

have received so much more than I give. That 1.7% of my week has helped me in ways I never dreamed of when I said, “Yes, I’ll sing with the choir.”

You don’t have to be a Pavarotti or a Streisand to sing in the choir. You don’t have to be a Picasso to make craft items for the fair. You don’t have to be anyone but you. We need you to serve the Body of Christ that is St. Mark’s Church.

In a week, there are 168 hours. What percentage of time do you give to God? Don’t you have an extra 1/2% of your week that you can give back for all the gifts God has given you?



McCallan/Kelly farewell

Sadly, 1997 saw the loss of several parishioners who had given much of their time, talent, and treasure to us. Our wonderful custodian, George McCallan announced his leave-taking. After many years of working for the F.A.A. and for St. Mark’s, it was now time to relax and do some traveling.

What would we do without this multi-talented man? He knew everything about St. Mark’s and could anticipate and accomplish any repairs necessary—from sculpting ornaments or a statue’s hand to fixing the furnace or the well. Fortunately, even though he and his wife Shirley moved into a condo, they remained in the parish. We still call on him from time to time to tap his expertise.

At the time of his departure, we were happy for him, but panicked about how we could possibly replace him. He was a tough act to follow! We placed ads in the bulletin asking those possibly interested in the position to contact us. Eventually a parishioner called and said his dad might be interested and ... John Robinson was hired.

In August the Kellys, Tom and Agnes, who were now retired, left for Minnesota. (They have since moved back to the St. Louis area.) A reception was held for both the Kellys and the McCallans as we tearfully said farewell. The following message was received from the Kellys shortly after they moved:

Thank you so much for the kind words, the gorgeous roses, and the lovely reception on the occasion of our leave taking. We truly appreciate all your good wishes and prayers. We miss you all.

Tom and Agnes Kelly

In November we said farewell to the Gliebe family who had been such a vital part of our music ministry. They wrote:

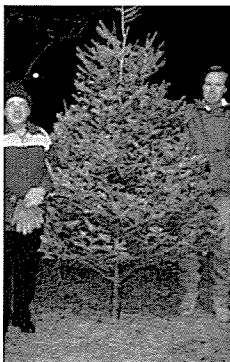
“We want to say ‘Thank You’ to all those who shared in our going away reception last month. It was a great showing of your support. It has been a pleasure to be a part of St. Mark’s community over the last five years. We have been blessed to work alongside many wonderful parishioners at St. Mark’s—people who repeatedly give of themselves in various ministries in order to serve others and to serve God. We will miss St. Mark’s, Fr. Tom, and our parish family. We encourage anyone who has not had the opportunity to share their gifts and precious time, to come forward.

Greg, Jeanel, Jessalyn and Karalyn Gliebe

On a happier note, we were able to announce in the December 7th bulletin that Lee Abbott, our Pastoral Associate, had been accepted as a candidate for the Permanent Diaconate. With our prayers and good wishes, Lee began his preparation for the order of Deacon. His ordination would occur on April 27, 2002.

Once again this year Marie Bouchard led us in contributing greeting cards to the prisoners incarcerated in various facilities throughout the State. We thanked all who contributed to this drive and we delivered 127 boxes of cards to our state prisoners. Catholic Chaplain, Paul Sweeney, was most grateful. He distributed the cards to the 2,050 inmates then incarcerated in Concord, Goffstown, and Laconia. *When I was in prison, you visited me.*

Kudos to all who helped with our Christmas Basket program this year. Through their generosity we were able to provide a joyous Christmas to thirty-five families in the Londonderry area. *I was hungry and you fed me.*



Our Knights finished off the year once again with their annual Christmas tree sale. This article appeared in the bulletin in December.

We would like to thank all who made this year’s Christmas tree sale one of the best ever... over 400 trees were sold. Special thanks to Todd Amadie of Londonderry Getty for providing the space to hold the sale; to Steve Cormier for donating the pallets; to

John Connor for providing the truck; to Paul Bartlett, Tom Cox, John Joyce and Walter Lewis for driving and loading; to Jim Blake for his great PR; to all who manned the booth, and to Kevin McGrath and Matt Sochalski for their superb management of the entire project.

We started 1998 off with a special day of fasting and prayer in support of life, the following article appeared in our January bulletin inviting all parishioners to participate.

Please join with members of our neighboring parishes as we offer penance in support of all human life. If possible, we ask that you abstain from solid foods for 24 hours. This fast will begin on Wednesday evening, January 21st and will conclude with Rosary and Benediction here at St. Mark's on Thursday the 22nd. Our Knights of Columbus sponsor this event.

A new group was started at St. Mark's after St. Jude's Separated and Divorced Group ended. It was called St. Mark's Singles. It was an ecumenical group for separated, divorced, widowed, or single adults. They met and participated in a variety of activities—all one had to do was call the sponsor of any event and say, "I'm coming!" Here is a listing of the various activities they had planned for just January and February this year:

Co-ed volleyball at Matthew Thornton School
Tubing at Amesbury Sports Park
Pizza at Cirois in Newburyport
Dinner at the Homestead Restaurant
Oriental Food Festival

Needless to say, they were a very active group!

Several of our parishioners received special honors this year. Hearty congratulations went out to John Mortimer. He was named Male Athlete of the Year in the *Union Leader's* Parade of Champions. Congratulations also went to Holly St. Onge, who was elected president of the Middle School Student Council. On Feb. 14th Boy Scout Troop 426 held an Eagle Court of Honor for Brian Paciulan at the Londonderry Presbyterian Church. Brian had been in scouting since 1988. He earned Wolf, Bear and Webelos ranks as well as the Arrow of the Light—all in addition to his 22 Merit badges. Way to go Brian!

We were also very proud of Casey Van Beusichem, winner of this year's *Chamber of Commerce Youth of the Year Award*. Casey received this honor because of her spirit of volunteerism and service to the community—Casey assisted teachers in the second grade religious education program, helped serve meals at Sonshine Soup Kitchen, volunteered at the Animal Rescue League, and conducted food and blanket drives. You are truly a treasure among us.

Congratulations also went to Msgr. Molan as he celebrated his 45th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood—quite a milestone. We are grateful to Msgr. Molan for spending a part of those 45 years ministering to us here at St. Marks.

Activities of all sorts marked this year. St. Mark's K of C held its annual Free Throw Contest on March 8th at the Londonderry Middle School. Winners of this contest went on to State finals, and State winners qualified for international recognition.

Our third annual Easter Egg Hunt was held on Saturday, April 11th. All kiddies through grade two were welcome to attend. There was no charge for this morning of fun and egg-venture. It was an activity our high school youth group put on for the “young-uns.” Our Youth Minister, Lisa Astrouski, and her assistant, Steve Curtin, kept watch over all—the hiding of eggs, the actual hunt, games, face-painting, etc. The little children had a ball—or rather, an eggstrordinary time!

Our Community Affairs Committee invited all our parish senior citizens to a spring social on a Sunday afternoon in May to honor them as an integral part of our parish family. The Hooksett-ite Entertainers performed using a U.S.O. military theme. Rides were provided for any senior who needed transportation. A marvelous time was had by all.

The Community Affairs Committee also responded to a call from the New Horizons homeless shelter in Manchester. They were in dire need of towels, washcloths, single bed sheets, and blankets. Parishioners were asked to bring any of these new or gently used items to Mass and leave them in the box at the entrance of church. Needless to say, we were once again most generous and the shelter greatly appreciated our donations.

“And they’re off...to a night at the races!” So read a headline in our bulletin announcing this exciting event hosted by our Social Committee on a Saturday in May. The first race began at 7 P.M. Those in attendance placed their bets and anxiously watched the TV while they raucously cheered their horse and jockey. Door prizes, desserts and beverages were available throughout the evening, so even those who didn’t win had a most enjoyable time.



Joe St. Onge, Kim Laudani,
Jeannie Guldin, Doriene
Steiniger, Susan Peterson

Something new was added this year by our Social Committee—an ice cream social. Parish families were invited down to the parish hall on Sunday afternoon to build their own sundaes and sit and socialize a while. When ice cream, chocolate sauce, and other goodies were still left over, they decided to move the ice

cream outside for the following weekend.

Parishioners were treated to cones or sundaes as they left Mass. What a great way to beat the heat!



Sue Peterson, Allan Fernald, Al
Iannacone, Tom Cox

Our architect, Dennis Mires, informed us that our request to build additional facilities would be presented to the Londonderry Planning Board on Tuesday, April 8th. This was done and, after some discussion and a few changes, we were pronounced good to go.

Now that we could begin, we congratulated our youth. Through the use of weekly envelopes, they had already completed their pledge of \$5,000 for our new parish center.



Fr. Tom, Msgr. Molan, Lee
Abbott, Lisa Astrowski

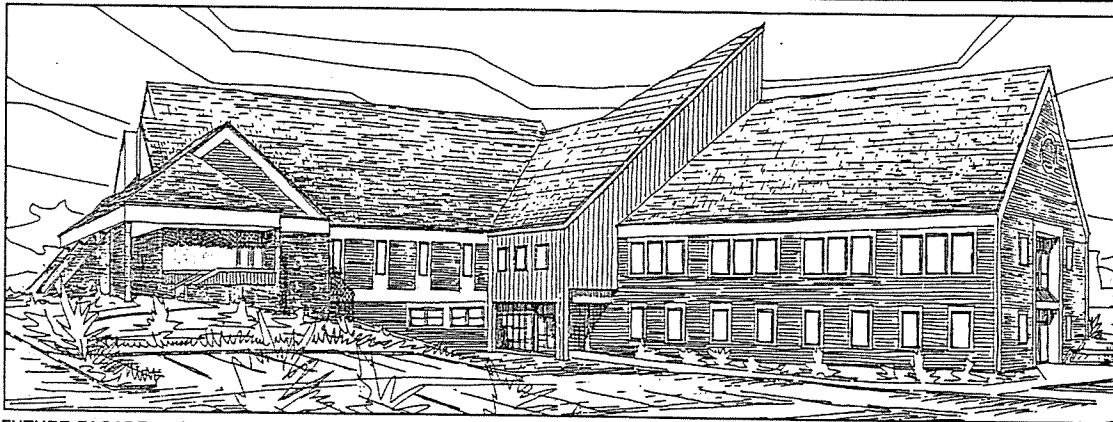
And so it was that we finally started—our Parish Center was becoming a reality. Papers were signed, and the contractor, Fulcrum Associates of Nashua, started our own “Big Dig.” Thanks to our parishioners’ faithfulness in honoring their pledges, the new addition would be completed this fall. On

Sunday, June 7, 1998, after the 11:30 A.M. Mass all were invited to join in the ground-breaking ceremony for our parish center.



Msgr. Molan, Fr. Tom,
Ann Cormier

News / Derry / Londonderry / Chester



FUTURE FACADE — A rendering by Dennis Mires, P.A., of Manchester, shows the addition to St. Mark the Evangelist Church. Its main feature will be a peaked entrance way connecting the current church with the new building.

Making Room for a Vital Parish

By DAN J. SZCZESNY
Union Leader Correspondent

LONDONDERRY — The building boom that has bulged the rolls of the region's schools has done the same to the parish at St. Mark the Evangelist Church.

But relief is on the way for approximately 900 children who now receive religious instruction in cramped quarters at the church.

Presently, the students are taught in the church basement, with various grades attending classes on different days to assure ample room. But the gray office dividers that define the individual classrooms can only dull the sound of voices and shuffling chairs. Each year it gets noisier as more students are packed into the crowded, over-sized cubicles.

Since the church at the corner of Mammoth and South roads was established in 1981, the congregation has grown from 500 families to 1,450. According to church records, in just the last four years student enrollment has grown by 150, from about 750.

Deliverance should arrive by September.

Last month, the Londonderry Planning Board approved a \$820,000 expansion that will nearly double the size of the current facility and create enough room for both students and church administrators.

According to architect Steve Peach, of Dennis Mires, P.A., of Manchester, work is scheduled to begin on the addition next week



The north side of St. Mark the Evangelist Church at the corner of Mammoth and South roads. The addition to the church will extend from the back and nearly double available space.

Dan Szczesny Photo

and should be completed in 18 weeks.

Pastor Thomas Bresnahan said the expansion will create 13 self-enclosed meeting rooms for students, along with a preschool area and administration offices. That will free up space in the basement for the parish to hold youth programs and other types of workshops for the congregation.

In addition to 12,400-square-feet of space, seven new parking spaces will be added, Peach said.

The addition will be a two-story structure, spare on the outside. The most distinctive feature will be large peaked roof where the old building meets the new. The main entrance will be built at that peak, Peach said.

"The current parish is very clean lined and contemporary," he said. "I think Dennis really wanted to pick up on those elements."

St. Mark's is, perhaps, best known for its statues of Mary, Joseph and Jesus wearing arm bands with the Star of David, a memorial to Christians and Jews who died in the holocaust.

The parish currently seats 400, but Pastor Bresnahan said the church is considering expanding seating as well.

"This addition is a reaction to the tremendous growth of all communities in the southern part of New Hampshire," he said. "This has been long in coming."

On a Sunday in May we welcomed 134 children to the table of the Lord. This was the largest class of First Communicants we had ever had. Several Masses had to be added to accommodate such a large group and the schedule was published in the bulletin.

During 1998 St. Mark's Charitable Fund (which assists people within the parish in their time of need) showed an income of \$8,877.00—all from donations received from parishioners. By this point in our history this fund, established in 1985, had distributed \$62,000 to help the poor in our area.

A special event happened this year that would be repeated a few more times in the future. Fr. Bill East visited with us and said all the Masses from April 14th through the 26th—while Fr. Tom vacationed in Florida. Fr. Bill is unique because he is married. Our bulletin told of his history.

Fr. Bill lives in York, England where he is assistant priest at Our Lady's Church. A former priest of the Church of England, he was ordained in the Catholic Church in 1966. He has a wife, Betty, whose mother, Mrs. Dorothy Parkhurst, lives in Londonderry. Fr. Bill is a frequent visitor to America and holds a doctorate degree from Yale University.

We all enjoyed Fr. Bill's visits and loved his British accent. Fr. Tom gave them his house (the rectory) and the use of his car while they were here visiting Betty's mother. He, in turn, got to vacation in Florida knowing that the parish was in good hands. After a particularly hectic week, Fr. Bill ended the Mass with the statement, "Fr. Tom is lying on a warm, sunny beach in Florida while I've said four Masses, a wedding, and a funeral this weekend... Smart man, that Fr. Tom."

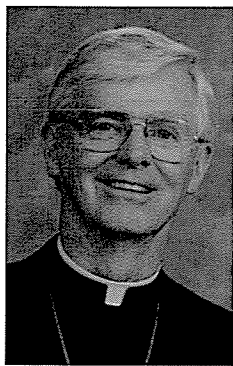
Fr. Tom always had a hard time remembering Fr. Bill East's name. He frequently called him Fr. West. It got to the point where the entire office staff started calling him Fr. East/West. In fact, it got so confusing that we can't be quite sure anymore whether his name is really Fr. East or Fr. West. In any event, his visits here stopped when his mother-in-law moved out of state. So now, we are sad to say, whether his name is East or West, "never the twain shall meet..."

This was another year of leave-taking. Several good-byes were said and one man was welcomed. We bid farewell to Fr. Tim Thibeault, the long-time pastor of St. Jude's Parish. And we offered our best wishes as he began his new assignment. Fr. Tim was always most cooperative in working with our parish.

During all the hustle and bustle of ground breaking and building we did not have a chance to publicly bid farewell to Barbara Englund. Barbara, a charter member of the parish, served as one of the directors of our Religious Education Program back in Sister Marion's days when the parish was just beginning. Down through the years Barbara has served others as a teacher in the Londonderry School System; as an educator and grade coordinator in our religious education program; as a lector at Sunday Mass. Barbara was a great example of Christian love and charity. We wish her and her husband Al our very best, and we thank her for sharing her gifts with us.

Rich and Jane Goodus said farewell to St. Marks's in early July. As they made their move to Massachusetts we thanked them for all they had contributed to our parish family. For a number of years Rich had served as Parish Council President and Jane had led our Prayer Line. Both had also served as Ministers of the Eucharist. Their daughters, Angela, Michele and Jennifer shared their musical talents to enhance our worship. We thanked them for sharing their gifts and talents with us and we asked God's blessings upon them in their new home.

We were saddened to learn of the death of Fr. Benedict Mawn, C.P. the elderly priest who assisted here at St. Mark's on weekends. He was very grateful to be a part of St. Mark's Parish Family and spoke frequently of his gratitude to the people of the parish. We, in turn, were privileged to have known him. We will miss his wisdom, his "fire and brimstone" sermons, his loving kindness, and the twinkle in his eyes. Most of all, though, we will miss his wit. Many a Sunday we left church ready to face the world with a smile on our faces because of the joke he told at the end of Mass. Go with God, Fr. Mawn.

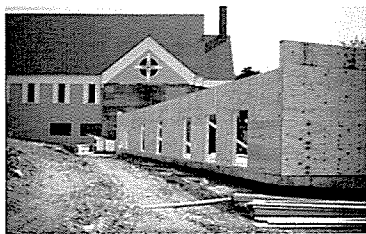


Bishop John
McCormack

Over the summer it was announced that Pope John Paul II, had appointed Bishop John B. McCormack, as the new Bishop of Manchester. Bishop McCormack officially took possession of the Diocese of Manchester at a special installation ceremony this September. Until that time, Auxiliary Bishop Francis Christian continued in his position as temporary administrator of the Diocese.

Bishop McCormack came to us from the Archdiocese of Boston. A Massachusetts native, he was ordained a priest in 1960 and became Auxiliary Bishop of Boston in December of 1995. He has served as pastor, as director of Northshore Catholic

Charities and as Vicar for the Clergy. Bishop McCormack continues as our bishop to this day.



Construction on our Parish Center continued all throughout the summer (and into the fall) of 1998. Father Tom, the staff, and members of the Building Committee kept careful and anxious watch over the entire project. Our thanks go to those men and women who served on this committee throughout the long and arduous process: Lee Abbott, Brian Bedard, John Carbonello, Ann Cormier, Joe DeCarolis, Jim Errico, Jeanne Guldin, Marilynn Heitman, Tom Kelly, Larry LeBlanc, Bob LeFaiver, George McCallan, John McCoy, Barbara McGrath, Joe St. Onge, Ron Turcotte, Richard Verrill, and Gary White. Thanks also went to our parishioners for their patience. Parking had become somewhat difficult with part of the lot taken up by construction vehicles and supplies.



The building was not ready for occupancy in September as planned, so religious ed classes continued in the parish hall. Finally the staff was able to move into their new offices in late November and it was decided to begin classes there after the Christmas break—on January 11, 1999.

Parish life continued on and we grew in faith and holiness. One of the groups active in the parish was called St. Mark's Rosary Makers. These dedicated men and women worked tirelessly in their homes putting together rosaries—for our parish, the armed services, prisons, and for missions throughout the world. Kathy Bove and her daughter, Kerry formed the group, in early 1991. The original members were Kathy and Kerry Bove, Dennis and Gloria Connelly, Phyllis Giguere, Carol Potter and her son, Franky, and Anne Marie Soroko. Members would meet to pick up supplies, make the rosaries in their homes, and then bring the finished rosaries to church for mailing.

The funding for the needed supplies was made possible by our Knights. They held a fund-raising spaghetti dinner in the early 1990s, complete with live band. The affair was a huge success and over \$500 was raised for the Rosary Makers. Money for beads and string and crosses wasn't all that was needed, however. A drive was held in the parish, strangely enough, for broken umbrellas! It seems the hollow spokes of umbrellas make the perfect tool for putting rosaries together.

Occasionally throughout the years, the group offered classes in rosary making to increase their membership. We read in a January 1999 bulletin:

The Rosary Makers will meet in the church kitchen on Sunday, February 14th, immediately following the 11:30 A.M. Mass. All parishioners interested in learning how to make rosary beads are invited to attend. Over the years we have made rosaries for the missions, for those in prison and those serving in the military. Our mission has been funded through the charity of the Knights of Columbus. Thank you.

Phyllis Giguere took it upon herself to make a rosary for each of our First Communicants. She made hundreds of rosaries for our children over the years until arthritis forced her to stop. Currently, Joan Bompastore is the Rosary Makers chairperson. She is assisted by her mother, Teresa Pallone, and her sister, Anne Bauer, along with parishioners Trish Derr, Paula Duyon, Helen Genito, Jeannette Jandreau, Josephine Lavoie, Kristen Waterhouse, and Jude Zecchino.

Through all the years of our parish history, classes were provided for those interested in learning more about our Catholic faith. In the early days, Fr. Tom instructed interested parties. After the arrival of Lee as Pastoral Assistant, he assisted Fr. Tom in this duty. Each year at the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday evening, those who had been instructed and who then decided they wished to become Catholic were accepted into the faith and received the sacraments for the first time. This process is called the R.C.I.A. or Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Appearing in our January 31st bulletin was this article regarding the R.C.I.A. process.

Assembling publicly for the first time, the R.C.I.A. candidates who have begun the process of inquiry will declare their intention to become members of the Church at the 10 A.M. Mass today. Please pray for Robin Azevedo and her sponsor, Warren Azevedo; Diane Fisher and her sponsor, Richard Fisher; and Tracy McKearney and her sponsor, Brian McKearney as they journey toward Easter.

Learning about the faith wasn't only for non-Catholics, however. Throughout the years St. Mark offered many Bible study opportunities. This year was no exception. The question, "Are you interested in reading Scripture, learning more about your Catholic faith and having fun?" was asked in our bulletin. The article went on to tell of the Bible study group beginning in mid September. Bill and Brenda Donroe would lead it.

Other Bible studies have been conducted in our parish by Deacon Lee Abbott and Mary Lou Benson. In addition, in 2002-03 Paula Flynn offered a course for parents of our religious education students. This class, which took place at the same time the kids were here, covered the materials that the children were studying.

Classes were also offered on other topics. When economic times were difficult and many people found themselves out of work, we sponsored a class, spearheaded by Jack Falvey, to help people update their resumes and network. This class turned into a support group that met here for many months.

Don and Paula Goduti conducted a class known as Crown Ministry. It was a twelve-week study of Christian money management covering topics such as earning income, giving, saving, spending, investing and budgeting. No more of that, "What do you mean I'm out of money... I still have checks!"

Again this year we reached out to those in need. In response to the civil unrest taking place in Kosovo a free will offering was taken up. We were able to send \$4,000 to aid those forced to leave their homes. Our Diocesan paper, *Tidings*, reports that with half of the parishes in the diocese reporting, \$178,000 was raised for this cause.

Sometimes those in need were not half way across the world, but in our own parish and community. St. Mark's has responded generously on these occasions also. We have opened our doors to Al-Anon—a support group for families dealing with someone's addiction to alcohol. For many years this group has met in our parish kitchen, and they still meet in a classroom in our parish center. This announcement appeared in a spring bulletin.

Is someone's drinking driving you crazy? Are you trying to stop or control another person's drinking? You may be dealing with alcoholism. Help is available.

Al-anon is a fellowship of family and friends who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their own common problems.

Come to St. Mark's on any Saturday morning; we meet in the Kitchen from 9 to 11 A.M. Help is available. You are not alone.

Responding to the needs of the poor in our own community, our Community Affairs Committee held a drive to assist families who needed help with back to school supplies. Donations of pencils, pens, paper, etc. poured in and were left at the entrance of the church. In order to keep confidentiality, they were distributed to area elementary schools to allow school authorities to give them out to specific students.

Each year our parish takes part in a Lenten Rice Bowl Project. At the beginning of Lent families are encouraged to pick up a small cardboard box. They take this box home and throughout Lent deposit money into it as part of their Lenten sacrifices. At the end of the season, just before Easter, they return the filled carton with their donations. This year's Rice Bowls brought in \$800 to be given to the hungry in poor countries. In addition, we sent \$500 to Catholic Relief Services and \$300 to the Soup Kitchen in Derry.

We were very proud of two of our young people in 1999—Drew Carlson and Emily Morgano. Both of them were National Merit Scholar finalists. Drew went on to attend Harvard, and Emily chose Northwestern University in Chicago. Way to go.

For several years following Mary Perkins' death, St. Mark's awarded an annual scholarship—the Mary Perkins Scholarship (\$500 in book assistance)—to a graduating high school senior. Parishioners were invited to nominate college-bound seniors they felt were deserving of the award. This year the winners were Laura Blake and Siobhan O'Brien. Each received \$500 in book assistance. Laura, a graduate of Londonderry High, planned on attending Keene State in the fall. Siobhan, a recent graduate of Notre Dame Academy, would continue her studies at Providence College.

Congratulations also went to Elise Comtois who was selected as *Student of the Year* by the Derry Rotary Club. The award is given annually to the eighth grade student, who, throughout the year, exemplifies community service, outstanding academic achievement, character, and leadership. Elise, oldest daughter of Anna and Gerard Comtois, was also selected to participate in the *People to People Student Ambassador* program this year. She spent three weeks during the summer visiting Spain, France, and Italy promoting cultural awareness. Elise, you made us proud.

Sadly, the following letter from our Youth Minister, Lisa Astrouski, appeared in our bulletin in the early spring.

There are rumors flying around... some are whispering and others are keeping a confidence. Is she, or isn't she? Are they, or are they not?

After living in Londonderry for twelve years, and lovingly serving as director of St. Mark/St. Jude Youth Ministry for five years, my family and I are relocating in Tucson, Arizona. My resignation will become effective on May 31, 1999.

Tony has accepted a transfer from Raytheon. Our home in Londonderry just went on the market and, last Friday, we became the proud owners of a four-bedroom Santa Fe-style home in the foothills area of Tucson. (No more freakish March snowstorms. Yahoo!)

As many of you know, writing a column has always been agonizing for me and, believe me, this one takes the cake. I've received lots of advice: get to the point, be straightforward, and be profound. I think I've accomplished the first two in the paragraphs above. However, I'm not sure what I can say that will be profound, other than...

Our children, no matter their age but especially middle schoolers, high schoolers, and young adults, are the greatest gift God has given us. Love them. Love them for their differences, their quirks, their messy rooms. Love them for the sparkle in their eyes, their bright smiles, their endless questions. Love them all... I do.

Lisa Darragh Astrouski

A farewell party was held for Lisa near the end of May. At a special Mass and reception held at St. Jude's we celebrated five years of Lisa's presence among us and her work with our youth. One of the gifts presented to her at this celebration was a quilt, made by our Quilt Group that included various blocks signifying her connection to our youth. (It even had a block with a Beanie Baby sewn on—Lisa's latest passion.) Shortly thereafter Lisa moved to warmer parts—sunny Tucson, Arizona—and Steve Curtin agreed to continue working with our youth until a new Youth Minister could be found.

Sad to say, we had another departure this year. St. Mark's Nursery School had to say goodbye to Pat DuPaul at the end of the school year. Pat had taught the three- and four-year-olds for the past nine years. She was offered, and took, an exciting new opportunity with "Hear New Hampshire," a regional preschool program for hearing impaired children. We wished Pat every happiness. She would be greatly missed.

Old Home Days (August 21st this year) was almost upon us and our Social Committee was planning ahead. Once again they would sell those delicious brownieicecreamhotfudgewhippedcreamsundaes—better known as Brown-eyed-Susans. They asked for help in our parish bulletin and many parishioners responded by donating lots of brownies, ice cream, whipped cream, and fudge topping. And of course, since it was a hot day, they were met with huge success.

Speaking of this particularly hot summer, letters were sent to all registered parishioners asking for financial help to air-condition the church and the hall. (The Parish Center already had air conditioning.) The September 5th bulletin announced that 294 families responded to this appeal with a donation of \$13,200. Thanks be to God, the following summer—no matter what the temperature outside—we celebrated with cool, refreshing air.

As St. Mark's Nursery School looked forward to the start of its 12th school year, it was a pleasure to welcome back Diane Ducas as the nursery school teacher for the 3- and 4-year-olds. Diane had held this position in the beginning of the school history, and now came back to take Pat DuPaul's place. As usual this year, all classes were full, but names were taken for the waiting list.



Rev. Joseph Cooper, Kathy Bove, Peg Iannacone, Jay Cormier, Bishop McCormack, Allan Fernald, Scott Englund

On Sunday, October 31, 1999, as close to our 18th anniversary as possible, Bishop John McCormack, came here for the blessing of our new Parish Center. All members of our parish were invited to join the Bishop as we asked God's blessing upon ourselves, our entire parish community, and especially upon the work of our hands—our Parish Center. The event took place outside the main doors of the Parish Center just after Bishop

McCormack finished celebrating our 11:30 A.M. Mass.

Our annual Country Cupboard Fair this fall was, once again, a huge success—netting about \$7,000. The crafters did a superb job of creating many wonderful items, both practical and decorative. The baked goods were scrumptious, the lunch items were tastefully tantalizing, the fudge melted in your mouth, and the raffles were better than ever—a real “basket” case. We congratulate all the winners and we thank all those who contributed their time, talent, and effort in bringing this fair to fruition. Special kudos, go to

Marilynn Heitman, Jeannette Jandreau, Kathy Morgano, Sheila O'Brien, Marlene Sgroi, and Doriene Steiniger for their tireless year-long efforts. (Little did any of us know this would be the last fair held at St. Mark's—at least in its first twenty-five years of existence.)

As 1999 came to a close our Community Affairs Committee, once again under the untiring direction of Dianne Spahn, held our Christmas Basket Program. Food and gifts poured in for this project. A wrapping day was held in the hall on the weekend of December 12th. Families were encouraged to participate in the gift wrapping session, as it is a wonderful way to teach children that this community reaches out to help others.

Our bulletin reported the outstanding generosity of our parishioner's support of Catholic Charities. By mid December 1999 we had received \$51,307. The balance due on pledges was \$3,986, giving us a potential donation of \$55,293 for this year.

Difficult times were experienced this year, too. While assisting at an Advent Penitential Service at St. Peter's in Auburn, Fr. Tom fell down an entire flight of stairs, breaking both his wrists. Needless to say this put him out of commission for several months. (The double casts made it very difficult for him to light his cigarettes, but somehow he managed.) After being released from the hospital, he took up temporary residence at Peterson House, a nursing facility across from the diocesan offices in Manchester.

Lee Abbot scrambled to find area priests to fill in for all our Masses. This was no easy fete especially for our heavy Christmas schedule. Graciously, St. Marie's in Manchester, who had several priests in residence, volunteered to cover all of our Masses until a temporary administrator could be assigned.

At the end of December the Bishop announced that he would assign Rev. John Grace as temporary administrator of our parish. He would serve until Fr. Tom's health would permit him to return. Fr. Grace was the Diocesan Director of Spiritual Renewal and the head of the Diocesan Office of Worship.

And so the Jubilee Year 2000 began with our welcoming Fr. Grace in the parish hall after all the Masses on Sunday, January 9th. As much as his busy retreat schedule would allow, he served our parish—saying both daily and weekend Masses, weddings, and funerals, attending parish meetings, and working with parish staff—until after Easter.



St. Patrick's Day dinner

Meanwhile, as much as possible, the parish continued on in Fr. Tom's absence. As usual our Social Committee held our annual St. Patrick's Day dinner. This tradition, started by Tom Kelly, continued on with Bill Hamilton as chief cook and bottle washer. In late February our bulletin announced the coming event.

ST. PADDY'S BOILED ...

Don't worry, it's not really St. Patrick who's boiled, rather it's a traditional Irish dinner: corned beef, potatoes, cabbage, and Irish soda bread (and hot dogs for those whose taste buds are less than Irish). Get your tickets soon—\$5 per adult, \$3 per child 12 and under—because our Social Committee will be cooking up the corned beef on Saturday, March 18th. Don't miss it or St. Paddy will *really* be boiled!

Although we had the wonderful Irish dancers as entertainment, we all missed Allan Fernald playing the piano with Fr. Tom leading us in singing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "Danny Boy."

From Sunday, March 19th through Wednesday the 22nd, in honor of this Jubilee year, our parish held Lenten Mission 2000. Fr. Robert Hawkins, from the Diocese of Providence, led the mission. The theme was the Eucharist and the mission was entitled *They Knew Him in the Breaking of the Bread*. Fr. Spoke at all weekend Masses regarding the parish Lenten Mission and also led us in the next three evenings of prayer and reflection as we journeyed with the men on the road to Emmaus and learned to discover Jesus in the breaking of the bread—the Eucharist.

We also celebrated Wednesday evening Vespers again this Lent. Our liturgist, Mr. Jay Cormier, once again led these evenings of prayer, psalms, and song.

Steve Curtin took about 25 of our youth to Fenway Park for the culminating event of the New England Dioceses' Pilgrimage 2000. Over 30,000 youth, college students, and young adults participated in this uniquely powerful, once in a lifetime, historical celebration of faith.

Yes, our Youth Group was alive and well under Steve's direction. They continued to volunteer at Kid's Café in Manchester. They hosted a game

night for our third and fourth graders; our fifth and sixth graders were treated to a movie night. Twenty-four of them, along with 15 adults, planned and ran a Halloween Night for 56 of our fourth and fifth graders. Steve led them in a special event this year—one designed to raise their awareness of world hunger—a thirty-hour famine retreat. Not only did the kids get little food to eat, they also learned what it was like to sleep in a box like a homeless person. The event was a real eye-opener to many of our high school students.

Throughout this year we worked to answer God's call to reach out to those in need. In cooperation with the First Baptist Church in Derry our Community Affairs Committee, through fund raising, was able to contribute \$700 to the new homeless shelter in Derry—Haven of Hope. A donation of \$400 was also given to the Caregivers of Greater Derry. Fr. Tabor's mission, Mother Teresa's Missions in Haiti, Birthright, and several other worthy causes were also the beneficiaries of our generosity.

For I was hungry ... Sometimes it is easy to forget that the poor need our help year 'round. That was why our Knights of Columbus collected food for the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry. Items such as salad dressing, tomato soup, instant potatoes, decaf coffee, canned vegetables, and other non perishable foods can go a long way toward helping serve meals to the less fortunate. Thus we finished Jesus' statement ... *and you gave me food.*

For I was ill ... A number of people in the parish and some high school students met and assembled 555 bath packets and 555 pill packets for Mother Teresa's mission. They were: Elise Comtois, Andrew, Maureen and Michelle Desrosiers, Rita Gorman, Jen Noone, Connor O'Brien, Bonnie Pestka, Holly St. Onge, Katherine, Mary and Sara Sohm, and Alicia Walker. A special thank you to Kathy Bove and Sheila O'Brien for organizing this project. ... *and you visited me.*

We also worked on the Beatitudes this year. *Blessed are the peacemakers ...* In an effort to stem some of the violence that continually plagued Ireland, parishioners were asked to host a pair of Protestant and Catholic teens for six weeks this summer. It was hoped that in this safe, neutral environment, they could get to know one another and see that they really had much in common. Volunteer hosts needed to provide a safe setting for them to get to know one another, a single bedroom for them to share, and daylong supervision. ... *for they will be called children of God.*

Easter arrived and we welcomed several new members into the Catholic faith and into our parish family. They were Tammy Bleau, Cheryl Fallon, Kathleen McMahon, Marcus Traynor (whose ten brothers and sisters would join us the following year), and Daniel Trow. We welcomed them with open arms and were greatly blessed by their presence among us.

In April we congratulated a number of children. John Perry, a member of our Youth Advisory Board and a senior at Londonderry High, for receiving his Eagle Scout Award. John's project to earn this award was a historical narrative of Londonderry—a videotape of interviews with numerous "senior" natives of our town. The video is available at the Leach Library. Catalina Rojo, a seventh grader, earned her Silver Award, the highest award a Junior Girl Scout can receive. Her project, a self-defense workshop, was aired on TV20. Ryan Kinnon, a sixth grader, won the grand prize of \$100, for his entry in the K of C's Pro-Life Essay Contest. Marianne Vanagel won the *Youth of the Year Award* given by the Londonderry Business Council for her service to the community. Way to go all of you!

In May we celebrated the artistically talented youth of our parish—those who won awards in the diocesan Jubilee Art Fair: Kerry Anne Twomey, Amy Curtin, Amanda Morgan, Tristen Curtin, and Kathleen Twomey. Their work was displayed in the Carr Center at St. Anselm College.

This year's Mary Perkins Scholarship was awarded to three of our high school graduates. Jason Spahn, Katie Vachon, and Kaitlyn Wright were the lucky recipients.

On April 30th we said goodbye to Fr. John Grace, the last day Fr. Grace would be with us as our parish administrator. A reception was held for him in the parish hall after all the Masses, giving us a chance to thank him for serving our spiritual needs while Fr. Tom was recuperating. We wish him well in his future endeavors and we appreciate all he did for us. Thank you, Fr. Grace.

Fr. Tom returned on May 7th, sans casts. He put a brief note in our bulletin telling us that it was good to be back with us after so long. He also thanked Fr. Grace and all the other priests who stepped in during his absence. He was just in time for the First Communion Masses. This year 102 students received the Eucharist for the first time.

On Sunday, May 21st Father Tom informed the parish of his forthcoming retirement. The following letter was sent to all parishioners.

Dear Friends,

Almost 19 years ago I wrote a letter to many of you asking you to help me establish the new parish of St. Mark the Evangelist. For many of you from Hudson, Londonderry and Windham, it was difficult for you to leave your parishes. Fortunately, Sr. Marion Sheehan and a group of dedicated people had already done much of the groundwork—for which I am most grateful.

Today, I experience the same difficulty in leaving you—my family for many years who has stood by me in good times and in bad. As a result of your cooperation and the Lord's blessings, I think we have established a vibrant parish, which will serve the needs of future generations.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your love and support over these many years. I ask your forgiveness for the times I have failed you or offended you in any way.

Over the years the Lord has blessed me with outstanding staffs. Many of these people are no longer with us, but my gratitude toward them lives in my heart. I wish to publicly thank and acknowledge our present staff, Lee Abbott, Ann Cormier, Marilynn Heitman, Sue Peterson, and John Robinson. These are the people who continue to serve you with so much dedication.

My departure is made easier by the good news that Fr. Maurice Laroche, (Fr. Moe), present pastor of All Saints Church in Lancaster, New Hampshire will be your second pastor. Fr. Moe worked in our parish many years ago as a seminarian. He brings to his ministry at St. Mark's a Spirit-filled enthusiasm for the work of the Lord. I know you will extend to him a warm welcome and the assurance of your wholehearted cooperation.

St. Mark's will always have a special place in my heart and in my prayers. I thank you for many years of happiness in your midst.

With all my love,
Fr. Tom

June 17/18th marked Fr. Tom's and Msgr. Molan's last official weekend with us. (Fr. Tom retired and Msgr. Molan began helping at St. Pius X Parish in Manchester.) To provide them with a great send off into their new "life styles" and to honor Fr. Tom's 40th anniversary of ordination (June 26) we planned a party and the entire parish was invited.

Unbeknownst to Fr. Tom, during the months he was convalescing the staff had sent a letter to all parishioners asking those who were interested to contribute toward a gift from the parish. (Since his last weekend would be on Father's Day, we called it "Father Tom's Day" in our correspondence with parishioners.) It was hoped that we would be able to buy him a car. (His old blue Toyota had almost 200,000 miles on it.) As expected, everyone was most generous. One family, who wishes to remain anonymous, purchased a car for Father, and the money donated by the rest of the parish allowed us to present him with a check of \$1,000 for each year of his priesthood.

So, on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in June, "Father Tom's Day" took place. Hundreds of parishioners came to say goodbye to our founding pastor. The Social Committee, now under the direction of Cindy Combes, set up the hall and the Knights lit up the grills—our special farewell picnic was underway. Everyone enjoyed hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, coleslaw, chips, and beans.

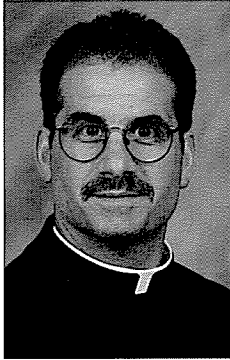
Msgr. Molan tried to sneak out after the last Mass thinking that this should really be Fr. Tom's day. However, he was caught by Marilynn, the parish secretary, and agreed to stay. Later in his very humorous goodbye speech he referred to Ann Cormier and Marilynn as "Sr. Mary and the Gestapo." The parish presented Msgr. Molan with a pair of Waterford crystal glasses.



Fr. Tom's check and car

Finally the moment arrived. The parishioners slowly filtered outside and Fr. Tom was asked to join them. When he got to the end of the Parish Center he was stunned to see a shiny new Toyota Camry waiting for him along with a large replica of a check in the amount of \$40,000—complete with the names of all those who had contributed. It's difficult to do, but we succeeded in rendering him speechless.

PASSING THE BATON



Rev. Maurice
Larochelle

On Tuesday, June 20, 2000, Fr. Moe Larochelle became the second pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish. The following weekend parishioners were again invited down to the parish hall—not to say goodbye, but to give a warm welcome to our new pastor. (Some to renew old friendships begun when he was a seminarian here in the early 1980s.)

Fr. Moe wasted no time starting new traditions. It was announced on the weekend of his arrival that beginning in July, he would say a First Saturday Mass at 7 A.M. in intercession to the Blessed Virgin for the conversion of souls.

In an article in the bulletin on July 2nd, Fr. Moe described himself as “hyper.” And indeed he was a man full of energy. He was constantly on the go, in meetings, with the youth group, in every aspect of our parish life. Unused to working with a professional and efficient staff, he used to lament, “What am I supposed to do?” (He was a staff of one in his last parish.) Whenever he returned from a meeting or a visit to the hospital he would sail into the office announcing, “Hey kids, I’m home!”

For the most part, things continued in the parish as they had in the past. Our Knights, however, started a new tradition—a pizza party and an evening at Holman Stadium to see semi-professional baseball at its best. It was to become a very popular event.

Our Community Affairs Committee still ran the “Pencil Box Project” in late summer to help supply needy families with school supplies. They conducted Blood Drives for the Red Cross (83 pints collected), and clothing/household item drives for the migrant workers living at Rockingham Park. They supplied Birthright with baby things, and they helped over sixty families with their Christmas Basket Project.

Our Social Committee, too, was alive and well under the direction of Cindy Combes. Everyone appreciated their coffee and donuts after the 8 and 10 A.M. Masses. They hosted the special Mass and marriage vow renewal near Valentine’s Day, and the corned beef and cabbage dinner for St. Patrick’s Day. Brown-eyed Susans were still sold at Londonderry’s Olde Home Days, and they started a new event in November, a pie-eating contest! Yumm. This year we continued to reduce our parish debt. By the time Fr. Moe

arrived, we were down to an outstanding balance of only \$100,000. Not bad considering the Parish Center had cost about \$1,000,000 and was now just turning two years old! Our parishioners were most generous in helping to reduce this debt by honoring their pledges and contributing through the monthly debt reduction (Green) envelopes.

On September 10th Lee, who had been studying to become a deacon since November 1997, celebrated the Rite of Candidacy with Bishop McCormack. This is a step toward ordination where the bishop and people involved in the candidate's formation formally affirm, consecrate, and empower the candidate to continue his journey toward ordination.

Another tradition that had fallen by the wayside over the past couple of years was revived. Liz Neville invited children in kindergarten through grade five to participate in the Children's Choir. This children's musical group would lead the congregation in song at the Christmas Eve 4:00 P.M. Mass downstairs.

Our sacristans searched for additional members to help keep our church fresh and clean. This group, originally started by Pauline Mailloux, was now under the direction of Ann Griffin and her daughter, Maureen. They created a rotating schedule of small groups of volunteers to dust and take care of the candles and holy vessels in the church.

Other groups—the Rosary Makers, Social Committee, Nocturnal Adoration Society, Women of Mary, Men of St. Joseph, and the Prayer Line—always welcomed new members. Of course both the youth and adult choirs are also on the lookout (or hearout), too.



Jay and Ann Cormier

Two weeks after religious education classes began in the fall, our Director, Ann Cormier, announced her resignation. Ann had always hoped to be a pastoral associate in a parish, and this fall her dream came true. She was offered a position as Pastoral Associate at Resurrection Parish in Nashua. After much prayer and many tears she decided that her tenure here (she'd been Religious

Ed Director since January 1995) must end—God was calling her to a new ministry. On Saturday, November 18th another farewell reception took place in our parish hall. We bid goodbye to Ann. Jay, Ann's husband and our very talented liturgist and Confirmation Program Coordinator, remained for one year and then joined Ann at Resurrection.

When Ann resigned Marilyn Heitman, our parish secretary, took over the position of Director of Religious Education. She had been a Catholic school teacher and the school's religion coordinator in Ohio for a number of years before coming to St. Mark's. She now moved into the office next door and took up the yoke Ann had left behind. (For a while—until a new secretary was found—she wore two hats and did the work of both offices.)

It wasn't long before our search for a new secretary succeeded. Fran Therrien, our current secretary, was hired. She had been the secretary and bookkeeper at a parish in Manchester that was closed after it merged with another parish. The shortage of priests has far-reaching effects. Their loss was our gain, however, and Fran settled nicely into her new position.

As the year 2000 came to an end, Fr. Moe's love of incense incensed some of our parishioners. Many complained about the billowing clouds of "holy smoke" that were part of the entrance procession on All Saints Day. Father responded with an article in a December bulletin explaining his "fetish." Since he wished to keep this ancient liturgical tradition and also be sensitive to those with respiratory problems, he designated the 8 and 11:30 A.M. Masses as "incense free." He also went on a hunt for a less pungent, "non-choking" variety. Many breathed a sigh of relief.

We started off 2001 with a spaghetti dinner sponsored by our Social Committee. For just \$2.50 a person or a max of \$10 for the whole family, we were treated to a complete, delicious Italian dinner.

The neighbors across the street asked that we refrain from parking too near their driveways when attending Mass, as they could not see oncoming traffic when they tried to exit their property. Parishioners were asked in the bulletin to honor this request. Eventually we petitioned the town and asked that the "No Parking" signs be moved from our side of the street to the opposite side. This was done, alleviating any problems for our neighbors and allowing us to park on the street directly in front of the church.

During this twentieth anniversary year Fr. Moe added to our staff. Peg Agati was hired to assist Fran in the office with phone answering and bulletin preparation. Roberta Davis was hired to direct our Sunday morning children's program. Paula Goduti was hired to run our R.C.I.A. program, Scott Sicard joined our staff as Youth Minister, and Gil Jandreau was hired in March to assist John with parish maintenance.

Father also did some revamping in the rectory. New furniture replaced the donated items in the living room and bedroom. (Some pieces of the replaced furniture were used items that had been there since the parish started.) He also had a hardwood floor installed in the upstairs. Painting the dark paneling in the living and dining rooms and replacing the drapes gave the rectory a much brighter look.

Now that the parish hall was available during the day—before our Parish Center was completed, the nursery school and kindergarten met there throughout the school year—we decided to form a hospitality committee. This group of parishioners would provide comfort to grieving families by offering a luncheon after a funeral, or, occasionally provide hospitality at various parish functions. Parishioners were asked to join this committee by volunteering to bake, cook, set up, serve, or clean up. Many women and several men answered the challenge, and three sub committees were formed. The sub committees worked on a rotating basis, thus alleviating the burden of any one group. The committee chairpeople were Peg Agati, Mary Anne O'Brien, and Doriene Steiniger.

Another group was formed this year: the Women of Mary. (The men's group, Men of St. Joseph, had been started when Fr. Tom was pastor.) This group of women met in the chapel on the first Saturday of every month to pray the rosary and attend Mass. After Mass they enjoyed a potluck breakfast while they listened to a guest speaker. This tradition continues today. All women of the parish are welcome to attend.

A Mother's Rosary Group formed this year also. Young mothers and their children met in our parish hall every Tuesday morning after Mass. The mothers prayed the rosary while the children played together. Joan Bompastore, Tracey Cusick, Trish Derr, Jen Hynes, Karen Nicoli, Monica Rahilly, Denise Radzelovage, Monica Turcotte, and others could be found there almost every week.

Ernie Picken, our cantor at the 5 P.M. Mass, started a Morning Praise and Worship group that met on the first Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to-7:30 A.M. in St. Bridget's Chapel. Any and all were welcome to attend this hour of song, Scripture, worship, and prayer. Unfortunately, Ernie's difficult battle with cancer brought this group to an end.

In addition to the men and women's groups, two children's groups were formed: Little Flowers for girls age 8 and higher and Blue Knights for the boys. Every other week during the school year they met in our parish kitchen and participated in prayer, study, and craft projects.

In February someone broke into our Poor Box and took approximately \$50-\$100. Parishioners were given the news in the bulletin and it was suggested that anyone who had contributed using a check might want to notify the bank and stop payment. This event caused us to re-plaster the hole in the wall left by the thief and begin using a portable Poor Box that would be available during services and locked away when the church was vacant.

By this time our parish had grown to almost 1600 families. Some of these families, however, were not actively involved in the parish. To more accurately reflect the true status of our parish and to save on mailing costs, we decided to update our census. For three weeks registration forms were distributed in church. Every family was asked to complete a new registration and return it. After a while, every family that had not returned a form was mailed one, along with a letter asking them to complete and return it if they wanted to remain a member of St. Mark's. This process was repeated several months later. After several mailing attempts, those families that had not responded or had notified us that they no longer wished to be members of our parish were deleted. This put us at just over 1300 families.

Fr. Moe started a new tradition—placing an article in the bulletin called the *Pastor's Pen*. At first his articles appeared on a sporadic basis, but by mid-March of this year his brief missives appeared almost every week. This is a tradition our next pastor, Fr. Thomas Duston, would continue.

We were informed in March that we would have a seminarian spend the summer with us again. (The last time this happened was in the early 1980s when Fr. Moe was stationed here.) Damien Ledoux would join us for the months of June and July. He had grown up in Manchester and was now studying for the priesthood at Mundelein in Illinois.

March also saw ninety of our fourth graders receive the healing Sacrament of Reconciliation. This was one of the largest groups in our parish history. Seventy of our tenth graders received the Sacrament of Confirmation in October. Our parish also hosted the joint Lenten Reconciliation Service (St. Mark/St. Jude) this year.

Our ninth graders, approximately 75 students, made trips to the Seabecks in Gilmonton as part of their religious education classes. There they spent an entire Saturday seeing slides of Mother Teresa's Haiti missions and hearing about her work, preparing small Christmas presents for the Haitian children, and making pill packets. The students were amazed to find that a child's entire Christmas present would consist of a toothbrush, toothpaste, a comb, a small bar of soap, and a tiny ball or barrette. It certainly was an eye-opener for most of our students.

In June a letter from the Seabecks appeared in our bulletin thanking our parish and our youth for "the incredible generosity of the diapers and detergent ... it is quite overwhelming. Please know how much it means to the sisters who have seven homes for the adult dying and seven homes for the children in Haiti. Your diapers make it possible for them to bring the little ones comfort either in their days of recovery from malnutrition or their last days on earth. The detergent helps them with the laundry involved in these fourteen homes that each has over 100+ people in them. Your check of \$900 will help us make our next 10 ton shipment later this month."

As usual some of our religious education students prepared and presented a children's Stations of the Cross. It was open to anyone in the parish, but children were especially invited to attend the Good Friday afternoon service.

Our Youth Group held a carnival for all the elementary school children in our parish. They had food, crafts, games, face painting, and a treasure hunt. The kids had a ball. The youth choir, under the direction of Jan McLaughlin, held a concert for the entire parish. Many of them also attended the "Inside Out Soul Festival" held at Loon Mountain for three days during the summer

Our R.C.I.A. was especially active this year. On April 14th, as we celebrated the Easter Vigil Mass, we welcomed sixteen children and adults into full communion with us. Killarney, Aloysius, Augustus, Terrence, Ernest, Spencer, Margaret, Roarke, Ruben, and Calico Traynor, Roberta Christie, Jeffrey Davis, Katherine Getchell, James Laudani, and Andrea and Frank Moska joined our ranks.

It was quite a sight to witness the baptism of nine of the Traynor children. Fr. Moe had replaced our traditional baptismal font with a hot tub so that baptism could take place by immersion. Father went in the hot tub and one-by-one he was joined by a child. Exuberantly he doused them with water as

he recited the words of baptism. The altar, and a few of the nearby people, felt the warm baptismal waters, too!

As a Special event for our twentieth anniversary, and to honor our patron saint, in April we celebrated a Mass of healing. It was held on the evening of April 25th, the feast day of our patron saint, the Gospel writer, St. Mark.

In May we began to hear about a new opportunity to reach out and serve our fellow man. This particular project, called the Belarus Relief Project, was presented to the parish and, in this area of the country, directed by Chris Cusick. This article appeared in our May 13th bulletin.

Have you ever wondered what the effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident had on the people who live there? Do you think you could open your hearts and home to some children for four weeks this summer? If so, please contact Chris or Tracey Cusick. Your donation and/or gift of housing could change their world forever!

Six families volunteered for this project and opened their homes for ten children from June 29th to July 27th. They were the Garrett Adie family, the Kevin Cronin Family, the Chris Cusick family, the Henk Oolders family, the Ken Rahilly family, and the Daniel Vasquez family. In addition, the doctors and dentists in our parish offered medical and dental services to these children, free of charge. Parishioners also helped by donating many items—clothing, toiletries, gift certificates, cameras, etc.—to help the children have a memorable stay.

Once again this year our parish participated in a product research survey. Parishioners came to two sessions in late May. Their participation in this event helped our parish reduce our debt even further.

Religious education registration forms were mailed to all families with school-age children. Families were given an option of class days and grades for the first time. While meeting in the hall, we could only offer one class at a time. Thus, if you had a child in 2nd grade, he/she had to attend on Tuesday afternoons at 4 P.M.; your sixth grader was scheduled on Monday evenings at 7 P.M. This meant that a family with three children would have to come back and forth for religious ed classes on three different days and times.

For the 1999-2000 school years, the Director, Ann Cormier, had two grades come on the same day and time—a second grader and a fourth grader could both attend on Monday or Wednesday afternoons. This alleviated the transportation burden on parents. For the 2001-02 school year Director Marilynn Heitman opened the classes even further. Families could choose the day (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) and have all of their 2nd through 5th grade children come at 4:15 P.M. Their 6th through 9th graders could also attend on any evening at 7 P.M. This created quite a burden on the religious ed department, but made life much easier for families.

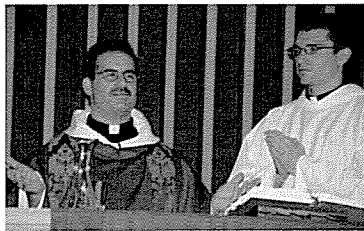
Other changes in religious education also occurred this year. Because of the Church scandal, many parents expressed concern about their tenth graders going to St. Basil's in Methuen for a retreat weekend. After much discussion, prayer, and reflection we decided to offer our own weekend retreat. Because we did not have showers, the students were allowed to go home on Friday night and return on Saturday morning. They did spend Saturday night sleeping on the floors (girls upstairs, boys downstairs) of our parish center. Parishioner and former youth and retreat leader, Becky Fainer, and our Youth Minister, Scott Sicard, agreed to run the retreat with the help of several of our Youth Group's Advisory Board.

The retreat was held on the weekend of February 7–9th. Our Hospitality Groups I, II, and III, along with the Knights and the Social Committee assisted in meal preparation and service. Paula Flynn, Mary Laturneau, and Barbara Scott-Kolbe were daytime monitors; while Bill Donroe, Chris Hamilton, Sally Mitchell, and Mary Sohm volunteered to be overnight chaperones. In late October, our ninth grade students participated in a Saturday retreat given by a team from Rivier College. They greatly enjoyed the experience.

Our Mary Perkins Scholarship changed its focus this year. Instead of offering graduating seniors money for college, the fund would now be used to assist families in need with their religious education tuition.

In May, Scott Sicard came on board as Youth Minister. A blurb in the June 3rd bulletin told of Scott's background. He had been a member of our parish since 1983, and had been studying at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio for the past two years. He was 24 and engaged to be married to Kelly Fallon. He hoped to become a high school English teacher. (This hope became a reality a few years later at Londonderry High.)

Paula Goduti also joined our staff. On July 1st it was announced that she would be the new director for R.C.I.A. Paula spoke at all Masses that weekend and was available for any questions after the Mass. Paula was one of the founding members of our parish.



Fr. Moe and Damien Ledoux

Our seminarian arrived in June. He was a perfect match for the high-energy Fr. Moe. He immediately stepped in and helped in any way possible. A computer buff, we would often come into the office and find our computers with screens rearranged, or weird jungle sounds emanating from them; we knew that Damien Ledoux had been there. He assisted Scott with the youth group, provided two leadership conferences for our teens, and worked with Fr. Moe, Lee, and Marilynn to restructure our Confirmation program. He was vocal, too, always announcing his presence with a mischievous “Whaatzup?” On the weekend of July 27-28th a brief reception was held in the hall after every Mass to say our good byes to Damien. We would all miss him.

This year saw the death of two people who were an integral part of our parish over the years. Eleanor Bell died in June. She was our parish organist for many years. Failing health and hip problems forced her to quit two years previously. Sr. Dorothy Morneau died in August. This lovely little lady, a Sister of Holy Cross living in our parish, assisted Ann and Marilynn in the religious ed office for a number of years. We appreciate all that they did for us and we pray for their eternal rest.

We were especially generous this year. We had donated \$58,749 to Catholic Charities. With another \$6,526 pledged, we would contribute \$65,275 this year to this charity alone. Of course we also donated to the soup kitchen (\$225); the missions in Haiti, Thailand, and elsewhere (\$2,150); we gave to disaster relief for the earthquake victims in Peru; to Birthright (\$625); to Hospice (\$400); and we poured out 130 pints of our very life’s blood during our annual Red Cross Blood Drive. We outdid ourselves in assisting needy families through our Christmas Basket Program, too (\$1541 plus 47 families assisted). When September 11th occurred, we reached out with both money and goods to assist the rescue workers in New York.

On September 16th our pastoral assistant, Lee Abbott, received the “Rite of Acolyte.” This rite would prepare him for services at the altar. His studies

would continue and it was planned that he would finally be ordained as deacon on April 27, 2002.

In one of October's *Pastor's Pen* articles, in we learned of Jay Cormier's resignation.

... Jay Cormier approached me to say that he would be resigning from positions of ministry in the parish. In his words, "Fourteen years ago Fr. Tom asked me to do the job of overseeing liturgy here, and I feel that my work is now finished."

As a parish we owe a great debt of gratitude to Jay for his tireless work and effort in coordinating liturgy, being a cantor at the 5 P.M. Mass, and directing the Confirmation program. ... Thank you, Jay. You will remain in our hearts and in our prayers.

Our Social Committee worked diligently to make our twentieth anniversary unforgettable. The entire weekend had events planned. Friday night would be spent in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Bridget's Chapel. This was followed by a Mass on Saturday morning. On Saturday evening a dinner dance was held complete with a catered meal and a DJ; over 200 attended. On Sunday whole families gathered for a spaghetti and meatball dinner—300+ feasted. All of these events were provided at no cost to parishioners.

In 2002 plans were made to bring another 10 children from Belarus to spend four weeks with a family. The goal of the project was to provide respite, medical care, hope, and lots of TLC to the forgotten children affected by the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl. To help accomplish this, we held fund-raisers in conjunction with our local McDonalds, Burger King, and Papa Gino's. They would contribute a portion of the money we spent on food orders to the Chernobyl Children's Project. As another fund-raiser, a silent auction and dinner was held in our parish in April. Monica Rahilly was in charge of this event that raised a whopping \$4,200. In mid June, Martin Doman, a Catholic praise and worship leader, singer, and composer gave a benefit concert to assist CCP.

The children arrived in June and were welcomed into the homes of the Garrett Adie family, the Greg Capiello family, the Kevin Cronin family, the Jeff Davis family, the Rob Litch family, and the Ken Rahilly family. Chris and Tracey Cusick once again spearheaded this project. They were also

responsible for getting parishes in Nashua and Plaistow to participate in helping the children of Chernobyl. Unfortunately, Chris and Tracey moved out of state later this year and no one stepped forward to continue our parish involvement.

The Catholic Church was rocked with scandal this year. Yet our faith did not depend on individual priests, but on our belief in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Fr. Moe addressed this issue in the March 31st bulletin.

A few years ago, during the Easter Vigil, I had the privilege of seeing a staunch Baptist woman become Catholic. I asked her, "What is it about worshipping as a Catholic that you find most compelling?"

"Father, where I come from, if the minister is a 'jerk' there is very little for someone who is devout. The thing I like about Catholicism is that you can always look past the minister to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist."

Indeed, we need to face, confront, correct, and heal the many wounds of our Church. Recent disclosure of grave sins on the part of clerics and officials of the Church reveal the face of human imperfection that distorts our vision of the Body of Christ.

After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were compelled to face some very serious issues. Judas had betrayed Jesus and committed suicide. Peter, the supposed rock, had denied Jesus, and all but Mary and John had abandoned Him. The disciples survived this scandalous beginning by recalling that the Church is really about the Risen Jesus Christ.

In spite of the scandal, St. Mark's was alive and well. Our tenth graders had the option of attending the weekend retreat given in the parish or choosing a weekend retreat at St. Basil's in Methuen. Mrs. Heitman was able to get a NET team to do a retreat in April. Most students chose to attend the retreat at St. Mark's. This year, instead of having the students stay overnight, they were sent home at 10 P.M. on Friday and Saturday evenings and had to return by 8 A.M. the next morning. The NET retreats were a huge success and all students in attendance were glad they had come.

Our ninth graders were treated to a one-day retreat with a NET team. They also spent a Saturday on a service retreat in Gilford with the Seabecks. Other students visited a temple in Manchester and talked with Rabbi Starr. Guest

speakers came and spoke to our older students and their parents: Nancy Malo, educational director of fertility at CMC, discussed teen dating, and Helen Wertheimer spoke about her family's experiences in the concentration camps of WWII. One hundred five children received the Eucharist for the first time in May. Several members of our Youth Group were privileged to attend World Youth Day in Toronto, in July.

Our Knights, wanting to honor families and family values, started Family of the Month awards. Anyone in the parish was invited to nominate a family that they found particularly epitomized true Christian family values. Winning families would receive a personally delivered certificate and a Holy Family statue from one of the Knights, and their name would be placed on a plaque in the stairway leading to the church hall. Some of the families so honored were the Rosenberg, Traynor, Derr, Hynes, Cusick, Morgan, Combes, Pedley, Turcotte, Fernald, Ciarletta, McLaughlin, Donroe, Goduti, Sommese, Cox, Davis, Hamilton, Rahilly, Desrosier, Jandreau and Kelly families.

In April an insert in our bulletin announced that Fr. Moe and his friend, Fr. Paul Gousse, from Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Concord, would lead a trip through Italy in November. Several of our parishioners decided to be part of this event: Diane and Dave Barber, Joe and Nancy DeCarolus, Terry Fernald, Paula Goduti, Jackie Hynes and her daughter Christen, and Alicia MacDonald. They all had a marvelous time and were overjoyed that they had decided to go.



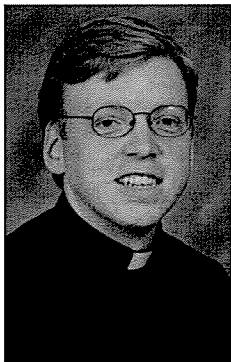
Fr. Moe and Deacon Lee Abbott

April presented days of joy and days of sadness for us. Lee Abbott, along with 22 other men, was finally ordained deacon on April 27th. His first Mass as deacon was celebrated at our 11:30 A.M. liturgy on the 28th. After Mass a reception was held in the parish hall for all who wished to extend their best wishes to our new "Reverend Deacon Lee" and his wife, Marie. In early April Ann Griffin died. She was the head of our sacristans and, along with cleaning the church herself, she organized and scheduled the other cleaning volunteers. We prayed for God's blessing upon her.

June saw some expected and some surprise leave-taking. Barbara McGrath retired after her fourteen years as director of St. Mark's Nursery School and Kindergarten. A reception was held for her after Mass on the second Sunday of June and we wished her well as she began her travels as a retired person. Her assistant, Jackie LeCompte, would now become the director. Our organist, Ginny Corcoran, left us to become the organist at St. Patrick's in Pelham.

The biggest surprise leave-taking occurred in late June. We gathered in the hall after Mass on June 23rd and said both "Happy Anniversary" for fifteen years in the priesthood, and "Goodbye" to Fr. Moe. Although he had only been our pastor for two years, he had affected the lives of many. His last *Pastor's Pen* as the pastor of St. Mark's stated:

I celebrated my first Mass as pastor of St. Mark's on June 21, 2000 at 9:00 A.M. Though there was a knot in my stomach, there was electricity of joy in my heart for anticipation of what was to come. Since then, one of my consistent experiences in this parish has been the warmth that comes through all of you. You truly have personified the warmth of Jesus for me. But it was not just I who had this feeling. Many of my friends and family from other parts of the state and country have come here and commented on the feeling of warmth and welcome that makes the air at St. Mark's thick with Christ. I pray that I can take this with me wherever I go, for this infectious warmth of Christ that I have received from you must be passed on!



Rev. Thomas Duston

On Thursday, June 27th, Fr. Thomas Duston, our new pastor, said his first Mass at St. Mark's. He processed down the aisle, went up the steps of the altar, turned around and said, wide-eyed, "Wow, this is more people than I am used to seeing on a weekend!"

Fr. Thom (the name sounded vaguely familiar to all of us even though the spelling was different) grew up in West Swanzey, a small town south of Keene. Prior to becoming our pastor, he was pastor of a triple parish: Sacred Heart Parish, Marlboro, Immaculate Conception Parish, Troy, and St. Denis Parish, Harrisville. Fr. Thom gave us a little of his background in his first *Paster's Pen* on July 7th.

For the past six years I have been ministering in three small parishes just outside of Keene. In the summer round-trip driving between the three churches and two missions was 75 miles, dropping to about 35 miles during the winter. I was also Dean of the Keene Deanery, a position meant to assist parishes and priests in collaborating in their ministry. In addition, I studied Sign Language Interpreting at UNH Manchester. I am very happy to have the studies over, and responsibilities for the Deanery passed on to another priest. I am relieved to be in one single parish now, even though it is much larger.

When Father joined us at St. Mark's, he brought along the seminarian assigned to him for the summer, John Boucher. John had served as our Youth Minister nine years previously, so he was no stranger to St. Mark's. He pitched right in working with Scott and the youth. (They were now in their summer mode, an activity-based program.) He also contributed much to the revamping of our Confirmation program and in any other way he could, both in the parish and in the parish office.

John was a seminarian at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois. In our July 7th bulletin he wrote a two-page insert telling of his faith journey, his discernment of his vocation, and his days at the seminary. In February of 2003 we would learn that John, after much prayer, study, and reflection, had discerned that God was not calling him to priesthood, but to another ministry instead. He moved from Illinois to New Mexico to minister to poor, displaced immigrants.

Fr. Thom had a rescued greyhound named Beau. Because of his racing background, Beau could never be tied out in the yard. We needed a fence around the rectory to keep him safe and to keep Father from being worn out from constant walk/runs. As usual parishioners were most generous in responding to this need and by next spring Beau was able to romp safely in the rectory's backyard—Fr. Thom could relax a little, too.

Father explained in his weekly bulletin columns, how it was that he became interested in the deaf culture and in learning American Sign Language. During his first year as a priest a deaf child wanted to become an altar server. Father agreed, but found it difficult to communicate with the boy. He asked the child's mother about deaf classes and soon not only learned ASL but also took the entire interpreter training program—seeing this as an opportunity to provide deaf people with access to the word of God.

We were all mesmerized the first time we saw Fr. Thom celebrate Mass both speaking and signing. This was quite difficult because the vocabulary is not the same and the word order or sentence structure of ASL is very different from the spoken word. At the end of the first Mass he signed at St. Mark's, he commented, "I don't know about you, but I'm exhausted!" Father continues to sign at any Mass where deaf people are present—and we still continue to be mesmerized.

In an effort to help parishioners deal with the scandal within the Church, we held a listening session. Our bulletin explains:

This time of sharing will provide an opportunity to voice our thoughts and concerns regarding the ongoing scandal of sexual abuse in the Church and the way our bishops have dealt with it. The outreach coordinator and counselor from our local Catholic Charities office will facilitate this meeting, helping us express our diverse thoughts and experiences with respect. Come to the parish hall next Monday and give voice to your concerns and hopes for our present and future.

Almost 100 people attended this meeting and shared their questions, experiences, frustrations, and anger. As a follow-up to this meeting, Fr. Thom asked the facilitators to return and be with us as we discussed our thoughts and feelings about our parish community itself. Two more meetings took place discussing the good and bad of our parish life. A list of concerns was created to be given to our new Parish Council for reflection and possible action.

Another event was held here in November, in conjunction with NH Catholic Charities. This was a program entitled "*Protecting God's Children—how to prevent sexual abuse of children.*" As a response to the Church scandal, and to prevent further abuse of children, the diocese prepared this program. Attendance at a *Protecting God's Children* seminar was required by the Diocese of Manchester for all parishioners who had any contact with children. We would offer this seminar a second time in June of 2003 and periodically thereafter.

During Advent this year, our parish held another mission. Fr. Carl Arico, a renowned retreat leader and author conducted the retreat from Sunday, December 8th through Tuesday the 10th. Father spoke to us about Centering

Prayer, Lectio Divina, and Prayer as Relationship. Because of this retreat, a small group was formed to pray together using Centering Prayer.

December also brought an explanation of the unusual ways that Fr. Thom was signing his *Pastor's Pen* columns each week. Closings such as, "With an affectionate nudge of my muzzle, GrrrrrGrrrrGrrrr, With a big roar, Back with my pride, Taking an afternoon nap, One paw up (like a high five?), With a flick of my tail, From the den," etc. had appeared in the bulletin for the last several months. Some parishioners just thought Father was quirky; some figured it out; some, in the beginning, thought it was a mistake; and some just asked him what they meant. Finally, Father explained. The new Church year readings would be drawn from the Gospel of St. Mark, our patron. Each of the four evangelists is represented in Church art by one of the winged beasts from the book of Revelation. St. Mark has a winged lion as his symbol (check out the statue in front of church). Father, with his closings, was making veiled references to our patron saint. Talk about dry wit!

An article appeared in our December 8th bulletin telling of an award given to Fr. Thom. Indeed he is a multi-faceted, talented man.

The Marlborough Interfaith Community has given our Fr. Thom this year's *Fr. Dennis Horan Interfaith Humanitarian Award*. ... Fr. Thom was recognized for his involvement in a wide variety of outreach—for his work as a Library Trustee, soccer coach, member of the Youth Advisory Committee, and Cheshire Hospital's Pastoral Ministry Committee, among others. He even served as Grandpa at the local community dinner! Way to go, Fr. Thom!

The year ended with many of the activities that have become hallmarks of our parish: the fall greeting card drive for prisoners, our September blood drive, the Knights selling Christmas trees, our annual \$1,200 raffle, and the whole parish participating in our Christmas Basket Program (55 families were helped this year).

Throughout the year our charitable giving to the Poor Box was distributed to Emily's Place (\$300); Community Caregivers (\$370); Mother Teresa's Haiti Missions (\$700 plus cleaning and disinfecting products); St. Mark's Charitable Fund (\$550); Birthright (\$400 plus baby clothing); Fr. Tabor's Thailand Missions (\$400); Sonshine Soup Kitchen (\$300); and Rockingham Hospice (\$540).

Our first Parish Meeting was held on January 27, 2003 in the parish hall. All were invited to participate in shaping the vision for our parish's future. The bulletin explained:

We need to evaluate where we are as a parish and where we want to be. We can change those things over which we have some control. Don't sit back and grumble that no one ever listens to you. Come to express your thoughts, concerns and desires about the future of our parish.

Approximately 100 people braved the sub-zero temperatures to attend and offer valuable insights and suggestions that would affect the future of our parish. Those who were unable to attend were also asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Parish Input sheets were available at the entrance of church throughout the month of February.

Fr. Thom announced the creation of a Pastoral Council that would begin to meet after our parish-input session.

I hope to call together a group of thoughtful, prayerful, and visionary people to advise me on the pastoral issues in our parish. ... The purpose of this council will be to prayerfully discern the suggestions gathered at our parish-input session. After this discernment, the council will discuss and propose for action those matters that seem most pastorally pressing. The council will then foster the pastoral activities of our parish.

This is a way that I can hear and think about opinions other than my own. Since I am the one who will have to answer to God for how I pastor this parish, I want to be sure that I work from the best ideas and goals possible. Those will not always be my own. They will always be ones that I can support and defend based on our faith.

Parishioners who were interested in serving on our Pastoral Council for a minimum of three years were asked to submit their names. After a number of prayer and discernment meetings, beginning on April 23rd, the Pastoral Council, would be formed from this group. The original members of our Pastoral Council which held its first working session on June 17th were: Lee Abbott, Martin Bourque, Kathy Bove, Jeff Davis, Bill Donroe, Rick Flynn, Bill Hamilton, Marilyn Heitman, Donna Hume, Fran Hynes, Gil Jandreau,

Carol Lott, Jan and John McLaughlin, Mary Ann O'Brien, Sheila O'Brien, Carol Potter, Victoria Reyes, Anne Marie and Ken Soroko—and, of course, Fr. Thom.

In March a bulletin insert informed parishioners of the results of the input sheets and meeting. In the March 23rd bulletin a questionnaire was included. Parishioners were asked to prioritize the suggestions that had been made in a variety of categories: liturgy, church, religious education, adult education/formation, youth, parish outreach, and miscellaneous. People were to take their time and think about the various issues and then return the completed questionnaires by the end of April.

One of the results of the parish-input sessions, and an idea the staff had discussed on many occasions, was the faith formation of adults. Many Catholics' faith education seemed to end with their own childhood religious education classes or the end of their Catholic school education. Certainly a child's understanding and an adult's comprehension of the tenets of Catholicism are vastly different. Growth in and understanding of our faith is a life-long journey. A committee to address this need in our parish was formed and became a reality in May of this year. Paula Flynn was chosen to lead the group.



Marilynn Heitman

In response to the parish input session regarding Religious Education, the Director, Marilyn Heitman, sent out a survey to all families in the parish with school-age children. Families were asked to choose which class days and time slots they found best suited their family's needs. Surprisingly, of the 92 families that responded, the majority preferred the current days and times. Many, however, asked about a Summer School Program. Marilyn would spend July and August 2003 visiting various parishes that had summer religious education classes. After speaking with a number of directors, teachers, and summer students from other parishes, she decided it was a viable alternative to the current school-year program. In 2004 after several meetings with interested parents, she would implement our Summer Session. It was announced in our November 16th bulletin that a Summer Session would be offered from July 26th to August 5th the following year.

The inaugural meeting of the new St. Mark's Catholic Book Group was held in mid February. Garrett Adie led this first session that discussed the format of the monthly meetings and chose the first book—*Professions of Faith; Living and Working as a Catholic*. This would be a fun, relaxed, small group that read and discussed Catholic books of interest to a broad audience.

In June the bulletin started highlighting the various ministries in our parish. It was clear from the suggestions of the parish input session that parishioners did not know about many of the ministries already happening at St. Mark's. Thus these brief articles were to help make parishioners aware of our current ministries and groups.

Changes occurred in our church during 2003. One of our stained-glass windows broke and, because the manufacturer was no longer in business, it could not be replaced. After searching for possible alternatives, it was decided to remove the other stained-glass windows and just let the light in through the clear glass. The steps in front of the church had been deteriorating for a number of years and were becoming dangerous. A mason was hired to make permanent repairs. Fr. Thom in one of his "Pastor's Pen" columns made the comment, "I find lawns boring beyond my ability to express." So, he, along with a number of volunteers, made plans to plant various bushes, trees, and flowers to give "our environment more interest and more diversity."

Our Knights were busy in 2003. They prepared a mid-winter treat of a spaghetti dinner and a movie—complete with free popcorn and soda. They formed a Squires Circle for Catholic young men, ages 10–18. They began our tradition of serving baked fish dinners on the Fridays of Lent. They held their annual Free Throw Contest; and their Pro-Life Essay, Poem, or Poster Contest (Amanda Morgan won). In May a daughter of one of the Knights was killed in an automobile accident. In response, the Knights set up a continuing scholarship fund in her name—the Rosemarie R. Cox Scholarship. They held their annual pizza party at a Nashua Pride baseball game in late June, and a parish ice cream social in September.

Other groups were also alive and well in 2002. Our Rosary Makers, with the support of our K of C, were able to send 250 rosaries to the members of our military and another 200 rosaries to the missions. Our Men of St. Joseph and Women of Mary continued to meet on Saturdays. Our Community Affairs Committee continued all their annual events and added some new ones.

They held a Brown Bag Sunday to collect non-perishable food items for the Shepherd's Pantry in Windham. A new ministry started in April of this year—a ministry to bring communion on a regular basis to the sick or homebound of our parish. This ministry continues today. Anyone desiring this service need only call the parish office.

Raffles and bake sales and the generosity of many parishioners helped to send thirty of our high school youth to the Steubenville East Conference and Retreat this summer. On their return we read in our bulletin such phrases as, “unbelievable time,” “amazing experience,” “life-changing experiences,” as they related their thoughts about the trip.

During the summer as part of our adult enrichment, the parish held Twilight Lemonade Chats. People were invited to come alone or with the entire family, to one session or to all five, to learn something new or learn something anew. Topics were: How do Catholics approach the Bible and why? Why is Mary so prominent? Why saints and why so many new current day ones? What is up with the “Left-Behind” series and ‘the rapture’? Your faith is not your parent’s.

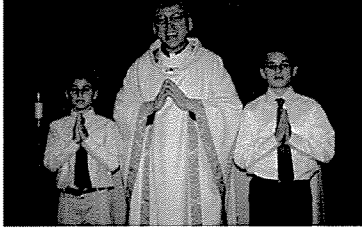
Our Adult Faith Formation Committee was quite active this year. Paula Flynn promoted an adult learning opportunity in an August bulletin:

Join a group of other adults on Wednesday afternoons while the children are in their Religious Education classes. We will cover all of the topics the kids are covering, but in more depth. Review the basics, catch up on the latest, and have your questions answered, in an informal, low-key setting. If you’re interested in taking this course, but the time slot is inconvenient, let us know your needs.

Sadly, only three or four people took advantage of this opportunity.

In August the Celebrant Singers came to St. Mark’s to give a concert and to share their stories and their faith. It was truly a wonderful event and all in attendance were moved by the performance. During their stay, various families in our parish hosted the Celebrant Singers.

The fall Religious Education classes opened with potluck suppers for all students and family members. Our hospitality committee hosted them on three consecutive evenings, and all seemed to have a most enjoyable time.



Dylan Woodard, Fr. Thom, Adam Woodard

October brought the addition of Children's Liturgies to our Mass schedule. Four times a year Father would say Mass and give a homily geared specifically to the children of the parish. Children were invited to participate as greeters, as readers, and as choir members. These were very popular Masses for the many young families in our parish, and reminded all of us that the children were not the future of the Church; they are the present of the Church along with us.

Another activity for the children happened two or three times a year—Children's Craft Day. Children, ages 4 to 10, were invited to make a craft for a nominal fee (\$1 or \$2) that would make a special gift for a loved one. Donna Hume, with the help of some of our high school Confirmation students, organized and ran this activity. Over sixty children came and glued and glittered, and enjoyed a movie and refreshments. Thank you Donna, and Confirmation students, for all your hard work!

Also in October our parish was proud to host the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. From October 31st to November 2nd an actual (4' x 6') size replica of the original Miraculous Image of Our Lady which she left on St. Juan Diego's cloak was on display in our church. These missionary images traveled the world and were said to bring conversions, reverence for life, sanctity of the family, and solidarity of the Church in America.

Although Sunday contributions were down both last year and this because of the Church scandal, our giving continued to various charities. We gave to Emily's Place (\$100); Community Caregivers (\$290); Mother Teresa's missions in Haiti (\$2,620 plus toiletries and first aid items); St. Mark's Charitable Fund (\$695); Birthright (\$955 plus baby clothing and diapers); Sonshine Soup Kitchen (\$250); Fr. Tabor's mission in Thailand (\$665); Rockingham Hospice (\$594); and our Christmas Basket Program (\$2,186 with 57 families assisted). In addition we gave our blood, we made salads and desserts for the Derry soup kitchen, and we contributed food items on Brown Bag Sunday for Shepherd's Pantry in Windham.

We started off 2004 with a delicious spaghetti dinner sponsored by our Knights of Columbus and our Social Committee. Many enjoyed the yummy Italian dinner and the splendid Broadway show tune entertainment provided by members of the Lowell Opera Company. Proceeds from the free-will offering were used to fund the Knights' first annual Rosemarie R. Cox college scholarship fund that would be distributed in June.

Aside from this event, our Knights were busy with many other activities this year. They held their annual free-throw contest for kids aged 10–14 at the end of January; they provided baked fish dinners on the Fridays of Lent; they cooked up a storm at the annual St. Patrick's Day corned beef dinner. They conducted their annual Tootsie Roll Drive and distributed money to benefit special needs children. They marched in the Olde Home Days parade, and once again had their putting green booth. They also held their pizza dinner and annual trip to a Nashua Pride baseball game.

Spiritually the parish was alive and well. Eucharistic adoration occurred every Tuesday in St. Bridget's Chapel. The Women of Mary met every first Saturday of the month for the rosary, Mass, a guest speaker, and a potluck brunch; while the Men of St. Joseph met on the third Saturday for the rosary, Mass, and fellowship. Eucharistic adoration continued throughout the night on every first Friday. Several different Bible studies took place throughout the year, both during the day and in the evenings.

Fr. Thom attended a pastoral week of the National Catholic Office of the Deaf in Baltimore. This conference—for both U.S. and Canadian priests involved in deaf ministry—was conducted almost totally in American Sign Language. So, while Fr. Thom was boning up on his ASL, we welcomed Fr. Ed Arsenault to our Sunday liturgies. Later in the year, Fr. Thom was able to attend an International Priests' Retreat in Malta. His trip coincided with Fr. Jim Costigan's visit for our parish retreat, so Fr. Jim covered all our weekend Masses. Fr. Thom enjoyed the convention immensely and hopes to attend other conferences in the future

In an attempt to reach out to the many young families in our parish, we started offering Children's bulletins each week. These worship bulletins helped teach God's message of the Gospel through fun activities. There were two different bulletins available at the church entrance each week—one written for young children (ages 3–6), and one for children aged 7–12. Families were encouraged to pick one up on their way out of church and use them at home to help teach their children about the Catholic faith.

Youth group continued to grow and strengthen under the direction of Scott Sicard. High school students met every Wednesday evening in our parish hall to learn about themselves, to grow deeper in faith, and to discuss issues concerning the daily life of a teenager. Weekly activities varied from songs, games, sports, skits, discussions, wild competitions, and many off-the-wall events. Special activities, such as "The Ring Thing" and the Steubenville East Summer Retreat, also took place.

Middle school youth group met every other Friday evening under the direction of Phil and Jodi Hardcastle. Along with prayer and spiritual growth, fun activities such as games, movies, races, and bowling took place. Students were always invited to bring their friends along, too; they didn't have to be a member of the parish—or even Catholic—to attend.

Due to rising costs and lower parish income this year, it was decided that we would have to raise Religious Ed tuition for the 2004–2005 school year. Letters were sent in January to all families with school-age children to inform them of this change so that they would have ample time to prepare—since it would go into effect with our new Summer Program. As always, families who used envelopes or checks to support the parish financially received reduced tuition rates.

Under the guidance of Roberta Davis, Donna Hume, Mary Lovell and others, and with the blessings of Fr. Thom, special children's liturgies were held four times again this year. Fr. Thom geared the Mass to the “younger crowd” by inviting the children up to the altar for the homily and the Eucharistic prayers. Usually some family activity, such as a bonfire or a pot luck meal, took place after these special Masses.

We sponsored a Singles Support Group for those in our parish who were separated or divorced. Singles were invited to meet on the third Friday of each month to hear guest speakers talk about annulments, spirituality, the various counseling services available, and ideas about how to help their children.

In March a new tradition began in our parish. In his *Pastor's Pen* column, Fr. Thom explained that St. Peregrine is the patron saint of those suffering from cancer. In Father's words, “When we pray to him we know that he will help us with the grace to seek God's will in the midst of our suffering, and, if God wills it, will bring healing of mind, body, or spirit. May St. Peregrine help all in our parish and in our families who suffer with cancer, and may we all help them as well.”

To assist parishioners touched by this terrible disease, Fr. Thom purchased a small statue of the saint and placed it in a box along with a novena prayer. Any parishioner who wished to pray this novena was able to borrow the box, pray the novena, and then return it for other people's use. Many took advantage of this opportunity. It must be noted that at some point St.

Peregrine disappeared. Father Thom purchased a second statue, and included it with the novena prayer in a new little box. Thus, the “little St. Peregrine box” is still circulating among parishioners.

Through the efforts of Jo Lavoie in 2004, members of the parish were invited to take part in a special prison ministry called Prayer Fellowship. Through this ministry parishioners would reach out—to the imprisoned, those recently released from prison, and the families of prisoners—in prayer and correspondence. It was hoped that this would help show them God’s love and encourage them to follow his guidance. Several parishioners responded and are still actively involved in this ministry.

In April our Community Affairs Committee also asked us to help the imprisoned—this time by supplying new or “gently used” games. Parishioners responded by donating piles of Scrabble, Risk, Monopoly, and other games, along with puzzles, Uno, and decks of cards. This, along with the fall collection of stationery and greeting cards, has become an annual event at St. Mark.

During April and May we were informed of changes in the Mass as directed by the GIRM—General Instruction of the Roman Missal. These changes were not unique to St. Mark’s but were to take place in all Catholic churches throughout the world. Each week the bulletin explained and informed us of these new practices. Silence before Mass and between readings was to allow us to put aside distractions and enter more fully into the celebration and to reflect on the readings and hear God’s message to us.

We were also to be united in gesture. We were asked to genuflect before the tabernacle containing the Eucharistic presence of Jesus (in St. Bridget’s Chapel), and to bow deeply before the altar prior to taking a seat (in our church proper). We also showed signs of reverence by bowing deeply during a part of the Profession of Faith and by a slight bowing of the head before receiving the Eucharist. Finally, we were asked to stand earlier during the preparation of the gifts so that we might more reverently enter into that prayerful dialogue. All of these changes were to facilitate more reverence and bring us into communion with the church throughout the world.

April and May also saw a series of six talks given in the parish. Our Respect Life parish liaison, John Matuszewski, was responsible for organizing these events. Msgr. Anthony Frontiero began the six-week series with Pope John

Paul's "Theology of the Body," while parishioner Don Sommese discussed "A Catholic's Response to Capital Punishment." The series continued with Fr. Gary Beliveau speaking about "The Catholic Understanding of Abortion" and Deacon Bob Anderson's talk on "Conception." John Matuszewski spoke about "End of Life" issues and the six-week series concluded with Bishop Francis Christian talking about "Forming a Moral Conscience."

Each week, after a question and answer period, the talks were followed by coffee and dessert socials. Jim Heitman was asked to videotape all six talks so that those parishioners who were unable to attend any of the sessions could still benefit from the presentations. The tapes may be found in our parish lending library.

In June we sadly said farewell to Ernie Picken as he accepted a fulltime position in the Office of Evangelization at Ste. Marie Parish in Manchester. Ernie, an accomplished musician, was both cantor and guitarist at our Saturday evening Masses and often at the 11:30 A.M. Sunday Mass as well.

On June 20th the first winner of our K of C Rosemarie R. Cox Scholarship was announced. Kathleen Horohoe, a graduate of Londonderry High School, received \$500 to assist her in her future studies at Holy Cross College. Kathleen, like many of our young people, was an outstanding representative of our parish family.

In mid May our DRE, Marilynn Heitman, announced her plan to retire. Her need to travel—to Arizona to care for her widowed mother and to San Diego for the birth of her first grandchild—caused this decision. She had worked diligently throughout the past year to institute a Summer Religious Education Program for our parish, so Marilynn agreed to stay until the end of July to oversee that this new program got well underway.

Meanwhile, preparations for the Summer Program continued. Registration had begun in February with plans for two classes each of grades two through eight. Fourteen teachers were recruited (there would be two teachers for each class) and trained. In addition hall monitors, office workers, playground monitors, snack time overseers, and babysitters were enlisted. It was a daunting task to find so many volunteers, but God provided.

On July 26th our first class of Religious Ed Summer Session began. Parents, teachers, and students were extremely enthusiastic. Each class was encouraged to "put their faith in action" by working on a service project for

the parish or community. Mitten collections, planting and beautification projects, bake sales, fleece lap robe making, and many other charitable works were undertaken. The love of God and the Catholic faith was visible and vibrating throughout the building—you could see it in the smiles of all the children and adults involved. By the end of the program on August 5th, it was clear that this would be a popular and ongoing program at St. Mark.

In his August 15th *Pastor's Pen* column Fr. Thom stated,

I was very skeptical of offering a Summer Program. On the first day, as over two hundred children descended on the parish center and filled it, I held my breath. I wondered what might go wrong that we had not planned for. Nothing went wrong. As the days passed parents thanked us, teachers said how much they loved their classes, and we didn't hear any complaints from the children. The truth is ... it was a smashing success! I just wanted to let the rest of the parish know how this all went. I want to thank all those who were involved ... You took an idea of which I was quite skeptical and made it into a program of which I am quite proud.

In his August 22nd *Pastor's Pen* Fr. Thom announced Cathy Kinnon's new position with these words.

As you know, we have been searching for a new Director for our Religious Education program. This past week we realized that we didn't need to look any further than our own 'backyard.' We are pleased to announce that Cathy Kinnon has agreed to assume the role of Facilitator for Religious Education. Kathy Morgano will become the Administrative Assistant. Cathy [Kinnon] served as an assistant in the Religious Ed office for nine years, first with Ann Cormier and then with Marilyn Heitman. Kathy [Morgano] has been a religious ed teacher for seven years. They have many ideas to enliven our programs. I hope you will join me in offering support and encouragement as they begin this new role in our parish community.

Two of our young men, Ted Combes and Fran Horohoe, worked throughout the spring, summer, and fall this year on their Eagle Scout projects—to beautify our parish grounds. Ted prepared and built a new outdoor prayer

area at the far side of our parking lot, and Fran designed and replanted the areas in front of church. These projects required coordination of workers, fundraising, and planning. Both young men did an outstanding job executing this major undertaking. St. Mark's is now a place of beauty—both in and outside!

We held a parish mission to deepen the experience of communion with Jesus in our hearts, minds, and souls. Fr. Jim Costigan, CPM led this mission in late October. Our Confirmation students spent Saturday with him and he spent Sunday afternoon and Monday evening speaking to the general parish. Fr. Jim travels the country giving retreats and missions especially aimed at establishing Eucharistic adoration.

As we celebrated our 23rd anniversary as a parish, we reached another milestone—we paid off our Parish Center mortgage. This momentous occasion was celebrated on Saturday, November 6th with a potluck supper. Many joined in this Thanksgiving-themed dinner and watched us burn the mortgage and finally unveil a plaque. This plaque, located in the hallway outside the parish hall, lists the names of all those who contributed \$1,500 or more toward the building of our Parish Center.

The fall also saw a drive for more parish involvement. Parishioners were given a list of all parish activities and were asked to indicate which ministries most interested them. Major listings were liturgy, youth centered groups, adult centered groups, and spirituality centered groups. Under each major heading were numerous choices (over fifty in all) so everyone who wanted to could easily find their niche in parish ministry.

In preparation for our twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006, bulletin announcements began appearing in October asking for addresses of people who were charter members of the parish but who had subsequently moved away. Eventually, Fr. Tom Bresnahan met with several of the charter members still active in the parish to see if they could find the remaining “missing people.” These parishioners would work with Fr. Tom and Fr. Thom throughout the coming year to prepare special activities for the “original” parishioners as well as all the members of our parish family.

Unfortunately this fall we said farewell to one of the most active original families in the parish—Dave and Diane Spahn. Between the two of them they were: a lector, a prayer line member, the Community Affairs

Committee chairperson, Christmas Basket Program coordinators, the leader of song for the 11:30 A.M. Mass, Religious Ed teachers, Confirmation facilitators, a coordinator of the healing Mass, Catholic Charities appeal representatives, and RCIA sponsors. They obviously would be greatly missed! We wished them well in their new home in Manchester and asked that they come often to visit.

All through the year our Pastoral Council met monthly to work on the concerns mentioned during the parish input sessions. One of the concerns several parishioners had was the placement of the tabernacle. They wanted the tabernacle in the church proper rather than in its current location in St. Bridget's Chapel. Their desires were discussed on many occasions at the Council meetings and both Fr. Thom and Deacon Lee addressed this concern several times both in the meetings and in the parish bulletins. Fr. Thom explained that since the current location of the tabernacle was appropriate, it would remain in St. Bridget's Chapel until such time as we expanded or renovated the church and it was financially feasible to relocate it. A similar discussion occurred regarding our modern version of the risen Christ above the altar. This, too, would remain until the church was expanded or renovated.

Other issues of concern to parishioners were also discussed at Council meetings throughout the year. Their findings (the changes that came about, or the things that would remain the same) were published in a series of bulletin inserts. In this manner, all parishioners would be kept informed of the results of their input. One of the changes that brightened the Parish Center was the painting of the classrooms and hallways with various colors. The protective enamel paint now allowed Cathy Kinnon, our new Religious Ed Facilitator, to decorate the halls and permit the teachers to hang papers and posters in their classrooms. Mrs. Kinnon also instituted a monthly Religious Ed newsletter that was provided to all parish families with school-aged children.

In response to needs within our community, Deacon Lee along with our Community Affairs Committee's fundraising group—Joe and Nancy DeCarolus, Paula Flynn, Pat O'Brien, and Arlene and Matt Sochalski—developed and implemented money-raising activities. The purpose of this group was to establish an emergency assistance fund to provide cash support to local families and individuals struggling with a temporary financial crisis.

This year also saw further development of our own parish website. Maria O'Brien originally volunteered to design and set up a site for the parish that would display our weekly bulletin and give additional information about parish happenings. Maria eventually moved out of the parish and Larry LeBlanc took the helm. He continued uploading our bulletin plus provided photos of Fr. Thom's Malta trip, a directory of parish committees, and links to other sites. Later, Larry would be replaced by Patricia Rowe who continues to provide us with a great website. Check it out: saintmarkevangelist.com.

Once again this year we held our fund-raising raffle. The winning ticket, picked on December 18th, went to Dayana Pizani. We're sure she put the \$1200 to good use! Our Christmas Basket Program was bigger than ever this year, even with all the extra outreach programs our Community Affairs Committee conducted. Fifty-five families had their lives and Christmas brightened by the generosity of St. Mark parishioners.

St. Mark was always blessed with generous parishioners and, as we entered into our 24th year of existence, we continued the tradition with our response to victims of the tsunami. Deacon Lee wrote a letter of gratitude in a January 2005 bulletin stating, "Your financial contribution of over \$7,000, along with your prayers and loving concern, is a powerful Christian witness of unconditional love." Even our children showed a giving spirit—Jonathan O'Neal collected \$166.83 for tsunami victims by canvassing outside Dunkin Donuts, while Melissa, Stephany, and Kelsy Zecchino offered the contents of their savings tin.

Starting at Christmas, parishioners began to see Fr. Thom using a new gold chalice. He addressed this in his Pastor's Pen column on January 9th.

It is new to us, but it belonged to Fr. Tom Bresnahan (aka Fr. Tom the elder). It was made in memory of some of his family members. The case even has his name engraved on it, which is often done with the priest's own chalice. Recently Fr. Tom decided to leave the chalice and paten here with us. Since it is here, and in good condition, I thought it would be good to use it. My intention is to use it for the more festive times of the year, namely Easter and Christmas times. Since this weekend ends the Christmas season, I plan to put it back in its case 'til Easter.

In late 2004 and early 2005 our Community Affairs Committee recruited new members and developed several subcommittees. One of these addressed the issue of fundraising for needy families in our area. Members of this committee were Joe and Nancy DeCarolus, Cheryl Fallon, Paula Flynn, Corinne Garofalo, Larry Lordi, Pat O'Brien, Ken and Monica Rahilly, Arlene and Matt Sochalski, Doriene Steiniger, and Monica Turcotte.

The group decided to hold a 50/50 raffle called the "Loaves and Fishes Program." They would sell 100 tickets for \$1,000 each and then split the proceeds with the winner—raising \$50,000 for our charitable fund. Even though tickets were \$1,000 each, every ticket was sold — plus two. Their program was more of a success than even they anticipated. The following article appeared in the March 6th bulletin:

We would like to thank, with all our hearts, the parish family of St. Mark's and all other individuals, families, and area businesses who participated in the Loaves and Fishes raffle. We would also like to thank in a special way the winning family who, while wishing to remain anonymous, donated their \$51,000 winnings to the parish. The proceeds of the \$102,000 raised will continue to be a blessing to many local families and individuals struggling with temporary financial burdens, now and in the future.

What better example of responding to Jesus' call to love the poor could there be than this very generous family? St. Mark's is truly blessed to have them as part of our parish community!

Cathy Kinnon, our Religious Education Facilitator, in an effort to educate and inform those families in our parish with school-aged children, began publishing a monthly newsletter. During the school year 2005-06 she held a contest for the students to name this publication. Bobby Carter was the happy recipient of a foosball table for his winning entry. *REMarks* continues to be published by Cathy with help from her assistant, Kathy Morgano.

In early February, our Adult Faith Formation Committee announced the "rollout" of a new, permanent resource for the adults of our parish—a rolling Library Cart containing Catholic books, magazines, and audio and video tapes. (The cart was a gift from our Knights of Columbus.) All the materials on various Catholic topics such as the Bible, the saints and Mary, prayer, and spirituality are available for parish members to borrow.

Our Knights continued to offer suppers on the Fridays of Lent this year, but the menu changed. Instead of the baked fish and chips offered for the last two years, the Knights dinners featured New England clam chowder or tomato soup, grilled cheese sandwiches, and salad. This delicious light meal was served in the parish hall prior to the celebration of the Stations of the Cross in the church.

In February Fr. Thom informed the parish that the Diocese had “clustered” parishes for planning purposes. Aside from St. Mark our cluster includes St. Jude, St. Francis in Litchfield, and St. Thomas Aquinas and Holy Cross in Derry and East Derry. Since the current number of six priests—four diocesan and two Franciscans—would need to be reduced to four sometime during the next eight years, plans needed to be developed. Cluster meetings would begin in the fall to decide how to meet the needs of these five growing parishes with a diminishing number of priests. His February bulletin announcement was followed in April by a brochure from the Diocese entitled “Vibrant Parishes” which further explained the role of clusters in the planning process. A parish listening meeting was held in May to allow parishioners to voice their input to our cluster meeting representatives, Paula Flynn and Bill Hamilton. The minutes to this session were published in the June 26th bulletin.

Special events occurred in May this year. A benefit concert was held for Ernie Picken. Ernie, who was our musical worship leader at the 5 P.M. Mass for several years, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. Donations from the concert would be used to help defray Ernie’s medical expenses. (We are happy to say that Ernie is now doing quite well!) Rob Surette, a self-taught artist who claimed to be the fastest portrait artist in the world, came to perform in mid month. His one hour show was a spiritually powerful, artistic, and theatrical experience incorporating rapid-fire artwork on gigantic canvases, special effects, and dramatic music. He painted two-handed, four brushes per hand, making what at first appeared to be a confusing mess. It was only with the final flourish that the portrait became clear. Whose portrait was it, you ask? Check it out in the lower hallway of our parish center.

Repairs to the church and rectory also took place this year. One day Fr. Thom walked into the rectory bathroom and found part of the sink hanging down into the vanity. It was replaced. The rectory garage doors were in similar shape. Custodian Gil Jandreau had been nailing the bottom together

with wood straps, but now the panels were all pulling apart as well. In addition, the church parking lot needed resurfacing. It was a little difficult to park and get in to the office or church for a few days. Parking was only available on the west side of South Road, and people had to walk on the grass toward the children's playground to get into the church or hall to reach the parish offices. The smoother surface and newly painted parking markings were worth the minor inconvenience. More repairs would become necessary later in the year ...

We hosted a seminarian again this year—Charles Pawlowski. Because of his upright posture and pious demeanor at Mass, many parishioners saw this tall, dark, and handsome young man as very serious. Those who were privileged to really get to know him, however, knew what a beautiful smile and great sense of humor he had. We enjoyed his weeks with us and wish him well in his future studies and discernment process.

In July 2005 our new meditation area, including a statue of the Holy Family, was dedicated. The ceremony was followed by an ice cream social in the parish hall. Ted Combes constructed the walkway for this area as part of his Eagle Scout requirements. Two other parish youth also received their Eagle Scout status this year: Brendon Turcotte, whose project was at the Lions Hall, and Francis Horohoe who took on the landscaping of our church as his project. All three are tremendous ambassadors of our parish and what it means to be a Catholic Christian. Thank you guys!

This was the year we lost St. Peregrine. Fr. Thom had purchased a small statue of the saint which he encouraged parishioners to borrow along with a novena prayer for those who had been diagnosed with cancer. In July 2005 he—St. Peregrine, not Fr. Thom—was nowhere to be found. Bulletin announcements asked for his safe return, but he remained hidden. Finally in November, Fr. Thom was able to locate another statue and so the tradition continues.

Fr. Thom announced that in preparation for our twenty-fifth anniversary, we wanted to have our first ever parish Pictorial Directory. All parishioners were asked to come to church one time to have their picture taken and pick out a picture for the directory. For their efforts, they would receive a free 8x10 photo of their choice and a free copy of the parish pictorial directory. Two three-day weekend sessions were available for picture taking (one in August and another in November) with time slots scheduled both during the

day and evening to accommodate everybody. Sadly only about 225 of our 1,300+ families took part in this undertaking.

Again this year, about twenty of our youth attended the Steubenville East conference in Attleboro. Our high school Youth Director, Scott Sicard, has been taking members of our youth group there each summer for the past several years. This year Fr. Thom went with them to share the experience. And, yes, he slept in a tent, on the ground, surrounded by about 1,000 young people. In his words, “The presence of the Holy Spirit was palpable. These conferences really fire up our youth.” All those in attendance would heartily agree with those words!

Cathy Kinnon, our Religious Education Facilitator, continued the Summer Program begun in 2004. Over 200 children took part praying, listening to speakers, visiting the church and chapel, participating in service projects, and of course studying and learning about their faith. Father Thom remarked in his *Pastor's Pen* column,

I have to admit that last year I didn't know whether a summer program would really work. I wondered whether the children would remember from year to year with only two follow-up sessions during the school year. The answer seems to be an overwhelming YES. In fact the response from children, parents, and teachers all seems to be overwhelming. I have been impressed by how well this program has worked out.

We all were impressed by the children and their service projects. In fact, one sixth grade class held a raffle and raised \$727 to give to the Sonshine Soup Kitchen in Derry.

This summer Fr. Thom Duston was named Dean or Vicar Forane for our deanery. This position was nothing new to our talented pastor; he had been Dean of the Keene area prior to coming to St. Mark. Nevertheless, it is a great honor—as well as work—added to his long list of positions in our Diocese. He is pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist (2002); Deaf Ministry Office (2003); Member of the Lay Ministry Formation Commission (2004); North East Regional Representative to the National Catholic Office for the Deaf Board of Directors (2004); Member of the Vocation Board (2005); and now Dean of the Salem Deanery (2005). What more can they ask of one man?

Father Thom is not alone in wearing more than one hat. Our Deacon, Lee Abbott, was named to the Diocesan Long-Range Planning Commission this

year, and Paula Goduti who directs our R.C.I.A. program was named to the Diocesan R.C.I.A. Steering Committee. What talented individuals we have on staff!

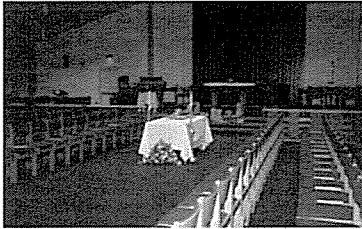
In October a glitch appeared in our Parish Center use. A practicing young driver lost control of his vehicle in our parking lot and hit the parish offices wall, structurally damaging the building. Fortunately no one was injured in the accident and the building was soon repaired. (No, it really wasn't in the works to have a "drive-thru window" in the parish secretary's office.) Mrs. Kinnon was forced to cancel a couple of Religious Ed classes and a few groups had to find another location for their meetings for a week or so. The good news was the office supply closet finally got a good cleaning out and more shelves installed!

The first cluster meeting for us (the five parishes involved were known as Cluster 17) was held on September 30, 2005 at Holy Cross Parish in East Derry. It was decided at that meeting to hold a listening session on October 4th in our parish hall for any interested parishioners in the five churches. Fifty to sixty people attended and were asked to consider the question, "What should members of the Task Force keep in mind as they make recommendations for changes in parish configuration, staffing, and scheduling to assure vibrant parishes to meet the spiritual needs of current and future members of the five parishes with only two diocesan and two religious priests?" Many thoughts and ideas emerged from this meeting that the task force members of Cluster 17 would consider when they met again on October 11th.

Bulletin inserts kept us all informed of the workings, ideas, and recommendations of each of the Cluster 17 meetings. On Tuesday, November 15th, another session was held for parishioners of all five parishes in our parish hall. After hearing a presentation on the proposed recommendation of the Cluster 17 Task Force, participants were able to offer their comments. There was spirited discussion and some concerns—especially dealing with financial matters—but, all in all, the proposal seemed workable.

The plan had the two religious priests now serving St. Thomas also serve the people of Holy Cross. On the west side of the cluster the three current parishes—St. Mark, St. Jude, and St. Francis— would be joined to form one parish, but each of the individual churches would retain its own name. All three churches would remain open. There would be one pastor and one

associate to take care of them. Some Mass schedules would need to be changed to allow the priests to travel between three churches. The Task Force endorsed the continuation of St. Jude's expansion plans. If the merger actually takes place, any debt or surplus of the prior parishes would be assumed by the new merged parish.



Fr. Thom, in an effort to get us all thinking and uniting our hearts and voices, had the seats in church changed to "choir style"—chairs turned to face the center aisle with the altar in the middle of the aisle—for the Advent season. (The parish traditionally turned the chairs this way for the Thanksgiving and Holy Week services, so some would be comfortable with it and others would find it a new experience.) A quote from Paul's letter to the Romans led to his decision.

May God, the source of all patience and encouragement, enable you to live in perfect harmony with one another according to the spirit of Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and voice you may glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fr. Thom explained, "There is much to be learned about God and ourselves by this seemingly simple move."

Finally our twenty-fifth anniversary year began. Father Thom announced the official twenty-fifth anniversary celebration date as November 5, 2006. However, feeling that the parish had much to celebrate, he didn't want to have just one celebration. Instead, he thought that we should celebrate throughout our entire 25th year. In order to do this he enlisted the help of all those who love a good party and have the skills to carry one, or more, off. His bulletin announcement read,

I would like to have an Anniversary Committee. The best thing about this is that you know that the work will be done in a year and the committee will disband. In the meantime this committee will make preparations for the big celebration next year, but perhaps will also come up with ideas for something on the feast of St. Mark ... or some other occasions.

Parishioners were encouraged to volunteer soon so that they could begin

meeting prior to the November 1st kickoff of our anniversary year. Fr. Thom asked us to, “Put on your party pants, or whatever, and get ready to celebrate.” Those who responded and formed this planning committee, along with Fathers Thom and Tom (the elder), were: Lee Abbott, Liz Ambrose, Jim Blake, Marie Bouchard, Robin David, Paula Goduti, John Matuszewski, Jan and John McLaughlin, Mary McQueeney, Sheila O’Brien, Sue Peterson, Monica Rahilly, and Dianne Zdankiewicz. Others would join and help on various activities throughout the year.

The committee decided that in the true spirit of this always generous parish, we should continue to help those in need while having some fun. Our 25th Anniversary Missionary Project would be a sister parish affected by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Proceeds from every anniversary event that we celebrated would go to aid this sister parish, St. Maria Goretti. Fundraising would be done in two ways: by selling commemorative Twenty-fifth Anniversary brass sun-catchers, and by conducting 50/50 raffles at most of the sponsored events. In addition, free-will offerings received at any events would also be sent to St. Maria Goretti Parish to assist in their cleanup and refurbishing efforts.

In November 2005, the beginning of our Twenty-fifth Anniversary Year, the festivities began. Our Social Committee held a Harvest Pot Luck Supper this month and our Knights of Columbus presented an evening of magic and mystery for the whole family. They had Father Daniel Rolland O.P. visit to perform his amazing magic and to present his inspiring message to all of us. Indeed, we were amazed and delighted!

Of course all our “normal” activities also took place. In December 2005 we helped a whopping 62 families have a more joyous Christmas with our Christmas Basket Program—the largest number of families so far! January saw the Knights host the annual 24 hours of fasting, Eucharistic adoration, and rosary for life culminating with benediction. Our Knights and the Peace and Social Justice Committee joined forces to serve our traditional winter spaghetti dinner—this time accompanied by the family-rated movie “Remember the Titans”—to raise funds for the Rosemarie R. Cox scholarship. (Haley Duyon received the scholarship in June 2006.) Men of St. Joseph met; Women of Mary held their monthly Mass, rosary, guest lecture, and brunch meetings; Eucharistic adoration took place on Tuesdays; First Friday Eucharistic adoration continued through the nights; Religious Ed classes took place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, as well as during the Summer Session; the High School Youth Group continued their Wednesday

night meetings and summer special events; the Middle School Youth Group met on the 1st and 3rd Fridays as usual. All was as it should be in our vibrant parish.

In February the Anniversary Celebration Committee decided to kick off anniversary events just as our parish first started—in a bowling alley. Park Place Lanes in Windham was the site of our candlepin bowling and pizza party. Fr. Thom and the parish staff formed a team and volunteered to “take on all challengers.” The staff—they called themselves the “Holy Rollers”—along with the other 115 parishioners who attended, had a wonderful time. Many had not been in a bowling alley since the early days of St. Mark’s existence. All were glad to be bowling there instead of attending Mass! The experience certainly brought us back to our roots. (And humbled us. Who wouldn’t be humbled with a bowling score of less than thirty?)

We also had music as part of our festivities in February. Martin Doman, a talented Catholic musician and composer of “*Our God is an Awesome God*,” performed a praise and worship concert on a Friday evening in church. Many families attended and were inspired by his song. Our traditional Valentine’s Day Mass, marriage vow renewal, and reception were held. Those celebrating their own twenty-fifth [wedding] anniversary were especially honored this year.

In March, along with our traditional St. Patrick’s Day festivities of a corned beef and cabbage dinner, Irish dancing, and an Irish ballad sing-along, we partied with Fr. Thom. On the twenty-fifth of that month—how appropriate a date for our twenty-fifth anniversary!—Fr. Thom turned forty. (Sheila O’Brien also celebrated a birthday that day, but she won’t tell us her age!)

A birthday bash was held for Father in our parish hall. A pot luck supper, complete with birthday cake, was enjoyed by all. Scott Sicard presented a slide show of “Through the years with Fr. Thom,” and we all enjoyed the pictures of him as a child, growing up, attending the prom, etc. The staff put on a little show complete with an original song, “Peeps.” (Peeps were the theme of the party because they happen to be one of Fr. Thom’s favorite candies. Yes, the gooey, sugary, marshmallowy chicks and bunnies that are resurrected each year at Easter! It’s hard to believe, but true.) Soon the whole gathering—about two hundred of us—was singing right along with them. The kids enjoyed batting at the piñatas filled with candy (a variety of sweets, not just Peeps!) And Fr. Thom enjoyed getting duped into providing

the musical entertainment, karaoke. We're all looking forward to celebrating Fr. Thom's fiftieth birthday a decade from now!

The next festive anniversary celebration took place in April. We were invited to attend a Manchester Monarchs hockey game at the Verizon. Since it was "Fan Appreciation Night," all of us received a team photo. The game against the Albany River Rats was good. And even those not enthused with hockey enjoyed the between periods festivities—the blimp dropping gift certificates, the shooting t-shirts, chuck-a-puck, and pee-wee hockey. A great time was had by all.

April also saw a dramatic presentation—*Afraid!*—of the *Gospel of Mark* by TV star Frank Runyeon. Thanks to the donations of a number of parishioners, this presentation was available free-of-charge to the entire parish. Those in attendance were mesmerized by Mr. Runyeon's portrayal of the Gospel. It was almost as if you were there, with Jesus, hearing him speak and feeling his pain. Frank Runyeon's performance was a very powerful experience. What a great way to celebrate the feast day of St. Mark!

On June 4, 2006 a young priest said his first Mass in our parish. It was one of our former altar boys, Billy Ventura. In this, our twenty-fifth anniversary year, we celebrated with the first young man in our parish family to be ordained a priest. What an anniversary present the Lord has given us! Fr. Thom and Fr. Tom (the elder) concelebrated the Mass with Fr. Bill. In his homily Billy told of his days as an altar boy. One day in the sacristy he said to Fr. Tom, "Some day I'm going to be the pope!" Fr. Tom wisely responded, "You have to be ordained a priest first, Billy." And so ...

Now halfway through our anniversary year, plans and activities continued. An evening of Nashua Pride baseball, a pizza party, and fireworks were scheduled for Saturday, July 1st. A possible parish picnic is in the works for September, and a special senior citizen event is being considered for October.

Fr. Tom Bresnahan working with Fr. Thom and a small committee of "original" parishioners (Jim Blake, Marie Bouchard, Jack and Mary Falvey, Barb Gingrow, Paula Goduti, Alicia MacDonald, and Arlene Potter) are planning some special celebrations during Londonderry's Olde Home Days weekend. This weekend was chosen because of the summer vacation travel opportunities and because of the obvious title implications. Invitations were

sent to all the founding parishioners and those who belonged to the parish in the early days (1981–1986) who moved away. A wine and cheese social is planned for Friday evening, coffee and donuts will take place on Saturday morning prior to the parade, and a special dinner will be served following the 5 P.M. Saturday Mass. All parishioners are invited to attend these events along with the “old timers.” Thoughts are still floating around about getting a team together for the road race, manning a booth (or should I say “personning” a booth just to be politically correct?), and possibly a float in the parade. We all look forward to old friends and neighbors returning “home” for this visit and we hope many of them will be able to attend.

Of course plans for the official days—November 1st, our actual twenty-fifth anniversary, and November 5th, the celebration day—are ongoing at this time. Bishop McCormack will be here to concelebrate the 11:30 A.M. Mass with the former (and present) pastors. A special reception will follow in the parish hall. And who knows what else is on the horizon?

As we continue in this our twenty-fifth year of existence as a parish—and as we venture into the next twenty-five years together—we have a lot to rejoice about and celebrate. Father Thom may have said it best in his *Pastor’s Pen* column this Easter:

There is a whole lot of living, struggling, losing, and beginning again going on here, and much of it bearing fruit in the world because it is being done in faith. Priests who come here remark about our community. People are being drawn here without knowing precisely why. We know why, though. Christ is alive here.

May we always know the presence of the risen Christ here. May we continue to live out His life in our lives. May we rejoice in this great blessing.

Indeed, St. Mark the Evangelist Parish is truly a blessing. Let us thank God for the time He has given us in such a Spirit-filled community.

*St. Mark the Evangelist
Londonderry, New Hampshire*

