



THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Diocese of Amarillo



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VOLUME FOUR

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2022

“A Living Memorial to a Great Man”

AN EXCITING IDEA was soon to become a wonderful reality for the Diocese of Amarillo.

Common interest in opening a retreat house to meet the needs of the people of the Amarillo Diocese led to a meeting, whose purpose was to discuss and clarify what steps should be taken to establish such a retreat house.

Father Babin, CSsR assured the group of the Redemptorists’ desire to staff the retreat house, as this was one of the apostolates of their Congregation. He also stated that several of their priests were prepared for such ministry. In regard to the building itself, Father Babin expressed the need to include living quarters for the priests on the staff.

The retreat house would be used for already existing programs of the diocese, including Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Deacon training program and retreats, Search for Christian Maturity, youth and adult retreats, as well as to provide the opportunity for private directed retreats, group retreats, and parish retreats.



Chapel
Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center

BISHOP DEFALCO RETREAT CENTER

The Diocese of Amarillo would accept all financial responsibility for the building and maintenance of the retreat house. The Redemptorists would assign two or three priests to serve as the retreat staff. The Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate would provide Sisters to serve on the retreat team to work with the Redemptorists. It was made clear that the Sisters would not be responsible for the domestic needs of the retreat house.

Discussion followed concerning possible sites for the building. It was Father Kuehler's opinion that a site immediately east of St. Francis Convent would be the most serviceable location. However, at this time, no definite decisions could be made in that regard. Sister Martha Delgado stated there was a possibility that the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate would be able to donate land for the retreat house. She said she would bring it before the Provincial Assembly for consideration. She felt confident it would be approved.

Those present decided it was necessary to form a committee to begin making specific plans if the project were to be carried through. At this point it was suggested that Bishop DeFalco be called and, if he approved the project, to name a representative from the diocese on the committee. When the Bishop arrived, he was given a resume of the preceding discussion. When asked if he agreed with the formation of a planning committee, his response was affirmative. The Bishop stated that there was definitely a long-standing need for such a center in this part of the diocese, and that it was his desire to have this need met; he would do all in his power to fur-



her the project. He strongly affirmed the action already taken and urged that the necessary arrangements be made to bring the project of the diocesan retreat house to completion. He appointed Father Norbert Kuehler to represent the Diocese of Amarillo on the planning committee. Father Kuehler gave his hearty endorsement of all that the Bishop had said and promised to do all he could to expedite the plans. Father Babin appointed Father John Broker, CSsR to represent the Redemptorists on the committee. Sister Martha appointed Sister Carrie Miller as the Franciscan Sisters' representative on the committee.

And so it began...

A Letter from Mary Frances Saunders, who has a Story to Tell

It's about my discovery.

It's here in Amarillo, Texas.

It's for all the people of the panhandle.

I call it "The Lord's safe place", for all who enter from the world. In

this wild, weary, wonderful world, peopled by all of us, all need a "safe place," now and again. Yes, we need it to refresh and regroup so that we then can re-enter the world: re-newed!

The 55-year-old Catholic diocese of Amarillo, Texas is the guardian of this discovery. Let me share some details with you.

First, it has a name: The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center.

It was Bishop DeFalco's dream; a retreat center for the families of the Texas Panhandle, its chapel dedicated to the Holy Family. It has become a reality through the efforts of Bishop Leroy T. Matthiessen, who considers this to be his sacred privilege. It's a gentle giant rising out of the Plains and soon will open to welcome all of us.

Three Redemptorists Fathers will be the spiritual caretakers. They have pledged themselves to this mission. They are Fathers Charlie Schraub, Bob Curry and Andy Meiners.

Dreamers and Dedicated Doers make things happen.

Prayers guard and guide the way.

Just Plain Money - keeps it all real!

So, this is my "first" fund-raising letter. The entire concept of this special "safe place" has captivated me!

Will you help???

Help Lots and Lots?

Mary Frances Saunders

November 11, 1982

Building Commission studying Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center

Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center Groundbreaking Set

Preliminary plans for a two-story, 50-room Bishop DeFalco Memorial Retreat Center were presented to the Diocesan Building Commission by Mark Hinton of Vaughan-Hinton and Associates, architects, engineers, and planners.

Prior to this presentation the Building Commission looked at a plot plan made by the architectural firm of the area which includes St. Laurence Cathedral and school, Alamo Catholic High School, the diocesan Pastoral Center, The Bishop's home, and St. Francis Convent, where the retreat center will be located.

The plot plan studied by the commission locates the Bishop DeFalco Memorial Retreat Center between St. Laurence Cathedral and St. Francis Convent, with the entrance off Spring Street. Also included in the plot plan for future development are a Catholic Activities Center, a Bishop's home, and parking lots to serve the entire complex.

Construction of the retreat center is expected to get under way this summer. Architects estimate a construction time of eight months.

When completed, the DeFalco Retreat Center will be staffed by the Redemptorists Fathers John Broker, Charlie Schraub, and Bob Curry, who are currently residing at 2601 Juniper in Amarillo. 3/22/81



Groundbreaking for the two-million-dollar Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center, the biggest building project ever under taken by the Diocese of Amarillo, is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 14, at 7 p.m. All participants will assemble in front of Alamo Catholic High School at 1800 N. Spring.

The groundbreaking will culminate three years of planning for the spiritual complex. The retreat center is named after Bishop Lawrence DeFalco, deceased, who envisioned a retreat environment within the diocese.

"We were compelled to begin the construction of this center for spiritual renewal to carry to completion the dream of Bishop DeFalco, who was responsible for bringing the Redemptorists fathers in to staff it." said Bishop L. Matthiessen

Plans were submitted to the Diocesan Building Commission for final approval in March by architect Mark Hinton, partner in Vaughan, Hinton and Associates.

He said the key to the entire 39,000-square foot concrete block complex is the circular-shaped chapel.

"The chapel was the key to the whole retreat center; I needed to symbolize it as the center of the project. Its circular form reflects this," said Hinton.

The rest of the two-story, 50 room, project is rectilinear, with an energy-efficient placement of windows. Furthermore, outside corridors are designed to take advantage of the constant environmental conditions found on the plains, such as wind and sun.

The second most important feature in the building design is the courtyard, which contains 10,000 square feet of extensively landscaped space. The courtyard will lend itself to purpose of the retreat center - open areas for groups to meet in, or private areas for couples involved in marriage encounters. Two covered walkways will run alongside the courtyard enabling people to be outside in bad weather.

The complex is designed to accommodate up to 100 persons. In addition to the 50 dormitory rooms, there are four suites for the resident priests who will conduct the retreats, a communal kitchen and dining room that seats 160, and three meeting rooms.

There is a definite Southwest accent, said Hinton, from the yellow-shaded stone and adobe-like exterior, to the flagstone and slate floors in the chapel, and the flat roof of the building.

Drew Bacigalupa, a member of the Diocesan Building Commission and liturgical designer from Santa Fe, New Mexico, designed the interior of the chapel.

“He used niches in the wall that allow light to show through to maintain the southwest flavor. The special stained and faceted glass was also designed by Bacigalupa,” said Hinton. The ceiling in the chapel elevates toward the altar from 16 to 22 feet. The altar, lectern, and pulpit are all constructed of stone. The top of the altar is a six-inch piece of marble.

The entire complex was designed with the handicapped in mind. There is easy accessibility on all levels for those in wheelchairs, said Hinton. In addition, there are special jacks in the chapel to allow the audio-impaired to plug hearing aids into the microphone system.

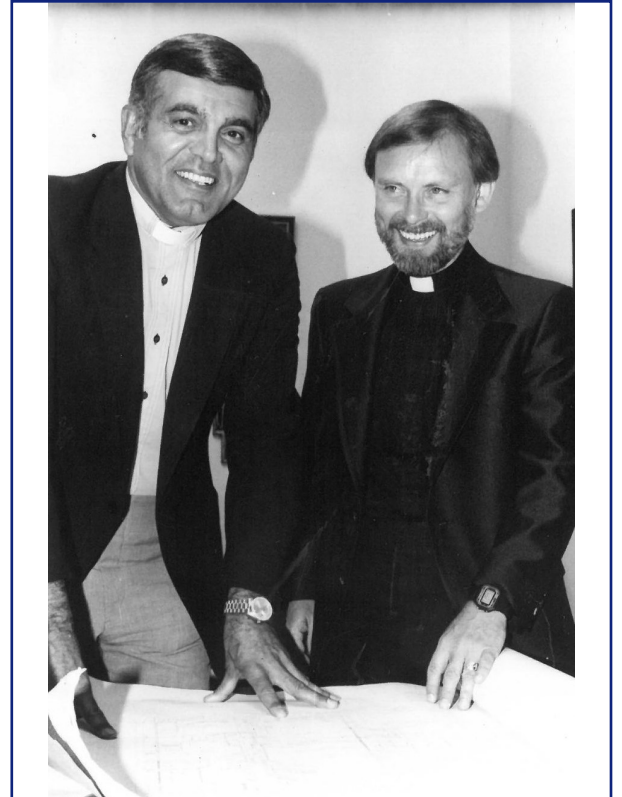


The Tabernacle gracing the chapel was the tabernacle used in Sacred Heart Cathedral that was downtown on 9th and Taylor in 1975.



Construction on Retreat Center





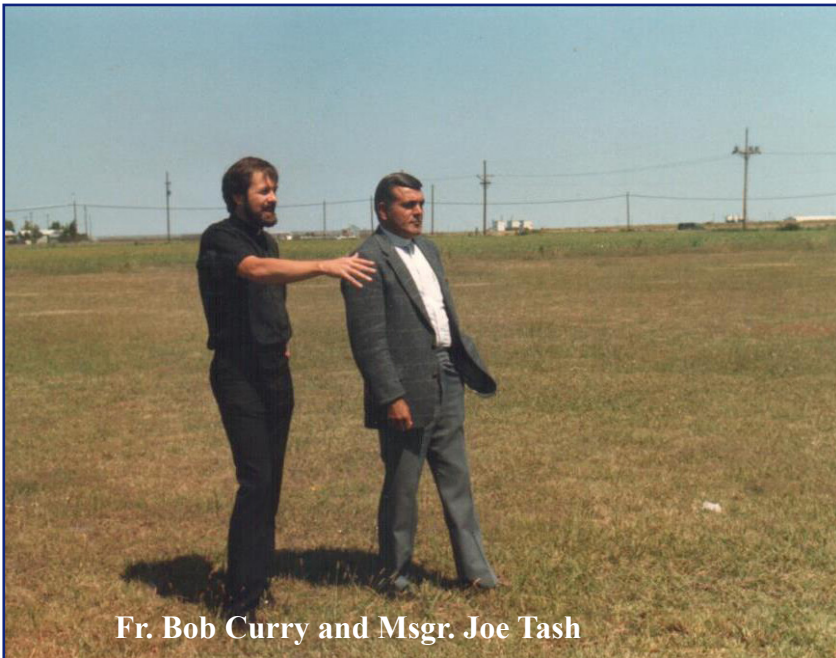
Msgr. Joe Tash and Fr. Charlie Schroub CSsR. look over the Retreat Center blue prints.



Bishop L. T. Matthiesen, Msgr. Norbert Kuehler, Vicar of Administrative Affairs, Mark Hinton, architect, and George Wilhelm, comptroller, view the rendering of the DeFalco Retreat Center. 9/6/1981



Paul Harpole, Bishop L. T. Matthiesen and Ron Briggs. 1985



Fr. Bob Curry and Msgr. Joe Tash



A bishop must be irreproachable . . . of even temper, self-controlled, modest and hospitable. He should be a good teacher . . . gentle, a man of peace.
I Timothy 3:2

As we take that first step of faith, we know others have heard the Lord's call and walked before us.

Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco answered the call and in 1963 the Lord led him to Amarillo.

In the same way a good shepherd loves and tends his flock, so Bishop DeFalco cared for the people of his diocese. And in return he received their great love.

Bishop DeFalco was a spiritual man, quiet but sympathetic. He was also a prudent and practical man. His dark eyes looked straight into the mind and heart and his words were forthright. He appeared very serious, but his laughter, when it came, was joyous.

A Pennsylvanian by birth, Bishop DeFalco developed a deep appreciation for the Southwest and the hispanic culture. When the time came to select a new cathedral church of the diocese he chose the bi-lingual parish of Saint Laurence.

In his journey with the Lord, Bishop DeFalco traveled widely about the diocese, sometimes offering four Masses at different locations in a single weekend. Scarcely an invitation or meeting went unattended.

It was Bishop DeFalco's desire to build a retreat center in Amarillo for the spiritual renewal of his people. Shortly before his untimely death in 1979, he announced the retreat center project. Then, he made his last request of those around him — that they pray for his people.

The completion of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center is visible evidence of the Bishop's love for his people and their love for him.

Groundbreaking held for Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center brings a long-time dream its first step toward reality. The center has been in the planning stages for the past three years. The architectural plans were submitted in March to the diocesan Building Commission by architect Mark Hinton.

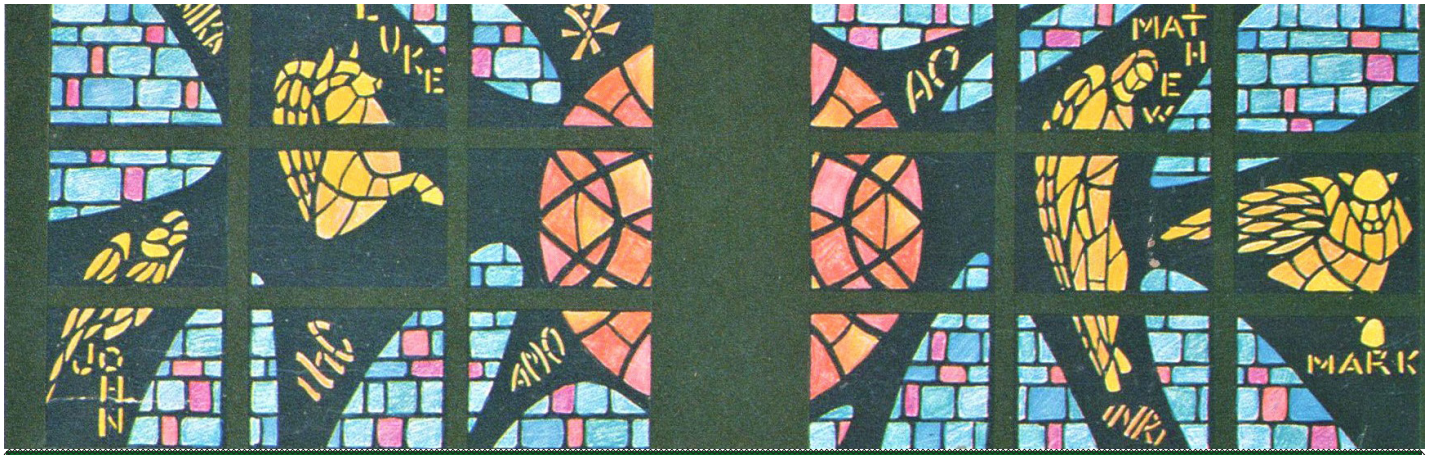
At the ceremony Monday, Bishop L. T. Matthiesen explained the need for a spiritual complex in the Diocese. He said, with so many challenges in life today, people need a place to pray and reflect to help them to make decisions about their personal lives.

Mayor Rick Klein was present for the groundbreaking "This is a living memorial to a great man. It's a wonderful facility for the Diocese and for the city," Klein said.

"We are beginning a facility and a project that will have untold benefits for us, our children and our children's children," said Bishop Matthiesen. "We think in terms of a building, but (the Late) Bishop DeFalco knew it needed life within it," the Bishop continued "He began to look for some people to work in it."

The Redemptorist Fathers were then invited to Amarillo because they work with retreats.

The Fathers looked very carefully at the city and the diocese and realized that there was no retreat center within 300 miles. The closest spiritual complexes are in Dallas and Colorado Springs.



Redemptorists to institute orgained retreat movement

The arrival of three Redemptorist priests will mark the beginning of an organized retreat movement in the diocese of Amarillo.

The three are Fathers John Broker, C.Ss.R., Bob Curry, C.Ss.R., and Charles Schraub, C.Ss.R, of the New Orleans province of the Redemptorists.

Father Broker, 60, will head the team of three Redemptorists, who plan to begin their work immediately.

In addition to retreat and parish mission work, the three Redemptorists are also experienced in giving spiritual direction, days of recollection, Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, and Youth Ministry. They plan to make themselves available for these in the diocese.

DeFalco Retreat Center Dedicated



DEFALCO CENTER OPEN SOON — Fr. Andy Meiners (left) and Mark Hinton stand in the courtyard of the DeFalco Retreat Center near the site of the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and discuss the finishing touches for the Amarillo facility due to open with an Engaged Encounter this weekend.

Meiners, a Redemptorist priest, is on the staff of the center. Hinton is the architect of the structure.

A dream of the late Bishop Lawrence DeFalco was realized with the dedication of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat center.

DeFalco, who died in 1979, believed there was a need for a retreat house where Catholic community programs could be conducted. Now, the new center named in his honor will serve that purpose.

Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen, who undertook to see the completion of DeFalco dream led the ceremonies, which were conducted on a clear but windy Panhandle day.



Bishop L. T. Matthiesen, surrounded by acolytes and lay participants, share in a blessing for the courtyard shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help during the December dedication ceremonies for the DeFalco Retreat Center in Amarillo.

The construction is both beautiful and utilitarian, with much attention to details such as the stained glass windows, slate floor in the chapel and native stone for the altar.

The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center is the largest building project ever undertaken by the Diocese of Amarillo.

Curry Named New Director

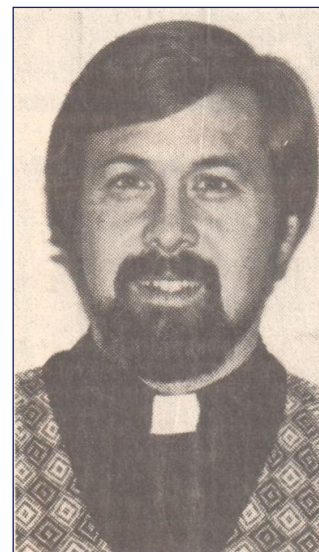
The Rev. Robert Curry was named the new director of the Bishop Defalco Retreat Center. He succeeds the Rev. Charles Schraub who has been named director of a new Redemptorist house of formation established in San Antonio.

Curry also succeeds Schraub as superior of the Redemptorist community at the retreat center.

Curry has been in Amarillo with the Retreat Center since its beginning in 1981. He has been active in the youth retreat program and the Fall Deacon Student workshops. He has conducted retreats in Spanish and English for the men and women of the Diocese.

Curry remained the director until 1991.

Bishop DeFalco Center's Fifth Anniversary



Rev. Robert Curry

Christmas lights dotted trees in the courtyard. Glowing luminarios lined the walkway to the front entrance. A 10-foot Christmas tree sparkled with lights and ornaments next to the fireplace. In the dining room, cookies, pastries, punch and hot chocolate were spread out in a festive setting. The parents of Fathers Bob Curry and Greg Mayers were guests for the celebration.

Then, Sunday morning, the blizzard hit knocking out the strings of lights, burying the luminarios, and keeping area residents off the roads. But, two courageous people, John and Caroline Tromba, ventured through the blowing snow to tour the facility, enjoy refreshments and met the staff and family.

At 4 P.M., 50 parishioners from the Perryton-Booker area arrived at the Cathedral for the diocesan celebration in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe that had been canceled. They found refuge at the Center. So, the open house celebration continued for two days with music, dancing and games with Perryton parents and teens, and the staff as guests. Cursillistas in the area brought extra food through the blizzard while the staff offered hospitality.

Thirty of their young people who are matechines, or religious dancers, were to dance at the diocesan celebration in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For months, they had been practicing the pre Columbian Aztec religious rituals that now are celebrated in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Even the blizzard did not chill their devotion nor turn them back. Since the diocesan celebration was canceled, they danced at the Retreat Center during the open house for Our Lady and for the staff, family, Cursillista Hosts and two brave guests.

So, despite the foot of snow and impassable roads, the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center celebrated the fifth anniversary open house in a way that the staff's careful planning had not anticipated.

FALL CAME EARLY

Fall came early to the staff of the retreat center when Fr. Bob's transfer was effective. Father Charlie Schraub established the Retreat Center in good soil. Fr. Curry cultivated it and brought forth its first wholesome fruits.

The soil is rich and good, the first harvests was wholesome and hardy. The future of the Retreat Center is promising thanks to the generosity and leadership of two fine Redemptorist priests.

The Retreat Center and the diocese said good-bye to an energetic and gifted director.

The new director of the Retreat Center is Fr. Greg Myers CSs.R.

TEN YEARS

Ten years ago on December 12, 1982 The Retreat Center opened its doors for the first time. Hundreds of programs make the Center their home.

Father Charlie Schraub was the first director of the Retreat Center. He served until December 1984, when Father Robert Curry assumed the position. In July of 1991 Father Greg became director.

Under the energetic leadership of these three men, the level of participation in Retreat Center programs has grown so much that today a major concern is trying to accommodate all the different people and groups who wish to make retreats at the Center.

There have been relatively minor changes except in the area of growth. This phenomenon extends to the temporal realm as well as the spiritual. Hundreds of trees have been donated and planted on the grounds, changing the face of the Center from prairie to woodland, a perfect setting for reflection.

The Retreat Center grounds provide a home for many species of birds. But it is in the Center's beautiful courtyard that one gets to know them better. If you sit quietly, it isn't very long before they reveal their presence with song. The birds use the Center for their refuge, creating a fitting metaphor for its greater mission with its people.

After ten years of constant use the building no longer has the new look or smell. It has, however, worn well. Like all things built to last, it has acquired a polished and enduring quality. The chapel has an almost medieval feel to it of solid timelessness and stability and yes, mystery. It is evident

that the entire Retreat Center is consecrated by the prayers of its people.

Fr. Greg Says Good bye

On January 23, 1998, the Diocese of Amarillo informed the Redemptorists that it was terminating their employment at Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center. The reason given in a letter announcing the decision was that it was time for "personnel of the diocese to assume directorship of the DeFalco Retreat Center..."

"By the time you read this column, Father Pat Hawk, Brother Michael Rhodes and myself will already have left the Retreat Center. But I hope that we will have left behind a spirit of integrity, generosity, hospitality and care indelibly etched in the floors and walls, in the history and the future of this sacred place.

Finally, to all of you: Thank You. Thank you for letting us be part of your lives. Thank you for your integrity. Thank you for your diverse expressions of faith which have so enriched our faith. Thank you for the memories, and for generosity and unforgettable kindnesses."

by Barbara Wooten 1991



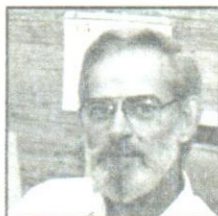
Bishop DeFalco Center

Legend has it that a retreat center in the diocese of Amarillo staffed by the Redemptorist Fathers was the fondest dream of Bishop DeFalco himself. Now that the retreat center has been a reality for sixteen years and Lawrence DeFalco has been dead for almost twenty, one must wonder just what the bishop would think of his namesake. It is probably safe to say that he would be surprised at the variety of religious understanding that characterizes the people who use this center. Of course, it is very likely that most of our end of the millennium world would surprise and maybe even shock Bishop DeFalco. The retreat center that he envisioned would be different indeed than our present retreat center much in the same way that a child grows up to be different than its parents expect it to be.



An Era Ends

For everyone who worked on the dream of building this place, there must have been great expectations. Taking on a project this large and expensive is not something entered without a great deal of deliberation. It is certain that the people who contributed their time, money, and labor back before even a shovel of dirt was taken from this ground had some kind of image in their mind's eye of the future. What kind of style of prayer did they imagine their retreat center would offer? Would our efforts now disappoint or delight the early "founders?" And finally, we can ask ourselves if we need be bound by the desires of those people from the past.



It could be said that everyone who comes to the retreat center has their own mission, whether they come here as a retreatant, an employee or even as an interested visitor to sit in the chapel or browse in the bookstore. People who partake of the gifts of a retreat center are seeking a little bit extra in the way of spiritual nourishment. They feel a deep need for more than church on Sunday. And once they enter the life of the retreat center and move toward their own goals, they also begin to move toward the collective goal. The Redemptorists are no exception; and now that they will no longer be here, their singular contribution to the collective will leave a void that won't be easy to fill.

Redemptorists are members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; the Latin is Congregatio Santissima Redemptoris, hence the initials CSsR after the name of each priest and brother. They are organized into Provinces and Vice Provinces throughout the major areas of the world. The priests and brothers who have been here at the retreat center throughout the years are part of the Vice Province of New Orleans. St. Alphonsus Liguori, who was devoted to the evangelization of poor people, founded the order in 1732 in Italy. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer is a highly respected religious order with a long history of evangelization, the preaching of the Word

of God, especially by means of foreign and domestic missions, retreats and devotions, particularly to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Fr. Elmer Toups CSsR, who died after a short illness in 1995, while he was stationed here in Amarillo, was especially devoted to the Blessed Virgin and the parish mission (a uniquely American undertaking).



The Redemptorists operate retreat centers all over the United States and throughout the world. I had never heard of them until I came to work at the retreat center seven years ago, shortly after Fr. Greg Mayers became the director. If they gave parish missions in my town, when I was young, I didn't know about it. The Right Reverend Monsignor Felix McCabe wouldn't have allowed it anyway; no one led his flock but himself. I was, however, influenced by these quasi-peripatetic preachers, the Redemptorists, because I went to church, and in the back of that church were all those Liguori Press (the Redemptorist publishing house) pamphlets and tiny books that I just couldn't help but read in tiny installments. While I waited in line for confession, I often read *How to Make a Good Confession* and other 1950's titles. Those pamphlets are still in the back of the church but now have titles that speak to contemporary issues like abortion and Aids; it can not be denied that the inspiration and influence of the Redemptorists is far reaching and profound.

Continued on next page

When the Redemptorist Fathers Charlie Schraub, Bob Curry and John Broker arrived in Amarillo on the first of March 1981 to operate this retreat center, it wasn't yet built. It wouldn't in fact open its doors until November 1982. The three priests were sent to the Amarillo Diocese ahead of time in order that they might get to know the local people and their needs. The following is a small portion of the Redemptorist annals written by Fr. Bob Curry when he first arrived. "On April 11, 1979, Fr. Albert Babin, accompanied by Fr. Earl Touns arrived in Amarillo." In their meetings with Bishop DeFalco, it was decided to set up a planning committee to study the feasibility of a retreat center."



In June 1979 Bishop DeFalco began to complain of persistent pain. He underwent exploratory surgery. The doctors discovered that terminal cancer was rapidly spreading through his body. The Catholic people were told the disheartening news: their beloved bishop would not be with them much longer. On the third of August, Father Babin wrote the ailing bishop and informed him that the Redemptorists were committed to staff the future retreat center. Bishop DeFalco immediately announced to his people the joyful news. This was the Bishop's last project. Monsignor Leroy T. Matthiesen became "the new bishop...he was to make the dream of Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center a reality."



Fr. Charlie Schraub became the first director. During his term the schedule of retreats had many of the programs that it does now: Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Deacon Formation, and Intensive Journal Workshop conducted by Fr. Greg Mayers. Fr. Charlie left Amarillo in December of 1984, and Fr. Bobby Curry became the director. During the seven years of his tenure many new programs were added to the retreat schedule: Through the Valley of Grief, Serenity Retreats, Couples Retreats and Centering Prayer. Fr. Bob was an energetic



and imaginative leader, and the retreat center grew into pretty much what it is today under his direction. When he left in 1991 the burden of command was passed on to Fr. Greg Mayers, who worked diligently to make the retreat center a model of fiscal responsibility. Fr. Greg's style of leadership enabled



With Gratitude And Thanks

the retreat center to keep and further assemble a very capable and willing staff. Fr. Pat Hawk, a member of the Redemptorist community in Amarillo since 1987, carried on with his crowded schedule of Contemplative Retreats and the program thrived. Fr. Pat's teaching is highly regarded throughout the contemplative community worldwide. Fr. Elmer

Touns came to us in late summer of 1993. He was a tireless worker despite his eighty years, giving missions and retreats for clergy and lay people. Fr. Touns died, while stationed here in Amarillo, in February 1995. Br. Michael Rhodes came in the early spring of 1994 with his array of special skills in air-conditioning and heating, electrics, plumbing and cheerful enthusiasm. Father Greg, Father Pat and Brother Mike left the Retreat Center on the first of August.



These men and their contribution will be profoundly missed. To former Redemptorist Provincials Fr. Al Babin CSSR, Fr. Matt Kerschen CSSR our many thanks for their generous help and their interested guidance and friendship.

The Retreat Center would like to give special thanks to Bishop Leroy Matthiesen for his gentle, patient, and wise leadership and his valued friendship for all these many years.

And finally, I want to say that the Redemptorists were good friends and excellent co-workers. They were involved in the community and made this area their home for a generation. I will miss them and their special brand of kindness and their flawless integrity.

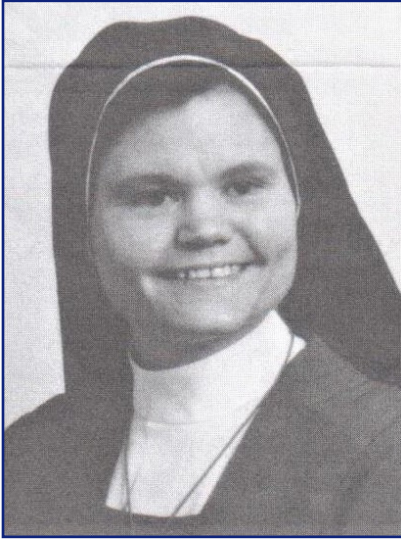
By Barbara Wooten 1998

Catholic Diocese to Manage Center

Beginning Aug. 1, management of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center will revert to the Catholic Diocese of Amarillo. The facility at 2100 N. Spring has been managed since it opened in 1982 by the Redemptorists of the South, an order of priests and brothers headquarters in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The Rev. Monroe Pirrer, provincial superior of the order, said the decision is by “mutual consent” of he and Bishop John W. Yanta, who has led the Diocese since March 1997.

“He wanted to start with a whole new approach to things in general,” Perrier said



Sr. Theresa Rozga

New Director For DeFalco

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Sister Theresa Rozga SCSJA. She comes to us from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to serve as our new director. Sr. Theresa belongs to the Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida, religious community dedicated to service today's people, especially the poor. Her involvement with spiritual direction and retreat ministry grew out of her love for teaching, especially about the Catholic Faith and its spirituality. Faith formation has always been an integral part of her ministry.



Old Friend, New Position

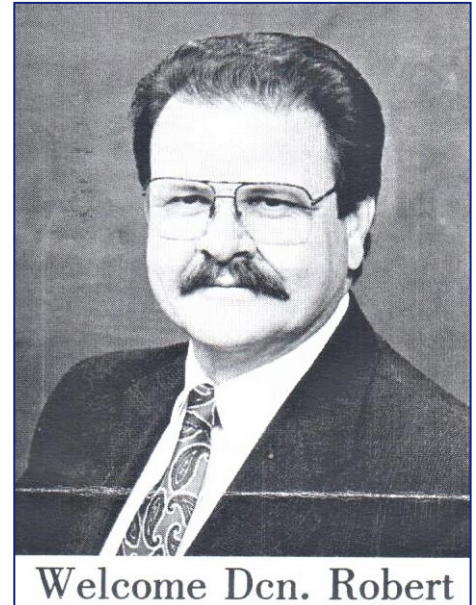
Deacon Robert Smith

Assumes Leadership of the Center

Deacon Robert Smith has been appointed acting director of the retreat center by Bishop John Yanta. Robert will continue as our Business Manager, a position he has held for the past nine years. It is nice to have a familiar face at the helm during this time of transition.

Deacon Robert has a long history with the center. He was a frequent visitor here long before he became an employee. And he has kept the center running efficiently during his tenure as Business Manager.

Deacon Robert possesses those qualities of leadership that make him a favorite with employees and guests alike. He is low-key, easy going and a good listener. At the same time he brings to the job his uncompromising professionalism.



The Retreat Center is a gift of peace to the future

The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center just celebrated its 25th Anniversary. Through all those twenty-five years there has been a spirit here that can only be called peacefully gracious. When visitors come to the center, their experience with our facility is the culmination of the efforts of many unseen hands. The staff at the retreat center has 75 years combined experience in the special needs of retreat ministry.

Our namesake Bishop Lawrence DeFalco was a humble man with an ambitious dream. This wonderful facility is his legacy, but it is also our legacy and yours. Each and every visitor takes, when they leave, a bit of the spirit of peace that resides here and everyone leaves a bit of themselves. We are a community. Join us.



Holy Family Chapel

Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center Names New Director



Linda Astuto, director of Adult Faith Formation at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, has been named the new director of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center.

She replaces Deacon Robert Smith, who retired last August. Astuto said for now, she will continue her position part-time at St. Thomas, while assuming her new responsibility, which began March 12.

A convert to the Catholic faith in 1989, Astuto says it was her love of the Catholic faith that prompted her to go back to school to earn a Master's degree in Theology from the University of Dallas, School of Ministry. She is currently in the graduate program at Creighton University in Omaha, working on a second Masters degree in Christian Spirituality and working on her certification in Spiritual Direction.

"The Bishop DeFalco Board would like to welcome Linda Astuto as our new director to our Retreat Center," said Jeannie Friedell, president of the Board of Directors for the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center. "We are looking forward to working with her and know she will be a large asset not only to the Retreat Center but to the entire community."

Astuto has been married to Steve Astuto since 1990 and the couple have three children: Gina, Tony and Allie.



Sister Stella Maris Hamann Named New Director

Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ Sister Stella Maris Hamann has been named Executive Director of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center, effective Monday, Jan. 24.

The announcement was made Dec. 8 by Bishop Patrick J. Zurek.

Sister Stella Maris replaces Linda Astuto, who served as Executive Director since March 12, 2014.

A native of Staten Island, New York, Sister Stella Maris is the daughter of Barbara Hamann and the late Patrick Hamann. While attending Catholic Schools that included religious sisters on the faculty, she began to think about being a woman religious. After she and her family moved to Florida when she was a teenager, Sister Stella Maris got involved in a Life Teen parish where she encountered the Lord as a personal God and began to discern religious life.

Sister Stella Maris earned a degree in Theology with a concentration in Catechetics and a minor in Accounting from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She joined the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ Community on Sept. 8, 2006 and professed Final Vows on Oct. 4, 2014.

Since professing her Final Vows, Sister Stella Maris has served as Director of Evangelization and Family Catechists with the Santa Mariá de la Paz Catholic Community in Santa Fe. In her four years there, she was Director of the Religious Education Program, which included sacramental preparation, while facilitating a grief support group and a cancer support group.

Earlier this year, Sister Stella Maris was granted certification in Ignatian Spiritual Direction from Cenacle School of Spiritual Direction in Clearwater, Florida. On Dec. 17, Sister Stella Maris graduated from the Vocational Nursing program at Amarillo College.

“With great joy and faith, we welcome Sister Stella Maris Hamann as Executive Director of the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center,” said Bishop Zurek. “We wish her all the best as she begins this new position. We also thank Linda Astuto for her nearly eight years of service at the DeFalco Retreat Center. We are appreciative of all that she has accomplished, especially in overseeing the renovation of the retreat center and evaluating and implementing new programs during her time there.”

“I am grateful for this opportunity to lead the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center following the hard work of Linda Astuto,” said Sister Stella Maris. “I pray that all the Faithful of the Diocese of Amarillo will find a spiritual refuge and home at the retreat center and come to visit in the new year.”



Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco

Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco came to us in 1963. Now, 16 years later, he is no longer our Bishop. Terminal cancer has forced him to resign and in time will take him away from us altogether.

We will look at his picture and remember...Those eyes that pierced us through and through, that made us feel transparent to his gaze, and then warmed as he agreed, and smiled.

His feeling of ease as he walked among the Mexican-American people of the dioceses. There was a rapport between him and them that others could only envy, and be glad about.

His sensitivity, for him a blessing that permitted him to feel with those who were hurting, and a curse that prompted him to draw back from those who hurt him.

His patience as he held out his hand to those who were struggling, to those who were different, though, truth to tell, his instinct was to recoil.

His durability as he fought back from a stroke that partially paralyzed him, walking endless hours alone, hitting and going after a golf ball, or out with Pobrecito, his little dog, who will miss him very much.

His willingness to substitute in parish work for priests ill or away for a break, to drive endless miles in the diocese to do his work.

His humility as he took an evening stroll and returned to his house with an armload of trash, picked up in the neighborhood.

His loyalty to his friends, his love of sports, even his fumbling with things mechanical. We, too, will miss him, very much.

Some 10 years ago the National Association of Manufacturers did an evaluation of the organizational set-up of the Catholic Church, and gave it an A rating.

Conscious of the chaos that seemed to prevail in some areas of Church life, a few members received that report with skepticism. With the resignation of Bishop DeFalco,

it becomes clear that the Church is, indeed, well organized.

Within eight days of the vacancy of the diocese, an administrator was elected by the body of consultors, in the case of the Diocese of Amarillo made up of the Priests' Senate. The action is set out in Canon 432 and the following of the Code of Canon Law.

The administrator has made his appointment known to the apostolic delegate - now Archbishop Jean Jadot - and thereafter, until the installation of a new bishop, there will be close cooperation between the administrator and the papal delegate.

The administrator operates under a simple rule: He has jurisdiction to carry on the already existing work of the diocese, but while the See is vacant he may not institute anything new.

This means no selling of Church property, no new building projects, no new programs, or no purchases of property.

In case of emergencies the administrator consults the apostolic delegate, who may authorize him to give his approval to matters under question.

The administrator may not name pastors, but may appoint temporary administrators.

For all his actions during the vacancy of the See, the administrator is accountable not only to the apostolic delegate but also to the succeeding bishop.

Upon the resignation of the bishop, the Vicar General ceases to be as does the Priests' Senate, which, however, in the case of the Diocese of Amarillo, had been named by Bishop DeFalco as his board of consultors. The consultors may be asked by the administrator to continue to serve.

There are safeguards aplenty to keep the diocesan church in safe hands in the interim until a new bishop is appointed.

Bishop DeFalco was described as relieved and at peace after his offer to resign was accepted by Pope John Paul

The burdens of the episcopal office are many. Some of them are lightened only by the knowledge that Christ is present to lend strength. Bishop DeFalco carried his responsibility with grace and humility.

We have been blessed to have had him as our shepherd.

Bishop DeFalco Resigns



Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco, head of the Catholic Diocese of Amarillo, resigned for reasons of health.

Bishop DeFalco tendered his resignation to Pope John Paul II through Archbishop Jean Jadot, Apostolic Delegate to the United States. Pope John Paul accepted the bishop's resignation.

Exploratory surgery on July 5 revealed that Bishop DeFalco, 63, had cancer of the pancreas which had already spread to other organs, diocesan officials said. Doctors advised him that chemotherapy would be ineffective, a diocesan spokesman said.

After recuperating from the July surgery at St. Anthony's Hospital, Bishop Defalco has been at his home in northeast Amarillo and has continued to administer the diocese through his vicar general, Father James Sonderman, and his chancellor, Father Norbert Kuehler.

Bishop Defalco was installed as the fifth Bishop of the Amarillo Diocese June 13, 1963, succeeding bishop John L. Morkovsky, who had transferred to the Diocese of Galveston Houston.

On Sept. 9 about three months after his installation, Bishop Defalco went to Rome for the second session of the Second Vatican Council a council which was to have a great impact throughout the church and on the Amarillo Diocese.

Bishop Defalco took up his duties as head of the diocese at a time when the economy was beginning to go into decline, and changes in social and religious life styles were becoming noticeable.

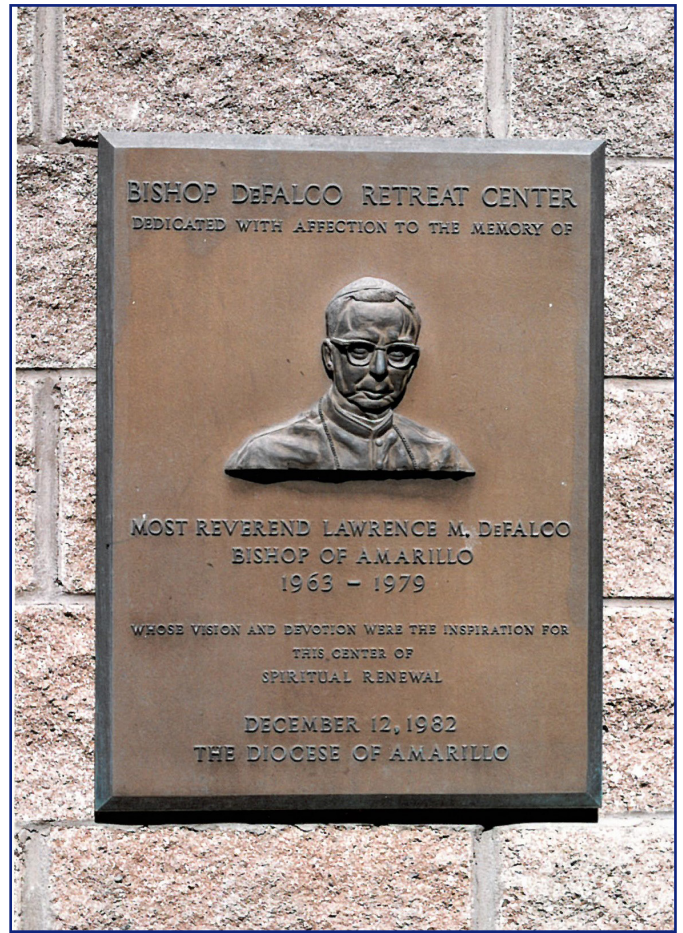
It fell to Bishop Defalco to consolidate the gains that had been made in the diocese, to strengthen the financial condition and hold together people of increasingly divergent views within the church in the diocese, a diocesan spokesman said. The Bishop returned to Rome for the following sessions of Vatican II that was concluded in 1965. He summed up the council in one word: "Pastoral".

In 1966 Bishop Defalco opened an office at St. Elisabeth's Church at Lubbock, to complement his office in Amarillo and better serve that part of the diocese.

In December of that year the bishop announced plans for establishment of the Amarillo Diocesan Pastoral Council, one of the first in Texas. The Diocesan Priests' Senate already had been set up as an advisor body and was described as the "vanguard" of the movement to establish such bodies in the U.S.

Later the Bishop approved and supported the establishment of a Diocesan Sisters' Senate and a Diocesan Permanent Deacons' Senate.

He also instituted a personnel committee to assist him in assignment of the clergy under his direction.



On Feb 4, 1968, Bishop Defalco noted in his column "Jottings from the Bishop's Desk" that was published in the then *West Texas Register*, that initial steps had been taken to form the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The first assembly of the council was held March 31 that year at St. Joseph's Hall in Amarillo, with almost 300 persons present.

On May 15, 1970, tests disclosed that the bishop had suffered a heart attack. But by Aug. 3 he was back at work.

In 1974, Bishop Defalco, with other Texas bishops, returned to Rome for a month-long theological consultation directed by internationally known scholars. That same year the Bishop named St. Laurence Church in Amarillo his cathedral church following the closing of Sacred Heart Cathedral.

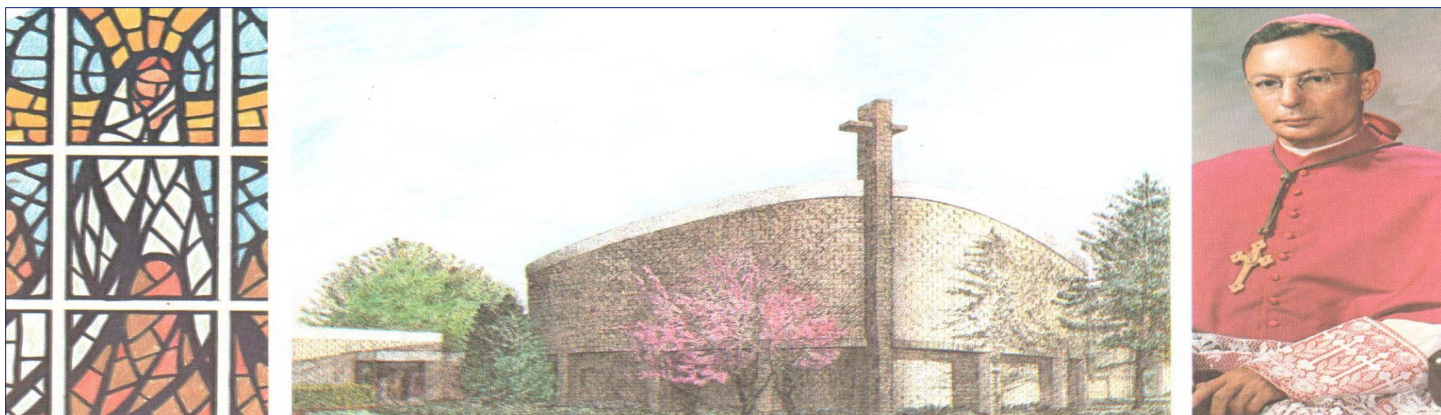
The Diocese of Amarillo celebrated its golden jubilee in November 1974, and Bishop Defalco hosted Archbishop Jadot and a number of bishops, clergy, religious and laity during the week of activities that was culmi-

Although Bishop DeFalco's principal concern in his diocese was pastoral, he also has been credited with restoring the diocese to financial soundness. In 1968 the Bishop reported in his column that the Amarillo Diocese owed \$2,161,046 in long-term loans. George Wilhelm, comptroller of the diocese, said that as of June 30, 1979 that indebtedness had been reduced to \$663,000.

Bishop DeFalco's last major action prior to his resignation was approval of a plan to build a retreat center in Amarillo to be staffed by the Redemptorist Congregation of New Orleans and Franciscan Sisters of Amarillo. Funding of the building cost and operation will be by the diocese.



DeFalco Remembered



The Legend of a Bishop

A plaque attached to the wall near the entrance to the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center reads:

*Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center
Dedicated to the memory of Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco
1963- 1979
Whose vision and devotion
were the inspiration for this
Center of Spiritual Renewal
December 12, 1982
Diocese of Amarillo*

Forty years have passed since the image and the words of Bishop Lawrence M. DeFalco were cast in bronze to catch the gentle spirit of a man whose motto was "Gressus Meos Dirige," a prayer to the Lord to "Guide My Steps." And guide them he did, in ways that eight years after his untimely death many of us still try to follow.

They are steps that lead us into our inner selves, then outward to others and upward to God.

Bishop DeFalco did not like crowds. He was not at home in large gatherings. His was not a powerful voice from the pulpit nor from public podiums. He made no impact on public policy and held no committee memberships in national conferences.

His strength was in personal relationships, in his sensitivity to individual needs, in his love for the poor and the marginalized. His last message from his death bed was to people gathered for a Fiesta de Colores in Lubbock. What shall we tell them, he was asked. "Tell them I love them," he said.

He would love the retreat center named after him. He would be at home there in the chapel, in the gathering area, in the meditation garden - especially there. He would have loved to take his dog, Pobrecito, there on his daily walks and talk with people, quietly, one on one.

He would have found the retreat center a place of spiritual strengthening, of reflection, of peace, as thousands have done every year of the forty years it has carried his name.

He was in his time among us a sign of the Church's unity in the Diocese of Amarillo. He is still that today in the Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center.



The Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center in Amarillo hosted its annual TREAT fundraiser Sept. 8 in the retreat center courtyard. The event also served as a 40th anniversary celebration for the BDRC, which was dedicated by then-Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen on Dec. 12, 1982. Photos by the Diocesan Office of Communications.



Current director Sr. Stella and former director Linda Astuto greet each other during the 40th anniversary celebration.



Peggy Pohlmeier and Sr. Elizabeth Ann Dockery



Joyce Knight talks with Bonnie Lasher

Thirty Years in Hell

This is the story of a Catholic priest, —a priest who labored in the Lord's Vineyard for 30 years and then set himself stubbornly against the very church he had loved. He was reconciled with his church through the efforts of Bishop Rudolph A. Gerken, Amarillo's first Bishop, and today his mortal remains lie in the Catholic section at Llano Cemetery in Amarillo.

Bernard Fresenborg was born in Germany in 1847 of devout Catholic parents, one of 10 children. It was an age of the industrial revolution and the mass immigration to the promised land of America. National groups quickly wormed in the new country—clinging together and retaining their mother tongue.

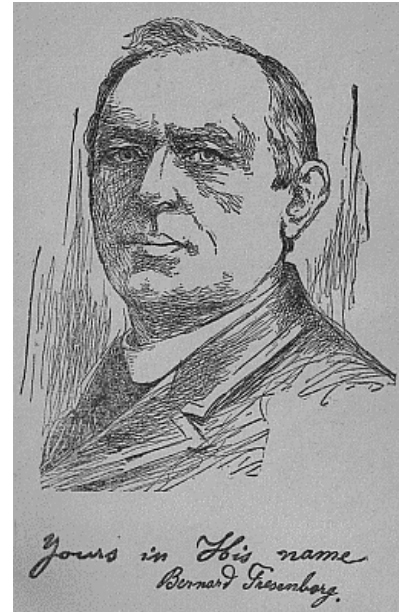
German Catholic families in the United States formed myriad colonies. And their priest had to speak German if he was to function effectively. American Bishops desperately tried every way possible to supply this need.

Bernard Fresenborg was attracted by the plight of his countrymen, and answered the pleas of the Bishop of Alton, Ill.—later divided into the Diocese of Springfield and Belleville.

Bernard was ordained in Germany in 1879 for the Alton Diocese, and soon arrived in America's Midwest country with all the zeal and lofty ideals of a newly ordained priest.

Father Fresenborg was a man of no little administrative ability. Many were the problems that plagued his Bishop concerning the German colonies, and Father Fresenborg soon became a clerical trouble-shooter. From one parish to another he was sent—and when peace was established between factions, or a worrisome debt whittled down, or some other problem put under control, Father Fresenborg would be transferred.

It was a trying life, and Father gradually began to feel that he was not sufficiently appreciated. Little shadows of paranoid conduct showed here and there, and difficulties and oppressions were imagined where none existed. Finally, while stationed in the Dakotas,



Father Fresenborg was caught in a violent storm during midwinter and suffered two frozen feet. Somewhat incapacitated as a result, he requested permission to return to Germany and retire. He was then 55 years of age. His bishop granted the permission, as well as a monthly pension. However, immigration laws were being tightened, and a long delay in securing the necessary papers ensued.

Meanwhile, Father Fresenborg became convinced that the Church had failed to recognize his labors and had turned against him. He left the Church.

The enemies of the Church were not long in finding Father Fresenborg. He was down and out – too proud to turn to his Church again. He was offered a royalty on each book sold, if he would put his name as author to a book vilifying the Catholic Church.

Father Fresenborg consented.

Little could he have dreamed of the dramatic and terrible results of this act. For this book became widely disseminated throughout the Midwest and South and did untold harm to the Church. For years it could be found side by side with the Bible in many protestant homes. *Thirty Years in Hell*, as the book was called, is one of

the vilest products of the church's defamers. It would be absolutely unthinkable that any man once a priest, could stoop so low as actually to author such a book. As we shall soon see, Father Fresenborg actually had little to do with writing the book; it was "ghost-written" for him.

This happened in 1904. Father Fresenborg soon regretted his action. He made very little from the book and discovered that his new-found friends were not interested in him or his future.

Father drifted from one place to another and finally gathered together enough money to buy a little farm just outside of Hooker, in the Oklahoma Panhandle. There he lived quietly. But his reputation followed him. Catholics avoided him like the plague, Protestants were suspicious of him.

In 1915 Father Fresenborg spent all his savings in a vain attempt to buy unsold copies of his infamous book. He managed to round up some 500 copies, with little effect on the thousands being sold.

Pride prevented his return to the Church, for which he ardently longed. Time went by. Then Bishop Rudolph A. Gerken came to Amarillo.

Soon after his arrival in Amarillo, late in 1927, Bishop Gerken made a trip to Hooker, where he had a long conference with Father Fresenborg. But Father was not yet ready to recant completely; many of his old suspicions and ideas of persecution lingered on. He promised to write to the Bishop.

One wonders what must have gone through the old priest's mind. Certainly, he was not a happy man.

In a letter written shortly after the Bishop's visit, Father Fresenborg stated, "I thank you for your testimony about my condition. Now you want to know the reason why I don't accept your kind offer. I know my condition but intend to drink the cup of pain and misery to the bottom. Pain all day and not one night free of suffering. I see the joyfulness of the world all around over Christ's coming... that must give me strength to carry my lot. Just now I have one friend left. My dog is licking my painful feet."

After a little more than a year of exchanging correspondence, Father Fresenborg came to Amarillo. He was installed in the caretaker's house back of a private chapel for offering Mass. Here he lived in comparative peace and tranquility, puttering around a little garden when the weather would permit

On Jan. 14, 1933, at the age of 86, Father Fresenborg died, fully fortified by the Church's last rites.

The return of Father Fresenborg to the church excited considerable comment – much of it unfavorable. Priests who were near to him in his last years still remark on the obvious sincerity and deep devotion with which he offered Mass. Joseph Quinn, in Oklahoma's Southwest Courier, remarked on the passing of Father Fresenborg:

"Commentaries of different color could be written about Father Bernard Fresenborg, who was buried last Saturday in Llano Cemetery Amarillo. Possibly you know him; doubtless you had heard of him. For 30 years he lived and labored in the Diocese of Belleville, but something in his faith snapped from under him, leaving him an aimless derelict. Then he came to Oklahoma and lived in the Panhandle. Pounded by strange fancies, swept away from the true belief, he cast here and there but found no haven to satisfy his soul. He lent his name to a cruel thrust at his old Church in the book called *Thirty Years in Hell*: It found space in libraries; was heralded by the anticlerical carpetbaggers of his day. Then, through the prayer of those who had known him as a zealous priest, his warped beliefs were straightened and having adjured his errors, he came back under the arm of the Church, contrite, saddened, an old man with gray hair returning abjured his errors, he came taken in of course, and lived humbly in Amarillo. At noon Friday he was spading in his garden, hoping for another spring with its message of resurrection. A stab of pain felled him. He closed his eyes forever to worldly things as dusk was coming down over his garden, but not before the last rites of the Church had been administered."

The following is a copy of Father Fresenborg's abjuration of error, upon his return to the Church:

State of Texas.

County of Potter.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS,

That I, the undersigned Bernard Fresenborg, an ordained Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois, having spoken and written things derogatory to the Church and having held a pastorate in a Protestant Church for a period of one year, and

WHEREAS: I now wish to make my peace with God and His Church, being truly contrite of heart I come voluntarily and of my own accord to the Right Rec. R. A. Gerken, D.D., Bishop of Amarillo, Tex., and being duly sworn, attest and declare on oath as follows:

I abjure all my errors against the Roman Catholic Church, including every suspicion of heresy as well as all that I may have written or spoken of a defamatory nature against the Roman Catholic Church, the Supreme Pontiff, and the Hierarchy, and I formally repudiate the authorship of the aforesaid book, entitled, *Thirty years in Hell*, and

WHEREAS: I have been the occasion of great harm to the Roman Catholic church I respectfully request that this abjuration and declaration be given all possible publicity in the Catholic and secular press so as to undo the harm caused, and while seeking reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church I wish to state that I am fully disposed to accept any spiritual penalties that may be imposed upon me in the way of satisfaction.

Witness my signature this 13th day of June, 1930, at Amarillo, Tex.

Bernard Fresenborg Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public, on this 13th day of June A.D. 1930. Notary Public, Potter County, Tex.

Julius Dorenfield, Jr.

We hereby certify that Bernard Fresenborg voluntarily signed the above and foregoing instrument in out pres

ence and there-upon each of us signed the same as witnesses in the presence of each other.

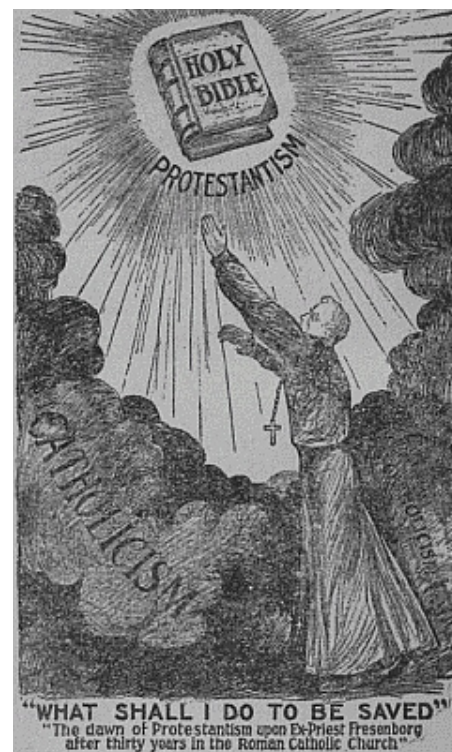
John R. Fullengim

E. H. Foster

I. J. Kessler.



Pages from *Thirty Years in Hell*



August - November

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	525

O sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into the hearts of men and women this peace for which they sometimes seek so desperately and which you alone can give to them. Help them to know one another better, and to live as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. Reveal to them also your beauty, holiness, and purity. Awaken in their hearts love and gratitude for your infinite goodness. Join them all together in your love. And give us your heavenly peace. Amen.

—Pope John XXIII



Did You Know?

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You may stop by daily (Monday through Thursday) to view the museum, for a guided tour it is recommended that you make an appointment.. The museum is open by appointment for church and school groups. This includes evenings and weekends.

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