

# APPENDIX K

## Centennial Report

### Report on Centennial Celebration (1983-1987)

Although finishing of the interior of the present church continued throughout 1887 and 1888, following the 1883-1887 construction, the Team Ministry decided in 1982 that the Centennial Celebration of the Building of St. Joseph Church on Allen Street should extend from September 5, 1983 through June 24, 1987. The Parish Council selected Robert G. Keenan as General Chairman of the Centennial Committee and as Coordinator of all Centennial Events. On October 22, 1982 the Centennial Committee was organized as follows:

A. *The Executive Board* that set policy and provided direction to the working committees, appointed committee chairpersons, approved member appointments and committee recommendations, resolved problems and provided coordination to all activities and celebrations, and consisted of:

1. The Team Ministry of St. Joseph Parish
2. The General Chairperson
3. The Chairperson of the Parish Council  
and

B. *The Working Committees* of the Centennial Committee that were as follows:

1. Civic and Ecumenical- David Sevigny, Chairman
2. Ecclesiastical -The Team Ministry
3. Finance- Clarke A. Gravel, Chairman  
Robert L. Gelineau, Assistant Chairman  
Robert G. Keenan, Treasurer
4. History-Veronique Gassette, Chairperson
5. Liturgical-Kathy Matthews, Chairperson
6. Publicity and Education -  
Rev. Francis R. Prive, Chairman
7. Social Life - Pauline Nichols, Chairperson
8. Spiritual Life- Jackie Labrecque, Chairperson

The Goal of the Centennial Committee was "To Renew and Celebrate the Faith Life of St. Joseph Parish Using the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Building of St. Joseph Church on Allen Street, Burlington, Vermont:"

The Theme of the Celebration was "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it:" (Ps. 127)

General guidelines were drawn and presented to the respective working committees on the same date to delineate responsibilities as well as to stipulate that overlapping activities would be coordinated through the authority of the Executive Board.

By mid-1983, an Index to Historical Highlights was prepared by the General Chairman. This index has been helpful to the Executive Board and the members of the working

committees in designing a calendar of significant events in the history of the parish to be used in planning celebrations. It was drawn from the *Annales* of the parish, the unpublished *History of St. Joseph Parish* by the Rev. Joseph N. Couture, SSE, and from several other sources.

In 1984, three special Eucharistic Liturgies were celebrated. The first on April 8 was in commemoration of the first offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the present church on Easter Sunday, 1887. Fr. Gerald Bombardier was celebrant. Liturgical responses in French and sacred hymns sung by the St. Joseph Church Senior Choir, under the direction of Maurice Villemarie, recalled for those parishioners participating in this liturgical service the earlier years before English was brought into use at Sunday and daily Masses.

On July 4, 1984, the second special Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated on the steps of the church to commemorate the placing and blessing of the cornerstone of St. Joseph Church on the same date exactly 100 years previously (Appendix J-8). Rev. Conrad Bessette, native son of the parish, was the principal celebrant. Concelebrants were: Msgr. Edwin T. Buckley, Vicar General of the Diocese of Burlington; Rev. Jay Haskin, Vicar for Administration of the Diocese; the Revs. Bernard H. Messier and Gerald W. Bombardier, members of the Team Ministry at St. Joseph Parish; Rev. Joseph P. Carrigan, chaplain at St. Joseph's Home, and the Revs. J. Walter Wells and Francis R. Prive. The Folk Group, directed by George Charron, provided the superb music and singing; the lector was Jackie Labrecque, Chairperson of the Centennial Spiritual Life Committee.

Robert Keenan, General Centennial Chairman, presented the opening welcome and historical statement entitled "Why We Are Here;" thereby explaining the significance of this joyous occasion to the more than 300 parishioners and friends assembled on the street and on the lawn of the residence of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart (formerly St. Joseph Convent). Fr. Bombardier presented the homily in which he emphasized that in honoring the parishioners who sacrificed so much to erect this magnificent edifice of stone and mortar we are really recognizing the strong faith of "those dedicated French Canadians, your ancestors." Fr. Bombardier added, as he looked across the street at the assembled congregation, "the real church is right in front of *me*:" He then stated, "You and I, with the faith the Lord has given us ... are taking this building and making it the House of the Lord. That is our quest. That is our goal:"

After the homily, Msgr. Buckley renewed the blessing of the cornerstone, one of the quoin stones of the central bay



100th St. Joseph Church Anniversary Mass commemorating the laying and blessing of the Cornerstone, July 4, 1984



The Real Church Is Right in Front of Me! (Fr. Bombardier )



Re-blessing of the Cornerstone on July 4, 1984 by Msgr. Edwin T. Buckley, Vicar General of the Diocese of Burlington

of the facade of the church . It is larger than the other grey quoin stones and is engraved with a plain cross.

Following the liturgy, Fr. Messier presented the closing remarks in which he re-emphasized the significance of this event and expressed appreciation to all who participated. He then read the following proclamation of the Mayor of the City of Burlington:

### Proclamation

WHEREAS, St. Joseph Parish of the Diocese of Burlington was the First National Language Parish of the Americans of French Descent in New England; and

WHEREAS, It was exactly 100 years ago, on July 4, 1884, that the cornerstone was blessed and laid by the Most Reverend Louis deGoesbriand, First Bishop of Burlington; and

WHEREAS, St. Joseph Parish has been a significant force in the history of Burlington and its French Canadian immigrants since its founding and the erection of the previous St. Joseph Church on Prospect Hill in 1850;

NO W, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the day of July 4, 1984, be set aside to commemorate the Celebration of the Blessing and Laying of the Cornerstone of the present St. Joseph Church.

Signed - Bernard Sanders, Mayor

Dated on the 26th day of June, 1984

Fr. Messier then called upon ten members of the Girl Scouts and Brownies to march in formation up the church steps and open the doors of the three entrances. This was done impressively. Fr. Messier then invited all assembled to visit the open church.

Refreshments were served on the lawn across the street at the Brothers ' Residence by the Centennial Social Life Committee, chaired by Pauline Nichols. During this social period, centennial mementoes were offered for sale at a booth operated by Byron and Judy Audy and other members of the Publicity and Education Committee. The first of twelve monthly drawings of historically significant pictures of St. Joseph Parish was won by Mary Cauchon. It was a beautifully framed photograph of St. Joseph Church on Prospect Hill, a copy of the only picture of the first St. Joseph Church erected by the French Canadian Congregation of Burlington and environs.

On Sunday, October 28, 1984, the third special Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated as the religious part of a Centennial reunion (Appendix J-8 and J-9). In addition to the native sons and daughters who have become priests and religious, those others who have served at St. Joseph Parish were invited to attend. Alumni of St. Joseph / Nazareth School were also invited to this celebration. A total of 400 persons assembled with the 63 priests and religious at this joyous reunion to express their gratitude for all that St. Joseph Church and School meant to them in their daily lives. They came from all over New England and from as far as Bogota, Columbia (Josephine Couture de Gonzalez). Great appreciation is due to Robert L. Gelineau who organized and led the six-month effort to locate and invite all known alumni. The oldest graduate present was Ida Benoit Auer, Class of 1911 .



Centennial Reunion, Oct. 28, 1984

The Principal Celebrant was the Most Rev. Louis E. Gelineau, Bishop of Providence, a native son of the parish and always a true friend. Most Rev. Robert F. Joyce, retired Bishop of Burlington participated in the liturgy along with the Team Ministry who were concelebrants. The visiting priests and religious who were guests of honor were introduced at the conclusion of the liturgy which had been preceded at 3:00 PM by a beautiful sacred concert presented by the Senior Choir, directed by Maurice Villemaire, and by the Saturday Night Folk Group, directed by George Charron. The concert was in commemoration of the sacred concert of October 28, 1897, presented by Mr. Frank Donahue, organist, Holy Cross Cathedral, Boston, to inaugurate the present church organ, as mentioned by the General Centennial Chairman, Robert G. Keenan, in his Address of Welcome that followed the 30-minute concert.

The Recessional proceeded across the street to St. Joseph School where a sandwich buffet, catered by Leo "Bud" Rouille, awaited the 750 persons who had attended the liturgical service. Many old friendships were renewed and all were most generous in their praise of the events of the day. Mr. Robert L. Gelineau and volunteers provided an information service to assist alumni in their search of former classmates. Judith and Byron Audy directed the operation of a centennial booth where they sold centennial mementoes, including a beautiful commemorative plate, Christmas ornaments, centennial buttons, and T-shirts. The original concepts of these items were developed by Claire Courville, a member of the Publicity and Education Committee, who also made a large number of contacts of firms nationwide to locate the best sources of these types of commemorative items.

Visits between old and new friends continued long into the evening and many expressions of pleasure were heard from parishioners and visitors alike. A number of other Centennial events were held during the remainder of this celebration period extending through June 24, 1987.

A major project was the restoration of St. Joseph Church to provide long-needed repairs to the roof, masonry and windows of the upper church, remodeling of the parish hall and installation of an elevator and elevator lobby at the rear of the chapel to permit the elderly and the handicapped to attend divine services in the upper church more easily. This work commenced in March 1985. With the installation of an independent heating system in the parish hall and zonal controls in the original steam heating system, the total \$675,000 project added substantially to the energy conservation, preservation and people-serving functions of this edifice. Fiscal resources to cover the cost of these improvements were being provided by the St. Joseph Church Centennial Fund to which some 800 benefactors and donors pledged their support during the Centennial Fund Drive of 1983 chaired by Clarke A. Gravel, assisted by Robert L. Gelineau.

A Commencement Dinner for the Advance Gift Benefactors, Centennial Committee Members, Captains and Workers was held at the Ramada Inn, South Burlington on Tuesday, September 27, 1983 (Appendix J-11). The group of 275 persons was honored by the presence of Most Reverend John A. Marshall, Bishop of Burlington, and Most Reverend Louis E. Gelineau, Bishop of Providence, guest speaker. In his address, Bishop Gelineau stated "It's always great to come home:" He spoke of the church as a symbol of the "life of God in our midst:" He said, "I know what God looks like because I see Him in the people of St. Joseph Parish - good, loving, caring, majestic and sharing:" He also recalled that, when he was a young man, life in the Old North End of Burlington "centered on our church." He added: "The church building is the center of life of the parish and it is a sign of the deep life we live together:"



Centennial Kick-off Dinner at Ramada Inn, Sept. 27, 1983.

Photograph - Courtesy of Vermont Catholic Tribune



Most Reverend Louis E. Gelineau, Bishop of Providence, Guest Speaker, Centennial Kick-off Dinner.

Photograph - Courtesy of Vermont Catholic Tribune

Later in the program, Bishop Marshall agreed with Bishop Gelineau on the significance of the church building.

He stated that the building should be "precious to us as a symbol which represents the Body of Christ and the whole Church-past, present and future:'

The Centennial Celebration culminated with a series of special events on the weekend of June 19-21, 1987. Commencing on Friday evening, June 19, with an organ concert by Mrs. Blanche Bonnette, followed by a Songfest led by St. Joseph Senior Choir, directed by Maurice Villemaire, and the Parish Folk Groups in the restored church, parishioners and friends joined together in a joyous celebration of the Grand Closing of the Centennial Celebration. The program closed with the Evening Prayer. The group then went downstairs to the Parish Hall for a Social Hour and to view the historical exhibit in the Chapel.

The weekend provided group activities in which all could participate. On Saturday, an 11:00 AM parade of parishioners, school children, scouts, and senior citizens in limousines paced by a Burlington Fire Department Hook and Ladder truck, wound its way through the Church Street Marketplace and the Old North End, reminiscent of St. Joseph Parish Parades of the past century. An outdoor festival followed in the St. Joseph School Yard, complete with games, pony rides, barbecue and music and interviews provided by Radio Station 95 Triple X. After the 4:00 PM Mass, festivities resumed at the school. A second outdoor barbecue, followed by an evening music festival in the school gymnasium, was accompanied by much singing and socializing by the large number who came for the events.

On Sunday, June 21, the liturgical phase of the Grand Closing of the Centennial commenced at 10:30 AM with a Sacred Concert presented by the Senior Choir and Folk



**Most Reverend John A. Marshall, Bishop of Burlington, Principal Celebrant and Homilist, liturgy of the Eucharist, June 21, 1987. Photograph-Courtesy of Vermont Catholic Tribune**

Groups, followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist with Most Rev. John A. Marshall as Principal Celebrant and Homilist. In his homily, Bishop Marshall praised the accomplishments made during the Centennial Celebration. "All these accomplishments are wonderful. We thank God and we thank you for them;" he said. "But that which is more wonderful still, that which has enabled this parish to do so much in the past few years of centenary celebration is the strength of its family life:'

Thus concluded on a very happy note the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the construction of St. Joseph Church on Allen Street. The wholehearted support of our parishioners, our former parishioners and our many friends in the Greater Burlington community and beyond has enabled our parish to realize the Goal of the Centennial Committee. Our beautiful Gift Recognition Board and the Book of Memory, with the inscriptions of the names of benefactors and donors to the St. Joseph Centennial Fund, provide a permanent testimonial to their faith and to their lives as they are lived in St. Joseph Parish.