

Holy Family Seminary's Alumni Newsletter 2025

Annual Newsletter #15: August 2025 ● Ed Koeniger, Jr.: Alumni Director ● Maurice Prater: Editor
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2500 ASHBY ROAD: MY HEART WILL GO ON!

by Mike O'Neal — Class of 1967

Dear M.S.F. Alumni:

A very popular song from the movie *Titanic*, *My Heart will Go On*, came to mind when I read an article in the last *Messenger* regarding the demolition of the seminary buildings at Ashby Road in 2023. I'm grateful for Weldon Tieken's excellent historical accounts and photographs. Not just for me, but for posterity.

I graduated from Holy Family Seminary High School in 1967. I've often said to my friends that the years spent in those buildings were the most rewarding and valued years of my youth. I'm 75 years old now, but I have memories I hold dear to my heart.



Mike O'Neal (right) and Ed Koeniger, Jr. in 1967.

Singing Gregorian Chant, being tutored by gifted priests, and quietly reflecting on the life of Jesus Christ in the chapel are just a small sample of these precious memories.

Recently, I've been going through items in some old tote bags. In one of the albums, I came across a Perfect Attendance Certificate for my senior year signed by the rector of the seminary, Father Thomas Copeland, M.S.F. Many of you may still remember Father Copeland who served in parishes in the South Texas area.

For this accomplishment, I was presented with a Holy Family Seminary Medal.

On another occasion, I was awarded an additional medal for taking First Place in a cross-country race held on the seminary grounds. I'm very proud of these awards, but they are more valuable to me today. Why?



O'Neal Brothers today (Mike on the right).

Because they are tangible reminders of the Holy Family Fathers' commitment to bringing out the best in each of us and fostering the love of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And finally, as I gaze upon the images of our former seminary buildings, *My Heart will Go On* with deep respect for all the Holy Family priests, past and present... and future. +jmj+



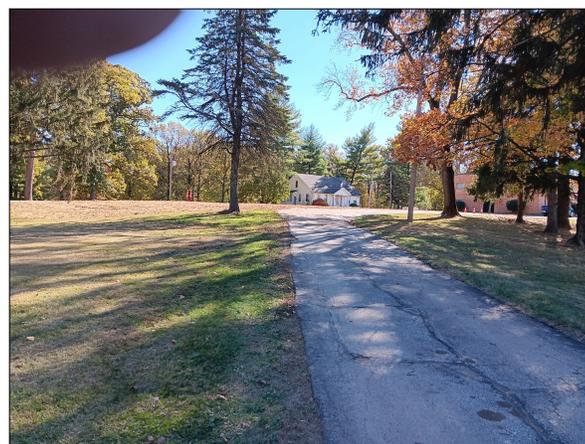
Cross from the top of the Bell Tower



Bell from the Bell Tower



Front of Seminary Grounds (before)



Front of Seminary Grounds (after)

NOTE: The City Council of Overland, Missouri, has a proposal for money to be budgeted for the tearing down of the convent building too. The bridge, the namesake of the seminary yearbook entitled *The Bridge*, is also slated for demolition. As of the writing of this newsletter, both are still standing. No date has yet been made public for the removal of these structures.

HISTORY: MISSION CHURCHES OF TEXAS

by Weldon Tieken – Class of 1957

Saint Joseph Mission in Spring Branch
Saint Ferdinand Mission in Blanco

Served by:

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
New Braunfels, Texas



+Rev. Peter
Roebrocks, M.S.F.

The beginning for the Missionaries of the Holy Family (M.S.F.) in Texas started when Archbishop Arthur J. Drossaerts of San Antonio went to Grave, Holland, to ask for priests.

This was in August 1922, but the details could not be worked out since the superior general for M.S.F. was visiting Brazil at the time.

In 1924, Superior General Father Anthony Trampe, M.S.F. came to the United States. He visited:

- ☺ Hillman, Minnesota
- ☺ Saint Louis, Missouri
- ☺ San Antonio, Texas



Weldon Tieken

He met with Archbishop Drossaerts about the possibility of offering some priests to come to Texas from Europe. Three priests, Rev. Anthony Elsing, M.S.F., Rev. Charles Schrieber, M.S.F., and Rev. Henry Benz, M.S.F., and one religious brother, Bro. Peter Jacob Liebfried, M.S.F., arrived in Galveston, Texas, on March 7, 1926, with San Antonio as their destination. They met with Archbishop Drossaerts who accompanied them to New Braunfels.

A house on Austin Street in New Braunfels, given to the archdiocese by Miss Emily Mueller, would be temporarily used as a rectory and chapel. Father Elsing immediately started working on building, which was a combination church and school, on one of the lots adjacent to the house on December 5, 1926, under the name of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

In 1930, Father Elsing started serving the Hunter, Texas, community which would become the mission church of Saint John's, and it continues to this day. In 1933, the New Braunfels priests would have two more mission churches added under their care: Saint Joseph in Spring Branch, in what was considered the area of Honey Creek, and Saint Ferdinand in Blanco. Actually, since 1931, the M.S.F. priests were already helping Father Virgilius Draessel in Spring Branch, including the Blanco community.



Saint Joseph Church
Spring Branch, Texas



Saint Ferdinand Church
Blanco, Texas

When Father Draessel passed away on October 9, 1933, the mission churches were given to the Holy Family Fathers, and the priests lived at Saint Joseph's in Spring Branch. Between October 1933 to September 1934, Rev. John Paar, M.S.F. and Rev. John Lucassen, M.S.F. shared the duties. Rev. George Gunther, M.S.F. then served from September 1934 to September 1937.

In September 1937, Rev. Peter J. Roebrocks, M.S.F. was appointed pastor for the two churches (see previous page for his photograph). In early 1939, Father applied for a donation from the Catholic Church Extension Society in Chicago, Illinois. On August 14, 1939, Father was informed that the society approved a donation of \$1,000.00 for the building of Saint Ferdinand Church in Blanco.

Saint Ferdinand was the namesake of a deceased parishioner, Ferdinand Werner, whose wife in turn donated another \$1,000.00 to build the church. With the parishioners donating money, material, and labor, it was becoming a reality. The exterior was rock veneer brought in from local quarries. The church structure and fixtures would bring the total cost to about \$5,000.00. The capacity was for approximately 150 people. Some of the names mentioned in the building of the church were Frank Werner, Arno Priess, Willie Haas, and Johnnie Schmidt.

The dedication for the church was on Saturday, March 30, 1940. Archbishop Arthur J. Drossaerts presided and was assisted by Superior General Very Rev. Anthony Trampe, M.S.F. The main celebrant for the High Mass was Rev. Peter Roebrocks, M.S.F., which included Deacon Joseph Jacobi, M.S.F., Subdeacon Ferdinand Strueder, M.S.F., and Rev. Joseph Wahlen, M.S.F. as the master of ceremonies who also gave the homily.

Masses were held in the church every second and fourth Sunday of the month. Father Roebrocks was known to get things done once he got started! He was also known as the "hunter priest" because he loved hunting and fishing, and he would go frequently with his parishioners. In April 1940, Father Roebrocks was transferred to Hillman, Minnesota, to be Prefect of Studies at the Holy Family Mission House. Rev. George Gunther, M.S.F. became the pastor until he passed away on July 30, 1941. Rev. Joseph Wahlen, M.S.F. was appointed pastor, and he served until August 1954.

The Missionaries of the Holy Family gave back Saint Joseph Parish in Spring Branch to the Archdiocese of San Antonio on July 20, 1954, and Saint Ferdinand Parish in Blanco was turned over to the Diocese of Austin on June 1, 1954. Both parish communities are thriving to this day. **+jnj+**



Eternal Rest Grant unto Them, O Lord!

- +Rev. Robert De Long, M.S.F.: August 7, 2024
- +Rev. James Beegan, M.S.F.: November 26, 2024
- +Rev. Leo Gariazzo, M.S.F.: December 2, 2024
- +Mr. John Flavin, Class of 1959: March 26, 2025
- +Mr. Donald Fielder, Class of 1966: June 24, 2025

WANTED: Although this annual newsletter has primarily been about Ashby Road, we would like to hear from people who lived at our Maryland Avenue facilities in Saint Louis too. Do you have stories or pictures to share? If so, please contact Weldon Tieken at placma@aol.com. Thank you and God bless your Family!



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