



History of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish.

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, New Bedford, MA. CAP at Orchard Lake.

Over one hundred years ago the first wave of Polish immigrants arrived at the shores of North America. Two reasons governed their departure from their homeland: the economic and the political conditions in Poland. The need for bread and the desire for freedom, then, impelled these emigrants across the Atlantic Ocean. Knowing neither the language nor the existing conditions on these shores, they were, nonetheless, full of hope that through their hard work and savings they would improve their lot and that of their families.

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of the history of Polish immigration is aware of the Poles' strong dedication to and love for the church. Wherever a group of them settled, their primary concern was to found and erect, from their meager possessions, a parish church and a school for their children. Their earnings being so scant and the groups being so small, it was very difficult to realize such a lofty aim. Understandably, initial progress was slow but steady. To other nationalities, the industry and the absorbing devotion of the Poles to their church were impressive. Consequently, after only 125 years, Poles can pride themselves on a wealth of religious, ethnic and social undertakings in every small or large city in the United States and Canada. All of this will remain a lasting tribute to their faith and their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church.

Founder and First Pastor - Rev. Edward A. Uminski

Like immigrants elsewhere in North America, those who settled in New Bedford, then a famous textile center, can take pride in their contribution to the growth of Polish churches and schools in America. Just seventy-five years ago, the time of the founding of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a few hundred Poles from every part of Poland settled here. Some, like Nicolaus and Barbara Misiarz and their daughter Catherine, came from Poland by way of Galveston, Texas. The Misiarz family, which was probably the first to settle here, with many others who later joined them, searched for a Polish priest to minister to their spiritual needs.

Divine Providence sent them just such a Catholic priest - a political refugee and a patriot dedicated to the spiritual needs of his countrymen. Late in 1902 the Rev. Edward A. Uminski arrived in New Bedford and immediately assumed the arduous task of organizing a Polish parish. This he did with the permission of the Most Rev. Matthew Harkins, Bishop of Providence, R.I., since

the Diocese of Fall River has not yet been founded and did not come into being until March 1904. At first, serving as a curate at St. Kilian's parish and then at the Chapel of the Guardian Angels, which later became the Holy Rosary Church, Father Uminski satisfied the religious needs of his people. He resided, temporarily, in a house belonging to Patrick O'Leary on the west side of Acushnet Avenue, opposite Washburn Street.

Father Uminski's efforts to build a church were frustrated by his difficulties in trying to raise money and by the lack of cooperation of those decidedly opposed to his plan. Two years of unrelenting work brought Father success; he had overcome the opposition. On March 28, 1905, Father Uminski bought the site for the church on North Front Street and began the construction of the church on July 9, 1905. The architect was L.H. Giele of New York, and the contractor was J.B. Sullivan of New Bedford. On September 1st the cornerstone was blessed, and on December 31, 1905, the church itself was solemnly blessed by the Most Rev. William Stang, first Bishop of the Fall River Diocese.

That same day, the painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was enshrined in the church. Imported from Rome and endowed with many privileges by the Holy Father, now St. Pius X, on the 20th of November, 1905, this painting was a gift from Father Uminski, who gave it as an offering in thanksgiving to Our Lady, that he had escaped the oppression of the Czar. Thus it is that the church receives its name and the patronage of Our Blessed Mother.

Upon completion of the edifice, Father Uminski worked untiringly to beautify the church. Equally unflagging were his care for and his zeal toward the Polish community that live in the South End and that found it difficult to attend services in their own parish church. The result is that in 1906 he bought a tract of land on the corner of Delano and South Second Streets, where he built a chapel. Father Uminski and later his assistant, the Rev. John Mard, traveled to the chapel to celebrate Mass. On October 1, 1908, this mission chapel was designated a parish church, with Father Mard appointed as its first pastor.

Father Uminski next undertook the task of erecting a school for the children of the parish in 1908. Because certain existing conditions did not permit the realization of this goal, he opened classes in the hall beneath the church, using the services of two Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph and lay teachers. A devoted priest, Father Uminski, from 1908 until 1910, ministered to a small Lebanese community in the North End by allowing them to conduct services and baptism in the church hall, services were held according to the Eastern Rite. He did the same for a group of Portuguese from 1910 to 1912, when they erected their own church, that of the Immaculate Conception on Earle Street.

After ten years of unstinting labor, Father Edward A. Uminski was transferred to another parish by the will of the Most Rev. Bishop Daniel F. Feehan on October 25, 1912. At the age of 76, Father Uminski died on the 13th of April, 1937, and was buried in Calvary Cemetery from St. Stanislaus Church in New York.

Rev. Hugo Dylla - Second Pastor

The pastoral care of the parish went next to the Rev. Hugo Dylla, who was transferred to the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on November 1, 1912. No stranger to the parishioners, having served as assistant pastor here from July to September, 1908, Father Dylla began his service with a zeal that is worthy of admiration. He liquidated debts that Father Uminski had been unable to pay off because of the hard times, and he reduced by half the parish's indebtedness to the banks. In 1913, while making necessary improvements in the rectory, he had the interior and the exterior of the church repainted. He also bought a parcel of land on Sawyer Street, where he intended to build a school. In addition, he imported from Munich, Germany, religious art objects to beautify the church. One of these is the ornate statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which to this day adorns the main altar, replacing the painting donated by Father Uminski.

On September 30, 1918, the Most Rev. Bishop Feehan appointed Father Dylla pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in Fall River.

Rev. John A. Nowicki, Ph.D. - Third Pastor

Succeeding Father Dylla on September 30, 1918, was the Rev. John A. Nowicki, Ph.D. The beginnings of his administration were rather trying, as the Spanish influenza raged at that time. Like his predecessors, Father Nowicki had to serve the material and spiritual needs of the sick night and day, at home and in the hospitals. Every day there were several funerals. Indeed, his first two Sundays at the parish found the church closed to prevent the spread of the dread disease. Father Nowicki's two years as pastor were marked by a profound concern for the spiritual needs of his flock. The call of his native Poland and his own love for his homeland, however, impelled Father Nowicki to resign his pastorate on October 11, 1920, in order that he might return home.

Rev. Andrew S.P. Baj - Fourth Pastor

On the day of Father Nowicki's resignation, the Rev. Andrew S.P. Baj was appointed pastor. Within a year of assuming his duties here, having noticed the walls of the church bulging from the weight of the slate roof, Father Baj hired a local contractor, Joseph Dias, to install iron supports and pilasters in the church at a cost of \$3,000. Yet, despite such a major expenditure, he managed in his first five years to liquidate \$15,000 of the parish debts.

It was about this time that the parishioners living farther north of the parish and in Acushnet were beginning to feel the lack of a parochial school and a neighboring Polish church. In order to remedy these conditions, Father Baj, in 1924 bought a parcel of land and a house on Acushnet Avenue, near Wood Street. There he built a mission chapel which was then served by the priests of the parish, just as during the time of Father Uminski the priests of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help had ministered to the Polish residents of the South End of the city. Two years later, under the auspices of the Most Rev. Bishop Feehan, this chapel became the parish church of St. Casimir, with its first pastor the Rev. Albert Folta.

The dream of many a pastor of this parish - that of building a parochial school near the church - was realized during the administration of Father Baj. The homes near the church were bought and moved onto the parish lots on Sawyer Street; the rectory itself was moved from Howard Street to face North Front Street. One of the houses on Sawyer Street was remodeled to serve as a convent for the Sisters who were to teach in the school. Only by the supreme efforts of the parishioners, despite the Depression, were the high rates of interest and current expenses met.

The twelve years that Father Baj spent administering the material needs of the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help are a testament of his loyalty to the Polish people and of his stamina and courage. Though he did not have the privilege of seeing the debts paid off, he deserves honor for bringing to pass a long-sought dream - the creation of a parish school for its children. On October 11, 1932, Father Baj's association with the parish came to an end by the will of the Most Rev. Bishop Feehan. Transferred to the Archdiocese of Boston, Father Baj served God's faithful in the parish of St. John the Baptist. It is fitting to give just acknowledgment to Father Baj's assistants; namely, the Rev. John S. Czerwonka and the Rev. Joseph F. Sutula. Their vigorous work performed for this parish is reaping rewards in heaven.

Rev. Stanislaus J. Ryczek - Fifth Pastor

Appointed pastor after Father Baj was the Rev. Stanislaus J. Ryczek, whose stay in the parish was very short; from October 11, 1932 to March 2, 1933.

Economic conditions during the depression, which had a profound effect upon the individual, plagued those parishes that were heavily in debt. Although Father Ryczek tried to handle the critical financial woes as best he could with the assistance of the various societies and faithful parishioners, his efforts were not sufficient to stave off creditors. In fact, the church was on the verge of bankruptcy. Then it was that Father Ryczek courageously approached the Most Reverend Bishop Feehan with the prospect of inviting a religious Order to assume charge of the parish. It was his belief that a religious Community, united in communal resources, would be able to save the parish from bankruptcy, as had been the case in other Dioceses. After deliberation, the Most Reverend Bishop Feehan gave the parish to the Polish Franciscan Fathers of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual of the Province of St. Anthony of Padua.

Today the parish owes a debt of gratitude to Father Ryczek, as it views the fruitful results of the Franciscan Fathers' administration, which did save the parish.

Rev. Leonard Pakulski, O.F.M. Conv. - Sixth Pastor

The Polish Franciscan Fathers began their administration of the parish on Ash Wednesday, March 2, 1933. The first religious approved by the Most Rev. Bishop Daniel F. Feehan for the pastorate was the Rev. Leonard Pakulski, whose assignment in the parish lasted two and a half years.

When Father Leonard arrived, the total debt was \$131,755.00, while the parish treasury showed a balance of only \$461.10. However, Father Leonard's geniality and willingness to serve everybody won the hearts of the parishioners and brought about greater cooperation within the

parish community.

It is no wonder then that, in spite of financial woes that threatened the parish, Father Leonard succeeded in having the interior of the church repainted by the artist Rafael Gironi and his son, Henry, of Boston, Massachusetts, and in having the sanctuary recarpeted. While making the necessary repairs on the church and the parochial buildings, he still managed to pay off a large portion of the debt, despite the national depression.

Rev. Giles Kaczmarek, O.F.M. Conv. - Seventh Pastor

As successor to Father Leonard, the Provincial of the Franciscan Fathers of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual sent Father Giles Kaczmarek. Although his administration was brief, hardly a year, it was through his efforts that a Hammond organ was installed in the church, and, in a musical and religious ceremony, blessed on June 14, 1936. It was also through his efforts and the generosity of the parishioners that, not only was the interest met on the debt, but also was the principal reduced.

On August 2, 1936, Father Giles was recalled to the Province to fulfill important functions in its administration. Subsequently he was called to Rome by the General Curia of the Order to become head of the Confessors at St. Peter's Basilica. At the same time he was given the important post of Assistant to the General of the Order.

Rev. Method Szymanski - Eighth Pastor

To replace Father Giles, the Very Reverend Justin Figas, Provincial of St. Anthony's Province, sent Rev. Method Szymanski, a renowned former missionary preacher. Father Method immediately captured the hearts of the parishioners with his eloquent sermons. During his three and a half years in the parish, he made great strides in liquidating the debt, paying off \$4,975.00 on the principal.

Toward the end of April, 1940, Father Method was transferred to the pastorate of St. Michael's Church in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Rev. Richard Brzozowski - Ninth Pastor

The Rev. Richard Brzozowski, who had been an assistant to Father Leonard Pakulski from July 9, 1934 to August 26, 1935, returned to the parish as its next pastor. It was during his administration that the parish reaped even greater spiritual and material benefits than had been possible in the past. During the period of World War II employment was plentiful; earnings were higher. Heeding the call of its pastor, the parish community responded generously. The result was that the debt was reduced by \$87,300.00.

Under Father Richard's direction, all of the pressing needs of the time were addressed: the exterior of the church was repainted, and a new roof was added; water leaks in the school building were repaired; the Sisters' Convent on Sawyer Street was refurbished, as was the rectory.

Father Richard continued in his office until September 17, 1948, when, by the will of his Superiors, he was transferred to St. Anthony's Church in Willimansett, Massachusetts.

Rev. Norbert Zonca - Tenth Pastor

On Sunday, September 17, 1948, the Rev. Norbert Zonca, the former Rector of St. Hyacinth Seminary, Granby, Massachusetts, formally assumed the pastorate here. Recognizing the need to renovate the church interior and to upgrade the parochial buildings, Father Norbert, however, wisely set aside these plans until such time as the parish could be totally free of its debts, which then totaled \$57,900.00. This goal was finally attained and commemorated on November 23, 1950, at a formal ceremony and banquet called the "Burning of the Notes and Mortgage Day". It was on this occasion, moreover, that the drive for renovating the church and parochial buildings were initiated.

While the plans for the renovation and alteration of the church were still in the formative stages, Father Norbert seized an opportunity to purchase a house at the corner of North Front and Beetle Streets for \$5,937.50. This house which was nearer the school, was completely remodeled and furnished as a suitable Convent for the deserving Bernardine Sisters, and the old Sisters' home on Sawyer Street was sold for \$8,000.00. On April 18, 1952, while he was at the parish to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Most Reverend Bishop James L. Connolly solemnly blessed the new Convent.

Despite the enormous expenditure for the Sisters' Convent, Father Norbert succeeded in making many needed improvements to the parochial property. A loudspeaker system was installed in the church, the kneelers were padded, and new cabinets were built into the Sacristy. The hall beneath the church was renovated, and new lavatories were built for the hall. In the school, all the classrooms, offices, and the stage were renewed; outside, the schoolyard was leveled and covered with asphalt.

The first stage in the renovation of the church began in 1953, when, under the supervision of Father Norbert, several parishioners, together with the associate pastors, cleaned and varnished the pews, the pulpit, the Communion Rail, and the floor of the church. An oil-burning system was installed in the church at a cost of \$12,000.00 and the electrical system was upgraded.

In the spring of 1954 the general contractors of Sullivan- Foster began work on the complete restoration of the church walls and the ceiling above the main altar. After

consultation, Father Norbert himself drew up the detailed plan for this project. First, the double row of windows was removed and replaced with beautiful, picturesque stained glass windows, which had been designed by the Polish artist Stanislaus Baut. Finally, in the year of the golden jubilee of the parish, the interior of the church was repainted and adorned with oil paintings by Boleslaw Twarog and Brothers. A vestibule was added on to the sacristy to permit safer entrance to both the sacristy and the church hall. The complete restoration of the church cost \$64,000.00. Through the bountiful generosity of the parishioners, not a penny had to be borrowed from the banks.

Other projects undertaken during the pastorate of Father Norbert included the building of a garage on the Howard Street side of the church property and the erection of additions to the rectory. This latter project took the form of an office and a waiting room in the front of the rectory and another room in the rear to replace the narrow porch on that side of the edifice. Father Norbert's administration can best be characterized by the fact that whatever he had proposed to do was done most satisfactorily, thanks largely to the wonderful cooperation and generosity of the parishioners.

Father Norbert Zonca left the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Bedford in 1960 to assume the pastorate of a larger parish, that of Corpus Christi in Buffalo, New York. On April 23, 1979, Father Norbert was called to his eternal abode by his Father in Heaven.

Rev. Adolph Banach, O.F.M. Conv. - Eleventh Pastor

After twelve years as pastor of the St. John Kanty Parish in Clifton, New Jersey, Father Adolph Banach, O.F.M. Conv., was assigned to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in August, 1960. A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he had studied for the priesthood in Rome and Assisi at the Seraphic College and Seminary and had been ordained on July 25, 1927, at the tomb of St. Francis.

Father Adolph came to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church full of zeal and the highest aspirations for the spiritual and material success of the parish. Shortly after his arrival in New Bedford, however, his health began to fail. Because of the progressive debility, Father Adolph had to limit his activities to the bare essentials. On April 2, 1961, Father Adolph Banach passed to eternity. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for the repose of his soul by the Most Rev. James J. Gerrard, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of the Fall River Diocese.

Rev. Seraphin Stachowicz, O.F.M. Conv. - Twelfth Pastor

After founding a parish and erecting a parish complex in Athol Springs, New York, Father Seraphin Stachowicz, a native of Chicopee, Massachusetts, was appointed administrator of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish on March 27, 1961. On April 4, 1961, he formally assumed the duties of pastor.

Father Seraphin continued the work of his predecessors, looking to the spiritual welfare of the parishioners as well as the need of maintaining the church property in good condition. During his pastorate Father Seraphin won the hearts of the parish community. As with Father Adolph Banach, however, his pastorate was shortlived because of his failing health. Father Seraphin left the parish in August, 1963. He was called to his eternal rest on August 4, 1965.

Rev. Fulgence Gorczyca, O.F.M. Conv. - Thirteenth Pastor

Father Fulgence Gorczyca, a native of Detroit, Michigan, assumed the pastorate of the parish in August, 1963, after serving as pastor in Fairfield, Connecticut, for a number of years.

Upon his assignment to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Father Fulgence formulated plans for the improvement of the church property, starting with the school building. In the process he was also able to replace the existing gutters on the church roof, gutters which had often leaked badly during our harsh northeastern storms.

Shortly after the arrival of Father Fulgence, the weekly parish bulletin made its appearance. This was a marked improvement over the usual Sunday announcements, which very frequently were misunderstood and misinterpreted when, read from the lectern on Sunday. Those with impaired hearing were also aided by the printed word. Now parishioners could refer to the bulletin for the dates and times of Masses as well as for other items appearing in the bulletin.

In order to augment the parish income, necessary for upgrading the parochial buildings, Father Fulgence Gorczyca encouraged and exhorted the parish societies, which at the time were quite numerous, to expand their fund-raising activities through such events as card parties, cake sales and dances. The most successful event was the Carnival, held each July on the school grounds. As time went on, all these fund-raisers helped fill the parish coffers sufficiently enough to enable Father Fulgence to undertake numerous parish projects.

At the beginning of 1966 plans for the observance of the Millennium - the Thousandth Anniversary of Poland's Christianity, were being formulated in the six Polish parishes of the Diocese of Fall River. For the observance of this great event, which commemorates that time when Poland's first historical ruler, Mieszko, was baptized into the Holy Roman Catholic Church, Father Fulgence Gorczyca acted as the coordinator in the Fall River Diocese. On August 26, 1966, the Most Rev. James L. Connolly, D.D., Bishop of Fall River, celebrated a Pontifical Mass at Bishop Stang High School on the occasion of the Millennium of Christianity in Poland.

In the latter part of 1966, Father Fulgence began the work of restoring the exterior of the parish buildings. In early 1967 he planned to renew the paintings in the church as well as to paint the interior. This was a sizeable project which necessitated an extra measure of self-sacrifice on the part of the congregation as well as increased donations; yet, despite the generosity of the parish community, Father Fulgence was still required to obtain a loan to defray the cost of painting the church interior. This project was brought to completion in the spring of 1968.

In 1968 tragedy struck the parish when, after more than 40 years of teaching in the parochial school, the Bernardine Sisters, by order of their Superior, left the parish. There were no alternatives but to close the school with the graduating class of 1968.

Our parish community owes a debt of gratitude to the Bernardine Sisters, who labored so long and so diligently in the apostolate of teaching the children of the parish. A pall fell over the members with the closing of the school, for the parochial community had lost the brilliance that had illuminated its many activities, be they social, spiritual, or liturgical.

In order to utilize the school building and gain some revenue, the parish entered into a contract with the Concentrated Employment Program. The building was to be used for instructional purposes, aiding the unemployed in various ways in order that someday these individuals might

be gainfully employed in the private sector of industry.

After agonizing over the payments for the renovation of the interior of the church, Father Fulgence Gorczyca was finally able to realize success when, on May 1, 1969, he made the last payment on the loan. Maintaining his vigilance over the condition of the church property, Father Fulgence now planned a new roof for the rectory, a project completed in the early fall of 1969.

Father Fulgence Gorczyca's term of office as pastor of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish ended in September, 1969, when he was assigned to St. Anthony's Parish in Chicopee, Massachusetts. After a brief illness, Father Fulgence passed from this life to eternity at Martinsburg, Virginia, on August 23, 1979.

Rev. Joseph Trawinski, O.F.M. Conv. - Fourteenth Pastor

Upon the departure of Father Fulgence from the parish, Father Joseph Trawinski, a native of Buffalo, New York, was assigned to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish by his religious superiors and approved by the Ordinary of the diocese in September, 1969. Father Joseph continued the work of Father Fulgence in ministering to the spiritual needs of the members of the parish and asked for the cooperation of the church societies - in actuality, the cells so vital to the life of the parish - in the many functions of the parish community. During Father Joseph's administration of the parish, the Polish traditions and customs were kept alive in such annual events as the "Oplatek" and the "Swieconka."

Noting the fact that the school building possessed many items which no longer could be of use to the parish, Father Joseph sold the school desks and chairs, in this way realizing some profit from the school property. Despite this sale, however, many pieces of furniture, cabinets and electrical fixtures remained to be sold.

With the parish complex comprising several buildings, one hardly needs to search out areas where repairs and improvements are necessary. Thus, the next project undertaken by the parishioners was the renovation of the kitchen in the church hall, where the walls were covered with a type of formica and for which new kitchen equipment was purchased. Inasmuch as the school cafeteria no longer served a useful purpose, several of the appliances were transferred to the hall kitchen. Completion of this project was achieved by the end of May, 1973.

A very memorable event in the history of the parish was celebrated on June 22, 1975. This was the 25th anniversary of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Society, which has been organized by Father Norbert Zonca. The festivities included a Mass of Thanksgiving, with Father Norbert as the principal celebrant and homilist at a concelebrated Mass, a banquet and dance. The society continues to be active in the parish and, time and again, comes to its aid in various ways.

As is the case with all wooden structures, there came a time when the church building, as well as the rectory, was badly in need of painting. This project could not be postponed for long lest the clapboards suffer extensively. As a result, two coats of paint were applied to the surface of both buildings, this work being completed in June, 1975.

In October, 1975, Father Joseph Trawinski asked the parishioners to consider the possible replacement of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in front of the church. Upon his proposing that a new statue be purchased in Italy, the parishioners responded with generous donations, a number of individuals and a few families making sizable contributions. Father Joseph saw the statue erected but did not remain in the parish long enough to take part in the blessing of the statue - adorned on each side by a marble vase - and the accompanying ceremonies, which took place on October 31, 1976.

Rev. Felician Plichta, O.F.M. Conv. - Fifteenth Pastor

Father Felician Plichta, a native of Fall River, replaced Father Joseph Trawinski as pastor of the parish on August 10, 1976. Upon assuming the pastorate of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Father Felician made a comparative study of the parish. In searching through various Sacramental Registers, journals, account books, and bulletins, he learned that the parish population was gradually diminishing. Among the reasons that could be cited for this condition were the great number of houses taken by the Commonwealth for the construction of Interstate 195, which caused the relocation of many parishioners in the suburbs; the closing of the parochial school; and the advanced age of many of the parishioners, which was resulting in a disproportionate number of deaths among the communicants. Over the years, too, the number of societies had declined. In fact, while some societies struggled to survive, attrition spelled the eventual demise of many church groups. The Sacramental Registers showed a decline in the number of marriages, baptisms and confirmations. Moreover, in the course of twelve years, attendance at Sunday Mass had dropped dramatically. The one consoling feature of the situation was that almost every urban parish was in the same predicament. Be that as it may, the spiritual welfare of the faithful, no matter how large or small the number might be, was to be the paramount objective in continuing service to the people of God at the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Just a few days after his transfer, Father Felician received word of the death of Mr. Joseph Sitarz. Mr. Sitarz, who had worked as a custodian of the church property for many years, was a man who had loved God and loved his Church. Devotedly he had expended much time in maintaining the church property in excellent condition. Each morning he would open the church and then spend time in private worship before the Blessed Sacrament. Parishioners, observing his loving service to the church, surmised that God would call Mr. Sitarz while he was about His Master's service in the parish. In actuality, it was a sudden illness in church that caused him to be rushed to the hospital, where he died on August 12, 1976. Unquestionably, there are many individuals in the parish who have worked assiduously for the good of the church. Many have made donations, some small, some large, at a considerable personal sacrifice. However, Mr. Sitarz was an unique man in his loyalty and attachment to and his selflessness toward the parish ... May God, in His mercy, look kindly upon him.

Because the floor in the sanctuary of the church, which was covered with multicolored rubber tiles, had seen its better days, the sanctuary and the priests sacristy were covered with red carpeting. Enhanced in beauty, as a consequence, were the altar of Sacrifice and the altar of Reposition.

On March 2, 1977, work was begun on the paneling of the walls of the church hall. Within a few weeks the project was completed. The paneling, along with the renovation of the kitchen and the hall itself and the installation of new lighting fixtures, so completely transformed the hall that one no longer had to offer excuses for the appearance of that facility. Since the hall is used frequently for parish functions and for the meetings of the societies, the project was a necessary and worthwhile endeavor.

In June, 1978, Mr. Henry Bartkiewicz, Esq., who had been the parish organist for thirty-five years, asked to be relieved of his duties because of ill health. His dedication to the liturgical functions of the parish were beyond comparison. Not only was Mr. Bartkiewicz an organist, but also was he an institution. His loyalty and his generosity to the parish were manifested on innumerable occasions. A gentleman in every sense of the word, he was called by God to his eternal reward on July 4, 1978.

Sunday, July 2, 1978, marked a special day in the history of the parish and in the life of one of its most esteemed communicants. On that day Father Cyril Augustyn, O.F.M. Conv. offered the Sacrifice of the Mass in thanksgiving to Almighty God for blessings and graces received from Him during the twenty-five years of his priesthood in the Franciscan Order. In the annals of the parish, Father Cyril is the first priest to return to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, where he had been baptized, where he had received his First Holy Communion and been confirmed, to celebrate such a memorable event in his priestly life.

If Father Cyril's return to the parish in July, 1978, was unprecedented in the annals of the parish, October 1, 1979, was even more unprecedented, not just for the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish but also for the entire Catholic Church in the United States of America. The chilly winds and the driving rain notwithstanding, it was a glorious day, a day of rejoicing, for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the successor of St. Peter, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, was arriving at our shores. Like other church groups throughout New England, the members of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish undertook a sacred pilgrimage to the Boston Common in order to greet Christ's Vicar. Some traveled by car; others, by train; and still others, by motor coach. In the early afternoon of October 1, a bus departed from the church grounds on North Front Street, its passengers destined for that meeting with the Pope and for his celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It was truly a scene to behold - the Pontiff celebrating Mass for us on the Common. Despite the discomfort of standing for hours in chilling rain on muddy soil, the faithful were spellbound by the humble demeanor of the Vicar of Christ offering to God the Supreme Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, sending up a plea to Almighty God for peace and justice in the world.

The adversity of New England weather, with its extremes of hot and cold, drizzles and blizzards, doldrums and winds - sometimes of gale or hurricane force - takes its toll on all buildings in this region. After discovering shingles that had flown off the church roof and finding leaks in the church structure, Father Felician had no alternative but to contract for a new roof on the South side of the church. In August, 1979, that task was completed.

In preparation for the Diamond Jubilee of the parish, which was to be celebrated in October, 1980, the interior of the church was cleaned throughout. The walls were subjected to a chemical compound cleaner, the lighting fixtures were restored to a lustrous shine, the floor was buffed to a mirror-like finish, and the tops and side supports of the church pews were steel-wooled and finished with a coat of lacquer. All the statues, except those on the main altar, were repainted ... all this in preparation for the big day.

During September of 1980, Father Felician obtained from the Most Reverend Bishop permission to paint the exterior of the church and rectory at a cost of \$12,300.00. This project was completed in time for the celebration of the jubilee of the parish.

On October 19, 1980, the joyous celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the parish occurred. Various church societies, carrying their respective banners, led the

procession of clergy from the rectory to the church. The Most. Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, D.D..S.T.D., Bishop of Fall River, was the principal celebrant of a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving at 3:00 p.m. Concelebrating with the bishop were Father Felician, the present pastor, and Father Joseph Trawinski, his predecessor at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church; also, Fathers Cyril Augustyn and Patrick Rolak, as well as priests from neighboring parishes in New Bedford. In addressing the congregation, Bishop Cronin recalled some of the history of the parish and exhorted the parish community to remain strong in its faith. At the conclusion of the Mass, the Bishop led the congregation in applauding our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. The services closed with the mournful and prayerful hymn "Boże coś Polskę," which was sung with great feeling and which brought tears to the eyes of those present in the church.

The culminating function of the Diamond Jubilee was a Dinner-Dance at the Venus de Milo Restaurant in Swansea, Massachusetts, where, in an atmosphere of conviviality, friends and relatives feasted and chatted about things old and new. Thus, the curtain descended on the 75th anniversary celebration of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in the Year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and eighty.

As a postscript to the many events which were related on the preceding pages about the parish during its 75 years of existence, there is a matter of great significance which cannot be overlooked; that is, the glittering jewels in the historical crown of the parish - the young men and young women, all former parishioners of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, who were called by God to the religious life and to the priesthood. Several young women received the habit of a religious community and are working for the greater honor and glory of God in various apostolates. Three young men were ordained to the Holy Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Father Cyril Augustyn, O.F.M. Conv., ordained June 29, 1953, is at present the pastor of St. Adalbert's Church in Elmhurst, New York. Father Patrick Rolak, O.F.M. Conv., ordained December 15, 1956, is an associate pastor at the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Buffalo, New York. Father Gabriel Swol, O.F.M. Conv., ordained December 21, 1968, is the Campus Minister and an instructor at Hilbert College, Hamburg, New York.