



HISTORY OF TRANSFIGURATION PARISH.

Diamond Jubilee (1890-1965) Transfiguration Church,
Mount Pleasant, PA. CAP at Orchard Lake.

During the expedition of General Braddock in year of 1775, the present town of Mount Pleasant had the name of Helltown, occupied by the Iroquois Indians. The bad behavior of the people was the reason for its name. After the building of the main road of Braddock, white settlers began to come; and slowly the Indians began leaving the town. Because this little town had a pleasant look, it was given the name of Mount Pleasant, which exists to this day.

Mount Pleasant, which is about 40 miles east of Pittsburgh, makes a very colorful picture with its hills; gardens and valleys. The soil is very productive where many vegetables are raised. Many years ago we had soft coal mines that were melted down to coke, and sent to all parts of America. Today, the mines are gone and the coke ovens are not burning.

The people of Mount Pleasant, the majority of which worked in the mines, earned good wages, and were not anxious to move to different towns. The Poles started settling here around 85 years ago. At first they were strangers to each other living apart from each other. They attended the Irish church in Scottdale. They were dissatisfied as most of them could only speak the Polish language, so as they got more acquainted with one another, they finally built a Polish church in Everson in 1887.

To this parish belonged all the Polish people from the vicinity. The distance to Everson was quite a long way for the Poles of Mount Pleasant, which made a very good reason for them to dream of their own parish in Mount Pleasant. There was St. Joseph's parish in Mount Pleasant, which our people helped to build. But they still had their dreams about one day having their own Polish parish.

While the Poles were growing in number, they, together with the Slovaks, built a parish which they named Transfiguration, in year 1800. The building which they used was bought from Protestants and blessed and used as a temporary church until 1899. At that time there were about 100 families, but the number was constantly growing. The Slovak families were also increasing, so they too organized their own parish which they named Visitation.

At that time Father Cichocki came to have the Sunday masses. Later Father Julian Dutkiewicz from Baltimore was made pastor January 1.891, and died March 1892 at age of 72. He was buried in Scottdale and was transferred to Mount Pleasant as soon as ground was purchased. During the illness of Father Dutkiewicz and for a short time after his death, Father Francis Pikulski took over the duties and was made permanent pastor in 1893.

From the very beginning of his pastorship in Mount Pleasant, Father Pikulski got down to work. In 1896, the parish purchased ground opposite the then present location, and built this beautiful

edifice having three high steeples that are seen in the surrounding territory. In 1898 Father Joseph Wielgus, pastor of St. Stanislaus in Mammoth blessed the cornerstone and Nov. 29, 1899 the church was dedicated. Due to the Bishop's illness, the dedication was performed by Benedictine Father John Jager of Chicago, IL. For this great occasion the priests from the surrounding parishes and all parish organizations took part in the ceremony. Father Pikulski deserves recognition for his hard work during his pastorate in Mount Pleasant.

On October 26, 1902 the third pastor, Father Alexander Siwec. came to Transfiguration. During his pastorship, the parish buildings began shaping' up. The main altar with the Cal-vary Scene that was carved from wood and the two Polish Bishops on each side, St. Adelbert and St. Stanislaw, seems to attract every eye and the Crucified Lord seems to invite all to him.

The next step was putting in the heating system and the purchasing of a pipe organ and installing it. The old school was much too small by now. so in 1906 a red brick 4 room school was built which cost \$15,000. In that same year the parsonage was started and completed the following year at cost of \$9,000.

The number of parishioners was constantly growing with much work to be done, Father Adamowski and Father Pawelkiewicz helped with priestly duties. Then very unexpectedly, the pastor announced he was being transferred to St. Josephat's in Pittsburgh, March 10, 1909 and Father Michael Kozłowski came to Mount Pleasant to be the new pastor.

After the new church was built, the old church was used for the parish meetings and part of it for a school. The other little school building was used too, but was too small. Up until 1903, we had lay teachers, then Father Siwec sent for the Felician sisters. After only a year here the nuns left and lay teachers again took over, in charge of Mr. Walter Wielebski and organist Mr. Skibiński. During the year of teaching by our nuns, there were 230 children for 3 nuns.

After Father Kozłowski took over the pastorship, in 1909, the Felician sisters returned to a new brick building and to this day with an addition of 3 more classes, the Felician sisters are teaching together with one lay teacher.

Father Kozłowski in a short while won the hearts of his people, whom he loved and ministered to for almost 20 years, and in return became very fond of his parish in Mount Pleasant. The best proof of this was when after the death of Father Smelsz in one of the largest Polish parishes in Pittsburgh, Father Kozłowski was offered that parish but refused saying he wanted to stay in Mount Pleasant to the end.

During his pastorship, we had Father Ladislaus Śliwiński as an assistant, followed by Father Ladislaus Osiński, Father Drelak and Father Zieliński. Father Zieliński was here when our pastor died April 29, 1929 which was only two months short of his silver anniversary of priesthood. His body rests at the foot of the large statue of the Crucified Savior at the parish cemetery. After his death, Father Zieliński took over for a year, when again in May 1930, a new pastor was assigned to Mount Pleasant by the name of Father Ladislaus Przybylski, and Father Zieliński took over pastorship of a mixed parish in Imperial.

During the pastorship of Father Przybylski, the parish gradually started getting smaller, caused by the depression. The people started moving to other places of employment, resulting from 600 families to about 400 families. Luckily there were only small debts which made it a lot easier to get by with

the small income the parish had during this depression. Most difficult was trying to keep the school doors open. It is noted that there was never any tuition charged for our children's education. The strain was so great that our pastors strength began to fail and he developed a heart condition. In 1936, Father Aloysius Zwoliński came to Transfiguration as our assistant. His devotion to the youth of the parish won great respect for him. On March 9, 1937, our pastor passed away and was buried at Homestead in which town he served his first parish, that being his last wish.

Father Zwoliński took care of our parish for a month and April 22, 1937 Rev. Anthony Pniak was assigned to the pastorship, coming here from St. Cyprians in Pittsburgh. Both Father Pniak and Father Zwoliński worked together and in May 1940, the Parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee of the parish.

During the pastorship of Father Pniak, our church was painted, rubber tile put in the sanctuary, and floor tile installed in the aisles of the church. The main Bell Tower was repaired and the very important project of pointing the church was completed.

Of interest to all is the construction of the road in the Parish Cemetery and a new heating system which was changed to gas in the rectory.

The beautiful Grotto to Our Lady on the lawn of the nuns residence, was donated by Mr. John G. Jendras, in loving mem-ory of his wife, Mrs. Rose Jendras. It was dedicated in May, 1956, on Decoration Day. At this Grotto, the annual May Crowning is held by our Sodality.

During Father Pniak's stay here, he had as his assistants, Rev. Lloyd Zwoliński. 1936-1943; Rev. Leon Darkowski. 1943- 1950; Rev. Casimer Trzeciakowski, 1950-1953; Rev. Francis Leśniak, 1953-1954; Rev. Josenh Tamilowski, 1954-1956; and Rev. Walter N. Bratus, 1956-1957.

We were all saddened by the sudden death of our beloved pastor, Father Pniak. Jan 26. 1957, and laid to rest Jan. 30 1957 in Transfiguration Cemetery.

Our Assistant Pastor, Father Walter Bratus took care of the Parish until we were assigned a new pastor. Rev. Marion Rosenthal. Father Rosenthal immediately won the affection of our Parishioners and many thing-s were accomplished. In 1957, a new heating-system was installed in our school, and glass windows on one side. In 1958, windows were finished, tile was laid in 3 classrooms, corridor, remodeling of the corridor walls, stairs and office. At this time, we were assigned a new assistant pastor. Rev. Thaddens Wisniewski. and Rev. Walter Bratus was transferred to St. John Church in Uniontown.

On May 25, 1958. the Parish honored feather Rosenthal in celebrating his 40th anniversary to the priesthood.

Father continued his hard work with many changes in our school and church. 1960 saw some new desks put in the school, and emergency lighting installed. Feb. 28, 1960, the Parish honored Father Rosenthal with a testimonial banquet on the elevation to domestic Prelate of Rt. Rev. Msgr. 600 attended the afternoon and evening reception which only shows the love the Parishioners have for him.

Some of the many additional improvements were additional lights in the church, church washed twice, new electric organ, pews refinished, floor leveled and reinforced, ceramic tile, new heating system (hot water), new roof, storm windows, fence removed, landscaped, new cement pavement between church and rectory, blacktopping between church and convent and marble wainscoting in the church.

Adding to the remodeling in our school, a new classroom was added, \$21,677, which is now used for the first grade. Rest-rooms were put in, cafeteria, dining room and kitchen, new desks for the remainder of the classrooms, blacktopped the school yard for parking area, in fact everything took on a new look. The front of the rectory took a complete change, when in 1963, the front porch was converted into two office rooms at the cost of \$7,286.

In June, 1962, the Parish held a Testimonial Banquet for our Assistant Pastor, Father Ted on the celebration of his Silver Jubilee of Priesthood. Father Ted devoted much of his time to our school children, being the school director, and teaching for a time in our school. Father Ted also was director of our Sodality, and helped in so many ways with the Parent Teachers Guild, which was organized several months after Msgr. Rosenthal came to our Parish.

We were saddened by the sudden illness of Father Ted in August, 1964, and during his recuperation, the Bishop as-signed a new assistant, Rev. Lawrence Hoppe.

Today, Ave are most happy to have with us Msgr. Rosenthal and Father Hoppe, two wonderful priests, who are always ready to guide us in all activities, whether it be religion or social activities of our Parish.

Now in 1965, our Parish is celebrating its 75th anniversary of its existence. We are very proud of it, hoping that it keeps on its prosperity and that its children will follow in their Father's footsteps, loving and holding on to their faith, language and church.