

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH BRADFORD, VERMONT

This history really begins with a letter written April 22, 1945, by the Most Reverend Edward F. Ryan, D.D., Bishop of Burlington, VT. It was addressed to the Very Reverend Michael A. Gearin, C.S.S.R., Provincial of the Redemptorist Order in Brooklyn, NY. Bishop Ryan wrote in part:

"There is a large section in the eastern part of this Diocese of Burlington separated from New Hampshire only by the Connecticut River, where for some years there has been no resident priest. The Catholics in this district are at least fifteen to twenty miles from any church. After studying the problem from various angles, I came to the conclusion that the Redemptorist Fathers could do a magnificent piece of work in this section if they could be induced to take over... The kind of work needed would fit admirably with the work intended by the Founder of the Redemptorist Order, (St. Alphonsus de Liguori), namely that of going out into neglected districts and searching out abandoned souls."

Things moved rapidly thereafter. On April 26, 1945, Father Gearin, accompanied by Father John Frawley, the Rector of Boston, MA, and recently appointed Provincial of the Order, Consultor Reverend Bernard Licking, and other Redemptorists, including the Very Reverend Joseph F. Scannell, of the Boston Community, drove to Bradford to survey the parish offered by Bishop Ryan.

Less than two months later, Father Scannell, with the Reverend Joseph A. Rocheleau, also of the Boston Mission Church, was sent to the picturesque district to take a census of the Catholic people. Father Scannell and Father Rocheleau took up temporary residence at the Bradford Inn on June 20 of that year. On that day both priests, with the permission of the Bishop, offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Father Scannell's room.

Thus, the Mass came to Bradford. Arrangements were made to celebrate Sunday Mass in the Ivy Room of the Bradford Inn through the courtesy of Frank and Grace (Barber) Mertens, and also at the Wells River Inn (Kale's Tavern) and in the Town Halls of Fairlee and Ryegate.

On August 25, 1945, word came from Father Provincial assigning Father Scannell Superior of the new Foundation of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bradford with Father Rocheleau as his Consultor-Admonitor. The new parish included the territory from Norwich to McIndoe Falls along Route 5, extending toward Barre as far as the junction of Routes 25 and 302, about 800 square miles. The September census revealed about 300 Catholics in the new parish.

After a four-month search, in January 1946, the nine-acre property Daniel and Loris Murphy on the Upper Plain was purchased for \$5000. • For the building, His Excellency Bishop Ryan approved the choice of Mr. William B. Colleary of North Orange, MA, the architect. With shortages of building materials growing more acute daily, it, was decided the contractor would

have to be one with many contacts in the building field. Mr. Matthew J. Cummings of Boston was selected. Mr. Cummings estimated the cost of construction with fees and furnishings would be a \$300,000 project. Excavation started in May 1946.

The laying of the cornerstone of the Church took place on July 28, 1946. A letter from President Harry S. Truman was read in which he ended his congratulations to Bradford and the State of Vermont "in the glory of a new house of God erected along the Connecticut River in Vermont." The Honorable Mortimer Proctor, Governor of Vermont, headed the list of speakers; others were Charles G. Taylor, a Bradford business man; Chauncey Willey of Barre; and Brigadier General William Harrison, who represented the Governor of Massachusetts. The musical program was under the direction of Madame Maria Balling, noted Professor of Music from the Conservatories of Milan and Paris and the University of Vienna. Bishop Ryan of Burlington blessed the cornerstone. Nearly two thousand persons were present.

Holy Redeemer Monastery Chapel was dedicated August 31, 1947, the Most Reverend James B. Kearney, D.D., Bishop of Rochester, NY. The lighted Infant Jesus statue north of the Church was installed that same year. The first Mass in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church was held on Christmas Day, 1947. The Church was dedicated on July 11, 1948, by the Most Reverend Edward F. Ryan, D.D., Bishop of Burlington.

With the completion of the Church, the parish became an active, vital part of the community. Great enthusiasm produced yearly bazaars, many card parties, monthly suppers, movies and plays presented in Marian Hall. The annual Christmas Party was a highlight of the year with the children's party held on Saturday afternoon and the festive adults' party that evening.

Holy Name Society was organized for the men and was active into the 1960's. The Cross and Flag Forum was organized for the high school youth group. Flying Fingers was a group of busy women who met in homes to sew altar cloths and to create the crafts needed for the bazaars. In 1950, this group reorganized under Father Joseph Hallissey as the Holy Family Society with investiture; meetings were held in Marian Hall and took on a more spiritual direction. This Society continued to date with many fund raising and civic activities and ecumenical participation.

The Legion of Mary administered to the sick and needy, members going out in pairs to visit hospitals, nursing homes and shut-ins. This important ministry disbanded about 1975.

On Wednesday evenings the Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help has been continued by the faithful over all fifty years.

The Parish Council was organized in 1970 by Father Kenneth Kuhn to involve the lay people in the day to day operation of the Church. Elected to serve three years, a council of six to twelve members, meets with the Pastor to review reports of the many ministries, financial reports and to give views and suggestions for future projects and activities of the Church.

Many organists have served the parish as have choirs. In 1989, Priscilla Ledwith became organist and the more structured choir with soloist, Cathleen Newton, was created adding the beauty of music to the Mass.

Over the years the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has instructed the children. For a time classes were held on Saturday mornings at Bradford Academy, in private homes and then in Bradford Elementary School. Classes finally moved to the Church, Chapel and Marian Hall were held on Sunday. The Sisters of Mercy in Barre sent Nuns to assist in the instruction of the students. In the '60's and '70's a Summer School program had the help of Sisters from the Order of Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart in Littleton NH, who made the Bible stories come alive with costumes and plays, Presently, CCD classes are held throughout the building after Mass on Sunday.

The "Summer people" have made an impact on the parish. After World War II, the many summer resorts and camps reopened sending their guests and campers to Sunday Mass. Rows of tanned campers in r various uniforms filled the pews. A 5:30 AM Mass accommodated many employees of the hotel-tourist trade and, of course, the hunters' eager to take to the fields by sun-up in the fall.

To serve the Catholic population of this large area, mission chapels were set up in Wells River, Norwich and South Strafford. The newly constructed St. Eugene's Chapel in Wells River held its first Mass on Easter, April 6, 1947, with the formal blessing of the Chapel on April 27th. Our Lady of Light Chapel in South Strafford was completed in 1964, and in Norwich St. Francis of Assisi Chapel was dedicated on July 1966. This was truly a great undertaking by the Redemptorist Order.

Until 1980, eight to ten priests resided in the Monastery. They were very active in the community and always encouraging the children, Father John E. Doherty was in Bradford for 23 years, 1945-1968, before becoming, Pastor in 1969. He was in charge of construction and Pastor in Norwich and South Strafford. Father Thomas Winterson resided at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Monastery 1948 to 1981, 33 years and was a very integral part of all that went on. Brother William and Brother Emmanuel were two of the Redemptorist Brothers who served many years in the Monastery; keeping the place operating, doing janitorial duties and maintaining the grounds.

By 1981, four priests resided in Bradford and in 1982 to 1989 only three. Father William Small was the last Redemptorist Pastor here at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Father Philip James Lavin was last to serve Norwich and South Strafford and Father John Howard Wright was last Pastor in Wells River.

Unable to fill the need, the Redemptorist Fathers handed over our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and Monastery to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington on June 21, 1989. Reverend Philip R. LaMothe became pastor of all four churches.

In February 1990, the Retreat House opened with a Cursillo Weekend. This successful use of the Monastery is most popular for retreats in the spring and fall with folks coming from all over Vermont. The kitchen in Marian Hall was added in June of that year. Keeping with the dictates of Vatican II, the Church renovation, with removal of the altar rail, was completed in June 1991. The handicap lift-elevator was installed in July 1992 to insure access for all to both the Church and Marian Hall. Also in that year was the construction and installation of the outdoor shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The marble posts holding the chain around the garden are from the altar rail.

Father LaMothe has strengthened the spiritual life of the parish with daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel, daily Rosary and Stations of the Cross, a weekly Bible Study and a Prayer Group. He celebrates Mass every first Friday for the residents of Brookside Nursing Home in Bradford, continues to instruct converts to the faith and promotes evangelization.

With this history of dedication behind us, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church looks forward to the coming fifty years under God's divine providence.

DETAILS OF CHURCH AND MONASTERY

Church and Monastery are constructed of Architectural Concrete, which consists of poured concrete reinforced with steel rods. Exterior walls are generally 12" in thickness. There is no structural steel in the entire project.

Poured concrete arches span the entire width of the Church Nave. Precast concrete purlins from arch to arch support precast roof slabs.

Dado of Narthex, Nave and Sanctuary is of Vermont marble and glass blocks were used in the Nave-Narthex screen to provide a lightsome area in Narthex. The High Altar-Shrine is of Radio Black Vermont Marble. To the rear of this altar is a painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, two and a half times as large as the original painting, reputedly painted by St. Luke. The Bradford painting, the work of an Austrian artist, is on gold plated copper and the ornate frame is of cast bronze.

The Poor Souls Altar on the right is of Verde Isorie Marble, while the Altar in the Monastery Chapel is of Olivo Marble. The plaque of Our Lady of Perpetual Help over the Main Entrance to the Church is a Venetian Mosaic made in Italy some time ago.

Roof construction consists of precast reinforced concrete slabs carried on the concrete purlins and finished with terra cotta tile with a mossy green finish. Marian Hall under the Church is the Parish Social Center.

Monastery portion is two stories in height, with basement and storage attic, Basement provides a kitchen, refectory, small assembly hall entrances to Main Church and Marian Hall. First floor has public business rooms, Pastor's Office, Lounge and Monastery Chapel. Second floor has the

Library and bedrooms for groups on retreat. The porches on floors are now enclosed, heated and used for classrooms.

PASTORS OF OLPH PARISH

Rev. Joseph Scannell, C.S.S. R.	1945 – 1950
Rev. Joseph Hallissey, C.S.S. R.	1950 – 1956
Rev. Thomas McManus, C.S.S. R.	1956 – 1959
Rev. Charles McDermott, C.S.S. R.	1959 – 1964
Rev. Harold Driscoll, C.S.S. R.	1964 – 1967
Rev. John Gallagher, C.S.S. R.	1967 – 1969
Rev. John E. Doherty, C.S.S. R.	1969 – 1970
Rev. Kenneth Kuhin, C.S.S. R.	1970 - 1975
Rev. Robert Lennon, C.S.S. R.	1975 - 1981
Rev. James Cannon, C.S.S. R.	1981 - 1987
Rev. William Small, C.S.S. R.	1987 - 1989
Rev. Philip R. LaMothe, Diocesan	1989 - 1988
Rev. Emile Guilmette, S.M.	1988 - 2000
Rev. Gagnon, S.M	2000 – 2001
Rev. Robert Graham, S.M.	2000 – 2001 (Associate Pastor)
Rev. Omar St. Onge, S.M.	2001 – 2003
Rev. Joseph Chasse, S.M.	2001 – 2003 (Associate Pastor)
Rev. Philip R. LaMothe, Diocesan	2003 – 2008 (The presence of the Carmelite Nuns)
Rev. Donald Roy, Diocesan	2008 – 2010
Rev. Vincent Onunkwo, Diocesan	2010 –

SERVING THE CHURCH

Deacon Melvin Dumphy,	1987 – 1994
Deacon Kelly Fitzpatrick	1994 – Present

PARISHIONERS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

Rev. Ronald E. Bonneau, C.S.S. R.
Sister Claire Bonneau, SSND
Rev. Mother M. Agnes Day, Trappistine
Sister M. Theophane (Agatha) Murphy, RSM (Deceased)
Rev. Anthony Brackett, Retired Diocesan Priest
Rev. David Bryan, SSE
Frederick J. Waters, OC.SS.R. (Deceased)

The Parish history was compiled when the parish celebrated The First Fifty Years 1945 -1995. This history is written to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church April, 30, 1995. Compiled by Diane Smarro and Edited by Rev. Philip LaMothe and Mary Drew. With special thanks for information and help: Redemptorist Provincial Office, Brooklyn, NY. William Goss, Brady Center, Burlington, Vt. Helen Bonneau,

Joanne Kennedy and the many other parishioners of OLPH who shared their stories. This is updated recently by Rev. Vincent Onunkwo the present Pastor of the parish.