

PARISHES
THAT SERVE THE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

HISTORY OF HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH

BEGINNING OF A BLACK DIASPORA: BLACK CATHOLICS AND THEIR CHURCH

Patricia Durhholtz, University Press of America

Since the last part of the 19th century, black Catholics in America wanted to increase their participation in the life of the church. Few, if any, blacks were represented in the clergy, and Catholic institutions, including schools, were segregated by default. As Father Giles Conwill, a former Comboni student, pointed out, even black Catholics in mission parishes tended to be separated from both decision-making and ceremonial roles.

In 1919, Thomas Wyatt Turner founded the Committee Against the Extension of Race Prejudice in the (Catholic) Church. He was one of the first black Catholics to raise the question about increasing participation of blacks in their church. In her biography of Turner, Marilyn Nickels notes that despite his being a professor of biology at Howard University, Turner lived with the race problem daily. It surfaced when he boarded a train to go to a convention and was forced to a separate compartment, or when he was asked to take a separate elevator to the convention room itself. He knew that it was not necessarily true that if a black man lifted himself out of poverty and ignorance he would be treated as an equal by his fellow white Americans.

Turner wanted blacks to have access to every role in the church that whites enjoyed. He wanted black Catholics to obtain this status without having to collaborate with white priests toward this end. One of these priests was John LaFarge, S.J., who launched the Catholic Interracial Council. These councils did effect change in the American church through the backing of white clergy and religious like LaFarge. But efforts to achieve equality for black Catholics remained inadequate well into the 1950s.

But in 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools violated the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and in 1955, blacks in Montgomery, Alabama, boycotted segregated city buses, a new leader, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., stepped forward, and the Civil Rights movement was born. Three years later, American bishops stated for the first time that, "The heart of the race question is moral and religious. It concerns the rights of man and our attitude toward our fellow man. If our attitude is governed by the great Christian law of love of neighbor and respect for his rights, then we can work out harmoniously the techniques for making legal, educational, economic, and social adjustments. But if our hearts are poisoned by hatred, or even by indifference toward the welfare and rights of our fellow men, then our nation faces a grave internal crisis."

Even as America began to address civil rights in the 1960s, African Americans were discovering strength and solidarity in their fight against segregation. Black Catholics began revisiting the separatist versus collaborative modes at issue between Turner and LaFarge. They wanted black leadership and a liturgy deeply rooted in black culture and identity. The move African Americans made from a relatively passive acceptance of their role in the church to one of criticism and a growing sense of ethnic unity took most white Catholics by surprise. White Catholics had assumed that integration, i.e., acceptance of white culture as the standard, was the goal blacks should and would embrace.

The story of African American parishes in Cincinnati's West End, and how they were lost, offers an example of why an acceptance of white culture and control did not always serve the best interests of black Catholics.

WINNERS, LOSERS OF URBAN RENEWAL

Beginning in the 1950s, the work of Comboni missionaries in black parishes was increasingly frustrated by plans to redevelop the West End. A wholesale and chaotic diaspora of black Catholics began as one church after another, one house after another, was leveled. The forces behind this destruction were many and complicated, but four of them were: 1. Overcrowding in congested and neglected neighborhoods. 2. Determination of Cincinnati's business leaders to improve the Central Business District. 3. A strong current of racism that a real estate lobby cultivated to its advantage. 4. Rejection by white citizens of blacks as neighbors due to property value fears.

A master plan for downtown Cincinnati was published in 1948. It included flood control, recommendations for "high-speed transportation" and new business sites. Only a short paragraph was devoted to an admission that "Cincinnati has retrogressed in providing suitable living accommodations" and a satisfactory solution to this was necessary. But a solution was complicated by the fact that although federal monies were available for public housing, on June 3, 1942, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that authority-owned housing projects were private activity and therefore taxable. This ruling halted any federal monies for such projects in Cincinnati for 10 years. Although the Housing Act of 1949 provided money for public housing as well as slum clearance, by default, the Ohio State Supreme Court ruling favored the forces supporting slum clearance.

However, state and federal monies were available to raze old buildings and provide new infrastructure, and the city could pay very little for the properties that it condemned. Once cleared, and a new infrastructure constructed, the city believed it could sell the new "improved" property to business and industry and thus, it was argued, increase the tax base. But overlooked were the facts that 1. state and federal funding was also taxpayers money, and 2. that a good many of the "tenement" buildings were solidly built and very often capable of renovation simply by improving sanitary facilities and making up for deferred maintenance.

In 1948, the Cincinnati Community Development Company (CCDC) arranged for a company to build a 208 unit project as well as other projects. But in the South Cumminsville and College Hill neighborhoods north of the West End, a realtor circulated petitions claiming that public housing would increase crime and decrease property values. According to one report, those passing out petitions unabashedly asked homeowners, "Do you want N—rs in your backyard?" In 1952, a group of Realtors tried to pass a public referendum on public housing that would require voter approval of all new public housing projects, and the Home Builders Association and the Home Savings and Loan Companies joined the campaign. Opposing them were those eager to begin construction of the Mill Creek Expressway, the Citizens Committee on Slum Clearance; and the three major newspapers. On November 6, 1952, the referendum was defeated by a substantial majority.

Despite this early victory, community after community fought public housing within its boundaries, and the CMHA (Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority) was forced to retreat from its goal of building in the suburbs. From Delhi Hills on the west of Cincinnati, to the city of Sharonville in the north, suburbanites claimed that mass housing projects would crowd schools, congest traffic, and lower property values. What they were unwilling to state publicly was their desire for a homogeneous community limited to white middle class families.

THE PASSING OF HOLY TRINITY

Holy Trinity, the oldest black parish in the West End, established by Archbishop McNicholas in 1926, was the first in his “Negro Apostolate.” McNicholas’ Apostolate was so successful that it expanded into other West End churches. A dozen churches and schools were opened to blacks, among these were the first black Catholic high school [St. Martin de Porres] in Ohio, and (later) separate black Catholic high schools for girls and boys. A 1950 issue of the *Apostolate of the Negro* newsletter noted that the Negro Apostolate then included five black schools in the West End serving 749 black students. It also reported there were 100,000 Negroes living in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati which constituted “a mission field right here at home.” This newsletter was forthright in its discussion of race issues, and in its last issue, it deplored hiring practices that discriminated by color, and it took issue with landlords’ neglect of property. No subsequent issue of this newsletter is believed to have been published. After the death of Archbishop McNicholas in 1950, and the virtual end of his Negro Apostolate and its newsletter, a vacuum existed that local pressures could exploit.

In 1949, Father Dominic Ferrara, Comboni pastor at Holy Trinity since 1945, was transferred to Africa as the first Prefect Apostolic of Mupoi in the Sudan. His parishioners raised \$927 at a festival and added their own money for his future mission post. The archdiocese also collected \$5,700 for Ferrara from pastors and the Indian and Negro fund. Replacing him was his assistant, Father Alexander Nardi, who that year had opened a parish Family Club offering services that included films, a lending library, job search assistance, health care, food, clothing, and legal advice. The interior of the church and its large congregation was the site of many Comboni ordinations. At one, Bishop Edward Mason ordained Fathers Aldo Cescatti, Xavier Colleoni, Aristide Guerra, and Marino Perghem.

Holy Trinity was an important center of Comboni Missionary activity. But what it represented to black Catholics in the West End was suggested by Professor LaVerne Muldrow Summerlin, “When Mother moved to the West End, she was working as a domestic and had four children to raise. She believed Catholic schools would give us a quality education. When we moved there, I was in the fifth grade. The twins went to the first grade, and the youngest was in kindergarten. We liked going to school because it was a safe place. We were often there even before the nuns arrived...Going to church was stressed, but we had many extra-curricular activities, plays, teams of all kinds. These were open to both children at Holy Trinity and to (those) not going to Holy Trinity. Amazingly, we were always in the team play-offs, amazing since our parents worked, and couldn’t get home till late. Father Ferrara, and later the younger priests, instilled in us an appreciation for four-part music. The Comboni seminarians who came down to sing with us were so good, we felt we had to measure up to them.

“Our whole family converted to Catholicism when I was in the eighth grade: our mother, grandmother, my two sisters and brother. When Father Branchesi was editor of the Comboni magazine, he would get us to help him. He paid us with those orange and green mint slices, the ones that were kind of like jelly on the inside with sugar coating. But to us it was more like working in a home away from home, especially with the recreation room in the basement. Working with the magazine, proofreading, labeling, putting stamps on, putting it together...we did a lot of reading.”

Melvin Grier, now a photographer with *The Cincinnati Post*, is a former Holy Trinity student who believes that the kind of discipline and education students found at Holy Trinity school is a lost art: “What was remarkable was that you could go into a classroom, and you wouldn’t hear a pin drop. There was such an aura of discipline. The Blessed Sacrament Sisters lived in

a house on Dayton Street. They were driven by Mr. Carl Bates in an old Nash. Every morning the nuns would come and pile out of this car. When those four nuns got out...oh my...school had started!...They were *in* charge. Their authority was unquestioned even though that neighborhood was rough and tough. It was so tough that once, after the school had already closed, we were out on the old playgrounds, and we saw a guy running toward us between the two old school buildings, and we saw puffs of smoke off the wall. The cops were chasing and shooting at him. But whether you were Catholic or not, in those days, everybody respected the nuns. You wouldn't dare not show respect for the nuns. It was unthinkable. They tolerated no nonsense. I remember Sister Julienne in the first grade. She had a way of taking hold of you. If you misbehaved, Sister Regina would put you under her desk ... And the Comboni priest would come in and say, 'Are you being good?' You're darned right you were being good."

On the 150th anniversary of Ohio's statehood in 1953, a missal covered in velvet with brass corners was discovered in a "dusty corner of Holy Trinity's attic." Dated 1843, there was an inscription written inside from the American Consul in Vienna on the occasion of Holy Trinity's dedication as the first German Church in Cincinnati. Ironically, 1953 was the year of the first dismantling of the old church. A report to the archdiocese explained that an inspection of the church tower revealed that fractures in its terminal masonry buttresses had increased. Bids for repairs came in with several options, 1. repairing the tower and church, 2. removing the tower, and 3. razing the entire church to the ground. Estimates for razing the entire church were virtually equal to the cost of repairing the tower.

In reporting these bids, Father Nardi also gave the archdiocese his views on a suggestion (evidently made by the chancery) to merge Holy Trinity with St. Anthony's, another black parish in the West End. Nardi's letter throws light on both churches' circumstances, "...St Anthony's is too far out of the way, next to the railroad tracks and coal yards. Holy Trinity has more transportation facilities and is centrally located. Moreover, Trinity has always been *remarkable in the West End for (its) religious and recreational activities.*" (Emphasis added) Nardi enumerated a litany of Trinity's activities: the Holy Name and the Altar Societies, the St. Catherine Society, the Legion of Mary, the Club for High School Students Boy Scout Troop, two Girl Scout Troops, five teams who now belonged to the Catholic Youth Council, the Red Cross courses in civil defense, and the recently opened Holy Trinity Family Club. Even this list is not complete.

In early May, Msgr. Leibold granted Nardi permission to remove the church tower. He gave explicit directions on how to lower the bells, how to prepare the school auditorium as a chapel, and how to fix the school basement for social purposes. When the demolition of the tower took place, other parts of the building were found to be deteriorating. The cost of repairs appeared prohibitive, and the archdiocese decided to raze the entire church. The decision was reported in a local newspaper: "One of the venerable landmarks in Cincinnati's West End, the century-old Holy Trinity church, will be torn down this summer...Decision to raze the structure was made after an examination revealed that the steeple, ceiling, windows, and other parts of the building had deteriorated to such an extent that it was felt that the cost of renovating it would be prohibitive...After the wrecking operation begins, church services will be held in the school auditorium. Father Alexander Nardi...said an altar would be erected on the auditorium stage and that a moveable partition would separate the sanctuary from the auditorium when the hall would be used for other than church purposes. The rectory, which adjoins the rest of the church, will be left standing. The three church bells will be sent to St. Catherine's Church, Cincinnati."

The parishioners of Holy Trinity contributed generously to the renovation of the school auditorium. Father Nardi noted in his house diary, "The City of Cincinnati...has various plans about the general refixing of the area...it will take years before things are settled...it is beautiful

to see how the poverty of our situation does not discourage our parishioners, nor does it cause the non-Catholics to take their children out of our poor school (even) when there is a nice new public school not too far away and the education there is free...At the end of last year (June 1953), there were 185 students in Holy Trinity school, half of whom were non-Catholics.”

Students could not officially join the church unless one of their parents was Catholic. Otherwise, a child had to wait until he or she reached an age of responsibility, generally considered 12 years. Melvin Grier, as a student at Holy Trinity, found himself in that situation. His Catholic mother had died, and his father was not Catholic. Yet his father never missed a PTA (Parent Teacher’s Association) meeting at Holy Trinity. Grier said, “He told me that my mother’s dying words were, ‘Don’t send that boy to (the public) Jackson School.’ And this, even though we could literally look out our window and see Jackson School. I had to wait till eighth grade to become a Catholic because there were no Catholics in my family, but my father never dreamed of letting me miss Mass.”

In 1954, when Nardi was transferred to Monroe, he summarized the achievements of students attending Holy Trinity. The boys of the elementary school had won the city championship in basketball. Three of four scout masters from Cincinnati who won the Boy Scouts’ Silver Beaver award were Holy Trinity parishioners. There was a substantial apostolate to the sick and poor with the pastor visiting the sick in the hospital, in the “old folks homes,” and in the home for the blind. One “quintale” (220 lbs.) of clothes had been distributed, and a parish St. Vincent de Paul Society was organized. A census carried out by the Legion of Mary had found 10,000 people. Nardi and his assistant, Father Dominic Pazzaglia, were visiting those whose marriages needed “straightening out,” and children of such marriages were being baptized. In 1954, Holy Trinity was still a parish with a lively spiritual and communal life.

HISTORY OF ST. EDWARD-ST. ANN CHURCH

ST. EDWARD CHURCH



St. Edward Church was founded in February 1864. The last church facing Clark Street along Mound was completed in November 1864. The property was sold to the City of Cincinnati for the Queensgate urban renewal project. The rectory at 1062 Wesley Avenue became the first location of Talbert House after its founding in 1965 by Father Busemeyer, Rev. Maurice McCracken, and others.

ST. ANN CHURCH

St. Ann Church was founded in 1866. The church was at John Street north of Richmond Street and the rectory was on Richmond. The property was sold to the City of Cincinnati

for the Queensgate urban renewal project. The caption under the photograph reads, "St. Ann's Church, New Street. This church was formerly owned and used by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1874 it was purchased by the Jesuit Fathers for the use of the colored Catholics, and is known as the "Colored Catholic Church." Part of the building is used as a parochial school and is attended by 60 scholars. The congregation is attended from St. Xavier Church. It has a membership of 100 families, and is on that the Catholics of this Archdiocese feel proud of.



ST. EDWARD-ST. ANN

St. Edward–St. Ann was founded in October 1938 from the merger of St. Edward and St. Ann Churches. It closed in 1965. The last pastor of the united St. Edward-St. Ann Church was Father Clement J. Busemeyer, 1960-1965.

ST. ANN'S CHURCH: A CULTURAL TRENDSETTER IN THE 1890s

Taken from *Catholic Telegraph* – Father Joseph Lackner, S.M. — February 10, 1995

St. Ann's Church, Cincinnati, which held liturgical services for the first time on July 6, 1866, was the third Catholic parish in the United States to exclusively serve African Americans. The parish, known historically as St. Ann's Colored Church, was preceded by St. Francis Xavier Church, Baltimore, in 1864, and Blessed Martin de Porres Chapel, Washington D.C., in February 1866.

Considering that not more than 20 black Catholic parishes had been established by the end of the 19th century, St. Ann's existence was exceptional. But it is that much more remarkable when seen in the context of Cincinnati's population. In 1860, Cincinnati had an African American population of 3,731, representing 2.3 percent of the city's total population of 161,044. By 1870, the black population had grown to 5,896 or 2.7 percent of the city's total population of 216,239. But of these African Americans, very few were Catholic. The situation in Cincinnati was quite different from that in southern cities such as Baltimore, Washington D.C., and New Orleans, which had significant African American Catholic populations.

Throughout the 1860's, many acts of violence and prejudice against African Americans in Cincinnati were perpetrated, and in the view of the very small number of African American Catholics in Cincinnati and in consideration of the racist sentiment among the population – many of who were traditionally Catholic – the existence of St. Ann's Church was extraordinary.

Racial prejudice had driven African American Protestants to find separate black congregations in the North before the Civil War, and this movement greatly influenced black religious life both in the North and the South after 1865. St. Ann's fit into the pattern of what was generally happening among blacks in Cincinnati and throughout the country.

The founding of St. Ann's was consistent with the practice of nationality parishes among Catholics. During the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, held Oct. 7 – 20, 1866, African American parishes were compared to those existing among various nationalities and they were sanctioned if the local situation warranted it. For some present at the council, including Martin John Spalding, who was the Archbishop of Baltimore and primate of the Catholic Church in America, ministry to blacks was one of the most urgent issues facing the churchmen. It was also a continuing concern for Vatican officials, who reminded the American hierarchy at the council of this. Despite these voices, the church in the United States generally missed the opportunity to evangelize the African American community at the end of the Civil War. St. Ann's stands as an exception.

Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati and several members of the Society of Jesus, in whose care the parish was initially entrusted, realized the Catholic Church's responsibility to African Americans. But none of these factors truly explain the origin of the church; similar conditions existed in other cities, but without similar results.

It was only through the initiative of African American Catholics – who approached Jesuit Father Walter H. Hill, rector of St. Xavier College, with a request for the establishment of a separate church and school for black Catholics – that the church came into existence.



This historical fact deserves special attention. St. Ann's was not an idea or plan that ecclesiastics originated and then sought to implement. It was the African American people who made St. Ann's, at its inception and through the years.

Characterized by various degrees of commitment, attracted by opportunities of schooling for their children, drawn from various parts of the world and often shadowed by death and hardship, they formed a diverse community. Just the hints at their stories contained in the census data suggest many lives were rich in adventure, perseverance, initiative and pathos.

Like their white Catholic counterparts and their fellow African Americans in the city, they were mainly poor immigrants. And in the lives of some, problems of family structure that would persist into the present were foreshadowed. But present also was the humanity and compassion of widows who took in children, the enterprise of those who improved their station in life through work and education and shared it with others, and the generosity of those who served as godparents in their church.

These people built a foundation so that St. Ann's Church would last as an independent parish until the middle of the 20th century.

HISTORY OF SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1834, the Most Rev. John D. Purcell, fancied a notion of a German speaking parish – Holy Trinity – the first national parish for German speaking Catholics in America! Holy trinity birthed three daughters:

- Saint Mary's [1840] located at 13th and Clay Street.
- Saint John the Baptists [1845] Breman and Green Street.
- Saint Joseph Church [1846] Linn and Laurel Street, in the West End.

In March 1846, a lot of land 96 ft. by 200 ft was purchased at Linn and Laurel Streets. The building combined a church/school. In 1896 – 1921, Rev. William Scholl was known as the building priest. He renovated the church in celebration of its Golden Jubilee on November 20, 1898. During its preparation for the Celebration, stained-glass windows were purchased by various parishioners. There were seventeen windows were purchased y various parishioners. There were seventeen windows designed and imported from Innsbruck, Austria. All were purchased by members of the church. Accept the window of Saint Joseph, the universal patron of the church as bought and paid for by Rev. Scholl.

The church contained 7 murals by William Lamprecht of Bavaria, Germany. His work in Cincinnati was considered his best. Along with the building renovation Rev. Scholl had to replace the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who had been called to return to Europe. In 1897, the Sisters of St. Francis Oldenburg, Indiana came to the school.

The city of Cincinnati continued its growth in population and industry, as did the church. German families moved out of the West End and into the suburban areas. Coloreds began to replace the whites within the West End community. Leaving behind vast areas of slums and abandoned buildings in Bucktown, Levee, and Little Buck area of the city as urban renewal was fast approaching.

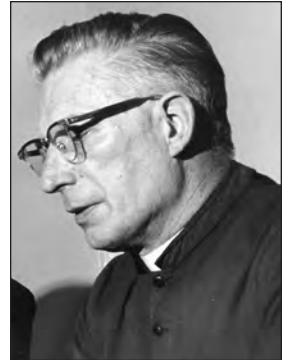
The saturation of more people into the West End changed the face of the community, literally, figuratively and economically. In 1938, construction was completed on a housing project, Laurel Homes. The complex was designed to house low income whites still residing in the West End community. The slum clearance began to disturb more people in the urban areas of the city, because the government had made no attempt in building adequate housing for the colored residents of the city. This caused anxious moments within the city government as the black population pushed council for answers to segregated housing.

During the 1940's racism escalated in Cincinnati and the Catholic Church. It was obvious. Within holy orders, within the business world, and the government on all levels. Classified ad's



placed in local newspapers stated it best: “No coloreds’ allowed.”; “Colored need not apply.”; “No colored admitted. [Even at hospitals!]”; and “Colored to the rear of the bus.”

Saint Joseph Church and School is blessed to have had pastors and educators to shepherd us through the “worst of times and the best of times.” Another such shepherd was Rev. Clement J. Busemeyer, O.F.M., who in accepting the stewardship of Saint Joseph Church and School in 1949, accepted a \$60,000.00 debt. He pastored an elementary school filled with white children, when the school sat in the middle of a black community!



Father Clement J. Busemeyer, O.F.M.

Fr. Busemeyer’s hopes were made clear to his superiors and the congregation, that all people were God’s people! He proceeded to extend his hand in an effort to “set things right”, to a people who had known poverty, disruption and racism in the church and out. It was under the pastor-ship of Rev. Busemeyer that “something” started at St. Joseph that was to have an effect on the Roman Catholic Church around the country. When Fr. Clarence Rivers was assigned to St. Joseph as a young associate pastor, and the first African American cleric in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, he helped us to realize the need for us to worship in a style consistent with our heritage and culture.



It was not long before Rev. Rivers was composing music that the Sisters taught the children in school and he taught and led the congregation on Sundays. Thus, began a movement that changed the face of the Eurocentric Catholic Church in America.

Father Clarence J. Rivers, how do we thank you? You gave us pride in our accomplishments as African American Catholic liturgist and musicians. You raised a little sand and kicked up a lot of dust, but as God blessed you, you never gave up! Thank you for your dedication to God, liturgy, music and people!

Mission Statement:

You, however are a chose race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. A people He claims for His own, so that you may proclaim the glorious works. [1 Peter 2: 9].

DEACON RAPHAEL SIMMONS

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE WEST END

I grew up in the West End. I was baptized as an infant at St. Edward Church and went to St. Ann until the 2nd grade, then Holy Trinity from the 3rd to the 8th grade. My mother was Catholic and my dad, A.M.E. They divorced and were forced to leave the Catholic Church, but they kept me in it.

I was exposed to all kind of religions as a child. Back then, there would be four to five generations in the same household: grandparents, aunts, and cousins. So it was in our house and other folks' households in the neighborhood, as well. Right in our house, there were Baptists, Pentecostals, A.M.E.s and Holiness.

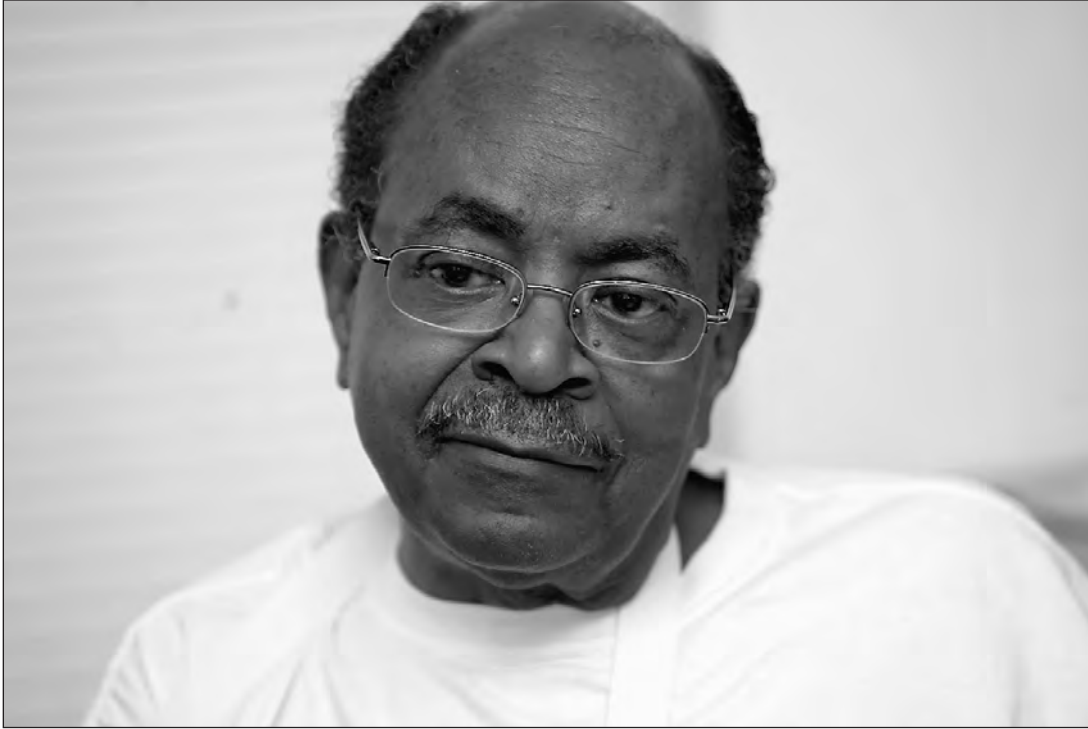
Sunday was a special day. On Sunday mornings, our ritual was to play the old songs of Zion sung by Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward and others while each of us prepared to go to our own church. We would pass people's homes on the way to church and hear the same songs from their record player or radio. Everybody went to church, and there was every kind of church in the West End.

We would be out playing during the week and someone from any of these churches would gather us up, take us inside the church for different activities, snacks or Bible lessons. I always went but was conflicted, because I was taught that the Catholic Church was the only true church. I never said anything and wouldn't dare show disrespect, but looking back, I realize that I didn't see them as church ... it was a dilemma for me.

The West End, at that time, was like a cocoon. I felt safe, protected and important. My family and the people in the West End provided the kind of environment that gave me a strong sense of self. We could do everything that we needed to do in order to live, right in our neighborhood. There were grocery and clothing stores, movie theaters, playgrounds and everything else. There were visible signs of segregation in the neighborhood, like the all-white firehouse and the all-white police department [Station X], but that didn't affect me. I didn't experience racism until I left the security of the West End to go to Central High School.

I had a hard time as a teenager. Jim Crowe was the law of the land, and I just couldn't accept what it said about me and other black folks. I knew that God loved me, all black folks, as much as anybody. I would get angry when I was told that I wouldn't be served at places like Newberry's because of the color of my skin. I would tell them, "I don't have to be quiet. I was here first, and my money is just as good as anybody's."

Situations like that normally ended with a call to the police. They would come, I would argue. My peers would tell me to be quiet, don't rock the boat, just get along with the white folks. I couldn't do it. Eventually I was labeled a troublemaker. Even at Central High School, when I was discriminated against, I would speak up. My punishment was to write on the blackboard something like, "I will be quiet" 500 times. I got that punishment so many times that the teachers gave me the option to write 500 times or pay .50. So I would alternate. One time do the writing, next time pay .50.



I spent time as a teen living in Dayton with my mother and attended an all-white Catholic Church. Well, the white folks wouldn't get near us ... in church!

We stayed in the back, not because we had to, we just didn't feel welcome. They treated us as though we were less of a person than they. Well, I was somebody, and I knew I was somebody. I didn't go to Communion once the whole time we lived there.

I went to church Monday through Friday and again on Sunday through the 8th grade. After that, I turned rebellious, didn't want anything to do with church, Catholic or otherwise. It no longer had meaning for me.

I joined the Air Force in 1955. I scored high on the placement test and was the first black man assigned to train as a bomb navigator/radar specialist. The training base was in Denver, Colo., but they didn't send me to Denver. They sent me to Biloxi, Miss., because I'm black. At that time racism was "in your face," I had never been treated with such nastiness, and it made me bitter. One of the worst, most hateful things that ever happened to me was in Abilene, Tex. I thought that if I gave church another shot, it would help me, plus I was lonely and wanted to be a part of the community. In my West End experience, the church is where you went to meet nice people.

Well, I went to the Catholic Church, and the white priest would not serve me Communion. He told me, "We don't serve coloreds here." I was shocked, embarrassed, humiliated and furious! More than anything, I was so hurt; I didn't know what to do. I turned around and walked out of that church and vowed not to step foot in church again.

There was blatant racism in everything. Black folks couldn't escape it. It hung like a fog around you, penetrating you, affecting every phase of your life. What helped me was that Hispanics in Texas were treated as viciously as blacks ... if that's any help. There was one difference, though. On the I.D. cards that we carried blacks were listed as "colored," but Hispanics were listed as "white."

Whenever I gathered with other black folks, our horror stories were the same: discrimination and unfair treatment. I still would not and could not accept “that’s just the way it is,” like many black folks did. I was not conditioned to do that.

One day I was walking down a road in Abilene, where a tractor-trailer had stopped ... some sort of mechanical problem. I saw the driver get out and open the back door. I was horror-struck to see Mexican and black people stacked on top of one another in the back of that truck like animals, slaves, or cargo that meant nothing. It sickened me and hurt me to the core of my being.

I went back to the base and reported what I saw to the commander. He told me, “As long as it’s not you, you have nothing to say.” It was customary in Texas for farmers with orchards to use illegal immigrants for planting and harvesting. What I saw had to be against the law. I lost all respect for him and the authorities that would allow another human being to be treated that way so I asked him to please transfer me. He told me “no” and took me off of my job as a bomb navigator/radar specialist and placed me on permanent CQ (dormitory guard) duty. I was labeled a troublemaker with a negative attitude ... again, for speaking out against what I knew was wrong.

God works in mysterious ways. I didn’t know it, but God was lining me up to use me.

While on CQ duty, the white guys would come in the dorm and talk to me about their lives, you know, “purge.” They would tell me about their problems and things.

I would minister to them. I found myself empathizing and being concerned with their spiritual welfare. I soon came to be known as a wise and concerned counselor.

If someone was experiencing marriage problems, they would come to me. I would tell them, “If you love each other... look out for each other.” If another had a death in the family, I helped them get through it. I even counseled non-believers. I never stopped believing in God, or the grace that He gives ... I just couldn’t accept religion as it had been presented to me.

After I was discharged from the military, the civil rights movement was in full force, and so was I. I would’ve thrown a Molotov cocktail to blow something up in a minute. Church was the furthest thing from my mind, and I struggled. I wondered, “Where do I fit in this world? No matter what I do, nothing changes.” My attitude was, “I’ll do what it takes for me to survive, and that’s all I’ll do.” I wanted no part of speaking out for up to this point in my life, speaking up had only led to trouble for me. I felt powerless.

But when I met Alice, my loving wife and the mother of my children, my life did change. She and her entire family were praying folks. Their faith was so deep; nothing could turn them around; everyday they thanked God that their basic needs were met: food, housing, employment, bus fare, clothes, etc. I could SEE the effect that faith had on their lives. Consequently, with Alice’s help, I reconnected, healed spiritually and began to grow.

Once we were married, I attended Alice’s Baptist church, but didn’t feel at home there. Alice insisted that I make the decision as to what church our family would attend. That’s when I took my family to St. Mark in Evanston.

I never changed my personality... I am who I am. This time, within the church, with my prayerful, faithful wife by my side, when I spoke up, the pastor at St. Mark listened to me. Father Dennis Kinderman embraced my outspokenness, respected my point of view and invited me to get involved in the church. Halleluiaah! I was home!

There were many things that compelled me. I had grown up with many ministers in Cincinnati, including Clarence Rivers, the first black priest in Cincinnati, from Cincinnati. My friends [Charles and Calvin Daniels] and I would scheme to beat him up when we were kids in the West End, with his pious self. However, Clarence brought his true self to the Catholic Church ... It was the first time I'd seen that! Father Rivers told me, "If you want to minister in the Catholic Church, you can." The light bulb turned on. "Man, I signed up!"

Through adversity, isolation and downright rejection, once I turned back to the Lord, worshipping in the Catholic Church, I was able to bring the culmination of all of my experience with me. The Catholic Church is a universal spiritual community that affords individuals the opportunity to utilize what is God-given.

I knew it was the Lord's divine plan for me. I hooked back up. I saw that Jesus did not separate himself from the community, but did His work within the community, and so would I. I realize that from childhood to adulthood, the Lord was developing me to be in this church... so that I could tell folks that anyone can experience the presence of God at any time, in any place.

I am in constant dialogue with the Creator of heaven and earth and I am amazed at His work. I am here to tell folks that you must let go and let the presence of God shine through.



Students at St. Joseph School in the West End enjoyed a special visit during the school's third annual "Celebration of Fine Arts and Literature" May 18-19, 1993. Pictured above are second-graders with children's book authors Patricia and Fred McKissack and illustrator Will Hillenbrand.

MRS. IRENE BRYANT

PARISHIONER OF ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Lord has to be good after what I've been through. He brought me and kept me.

My mother died on August 3, 1925, at 33 years old. I was six. After that, my father put one of my sisters, two of my brothers and myself in the Bessie Allen Orphanage at 6th and Walnut in Louisville, Ky. I stayed there until I was 16 years old. It's where I learned to do things. The Sisters there taught me to read, organize myself and become productive... it made me smart. I stayed there until I was 16 years old. Then I was placed at Good Shepherd at 8th and Walnut, also in Louisville. It was a home for older children run by Good Shepherd Sisters.

The Mother Superior there was a nun named Sister Isabelle. She had a big influence on me. She would see to the priest... make sure everything was organized and ready for Mass; serve the priest his meals and other things. I was her helper. She and I formed a good relationship. She taught me things, and I listened to her. I was still a little colored child but worked side-by-side with the sister that was in charge. Looking back, I guess she saw something in me. Thank God she did, because times were horrible for coloreds; Jim Crowe and whatnot, let alone an orphaned colored child.



When I graduated from high school at 17, I was put out to day work. My first job was at the Netkims family. They lived at 1735 Harvard Dr. (Louisville). They had three children. I cooked, cleaned and took care of them for \$8.00 per week.

One day on my way home from work, I met a couple at the bus stop that was from the place that I was born, Richmond, Ky. I talked with them, told them about my background. Praise God, they knew my people and my story.

I just knew that the Lord was looking after me. I had developed a belief and a trust that in spite of my circumstances, everything was going to be all right.

I went back to Good Shepherd, packed my bags and left with those strangers.

Folks back then; you could trust them. They took me to my Aunt Lee's house. My mother's

sister! I had never met her, and she had never met me, but she took me in and I experienced the love and security of a family for the first time in my life. It gives me chills to think of it.

I didn't stay with Aunt Lee but a few weeks, because she knew that my oldest sister lived in Cincinnati. When Aunt Lee called my sister, she came to Richmond and got me. I arrived in Cincinnati in January 1937, smack dead in the middle of the great flood and the great depression.

I was delighted to be with my sister, so I settled into life in Cincinnati.

I went to church at Holy Trinity.

I found out that Sister Isabelle lived in Cincinnati, working at Girls Town in Finneytown. My soon-to be husband and I went to see her. She had really been my mother-figure growing up and I loved her. She told me to go see Father Busemeyer at St. Joseph, so I did.

I met Father Busemeyer and found him to be the first white person I had ever met to treat everyone equally. It didn't matter to him what color you were, he was a fair man. I joined St. Joseph Catholic Church and have been a member ever since.

Before I was married, Father Busemeyer checked my husband out and gave the OK for the marriage. We raised three children together. My husband owned a fruit and vegetable stand on the Findley Market. I worked at Children's Hospital 33 years and eight months preparing formula and delivering it to the infant ward. Ain't God good?

I learned that small kindnesses and generosity means everything. The Sisters that took care of me as a child, raised me in the church at the orphanage, and the way I was reunited with my family is a sure sign of the grace of God. I am blessed to live this long, and my faith sustains me.



**Venerable St. Joseph Catholic Church,
August 1957**

MR. JACK MCWILLIAMS

PARISHIONER OF ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

I was born during the Great Depression and grew up in the east end of Cincinnati. My mother was Catholic and wanted to go to church in our neighborhood. Because of Jim Crow laws, we were “directed” to Holy Trinity, the all-black parish at 621 West 5th Street in the west end. I went to school there and was educated by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It was a blessing in disguise, because the Sisters and priests truly believed in their mission of dedicating their lives to serve African Americans and Indians. They were sensitive to our culture, dedicated to providing us with a good education, in addition to instilling discipline and grounding us in the Word of God. They taught us that in spite of racism and segregation, we were just as good as anyone else and we must work to glorify the gifts that God blessed us with.

One of my favorite bible verses is Matthew, Chapter 25 14-29:

14 ⁶ “It will be as when a man who was going on a journey ⁷ called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents; — to another, two; to a third, one — to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. ¹⁷ Likewise, the one who received two made another two. ¹⁸ ⁹ But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money. ¹⁹ After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. ¹⁰ He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ ²² (Then) the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ ²⁴ Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; ²⁵ so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’ ²⁶ His master said to him in reply, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! ¹¹ So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷ Should you not then have put my money in



the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? 28 Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. 29 ¹² For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

I want The Lord to tell me “Well done!”

My experience at Holy Trinity prepared me for interaction within the larger church.

In 1979, the Ministers of Service program was established to provide training for lay ministers in urban Catholic communities. I have been the director of the program since 1982. The Mission Statement reads: “We have a commitment to educate and develop indigenous African-American leaders and others who minister to parishes located in predominately African-American communities within the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.”

The Ministers of Service Program organizes and promotes the empowerment of Catholic laypersons toward ministry. It also gives support and guidance to laypersons designated by their parish communities as ministerial leaders.

The candidates receive academic and spiritual guidance related to urban ministry. It consists of two seven-week core sessions. The first seven-week core is composed of studies in the Old Testament, church in the world, speech, and practical spirituality. The second core is composed of church history, liturgy, New Testament and pastoral ministry. Throughout the entire programming, we present the richness of the Afro-centric experience.

Prior to The Ministers of Services program, African Americans were voiceless in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Through the Ministers of Service, we were able to establish such programs as “Brothers and Sisters to Us” within the U.S. Catholic Conference. The leadership were invited to speak and addressed racism in the church. We had the attention of church leadership in the United States.

It is a fact that no matter how much or how little money a parish has, it has the need for its members to acquire leadership capabilities and to utilize them.

Then-Archbishop Joseph Bernardin put his support behind the program in 1982 and blessed us with an operating budget. I was able to work full time as director until the archdiocese suffered a severe budget crunch in 1989. Today, the program operates on individual and corporate donations.

My ambition for the program is to begin classes to train people in methods that are successful in African-American and Hispanic cultures. It is important to provide training that people can grasp. There is definitely a need for programs such as the Ministers of Service at this time. Especially at time where there are fewer priests and nuns working in parish communities.

I love the Catholic Church. I strive to live for Jesus Christ. It is important to show concern for others by working for social justice and to work to alleviate poverty. I have the responsibility to exhibit the same dedication for my neighbor as I received from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a child. I know that my life must be a reflection of my faith.

ELLA HAS HER DAY AS SHE TURNS 100

Friday, June 20, 1980 *Catholic Telegraph*

Ella Franklin was clearly the center of attraction at the 11 o'clock Mass at St. Joseph parish in Cincinnati last Sunday (June 15, 1980). And the longtime resident of Cincinnati loved every minute of it. And with good reason. She and 250 friends, family members and parishioners had gathered to celebrate something worth celebrating: her 100th birthday. And they did it in style, with a cake, a corsage, gifts and songs, including her favorite, "Precious Lord."

Officiating at the concelebrated Mass were Father Terry Meehan, pastor, and Father Mark Schneider, associate, while Mrs. Franklin sat in the first pew with her 80-year old daughter, Mrs. Julia Parker, and her 63 year old granddaughter, Mrs. Viola Gateskill.

A convert to Catholicism while in her middle sixties, Mrs. Franklin was baptized at Holy Trinity church, Cincinnati, before moving to St. Joseph's at Linn Street and Lincoln Park drive (now Ezzard Charles Drive) in 1949. And there she lived until a year ago, when she moved to the Oak Pavilion Nursing Home in Walnut Hills. A mainstay at St. Joseph's for 30 years, Mrs. Franklin always walked to church, including a three-block trek she used to make just last year at the age of 99.

Following Sunday Mass and reception in her honor, several of Mrs. Franklin's family members joined her, Father Schneider and Sister Judy Tensing, a member of the pastoral team, for a birthday dinner at a local restaurant. According to Sister Tensing, the restaurant manager joined in the spirit of the occasion by giving Mrs. Franklin a free meal.

A nice ending to a special day for a special lady!

Ms. MARY JOYCE EDWARDS

PARISHIONER OF ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

I am the older of two girls. My family has always lived in the West End. I remember visiting with my grandmother when she lived on 6th Street right in the middle of the 6th Street Market. I also remember that she picked out a live chicken and would take it to a back room and return with it cleaned, cut and ready to cook. She always bought everything fresh. My mother worked in the home and my father pressed clothes at a big hotel in town. After work, he would meet the rest of the family at my grandmother's house and we would walk home together.

When I was six years old, we moved to the projects. We lived a normal life. My mother talked to all the neighbors, and when it rained, we would put on our swimsuits and run around outside. The biggest crime in the neighborhood at that time was stealing cupcakes and other baked goods from the delivery trucks. My first year of schooling, I attended Sherman Elementary. The very next year I attended Saint Joseph Catholic School. Whatever the Father and teacher said, we did it. If the nuns said we had to go to church on Saturday, we were there. They taught us about the bible, as children we did it read it, but it was read to us by the priest or the nuns. In high school, I attended Our Lady of Angels in Saint Bernard for three years and I graduated from Taft High School.

My mother and father even though they were not Catholic they sent us to a Catholic School because the neighbors had told her it was a good school. They also felt that you should go to church especially if you had small children. I was baptized at St. Joseph Church on September 30, 1951. I received the Sacrament of Confirmation on May 18, 1952. My mother bought me a white veil and white dress.



The Church has always been important to me. I remember when they made the change of the priest facing the people to say Mass. The Mass became more relevant and people no longer rushed out to the parking lot as soon as Mass was over. I also remember the closing most of the Black Catholic churches in the West End. Through joys and sorrows of my life, I have come to know the Lord. I did leave the church for awhile, but after doing it my way – and doing it badly – I returned to Church. One of the biggest influences in my life was Fr. Clarence Rivers, Deacon Raphael Simmons and Fr. Rey Taylor. They knew how to apply the Catholic faith to “Black” life. It was one of the riches of Saint Joseph Parish. We are one big family. We have members from all over Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky and they come because of what we have to offer. We are very inclusive. Everyone can do their part, everyone has something to do – all they have to do is step forward.

PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

My faith has helped me to live in a way that is pleasing to God – and that is a full-time job. I read the Bible daily and it has brought me closer to the Lord. I pray using Psalm 31, Psalm 91 and Psalm 139:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.

And there is nothing like a good song: Amazing Grace, Our God Is An Awesome God, Revive Us Again, I Love Jesus More Today Than Yesterday.

Each day presents a challenge and I try to better than I did the day before. Yes, my faith has helped me to treat others the right way; to try to understand them a little better; and to become a better listener. God didn't make no junk. We are wonderfully made by God and for God. God loves us and he wants us to love one another. He is always with us – and through prayer we can talk to him daily.



U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley tours St. Joseph School with Father Mike Noonan, Robert Gazaway, Deacon Raphael Simmons and Sister Kathryn Ann Connelly in 1993.

Ms. SADIE HOUSTON

PARISHIONER OF ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

I have a wonderful family! I am 82 years old and God has truly blessed my life. My parents Bennie Barnett and Mary Horne-Barnett gave birth to three children: Sadie, James, and Norma Jean. My grandfather York Horne was a slave and was brought to America at the age of seven. He worked on a plantation in Georgia. His slave owner smuggled him and my grandmother [Emma] to Cincinnati, Ohio after he killed a white man for attempting to sexually assault my grandmother. His wife, Emma was a Cherokee Indian. My grandfather was a proud African man who stood 6'4" tall and was very dark-skinned. I had a wonderful relationship with him, because I was his first grandchild. We used to go for long walks. He didn't say much – we would just walk. He died at the age of 75 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I attended Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary from the Kindergarten to Eighth Grade. I married my husband John Houston in my parent's living room shortly after I graduated from the eighth grade. I wore the dress I had worn to my eighth grade graduation. We were married for 35 years until his death in 1978. My grandfather had died three weeks earlier. We had three children: John, Barbara [*currently on the administrative staff at Saint Joseph church*] and Clarence Houston. All of our children attended Catholic Schools. I have 11 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren. While working at different jobs, I attended Taft High School Evening Classes and later took classes at the University of Cincinnati and Thomas More College.

I remember that during the Great Flood of 1937, the Ohio River reached the front steps of Saint Joseph Church. Cincinnati has always been a great city but there have always been a few people who try to make it unsafe. After my grandfather became a free man, he served as an assistant helper with the police in Cincinnati. He helped to break up alcohol smugglers and some of the gangs in the area.

My parents attended Saint John A.M.E. Zion Church and I sung in the choir. We had a Christian home and we prayed a lot together. I was Baptized and Confirmed by Fr. Clarence Joseph Rivers III. During the Confirmation, he slapped me so hard that I balled up my fists to hit him, and he said, "No, no, I was just knocking the devil out of you." When Fr. Rivers left St. Joseph to dedicate himself to his music, he gave me a signed copy of the first album he recorded, "The Brotherhood of Man." I still have that album and through all the years, I've only played it once.

Fr. Clement Busemeyer was very good to me and we had a great friendship. After I had lost my job, he gave me a job at Saint Joseph School working in the cafeteria. I also volunteered to assist at Bingo with Ms. Brinkman, Ms. Williams, Ms. Chilsom, and Ms. Stratton. From 1962 - 1979 I taught at St. Joseph School. There were 40 children in my class of first and second graders.

Fr. Busemeyer was a great man. He fed and clothed a lot of people in the West End. Somehow, during Christmas he managed to have trucks deliver hams, turkeys and Christmas trees to every family. While he was the pastor at Saint Joseph, we did not owe anyone a dime - we were debt free when he left Saint Joseph because of an illness. After the new priest came in - six months later we were in debt. And since that time, we've been a struggling parish. There

have been times when I thought we were going to lose our community; but the Lord has always helped us to bounce back.

I knew the Lord, but Fr. Busemeyer and Fr. Rivers helped me to strengthen my faith. But the Psalms have been my joy and helped me all through my life. Especially Psalm 91:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
Who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
Will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
My God in whom I trust."

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the deadly pestilence;
He will cover you with his pinions,
And under his wings you will find refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day,
Or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
Or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
Ten-thousand at your right hand,
But it will not come near you.
You will only look with your eyes,
And see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
The Most High your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you,
No will scourge come near your tent.

As an adult, Saint Joseph has been my church home. I enjoy the people and the music. Sometimes music will help you when your heart is heavy – in a way that preaching can't reach. There are those times when you need a special song to cheer you up.

My faith helps me to forgive others and allow others to forgive me. I pray so that we may all be one!

HISTORY OF ASSUMPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH – CINCINNATI PARISH TO OBSERVE 100TH ANNIVERSARY PARISH

[Taken from *The Catholic Telegraph* – Aug. 31, 1973]

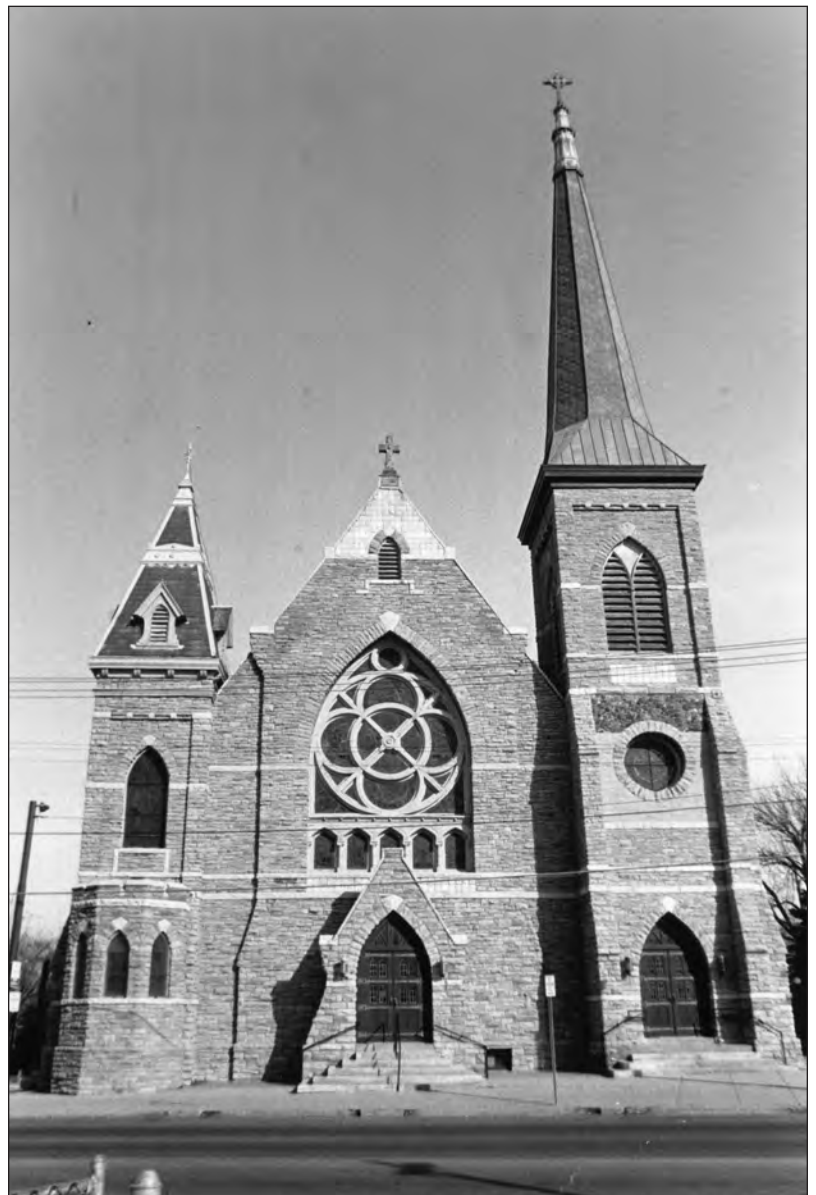
“It’s a beautiful parish!” declares Mrs. Nellie N. Jackson, who admits having had qualms about joining it in the first place. “Priests who’ve said Mass here tell me they’ve never felt such warmth in a congregation,” Father Vincent P. Schneider, pastor, says proudly.

Similar comments indicate that Assumption Parish, Walnut Hills, will have a joyous celebration at its 100th anniversary observance on Sunday, Sept. 9. Scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. with a Mass of Thanksgiving con-celebrated by Father Schneider, associate pastor Father Ted Kosse, Msgr. Aloysius A. Huber and Father Eugene Gallagher, former pastors, and other priests who have served at the parish, the celebration will continue through the afternoon with a reception for visitors and a parish reunion.

Jack Jansen, grandson of a charter member of the parish, is chairman on the anniversary committee. In describing the parish, which has an average Sunday Mass attendance of 300, Father Schneider points to the “odd situation” of two other Catholic Churches within the parish boundaries: the Maronite-rite St. Anthony of Padua and the Italian Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. At one time there was even a third, he says – Mother of God Mission Church for black Catholics, which merged with Assumption in 1961.

Assumption Parish was established in 1870 from portions of Holy Angels, St. George and St. Francis de Sales parishes, but was called Presentation for the first few years of its existence.

The first pastor, Father Richard W. Hazeland, celebrated Mass above a grocery store at the corner of Curtis Street and Gilbert Avenue. The parish name was changed to Assumption when Father John J. Kennedy moved the services to a private residence at the corner of Gilbert Avenue and McMillan Street in 1873.





The cornerstone for the present church was laid in September 1884, and Archbishop William Henry Elder dedicated the new building 11 months later. Sisters of Mercy staffed the parish school, built in 1900, and remained until the school closed in 1972. The convent and rectory were purchased in 1910 by Father William Conway, pastor from 1901–1922.

The next pastor, Father Michael Mulvill, lived only two years. His successor, Msgr. Robert G. Connor, began remodeling the church interior in 1924 and installed a marble representation of Murillo's painting of the Assumption over the main altar. Archbishop John T. McNicholas officiated at the rededication of the church in March of 1927.

Father William O'Connor was pastor from 1935 to 1938, when Father Huber was appointed. Mother of God Mission was established by the archdiocese during Father Huber's first year. Located five blocks north of Assumption on Gilbert Avenue, the mission church grew from 15 parishioners in 1938 to over 300 families, mostly converts, in 1955.



PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

By the '60s, however, the Catholic populations of the two parishes had dropped, and maintenance of both as separate entities became impractical. Mother of God Church merged with Assumption on August 15, 1961.

“It broke our hearts to leave Mother of God,” Mrs. Jackson recalls. “We all were afraid the white people wouldn’t want us in their church. And some of the colored just wouldn’t come because of that feeling.”

Some Assumption members did object to worshiping in an integrated church and left the parish. But the ones who stayed, says Father Schneider, joined with the new parishioners “to give the parish the great spirit we have today.” The parish has an even racial mix today, he says.

Succeeding Father Huber, who received the cancelled church mortgage in the same mail as his appointment to St. Agnes, Bond Hill, was the late Father John F. Dillon, pastor from 1946 to 1961. His successor was Father Eugene Gallagher, now pastor of St. Ann’s, Hamilton. In 1966, Father Schneider, twice an assistant at Assumption, returned as pastor.



MOTHER OF GOD A MISSION OF ASSUMPTION CHURCH

The Mother of God Mission Church was founded in 1938. The church at 3015 Gilbert Avenue was completed, June 1939. The church was closed in 1961. The property was sold and now is The House of God [Pentecostal].

Mother of God Mission Observes 10th Jubilee

Text from *Catholic Telegraph* Article May 20, 1949

The 10th anniversary of the founding of Mother of God mission in Walnut Hills, Cincinnati was commemorated May 8. The celebration began when 11 children received their First Communion in the 9:30 o'clock Mass. A Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving followed. With Father Richard Redman, administrator, as celebrant and two former administrators Fathers Bernard Felix and Gerrard Evers, as deacon and sub-deacon.

James Pearl was master of ceremonies; other assisting in the serving were Simon Butler, Arnold Williams and Austin Railey. The men's choir of Assumption church, Cincinnati, and St. Rose's girl's choir combined under their directors, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Picciano, to chant the music of the Mass.

The mothers of the mission were honored at a dinner after the Mass. In the afternoon the parishioners marched in procession to crown the statue of Mary at the outdoor shrine and then returned to the church for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The honor of crowning the stature of the Blessed Virgin was bestowed upon Mrs. Mary Elliott of 1544 Blair Avenue, a 60-year-old mother of 10 living children and grandmother of 12.

Twenty-two Converts for Christ



41 converts in last year, are shown at row, Joseph Dunson, Pauline Irby, and Mrs. Jessie Fleming, The Irby, and Mrs. Alice Davis; fourth row, Laurence Mayse, Elaine Watkins, Mrs. Mary Dainson, Pauline Irby, and Mrs. Jessie Fleming, The

Family Joins Church



MR. AND MRS. [Name] and four children, shown at Mother of God Church at Mother of God. They are the largest family in the Walnut Hills mission's children are, left to right, and Theodore, Jr.

One Fold and One Shepherd



CONVERTS OF THREE NEGRO families receiving Communion for the first time were joined by students of Elder high school's class 1-B GSMC unit in Mother of God church, Cincinnati, earlier this month. They are shown at the calling as Father Richard Redman, who is in charge of the church the sacrament Father Redman low Christians Savior and the

Celebrating an Anniversary



CONNECTING LINK throughout the 10-year history of Mother of God church, Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, during which time eight parishes have administered the suburban mission for Colored, has been Sister Burrows, superior of the convent since the founding of the mission. The Dominican Sisters came from their mother-house in Eschwege, W. Va. in 1939 to aid in convert work in the new parish. At present three other Dominican Sisters assist Sister Burrows. In the 10 years since coming to Cincinnati, Sister Burrows has been instrumental in leading 240 persons into the church.

PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

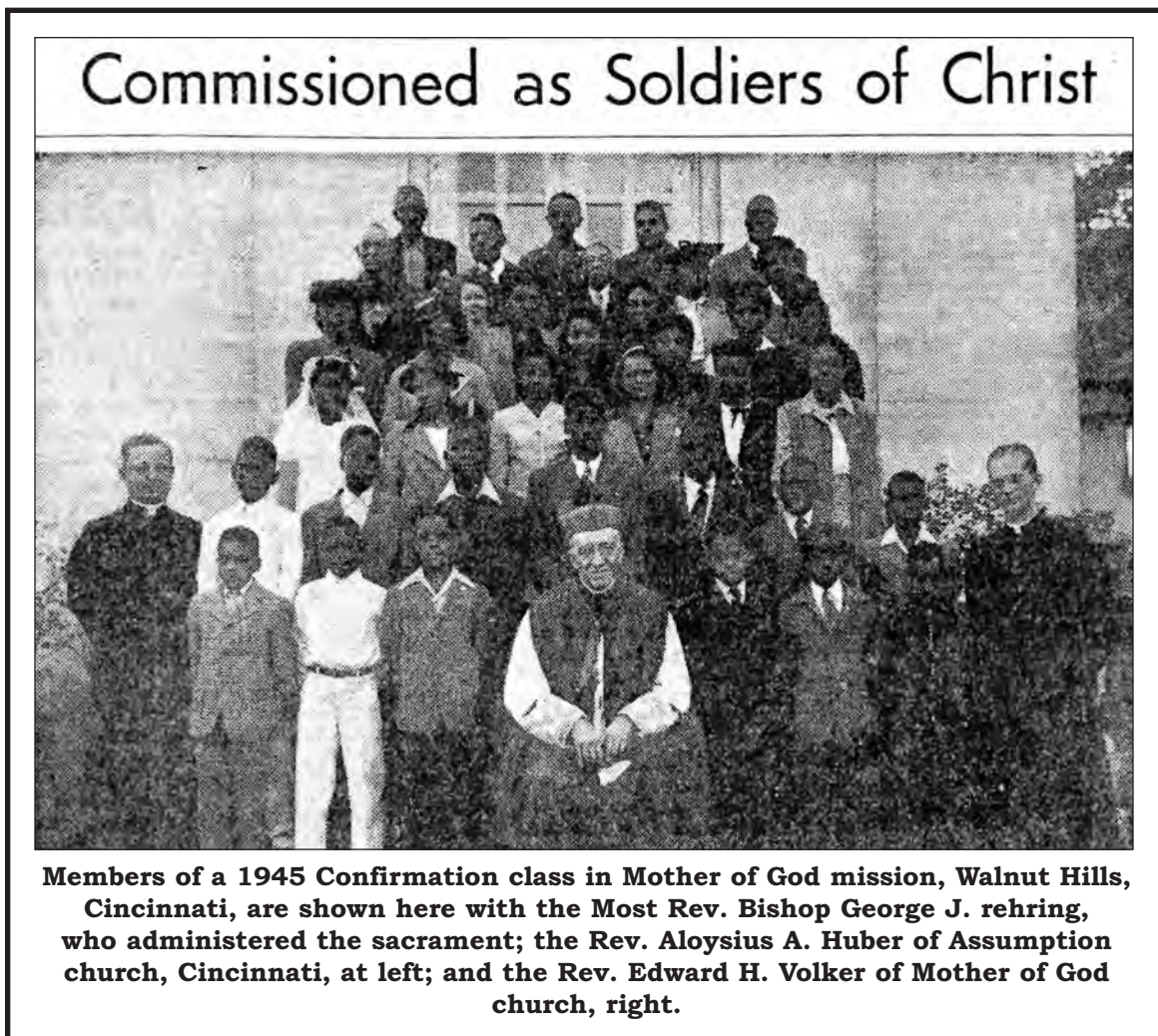
In 1939, the first year of the parish, Mrs. Elliott was instructed and baptized in the faith. All her children continued through Catholic grade and a high school, and one Gertrude, was graduated from St. Xavier university, New Orleans, La. Five of her grandchildren now attend St. Mark's grade school.

At the time of its foundation, Mother of God mission boasted of 15 parishioners. Only one husband and wife could receive the sacraments; only two boys in grade school and one in high school had received their First Communion; the first Holy Name unit in the mission could scrape up only one officer, and the Sorrowful Mother sodality none.

At the present time nine children are attending Catholic high schools and 50 children, baptized at Mother of God, attend neighboring parochial schools. Approximately 240 persons have been baptized in the history of the parish, about half of these are adult converts and most of the remainder are the children of converts.

In its 10-year history the mission has been in chard of eight priests: Fathers Edward Platt, Gerrard Evers, Bernard Felix, Edward Volker, Leo Herlihy, Paul Golembiewski, Vincent Bramlage, and Father Redmond, the present administrator.

Four Dominican Sisters from Sinsinawa, Wis., work at the mission. Sister Borromeo, who has been at the parish since its founding is the superior.





MOTHER OF GOD MISSION

Text from *Catholic Telegraph* Article [1956]

Father Eugene Gallagher is a mighty pleased man these days, for his small church at 3017 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, gained the distinction of having the highest number of converts in the archdiocese for 1955. Father Gallagher and his four helpers, the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Rosary received 76 converts into the church during the past year. But according to Father Gallagher, “such a feat wasn’t just an accident, nor did it happen overnight.”

HARD TASK AT FIRST. Five years ago, the young diocesan priest, an assistant pastor at Assumption Parish, was asked to take over the duties of its mission church, Mother of God. His primary aim was to increase the number of parishioners. He was also to establish church societies and to try to make the mission self-supporting. “And this meant of course,” Father Gallagher said in an interview, “that I was going to do a lot of converting.”

It was hard, time-consuming work at first, the priest related, because he had to make friends for himself first, before he could make friends for the church. “I started out by ringing doorbells and introducing myself as a neighbor,” he said, “and sometimes it meant a lot of return trips before I was greeted as a friend.” But after a year or more, when he had a few converts to his credit, “and business was picking up,” his parishioners and new converts began to do the work for him. “And all of a sudden,” he said, “people began ringing my doorbell to ask if they could take instructions.”

Most of Father’s converts are entire families, and usually young growing ones, “which means,” he said, “that all of their future children are born into the church.” In fact, the young priest gauges his success on the increase in the number of infant Baptisms of the past four years. In 1952, the parish had but 36 infant Baptisms; in 1955 it had 124, with most of the children being born of convert parents. Father Gallagher has baptized 21 infants so far in 1956.

Ms. BONITA WILFONG-MILLER

PARISHIONER OF MOTHER OF GOD MISSION

I saw the photograph of my family for the first time after my brother Ted showed me a copy of the first edition of “Celebrating National Black Catholic History Month, he had received from Deacon Winters. Deacon Winters did not know it was a photograph of the Wilfong family. I am Bonita Wilfong-Miller and the little girl standing in the front row of the photograph titled, “Family Joins Church” is me. The family members in the photograph are [front row] my siblings Theodore Jr., Odessa, Shirley, my parents Theodore Sr and Hattie Wilfong [not pictured is my sister Louise]. I am also in the photograph [left] titled, “Celebrating an Anniversary” along with Sister Borrromeo, my cousin Patricia Bostic-Stephens [middle] and a classmate. When I was born, the family lived on Van Buren Street in Avondale.

Shortly after I turned three-years-old, the family moved to Gilbert Avenue. We lived in a home that did not have hot water and my mother cooked on an oil-burning stove.

I was seven when the family became Catholic. I can say from that point on I was raised by my mom and the nuns. I attended the Douglass Colony Elementary School which was a red-brick house on Gilbert Avenue. The house is still there but is now boarded up. If I remember the story right, my mother had close friends [Ms. Geneva Carpenter and Ms. Rose Spears] who were Catholic and attended St. Henry Catholic Church in the West End. Ms. Carpenter helped my aunt raise her children and had her son Robert baptized at St. Henry. When Robert visited our house, he was always so excited and told us stories about his new found religion.

In the past, I had attended Bethel Baptist Church with my grandmother. The services were so long! I also didn’t understand why all the ladies wore their fancy dresses and hats to go to church. Even though they were dressed all fancy, when church started they got the “Holy Ghost” hollering and screaming, and shouting. In trying to explain to me, my grandmother would say, “they got the Holy Ghost, child!” One day Robert showed us a film about the life and death of Jesus. I remember that the film was nothing like the one directed by Mel Gibson [The Passion of Christ]. After watching the film I asked, “Why did they do that to that man?”

I not sure why, but one day my mom and dad told us, we are joining the church [Mother of God Mission] up the street. I had passed the church many times and would see the nuns walking the grounds. My parents explained that I would no longer attend Douglas Colony and would begin attending Assumption Elementary School. My second grade teacher at Douglas Colony tried to talk my parents into keeping me at Douglas Colony. We had been raised in a black neighborhood, attended black schools – with black teachers, and now I really had to make an adjustment at Assumption. I was the only black girl in the class and there were three black boys. We had a beautiful Caucasian teacher by the name of Miss Federle, I just loved her. Among all the Irish and Italian students, I felt so strange. I was the only black girl in my class all the way to the eighth grade. I had lots of white friends but I never met their parents. There was no a lot of student changes so for all those years, we were like a family. Once a year Assumption had Coney Island Day, the white kids would go to Coney Island and the black kids were given three dollars and a day off from school. The Catholic authority never put a halt to this kind of practice. One day, the parents of a fellow student complained and it made the news.

Shortly after that, Coney Island opened its doors to blacks but nobody wanted to go because of the past racist practices.

One of my best friends was Patricia Cogliana. She lived on St. James Avenue in Walnut Hills and didn't have any kind of racist blood in her. After graduating from Assumption, we went our separate ways. I attended Regina High School, the same year Emmett Till was killed in Mississippi. Finally, I was not the only black girl in my class; the others were Mary Ruth Carr, Annette Lee, and Mary Elizabeth Harris. My sister Peggy had a hard time at Regina, mostly from one of the Sisters. She was one of three black girls who attended Regina at the time. Peggy hung in there and graduated from Regina in 1954. The nuns at Regina did everything they could to discourage me and my sisters from pursuing professional careers. In 1975, I received an Associate Degree in Nursing; in 1980, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing and Health; in 1985, I received a Masters Degree in Nursing [Gerontology] from Wright State University. In spite of all the things we endured while in the Catholic Church, we remained dedicated Catholics.

My mother did domestic work and a lady that mother worked for told her she had seen my brother's [Ted Jr.] artwork at Shillito's. No one in the family knew Ted had artistic ability. She went down to Shillito's to see for herself. My mother and I spent a lot of time at Mother of God Mission helping out Sister Borromeo, Sister Waltrude, Fr. Redmon and Fr. Gallagher. Sister Borromeo helped my father get a job at the Ford Motor Company. He worked there for 32 years.

I left the Catholic Church in 1982, but I maintained a relationship with God and learned more about Jesus Christ. My mother and my friend Rosa Conner were very upset that I left the Catholic Church. My mother advised me to read the Psalms because she thought it would ease my mind.

On my birthday, Wednesday, January 23, 2008, I went to confession – after being away from the church for 26 years. The priest was an absolute gem. He listened intently to my story, the hurts and the pains and then he welcomed me back into the church. The next day, I told my brother Ted [it was his birthday] he welcomed me back too. After all these years, I had missed the Catholic Church. I am back, I'm a better person and I am happy. I have my version on what being Catholic is all about and Ted has his version. I can say this, we both love the Lord.

MR. THEODORE WILFONG JR.

PARISHIONER OF MOTHER OF GOD MISSION

I saw the photograph of my family for the first time when Deacon Winters gave me a copy of the first edition of “Celebrating National Black Catholic History Month. I don’t think anyone in the family had ever seen the photograph prior to that day. My parents are Theodore and Hattie Wilfong. My siblings are Odessa, Shirley, and Bonita.

I’m quite proud to be a part of Mother of God’s history. I started going to Assumption Catholic School in the seventh grade. I graduated from Purcell High School in 1956. I was the only black graduate in the Class of 1956. My senior year of high school, my best friend [Jack Wright] and I received a scholarship to the prestigious Art Academy of Cincinnati. To this day, Jack and I see each other often and play golf together. Jack is now an architect and I am a retired art director and graphic designer. Once a month, 20 – 25 of my friends from Purcell meet for lunch to talk about the good old days.

The racist experiences that my sisters and their friends had at Regina did not happen at Purcell. The nuns at Regina did everything they could to discourage them from pursuing professional careers. Yet, both of them went on to successful careers in Nursing and Education. If those nuns who were at Regina are still alive today, they would see that the “train they tried to derail is still on the track.”

Not once did the nuns and priests at Assumption, Mother of God and Purcell try to discourage me from pursuing my goals. I credit my artistic abilities to the nuns at Mother of God Mission and Brother Francis Grisez of Purcell High School. They instilled in me some great values, gave me direction and prepared me for life. It was through these relationships that I began to build a foundation of trusting in the Lord. Jack and I served as pallbearers at Brother Francis Grisez’s Funeral Mass in Dayton, Ohio.

In 1969, I married Lucille Penn and Fr. Eugene Gallagher officiated the wedding. Lucille died in 1985. In 1997, I married Tessie Harris and Fr. Steve Angi officiated the wedding at Saint Agnes. At the wedding, we “jumped-the-broom” to remember the ancestors who joined in marriage on foreign soil and who has given us a chance to know freedom. My friend Jack Wright was there to support me. Tess [a nurse] has truly been an angel and has supported me in sickness and in health.

I am Catholic to the core. My sister kids with by saying, “You’ve been Catholic since you were 12 years old. Some of the other boys and I would race to Mother of God just to be able to serve at Mass [a Latin Mass]. I served as an altar boy from the seventh until I graduated from Purcell High School. The nuns at Mother of God would always ask me to help out around parish grounds and rectory. Fr. Gallagher was a family friend who engaged in many debates with my father and mother.

Some of my children are Catholic and some are not. One of my daughters’ is studying to be an ordained Baptist minister. I’ve have been a member at Saint Agnes for 40 years. My journey as a Catholic has been strengthened in the relationships I have in the parish. I try to not miss a Mass because it’s an offense against the Good Lord and my Church. On Sunday, church is where I should be.



HISTORY OF MOTHER OF CHRIST MISSION

Taken from *The Catholic Telegraph* February 5, 1965

Mother of Christ Mission in Findlater Gardens, Cincinnati, will officially open its new church hall and recreational center, above, on Sunday, February 7. Father Charles H. McGurn of St. Bernard Parish, Winton Place, who has charge of the mission, will bless the building and offer Mass at 4 p.m.

The building, located on a three and on-half-acre site at 5301 Winneste Avenue will seat about 300 in the church hall for church services. Moveable partitions will permit the hall to be divided into three separate rooms for catechetical classes, held there for grade school and high students who attend public schools.

Other facilities of the building include a wing containing a meeting room, kitchen, utility rooms, an office and a priest's room.

For the past 20 years, the mission used a community building in Winton Terrace for Masses and instructions. The new building, which was erected by the archdiocese, will permit the transfer of all the mission's activities to the new center.

Eugene Schrand of Cincinnati was the architect; Allan and Beischel of Cincinnati the general contractor.

THE HISTORY OF MOTHER OF CHRIST CHURCH

The history of Mother of Christ Church began in the spring of 1945. The parishioners attended Mass at the Winton Terrace Administration Building. On Christmas Eve 1964, the members of Mother of Christ celebrated the first Mass in their new building then called the Mother of Christ Mission.

Today, Mother of Christ Church is a parish of over 100 families. Although Mother of Christ is a Catholic and primarily African American, people of various backgrounds, cultures, and religious expressions have been touched and strengthened by its presence.

The current pastor is Reverend James Shappelle and the pastoral administrator is Ms. Jodie Bender.

Priests who have served the parish:

Reverend James Shappelle	1984 – Present
Reverend George Jacquemin	1975 – 1984
Reverend Thomas Axe	1970 – 1975
Reverend Charles McGurn	1949 – 1970
Reverend James Hoban	1949
Reverend Henry Naber.....	1946 - 1949
Reverend Robert Tinsing	1945 – 1946

Religious Sisters and Lay Pastoral Administrators who have served the parish:

Ms. Jodie Bender
Sister Mary Macke, O.S.U.
Sister Joan Krimm, S.N.D.

Ms. LILLIAN KIMBROUGH

PARISHIONER OF MOTHER OF CHRIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

Most people in our neighborhood belonged to either a Baptist church or the A.M.E. church, like my mother. My dad was Jehovah Witness. Back then they were called “The Russell Lights.”

When St. Richard of Chichester church was built, it was a missionary church to convert the black people in Steele Subdivision (West College Hill) to Catholicism. The Sisters planned activities, like games, craft-making, and so forth to win us over, and it worked. My friends, Clarisse Martin and Viola Kimbrough and I were always anxious to get there... it was fun. After they won us over, they went about the business of converting us. It was kind of slick. We all decided to take Catechism classes and eventually were baptized by Father Hartke. I was 17 years old.

The First Baptist Church in our neighborhood offered movies on Monday nights for \$.20. My friends and I always went but never missed our classes at St. Richard.

I like order about stuff and appreciate the discipline and organization of the Catholic Church. It is not only a religion; Catholicism is a way of life.

I graduated from North College Hill High School right after I joined the church. My high school sweetheart had joined the Army and was stationed at Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas. When he sent for me, we were married in a Catholic Church on the Army post. Not long after our marriage he was sent to fight in Japan during WWII, and I returned home to Cincinnati.

Upon my return to Cincinnati, I resumed my membership at St. Richard's. Back then they had all of that Latin business going on (give me a break). I didn't understand a word they were saying, but I stayed. I knew that the Lord was present.

Catholicism is a part of my life. I ended up raising my three children alone and could not have done it without faith. I have always had a belief and faith that things will work out. That is what the Catholic Church has done for me.

I was determined that my kids would have better opportunities than I had. So, I sent them to St. Richard School. The white folks at North College Hill School treated blacks with contempt...it was awful! It was awful when I went there, and it looked to me that nothing had changed when



my children came of age for high school. Sports dominated at NCH, like it was the most important thing...instead of bookwork. The black guys that played sports were heroes during the sports season, but as soon as the season ended they were back to being mistreated, and I simply did not want that for my children. The Sisters at St. Richard cared about the children; it was quite different.

Viola is still my dear friend. It was her daughter that took my daughter to Mother of Christ, and then my daughter took me. My children and grandchildren are a part of The Mother of Christ family... my great-grandbaby was baptized there this year [2007].



MS. BARBARA REID

PARISHIONER OF MOTHER OF CHRIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

My mother was a young woman when she fled the South, from Alabama. It was the time of the Great Migration. On her path north, she met my father in Tennessee. He must have been stationed there in the Army, because I have always been told that daddy was the first altar boy from St. Ann's to fight in WWI.

While they were courting she became sick...caught malaria. Back then, black folks suffered from non-existent health care. Hospitals wouldn't accept them, and unless there was a black doctor around, (fat chance) they went without medical care. My father nursed her the best he could, and they fell in love. He brought her to Cincinnati where they married and had children. She was always a sickly woman, though... dad took care of her, my brothers and sisters and me.

Dad saw to it that we were baptized and went to church; Father McGarity baptized us at St. Anthony on Budd Street.

I remember one summer; the health department came to our house and quarantined us because of momma's malaria. We stayed in the house all summer. Talk about cabin fever! Well, one day, my father had about as much as he could stand. He got all of us children ready and took us for ice cream, quarantine or no quarantine.

It was not long after that that my mother died. It was August 19, 1943. Looking back, I imagine that dad was so distraught, that he drank all of the time. I always say, "My momma died and my daddy got drunk." He was not like that while momma was alive. Why, he taught us to read before we started school. In any case, our lives sure did change after momma died.

My father sent my sister and me to Girls Town in November 1943 around Thanksgiving.

I was eight. The nuns were so mean. I was a bed wetter and they didn't just whip me... I got whuppins! I guess it didn't occur to anybody that I was in crisis. My mother was dead, my family torn apart and I was in a strange place, with strangers.

Girls Town had three buildings for colored girls. One was for little colored girls, called St. Peter Claver House, a second building was for the older colored girls, and the third was for troubled colored girls... we never saw them. The white girls were kept completely separated from us... Jim Crowe was around then. Well, not only did they live in a different building than we did: they were fed differently than we were...we got the scraps... barely any meat at all. I used to cry because the food was so nasty. One nun had been around black folks before and kind of knew the seasonings that we were accustomed to. So sometimes she would pour gobs of bacon grease into our green beans. I would tear them up, it was so good, but it made me sick as a dog.

We lived just like the nuns did. We got up before the crack of dawn and attended Mass at 5:30 am, had breakfast and then went to classes. After school, there were tasks assigned to each of us. My task was to clean the nun's house. There was a great big stairway that I had to keep spotless... I even cleaned their bathroom and was just a little girl.



There was a big sewing room that had I don't know how many sewing machines... it was a sewing factory. When I got a bit older, my task was to fold the garments that were made there.

I left Girls Town in 1952 at 17 years old; the sisters placed me with a family in North Avondale, on Beechwood Avenue as the mother's helper. I was angry about it but didn't have anywhere else to go. My father died when I was 16. I rebelled: wouldn't go to school. I discovered black folks downtown and would slip out of the house to hang out with them. I just loved Central Avenue I would go to stage shows at the State Theater to see acts like "The Brown Skin Mollies." I had been so sheltered and restricted all of my life, that when I got a taste of freedom... it was on.

One day while I was tasting my freedom, a young man flirted with me and got my attention. While we courted, he took me to meet his big family: his parents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins. His family wrapped their arms around me and for the first time since I was eight years old, I belonged to a family. I was more in love with the family than I was with him. I got married at St. Joseph's in 1953, which I had joined as soon as I left Girls Town... I have always gone to church.

The Good Shepherd Sisters that raised me gave me everything that I am. While times were hard, I knew that God saw everything. I always say: "God takes care of babies and fools." I think that if I had to do it again, I'd go that same route.

My favorite Scripture is Hebrews Chapter 11, where Paul writes:

1. Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.
2. Because of faith the men of old were approved by God.
3. Through faith we perceive that the worlds were created by the word of God, and

PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

that what is visible came into being through the invisible. 4. By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice greater than Cain's. Because of this he was attested to be just, God himself having borne witness to him on account of his gifts; therefore, although Abel is dead, he still speaks. 5. By faith Enoch was taken away without dying, and "he was seen no more because God took him." Scripture testifies that, before he was taken up, he was pleasing to God. 6. But without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Anyone who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him. 7. By faith Noah, warned about things not yet seen, revered God and built an ark that his household might be saved. He thereby condemned the world and inherited the justice which comes through faith.

Please read it, the entire chapter.

I have always been encouraged to know that God sent Abraham to a foreign country and kept His promise to make him the father of as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore. I love the story of Joseph who was sold into slavery; God brought him out. I think about how Moses' parents sent him away in order to save his life. God parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross, but the same sea swallowed the Egyptian army.

Right now there are four generations of my immediate family that are members of Mother of Christ. I am the matriarch. I believe! That is what has helped me.



Baptism, Mother of Christ Church, from left to right: Mary Johnson, Michael Johnson, Norman Barnett and Father Michael Paraniuk. (1987).

Ms. ROSA YOUNG-BOGGS

PARISHIONER OF MOTHER OF CHRIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

Interview by Mr. Greg Pierson

I was born on May 6, 1922 in Livingston, Alabama. My birth-mother's sister and her husband Martha and Richard Young became my adoptive parents when I was six months old. We lived in Bessemer, Alabama. The city of Bessemer got its name from an engineer, Sir Henry Bessemer who developed a method of making steel. Besides being noted for its steel mill – railroad Pullman cars were also manufactured there. Our community was completely segregated – schools and churches.

My father worked as a hook-man on the L & N Railroad. Dad was also a deacon and an ordained Baptist minister. When I was twelve, he became sick and died before a pastorate became open. He was self-educated and read everything he could get his hands on. My father loved books and would read to me and help me with homework. One of the things I loved most about him was that he didn't believe children should be whipped. In our house, mama was the disciplinarian. She insisted that we be honest and there absolutely was no lying. The only spankings I had as a child were for trying to get away with something rather than just telling the truth. Even though I was the only child, I learned early on to make friends – our yard was always full of children. Where we grew up, we knew all the neighbors and mama seemed to know when someone needed help and she was always eager to help. Mama sang in the choir and her involvement in church affairs and activities were a way of life.

As a child, I was baptized in a river by pastor, Rev. Ravigee of New Zion Baptist Church. The church gathered and there was lots of singing and rejoicing. At the age of fifty-four, a friend invited me to her Catholic Church. A year later, I completed my religious instruction. On February 22, 1981, at Our Lady of Presentation Catholic Church, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation and my grandson was baptized and received First Communion.

My faith and God and the witness of faith that my godmother has exhibited have kept me strong. I rely on the strength I get from prayer, my prayer partners and the brothers and sisters I get together with to study Scripture and to share our faith experiences. I've also been spiritually nourished through sacred songs: "He Touched Me," "His Eye Is On the Sparrow," and "Amazing Grace." Fr. Al Lauer who was a charismatic priest was most instrumental in my spiritual growth. He taught me how to read and understand the Scriptures, and how to apply it to my daily life. Through the study of Scripture, I have come to love the Lord more deeply. It's hard to pick a favorite Scripture, but if I were to choose one it would be Psalm 103:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me,
bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget his benefits – who forgives iniquity,
who heals all your diseases...who crowns you
with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with
good as long live so that your youth is
renewed like the eagle's.

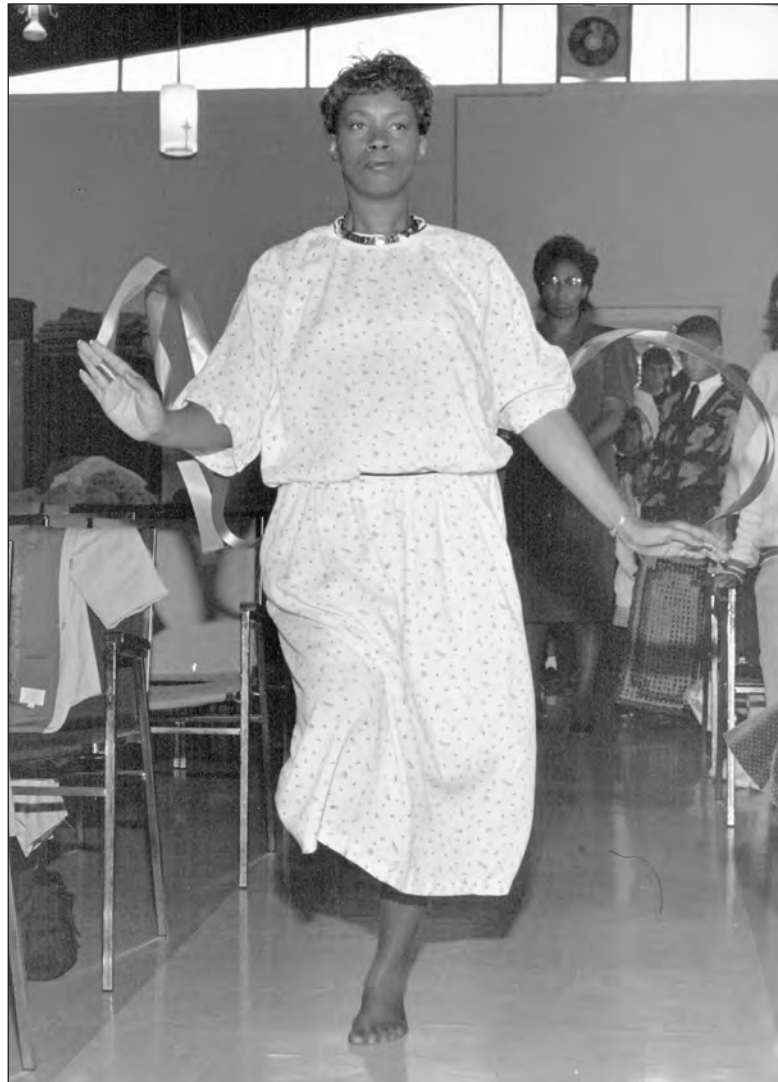
PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

In the past, I've participated in the charismatic church community where we had daily Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, healing services and prayer meetings.

My current parish, Mother of Christ is a very friendly and welcoming parish. We try to encourage the young people so that they can steer clear of the streets. Fr. Shappelle and the Jesuit priest from the Claver Jesuit Community have been a blessing for us. And of course, a good church has to have a good gospel choir and our choir is one of the best. My faith in Jesus Christ and his Word has convinced me that obedience is better than sacrifice. Through obedience I have God's blessings, favor and rest. I have learned to love God, self, family and my neighbors.

I want everyone to know that God loves them and created them in his image. God has prepared a place in heaven for each person who has believed in his Son. I want everyone to know that the Catholic Church is very rich when experienced in its fullness. Yet, sometimes we get caught up into projects and programs to raise money for the survival of the church. And the result is that we suffer from spiritual malnutrition.

Sharon Monroe-Carr performs an interpretive dance to open Kwanza at Mother of Churst Church in 1989.



MOTHER OF CHRIST MISSION

LOCAL TEENAGE VOLUNTEERS ENRICH SUMMERS FOR WINTON PLACE YOUTH

Catholic Telegraph Article – August 7, 1970

Every day for the past two weeks, approximately 115 Presbyterian and Catholic children between the ages of 5 and 12 have assembled at the Mother of Christ Mission for the Winton Terrace Bible School. Co-sponsored by the Rev. Arvin L. Sexton, pastor of Winton Hill Presbyterian Church, and Father Lawrence Strittmatter, assistant at St. Bernard Church, the school has provided summer religious instruction and recreation for area children since 1967. "The main idea behind the program was to supplement the released-time program that the children were getting through the school year," Father Strittmatter said, noting that it is "a very ecumenical school."

Volunteers from St. Clare and St. Vivian Parish Youth Clubs staffed the two-week program, which included daily religious education, recreation, refreshments and song fests. Mrs. Donald Hunt of St. Clare Parish, one of the original organizers three years ago, continues as a supervisor. When Father Strittmatter first requested help in launching the program, Mrs. Hunt "Jumped at the chance," as she put it. "I love working with children and this is a very worthwhile program," the mother of five admitted. Helping Mrs. Hunt was another St. Clare parishioner, Mrs. John Grebb, who also helped organize the program and recruited youth volunteers to be student group leaders. "We are trying to get the bible school children to take pride in themselves and their community," Mrs. Grebb said, explaining the purpose of the school.



Children at the Winton Terrace Bible School prepare for craft time during which they create some art project that relates to the biblical theme of the day. The school is co-sponsored by Catholics and Presbyterians in the area for children between the ages of 5 and 12.

Outlining the three-hour daily program, she said that either Father Strittmatter or the Rev. Sexton read a biblical quotation, and then followed up with a short parable explaining the theme of the quotation. The children then divided into groups according to age and the student leaders tried to help the children see how the quotation could be applied to their own lives. "Most of the biblical quotations dealt with loving others and respecting people, as we are trying to point out to these children that each person is important to himself, to others and to the community," Mrs.

Grebb said. The children were given a recreation period and a “Kool-Aid” break and then joined together for a song fest.

The only qualification for student group leaders was that they be of high school age, according to Mrs. Grebb. A total of 47 boys and girls participated as student leaders in the Bible School. Mrs. Hunt, praising the volunteers, said, “All of the kids really stuck with the program and we never lacked willing volunteers. Other members of the organizing committee included, Mrs. Lauree Duncan of the Winton Hill Presbyterian Church; Mrs. Carl Anderson of the Mother of Christ Mission; and Mrs. Carol Fairchild of St. Vivian Church.

HISTORY OF ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the 1870s, the steady stream of Cincinnatians moving to suburban homes brought about the construction of new Catholic churches including St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church, 3401 Reading Road Cincinnati, Ohio. The parish organized in 1874 for English-speaking individuals, a large number of them Irish Catholic domestics, purchased a lot on Prospect Place and erected the first St. Andrew Church in 1832. The church building later served as a synagogue, then was razed for the construction of South Avondale School.

The present stone Gothic style church [whose architects were Samuel Hannaford and Sons, begun in 1917 and dedicated in 1920, features a vaulted ceiling, stained glass memorial windows, and a statue of St. Andrew [above the front door near the apex. Around 1919, Frank Herschede [d. 1922] ordered a marble statue of the saint from Italy. It failed to please the parish priest [Father David O'Meara] and was crated and stored in the warehouse of the Herschede Hall Clock Company. This statue was not the same size as the other statues in the church.



Because the figure held a St. Andrew's Cross, it was difficult to sell to another parish as a different to sell to another parish as a different saint. The statue was blessed and installed on the lawn in 1939 and is now inside the church.

The 1960s was a period of change for both Avondale and within parish. The red brick school [built in 1925] behind the church was closed in 1965, and students were sent to St. George School, renamed Corryville Catholic. It was during this period that the church's interior was painted and adorned with the may symbols of the Dominican Order.

During the rioting in 1967, the church and school were targets of vandalism. The riots resulted in "white flight." Not only were the human resources lost but also the structural and human connections that make a parish financially solvent. These systemic changes essentially eradicated parish boundaries and instantly changed the ethnic and cultural make-up of the community.

Coupled with the "mission" mentality which had be instilled in the minds of many African-American Catholics, this and many other factors greatly impacted the financial and spiritual health of the parish.

Pastors of Saint Andrew since 1970: Father William Tefft O.P., 1967–1970; Father Harvey Schaller 1970–1979; Father Harry Meyer 1979–1988; Father William Cross 1988–1994; Father Terrence Meehan 1994–2001; Father Jerry Steinbrunner C.P.P.S. 2002–present. Father William Cross currently serves as a sacramental minister.

St. Andrew Church is located in the heart of the Avondale community and is the only Catholic Church in the area. Avondale is a part of the “Uptown Development Area,” which includes the expansion of University Hospital, University of Cincinnati, Eden Park, Children’s Hospital and the Cincinnati Zoo.

Demolition of many of the houses on Burnet Avenue is leading the way for the proposed/planned development. Twenty-five million dollars has been allocated for this development, which will include both housing and a new business district. This development area is two blocks west of St. Andrew’s present location. Along with this renaissance movement in the immediate area, St. Andrew is also showing signs of its own rejuvenation. The exterior of the church has undergone some minor repairs to its roof and outside stairs, as well as landscaping. This rejuvenation extends to established programs and ministries.

Mission Statement:

St. Andrew is a vibrant urban Catholic community that is both culturally and economically diverse. We minister in divine love to all people by embracing a spirit of celebration and fellowship in our worship, in an atmosphere which helps to facilitate spiritual growth. We offer a foundation of education and empowerment to those we serve. We are a Catholic community with a foundation of mutual caring and a vision for future revitalization.

MS. JEAN DANIEL

PARISHIONER AT SAINT ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

I will be 78 years old in December. I was born in Provident, Kentucky which is located near the Tennessee border. When I was six months old, my mother and my two sisters moved to Cincinnati, Ohio to be closer to my grandmother.

My mother was not Catholic, but at the time the Church was reaching out to Blacks in the West End. I was baptized at St. Ann Catholic Church, 931 John Street by Fr. Clarence Schmidt. I grew on 9th Street near Central Avenue. I remember my childhood as being great days. We had our only little crowd because we were encouraged to stay away from people who were not Catholic. St. Ann was an all-Black School, and then I attended the all-Black Madonna High School. I thought we were treated very well but we were not exposed to other Catholics.

I became a member at St. Andrew after reading in the newspaper that St. Andrew was receiving a Black priest, Fr. William Cross. My thought was that I could go over there to be of assistance to him. I don't think the people at St. Andrew gave him the support that they would have given a White priest. That's why he left at his initial six years as the pastor.

I volunteered in the parish office and assisted the parish in any way that I could. I find peace in the Catholic Church. My experience of the Mass and the people has served me well. There is no other Church for me.

The Catholic Church has not been tolerant of other races. When I attended other White Catholic churches, they weren't very welcoming.

I believe the current situation with the Pastoral Region is racist because all of the Black Catholic Churches are grouped together. I'm sure we would feel good about being together in one church, but this whole discussion of not enough priests is a slight toward the Black communities.

The Archdiocese has been talking about merging churches for the last twenty years. I believe the decisions have already been made. Even with all that, I still love the Church. My life is good because of my Catholic upbringing.



MS. JEAN DANIEL
DEC. 11, 1929 - FEB. 17, 2008

Mass of Christian Burial
Saint Andrew Catholic Church
3401 Reading Road
Saturday, February 23, 2008

Presiders: Fr. Jerry Steinbrunner
Fr. William Cross
Interment: Spring Grove Cemetery

MR. RAYMOND PAYNE

PARISHIONER AT SAINT ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

I turned 76 years old a few days ago. I was baptized at the age of 8 at Holy Trinity Catholic Church. My father was Catholic and my mother became a convert. We lived on 5th Street a half-block from Holy Trinity. We were taught by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament who were dedicated to teaching African Americans and Native Indians. The Fathers of the Sacred Heart [The Verona Fathers – Italians] began to operate the parish and the school. They were dedicated to teaching Africans and African Americans.

What I remember most about the Verona Fathers is that Fr. Dominic Ferrara [1945 – 1949] had sang in the opera. Father Ferrara began the first choir at Holy Trinity and developed the Boy's Sanctuary Choir [9-15 years old] in which I was a member. He had a unique title, the "little bishop." We weren't sure if he was promoted to bishop, but we knew he had some kind of special position.

At Holy Trinity, we had a Boy Scout troop [#173]. It was one of the only black Boy Scout troops in the city [the other, Troop #55 was located at the 9th Street YMCA.] The 9th Street YMCA was one of the few YMCA's that had a bicycle course. My father, Norman Payne, coached football at Holy Trinity and won several CYO championships. We had a marching band under the direction of Carl Bates, who was also the scoutmaster. The Cub Scout master was James Golliday.

At Holy Trinity, we had a Holy Name Society. One of the major functions for our society was to march to Crosley Field for Benediction with all of the other Holy Name Societies. The big thing for us on that day was the walk down Lincoln Park Drive, because we would have a large black audience – "it was show-off time."

Most of the children who graduated from Holy Trinity attended Madonna High School. Once they closed Madonna, the girls attended Mercy [if they went to Catholic school]. Most of the girls did not attend Catholic school because Mercy was not very friendly. The boys went to Martin de Porres High School.

The neighborhood could tell the difference between Holy Trinity kids and Jackson Elementary School kids — not because of our uniform but because of our behavior. The boys worked at the bingo on Friday nights selling pop. We had a thing called the *Junior Catholic Messenger* aimed at the kids. It was the first time I read about black heroes [Mary McLeod Bethune, Toussaint Louverture]. *Mary McLeod Bethune the Dayton Normal and Industrial School now known as Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune was active against racism and served an unofficial advisor to President Roosevelt. Toussaint Louverture led Haitian Revolution slavery and became the first leader of a free Haiti.*

My family moved from 5th Street to the projects closer to St. Edward/St. Ann Catholic Parish. For many of us, the projects were an upgrade because they were new and they were not subsidized housing. In 1950, my family moved to Avondale, and we attended St. Andrew. At the time,

there were less than 10 families at Saint Andrew. In 1956, while on leave from the Army, my wife [Mary] and I were married by Fther Harvey Shaller at St. Andrew.

Over years, my faith has helped me a lot. As a more mature person, I think, it's a matter of looking back and recounting how I've changed.

I'm more able to express my spirituality and it allows me pray and it helps me to understand people better. I have become more patient because of my faith. My kids tease me that I'm not as patient these days. But when I see young people come to the Saint Andrew Table for the poor, I realize that I should not dwell on things that bother me. I can now gently make suggestions rather than making sure I have it my way.

MRS. MARY KATHRYN ALLISON JOHNSON

PARISHIONER OF SAINT ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

My parents Rufus and Rosa Dukes were born in Brennen, Georgia and were raised in the Methodist Church. When they moved to Cincinnati, they joined the Catholic Church. My grandmother would always say, "There are many ways to serve the Lord and all of them good if you are sincere." So I think my parents took her message to heart.

I was born and raised in the West End. That in itself was an education. If you could survive and still keep your center, you could deal with anything - and that's a fact! We worked hard to speak correctly, to walk correctly, to dress correctly. And, if any adult saw you not doing that, they would correct you.

The nuns at Saint Anthony Church were the Sisters of St. Francis of the Poor, they never hit you, but if they told you that they were going to see your parents, over the weekend, you knew you were in trouble. The nuns were like family. The one thing about that, you got use to those nuns and you thought all nuns were like that. As I look back, I think those nuns were responsible for the Catholic High Schools being integrated. Because they didn't put it on us, they put it on the school system. The nuns would say, "Let's see if the Catholic Schools are doing their work."

The nuns had prepared us to be ready for anything and if we weren't they would take us back and work with us. So in the summer, [beginning in the 5th grade] we had what we called "Rosey Gill". Actually, it was summer school - they just named it something else. We learned how to set the table, which side the fork went on and those types of things. But we also studied Algebra and English and the nuns made it fun. When we got to high school, we were ready!

It was not like we voluntarily went to summer school. The nuns would come to your house and tell your parents that we are going to do this, because we are getting them ready for high school. Nobody ever asked if you wanted to go. You just knew you were going to go. The summer classes were held at St. Anthony Church - West End. They were preparing us for life and we didn't know it. But we were ready when we got to Our Lady of Mercy. We had just enough street sense in knowing how to act to survive. When we got there, there was one girl who called us the "N" word. I dared her to say it again and I had some choice words. She was so shocked and said that she was just playing. I told her, "We don't play like that." I never had any more trouble from her or any of the other girls.

The one thing that I did have trouble with was most of the Catholic girls got jobs at Christmas time at the Post Office and I couldn't understand, since I was Catholic, why I never got one of those jobs.

At that time, the history books said there were four groups of people; the black, the yellow, the white, and the red. Of these groups, the white were superior. That was in the book. So when we had a test, in order to get what was in the book, I wrote on the test that a white person must have written the book, so naturally they would put that white people was superior.



Now if there was a black person (back then they said Negro) that wrote the book, the black person probably would have written that blacks were superior. One day, Sister Mildred [I never will forget her name] called me out into the hall. We (the black girls) had a pact - that if anything happened at school, we would holler and everybody would get up and come out in the hall. Sr. Mildred said to me, "If you change your test paper, I will make sure that you get a job at the Post Office." Well, for some reason I felt empowered. I said, "No I'm not going to change my paper." She raised her hand to as if to hit me and I hollered. My classmates came running out into the hallway. Sister Mildred turned so red and said, "You will never be able to work at the Post Office."

My dad was a hard worker and he told me, "If I have to come to school because you did something wrong, I'll take care of you, but if the nuns are wrong, I'll take care of them."

Well, I'll show you how the Lord works! I never worked at the Post Office but that's all right. The Lord took care of us. I had to make cornbread one day and my dad fixed a big pot of beans. I could make hot water cornbread that cooked in the oven that looked like cake. I began selling cornbread in the neighborhood. I would start at my house and go down the row and collect .25 for a slice of cornbread. I made \$2.50 that day. At that time that was a lot of money.

God was always the head of our household. That started with my grandmother. Funny thing about my mother's mother was that she was the type of person who prayed for and blessed everything - the person who planted it and the person who picked it. One day, I was sitting at her right and she was praying, and I had my head down and I didn't think she heard me when I

said, "Those people are going to eat before we will." She bopped me upside the head with a backhand. And to this day, I let the people pray!

I was baptized at St. Anthony Catholic Church in 1935. I remember that the church was really lit up. We were the last church at the end of Cincinnati. The people from Price Hill would come down whenever we would have something. The church would be full. One thing that I now realize is that people who attended St. Anthony's back then are now your lawyers, your doctors, and your teachers.

On Sunday's we would attend the 9 am Mass, come home to eat dinner, and then we would go back down to the church and watch silent movies.

After watching the silent movies, we would move the chairs and tables and skate. It was at one of these silent movies that I started dating my first husband, Frank Allison. He came to one of the movies with me. He was sharp. He had his gold shirt on and back then they had those jackets with no collars and he had his gold pants, shined shoes and he always liked to wear a hat. Well, at the time, while at the silent movies, we would talk to the screen, as if we were making the story up. He leaned over and asked me, "Did you know that they have talking movies?" At that time it cost a penny to go to the silent movies, we didn't have a quarter to go to the Roosevelt Theater. Frank Allison converted to Catholicism and we were married at St. Anthony's.

While at a student at St. Anthony, there was a lady who came to show us the minuet. I will never forget it. I couldn't understand why she would teach us a dance like that. My mother told me, "it doesn't hurt to learn something new. You don't have to like it but the next time someone is talking about it - you'll know what they are talking about and you can converse on that level."

One of the worst moments I've ever had as a Catholic was when we moved to Evanston. All these people were supposed to be Catholic and they treated us like we were aliens. They acted like the church was just for white folks. They had dogs in the yard that would jump at you. As Blacks began to move in the community the priest were not very helpful in building relationships.

I've been a parishioner at various Catholic parishes: Saint Anthony, Saint Andrew, Saint Mark, and the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Chains. I was once the president of the Women's Society at St. Mark and my husband [Frank Allison] was the president of the Men's Society. I returned to Saint Andrew when Archbishop Pilarczyk assigned Fr. Cross as the pastor.

The most instrumental people in my faith journey were my grandmother, my mother and the nuns at St. Anthony. Those nuns really worked with the community and you never heard about anyone trying to hurt them. They felt free to work and to walk in the community. That in itself is a spiritual thing. The nuns helped us more than the priest. The Catholic Schools that I attended - Saint Anthony and Our Lady of Mercy also help form me. I could see the spirituality more than I could tell you about it.

My grandmother use to say, "You can learn something from everybody, even if it's a fool, because the next time you see somebody acting like that, you know it's a fool and can move away from them." I'm always open to learning. Even today, I learn from others all the time, especially youngsters. Children are my passion. Even if I can't do as much with them as I use to, I still talk to them. As a parishioner at Saint Andrew, I've prepared a lot of children for First Communion. I would tell them that God is the God of all of us. When we are all using the same Bible, the same Ten Commandments, He is the same God. Now, there are different ways that we

decide how we are going to praise Him. They are not wrong, they're not better, they are just different. We should be open to listen to all religions.

I came to believe that there is not one true religion because my maternal grandmother was Baptist and my paternal grandmother was Methodist. However you choose worship is between you and your God. For God will know if you have a sincere heart.

Music has played a major role in my life. It got to be a joke, because I'm not much of a singer but when my first husband was sick, he really liked me to sing to him, "Here I Am Lord." I can't think of the name of the other songs, but a verse to the song says, "Be patient with me because the Lord is not through with me yet."

When I was younger I made up a Psalm. When we were little, my grandmother's favorite Scripture was the 23rd Psalm. The grandchildren had to recite that for her on a regular basis. But in school the nuns would say, look at the whole thing and see what it is really saying. So when it got around to me I said, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want, for any good things in this life and whatever happens will be a good thing."

It has been a long journey. Things have gotten better in some areas but we still have things to do. Instead of having what we would call Italian parishes, German parishes, and Black parishes, we should have Catholic parishes. We've pushed ourselves in a corner and now we don't know how to get out.

MR. DAVID LETT

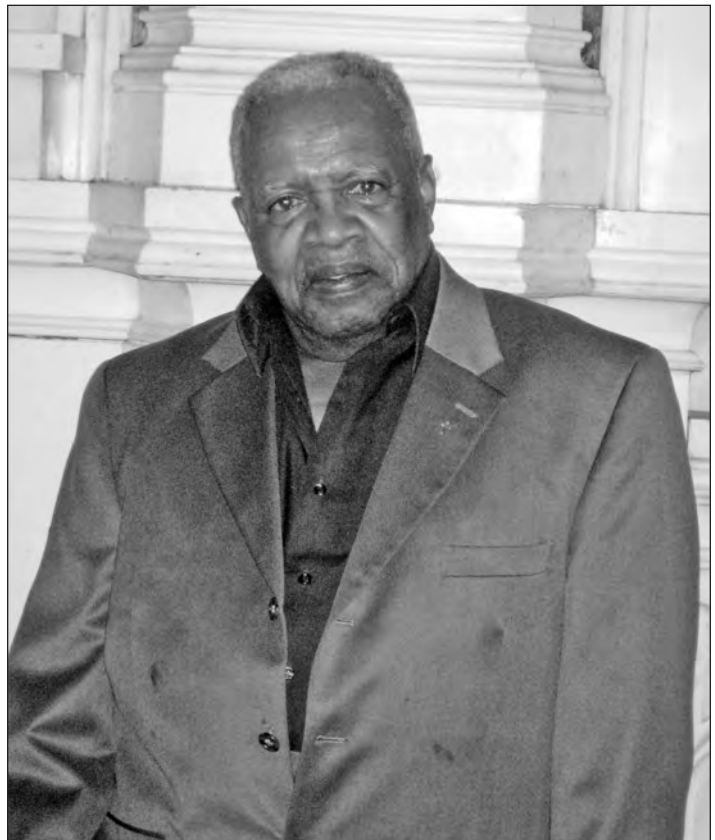
PARISHIONER OF SAINT ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. I am a widower. My wife and I have three children: Glen, Donald and Davienia.

As a child, my parents sent my brother [Charles] and I to St. Ann even though neither of them was Catholic. My mother would see to it that every Sunday we got up and went to Mass. The Sisters at the school were the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. We eventually became Catholic due to the outreach the Sisters had to the poor. Anytime the Sisters did their outreach, it was always two of them – they were never alone. They were very good to us – and were just like parents to us. Even though we were poor, our parents would give us a quarter to go to the theatre. It would cost 10 cents to get in and we would have 15 cents to spend! We bought hot dogs, pop or whatever we could get for 15 cents.

At the age of six, I was baptized at St. Ann's on John Street. I remember it well because they had breakfast – chocolate and rolls and a banana. Even for Confirmation, somehow what I remember most is the breakfast!! The church gave the boys a suit, shirt, and a tie; and the girls a dress. The clothes they bought for us were ours to keep. We would wear them on Sundays and to the movies. All the clothes that were given to us were the same because they didn't want us to try to compete with each other. They wanted to keep tranquility in the schools. The whole neighborhood was very poor.

The Cincinnati that I grew up in was prejudice as hell. It wasn't just in the West End where I grew up, but it was the whole city. Black folk couldn't go across Central Avenue. They would turn you around, no matter how young or how old you were. We would only have the worst groceries at the stores. Everything that was worth anything and everything that made any money was owned by the white people. There was a big red truck called Landon & Knox & the Charity Box, which would come through the neighborhood selling groceries. I believe they were running for President & Vice President of the United States at the time but they didn't win, Roosevelt won.



Father Miller was an instrumental force in my life as I started in the Catholic schools and what he taught me I carried with me through the years. He taught classes in and outside of the regular school day. One of the things I loved the most was being an altar boy. We got to wear

this long black cassock. It was truly an honor - I loved putting on that cassock. It was an honor on the schoolyard because everybody looked up to us.

It was something we earned. They didn't just give it to you. We would earn the right to be an altar boy by not getting any demerits, or having low marks in school.

I attended Madonna High School which they later changed its name to De Porres High School. The same teachers who taught me in grade school also taught me in high school. Those Sisters were pretty smart. In high school we earned a stipend once a month to do chores around the school. I think they paid us about 5-8 dollars a month.

I've been a member at St. Ann, St. Joseph and St. Andrew.

I enjoy being a member at St. Andrew. The reverence in the church has changed a lot. Now, the girls and women come to church wearing tight skirts or jeans; and jeans – and the boys and men wearing shorts or jogging suits. When we were going to church back then, we'd put on our best and all the women had on hats or something covering their heads. We also had Mass in Latin. I learned a lot of Latin back then.

Everything about Catholicism has been good to me. I feel bad about them taking down the altar rails and the way they say Mass now, in English. The change seems less reverent. It doesn't seem as solemn as it used to be.

My faith in God has made me a better person. I'm more considerate of my fellow man. I contribute to the support of my church. Yes, faith in God changed my life. I know that serving the Lord is everything. I find strength in Psalm 23 or in the song, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

I've told my kids and their children, "God is good. God is real."

MS. GLORIA NELSON TURNBOW PARISHIONER OF SAINT ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

Interview by Mrs. Sabrina Burton-Simonson

My Catholic beginnings started with my maternal great grandmother, Hannah Monday. She was from Louisville, Kentucky, but somehow ended up in Chattanooga, Tennessee where she married a 'Geechee'. **[The Gullah people, living in the low country of South Carolina and Georgia are also Geechee, especially in Georgia. The Gullah are known for preserving more of their African linguistic and cultural heritage than any other African American community in the United States.]**

Unfortunately she was in an abusive relationship, but managed to get away. She and my grandmother, Willie Mae Samuels caught a train to Cincinnati, Ohio. They ended up on Budd Street at St. Anthony Catholic Church in the West End. At that time, my great grandmother and grandmother arrived with nothing. They had no money, no food, nor a place to stay. My great grandmother went to the nuns and asked them for help while she looked for housing and employment. It was the generosity of those nuns that we became Catholic. As a result, my grandmother stayed true to Catholicism for the rest of her life. She was a strong Catholic who read her bible daily.

I was born in 1945 in the West End at 1210 West 8th Street. My grandmother and uncles attended St. Anthony Catholic School for a period of time but my mom attended Oyler School in Price Hill. However, my grandmother made sure I was christened into the faith. The family moved to Avondale in the mid-fifties. We lived on Reading Road where the Urban League is now. I developed close relationships with the Catholic kids in the community and they took me to Mother of God Mission Church on Gilbert Avenue, even though St. Andrew Catholic Church was closer to our home. While I attended Mother of God, my grandmother attended Assumption Catholic Church because we weren't sure that we would be welcomed at St. Andrew. My grandma expected us to go to Mass every morning before school or work. In fact, I went to Mass almost every day of my life growing up and now, if I miss Mass as an adult, I feel real bad.

When we began to attend St. Andrew, there were very few Blacks who were parishioners, except my grandmother and two of my uncles. Their involvement at St. Andrew is the reason I was encouraged to worship there. I was christened at St. Anthony but baptized at St. Andrew.

I also received my first Communion and Confirmation at St. Andrew. I have pictures of my Confirmation with my best friend. The girls all wore gloves and veils. It was a beautiful and solemn ceremony.



Friends Judy Harris and Gloria, Spring 1960 and, below in 1985



Father McQuallin, O.P. (Dominican) and Father Shaller, O.P. (Dominican) and Father Harry Meyer, Archdiocese of Cincinnati were instrumental in shaping my religious views. Father McQuallin and Father Shaller were very kind to me and encouraged me to go to Catholic High School. I attended St. Andrew School and graduated 8th grade. I graduated from Our Lady of Angels High School in 1964.

I always remember Father Shaller with his head of white hair on the playground talking to us about our goals for the future. Father Harry had a huge impact on my adult life as a Catholic.

St. Andrew and Our Lady of Angels had an enormous effect on my life. I believe I would not be who I am today had I not had my educational Catholic experience.

I always felt special and loved and my positive experiences occurred while attending catholic schools. The only negative experience was with a counselor at OLA in my senior year who told me that I would never be more than a short order cook. Education is important and Catholic Education is a must for my family. I graduated college and when my kids went to Roger Bacon High School, that same counselor was there. It was neat to let her know that I turned out, just fine. I'm an educator, a supervisor and a mentor. I have served on the Archdiocesan Board of Education and the School Board for Corryville Catholic School.



Our Lady of Angels School, St. Bernard

I belonged to Mother of God, but my church faith has been shaped by St. Andrew. I enjoy the fellowship of my parish. We are a family. Even though, we've had our ups and downs - we love each other - and there is a special bond between us. I've known some of the members of St. Andrew for most of my life.

Prayer has always been a major part of my life. I pray daily and it goes back to my roots, my praying grandmother. My prayer is also rooted in those sacred songs I've heard almost all my life: "He Looked Beyond My Faults" and "Let's Us Break Bread Together". The words in both of these hymns have really touched my heart.

The Book of Ruth is my favorite book in the Bible. I did not have a very good relationship with my mother-in-law and I vowed that I would love my daughter-in-law like Naomi loved Ruth. Right now my daughter-in-law is taking catechetical lessons to become Catholic. Early on, she agreed to allow my grandchildren to be baptized Catholic and to attend Catholic school. And now she is being instructed in the Catholic Faith.

I have 5 children, 10 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. I constantly teach them the importance of believing in and praying to God daily. I try to teach them that all things are possible with God and that they can't do anything without God in their lives. If they don't have God in their lives they are not going to make it.

HISTORY OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Martin de Porres Parish was established in 1935 as St. Christina in the area of Hamilton County that was incorporated in 1946 as Lincoln Heights. The purpose of Archbishop McNicholas' founding of the parish was to serve the African-American Catholic community in northwest Hamilton County. Father Charles F. Murphy celebrated the first mass August 4, 1935 with 40 people in attendance. The building had a chapel and classroom on the first floor and two classrooms on the second floor with three modest rooms which served as the home of Father Murphy.

With the generosity of Mary Menge, sister of Father Goswin Menge, a new church was built. This church was dedicated by Bishop George J. Rehring, on June 12, 1938 and was named St. Christina in memory of Mary Menge's deceased mother. A new school with four classrooms was opened in September 1939. The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati staffed the parish school from its founding in 1935 until its closing by the archdiocese in 1979. Since then, the parish has been one of five parishes operating the St. Gabriel Consolidated School in Glendale, Ohio.

The parish was re-named in the early 1970s in honor of the first canonized saint of the Americas of African descent — St. Martin de Porres, whom Pope John XXIII had canonized in 1962.

The parish owns 15 acres of property and has three buildings, the church, the pastor's residence/parish office building, and the former school. Approximately 135 family households are registered in the parish.



PARISHES THAT SERVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

Over the past 10 years, the parish has been involved in an ongoing renewal process. These two five-year plans resulted in two major renovation projects: in the first five years, the interior of the church worship space was renovated; in the second five years, the exterior of the pastor's residence/office building had insulation and siding applied, improving its appearance and presence in the community; and the interior of the fellowship hall was upgraded.

In November 2000, the parish was honored to be named as one of 300 excellent Catholic parishes by the Parish/Congregation Study conducted at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and listed in the book *Excellent Catholic Parishes*, by Paul Wilkes, the director of the study. Due to the publicity consequent to that designation, numerous adults and several families with young children have joined the parish.

A third five-year plan began in December 2000, and its implementation is underway now. It includes further development of lay ministries and ministers, the growth of small groups for prayer, formation and outreach, and physical improvements. The current request applies specifically for assistance to add 18 parking spaces, increasing the current parking by about one-third, and the construction of a rest-room in the church building, and to make additional improvements to the interior of the church and fellowship hall.

The current pastor for St. Martin de Porres Church is Father Thomas P. DiFolco.



HISTORY OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH BISHOP TO DEDICATE MISSION CHURCH AT LOCKLAND ON JUNE 12TH

The Catholic Telegraph Register – Friday, June 3, 1938

Blessed Martin de Porres Mission – Dedicatory rites for the mission Church of St. Christina will be held here Sunday, June 12, at 10 o'clock, according to an announcement made by the Rev. Charles F. Murphy, in charge at the mission. The Most Rev. George J. Rehring, S.T.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, will be the officiant. He will also assist at the Solemn Mass and preach. The Rt. Rev. Charles A. Ertel of Holy Family Church, Dayton, will be the celebrant of the Mass. The Rev. Joseph Dauwe, assistant at St. Cecelia's, Oakley, will be deacon and the Rev. Thomas Coleman, associate editor of the *Catholic Telegraph – Register*, sub-deacon.

The Very Rev. Francis A. Reardon, pastor of St. William's Church, Cincinnati, and the Rev. Leo Walsh, pastor of St. James' Church, Wyoming, will act as chaplains to Bishop Rehring. A feature of the ceremony will be a motorcade from Schwartz's corner to the church. The parade will start at 9 o'clock. St. Joseph's orphanage band will lead the parade in which Bishop Rehring will have the place of honor. St. Christina's Church stands at the edge of a 20-acre tract of land facing Anthony Wayne Avenue.

The mission school near by was once a Swedenborgian Seminary. Activities at the mission itself were started by Father Walsh in 1935 at the instance of the most Rev. John T. McNicholas, O.P.S. T.M., Archbishop of Cincinnati who is greatly interested in the Colored people of the vicinity. Beginnings were made for work in an instruction class for the Negro people of the neighborhood conducted by the Rev. Edward Sims when he was stationed at St. James Wyoming.

The first Mass celebrated at the mission was August 4, 1935. At that time 40 persons, including visitors attended. Today the regular Sunday attendance at mass is approximately 125 parishioners. The church is named after the mother of an unnamed benefactress. Brother Bertrand Bailey, O.P., was in charge of the actual construction work. The sketch for the building and the working plans were made at the office of Edward J. Schulte, architect. The architecture is early American and is similar to churches at Mason and Jamestown. Previous to the erection of the new church, Mass was said in the mission school in a temporary chapel seating approximately 80 persons.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be administered in the afternoon to about 60 children and 20 adults. Six adults will be baptized Saturday, June 4, and will receive their First Holy Communion the following day.

MR. MYRON KILGORE

PARISHIONER OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH

I grew up in Zone 15, better known as Lincoln Heights. My mother was Baptist and my dad was Episcopalian; they both took me to church. I attended Lockland Wayne Elementary School. Black children went to Lockland Wayne East, and white children went to West. Woodlawn Elementary was segregated into north and south... nothing different there.

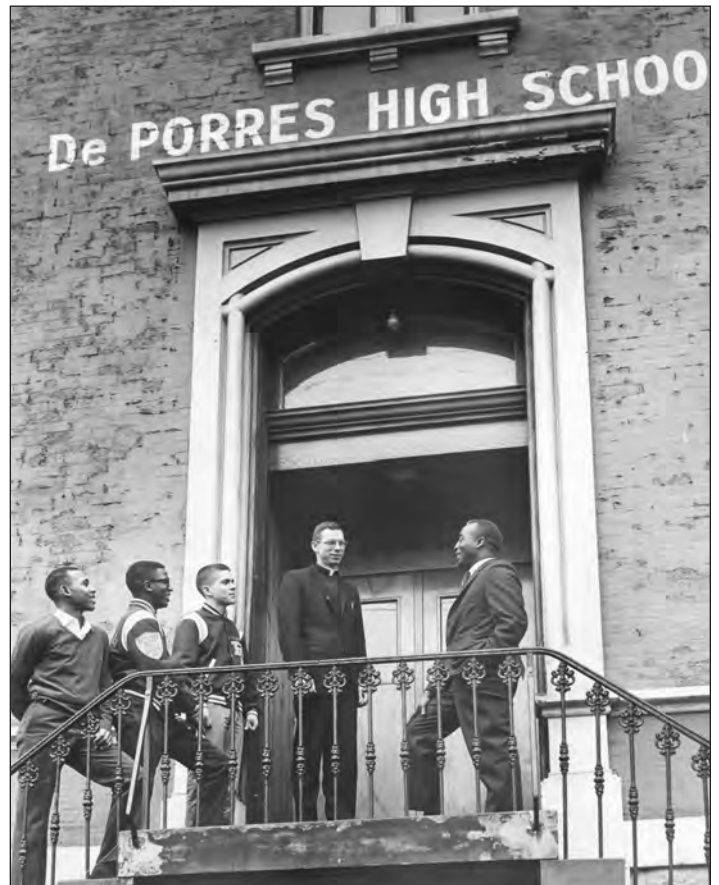
I am proud to be a graduate of St. Martin de Porres High School; the first and only black all-male Catholic school in Cincinnati. It was located on Court and Mound streets in the West End. Mr. Franklin Shands, whom we called “Coach Shands,” recruited black guys from all over the city, convincing our parents of the advantages of a Catholic education.

Coach Shands and the priests insisted that we perform at our highest level in academics, sports and anything else that we did. It was our job to reflect excellence and we took pride in doing that. St. Martin de Porres was “our school,” and we felt at home, we belonged; versus “their school,” where we would be visitors, intruders.

Segregation and blatant racism was a way of life back then. At Saint Martin de Porres, something special was going on and it became our way of life to excel in spite of segregation and racism. It was there that my classmates and I became convinced that we were smart, as good as anybody else. As a matter of fact, we had to be better in order to get our due.

I played football. Our opponents, for the most part were white Catholic schools like Roger Bacon, Elder and Purcell. The other teams were vicious, mean, but we were talented; in tip-top shape, and could play. They would literally try to hurt us because we were black. I got knocked unconscious in every game. The white kids and their parents cursed us, hit us and provoked us; all in the name of white superiority... it was ridiculous!

The white referees wouldn't say anything, and Coach Shands wouldn't let us fight back. He pounded into our heads that it was imperative that we maintain the highest level of integrity, no matter what. A fight in Western Hills might've gotten us lynched. However, our impeccable manners and sportsmanship carried us a long way. My classmate, Pete Randolph was Cincinnati's first black “Boy Mayor.” I was the second.





Black folks all over the city were proud of us and supported us. There was a feeling that because we succeeded, “WE” succeeded. We were as they used to say, “a credit to our race.”

The community supported St. Martin de Porres. When we had banquets, celebrities like “The Big O” (Oscar Robinson), Frank Robinson would come. Jack Twyman would bring Maurice Stokes, The Stoker. *

I attended St. Martin de Porres Catholic Mission Church in Lincoln Heights, sang in the choir and was active, but I didn’t convert immediately. In my senior year of high school I was baptized and receive First Communion. It was around the time that everybody was concerned about the hydrogen bomb; building bomb shelters, gathering food, having evacuation exercises... I thought that I’d better officially join the church, just in case. Due to the fact that there was unity at school the feeling transferred to the church in Lincoln Heights.

Racism was and still is a big problem, but I’ve learned that ethical behavior is a person’s best bet. It damages one’s spirit to cheat or misuse another person. No matter whom you are dealing with, you have more in common with that person than you don’t.

If I had to come up again, I’d do it the same way.

MR. OLIVER LACKEY JR.

A CATHOLIC BELIEVER

My name is Oliver Lackey Jr., and I am 79 years old. I was born in Lincoln Heights, Ohio and have been Catholic all of my life. My grandparents William and Marcy Lackey had attended St. Ann Catholic Parish. In the early 1920s, they moved to Lincoln Heights. I was told it was like a “wagon train” with horse-pulled buggies.

I attended Lincoln Heights Elementary, which was located on the current site of the Lincoln Heights Police Department. After the second grade, I began attending Blessed Martin de Porres on Wayne Avenue in Lincoln Heights.

At the age of four, I remember attending St. James Catholic Church [Wyoming] with my parents and siblings. Back then, blacks had to sit in the balcony. St. James was then located on Wyoming Avenue near the railroad tracks. The Lindners had built their second ice cream parlor in the area.

Prior to building the current church, Blessed Martin School and Church was located in the current parish rectory. As a teenager, I was told that a white family from our sister church [St. James Wyoming] had provided funds for me to attend Roger Bacon High School.

I remember Father Murphy, Msgr. Kramer and Father Diener at Blessed Martin de Porres. Father Diener officiated at my wedding [Mildred] in 1955. I also remember there were two men [the Jackson brothers] who had gotten in trouble with the police. Msgr. Kramer asked my grandfather, “What should we do to keep these two boys out of jail?” They agreed to talk to police, and then they encouraged the two boys to enter the military. They both went into the Army and one of them served in the Army and the Navy. Those two boys became productive citizens.

When I went into the Army, someone said if I make it back what would I do. I made it back to the United States! I remember walking into the employment and while waiting I fell asleep. One of the ladies told me, “If you wake up, you have a job.” I was hired by General Electric [Evendale] as a welder, a skill I learned in the Army.

I remain Catholic because of my strong upbringing in the church. I sent one of my sons to Purcell High School and sent my daughter to Marian High School.

As a child, I used to make kites and draw pictures of Popeye and Superman on brown craft paper. I’ve been drawing all my life. In the 1960s while attending St. Francis de Sales, the dean of Edgecliff College [also a parishioner] help me with presenting my artwork [sculptors from scrap metal]. The one I like the most was called “Leap to Freedom.” It depicted an African slave who jumped off the ship in the middle of the ocean rather than come to America. I was also commissioned to do a sculptor for Rev. Moss through the pastor of Saint Francis de Sales, Father Schaeffer.

MR. CHARLES HOOTEN

PARISHIONER OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH

I was born in Montgomery, Alabama and I come from a family of six siblings. I was raised by an aunt and uncle. When I was 10 years old, my sister and I moved to Cincinnati, Ohio with my aunt and uncle in 1951. I didn't know my other siblings until I was an adult. We always had two parents [aunt and uncle] in the home. My uncle worked hard every day and taught me that there was plenty of love, kindness, and respect for not only our home and family, but for our neighbors and community as well. I grew up in the West End – 7th and Freeman Avenue; 8th and John Street; and Liberty and Wade Street.

Religion played a very important role in my life. My aunt was Methodist and highly spiritual. My uncle was Baptist and not as deeply spiritual as my aunt. However, they insisted that my sister and I went to church and they demanded it. When I was 7 years old, I was baptized at Mount Zion Church in Montgomery, Alabama. I don't remember a lot about it. But what I do remember is that there were a lot of people gathered around as the minister dunked me into a pool of water.

I attended Catholic school and I remember the Archbishop coming to baptize and confirm me and my classmates. I also remember wearing a white shirt and tie and I felt very holy and special. My aunt was very instrumental in my spiritual journey as was the family that lived down the street from us. I must include the nuns and priest that taught me at St. Ann's in the West End. The kindness and patience that the nuns gave me allowed me to continue my journey of learning more about God. The Catholic School was the foundation and formation that sustained my life in the Lord. I attended St. Jude in Montgomery, Alabama; St. Anthony [Budd Street]; St. Ann [John Street]; and I graduated from Blessed Martin de Porres in the West End. I graduated from Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

As an adult, my wife Carol has deeply inspired and supported this journey. Through our marriage and our membership at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church, we have continued to fall in love with the Lord. What I like most about St. Martin de Porres is its worship, fellowship, music and its ability to welcome friend and stranger. When I think about my current parish, I remember the Catholic Churches in New Orleans and in Cincinnati where I was not welcomed and I thank God that I was able to find a church home.

I sing in the choir at St. Martin de Porres and my favorite hymns are: *Amazing Grace Shall Always Be My Song of Praise*, *Jesus - You're The Center of My Joy*, and *The Lord's Prayer*. My favorite scripture reading is from the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Through the Scriptures and through sacred hymns, I've learned to trust in Jesus. And, if I was going to pass anything down to my children and my children's children I would say, "What God has said, He will do. Just believe and place your trust in Him." My faith has taught me to be patient and caring. It has taught me not to dwell on the shortcomings of others. For throughout my Christian journey, I've learned to trust in the promises of God. The last 25 years and certainly the last 15 have been the best. The spiritual awakening that I've experienced during these years has opened up a treasure, a true relationship with my God and creator.

Ms. MARJORIE PHILLIPS

PARISHIONER OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH

I was born in Cincinnati [College Hill] and I am the oldest girl of eleven children, seven girls and four boys. My two older brothers are no longer living. Most of my siblings were born at home. My dad worked as plumber for General Electric which was originally called Wright's. My mom did lots of cooking, canning, and sewing. We had one hot meal a day [supper] with cornbread. We moved from College Hill to Lincoln Heights in 40's which had dirt streets back then. Everyone in the neighborhood knew each other and there was no violence. The community kept an eye on the children. I had a happy childhood.

My parents were Baptist but not active in their church. The entire family attended Blessed Martin de Porres School and Church. We were taught to help and respect each other. On a nightly basis, we would sit at home and listen to my mom and dad read the bible. At the age of nine, I was baptized at Blessed Martin de Porres Church on August 9, 1946. My baptismal name was Ann and my sponsor was Mrs. Ruby Malock. For my First Communion, I remember wearing a beautiful white satin dress and taking pictures with all the other boys and girls dressed in the First Communion outfits.

The pastors [current and past] at Blessed Martin de Porres and St. Martin de Porres were very instrumental in helping me to know the Lord. Through their preaching, and prayerfulness, they were good role models for me. During my childhood the nuns helped me to know the Lord. They were very strict. The Latin phrases may not have sunk in, but they help me to pray.

I love my parish, our pastor Fr. Thomas DiFolco, and my church family. I enjoy singing in the choir, taking part in the Rite of Passage, and feeling the warmth of God's love in the services. The people of St. Martin de Porres have always given me support and love in my times of need.

My favorite sacred hymns are: *Keep Your Eye on the Sparrow*, *Amazing Grace*, *We Are Conquerors*, *Jesus – You're the Center of My Joy*, and *Potter's House*. My faith has gotten stronger as I've gotten older. I am more caring and less selfish. Through faith, I've been able to build better relationships with family and friends. I just thank God for all his blessings and thankful that he has allowed me to love and care for those who are less fortunate. If I would pass anything on the next generation it would be: "Follow the commands of the Lord. Practice the faith. And always, always put God first in your life."