

OUR STORIES 1

A LETTER FROM MRS. MARTIN NOON

May 8, 1945

My recollections as a member of St. Anthony's Church go back a great many years and my span of life even precedes the establishment of St. Anthony's Church. I was born in 1873 and was baptized in "St. Michael" Church, the first Catholic Church in Madisonville. I have been a member since its dedication in 1874, a mere 71 years.

From my father we often heard of the difficulties and struggles the pioneers encountered in bringing to realization this parish and how this particular site was chosen and how the church received its name, "St. Anthony."

Father Anthony Walburg donated the property on which this church is built. It was his desire to name the new church "St. Joseph" in honor of my father because of his many and varied contributions to St. Michael's Church, and because of his generosity and aid in building the new church. My father would not countenance this and strongly suggested that the new church be named in honor of the man responsible for its successful erection, Father Anthony Walburg.

My early remembrance of this church places it in a vacant field with but a few houses around and grazing cattle within a square of it. Also, in back of the church where the colored folks now reside was a vast vineyard. At that time there was only one colored family in this vicinity. Quite a contrast to present time.

Attending church in those days was quite different from now. Automobiles and busses were unheard of and we had no paved streets. The roads were far from being considered good.

From where I lived on Indian Hill it meant walking three miles each way or being driven by horses and buggy. There were those who even came to church in covered wagons. One particular Christmas morning stands out in my mind, it was bitterly cold and the snow was very deep. In order to make the 5 o'clock Mass we had to get up quite early, and it was so dark we had to carry a lantern to see our way.

Very vividly do I remember the fire which destroyed the church in 1891, for I was then 18 years of age. It was a shock indeed and a most disheartening sight for when we arrived it was at its height.

During my many years in the parish I have observed great changes, and have noted the Church's growth and progress, also the expansion of its educational system in this school. I have experienced the sad passing of many of the old parishioners and witnessed the influx of newcomers.

I feel privileged to have held membership in this one church all of my life thus far.

Mrs. Martin Noon

ST. ANTHONY IN 1947

by Helen Miriam Gunn, SC July 2009

(Editor's Note: Sr. Miriam was parishioner Susan (Schmitt) Wenker's first grade teacher at St. Anthony and they still visit occasionally)

It was about mid-August 1947 when I was first introduced to St. Anthony parish . . . the church, the rectory, the school and the convent. It would become my home and place of worship and teaching for the next five years. What a wonderful place it proved to be. . . . especially the school. It was so clean and well-kept. The classrooms, so bright and cheerful, housed all eight grades. The cafeteria and auditorium provided space for all gatherings and special programs, but neither was utilized for weekly religious instruction given by the pastor, Rev. H. A. Westerman. That was reserved for church, and all students from all eight grades attended. For these sessions there could be no preparation. Impromptu questions elicited typical children's responses such as, to tardy or absentee servers, "Johnny, were you snowbound on Monday?" "No, Father, I was bedbound."

As I recall, the school children were a breed of their own. Pupils throughout the school knew each other by name. If one got hurt, they all felt it. They were friendly, docile, cooperative, dependable and hard-working. Leadership was also evidenced by many especially during class activities, campaigns for CSMC and tax stamp drives.

Sometimes there were problems, sometimes serious ones, which had to be corrected by both teachers and parents. These did not destroy the beautiful spirit of trust and helpfulness which existed among all concerned parties. Many times, even after corrections, children volunteered their services in sacristy, convent or school. That's the way it was. Such actions reflected the training from loving God-fearing parents.

The neighbors around St. Anthony were integrated – Caucasian and African-American. They showed great concern for our welfare. They are part of the reason I have such fond memories of St. Anthony Parish.

MY REMEMBRANCES OF ST. ANTHONY PARISH AND FATHER MOLLOY

Excerpts from a 1968 letter by John T. Bickmore, M.D.

by John Bange (1999)

In 1931, our family moved to Kenwood Road, high above the suburb of Madisonville on the eastern side of Cincinnati. At this locale we became members of St. Anthony's Catholic Parish on Desmond Street in Madisonville, and it was there that I first encountered the Reverend Martin T. Molloy who was pastor at St. Anthony's during the years that we resided in Kenwood.

Father Molloy had such firm faith in the hereafter, and God's presence in it, and he worked so hard to instill that faith in his parishioners, that he could not help but succeed with a goodly number of them.

When I think about the events that occurred over a half-century ago at St. Anthony's, and Father Molloy's direction of them, one is forced to realize that the rituals of the Catholic religion as it was practiced at that time, have significantly changed. Certainly the actual practice of religion was far more important in our lives than it is today. Many more hours were spent in church, on days of the week as well as Sunday. The age-old rituals such as Confession, Vespers, Stations of the Cross and Forty Hours Devotion were scheduled and attended far more often than they are today. The reasons for these changes are probably complex, and I am unsure that they are proper.

Unlike many parish priests, Father Molloy was not a very friendly man, not at all paternal, condescending, or even, at times, kind. He was, instead, a martinet, a stern "leader of the troops," so to speak. In fact, thinking back on it, he ran his parish like an officer would handle his soldiers. I recall that once he personally beat on a snare drum as we marched into the school building for morning classes! He maintained the distance and aloofness to establish command and perpetuated that status as long as I knew him.

The decade of the thirties was as difficult for him as they were for almost anyone else. During those depression years, no one had any money, and not likely to have excess funds in the near future. There was little organized welfare, no social security, few pensions, and not nearly enough jobs. The eastern section of Cincinnati, particularly Madisonville, was inhabited largely by "blue collar" workers, surrounded by large communities of blacks. Consequently, St. Anthony's parish was surely one of the poorest in the diocese, which made Father Molloy's efforts to keep it functioning formidable indeed. A part of almost every sermon at Sunday Mass consisted of his plaintive and persistent requests for money to meet his expenses. The annual coal bill to heat the buildings was always a crisis. The requirements in those days were a contribution of one dollar per week per family, and the names of those who were able to achieve this were regularly posted in the back of the church. The list was never a long one.

The church consisted of a classically built (for the period) red brick church with tall spire and belfry. A yellow brick school building that contained eight classrooms, an auditorium and a cafeteria and lunchroom, was situated next to the church, interposed by the rectory. There was a playground behind the church that contained slides, swings and "teeter-totters." The area was surrounded by a neighborhood of very small and modest homes, the largest of which was the two-story building which housed the nuns. In those days all of the teachers were Sisters of Charity. As surmised, some of the sisters were advanced in years, but several were right out of their novitiate and very young. I remember the names of all of these sisters to this day, and amazingly encountered several of them as patients in Dayton many years later. One of them, Sister William Mary O'Connor, is still alive today, resides in Dayton and taught me to be a server at Mass when I was in the fifth grade. I was gratified that she remembered me as a former student after over fifty years had elapsed.

On the corner next to the church was a small grocery where the kids bought penny candy. Here they also sold flavored "ice balls," a delight for two cents.

It was a mile from the school to our home. My brother and I traversed this four times a day (we went home for lunch), five days a week during the school year. On Sunday, not only did we attend the nine o'clock Mass, but during May and October, the Sunday afternoon services and religious instruction. Instructions, of course, were conducted by Father Molloy, and how boring they were! I remember how upsetting it was to interrupt our Sunday afternoon football and baseball games in order to be present at these spring and fall sessions. However, no one dared skip them and incur the wrath of Father Molloy! My friends on Kenwood Hill, good Protestants all, thought it ridiculous to return to church on Sunday afternoon, but we did, in spite of the hoots and catcalls. We were simply afraid not to.

Confessions could become an ordeal at St. Anthony's. It was a monthly requirement for all of the children of the parish. Woe betide any youngster who confessed a major discretion against any of Father Molloy's precepts! With the whole class in the pews observing, I remember an occasional miscreant being kept in the confessional for almost a half-hour, suffering the inevitable verbal lashing from Father Molloy. Eventually the culprit would emerge, totally chastened and often blushing, paltered also by the blatant ogling of classmates. Such an event had to be effective!

To illustrate Father Molloy's strong sense of duty, I recall that I once visited a classmate after school who had a small "chemical set" (which fascinated me) and who lived right across the street from the rectory. Of course, Father Molloy spotted me, playing with this lad late in the afternoon. Sternly, he inquired why I had not gone home when classes were dismissed. "Don't you have chores to do?" he asked. Wherewith I went right home.

All of the children were required to recite the Mass as it was read, something that I have never seen done in any other Catholic church, then or since. Apparently this was his method of enforcing an actual participation in the service. In addition we had to sing all the scheduled hymns, which required weekly choir practice sessions in the school auditorium. I can still see in my mind's eye the aged nun who conducted these sessions, blowing in her pitch pipe in order to get us started on the right key. Naturally, when Sunday performance occurred, it seemed that we could never sing up to our potentialities.

The ritual of Forty Hours Devotion occurred several times a year. Father Molloy was at his best during this occasion. He had a beautiful singing voice and was proud of it. These devotions were culminated by a slow and solemn procession around the church, the initiation of which was preceded by his stentorian "Pange Lingua Gloriosa!" The sound of his voice penetrated to the farthest corner of that church! The congregation then continued the hymn as the procession filed around, with acolytes swinging the incense burners and Father Molloy proudly holding the Ciborium in front of him. It seemed that this occasion gave him his greatest satisfaction.

I have never forgotten the melody of "O Salutaris Hostia" or "Tantum Ergo Sacramentum," which we all sang so many times in those days. How seldom does one hear either of those great hymns today! There was another: "Parce Domino Parce Populo" coupled with the beautiful and sad "Stabat Mater Dolorosa." These age-old hymns, a part of Catholic ritual for centuries, are seldom heard today.

It was the good Father's habit periodically to burst into a classroom, completely interrupting the curriculum (much to the nun's dismay it seemed) to deliver a lecture. I suppose it was his way to remind us of our religious duties and no matter with arithmetic, grammar and spelling! Even when Father Molloy attempted to keep tabs on us by having all report cards sent to him so that he could pass them out individually to us. If any one of us was not doing well scholastically, there had to be a reason.

When I was 16 years old, I was hospitalized for an appendectomy. One afternoon I was astonished to find him at my bedside. I wish that I could recall what he said to me on that occasion, but I do remember that I was flattered by his visit. I didn't know that this was a duty for all parish priests.

As time went by we all matured and scattered, there were many years that I did not think of him or of those parish activities that had occurred in my teens. Then one day, many years after I had left Cincinnati, it was announced at Holy Angels church in Dayton, that he had died. It seems that sometime in the early 1940's he had been transferred to Holy Angels parish and had taken up his pastoral duties there. The announcement of his death rekindled a long-submerged interest and I made efforts to inquire about his later years.

I was told that he had gradually lost his eyesight, such that he had been forced to relinquish all pastoral duties, and was admitted to St. Margaret Hall nursing home in Cincinnati. Here he spent a number of years in peaceful retirement, becoming virtually blind before his death. I was also told by people at St. Margaret's that old age and blindness had mellowed him considerably, and that he had become a much more jolly and friendlier man. I wish that I had been able to visit him during those months, if only to observe the change!

My resurgence in interest in his activities enticed me to write to the current Archbishop at the time of Father Molloy's death, extolling his strenuous efforts in behalf of the spiritual life of the parishioners of that destitute little parish in Madisonville. Someone, I felt, should make their appreciation known. Certainly, I, for one, owed him much, for, more than anyone else, he had given to me the faith that I had never lost.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Bickmore attended St. Anthony School and Purcell High School. He is now a retired Ear, Nose and Throat Physician after practicing in Dayton for 35 years. Dr. Bickmore wrote this letter to then Archbishop Karl J. Altar in 1968 at the time of Father Molloy's death and it was published in the *Catholic Telegraph*. Dr. Bickmore said the Archbishop wrote back and noted that it was not often that any parishioner ever wrote anything concerning their former pastors. The Archbishop also wrote to Dr. Bickmore that Father Molloy's funeral was well attended, although mostly by clergy. Dr. Bickmore's original letter was edited for brevity.

THE WOMEN RELIGIOUS OF OUR PARISH

by Cathy Funcheon

(based on an article in the 140th anniversary book; updated summer 2009)

When I was growing up in parochial school, the sisters were everywhere. We saw them in our classrooms, at church, and Sundays on visiting days. I was one of the many Catholic kids who had a relative who was a sister, but unlike my friends, my aunt was part of the order who ran my school. She was a local, so I knew all of the sisters who taught grades one through eight, and they knew me. At that time, they were also identifiable because of the heavy, long black habits they wore, the ones that left only their faces and hands exposed. I remember being intimidated by the black uniform.

Along came Vatican Council II, which made the church more pastoral and less legal and rigid. With the changes precipitated by Vatican II came greater freedom, both public and personal. Vatican Council freed them from structure and freedom brought more change. One of the obvious changes is the mode of dress for members of religious orders. While some sisters choose to wear habits in some form, most choose to dress in a fashion that allows them to fit in with the general population. This may be a reason that some of us at St. Anthony's are not aware of the number of women religious that are members of our community.

Women religious are very much a part of our community. They greet and make announcements. They sing in the choir and proclaim readings at Mass. They sit next to you every Sunday. Did you know that the woman who offers you a warm handshake during the Sign of Peace is a sister?

Surprisingly, at least for me, women religious are considered laity. They, like religious brothers, have never had clerical status. Thus, women religious have no greater role in the church unless they choose to take those roles. Women religious accept roles in various ministries the same way the rest of us do – by choice.

One of the reasons many of us belong to St. Anthony's is the diversity of the community. Our members come from many different economic, social, and familial backgrounds. They are single, married, divorced, and widowed. They have children they bore and children they choose, and they are childless. They are part of a traditional family and they are part of a non-traditional family. They are part of a religious community.

Vive la Difference!

(originally from the *San Antonian*, January 1997)

WOMEN RELIGIOUS AT ST. ANTHONY

Helen Cranley – Sisters of Charity

Joan Groff – Sisters of Charity

Winnie Brubach – Sisters of Charity

Carol Leveque – Sisters of Charity

Donna Steffen – Sisters of Charity

Joyce Richter – Sisters of Charity

Jeanette Jabour – Dominican

Ruth Podesta – Ursulines of Brown County

Roseann Klosterman – Sisters of St. Joseph

Janet Roesener – Sisters of St. Joseph

Jeannie Masterson – Sisters of St. Joseph

Caroline Benken – Sisters of St. Joseph

REV. JAMES E. SHAPPELLE – JUNE 1962 – JUNE 1970

By John Bange (1999)

Father James Shappelle was born on August 19, 1924 on Cincinnati's West Side. He grew up in Holy Family parish in Price Hill. They lived close to Holy Family and were always around the parish. It was this familiarity that led Father Shappelle to consider the priesthood. After grade school and Latin school, he attended St. Gregory and Mount St. Mary Seminary, being ordained on August 24, 1948.

Father Shappelle was assigned to St. Anthony from June 1962 to June 1970. Father Campbell was the pastor when he came and left. He remembers: "We represented two different outlooks on the Church, pre-Vatican II and Vatican II. I remember my eight years at St. Anthony as very pleasant. The parishioners were very kind to me. I remember the inter-racial discussions with the Coastons, Crawfords, Chalks, and Thomas'."

Some of Father Shappelle's other memories: "I remember that when I arrived in June 1962 that the altar had already been turned around. The new one was donated by the Hirschauers. I also remember the big high-rise (Kenwood Towers) looking right down into our backyard. And I remember Father Campbell and the men of the parish painting the church in 1963 or 1964 to cover over the ugly painting of St. Anthony. I also remember one of the 10-year-old neighborhood kids when he tried to drive my car when I wasn't looking!"

St. Anthony School was still open when Father Shappelle was here. "I remember Sister Ann Winifred as the principal. She was my 4th and 6th grade teacher at Holy Family." How was it when Father Shappelle left St. Anthony? "It was sad to leave. I remember that the people petitioned Archbishop Leibold to have me stay. But I went on to my next assignment at St. Leo."

Other assignments for Father Shappelle were at All Saints in Kenwood, St. Leo in North Fairmount, and as a member of the seminary faculty and in the Archdiocesan School Office. He is currently pastor of Mother of Christ and St. Bernard parishes.

In his spare time, Father Shappelle likes to ride his bike, golf and hike. He has traveled to Grenada to help Father Conlon.

"I have been so lucky and blessed to be a priest for so long," says Father Shappelle. "I am traveling on my faith journey. I have miles to travel and memories to build."

CURRENT ADDRESS: Rev. James Shappelle, St. Bernard Church, 740 Circle Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45232

AN FBI AGENT IN CHURCH?

by John Bange August 2009

In 1982 or so, our pastor Father John Civile asked me to help him with some Easter banners. In those days we did not have a committee that took care of decorations. The banners were to say 'Alleluia' and 'He Is Risen.' I made large stencils for the lettering. He worked with several seminarians who cut the cloth and cut out the letters and glued them together. They were simple but very colorful and they warmly greeted folks on Easter Sunday morning.

The interesting part of this story was that I stopped by that Saturday afternoon to see if I could help hang them. Father Civile was very good about enlisting people to help him around the parish. And sure enough there was a man there, up on a ladder, stringing cord across the church from window to window from which to hang the banners. Seeing that this was taken care of, I left. But the man on the ladder was a puzzle to me. I did not recognize him from the parish, but I knew I recognized him from somewhere. I later asked Father Civile who he was. He told me he was an FBI agent and his first roommate in the seminary some years earlier. Apparently there was a dangerous criminal who had escaped from a prison who had relatives living near St. Anthony. The FBI had reason to believe he might come to seek refuge there. So they stationed agents in an upstairs room of the rectory where they could watch the house from a window! This man and his partner took turns, and when he was on break, he came down to help Father Civile hang the banners. But where did I know him from? Before he joined the FBI, he was a teacher, and he was my Latin teacher at LaSalle High School in 1965-66, Mr. Michael O'Neill.

GRANDMA VELMA AND FATHER GEORGE VISIT

by John Bange August 2009

My grandparents were farmers in Butler County near the small town of Millville. I spent a lot of time with them when I was a youngster. After Grandpa Jimmy died, Grandma Velma lived on the farm by herself for 26 years until she died at age 92 in 1993. Her faith kept her strong. She prayed several rosaries every day. She was always interested in news from St. Anthony.

In 1984, I told Grandma Velma the good news that we had a new pastor, Father George Jacquemin. I already knew he was from farming background, but I was surprised when she told me she knew the Jacquemins! I knew that farm people know many other farm people from all around, through buying and selling livestock, farm organizations, and so forth. But the Jacquemins were from the other end of the county. Well, her Uncle Will and Aunt Anna and all of their children farmed on a very large farm next to the Jacquemins for many years. She knew who the Jacquemins were from when she was a girl and went to visit her cousins. Father George and I were pleasantly surprised to find out that our ancestors were neighbors, friends and attended church and school together!

Now and then I would pick Grandma Velma up at her farm for a visit to our home for the day. Sometimes I would check with Father George and as his schedule allowed, we would stop and visit him at St. Anthony. We would meet in church and sit in the last pew and they would discuss the old days and the neighbors and farming. He would then give her communion and offer a special prayer for her and give her a blessing. She enjoyed those visits very much.

Fairfield Township has changed a lot in recent years. Development almost completely surrounds the Jacquemin farm. Father George's parents still live on the home place, and his youngest brother Lou still farms the land. The old Miller homestead just up the road is gone, and there is a large housing development with a sign that welcomes you to Miller's Run.