



THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF SAINT RAYMOND DE PENAFORT

All Are Welcome in this Place

An illustrated history by
Jean Powley Murphy

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ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop

Post Office Box 1979
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

November, 1998

Dear Friends,

Congratulations and best wishes as you celebrate the 50th Anniversary of St. Raymond de Penafort Church.

Anniversaries are a time for remembering and giving thanks for the many people who have built a tradition of faith, love and service in the parish.

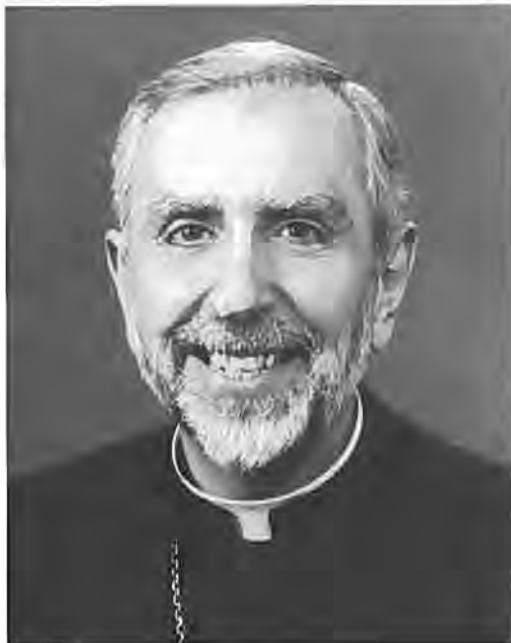
May the Lord continue to fill your hearts with His love and may you continue to witness to the Gospel of Jesus in service to one another and to the community.

You and your loved ones will be remembered in my prayers; please remember me in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

St. Raymond de Penafort Church
50th Anniversary



ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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A Year of Jubilee

Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Raymond de Penafort Parish,

The Catholic Community has had a presence in Mount Prospect since the nineteenth century, even before the village was incorporated in 1917. On July 10, 1949 Cardinal Stritch appointed Rev. Thomas J. O'Brien to form a parish. He celebrated Mass in the basement music rooms of Central School. There are some of you now at St. Raymond who would remember that historic moment.

Now we are celebrating fifty years of Catholic presence at St. Raymond. From your parish, all of the other parishes in Mount Prospect have emerged. You are now one of the largest parishes in the Archdiocese, numbering 3,300 families. Fr. Pietrzak, your pastor, can be very proud of this vibrant community.

When you read the history of St. Raymond de Penafort Parish and School, you hear the dedication and commitment of so many who believed in the Lord Jesus and wanted to pass their faith on to their children.

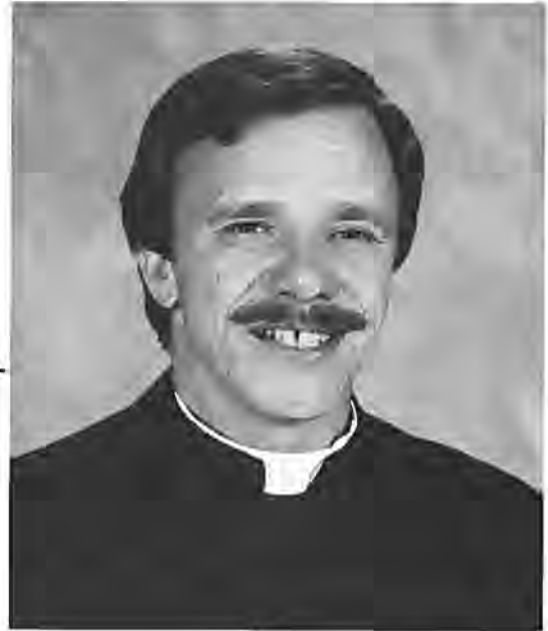
You have been blessed by many fine pastors including Fr. Thomas O'Brien, Fr. Leo Coggins, Fr. William Buhreind, Fr. Bob Loftus, and now Fr. Bernie Pietrzak. Each of these pastors, along with their associates and staff, has served this community well.

I have visited the parish on a number of occasions including Confirmation, Sunday liturgies, funerals and other special events. On each occasion I have been impressed by the faith, enthusiasm and dedication of the community. You care for the sick. You share your resources with the needy. You teach the faith to your children in the fine Catholic school and religious education programs of the parish. Your devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, your celebrations of the Liturgy and your opportunities for prayer show that you are serious in your desire to grow in holiness.

Congratulations on these past fifty years. I pray you will continue to grow in faith, hope and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Vicar for Vicariate I



People of Promise

St. Raymond Church

301 South I-Oka Avenue
Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056
847-253-8600 • Fax 847-253-0023

Dear Friends of St. Raymond,

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been reared. Entering the synagogue, he read the following passage aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. The Lord God has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind and to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to announce a year of jubilee from the Lord.

As we at St. Raymond begin this year of Jubilee from the Lord, we celebrate the continuing fulfillment of this scripture in our midst. Any faith community that strives to follow the Lord Jesus, attempts to live and minister with the heart of Christ's vision and mission in mind.

This commemorative book of the history of our parish attempts to chronicle, in word and picture, the dynamic movement of this Spirit of the Lord. Jean Murphy, the author, does a marvelous job illuminating the presence of this Spirit in the life and growth of this community of believers over the past fifty years.

St. Raymond Parish has been blessed with the talent and commitment of thousands of faithful and loving people in our history. All have helped to sustain and nourish a rich legacy of service and ministry, compassion and generosity that is rooted in the gospel message.

Anniversaries are a time for remembering and honoring the women and men of faith who have given so much to the building up of our parish tradition and mission over the years. A year of Jubilee is also a time to look forward to our future together. Many events and celebrations have been planned for the coming year. It is my hope that as we approach the great millenium these gatherings will serve to deepen our faith, strengthen our spirit and increase our commitment to do what the gospel will require of us all.

When all is said and done, the history of St. Raymond Church will always be remembered, not just in one publication, but in the minds and hearts of the many people it has tried to serve for the past fifty years.

God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bernard J. Pietrzak".

Rev. Bernard J. Pietrzak
Pastor



Mount Prospect was a relatively sleepy village during the 1940s. Yet it was poised on the brink of the largest population explosion in its history . . . an explosion which would bring the community its first Roman Catholic Church - St. Raymond de Penafort. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.

Catholicism comes to Mount Prospect

St. Raymond de Penafort Catholic Church is one of the Archdiocese of Chicago's largest parishes with 3300 families registered. Located on a block and a half of prime tree-lined, beautifully-groomed property in Mount Prospect, IL, it is a plum assignment for any priest and a source of pride for its parishioners.

Fifty years ago when the parish was founded, however, Mount Prospect was still a fledgling community, on the brink of the biggest building boom in its history. It was also home to a small, close-knit group of Missouri Synod Lutherans of German descent who weren't at all sure how they felt about the influx of newcomers from Chicago. A Baptist church had been built within the Village limits in the 1930s and an Episcopalian congregation had purchased a vacated public schoolhouse soon afterward. Both of their members had been assimilated into the

community rather well. But urban Catholics of Irish, Italian, Polish, German and Hispanic descent were another matter.

The Chicago metropolitan area, like the rest of Illinois and this nation, for that matter, was built by immigrants, wanting to make a better life for themselves and their families. They crossed the ocean to a totally foreign land, but their bravery only went so far. When they arrived here they still sought out immigrants from their own homelands because they naturally felt more comfortable with people who spoke the same language, followed the same traditions and worshipped in the same way as they did.

Churches played an important part in helping immigrants from all lands become comfortable in the United States. The German farmers who immigrated to Mount Prospect in the 1840s began longing for a church (and the link with home it provided) as soon as they had their farms running well. So they established St. John Lutheran Church in 1848, followed by St. Paul Lutheran Church in 1912.

In the same way, Catholics from many lands settled in Chicago's neighborhoods and built churches similar to those they left behind in the Old Country (whichever country that happened to have been!). According to Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz and Steven M. Avella in their book *Catholicism, Chicago Style*, "more than any other institution, the Catholic parish humanized Chicago, transforming it from an alien to a familiar place. This process had far reaching consequences for Chicago Catholicism."

"First and foremost, the Church early on assumed an urban identity," they wrote. "In contrast with mainline Protestant denominations that found the city a difficult place to maintain congregational life, Catholic parishes quickly took root. [And] from its very beginning [the Catholic Church in

Once a community of farmers, the Mount Prospect of the 1930s and 1940s was a conservative enclave primarily made up of middle class German Lutherans. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.



Chicago was] responsive to the needs of diverse ethnic groups. Its parishes, schools, hospitals, charitable organizations and cemeteries were [all] originally organized along national lines . . ."

This close link between the parish and the ethnic neighborhood was the hallmark of Chicago Catholicism. Parishes conferred on these immigrants a sense of belonging – religiously, socially and geographically, Skerrett, Kantowicz and Avella wrote.

So throughout the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, Chicago and the communities surrounding it were like a patchwork quilt of nationalities and religions.

St. Paul Lutheran Church was the fledgling village's first church, built in 1912. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.



Mount Prospect was a German Lutheran village. And Chicago was a Catholic city, divided into its own patchwork quilt of ethnic neighborhoods, each with its own church. There were always those who bucked the norm and lived in the territory of another group, of course, but most stuck together until right after World War II.

Two World Wars in the space of 25 years had a profound effect on these ethnic groupings. Men went overseas and became exposed to those from other ethnic groups. They also had a chance to travel and see how others lived. And German-Americans in Mount Prospect and elsewhere found it necessary to play down their German heritage and become more Americanized, thanks to, first, the Kaiser, and later, Adolf Hitler.

So when "Johnny came marching home" from Europe, North Africa, the Pacific and other hotspots in 1945 and 1946, he was ready to enjoy the good life which he had missed while overseas. The ex-GIs (Catholic and otherwise) wanted to own homes where they could raise families. And they married younger and had more children than their parents had. The result was a spectacular population explosion, accompanied several years later by a mass migration from the cities to the suburbs.

Mount Prospect was a major Chicago-area recipient of the people, progress and problems from this migration thanks, in part, to the convenience of transportation to jobs in the city via the Chicago - Northwestern Railroad. In 1940 Mount Prospect's population was 1,720. By 1950 it had increased almost two and a half times to 4,009. Then, between 1950 and 1960, it increased another 372 percent, to 18,906.

Many of those transplants were Catholics who wanted a place nearby to worship. They were tired of traveling to St. James in Arlington Heights or St. Mary in Des Plaines for Mass. A movement for establishment of a Catholic Church in Mount Prospect had actually begun in the early 1930s. A small number of Catholics had come to Mount Prospect during the building boom of the 1920s and in 1931 twelve women got together and organized the Mount Prospect Catholic Woman's Club. Membership was open to all



One of the young men from Mount Prospect who went "over there" was Edwin Wille, shown here with relatives, friends and, at right, his father, William Wille. By 1917, German-American newspapers were emphasizing the idea that the Allies were fighting against Germany's militaristic government, not its people. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.

When George Busse (left) and his son, George I., posed for this photo in front of their realty business in 1947, they were just beginning to experience the post-war suburban housing explosion. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.



Most suburban men commuted to Chicago each day to work in the 1950s. Many took advantage of the convenience of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway's commuter service so they could do without a car. Courtesy, The Daily Herald.

Catholic women in the area, as well as to non-Catholic women who were "wives of Catholic men and mothers of Catholic children, provided they are in sympathy with the rules and objectives of the Club," according to an early parish directory. The purpose of the club was two-fold: to press the Archdiocese for a Catholic church in Mount Prospect and to serve

as a social organization for the Catholic minority here.

This was the Depression, however, and no one was building much of anything except bridges and other Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects, so their quest for a church didn't get anywhere. People weren't building new houses and moving to Mount Prospect during this time because of the

economic crisis, so the Catholic minority didn't grow enough to warrant construction of a church. Later, World War II put their efforts on hold again.

As soon as the strife in Europe and the Pacific was settled, however, the Catholic women resumed their letter-writing campaign aimed at the Archdiocese.

You see, the Catholic Church's parish-building policy within the city had long been to build one church per square mile in order to foster a sense of belonging and intensify the connection between church and neighborhood. So that was what these Chicago transplants had learned to expect from their Church and they fully expected it to respond to their needs again in the growing suburbs.

Samuel Cardinal Stritch was the Archbishop at this time. A gentle, beloved southerner, he presided over an unprecedented parish-building boom. Seventy new parishes were built within the Archdiocese during his tenure (March 7, 1940 to April 27, 1958). A total of 24 new parishes were built within the city of Chicago and 46 were built in the Lake and Cook County suburbs. In 1949 alone, six parishes were built. In addition to St. Raymond there was St.



Mount Prospect's leaders were consumed with providing enough public services for the village's booming population. The library, for instance, was inadequate for the size the community was becoming. Shown here in 1944, it was located at 115 S. Main Street and its collection had been achieved entirely through donations. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.

Francis Borgia in Chicago, St. Anne in Hazelcrest, St. Beatrice in Schiller Park, St. Francis de Sales in Lake Zurich and St. Peter Damian in Bartlett.

"The ecclesiastical building boom in the post-World War II era was so great that The New World <newspaper> did not have space enough for feature stories about each new parish complex," wrote Skerrett, Kantowicz and Avella.

"For upwardly mobile Catholics who settled in Protestant-dominated areas, parish formation and church-building took on added meaning. . . , " the authors explained. "Whereas Catholics regarded the formation of <these parishes> as a new beginning, a sign of progress and faith in the future, for some Protestants it represented a serious fissure in the fabric of suburban life" and they were, if not hostile, certainly reserved toward the Catholic newcomers.

The leaders of Mount Prospect also had other concerns. Schools and a real library needed to be built. Roads, sidewalks and sewers needed to be expanded and improved. Building codes and zoning laws had to be updated and toughened in order to deal effectively with the many developers building homes and factories in Mount Prospect. Police and fire protection was inadequate to handle the influx of people. The water supply was insufficient, and there were problems with refuse collection. Flooding was also increasing as more and more flood plains were disappearing under subdivisions.

In fact, the Village fathers were so concerned about their growing pains that they circulated petitions in 1948 asking for a referendum on whether or not the township trustees, in whose name all school property was then held, should sell the eight lots on the

Mount Prospect, Ill.
October 6, 1947.

Very Rev. Monsignor Burke,
Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Monsignor Burke:

Mrs. Charles Quackenbush informs me she has had a most encouraging talk with you on the telephone relative to our hopes and prayers of soon having a Catholic Church here in Mt. Prospect.

Our town has a present catholic population of one hundred and twenty-three adults and eighty-nine children. This one hundred twenty-three figure represents sixty-five catholic families. This number is based on a canvas of last Spring, and the figure is probably more at this time.

Mount Prospect has a population of 2800 and is rapidly growing, it now having the largest building production in suburban Chicago. It has two Lutheran Churches and one Lutheran school, and an Episcopal Church and a Community Church.

Our need is great, Monsignor Burke. Most of us attend St. Mary's in Des Plaines and some of us St. James in Arlington Heights, both of which are crowded. We feel we would have many new catholic families in Mount Prospect if we had a Catholic Church.

Our Catholic Woman's Club has a membership of thirty-five, and we are trying so hard to work and raise money for a catholic church here in our own community. It has been slow and difficult since we have no spiritual advisor in our own midst to help us.

This is not our first appeal to the Chancery for a church. We now feel we have more to go on with a larger membership and more workers to advance our cause. The ladies in our club will do all in their power to get a catholic church right here in our own town. We have had card parties in the past and are now making plans for two bake sales in the near future. All the money we have raised in the past has gone into our church fund, and while the sum is not large, it is growing. We also have our monthly dues to add to our bank account. We intend to continue to raise funds for our church here.

We do hope Cardinal Stritch will see a way to help us establish a Catholic Church in Mount Prospect.

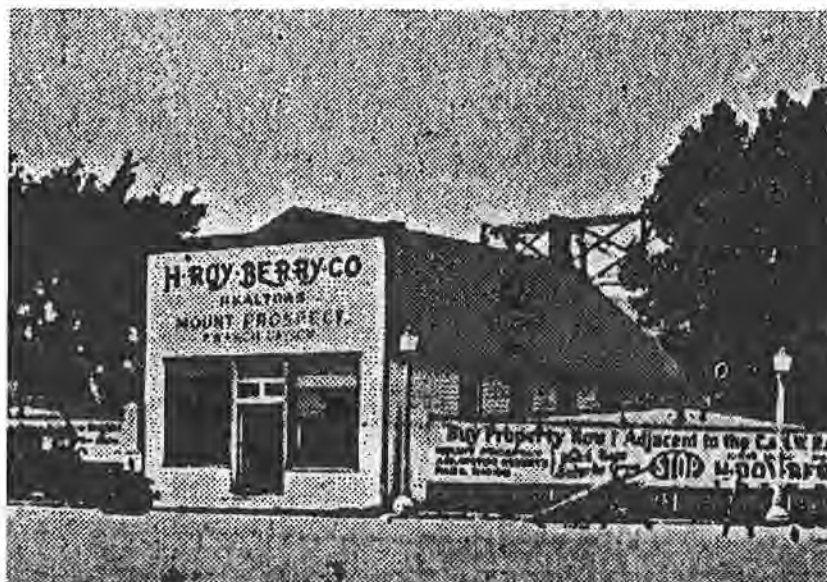
We sincerely thank you, Monsignor Burke, for your kindness in presenting our letter to Cardinal Stritch, and will put our trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and abide by the decision of the Chancery. Please help us.

Very Sincerely,
President, Mount Prospect
Catholic Woman's Club.

600 W. Sha-Bones Trail

Women's Club letter requesting a mission church be established in Mount Prospect.

south side of Milburn Avenue between I-Oka and Elmhurst Avenues (which developers Axel Lonnquist and H. Roy Berry had donated to them in the 1920s) rather than use



H. Roy Berry and Axel Lonnquist donated the land, upon which the St. Raymond School and gym now stand, to Mount Prospect School District 57 for a south side school. Deemed unsuitable, the land was sold at auction in 1948. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.

St. Raymond de Pennafort, patron saint of Barcelona, Spain

St. Raymond de Pennafort was a native of Spain and a contemporary of Saints Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure and Albert the Great.

A quiet and introspective man, he is the one whom Pope Gregory IX chose to compile into one document the complicated laws of the Church for use in the schools and courts of his day. His document, called the "Decretals of Gregory IX," was the authentic source of legislation in the Church from 1234 to 1918 when it was replaced by the "Code of Canon Law." He also founded, with St. Peter Nolasco, the military order of Our Lady of Ransom and came up with the revolutionary idea of converting Moors and Jews to Catholicism by teaching them in their own tongues.

Born sometime between 1175 and 1180, Raymond de Pennafort was a very modest man. It is said that he was so fond of his anonymity that he concealed all records of the day and year of his birth. But he was unable to conceal the location. He was born in the village of Villafranca de Penades between the cities of Barcelona and Tarragona in country marked by hills and freshwater streams.

Raymond was a member of one of the province of Catalonia's most prominent families. The Pennafort family was closely related to the Counts of Barcelona and were also able to claim kinship with the Kings of Aragon, another province of Spain.

Like many children of noble birth in his day, Raymond was

dedicated to the service of the Catholic Church when he was still in his cradle. At a very young age he left his family and joined youths from all ranks of society at the Cathedral School of Barcelona where he studied and prayed in quiet and solitude. He was there from such an early age that it is said that he eventually felt alien outside of a religious community.

By all accounts a physical giant of a man, Raymond spent eight years winning the hearts of the people of Barcelona by teaching them rhetoric and logic and refusing to take payment for his efforts. He considered knowledge to be a gift from God and something that was common property, not to be sold.

In 1210 Raymond decided to further his own education by traveling to the University of Bologna in Italy to study law. This was the leading school of law in the Christian world at the time and its prestige was similar to that of Harvard University School of Law today. Raymond spent six years studying there and earned his Doctor of Laws degree. Afterward, he once again took to teaching the citizenry for free, earning the hearts of the people of Bologna, too.

The course of his life was drastically altered in 1218, however, when a group of Friars Preachers (Dominican monks), led by Dominic of Castile, arrived in Bologna. A huge number of his contemporaries were highly influenced by these monks and chose to leave the University to join their Order. Raymond was also

quite interested.

But soon after their arrival, Berengar IV de Palou, the Bishop of Barcelona, also arrived in Bologna seeking Dominic of Castile. He wanted Dominic to bring a group of his friars to Barcelona to battle the indifference of the people of his city. He also wanted Raymond de Pennafort, a native of his own diocese, to return home to teach in a school for the clergy which he hoped the friars would establish there. Raymond agreed and together they convinced Dominic to send members of his Order over the Pyrenees Mountains to start the Santa Catarina Monastery in Barcelona.

Once they were back in Barcelona, the Bishop quickly chose Raymond to fill a vacancy on his staff and months later he was elected to the Office of Provost. But Raymond yearned to sacrifice himself wholly to God and after associating with the friars, he ardently wanted to join them. So on Good Friday, 1222 he became a Dominican.

For the next five years Raymond prayed from midnight to well into the morning, sleeping only briefly. He spent all of his time saying Mass, studying the law, listening to lectures and studying the Scriptures. He fasted every day of the week, taking only one meal daily, except Sunday when he ate two meals with wine to honor the Lord's resurrection. During this time period he is credited with performing two miracles. He healed a woman's fever and a man's long-recurring

head pain.

It was also during this period in his life that the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to Raymond, Peter Nolasco and James I, King of Aragon. She instructed them to form an order for the ransom of Christian slaves from the tyranny of the Moors (Saracens) who enslaved them. Raymond and Peter, with support from James I, subsequently formed a lay military order called the "Order of Our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives." No use of the sword was permitted by members. Instead, they sought to ransom captives with money and they also sold themselves into captivity in order to liberate others. Members of religious communities were eventually allowed to become members of the order and its members became known as "Mercedarians," short for the "Order of Mercy."

Raymond's life took another sharp turn in 1227 thanks to the visit to Spain of a Papal Legate, John d'Abbeville. Rome was far away and the Pope's rules were only half-heartedly applied in Spain. The Church in Spain was literally falling apart and reform was desperately needed. So the Papal Legate traveled through the Spanish countryside, trying to start a grassroots movement for reform from the Spanish bishops.

Raymond was asked to go along and help smooth the Legate's way with his countrymen. It is said that during that trip Raymond's noble birth was obvious to all who heard him speak. Furthermore, his



influence on the people was so strong that the Legate's visit was a great success, triggering reform throughout Spain and prompting d'Abbeville to mention Raymond to Pope Gregory IX when he

returned to Rome.

The Pope was intrigued by Raymond de Pennafort. He wanted to meet this man who could influence a whole nation. So he sent for him and as soon as



Raymond arrived in Rome, Pope Gregory appointed him chaplain and penitentiary for the Vatican and made him his own personal confessor. In his capacity as chaplain Raymond conferred on difficult cases of conscience and as penitentiary he imposed penances for sins whose remission was reserved to the Pope.

He was also instrumental, during this time, in introducing the Inquisition to Aragon. He and the Pope both wanted to bind Church and State into a theocratic empire in which heretics would be guilty of not only sins against the Church, but also high treason against the State. He wanted to see heretics jailed so that they would have no contact with the "faithful." But he counseled caution and prudence in

these matters. It was not until two centuries later that the Inquisition was formally established as a tribunal.

Raymond's work during this time was tedious, but hidden, so he enjoyed his duties. But when Pope Gregory IX asked Raymond to become a bishop, the Spanish scholar/priest was so horrified by the thought that he fell seriously ill and had to return home to recuperate, so the Pope was forced to choose another bishop.

Back in his native land once more, Raymond resumed a quiet life as "Brother Raymond," compiling a book for his students based on his law notes. But he was not to be left in peace. Suero Gomez, the Provincial of Spain, commanded him to draw up a handy compen-

dium for priests featuring short synopses of cases most frequently mentioned in confession and how to handle them. Known as the "Raymundiana" or the "Summa Raymundi," its cases were divided into four categories: crimes against God; sins against neighbors; sins against the ecclesiastical state; and matrimonial sins. Its influence was felt far and wide.

In fact, before it was even published in 1235, Pope Gregory summoned Raymond back to Rome to take on a similar task for him. Pope Gregory felt that a codification of Canon Law was necessary because the laws of the Church at the time were very confusing and spread throughout numerous different texts. So he commissioned Raymond to collect, consolidate

and codify the existing laws in one book.

According to Thomas M. Schwertner in his 1935 book entitled St. Raymond of Pennafort, Pope Gregory IX saw that for the good of both the clergy and the laity, a general reordering of the ecclesiastical legislation was needed for a more expeditious treatment of questions both in Rome and the dioceses. So he asked Raymond "to collect the scattered laws and to remove all confusion, contradictions and superfluity from them in order that the faithful might be peaceful and honest."

Four years later, Raymond issued the fruits of his labors, the supreme work of his life. Called the "Decretals of Pope Gregory IX," the compendium was 2154 chapters long and was organized under five headings: persons obtaining office in the Church; civil judgments; clergy – their morals and temporal goods; law of matrimony; and crimes, penalties and manner of inflicting them. For the next 680 years (until 1918) it was the authentic source of legislation in the Church and the code by which the discipline of the Church was directed.

Raymond's work was not yet done, however. Just as he was finishing up the Decretals in 1238, the Dominican Provincials elected him Master General of the Order, succeeding Jordan of Saxony who was killed in a shipwreck. It was not a position he coveted. In fact, he argued with the Provincials and tried to refuse the appointment, but

to no avail and he was forced to take on the direction of over 30,000 friars around the Christian world.

During his tenure as Master General he drew the Dominican nuns closer to the Order and also did what he did best. He rewrote and tightened up the Constitution of the Order. Remarkably similar to Constitutions that were later written for both the British Empire and the United States, Raymond's rewrite of the Dominican Constitution was not substantially changed until 1924.

In 1240, after serving as his Order's leader for two years, Raymond resigned due to ill health. But he was not yet finished making an impact on his Church. He opened a small school in Tunis in which Moslems were taught the Church's teachings in their own language – Arabic and another school in Murcia where the Jews of Spain were taught in Hebrew. This was the first time that anyone had attempted a systematic missionary activity among the Jews and Moslems in their own languages. Many of the faithful were scandalized, but Raymond's experiment was very successful. Over 10,000 men in Africa and Spain were reportedly converted through these efforts. In fact, many Jewish and Moslem converts left their native lands to take refuge with him and he asked for gifts from the wealthy to support his converts.

Raymond spent the last 30 years of his life as an invalid, spending his time in prayer. He considered it to be "interior crucifixion," a type of martyrdom.

Despite his ill health and seclusion, he was frequently consulted by King James of Aragon and King Alfonso of Castile on matters of the law and religion. In fact, one of Spain's favorite stories about St. Raymond de Pennafort concerned a disagreement he had with King James of Aragon in 1263. Raymond, very elderly by this time, heard that King James was planning to go to the Balearic Islands for an assignation. Raymond strongly objected and threatened to leave Majorca, where he was living. As the story goes, James closed all of the ports in Majorca so that Raymond could not leave. So Raymond performed a miracle. He sailed 160 leagues to Barcelona on his cloak. Many Spanish hymns and poems are actually based on this story.

Raymond de Pennafort died in Barcelona on Epiphany in 1275 after living for almost a century. Requests to have him canonized began flooding Rome from Spain as early as 1297 but it took over 300 years for Raymond de Pennafort to actually be proclaimed St. Raymond de Pennafort. He was finally named a saint by Pope Clement VIII on April 29, 1601. By 1604 his feast day was a Holy Day of Obligation throughout the Spanish kingdom of Catalonia and in 1647 he was named the patron saint of Barcelona by the Holy See, a title he still holds. For obvious reasons, he is also considered the patron saint of those skilled in canon law. *



Samuel Cardinal Stritch presided over an unprecedented parish building boom in the Archdiocese of Chicago during his tenure. A total of 70 parishes were built between March of 1940 and April of 1958 and one of them was St. Raymond de Penafort in Mount Prospect. Courtesy, The New World.

Father Thomas J. O'Brien, former chaplain of St. Theresa Hospital in Waukegan, was named pastor of the new Catholic parish to be established in Mount Prospect.

it for a school. Village officials felt that it was a bad location for a school because it was only a few blocks from the growing business community in the downtown.

A special election was held June 12, 1948 and the 48 people who participated voted almost unanimously to sell the property. So a public auction was held on July 24 and the proceeds of the sale were set aside for the future purchase of land for a new school on the south side of the tracks, as stipulated by the developers when they gave the land to the trustees in the 1920s. That was when they bought the much larger, but low-lying, parcel where Lincoln Junior High School is situated.

Ironically, the Trustees ended up selling at that July 24 public auction this property which they had pronounced in the deed to be "unsuitable, unnecessary and inconvenient

for school purposes," to an authorized, but apparently secret, representative of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, William E. Frawley. He bid \$15,000 for it and completed the deal on August 6, 1948.

Frawley's connection to the Archdiocese is confirmed by a letter to William J. Hoffman of the Chancery Office, penned by Walter C. Senne of the law firm of Kirkland, Fleming, Green, Martin and Ellis and dated January 21, 1949, which was found in the Archdiocese's archives. It said, in part, "enclosed herewith please find a deed from the Trustees of Schools . . . to William E. Frawley which has been filed for record in the Registrar's Office of Cook County, IL . . . which covers property recently purchased by you in Mount Prospect, Illinois."

Frawley then proceeded to purchase as much of the other property in that block as he could. On Sept. 3, 1948 he purchased Lot 12 from Edward and Anna Thompson. On Oct. 1, 1948 he purchased Lots 8, 9 and 11 from the builder. And on June 6, 1949 he was able to complete a deal with Samuel and Kathryn Faraone of Evanston to purchase Lot 13.

Finally, on July 10, 1949, Cardinal Stritch decreed that a church would be



established in Mount Prospect on property owned by the Archdiocese. Its pastor would be Father Thomas J. O'Brien, chaplain of St. Theresa Hospital in Waukegan. To him fell the task of organizing the 125 Catholic families in Mount Prospect into a parish and building adequate facilities for that parish.

Many have speculated over the years about how the name for the parish was chosen. According to Ben Trapani, a long-time parishioner, Father O'Brien named it for the 12th century Spanish Dominican monk and Papal confessor, St. Raymond de Pennafort (notice that our spelling of Pennafort with only one 'n' is actually incorrect and has been since the parish was founded.) This name was chosen as a tribute

to his good friend and mentor, Father Raymond Hillinger, superintendent of Angel Guardian Orphanage at Devon and Ridge on the north side of Chicago (now the location of Misericordia Home). Father Hillinger was later made an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese and eventually Bishop of the Rockford, Illinois Diocese. Bishop Raymond Hillinger was fittingly present years later for the consecration of the three altars in the parish's permanent church.



This aerial photograph of Mount Prospect, taken during the 1920s, shows the relative proximity of the land St. Raymond's occupies to the Village's growing downtown area. To figure out where St. Raymond will be, look for the Route 83 S-curve and judge from that. Courtesy, Mount Prospect Historical Society.





For several years after the parish was founded, local Catholics attended Mass each Sunday in the basement of Mount Prospect School District 57's Central School. Built in 1927, it was located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Central Road and Route 83. It was torn down in 1974 to make way for the present public library.

Building a parish of our own

When Father Thomas J. O'Brien arrived in Mount Prospect in July of 1949, he was met with open arms – literally. Parishioner Ben Trapani recalls stories about parishioners Les Minoque and Joe Suchy meeting Father O'Brien at the train station and taking him into their homes to help him get started. Not surprisingly, Minoque and Suchy became the parish's first two lay apostles, acting as Father O'Brien's right and left arms.

The parish community celebrated its first Mass (as well as the baptism of its first baby, Jeffrey David Teach) on July 17, 1949 in the basement of Mount Prospect School District 57's old Central School, which was located on the site of the present public

library. Mass was held there for several years until a church building could be completed.

Robert Bluett, a prominent local builder, immediately stepped forward and purchased a small home at the corner of Milburn and Hi-Lusi Avenues (at 222 S. Hi-Lusi Avenue) to serve as a rectory and chapel. And the Catholic women and nuns from St. Theresa Hospital, where Father O'Brien had been chaplain, jumped in and decorated and furnished the little house.

"When we first moved out here in October, 1950, the congregation was meeting in the basement of Central School," recalls Adelaide Thulin, cantor and long-time choir member, and her husband, Fred, one of the

St. Raymond's first rectory was a small house located at 222 S. Hi-Lusi Avenue. Father O'Brien lived there alone.





Before the church was built, baptisms were done in the basement chapel of Father O'Brien's home on Hi-Lusi Avenue.

founders of the parish Holy Name Society. "Father O'Brien heard face-to-face confessions in the broom closet and many people went to confession in Des Plaines or Arlington Heights to avoid that. I remember it

feeling a little strange."

Many long-time parishioners including Nell Steinmiller, Marie Jeuck and Thulin recall Father O'Brien baptizing some of their children in his basement chapel on Hi-Lusi. Thulin further recalls Father O'Brien bragging about the fact that his Irish mother had taught him how to keep house and that was why he was able to live in that little house by himself.

Father O'Brien also made it a point to go to each and every new parishioner's house and bless it personally. This seems all the more amazing when you think that the Catholic population of the parish doubled between 1949 and 1951 and that Father O'Brien's flock came from a large geographic area in those days. The parish's original boundaries extended from Palatine Road on the north to Higgins Road on the south and from Wolf Road (north of Northwest Highway) and Mount Prospect Road (south of Northwest Highway) on the east to Forest Avenue (north of Central Road) and Arlington Heights Road (south of Central Road) on the west. It was later to be progressively eaten away at by the formation of such parishes as St. Emily, St. Cecilia, St. Thomas Becket, St. Zachary and St. Alphonsus.



Women of the parish periodically held bake sales in front of Keefer's Pharmacy to raise money for the church.

"We all worked hard, but we had a good time," Nell Steinmiller says of those early days. "It's fun building up a parish. We were all young then."

A principle the Archdiocese had learned over the years in urban parishes was proving to be true in Mount Prospect and other suburbs, too.

"The complex process of church-building actually led to higher levels of commitment among <parishioners>," explained Skerrett, Kantowicz and Avella in their book *Catholicism, Chicago Style*. "In parish after parish, the campaign to complete a church and school demanded cooperation among Catholics living in a particular area. While the debts incurred were often enormous, fund-raising became an important component of parish life, bringing together members of a congregation in a way that worship alone could not. Built of brick and mortar, these parish complexes provided incontrovertible evidence that <these suburban transplants> and their children were creating a place for themselves" in their new communities.

And fund-raise they did! The women held bake sales in front of Keefer's Pharmacy. They also organized geographic "block clubs" to make things to sell at an annual bazaar.

"The Women's Club was VERY active then," recalls Jeanette White. "If you were a woman in the parish, you belonged, no matter what your age. We never had any guilds at St. Raymond. It was always organized on a neighborhood basis. Neighbors would get together and be responsible for a booth at the bazaars."

"It was rough starting a parish. We had no money," recalls parishioner Myron Weigle. "So the Catholic Men's Club (which later became the Holy Name Society) would hold spaghetti dinners, fish fries and other similar fund-raisers every night of a given weekend on a periodic basis at St. Mary in Buffalo Grove. They were very kind to us."

Other aspects of parish life also began to fall into place. The Christian Family Movement began crusading with great success against objectionable magazines at local stores, asking merchants to put them

behind the counter and away from the hands of children.

Parishioners Gertrude Ahern and Helen Urquhart prepared 14 children for First Holy Communion and on May 14, 1950 (Mother's Day) the parish held its first ceremony of First Communion at Central School.

And parishioners Jean Jarosz, Helen Gorny, Jean Rodda and Julie Brossart began organizing a choir. Joseph Molumby became

First communicants in 1950 took the sacrament in the makeshift basement sanctuary at Central School. There were 14 in that first class.



its first director and organist. The choir made its debut at Christmas Midnight Mass in 1950 and its members included Jarosz, Gorny, Rodda and Brossart, as well as Santa Riccio, Jane Nicoll, Marge Louthain, Irene Jenal, George Laubenheimer, Robert Nicoll, Mrs. Baker and Fred Thulin.

Father O'Brien also granted an inter-

Christmas Mass in 1950 marked the first appearance of St. Raymond's new choir, organized by four women parishioners. It was directed by Joseph Molumby, seated at the piano.



view to the Mount Prospect Herald newspaper. In the resulting article, which appeared in the October 6, 1950 issue, he announced tentative plans for a 140,000 square foot

church and school complex. His plans at the time called for a two-story building with four classrooms on the upper floor (each of which were to accomodate 48 children) and a large

When the tiny little church was completed, it was cause for great celebration and Samuel Cardinal Stritch came out to dedicate the building on June 29, 1952. Having the Cardinal in the village caused a lot of excitement among area Catholics.



multi-purpose room on the first floor to be used for Masses, social functions and community activities. He also planned a "bungalow-type" structure which would connect the two-story unit to a second unit to be built later. This bungalow structure, according to the article, would house school and church offices; a pastor's apartment and study on the upper floor; and a kitchen and boiler room on the lower level. He also mentioned that he was trying to make arrangements for the "necessary nuns to conduct the school" because, as of that interview, Mount Prospect had 250 Catholic families with 362 children of all ages.

Plans changed, however, and Father O'Brien ended up building the second unit first. It consisted of a small church with a choir loft which was dedicated by Cardinal Stritch on June 29, 1952. Father O'Brien had been directed to expedite the construction because neighboring parishes were quickly becoming overcrowded. St. Raymond already boasted 306 families. So Thomas L. Edward Cooke, architect brother of Monsignor Vincent W. Cooke, was called upon to design the little sanctuary.

The resulting church was considered a departure from churches of the past because it was "a blend of richness and simplicity in brick, wood and stone," according to a 1954 newspaper clipping from an unknown publication. In the article, St. Raymond's tiny church was held up as an example of the new, "anti-traditionalist" thinking in church architecture.

"Architects have been complaining for years that it doesn't make sense to copy traditional church designs with modern building materials," the article explained. "... if the cathedral builders of the 12th century had steel beams and glass bricks available they wouldn't have built any Gothic churches for us to imitate. An increasing number of pastors and congregations have come to agree that it is appropriate to use today's new materials to seek new forms of beauty in churches."

Adelaide Thulin recalls it as "a lovely little church." No one ever expected it to be the parish's final church. Even the abovementioned article explained that the

church they were featuring so prominently would someday "become a parish auditorium when a larger church eventually is built."

In the meantime, William Frawley continued to buy up lots within the block. Arthur and Lillian Niemann sold him Lot 10 on June 4, 1951; John and Anne Baldwin of San Francisco, CA sold him Lots 14 and 15 on November 18, 1952; and John and Rosella



Zgonena sold him Lot 7 on May 19, 1953.

And life went on. Frank Baldini was the first parishioner who died. He was mourned and buried from the temporary sanctuary at Central School on February 24, 1951.

The first marriage within the new parish was that of Jean Miller and John Henry Michels on August 31, 1951. It was witnessed by Father O'Brien. And the sacrament of Confirmation was administered to 33 youths from St. Raymond by Bishop William O'Brien, auxiliary bishop of Chicago, on May 6, 1952.



The brick, wood and stone church which Thomas L. Edward Cooke designed for St. Raymond caused a bit of a stir in church architecture circles. It was held up as a sterling example of anti-traditionalist thinking in church architecture.



Hazel Voorhees, the church's original organist, played for almost every Mass until her death in 1964.

Hazel Voorhees, an organist with experience playing at the great Chicago Theatre, became the regular organist, playing at virtually every Mass held in the church until her death in 1964. John Pope and Bill White were the vocalists who sang with her at every 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass for years.

During these early years, Father O'Brien's unofficial associate pastor was Father Joseph Gartland of the Passionist Order. He said many Masses, counselled parishioners and substituted for Father O'Brien when he had to be elsewhere. He even continued to help out after the Archdiocese sent Father J. Michael Hartnett to be St. Raymond's first official assistant pastor in July of 1953. So it was indeed a loss when Father Gartland died in March of 1956.

Permission to add a school to the parish was received from the Chancery office in late 1952 and excavation for an eight-classroom school, designed for expansion, began on March 22, 1953. The school's cornerstone was set in place and blessed by Cardinal Stritch in

September, 1953.

The long-awaited school finally opened to students in September of 1954 and Cardinal Stritch traveled to Mount Prospect again to dedicate it on September 25, 1954. By this time there were 600 families in the parish.

Among the children admitted to the school that first year was Marcella and Ken Odmark's son, Edward, who was in second grade the year the school opened. Their older son, Ken (a sixth grader), was unable to get in so he went to St. Mary School in Des Plaines until he was able to get into St. Raymond two years later as an eighth grader.

"There were 72 second graders in Edward's class and they were all taught by a nun named Sr. Jude," Marcella recalls. "For the number of children in the room, they did get a good education. But I have to say that some of their rules at that time were too strict."

Jeanette White agrees. "School wasn't tons of fun then. There was no drama club and no band. They didn't get a choice about

The first group of young people from St. Raymond parish to receive the sacrament of Confirmation did so on May 6, 1952. There were 33 boys and girls in the class.





Far left: Samuel Cardinal Stritch returned to Mount Prospect in September, 1953 to bless the cornerstone of the new school as it was being set in place. Above and left: There was lots of celebration and fanfare when the parish school was dedicated by Samuel Cardinal Stritch in September, 1954. Even the Knights of Columbus were present as an honor guard.

much."

"For uniforms they wore navy and white checked jumpers for the little girls and skirts for the older girls, with white blouses," says Marie Pope. "The boys wore navy blue

pants with beige shirts and blue ties."

"The nuns were very strict," Adelaide Thulin says. "The kids really behaved. I remember that at first our children had to walk home for lunch, even though we lived a mile away. Later on they carried their lunch and got milk at school. Sometimes they would even recruit mothers to cook lunches there and we would take turns serving them."

"Children like mine who lived close continued to go home for lunch for many years," Pope explains. "I would look forward to them coming home, but they only had an hour and they really had to run in and run

Memories of St. Raymond School

by Gloria Zimmer Ryan, Class of 1964

When I was in grade school at St. Raymond there were quite a few more students in each classroom than there are today. There were three classes in each grade with anywhere from 50 to 60 children in a room. When I was in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades, I was in split classes (one room with two grade levels). It wasn't until eighth grade that we changed rooms for different subjects and different teachers.

The physical appearance of the school really hasn't changed too much. The teachers' lounge was a first

grade classroom in those days, and the computer lab was the Principals' Office. There was no gym class as part of the school curriculum. When I started at St. Raymond School, the gym was the church. I made my First Communion and was confirmed in the old church. By the time I graduated, the new church had been built. The old church was then used for school assemblies and church social functions, like the "teen club."

Certainly the most obvious difference between then and now is the makeup of the

faculty. Lay teachers were the exception then, rather than the rule now. The Sisters of Mercy, who taught at St. Raymond in those days, lived in their convent, which is now the P.M.C.

When I walk down the halls during school hours now, I'm still amazed at all the activity. When we were not working on our lessons, we sat in silence with our hands folded on our desk and except for an occasional whisper when Sister was out of the room, never spoke unless we were called on. *

back out. But I remember that we had to be careful not to send them back too early. They weren't allowed to play on the playground with the children who stayed at school for lunch."

Classes were taught primarily by members of the Sisters of Mercy order who lived in a 1920s-vintage house at 218 S. I-Oka Avenue. The first principal was Sister Mary Innocentia and her fellow sisters in the classrooms were Sisters Mary Jude, Honorata and Maria. There were also two lay teachers – Dorothy Skene and Mary Neville.

"But they did ask mothers to come in and help by tutoring children who were having trouble in reading," recalls Marie Jeuck. "We would work with them on the lower level."

"Sister Delores, who replaced Sr. Mary Innocentia as principal after one year, was a very strong character," recalls Nell Steinmiller. "My son, George, who was an altar boy and later became a Passionist priest, graduated from the first graduating class. He said that Sister Delores pulled him out in the hall one day and asked him if he had ever considered becoming a priest. I always remember that."

All eight classrooms were on the upper level. The lower level was used as a meeting hall and auditorium, as well as for a lunch-



St. Raymond Sisters of Mercy get their students ready for polio shots in 1955. Courtesy of the Mount Prospect Historical Society.

room for the children. Overflow Masses and fund-raising bazaars were also held down there.

Even with all of the building going on at St. Raymond, its parishioners did not have tunnel vision. They were also concerned about their fellow man and in 1954 a group of them formed the Christian Family Movement (CFM).

"There were so many migrant workers around here then," recalls Adelaide Thulin, one of CFM's founders. "We formed CFM as



The little church was especially lovely at Christmastime.



The convent was built at the corner of Milburn and I-Oka Avenues for members of the Sisters of Mercy who taught at the school. The chapel was located on the upper floor at the north end and the basement was furnished as a recreation and living room.



a social service organization originally to provide services to these people throughout the picking season. Some of the farmers were very harsh. So we used an old abandoned church in Des Plaines and held weekend clothing stores there where we would sell donated clothes to the migrants for 50 cents per bag. We would also hold a First Communion Breakfast at St. James in Arlington Heights for the migrant children making their First Communions and their families. Father Reiker at St. James spoke fluent Spanish and he was assigned there to work with the Hispanics so we worked with him. We also formed the Opportunity Council to try to get some low cost housing built in South Barrington, near some of the fields. Obviously, we failed in that effort."

"Cardinal Meyer also asked CFM to establish a religious center at Cabrini Green in Chicago," Thulin continues. "Our CFM



group responded by founding Damian House on Orleans Street. It was named for a local priest who had been called on to serve as a missionary in South Africa. Every Saturday we volunteered at Damian House and at the little model airplane club that my husband, Fred, and Bernie Minton, another St. Raymond parishioner, founded at Cabrini Green."

"We stored food, clothing and infant supplies at Damian House for distribution to local families who were suffering from emergencies due to fires, accidents, etc.," she continues. "Counseling was provided by some Catholic clergy, as well as CFM lay volunteers. Since at that time it took up to three days for the appropriate governmental agencies to provide people with aid and shelter in times of crisis, the local police officers had been personally donating items to needy people. So they were especially grateful that Damian House took on this responsibility."

Meanwhile, St. Raymond expanded its little church in 1955 to help ease overcrowding. An additional 80 feet was added to the western end of the structure.

But the growing pains refused to ease. There were so many "Baby Boom" children

to educate that the parish was forced to give up its big lower level meeting space and replace it with eight more classrooms in 1957.

"By the time my son, Edward, got to eighth grade in 1960, there were so many eighth graders that they could only go to school half days to accommodate everyone," recalls Marcella Odmark. "Sister Mary Finnbar taught them. Half would go to school from 8 to 11:30 a.m. and the other half would go from noon to 4 p.m. and they would rotate the hours each month. Edward would go in the morning one month and in the afternoon the next month."

With the increased number of students came the need for more Sisters of Mercy to teach them and the house on I-Oka had become overcrowded with eleven nuns living there. So, in September of 1957, construction began on a convent at the corner of Milburn and I-Oka Avenues, just west of the little church.

The convent was constructed to house 16 nuns and a housekeeper. The main floor featured a kitchen, community room, dining area (which they called a "refectory") and work room. Upstairs were the tiny individual sleeping quarters, lavatory facilities and a chapel. In the basement there was a recreation room with a piano, television, ping-pong table and work area, as well as a laundry room and room for storage.

"The nuns were so happy there," recalls Nell Steinmiller. "Marshall Field's did the interior for them and it was beautiful."

By this time the Steinmillers with their eight children were living on the same block as the convent. In fact, they were living right next door at 309 S. I-Oka Avenue.

"We had been living on the other side of the tracks at 220 South Owen Street for six years when Father O'Brien came to Jack in 1956 and suggested that we buy this house on the same block as the church," she recalls.

"Apparently he had tried to buy it for the church from the non-Catholic owners, but they had been reluctant to sell to the church," Steinmiller explains. "So Father O'Brien wanted to get a Catholic family in there because he figured that a Catholic family would be more willing to sell to the church if it later wanted the property."

The church already owned the house just to the south of this one at 311 S. I-Oka. They had purchased the two-story brick and cement home with a screened porch from Harold and Juanita Barnes in June of 1953 for \$21,500. Stan Wozniak, the parish's beloved maintenance man, was living there.

The Sisters of Mercy were part of the neighborhood. The Steinmiller family with their eight children lived in the first house south of the convent. Next to them was a home, owned by the church, but occupied by Stan Wozniak, parish maintenance man. The third house, which is barely visible, was owned by the Byrne family, which also had eight children.



The only other private home on the block was at 313 S. I-Oka and it was owned by Andrew and Mary Byrne who, like the Steinmillers, had eight children.

"We all sure enjoyed living by the nuns," Steinmiller says. "We would always freeze our yard in the winter and they would

come over and skate."

Other neighbors also recall the Sisters of Mercy. For instance, Jeanette White recalls driving them around each year to see the Christmas lights. And Marcella Odmark remembers taking the nuns to run errands.

"I became close to one of the nuns and she used to tell me about their lives in the convent," Odmark relates. "She told me that someone read Scripture during each meal and no one was allowed to talk. And the reason they had that butler's pantry area with the sink between the dining area and the kitchen was because the nuns had to wash their own dishes there after each meal."

Once the Sisters were ensconced in their new convent, Father O'Brien and his new assistant, Father Joseph Doyle, moved into the much larger, former convent at 218 S. I-Oka Avenue and the parish sold the original rectory on Hi-Lusi Avenue in August, 1958.

All of this building forced Father O'Brien to always be searching for donations and fund-raisers. "Walgreen's donated four big fans to cool the little old church," parish-

ioner Myron Weigle recalls.

"We used to joke that Father O'Brien was always looking over his shoulder to see who was driving up in the Cadillac," says Marie Pope. "He wanted to know them!"

Ken and Marcella Odmark agree. "Father O'Brien was very nice, but also very close-mouthed. He wouldn't answer questions about the parish finances and he never told anyone how much was collected each week. But he seemed frugal with the church's money, so he was able to get people to donate."

It is important to remember that for much of this time there were no collection envelopes issued, according to Myron Weigle. People just threw their money in the basket and no one knew who gave what.

In September, 1959 Father O'Brien initiated the parish's first "Fair Share" campaign, chaired by Jack Keefer, with help from Eloy Ekkebus and countless others. With the slogan, "Pray, Work, Give," this intense door-to-door solicitation by 400 male parishioner volunteers sought funds, payable over three years, for debt reduction and school expansion. Their goal was to raise no less than \$350,000 because the parish's debt at the time was \$546,000 and they also wanted to build a new larger church and add eight more classrooms to the school.

This was an incredibly well-orchestrated effort with the parish divided into 18 geographic "divisions" and a chairman appointed for each. There was also a special newspaper published each week just to promote the campaign. And a big kick-off dinner was held at Chevy Chase Country Club in Wheeling where Auxiliary Bishop Raymond P. Hillinger was the keynote speaker. The workers at that inspirational dinner pledged \$132,000 toward the goal before they even set foot in the neighborhoods.

The campaign blitz was held on a Sunday afternoon, October 11, 1959, and people were urged by Father O'Brien and their division chairmen to stay home to receive campaign workers and most did!

Myron Weigle, one of the many soldiers in that fund-raising army, recalls, "We did it by block and while some people

Sisters living in the convent ate together at this long table while someone read Scripture.



refused to contribute, most helped. You have to remember that the people we were approaching had all come through the Depression, but most were still willing to contribute."

The campaign was obviously successful because parishioner Theodore Erbach, a well-known church architect, was commissioned in 1960 to design a new church and the ground was broken on the southeast corner of the block during the spring of 1961. The original church had grown too cramped. In fact, extra Masses were being held down the street at Lincoln Junior High School to accommodate the crowds. St. Raymond boasted 1500 families by now. So the school's playground was sacrificed for the cause of a more spacious, air-conditioned, church. Eight more classrooms were simultaneously added to the school and the two buildings connected.

Modeled after St. Gerald Church in Oak Lawn, the church was built of Norman brick with bedford and Lannon stone by Schillmoeller and Krofl General Contractors at a cost of \$410,000. The floor was made of terrazzo and all three altars were made of Italian marble, as were the statues. The brick of the main wall of the sanctuary was laid in a special pattern which formed the reredos behind the altar and a huge crucifix of ebony adorned it.

All of the appointments in the church, including the stained glass windows and pews with seating capacity of 1200, were donated by parishioners.

Auxiliary Bishop Hillinger paid a visit to the new church on August 31, 1961 to consecrate the three altars so that the congregation could make use of the new facility. But it wasn't formally dedicated until April 29, 1962 when Albert Cardinal Meyer traveled to Mount Prospect to give it his blessing.

Throughout his pastorate at St. Raymond, Father O'Brien was known to be a quiet, friendly Irishman who usually had a joke to tell. He also tried his best to accommodate his parishioners whenever possible within the strictures of the Church. Men who had to leave daily Mass (which was much better attended then) to catch a train for work were offered the opportunity to take Com-

munion before Mass instead of near the end of it. This practice continued throughout the next pastor's tenure at St. Raymond, too, and on into the early 1970s, according to Jeanette White and Marie Pope.

Adelaide Thulin remembers a story Father O'Brien told about working on the grounds around the church one day, dressed in a sweatshirt and work pants. A car full of women from another town pulled up and stopped their car, asking when someone would be available to hear their confessions. Father O'Brien recalled pulling his stole out of his pocket, draping it around his neck and

Fund-raising campaigns in the early years were so important and well-orchestrated that special campaign newspapers were published each week and huge kick-off dinners were held to inspire the workers.



telling the women, "at St. Raymond, even the gardener hears confession!"

According to Myron Weigle, Father O'Brien also had a weakness for banana cake, walking a couple of blocks quite often just to get one from Weigle's wife, Charlotte.

But as with most people, there were apparently many sides to Father O'Brien. Weigle remembers how hard he drove himself and his parishioners to begin the parish with nothing and built it into something enviable.

Whereas Thulin remembers his softer side. Father O'Brien used to tell his flock that the Christmas Gospel was the greatest homily that could be given. Nothing else was needed.

While the new church was being built, the heavily-wooded parcel directly south of it and across Lincoln Avenue became em-



Schillmoeller and Kroft were the general contractors on the construction of the new church. The cost was \$410,000. When the church was completed it had a seating capacity of 1200 and was air-conditioned. Notice the large, elevated podium and marble appointments.

broiled in a controversy. A consortium of dentists from Glencoe, headed by Dr. Meyer Kushner, purchased the eastern half of the block and, according to Ken and Marcella Odmark, planned to build an apartment building with an alley there.

But the Odmarks and their neighbors in the 400 block of South I-Oka Avenue got together and protested the plan to the Village fathers and it was rejected.

"It was completely filled with trees over there," Marcella Odmark recalls. "The kids always played there. They called it the 'lost jungle.' We didn't protest to save the trees, though. We just didn't want a city-style apartment building with an alley in Mount Prospect. That's what we had left behind in the city."



When the dentists' plan was rejected, they were forced to find a buyer and Father O'Brien had the foresight to realize that he needed the land for a parking lot.

"We had all of these families walking to church each Sunday or parking on nearby streets," recalls Ben Trapani, "and Father O'Brien realized that we needed a place for all of these cars. So he came to me and asked me to negotiate for the property."

Once again, go-betweens were used. Using church money, Walter and Lois Lemke

purchased the 24 lots for \$100,000 on August 7, 1961 and nine days later they turned around and relinquished their claim to the property, transferring it to St. Raymond. A massive parking lot with capacity for 500 cars was built there shortly thereafter.

Father O'Brien now had his new church, huge parking lot, larger school, convent for the nuns and even a hall for meetings (the little old church), but he was still troubled by having two families owning property and residing on it within "his" block.

Andrew and Mary Byrne and their eight children helped him out by moving to Elm Grove, WI in November, 1962 and selling their home at 313 S. I-Oka Avenue to St. Raymond. Father O'Brien quickly moved in. He had never been particularly fond of the rectory at 218 S. I-Oka Avenue, according to Nell Steinmiller, so he moved into the Byrnes' old house, leaving his assistants, Frs. Joseph Doyle and Daniel Coughlin, in the old rectory.

Eventually he probably would have asked the Steinmillers to move so that the church could have the whole block but he became ill and went into Resurrection Hospital in April, 1963 for surgery. He died on the operating table on April 27, 1963, a few months short of his 62nd birthday, leaving



Father O'Brien used lots of imagination and creative thinking, as well as hard work, to create the parish of St. Raymond from scratch. By the time he died on April 27, 1963, the parish he had created was already well established and quite healthy.

behind a strong, healthy parish which had little left on its construction agenda. Father O'Brien had truly built something wonderful out of nothing.



Albert Cardinal Meyer presided over the dedication Mass for the new church on April 29, 1962.



Father Coggins' ingenious connection of three formerly private homes to make a large and very beautiful rectory for the pastor and priests was admired by all, including the Archdiocesan officials who had put a moratorium on construction of new rectories.