

HISTORY OF ST. PATRICK'S

The early Catholics in Olyphant were forced to travel long distances over rough country to attend divine services. Initially, they traveled to Archbald, and after the establishment in 1856 of St. Mary's Parish, Dunmore, some of them trekked through the forest to receive the ministrations of the Church. Occasionally, Mass was celebrated in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Loftus.

The coal industry developed and the population increased so rapidly that the seating capacity of the small church erected in 1868 became inadequate to the needs of the constantly increasing number of Catholics. Thus, the need for the erection of an addition to the already existing building.

Today's St. Patrick's, Delaware and Grant Streets, Olyphant, is an imposing, domed edifice designed in classical Roman style. It was dedicated in 1933, four years after ground was broken.

In its first 55 years, St. Patrick's Church had three pastors: Rev. Patrick J. O'Rourke (1875-1884); Rev. Edward J. Melley (1884-1889); and Rev. Patrick J. Murphy (1889-1930).

The parish originally was a mission of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Archbald until 1875, when it was established as a separate parish with St. James, Jessup, as a mission.

According to the Catholic Light, in 1873 the first Bishop of Scranton created St. Patrick's as a separate parish, the Rt. Rev. William O'Hara, D.D., with Jessup as a mission. The new parish was named after Ireland's patron saint and St. James was selected as the name of the mission in Jessup. Bishop O'Hara as the first pastor of St. Patrick's appointed Rev. O'Rourke, and it was he who built the first rectory, which served until the Very Rev. Msgr. P.J. Murphy erected the new priests' home, a few years before his death. It was on the site of the present church. Father O'Rourke was ordained in the same class as Msgr. Murphy.

The Rt. Rev. William P. Kealy, a former chancellor of the Scranton Diocese and a scholar who studied in Rome, succeeded the Rt. Rev. Dr. P.J. Murphy in 1930 as the pastor of St. Patrick's. One of his first goals was the construction of the new church.

Early members of St. Patrick's Parish occasionally walked or rode the Gravity Railroad to Archbald for Mass. The parish was a mission of St. Thomas Aquinas until 1875. At that time it was created into a separate parish with St. James, Jessup, as a mission.

The Rev. Patrick McSwiggin laid the cornerstone for the first church in Olyphant and the first in the entire Diocese to be built of brick. It still stands today on Delaware Street, Olyphant, converted to a hall.

The hardships, which followed the close of the Civil War, were still fresh in memory when the first settlers of the tiny mining hamlet, under the direction of Rev. McSwiggin, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Archbald, began the erection of a house of worship.

On January 25, 1868, the Most Rev. James Frederic Wood, then Bishop, but later Archbishop of Philadelphia, purchased in trust for the parish a plot of ground on Delaware Street from Richard S. Benjamin and wife Emiline, of Dunning, now Elmhurst, PA.

The cornerstone was blessed by the Rev. John Dougherty, Honesdale, and was dedicated by Bishop Wood in October 1868, with Father Dougherty preaching the sermon on that auspicious occasion. The edifice, 60' by 45' in size, was the first brick church in the Diocese.

Rev. O'Rourke was the first pastor. He purchased a rectory adjoining the church. He had the distinction of being attacked by a gunman during Mass. He survived the attack. Rev.

O'Rourke died 12 years after his ordination (July 14, 1884) and was succeeded by the Rev. Melley who celebrated Masses in a school building in Jessup and later directed the construction of and completely paid for the first St. James Church.

Rev. Melley also started a parish fund for St. Patrick's and purchased a new cemetery. Parishioners had been using a burial ground, which had never been consecrated. He acquired the ground for the new cemetery on the slope of the mountains west of the town of Blakely and erected a wire fence about it, all at no cost to the parish. He also ordered the removal of the body of his predecessor from the churchyard and its reinterment in the new cemetery, erecting a monument over his grave and contributing \$200 to the cost of the memorial.

Father Melley was also very attentive to the wants of the Catholics in the nearby mining town of Jessup who were under his care. For their benefit, he celebrated Mass in a schoolhouse there and later built a church, the present edifice, using the foundation and much of the material of a structure said to have been erected by the famous Mexican general, Santa Anna, who contemplated leading a colony of his countrymen in Jessup after he went into forced retirement following the massacre of the defender (of the Alamo) under Davy Crockett, according to the Catholic Light.

Father Broderick served as administrator for a short time until Rev. Melley was named to succeed Father O'Rourke.

The third pastor, Rev. Murphy, came to St. Patrick's in 1889 following Father Melley's transfer and spent 41 years in the parish, the longest term of any pastor. He was credited with much of the progress in the church and community during that time period.

Msgr. Murphy came from St. Andrew's Church, Blossburg, to assume charge of St. Patrick's Parish and mission November 28, 1889. He was born in County Cork, Ireland, ironically on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1849. He attended Mallery College, Munster, and earned the degree of bachelor of philosophy after which he came to the US at the age of 21. He matriculated at Niagra University. The institution conferred the degree of doctor of laws upon him in 1914.

During the Christmas holidays of 1870, Msgr. Murphy received a letter from the Rt. Rev. William O'Hara, Bishop of Scranton, instructing him to come to Scranton for examination preliminary to his adoption into the Diocese.

Bishop O'Hara in St. Peter's Cathedral, Scranton, ordained him July 14, 1872. Another member of the ordinandi was the late Rev. O'Rourke, who Msgr. Murphy later succeeded as pastor of St. Patrick's Church. The name "Patrick" was significant for Msgr. Murphy. Besides his birth on St. Patrick's Day, he was named after Ireland's patron saint and four of the six priests ordained with him were named Patrick. And of course, he served the greater part of his life at St. Patrick's Church.

Msgr. Murphy's first assignment was to serve as assistant to Very Rev. John O'Rielly; one of three brothers who were pioneer priests in the Scranton Diocese and who at that time was pastor at St. John's Church, Susquehanna. He was his assistant when Father O'Rielly met his death under the wheels of a locomotive in a heroic effort to save the lives of two young women who were in the path of the onrushing engine. After two years at Susquehanna, he was assigned to Auburn with missions at Meshoppen, Tunkhannock, Montrose and Laceyville. During the time he was in charge, a church was built and paid for in Meshoppen.

On April 1, 1874, Msgr. Murphy was instructed to take charge of Friendsville and missions during the absence of the pastor. He took up residence in the village, but six months later returned to Auburn. His missions included Middletown, Warren and Little Meadows. In

February 1878, he was named pastor of St. Andrew's, Blossburg, to succeed Rev. John Wynne. After serving 11 years he was transferred to St. Patrick's November 28, 1889, succeeding Rev. Melley, who was named pastor at St. John's Church, South Scranton.

Shortly after taking charge, Rev. Murphy announced he was opposed to the erection of a new church and suggested the plan be abandoned and instead, the building be renovated and repaired. This was done in 1890.

New windows were installed, a new steel ceiling placed, the choir loft rearranged and a system of heating by furnace installed, an excavation being made under the church and heating plant. The repairs and improvements cost several thousand dollars and at the time it was one of the most attractive churches in the valley. Windows in the church bore the following inscriptions: "John J. O'Malley, Rev. P.J. Murphy, Rev. J.V. Moyland, James Jordan, Dr. John Walsh, Michael and Kate Lynch, Bernard Feeley and sons, John McGinty, McDonnell and Dougher."

Rev. Murphy was instrumental in forming plans for the Olyphant Water Co. He sponsored a movement to erect a municipal power plant, which was successful.

He was very active in founding the Mid Valley Hospital of which he was a director. He remodeled the church, erected and established St. Patrick's school and built St. Patrick's convent. The rectory at Delaware and Grant streets was established during his pastorate. He also purchased a tract of land to enlarge the cemetery.

Rev. Murphy had a deep interest in the development and care of the parish cemetery, which he termed "God's Acre." Early in 1919, he purchased from the Hudson Coal Co., a large tract of land adjoining the cemetery, the purchase price including the surface and on half the underlying coal. The addition was cleared and improved and the parish cemetery today is one of the most beautiful burial grounds in the Diocese. Several parishes in the Mid Valley in addition to St. Patrick's parishioners use it.

Following the command of the Fathers of the Baltimore Council, Rev. Murphy launched a move for the erection of a parochial school soon after coming to Olyphant. With this in mind, he purchased three lots on Delaware and Race streets, adjoining the church, for \$5,750.00, according to the Catholic Light. The building was completed in 1893, having been erected at a cost of \$7,500.00. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary took charge of the school in August 1893 and 220 pupils enrolled on opening day.

A convent was erected in 1889 on the plot of the ground north of the school at a cost of more than \$9,000, largely through the generosity of Mr. Jordan, who left \$5,000 in his will for that purpose. Mrs. Lynch contributed \$1,000 to the fund in memory of her husband, James Lynch, and Father Murphy added \$500 to the fund. Mrs. Mahon donated the stained glass windows in the convent chapel in remembrance of her deceased husband and by Mrs. McDonnell in memory of her departed husband and son.

The Jessup mission remained under the jurisdiction of the pastor of St. Patrick's Parish until February 1899, when the Bishop of Scranton assigned Rev. E. Lafferty as pastor of St. James Church.

Another outstanding improvement during Msgr. Murphy's pastorate was the erection of the rectory, located opposite the new church at the corner of Delaware and Grant streets. It is constructed of brick and is one of the most modern rectories in the Diocese. The original rectory was located on the site of the new church and adjoined the old church. The final improvement to the parish property under Father Murphy's direction was made a few years before his death when he contributed most of the money used in building as addition to the old church.

The people of St. Patrick's Parish displayed their patriotism during the World War when they subscribed a sum in excess of \$30,000 from the church building fund to a Liberty Bond issue.

Father Murphy was well known and respected. He was known to order young men out of pool halls on Saturday nights, so they could get up in time for Sunday Mass. He would organize excursions. People of all faiths waited patiently each summer for Father Murphy's famous events at Farview, Lake Ladore, Lake Ariel and Moosic.

While at St. Patrick's, he was honored by his Holiness Pope Pius XI, who elevated him to the rank of Camerieri Segreti with the title of the Very Rev. Msgr. LL.D was conferred upon him by his alma mater, Niagra University.

Rev. Murphy was also regarded as an influential figure in coal mining circles, particularly in the field of labor relations. Labor and industry leaders sought after his advice. He was honored in 1910 by a visit from Theodore Roosevelt, former US President and Army Colonel. President Roosevelt journeyed to the coalfields in an attempt to settle a bitter miner's labor strike. The President also visited the rectory.

During his 41 years in Olyphant, Msgr. Murphy became one of the leading citizens of the Borough and county. Whenever public improvement was undertaken the community looked to him for advice. An inveterate foe of dishonest public officials, he was feared and respected by them. He was a pioneer in the movement for the erection of the municipally owned electric plant and the advocacy of paved streets. Much of Olyphant's progress is credited to his leadership.

He possessed a charming literary style and contributed many articles to the Catholic University Press, including the Catholic Light.

Apart from his strong spirit of citizenship, Msgr. Murphy was primarily interested in the spiritual welfare of his own flock. Devoted to Catholic education, he always displayed a strong interest in the parochial school and personally examined the students regularly.

He saw the school develop from a grade school to a three-year high school and before his death to a four-year high school, equal to any similar institution in the state. Several years before his death, he donated \$5,000 to Catholic University of America.

Rev. Murphy died January 28, 1930 and was succeeded by Rev. Kealy, chancellor of the diocese. Bishop O'Reilly appointed Msgr. Kealy in May 30, 1930.

Msgr. Kealy shepherded the planning, financing and construction of the new church at a time when many parishioners were losing their jobs. A building fund, containing a large sum of money, had been gathered during Msgr. Murphy's pastorate of 41 years and with this as a nucleus the \$200,000 project was launched.

Born in Inkerman, Luzerne County, April 24, 1888, Msgr. Kealy was the son of John Henry Kealy and Mary Theresa (Burke) Kealy. His father was born in Kilkenny, Ireland. After a term of service in the British navy, his father came to the US at the age of 21 and settled in Pittston.

He was an ardent Hibernian, having served as president of the Inkerman branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and as delegate to the state and national conventions. Msgr. Kealy's mother was born in Ballinrobe, County Mayo, Ireland, and was two when her parents immigrated to this country and settled in Minersville. Father Kealy was one of nine children, four of whom entered the religious life. He had three sisters who were members of teaching orders.

Father Kealy was professor of classics at St. Thomas College (now the University of Scranton) from Sept. 1914 to June 1923. For more than nine years he was chaplain to the House

of Good Shepherd, Scranton. On June 1, 1923, Bishop M.J. Hoban, who appointed him Chancellor of the Diocese, honored him. He was reappointed to that office and also a member of the Board of Diocesan Consultors by Bishop O'Reilly (April 19, 1928). He was named spiritual director at St. Thomas College by Bishop O'Reilly (May 6, 1928).

The Holy Father, in audience August 17, 1928, made Msgr. Kealy a domestic prelate in the Vatican household with the title of Rt. Rev. Msgr. His investiture in the purple robes took place August 23, 1928 in St. Peter's Cathedral with Bishop O'Reilly officiating. The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Paul A. Kelly, V.G., P.A, was invested at the same time.

Msgr. Kealy formally assumed his duties as rector June 6, 1930 when members of Olyphant Council, Knights of Columbus and parishioners met him at Blakely corners. He was escorted from there to the church, Msgr. Kelly read the letter of appointment written by Bishop O'Reilly and both he and the new pastor addressed the congregation briefly. Msgr. Kealy then celebrated Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

A scholar who studied in Rome, Rev. Kealy was able to witness his vision of a new church September 23, 1932. With the Rt. Rev. Thomas C. O'Reilly, Bishop of Scranton, officiating, the cornerstone of the new church was laid. Seated in the cornerstone were documents concerning Pope Pius XI, President Herbert Hoover, Bishop O'Reilly, Burgess John Kilcullen of Olyphant and some coins and local newspapers.

Msgr. Kealy, with Rev. P.E. Lavelle, had accompanied Bishop O'Reilly on his first ad limina visit to Rome in September 1928 and was presented to His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, by Bishop O'Reilly.

Edward J. Rutledge, Scranton, was the architect of the new church. Breig Brothers was the contracting firm. J. Ross McCormick, engineer of the Scranton Diocese and a native son of St. Patrick's, supervised construction of the church.

On Sunday September 17, 1933, as a fitting climax to Old Home Week in Olyphant, St. Patrick's Church was solemnly dedicated, minutes after the Rev. Francis McCarthy, Chicago, IL, celebrated the last Mass in the old church.

Besides the Most Rev. Thomas C. O'Reilly, who officiated, there were four other bishops: Most Rev. Edward Hoban, Bishop of Rockford, IL; Most Rev. James A. Walsh, Titular Bishop of Antioch and superior of the Maryknoll Order; Most Rev. John J. McCort, Bishop of Altoona, PA; and the Most Rev. Francis M. Kelly, Bishop of Winona. Hundreds of visiting priests and nuns attended the event. Several hundred parishioners attended, including Mrs. Julia McCormack, the oldest member of the parish, and whose son, Rev. Patrick H. McCormack, was deacon of the Mass. Another son of Mrs. McCormack, J. Ross McCormack, engineer of the Scranton Diocese, supervised the construction of the church.

An account from the Catholic Light is as follows: "Five bishops, 12 monsignori, scores of priests from the Scranton Diocese and numerous other Dioceses throughout the East, including representatives from the Franciscan, Passionist and Maryknoll orders, Christian Brothers, many Sisters of several communities and hundreds of parishioners and friends witnessed the solemn ceremonies and assisted at the First Mass in the new edifice.

"Undaunted by the threatening weather, hundreds from other parishes crowded the streets surrounding the church as the procession left the rectory shortly before 10 a.m. Police under the direction of Burgess John L. Kilcullen opened a lane through the throng to permit the procession to start.

"Following Eugene O'Malley, the processional cross bearer came the altar boys with lighted candles, headed by Joseph Ruddy. Then came the Christian Brothers, the visiting and

local priests, the monsignori, the visiting bishops with their chaplains, the pastor and officers of the Mass and finally Bishop O'Reilly, accompanied by his chaplains, Rev. Hugh Ruddy and Rev. Eugene O'Boyle. The procession moved to the various entrances to the church where Bishop O'Reilly performed the ceremony of dedication, after with it moved into the interior of the church where the dedicatory rites concluded.

Upon conclusion of the actual dedication the doors were opened and hundreds who crowded the street in front of the church were admitted. With Bishop O'Reilly seated on the throne of the Gospel side of the altar and the visiting bishops and monsignori seated in the sanctuary, Msgr. Kealy began the celebration of solemn high Mass. Assisting were the following: Rev. John O'Malley, assistant priest; Very Rev. Patrick H. McCormick, deacon; Rev. Gerald Keegan, sub deacon; Rev. Thomas McCormick, censer bearer; Rev. William A. Crotti, mitre bearer; Rev. Joseph McGowan, crozier bearer; Rev. Bernard Murphy, O.M.C., book bearer; Rev. Joseph Hammond, candle bearer; Rev. William Cawley and Rev. Francis Durkan, acolytes. Very Rev. Msgr. M.J. O'Connor, Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Gavenda and Rev. William Farrell were masters of ceremonies. The chanters were Rev. Dr. Eugene Caulfield, Rev. Maurice A. Hughes and Rev. Francis Toolan."

The visiting Bishops seated in the sanctuary were: the Most Rev. James A. Walsh, D.D., titular Bishop of Antioch and superior of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society, Maryknoll, NY; the Most Rev. Edward F. Hoban, D.D., Bishop of Rockford, IL; the Most Rev. Francis M. Kelley, D.D., Bishop of Winona, MN and the Most Rev. John J. McCort, Bishop of Altoona, PA.

The estimated cost was \$135,000. In November 1933, the completed cost of the church was \$224,111.31 plus \$3,758.69 for vestments and casements. By 1948 the entire debt was paid.

During the four years it took to complete the structure, Msgr. Kealy supervised each phase of construction. He selected the Roman Classical style.

It is said to be an exact replica of a church in Rome. Father Kealy filled the church décor with symbolism connected with its patron, St. Patrick.

One of the principal pieces is carved in the tympanum above the main portico. It depicts one of the principal events in the life of St. Patrick, the meeting of King Loigaire and his entourage.

St. Patrick's Church is one of the finest examples of Byzantine Renaissance architecture in the US. It is a harmonious blend of semiprecious marbles interwoven with the inlays of Florentine and Venetian Mosaics. Italian marble cutters were brought to Olyphant from Italy to cut and set the marble pieces. The marble cutters stayed with host Italian American families who resided in the parish. The dedication of the church was September 17, 1933. Scranton's Bishop O'Reilly presided.

A description written by Vincent Lyons of the defunct Olyphant Gazette described the new church in more detail: "The general plan is cruciform or cross-shaped, with an exterior of Indiana limestone and gray brick. Four Corinthian columns stand at the entrance to the portico and support a frieze on which is carved a heroic statue of St. Patrick preaching to the Druids. A massive dome tops the church and dominates the whole structure adding much to its striking beauty.

"Crowning the dome is a cupola which houses the bell and is known in architectural language as a lantern.

"As in all Byzantine structure of architecture, the vestibule is an integral part of the church, and in passing through it and entering the nave, a person is immediately impressed by the

marble, interior pink marble from Africa, white for Italy and Austria, onyx from Belgium, all carved in an exquisite and delicate manner and inlaid with Florentine and Venetian mosaics...

“On the mensa is a free standing marble tabernacle carved from Foggio marble with a chased bronze door plated with gold. Above the black lighter marble base the magnificently sculptured reredos rise. It is made of Onyx Rouge de Morocco or red onyx, which comes from the Atlas Mountains of North Africa, a rare and highly expensive grade...

“The inlays embellishing the reredos are Florentine and Mosaic styles and have various motives, such as Fleur de Lys, symbol of the human nature of Our Lord; the Passion Flower, symbol of the Passion our Lord; and Pomegranate, symbol of the resurrection..

“On the gospel side is an altar dedicated to St Joseph.

“Foggio Marble is used in the construction of the altar railing with columns of Rouge African Onyx surmounted by exquisitely carved Byzantine caps...genuine bronze gates complete the railing and Venetian mosaic inlays are introduced into the entrance and end posts of the caps...genuine bronze gates complete the railing and Venetian mosaic inlays are introduced into the entrance and end posts of the railing. On the panels are designed wheat and grapes, symbols of Holy Communion and the Body and Blood of our Lord.

“Richly carved statues of St. Ann and St. Patrick, sculptured from Poggio marble, are artistically arranged on carved brackets of the same quality marble relieved with in lays of Florentine mosaic.

“The 14 stations of the cross are masterpieces of Venetian mosaic.

“The 14 stations harmonize with the marble and mosaic altars of the sanctuary. They were designed and executed by craftsmen of the Daprato Studios of New York and Pietrasanta, Italy.

“On the gospel side in the center opening is a heroic figure of the Immaculate Conception, with a rich blue robe, in which one will note the symbols of the Blessed Virgin, namely the rose and the fleur-de-lys. The undergarment is of various tones of white decorated with the monogram of Our Lady and her symbol, the lily.

“Directly opposite the transept is shown the center lancet, the figure of the scepter and orb, symbolizing Kingship and triumph of the Gospel...His right hand is raised in the form of Benediction. The figure of Our Lord is placed against a golden aureola. Surrounding the aureola are the seven doves, signifying the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of Our Lord.

“The rainbow, which is placed against a deep blue background, is symbolic of God’s promise.”

The Very Rev. Thomas Plassman, O.F.M., preached the dedication sermon of the new church at the time president of St. Bonaventure’s College. His sermon, in part, was as follows: “May this beautiful church inspire you and your children, that as it towers above your homes, so faith and devotion may tower high above your earthly hopes and expectations; and may the bells from the lantern above ring out at all times.

“Sursuum Corda. Lift up your hearts. May they constantly stimulate to build up in your hearts a spiritual temple of grace. Let the foundation of faith sink deep into your souls. Raise on high the walls of Christian hope and cover all with the roof of charity unfeigned. Let the lamp of God’s love ever burn before the tabernacle, that when the Bridegroom comes, you may meet him with loins girt and lights in your hands following Him to the temple which stands on the everlasting hills.”

Following Father Plassman's brilliant sermon, Bishop O'Reilly read the Holy Father's cablegram, signed by His Eminence, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, Secretary of State, to the priests and people of St. Patrick's on the occasion of the dedication of the new church.

The cablegram was as follows: "Vatican City, Italy. His Holiness sends blessings to priests and people of St. Patrick's parish on occasion of dedication of new church. (Signed) Cardinal Pacelli."

In a few remarks, the Bishop congratulated Msgr. Kealy and his assistants on their splendid work and lauded the cooperation of the people. He paid tribute to the late Msgr. Murphy and all those who in the past worked in a particular way for the parish.

Prof. Frank J. Daniels, Scranton, presided at the organ and the combined boys' and mens' choirs, under the direction of sister M. Nazaretta, sang during the Mass.

Dinner was served after the Mass to the visiting clergy in the auditorium of the new church.

The fact that the project had been undertaken at the time of the worst depression in history was a tribute to the courage and determination of Msgr. Kealy and his parishioners.

Rev. Francis O. McCarthy, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church, Chicago, IL, was celebrant of the last Mass in the old St. Patrick's Church, according to the Catholic Light. After Msgr. Kealy's death in 1942, the Rev. Arthur McAndrews served as administrator until the appointment of Rev. Martin J. Jordan. Father Jordan had been assistant pastor under Msgr. Murphy and Msgr. Kealy and administrator after Msgr. Murphy's death.

This was probably the most crucial time in the history of the parish. With the country at war and many of the parishioners in service, entire families were moving to places where employment was more attractive. In spite of this, Father Jordan was able to reduce the parish debt by \$82,000 in less than six years. Fifteen years after the dedication of the church it was completely paid for.

During Father Jordan's tenure, the mining industry began to subside. The parish population declined from 800 in Msgr. Kealy's time to about 600 families. Many of the younger couples moved away to find better jobs. In contrast, the population today in the parish is approximately 963 families.

According to an article written by Jerry Leeson of the old Miner Gazette, Father John Kelly, St. Patrick's pastor from 1974 to 1997, stated, "What was missing was the young married couples. Many of them had to go to New York to get work."

However, the trend eventually reversed itself and the number of families in the parish began to increase again.

Father Jordan died January 7, 1950, the seventh anniversary of his appointment as pastor. The Rev. Joseph W. Padden succeeded him. Rev. Padden immediately began plans for a new school building. Bishop William J. Hafey dedicated it in 1952.

Father Padden also remodeled the interior of the convent and had the exterior covered with aluminum siding. He added new landscaping around the convent and church and had the exterior of the church painted and the interior redecorated. A new roof was installed on the church at no cost to the parish. He also erected a garage in the rear of the rectory.

Father Padden improved the cemetery and purchased a tract of land to extend it to the Scranton-Carbondale Highway. The Visiting Nurses Association as a business and administration building July 6, 1994 purchased the school building.

Father Padden left St. Patrick's in 1967 to assume the pastorate of St. Aloysius Parish, Wilkes-Barre. During his pastorate there, he was given the title of Msgr.

The Rev. John J. O'Malley, S.J.D., was next in line. He took an intense interest in the buildings and welfare of the parish. Rev. O'Malley organized a senior choir, the first in the parish in over 40 years. He also organized the men of St. Patrick's, formed to honor the Patron Saint.

Rev. O'Malley tried desperately to get other parochial schools into Olyphant to consolidate with St. Patrick's, but he was unsuccessful and the school was finally forced to close. The school closed due to rising costs of maintaining the school building and declining enrollment. The high school closed in 1969 and the elementary school shut its doors in 1972. Rev. O'Malley retired in 1974 shortly after redecorating the church. He became the first Pastor Emeritus.

Rev. John J. Kelley, former assistant pastor, became pastor of St. Patrick's Church in 1974. He served as pastor for 24 years. During that time period he refurbished and enhanced the beauty of the parish rectory. He also supervised the sale of the parish school and replaced the dome roof of the church. Another accomplishment was the renovation of the Kelley Hall with paneling, carpeting and additional classroom space for religious education. Rev. Kelley installed a new furnace in the church.

Rev. Kelley was one of the founding pastors of LaSalle Academy and was an important member of the Bishop O'Hara Board of Pastors. He left a legacy of superb care for the spiritual and temporal needs of the St. Patrick Parish community. Father Kelley became the second Pastor Emeritus July 1, 1997. He now resides in Hazleton and continues to be active in assisting Masses in that area.

Rev. Kelley was pastor of St. Patrick's during its centennial celebration 25 years ago. He made sure the church; school buildings and cemetery were in excellent shape for the celebration.

The Rev. Philip J. Sladicka, current pastor, became pastor of St. Patrick's Church in 1998 following Rev. Kelley. St. Patrick's church, on July 1, 1998, became a joint parish with Holy Ghost Church, 120 Willow Avenue, Olyphant. The restructuring of the two churches under one pastor is considered to be a significant event in the history of both St. Patrick's and Holy Ghost. Father Sladicka became pastor of both churches July 1, 1998 following the retirement of Father John Marinko, pastor of Holy Ghost Church since September 1, 1988. Father Marinko retired due to health reasons.

The restructuring brought together members of two Olyphant parishes – 379 families from Holy Ghost and 710 families from St. Patrick's – as a new parish family with 1,089 Catholic families under the leadership of one pastor.

Children from both parishes attend LaSalle Academy, a pre-K through eighth grade interparochial school in Jessup. Holy Ghost was established 13 years after St. Patrick's in 1888.

Announcement of the restructuring was made to parishioners at a parish town meeting held at Holy Ghost Church June 4, 1998.

The meeting was conducted by a Diocesan team led by James Earley, chancellor, with Msgr. Joseph Bambera, vicar for marriages.

The parish town meeting is an integral part in the parish restructuring process, which begins with the identification of designated parishes as potential candidates for consolidation.

Following Bishop Timlin's review and approval of the move, preliminary meetings were held with the affected parish administrators, and ongoing support and in-service for successful transition was conducted to help the parishes move toward restructuring. At the close of the transition process, pulpit and bulletin announcements were used to invite parishioners to the town meeting.

It was explained to parishioners that the restructuring was necessitated by three main factors, including the shortage of active priests available to serve within the Scranton Diocese.

The other factors influencing church restructurings in recent years include shifting populations. The eastern region of the Diocese is the fastest growing part of PA.

The population growth is contrasted with both overall and parish population declines in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, where churches have experienced more parishioner deaths and reduced sacramental reception totals, including baptisms, communions, confirmations and needs of the parish community.

When appropriate, the pastor and parish leadership team may plan a community gathering to celebrate the unity of the restructured parish. The Diocese's Office of Pastoral Planning will provide follow-up assistance for three to five years by scheduling general parish planning sessions, dialogue, reflection and review of the consolidations process.

As of 1998, the Diocese of Scranton had conducted 46 parish consolidations. As part of the individualized restructuring process developed by participating parishioners, the weekly/monthly liturgical schedule may change and opportunities may be created for resourcing pastoral staff and programs. With few exceptions, restructured parishes in the Diocese have remained open and retain their own identity. Due to the shortage of active priests, one pastor, occasionally with one assistant pastor, usually administers combined parishes.

Prior to being appointed as pastor, Father Sladicka served as pastor of the Church of Resurrection in Muncy for about nine years and as administrator of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Wilkes-Barre. He previously served as an assistant pastor at four churches.

A Carbondale native, the late Bishop J. Carroll McCormick ordained Father Sladicka a priest of the Diocese of Scranton in May 1976. He graduated from the University of Scranton; St. Pius X Seminary, Dalton; and Mary Immaculate Seminary, Northampton.

During his current tenure as pastorate, Father Sladicka has looked after creating and enhancing the environment of the parish church begun by Father Kelley.

Known as "Father Phil," the Rev. Sladicka has supervised many physical improvements of the church. Beginning with the repainting and repair of the church steps. Rev. Sladicka also attended to the painting of masonry blocks around the church. Many areas have been landscaped.

The entire wooden areas of the church and rectory have been repainted for the 125th anniversary celebration. Robert Ritterbeck repainted the church. Sacristy areas were remodeled and old sidewalks were replaced. The greatest accomplishment during this time was considered to be the union of St. Patrick and Holy Ghost Churches. The union has been considered to be a work of faith and has enhanced both the worship and community of both parishes. The union has brought life and support to the churches' religious education, home visitation and liturgical services. The two churches combined bring a full church congregation together to praise and worship God.

The last 25 years have included many changes at St. Patrick's Parish. The greatest is considered to be the changes of Vatican II and the union of St. Patrick's and Holy Ghost. Through it all, St. Patrick's Church has remained a viable parish. Father Sladicka prefers to focus on the spiritual and the joining of the two parishes. It is maintained by Father Sladicka, the church and its community that a strong belief in Jesus and the teachings of the faith are what brought the parishioners together at a special time.

The 125th anniversary of St. Patrick's Parish took place Sunday, November 5, 2000. The Most Rev. James C. Timlin, Bishop of Scranton, was the principal celebrant of the special 4 p.m. Mass.

In reviewing the church history, a very strong faith, hard work and sacrifice of the congregation and its pastors stand out.