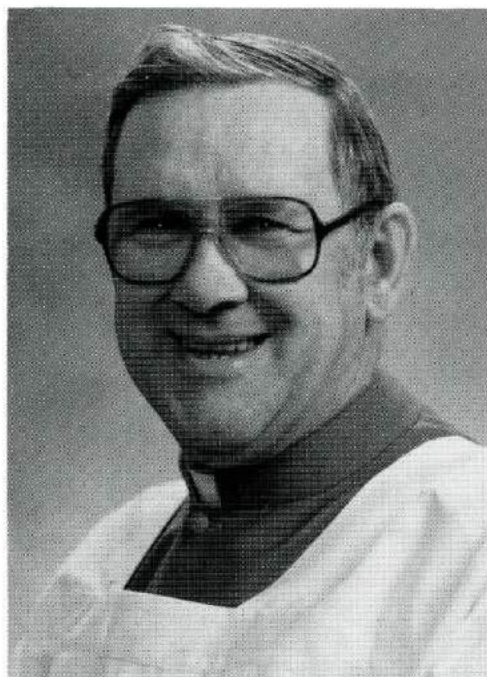




# The Church of Our Lady

GUELPH, ONTARIO



**MSGR. J.H. NEWSTEAD**

The Church of Our Lady is an inspiring house of prayer. It speaks of God's presence in the community. The Gothic style and cathedral proportions of its building are majestic and beautiful.

But, it is more than a 'place' to worship, it is the people of God, committed in their faith to serve their neighbours.

This booklet commemorates the One Hundredth Anniversary of the dedication of this Church building. On behalf of the parish community of Our Lady Immaculate, I wish to thank Father Tom Collins for his labour of love in telling the story of our parish and Sister Romana for her impressive description of this house for the Church — the people of God.

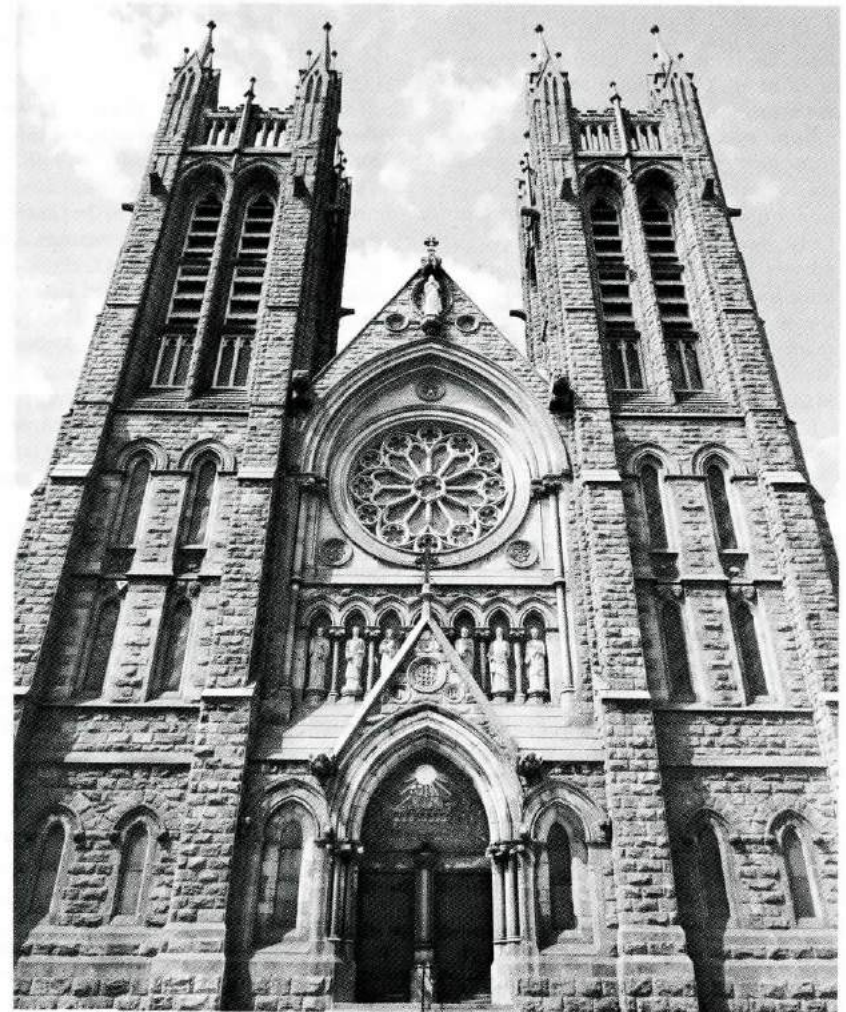
## GUIDE TO THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY

*Sr. M. Romana IBVM*

## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY PARISH

*Rev. T. Collins*

We wish to express our appreciation to the Guelph Civic Museum, to the Jesuit archives, to the Hamilton Diocesan archives, and to the many parishioners who contributed information and photographs.



## GUIDE TO THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY

As you stand in front of the Church, you see the magnificent facade with the Lamb of God mosaic, and above it the statues of the Four Evangelists: John, Matthew, Luke, Mark and the Apostles Paul and Peter. Highest of all these is Our Lady, a gleaming white figure in the top pinnacle.

Entering the narthex and turning left, you see in the southeast vestibule three interesting windows. Above the door is

a representation of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth, haloed and crowned with a border setting of twelve stars. The other two windows depict the Archangel Michael and the Archangel Uriel.

Turning back to the side aisle, formed with the south wall and the granite pillars, notice how the architecture is clearly Gothic in type, offering the maximum light and sweeping lines so necessary to churches which must take

advantage of the short periods of sunlight during certain seasons.

The Church of Our Lady has been decorated on a basic scheme which employs colour, symbolism, and monogram. Gold has been chosen for all thematic treatment of Jesus Christ, traditional blue for representations of Our Lady. Ancient and modern forms of crosses designate Our Lord, and types of lilies and roses symbolize Our Lady, His Blessed Mother. The IHS monogram marks references to Christ, with MR — Maria Regina (Mary Queen) and AM (Ave Maria) for Mary.

The series of five windows on the south side, which deal with the early life of Jesus, show the intimate association between the Christ Child and His Mother. The first window portrays the Nativity at Bethlehem. All the figures mentioned in the Gospel narrative are there — Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angels, even the animals. The name of the artist who designed and produced these windows in Rheims, France, in 1907, is A. Vermonet, the name appearing at the base of several of the ten side windows.

Between the Nativity and Wise Men windows you see the Eighth Station of the Way of the Cross. (Visitors are reminded that the Stations begin at the North transept. Done in ivory finish on gold background, these originate from Daprato Statuary, Chicago.)

The Wise Men, or Magi, brought gifts to the Divine Infant. This is the event commemorated by the feast of Epiphany, a word meaning Manifestation, when Jesus showed Himself to non-Jews for the first time. The Ninth Station is between the Magi window and the one depicting the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Joseph holds the offering of doves, while Simeon and Anna rejoice at the sight of the Divine Child and His Mother.

At this point, as you proceed up the side aisle, if you pause and look up to the frescoes in the nave opposite, you will see, beginning from the rear of the Church, representations of an Angel, St. Gregory the Great, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Helena (through whose instrumentality

the True Cross was found), St. Charles Borromeo, St. Martha (the model of housekeepers), and St. Pius V.

This might be a good place to explain about the choice of saints as subjects for the frescoes in the nave of the Church. They are in three categories: (1) Saints from a cross-section of eras of the Church from the first to the present centuries, e.g. St. Mary Magdalene to St. Pius X; (2) Saints selected for their youth or old age, e.g. St. Maria Goretti and St. Agnes, 12 and 13 years of age respectively, to St. Alphonsus Liguori who lived to be over 90; (3) Saints from all walks of life from the good housekeeper St. Martha to mystics and queens like Catherine of Siena and Elizabeth of Portugal, to popes and bishops like Pius V and Augustine.

If you continue to look in the same direction, notice the figures on the spandrels at the top of each of the four granite pillars. These represent four of the original eight Jesuit martyrs who are commemorated at the Shrine in Midland, Ontario. The other four are on the pillars directly opposite to these. You will see them later from the other side aisle.

Turning back to the south windows, you arrive at the Finding in the Temple, when at the age of twelve Jesus astonished the Doctors of the law with His wisdom and answers, and was found by Mary and Joseph. The fifth window is a beautiful family setting of the Holy Family at Nazareth with the master carpenter Joseph, his apprentice Jesus, and the Mother busy with her distaff.

Again directing your gaze to the nave, you complete the frescoes on the north side which represent St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Veronica (who accompanied Christ to Calvary and offered Him a towel on which He left the imprint of His face), and at the end St. Dominic. Blessed Marguerite D'Youville, Foundress of the Grey Nuns, is seen in the spandrel below.

Proceeding up this aisle, notice on the first large pillar a bronze memorial tablet, a tribute to the members of the Society of Jesus, who were responsible for the Parish and Church to the "Greater Glory of God" from 1852 to 1931.

Now look up to the west wall of the transept you have arrived at, and see a most unusual interpretation of the Last Supper. It is one of two second-largest frescoes in the Church. Below it is the Shrine of the Sacred Heart as Christ the King. This quiet corner has been set aside to identify the Humanity and Royalty of Our Lord. On the wall-bracket beside the Shrine, the statue of St. Therese calls to mind her promise to let fall roses from heaven. The pair of windows now facing you on the south is a miniseries of scenes from the life of Mary. On the lower left the scene is one of her birth; above it she is presented in the temple at an early age; in the lower right St. Anne is teaching Mary the Sacred Scriptures, while St. Joachim points out to a young mother how, one day, she must instruct her child in the things of God. Above, completing the series, Mary and Joseph are espoused before the High Priest.

Above these two interesting windows is a remarkable Rose Window of Our Lady of the Way (Madonna Della Strada), a favourite title by which St. Ignatius Loyola revered Mary. The Mother and Child are surrounded by many decorative symbols of Our Lady's titles — Mystical Rose, Violet of Humility, Lily of Purity. Immediately below is a unique fresco of Creation.

Before moving on into the ambulatory, look up above the north transept arch and see two of the smallest frescoes: Jesus feeds the five thousand, and the centurion begs for the cure of his son. A few steps now will take you to the entrance of the ambulatory, but pause and look back up at the large fresco on the east wall of the transept, opposite the Last Supper. In this, one of the two largest frescoes in the Church, Peter receives the Keys from Christ.

The first window on the left as you enter the ambulatory represents Pope Pius IX, who guided the Church from 1846 to 1878, the longest reign of any pope. He holds the "Ineffabilis Deus" document which proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady on December 8, 1854. Surrounding him is a group of dignitaries among whom can be

recognized Cardinal Pecci, later to be Pope Leo XIII, and Bishop de Charbonnel of Toronto. Very Reverend James Keough, one-time Vicar General of the Diocese of Hamilton, donor of the window, can be seen in the red cope.

At right angles to the above window is a beautiful fresco of the Agony in the Garden, seen above the ambulatory arch. Before proceeding further, notice as you look up to the north side of the apse, the portrait of Pope John XXIII, and in the four adjoining niches Saints Vincent de Paul, Dominic Savio, Maria Goretti, and Don Bosco.

Moving on into the ambulatory, you can see a reproduction of the great Michelangelo's Pieta, the sorrowful Mother holding the body of her Divine Son, just taken down from the Cross. The six windows at the rear are of notable Jesuit Saints: Peter Claver, the Apostle of the slaves, John Berchmans, Stanislaus Kostka, Aloysius Gonzaga, Francis Xavier, and their Founder Ignatius Loyola.

Before arriving at the next chapel, there is a statue of St. Anne, Patroness of Mothers. Then comes the shrine dedicated to our Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Lourdes. The grotto is a miniature of the famous shrine in France. The Carrara marble figure of Our Lady can be seen in the niche, and below to the left, little St. Bernadette kneels in prayer. The saints in the windows are all well-known for their special devotion to Mary: Saints Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Bernard of Clairvaux, Jerome and John Chrysostom.

St. Rita greets us as we pass to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, with a replica of the miraculous picture now treasured in St. Alphonsus' church in Rome. Devotion to Our Lady under this inspiring title has grown steadily. The two pairs of windows on either side show the early Fathers of the Church: Saints Gregory, Basil, Irenaeus and Polycarp, who were so loyal in their devotion to Mary. The centre windows are Saints Cecilia and Catherine of Alexandria, two worthy imitators of her virtues.

The next area was originally the Lady Chapel, and now is the main vestry, with St. John Vianney, the patron of parish priests, appropriately placed beside the entrance. The Mass vestments, altar vessels and other items used for the Holy Sacrifice are all stored here, where the celebrants prepare for ceremonies. As mentioned above, this was the Lady Chapel, so the windows portray the saints who, with the exception of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Simon, are particularly identified with the early life of Mary: Saints Joachim and Anne, her parents; Joseph, her husband; John the Baptist, the precursor of her Son; Simon the Apostle; John the Evangelist, her protector; and Luke, from whom we learn most of the details of the infancy of Jesus. From this point the veining of the Carrara marble in the altar can be plainly seen. The exquisite statue above will be seen later from the front of the sanctuary.

As the patron of Youth, St. John Bosco could be an inspiration to the Sanctuary Boys who assist the priest at Mass and other ceremonies.

The shrine dedicated to St. Patrick calls to mind the original Church built by the pioneers of the parish on the "Catholic Hill". Being largely of Irish extraction, it was only natural that they should thus honour their favourite saint. This chapel is preserved as a mark of respect to those early settlers. The windows portray four great Doctors of the Church: Saints Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine, all remembered particularly for their defense of the Church against heresy in the early centuries. The female saints deserve special notice: St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine — by her untiring efforts the True Cross was discovered; and St. Pulcheria, sister of another Roman Emperor, who was instrumental in prevailing on the Council of Ephesus in 431 to define Our Lady's title "Mother of God."

Next, St. Jude, who according to ancient tradition was clubbed to death, stands with a club and book. He wrote one of the seven epistles which by the end of the second century had already

been given the title of "Universal" or "Catholic" Epistles.

Now, we arrive at the Baptistry which originally was situated on the north side of the main entrance. The windows — Saints Patrick, Anselm, Clare, Bridget, John Damascene and Dominic — do not seem to conform to any particular plan or pattern.

The Jesuit shrine, surmounted by the marble statue of St. John Brebeuf, honours him as the leader of the heroic band of martyrs, whose blood in the 1640's enriched the soil from which the seed of the Church in Ontario bore fruit later. Most Canadians are familiar with the story of Fort Ste. Marie and the restored area at Midland.

Three women saints figure in the windows here: St. Theresa of Avila, St. Frances of Rome, and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The other three personages, along with the women, were especially devoted to Our Lady — Saints Philip Neri, Alphonsus Liguori and Francis de Sales.

Turn now to face the south side of the apse and see the fresco of Pope Pius XII and in the four niches to the left St. Brigid of Kildare, St. Margaret Mary, Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, and St. Ephrem the Deacon. In the spandrel below, Moses holds the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

The best view of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" can be appreciated from this point. This bas-relief is situated under the table of the altar, and close examination will reveal the absolute perfection of every line of the Sacred face, as well as the tiniest detail of Christ's hands and the expression on the Apostles' faces. In the niches on either side are Aaron with the Loaves of Propitiation, and Melchisedech with his bread and wine.

On the chancel north wall, the Jesuit window shows the large group of saints of the Jesuit Order with the prominent A M D G motto. This stands for "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" — "For the Greater Glory of God." It should be noted that some of the figures in the lower left corner are haloed in a darker colour.

These are the martyrs of North America who at the time the window was assembled had been beatified but not yet canonized.

Above the ambulatory arch see the fresco of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by St. John.

Before advancing any further, look up at the east wall of the north transept. The second of the two largest frescoes faces the Shrine of St. Joseph, and depicts the Conversion of St. Paul on the Road to Damascus. In the lower right hand corner is the only spot in the Church where the artist's name appears: Gaetano Valerio, who with his brother Giuseppe produced all the frescoes in the Church.

Now, facing directly to the north transept, you see windows which tell stories of events about three hundred years apart. The left side shows, in the upper section, the battle of Lepanto in 1571, when the Turks threatened to conquer the Christian countries of Europe, but were decisively beaten by the Christian fleet under the command of Don Juan of Austria who can be seen in the background, while the enemy's main mast breaks and the soldiers scatter. In the lower section Pope Pius V leads the Rosary for Victory and Peace. The title Our Lady of Victory dates from this time and was changed to Our Lady of the Rosary by Pope Gregory XIII.

The window on the right has a beautiful Our Lady of Lourdes grotto with little Bernadette's red dress and especially the sleeve, giving a brilliant reflection of light. Above this is a scene from the famous Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré on the St. Lawrence River, and shows the cure of a pilgrim in answer to the prayers offered to God through the intercession of Ste. Anne and her daughter Mary. These last two events bring us to the time during the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

The Rose window above these two enshrines St. Joseph with the Child Jesus, fittingly placed close to the altar of St. Joseph where this patient, silent, strong and just man is invoked as Patron of Workmen. His Marriage to Mary in the

fresco above is the other second largest fresco corresponding to the one of the Last Supper. The traditional canopy used at Jewish weddings forms a fitting background for the figures of Mary and Joseph kneeling before the High Priest, with various other persons present. On the wall bracket beside St. Joseph's Shrine, St. Anthony is represented holding the Child Jesus, reminiscent of the occasion when a Brother came upon the scene and witnessed the event, unknown to Anthony.

Before moving to the centre aisle, look up above the arch of the south transept. There you see the other two of the smallest frescoes: Jesus at Emmaus with the two disciples He had met on the way, and Jesus calling Lazarus from the tomb.

Stand now at the centre aisle and face the altar. This beautiful masterpiece was sculptured by the Rouillard Ateliers of Angers, France, from marble supplied by the Carrara quarries in Italy. The statue of Our Lady, a copy of Murillo's "Virgin Immaculate" direct from the Pietrasanta Statuary Company in Italy weighs two tons and surmounts the altar, emphasized by the gold mosaic behind it. Above the table of the altar on either side of the tabernacle, the symbols of the Four Evangelists are embossed in exquisite relief. The delicately wrought sanctuary rail with its variegated columns of marble relieved with onyx is also from the Rouillard Ateliers.

From your present position, you see the seven arches which form part of the ambulatory, and above them the seven windows which are among the many from the well-known firm of Mayer and Company of Munich, Germany, and pronounced by artists to be the finest of their kind.

The theme of these windows is interesting. In the first from the left, Jesus is shown with the little children, and below in the smaller section, He raises the daughter of Jairus. In the lower section of the next one, Isaac carries the wood of sacrifice while Abraham walks dejectedly beside him. Above, Jesus bears His cross up to Calvary in the sight of His

grieving Mother. Then come Adam and Eve who lost sanctifying grace for us, and above, the Supreme Sacrifice restores God's favour to mankind. The centre window is appropriately dedicated in remembrance of Father John Holzer, who named the Church in honour of Our Lady Immaculate. Then in the lower section of the following window Noah's Ark carries the surviving hopes of the human race, and Mary above becomes the Ark of Salvation bearing the Saviour of mankind. Then as Mary arrives at Zachary's home, Elizabeth is conscious of the presence of Jesus in Mary, as Moses recognizes God in the Burning Bush. The last window on the right carries through the theme of the Shepherd, with the Angels announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds, and the Good Shepherd with the Lambs of the Kingdom of God.

The seven arches below the apse windows are the only unit of seven in the Church. Above the arches are figures of the Twelve Apostles in pairs, with the centre space plain mosaic in gold leaf emphasizing the beautiful statue of Murillo's Mary Immaculate. The Apostles from left to right are pictured with their identifying symbols: St. Bartholomew, holding his flaying knife; St. James the Greater, pilgrim staff and shell; St. Thomas, the square rule; St. Jude Thaddeus, the halberd, though traditionally he was clubbed to death; St. Simon, the saw; St. Peter, the keys; St. John, the chalice; St. Philip, the club; St. Andrew with the X cross on which he was crucified; St. James the Less, a staff; St. Matthew, a spear (sometimes a purse); St. Mathias, a cross (or lance).

Turning around to face the back of the Church, observe the Rose Window or Catherine Wheel, as it is sometimes called. It is at its best in the early morning. More than eighteen feet in diameter, made up of many intricate designs with our Lady as the central figure, it fills the front gable of the nave. In the triangular space above it is a fresco of St. Cecilia, Patroness of Music, fittingly positioned above the organ.

Now we go back to the north aisle and see, in the spandrel of the first pillar on

the opposite side of the nave, our recently (1981) beatified Mohawk maiden, Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Canadian Indian to be so honoured.

Turning now to the last series of the north windows, we have the scene of the first miracle at Cana, followed by the farewell to Mary, in which Jesus indicates to her that He now begins His public life. John the Baptist's two disciples are told "There is the Lamb of God." Peter and Andrew are visible in the distance with their boat. The inscription, "I will make you fishers of men," completes the scene.

The third window, "There is now sorrow like my sorrow," is the familiar Pieta, with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus having taken down the Sacred Victim.

At this point we look up again at the frescoes on the opposite side of the nave, and complete the list of saints depicted there beginning with the one closest to the arch — St. Catherine of Siena, who was instrumental in persuading the Pope to return to Rome from his exile in Avignon. Next to her appears the child Agnes, the Roman martyr with a lamb (agnus, Agnes); then St. Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory to bring the faith to the Anglo-Saxons; the Deacon Stephen with his palm and stones, symbols of his martyr's death; St. Elizabeth of Portugal, who is noted for her gift of peace-making and for heroic forgiveness; St. Mary Magdalene with her alabaster jar of precious ointment; St. Pius X, our twentieth century Pope; St. Lucy, patroness of persons with eyesight problems; St. Nicholas of Bari, the lover of children; and finally an angel.

In the spandrels of the last four pillars are the other four Jesuit martyrs, facing the ones we saw at the beginning.

The next window is a very unusual representation of Easter morning. The women stand at the empty Tomb, and Christ appears to Mary. No mention of this incident is recorded in Scriptures, but St. Ignatius says no one could doubt that the most natural thing in the world for Jesus to do would be to visit His Mother before anyone else. The last window shows Mary being assumed into heaven,

and the Apostles gazing at the dazzling beauty of the lilies in the grave.

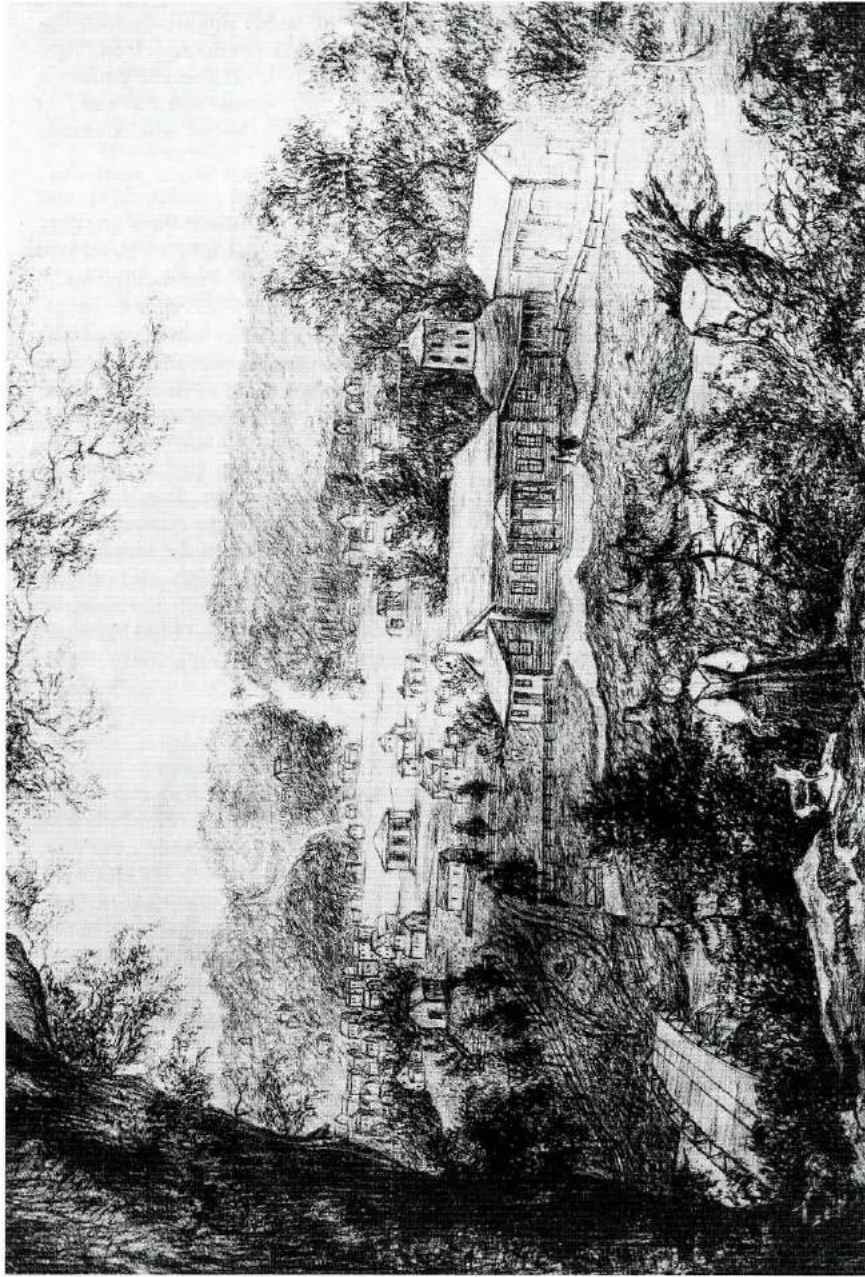
Now we arrive at the entrance of what was formerly the Baptistry. Four interesting smaller windows depict from left to right: Jesus and the children; Jesus knocking at the door (of the heart — notice no knob on the outside!); Jesus as the Good Shepherd; and the Baptism by John.

Going now to the centre aisle and facing the altar, the massive Bay of Fundy granite pillars can be seen to advantage with the volutes ornamenting the tops of each, no two of which are alike in the whole Church. The triforium, or arcade, over the arches is an architectural form which originated in England. Canterbury and Lincoln Cathedrals are two other examples. Up above, even higher, the ten clerestory windows admit light to the highest part of the nave. Each of these has a design of one of the titles of Our Lady's Litany, e.g. House of Gold, Tower of David, Seat of Wisdom, Mother most Pure, Ark of the Covenant, all with a scroll indicating the name of the donor.

Leaving the Church by the front door, you will notice two statues on each side. On the left and right centre are St. Francis Xavier, the first missionary of the Society of Jesus, and its founder, St. Ignatius Loyola. On the far left and right are St. Francis de Sales and St. Catherine of Siena, the Patron and Patroness of Letters, placed above the Catholic Literature racks.

In the narthex, Saints Peter and Bartholomew are memorialized on either side of the door. In the centre, St. Vincent de Paul reminds all of the duty to the poor, especially the children.

No matter what you believe, or disbelieve, we hope with all sincerity that you will come again to visit the Church of Our Lady. Whether you are worn and worried, or exultant with worldly successes, rich or poor, sick or well, the Church is open to you. It is the Lord's Home and He knows no barriers of race, colour or creed. From the morning till night you can enter freely, every day of the year, to make use of it and to be comforted in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



*Guelph in 1827. Across the river, at the top of the hill, with Macdonell Street newly cleared to lead up to it, a tree marks the site of the future Church of Our Lady.*



*Bishop Alexander Macdonell*

## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY PARISH

### THE BEGINNINGS

From the earliest days of the settlement of Guelph, Catholics have played a role in the life of the community. Bishop Macdonell, the Bishop of Kingston, who was responsible for the Catholic Church in Ontario, was a friend of John Galt, the founder of Guelph. He had supported Galt's work with the Canada Company, which was charged with developing much of the land in southern Ontario. When Galt established the new settlement on April 23, 1827, he gave to the Catholic Church the hill in the center of the town. In his **Autobiography** he writes: "a beautiful central hill was reserved for the Catholics, in compliment to my friend, Bishop Macdonell, for his advice in the formation of the Company." A road was cleared leading up to the hill: Macdonell Street. In the autumn of 1827 Bishop Macdonell was one of the first visitors to the new settlement.

Galt had grand plans for Guelph, and wanted a magnificent church built on the hill. He also wanted a Catholic Bishop to be stationed in Guelph, and writes "I had some reason to hope that Mr. Weld of Lulworth castle (now cardinal Weld in Rome) would come to Upper Canada, and probably make it his residence; being desirous to allure him to Guelph, I had this in view in converting the receiving house into a habitation." Galt's plan to attract Bishop Weld to live in Guelph was not to be fulfilled, but Bishop Macdonell certainly had great influence on the history of the Catholic Church in the city, a contribution commemorated not only by the street named after him, but also by the modern Bishop Macdonell High School.

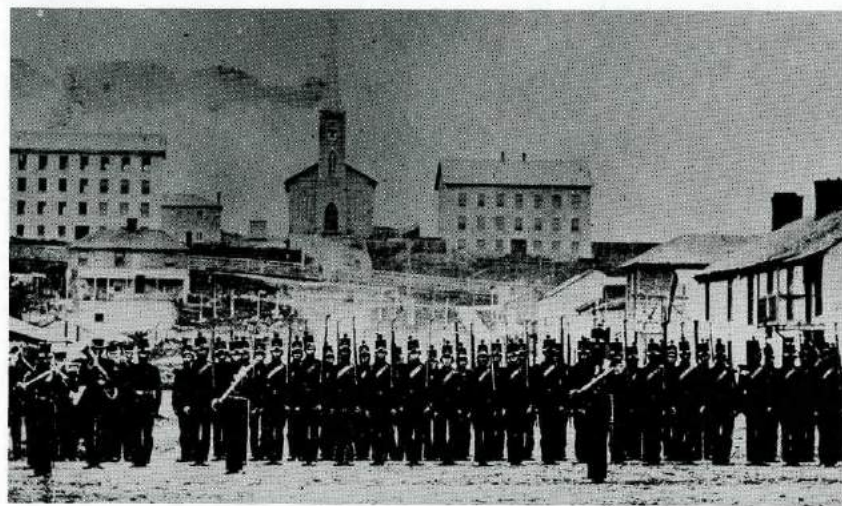
An important early settler was John Owen Lynch, an Irishman who was brought in from New York to be the





settlement's blacksmith. A wood cabin was constructed for him and his family at what is now the corner of Gordon and Farquhar streets, and it was there that Father Campion, the first priest to take care of the parish, celebrated Mass. Father Campion was the military chaplain at Niagara and was responsible for the pastoral care of the Catholics in what is now western Ontario. He would visit each settlement from time to time, and it was he who celebrated the first Mass in Guelph on August 26, 1827. That first Mass was followed by the first wedding in the town, as he married Christopher Keogh and Ann Green. Mr. Keogh had been one of the workmen with John Galt at the founding of Guelph.

In the early years of Guelph the Catholics were mainly Irish. They were few and poor. From 1827 to 1835 there was no church. Until 1831 Mass was celebrated in the home of Mr. Lynch, and after that in a schoolhouse, which was also used on Sundays by the Methodists and the Presbyterians. During this period Father Cullen and Father Cassidy cared for the Guelph Catholics, but did not live in the town. Father Cassidy was responsible as well for the much larger parish in Dundas, and would only visit Guelph occasionally.



**St. Bartholomew's Church, with the rectory and convent, 1857.**

Finally, by 1835, the parishioners were able to construct a small wooden church on the hill, and, being mainly Irish, they dedicated it to St. Patrick. It was the first painted structure in the settlement, and was used until October 10, 1844, when it was destroyed by fire.

In 1837 Father Thomas Gibney became the first resident Pastor in Guelph, and he was responsible as well for the territory from Mount Forest to Goderich. The parish was still extremely poor. Father Gibney was involved, along with several Protestant ministers and other citizens, in the establishment of the Guelph School board, and in 1846 he dedicated a small stone church, St. Bartholomew's, which replaced St. Patrick's. The cornerstone of St. Bartholomew's is now found in front of the Church of Our Lady, and reads: "D.O.M. (Deo optimo maximo) memoriae, Beati, Bartholomaei, Apostoli, hanc, novam, Ecclesiam, Prima flamis devorata, Aedificaverunt, Guelphi, necnon, Torontinae, Diaeceseos, Fideles. MDCCCXLV." ("To God, the best and greatest. The faithful of Guelph, of the Diocese of Toronto, have built this new Church, in honour of the blessed Apostle Bartholomew, the first Church having been consumed in flames. 1845.") Father Gibney was killed in a riding accident on October 17, 1846.

In 1841 Guelph came under the jurisdiction of the new diocese of Toronto, which was separated in that year from the diocese of Kingston.

The years following the death of Father Gibney were difficult for the parish. Many Irish immigrants arrived fleeing the potato famine in their homeland, and they were destitute and often suffering from disease. Tensions between the religious groups in Guelph increased.

Father Peter Schneider was briefly pastor in 1847. He was remembered for his work with the sick during an outbreak of fever among the immigrants in Guelph. Father Schneider was followed by Father Simon Sanderl. Father Sanderl was born in Bavaria, and was a member of the Redemptorist Order. He was a zealous man who cared for his parishioners, and especially for the many newly arrived immigrants, though he had difficulty adapting to their Irish culture. He was also noted for his sermons, which would often last two hours. Unfortunately, lack of funds and increasing parish debts led him to press the parishioners heavily for money, but they, themselves poor, did not accept that and in 1850 he was forced to leave. He became a hermit on an island in Puslinch Lake for a couple of years, and then became a monk at the Trappist monastery of Gethsemane.

### THE JESUITS IN GUELPH

A new era in the history of the parish began in January of 1852 when Bishop Charbonell of Toronto appointed Father John Holzer, S.J., to be Pastor in Guelph. The parish was to be under the care of the Jesuit Order for about 80 years, until 1931.

Father Holzer was a great organizer. In 1853 he began work on a large stone schoolhouse, which later became the convent, and wrote to Bishop Charbonell: "all over the mission now, we have only the motto of Archbishop Hughes: "The schoolhouse first and the Church afterwards. But the troubles and difficulties are very great indeed!" Despite some local opposition, a Separate School Board was organized and on January 11, 1854, the

Catholic parents of Guelph elected three trustees. On January 16, 1854, Patrick Downey began teaching boys and girls in a room of the unfinished convent building.

Father Holzer invited the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to come to Guelph. On June 10, 1856, four Loretto sisters arrived: Mother Berchmans Lalor, the Superior, and Sr. M. Ignatia Lynn, Sr. M. Stanislaus Hennigan, and Sr. M. Ita Cummins. They stayed at the home of a local parishioner, Mr. John Harris (who later became Mayor of Guelph) until 1857, when the convent was completed. Mr. Downey moved his class of boys to the rectory, while the Sisters taught the girls in the convent. Thus began Catholic education in Guelph.



**Father John Holzer, S.J.**

In 1856 the Diocese of Hamilton was established, with Bishop John Farrell as its first bishop, and Guelph came under the jurisdiction of the new diocese. During these years the Jesuits in Guelph were responsible for the territory north and northwest of the town to Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. They established 56 mission stations in that area. Among these missions were Arthur, Kenilworth, Ayton, Carlsruhe, Chepstow, Deemerton, Neustadt, Elora, Formosa, Hanover, Markdale, Mildmay, Riversdale, and Owen

Sound. Under the direction of Father Holzer churches were built in Hanover (1852), Fergus (1854), Morrision (1856), Deemerton (1856), Hespeler (1857), Mount Forest (1857), Acton (1857), Georgetown (1858), Neustadt (1860), and Carlsruhe (1860). Gradually, over the years, the mission stations attached to Guelph became independent parishes.

The great missionary who travelled tirelessly establishing the Church throughout the vast area of the Guelph Mission was Father Caspar Matoga, who died at the age of 33 in 1856. He was born in Poland in 1823, and came to Guelph on September 1, 1852. Except for a few months, when he had the use of a horse to carry clothing and other necessities for the poor whom he encountered, Father Matoga walked on his missionary journeys, covering the circuit of Mission stations five or six times a year. He would arrive in the morning, hear confessions, baptize, marry, anoint the sick, settle disputes, and teach catechism. Then at noon he would celebrate Mass, preach a sermon, give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and continue with pastoral visitation throughout the afternoon. He endured great hardships and exhaustion, and survived two attempts on his life. Often he would simply lie down by the side of the road, to get a bit of rest, and then move on. On one of his trips this saintly priest became very ill, and walked 30 miles to Guelph, where he died on August 21, 1856. He is buried in the Church of Our Lady, beneath the Canadian Martyrs chapel. He was known as "indefessus animarum venator" — the indefatigable hunter of souls.

In Guelph itself Father Holzer continued his activities. In 1857 he built the rectory and completed the convent. He intended the rectory to be the site of Ignatius College, and on May 7, 1862, a Bill was passed incorporating the College. But there were not enough students, and in a few years the College closed. In 1862 Bishop Farrell gave the Jesuits 6 acres of land for a residence and a future college. In 1861 Father Holzer founded St. Joseph's Hospital. He asked the St. Joseph Sisters of Hamilton Diocese to be responsible for the Hospital, and on November

21, 1861 Sr. Alphonsus, Sr. Antoinette, and Sr. Ignatius arrived to begin this work. At first they cared for the sick in a small stone building known as the Gate House, with room for 16 patients. In 1862 and 1877 this building was expanded, and a new Hospital was built in 1895. A new wing was added in 1925, and another in 1951. In 1956 a home for the aged was constructed. As we enter the final years of the twentieth century, a new Hospital is planned, the latest location for the work of caring for the sick which was begun in Guelph in 1861.

On October 4, 1863, Bishop Farrell laid the cornerstone for a huge church which was meant to occupy most of the hill. The inscription in the cornerstone read: "His Lordship Right Rev. John Farrell, D.D., First Bishop of Hamilton, blessed and laid the first stone of this church, to be built to the honor of God, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, and of St. Bartholomew, Apostle and patron of the Parish, the 4th day of October, the Feast of the Holy Rosary of the B.V.M., A.D., 1863. Pius IX, Pope; Flavian Turgeon, Archbishop; Very Revs. Ed. Gordon, V.G., John Walsh, V.G., Revs M M. O'Shea, S. Maheaut, Ed. Glowalski, J. Holzer, S.J., Sup., Db. Petit, S.J., J. Archambault, S.J., N. Sorg, S.J., assisting. Victoria, Queen; Lord Monck, Governor-General of Canada; H.W. Peterson, Mayor of Guelph."

Construction of the church was begun, but the project was abandoned after a debt of \$20,000 had been accumulated. It simply seemed impossible to continue. Legend has it that Father Holzer was a friend of the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, who supplied the funds, and that when Maximilian was shot in 1867 the funds stopped, and so did the building of the church. It is unlikely that this legend has a basis in fact. The problems in financing the church arose long before the death of Maximilian. It may well be that Father Holzer, searching for ways to solve the financial problems of the parish, mentioned a desire to seek a contribution from Maximilian.

Father Holzer's pastorate ended in 1864, when worn out by his labours, he

suffered a stroke. In 1875 he visited Guelph for the last time, and died at Georgetown University, Washington, on April 23, 1888, a few months before the opening of the present church.

In 1874 Father P. Hamel, S.J. began plans for the Church of Our Lady. He appointed Joseph Connolly as architect. Connolly designed many churches in 19th century Ontario, including St. Peter's Cathedral in London, though the Church of Our Lady is considered to be his masterpiece.

On July 10, 1876, Bishop Crinnon of Hamilton turned the sod for the new

church, and on July 5, 1877, Bishop Conroy, Apostolic Delegate to Canada, laid the cornerstone. Construction began at the rear of St. Bartholomew's, and was to continue for over ten years. In 1883 Rev. W. Doherty became pastor. On September 12, 1885, he supervised the burial under the chapels behind the sanctuary of the new church of Fr. Thomas Gibney, Fr. James Sherlock, S.J., Fr. Caspar Matoga, S.J., and Sr. Ursula Heenan, all of whom had been buried in the cemetery which had been beside St. Bartholomew's.



*The Church of Our Lady as it appeared in 1888.*



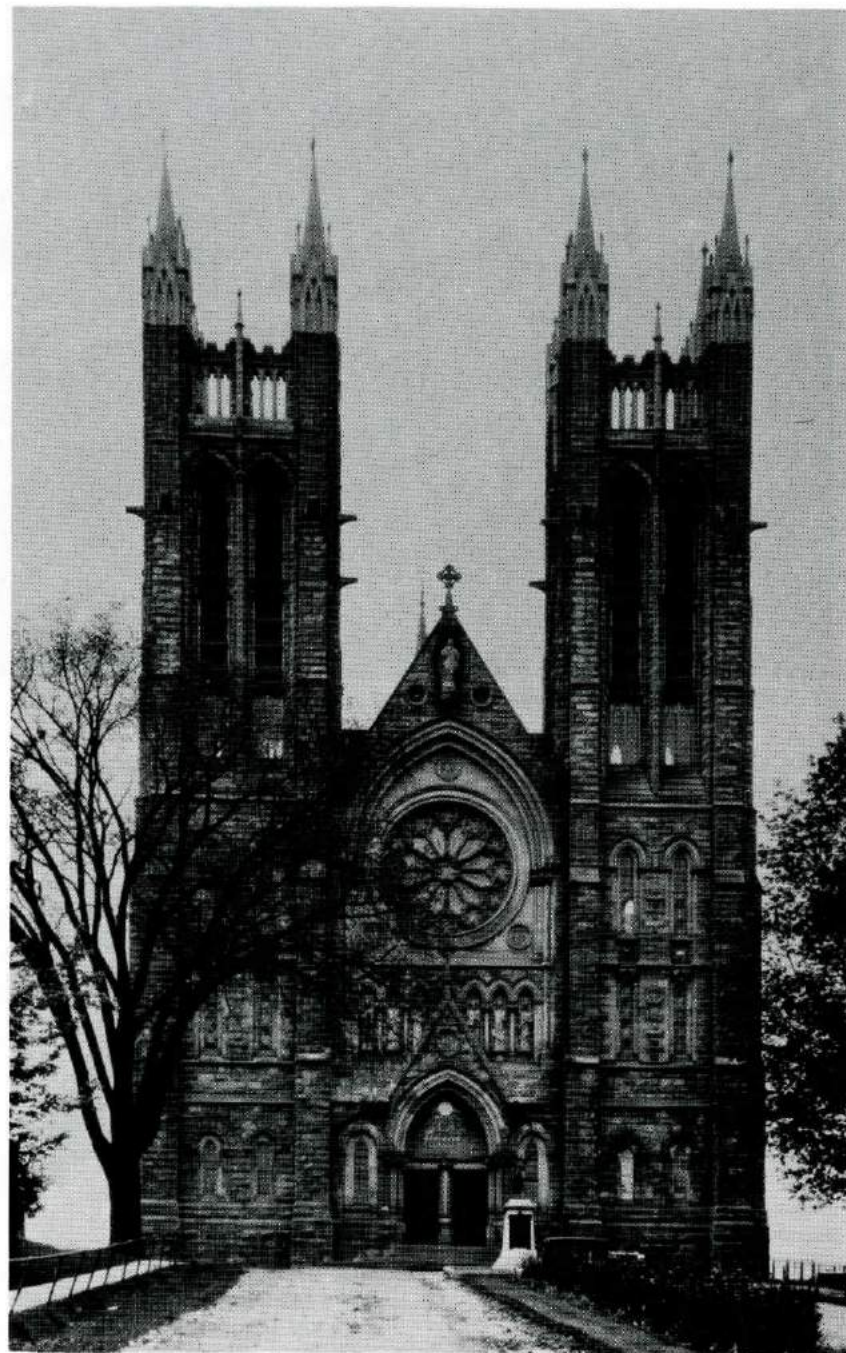
*The interior of the Church before 1908.*

In 1887 work had reached the stage at which St. Bartholomew's could be demolished, and on October 10, 1888, almost two thousand people attended the ceremony as the Church of Our Lady was dedicated by Bishop Dowling of Peterborough (since the see of Hamilton was vacant at the time.) The next year Bishop Dowling became Bishop of Hamilton. Bishop Walsh of London preached the sermon, and pointed out that though there were many magnificent old cathedrals constructed by kings and men of wealth, the Church of Our Lady was built by the generosity, sacrifice, and labour of the poor immigrant settlers of Guelph, "by money raised from the workingmen who had built our canals and railways — servant girls, mechanics and other hard-working people."

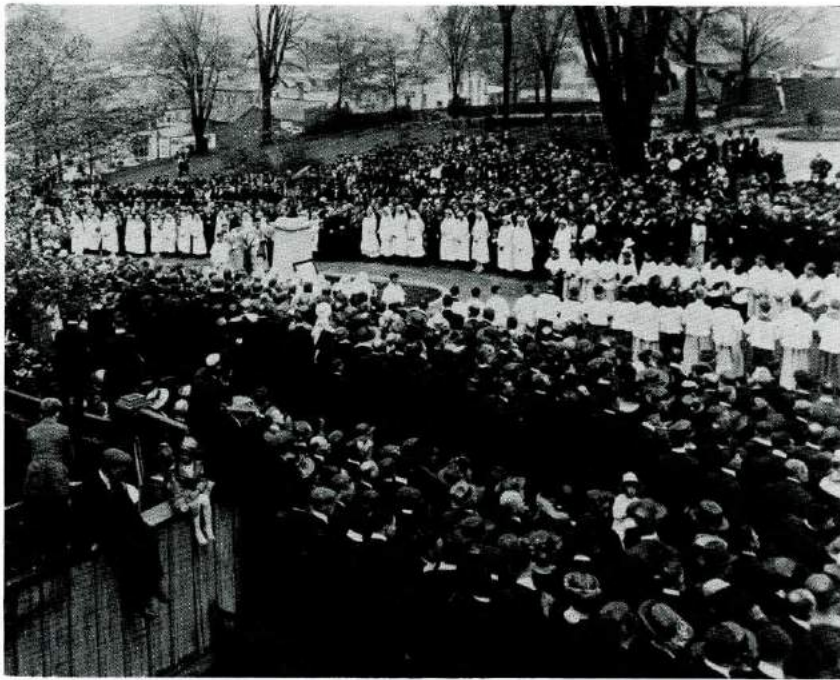
In 1908 the present Altar was erected, the walls were painted with murals, and the stained glass windows were installed. Bishop Sbarretti, the Apostolic Delegate, came to bless the completion of the

interior decoration of the Church. The organ, from Casavant freres of Quebec, was added in 1919. The exterior of the church was not finished until November 13, 1926, when the two towers were completed. This work was accomplished during the pastorate of Father F. Wafer Doyle, who was Pastor for 18 years, from 1912 to 1930.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the Church of Our Lady was no longer a mission center, but had become instead simply the parish for Catholics in the Guelph area. The many missions which had been founded from Guelph were now established as parishes on their own, and soon the same process would take place within Guelph itself. In 1911 a chapel was opened in a private house on Alice Street, to serve as a mission for the care of Catholics in that part of the city; in due time, in 1924, Sacred Heart Church was built and in 1930 it became the center for an independent parish, the second in Guelph.



*The Church after the towers were added in 1926.*



*Father Wafer Doyle, S.J., blesses the parish war memorial, 1920.*

## THE TRANSFER OF THE PARISH TO DIOCESAN PRIESTS

By 1931 the time had come for the end of the Jesuit pastoral care of the Church of Our Lady. Over the years the Jesuits had sought to relinquish the parish, and Father Hingston, their Provincial, once more asked Bishop McNally to place it in the hands of diocesan priests. The Bishop agreed, and on September 6, 1931, Father J. A. O'Reilly, a priest of Hamilton Diocese, became Pastor.

Father Hingston, in a statement read out to the parishioners, explained the reason for the change: the main mission of the Jesuits was missionary or educational work, and since the College once established at the parish had closed long ago and since the parish was no longer a missionary center, it was time for diocesan priests to assume responsibility for the parish while the Jesuits moved on to work more in keeping with their particular call.

Father O'Reilly was pastor for twenty-five years, the longest pastorate in the



**Monsignor J.A. O'Reilly**

history of the parish. During his time as pastor two more parishes were separated from the Church of Our Lady to begin their life as distinct communities: St. Joseph's parish, in the western part of the city, in 1952, and Holy Rosary parish, across the river in the eastern part of Guelph, in 1956. The Church of Our Lady

parish, which once extended to Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, had now reached its present boundaries.

There were three schools on the grounds of the church: St. Agnes School, built in 1877, St. Stanislaus School, built in 1883, and the Loretto Academy, a High School for girls. Up until 1924 the Loretto Sisters had run a boarding school in the convent, but that was discontinued in 1924 to free space for classrooms for the increasing number of day students. This was followed in 1926 by the construction of the Academy, attached to the convent. On October 10, 1944, Father O'Reilly announced plans to build a Catholic High School for boys. In 1953 the Loretto Academy became co-educational, and in the following year Notre Dame High School was opened at the bottom of the hill.

In 1949 Father O'Reilly encouraged some members of the parish to form Our Lady's Parish (Guelph) Credit Union Limited, within the Ontario Credit Union League. Membership was originally limited to parishioners, and volunteers offered financial services to the members from an office in the basement of the Church on Sunday mornings and Monday evenings. The Credit Union grew rapidly, and amalgamated with the Sacred Heart Parish Credit union. Office staff and a full time manager were hired, and offices were built near the Church on Cork Street. In 1970 the parish Credit Union joined several others in the city to form the Guelph Community Credit Union, and in 1980 a further amalgamation with the Guelph-Wellington South Credit Union formed the Guelph-Wellington Credit Union Limited, which now has three offices in Guelph.

In 1956 Father John Noonan became pastor. St. Bernadette school was established in 1960, St. Paul's in 1964, and Our Lady of Lourdes in 1965. The Loretto Academy and Notre Dame High School were united to form Bishop Macdonell High School in 1962 and an addition was made in 1967 linking the two buildings.

Several changes were made in the property as well. In 1958 a new entrance

to the Church from Macdonell Street was constructed and in 1960 landscaping was done on the Northumberland and Dublin Street sides of the property and a new statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was placed on the front of the Church to replace the original one, damaged by weather. In 1967 there was a major renovation of the Church, with a repainting of the whole interior. In 1973, during the pastorate of Father W. L. Ryan, a trust fund was established for the perpetual care and preservation of the Church.

On June 12, 1977 the Catholics of Guelph marked the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Catholic life in Guelph by holding a procession through the center of the city, followed by a Holy Hour.

Throughout the parish's history several organizations have assisted in enhancing the material and spiritual welfare of the community.

In March of 1872 a Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was established in the Parish to care for the needy, offering them both material assistance and spiritual encouragement. It has continued this work faithfully over the years, and has recently opened a used clothing and small articles store and a used furniture warehouse.

In 1920 Bishop Dowling established the Catholic Women's League in Hamilton Diocese, and in February of 1921 a branch of the CWL was organized in the Church of Our Lady parish. During the next several years the parish CWL contributed \$10,000 to the fund for the building of an addition to the Loretto Academy. In 1934 Fr. O'Reilly disbanded the CWL at the Church of Our Lady and established in its place the Confraternity of the Holy Family, which was, however, closely associated with the diocesan CWL — so much so that in 1940-41 Miss R. McElderry, of the Church of Our Lady Parish, was Diocesan President of the CWL and its National Secretary. On October 21, 1952, the Parish branch of the CWL was re-established. It is involved in many works of service, and has recently

undertaken a commitment to contribute towards the construction of the new St. Joseph's Hospital.

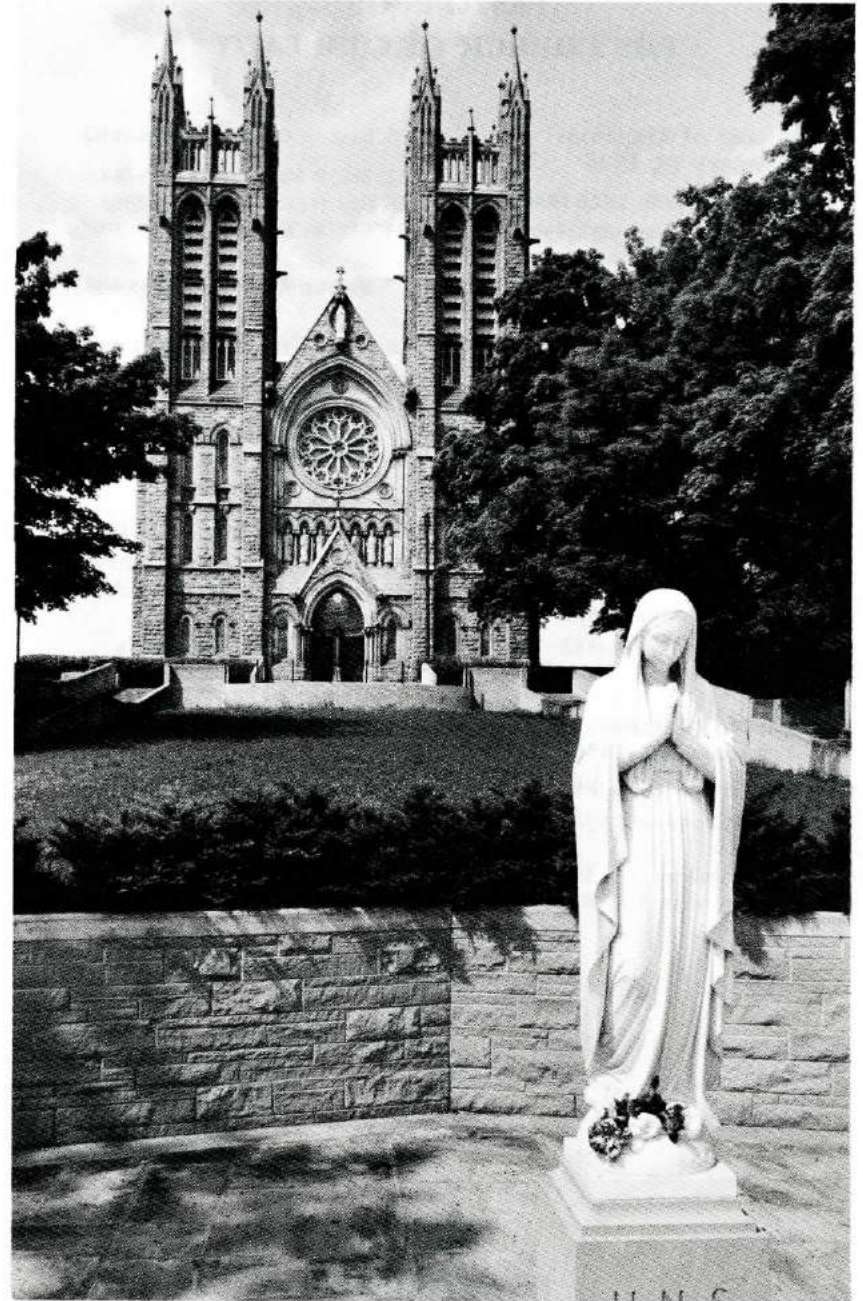
The Knights of Columbus, founded in the United States by Father McGivney in 1882, has been present in Guelph since April of 1910, when the Guelph Council of the Knights of Columbus 1507 was established. The Knights met at various places in the city until 1931 when they opened a new clubhouse at the corner of Dublin Street and Waterloo Avenue. They moved to new quarters in 1976, and the old clubhouse became the home of the Guelph Civic Museum. Over the years the Knights have participated in many worthy projects.

Other groups, such as the Holy Name Society and the Legion of Mary, have contributed over the years to the life of the parish.

In 1986 Msgr. J.H. Newstead, Vicar General of the Diocese of Hamilton, was appointed Pastor. In the same year Bishop Matthew Ustrzycki, the auxiliary bishop of Hamilton, took up residence in the

parish. This fulfilled the desire of the founder of the city, John Galt, that a Bishop reside in Guelph.

On October 10, 1988, the parish celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of the opening of the Church of Our Lady. This majestic church is the architectural masterpiece of the city of Guelph, and a source of pride for all its citizens. But the parish is more than the church. From the early days of poverty and struggle, through the great missionary era when this parish extended far to the north, to its present situation as a Catholic community in the center of Guelph, the parish has been alive with the spirit of the Gospel. From any place in Guelph one can see the great stone church on the hill; as we look at it may we keep always in mind the words of Scripture: "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5)



# PASTORS OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY

## **Diocese of Kingston: January 17, 1826**

### **1. Bishop Macdonell: 1826-1840**

1. Rev. James Campion: 1827-1830
2. Rev. John Cullen: 1830-1833
3. Rev. John Cassidy: 1833-1837
4. Rev. Thomas Gibney: 1837-1846

### **2. Bishop Gaulin: 1840-1841**

## **Diocese of Toronto: December 17, 1841**

### **3. Bishop Power: 1841-1847**

5. Rev. Peter Schneider: 1847
6. Rev. Simon Sanderl, C.S.S.R.:  
1847-1850

### **4. Bishop Charbonnel: 1850-1856**

7. Rev. John Cullen: 1850-1852
8. Rev. John Holzer, S.J.: 1852-1864

## **Diocese of Hamilton: February 29, 1856**

### **5. Bishop Farrell: 1856-1873**

9. Rev. J.B. Archambault, S.J.:  
1864-1870
10. Rev. J.C. Conilleau, S.J.: 1870-1873
11. Rev. J.P. Loyzance, S.J.: 1873-1875

### **6. Bishop Crinnon: 1874-1882**

12. Rev. P. Hamel, S.J.: 1875-1882
13. Rev. H. Lory, S.J.: 1882-1883
14. Rev. W. Doherty, S.J.: 1883-1891

### **7. Bishop Carberry: 1883-1887**

### **8. Bishop Dowling: 1889-1924**

15. Rev. G. Kenny, S.J.: 1891-1905
16. Rev. J.J. Connolly, S.J.: 1905-1910
17. Rev. J. O'Loane, S.J.: 1910-1912
18. Rev. F.W. Doyle, S.J.: 1912-1930

### **9. Bishop McNally: 1924-1937**

19. Rev. G. Bradley, S.J.: 1930-1931
20. Rev. J.A. O'Reilly: 1931-1956

### **10. Bishop Ryan: 1937-1973**

21. Rev. J. Noonan: 1956-1969
22. Rev. W.L. Ryan: 1969-1979

### **11. Bishop Reding: 1973-1983**

23. Rev. R. Diemert: 1979-1986

### **12. Bishop Tonnos: 1984 -**

24. Msgr. J.H. Newstead: 1986 -

