

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

May, 2000

This is the first edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with information on the history of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. This history is a record of the love and sacrifice that the people, religious and clergy have unselfishly invested in the development of this House of God. It is our hope that the capital fund raising for seismic repair will be successful and we will be able to save our church.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARISH

The Parish of St. Leo The Great was formally erected on January 1, 1911, by Patrick Riordan, Archbishop of San Francisco. The Parish was established to serve the needs of the new city of Piedmont and parts of the rapidly growing section of North Oakland, that had previously been part of Sacred Heart and St. Frances de Sales parishes. The Parish of St. Leo The Great was named after Pope St. Leo the Great. This St. Leo, serving as Pontiff from 440 until he died in 461, had guided the destiny of the Church at a time of great tribulation and agitation. Archbishop Riordan called upon Father Owen Lacey, pastor of St. Anne's in Lodi, to head this new parish.

When Father Lacey arrived there was no church, no home for the priest, and no property of any kind. The first Mass of the new St. Leo's Parish was celebrated in Mowbray Hall, on Vista Avenue near Bonita, in the heart of Piedmont, on the first Sunday in January, 1911.

A few days later on January 10, 1911, Father Lacey received a letter of

objection from Reverend John E. Stuchell, Minister of the Church at Piedmont. He wrote that "it's a free community... and that the holding of services of the Catholic Church is welcomed in Mowbray Hall, built largely with Protestant money and effort." Reverend Stuchell, an ecumenical pioneer, was concerned that the erecting of a Catholic Church would cause schism in a community that had been united. He advocated one church on Piedmont Avenue for the use of all Christians.

THE ARCHBISHOP RESPONDS

The Archbishop's office responded to Reverend Stuchell's letter. The response pointed out that Piedmont had been part of a Catholic parish for many years, and that the Catholic people living there had often asked for a church of their own. The Archbishop's office stated that the establishment of St. Leo's and the building of a church could in no way cause harm to the congregation of the Community Church of Piedmont.

The original Catholic population of St. Leo's comprised about sixty families, mostly people of Irish and Italian backgrounds. Longtime residents have pointed out that a large percentage of the active original workers for the parish were the Irish maids who worked in those large mansions "up in Piedmont." About thirty people were present at the first Mass in Mowbray Hall, according to Father Lacey's records. The attendance stayed at that level for the two months that this location was used.

NEXT EDITION: The First Church at our present location.

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee



June, 2000

This is the second edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. We would like to acknowledge "St. Leo's Parish, Christian Service 1911-1971" by Ted Wurm as a major reference source. It is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

DIFFERENT LOCATIONS OF THE PARISH

After two months at Mowbray Hall, Father Lacey moved the Parish to the Standard Grocery store managed by Dan Dwyer, Jr., at 4056 Piedmont Avenue, near 41st St. This was a great success. The attendance grew to such an extent that many of the congregation were forced to stand and kneel on the sidewalk outside. The people were well content at not having to go all the way downtown or over to Sacred Heart for Mass. Even those who had been dropping in at the student chapel at St. Mary's College on Broadway found Piedmont Avenue a lot more convenient in those days before the automobile became such a part of our lives.

Almost immediately a campaign was launched to find the suitable spot for a permanent parish location. At the corner of Piedmont and Ridgeway, a block above 41st, stood the Hill Family home on a large lot of land running along the avenue. Parishioners and Father Lacey considered this an ideal location, and the home was for sale. It was purchased for \$16,000 ! It was both home for the Pastor and church, with the faithful spilling out onto the porch and steps.

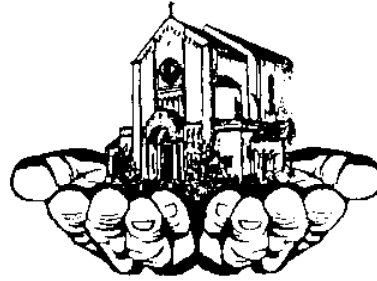
BUILDING THE CHURCH

In order to accommodate the large number of parishioners, Father Lacey decided to build a church along side the house, both of them facing Piedmont Avenue. Architects Shea and Loftquist designed a wooden building with a vague resemblance to California mission style. It was erected by contractors Gallagher and Motts. The total cost: \$9,000 for the church and \$6,500 for the furnishings. All of the money was raised, according to the *Oakland Tribune* of January 29, 1912, from "small contributions".

Archbishop Riordan came across the San Francisco Bay to dedicate the church on January 16, 1912. All the other Catholic pastors of Oakland attended, according to the *Oakland Tribune* story. The Archbishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to fifty boys and girls and addressed the large gathering of 500 people.

Only a year and a couple of weeks had passed since Father Lacey had arrived from Lodi and started putting together a parish, with no resources other than the people. The first year of St. Leo's parish ended with a home acquired for the priest, a new church built alongside, twenty or thirty children under instruction, and a couple of hundred people attending Sunday Mass and receiving the Sacraments. Altar boys had been trained to assist the Father. Among the first were the Guerra brothers, Rene, Vincent, and Leo. The Ladies Soldality was at work and other parish groups were already in the process of formation.

NEXT EDITION: The New Parish



THANK YOU!

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all of you who have already made a pledge to our **SAVE OUR CHURCH CAMPAIGN**.

So far we have 99 pledges for a total pledge of \$75,902. This is a long way from our goal. Currently we have collected \$1,107,952, which is about 62% of our goal \$1,800,000.

This pledge drive is going to last for one year! It will be over April 1, 2001.

The costs to retrofit and repair our Church keep rising. We must get started on the work **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**.

This is our Church! This is your Church!

Each of us is part of our parish community. Just as we call upon each other for spiritual support we sometimes must call on each other for financial help. This is such an occasion.

PLEASE HELP! WE NEED YOUR PRAYERS AND WE NEED YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT!!

If you have not already made your pledge, pledge cards are in the Church. Just fill one out and drop it in the collection basket or leave it at the rectory.

Again, Thank you!

The Save Our Church Committee

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

July, 2000

This is the third edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. It is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

THE GOOD SPIRIT OF PIEDMONT AVENUE

Father Lacey was a personable pastor known to the large community of merchants along Piedmont Avenue through his weekly visits. Only a few of the neighborhood shopkeepers were Catholic, but the fondness of all of them for Father Lacey was evident in their support of his work over the years. He represented to them a solid, stabilizing influence, a good leader and a hard worker.

Herb Sack, whose parents established Piedmont Grocery in 1904, was always glad to see the Catholic priest stick his head in the front door and exchange greetings. Others who looked forward to his visits and friendly banter were Billy Lund and the Guerras at Piedmont Market, Jim Pearson at the hardware store, Jack Learner at the shoe shop, Lee Gilpin at Piedmont Electric, Morse and Seifert, the florists, Oris brothers, the Fentons at the creamery at 41st & Howe, Harry Winston, the baker, the Popeneys at Oakland Provision, and Johnny Cox at his funeral parlor down below Moss Avenue.

They nicknamed him the "Good Spirit of Piedmont Avenue" because of his many worthwhile causes. His generosity was known to all.

AN ACTIVE FIRST CHURCH

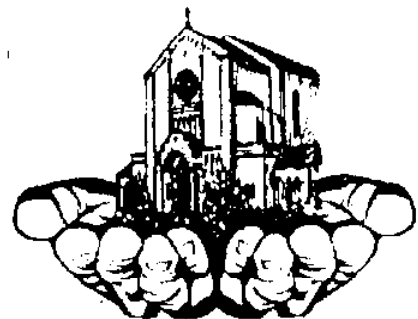
The first church at St. Leo's was a parish throbbing with activity. When Father Patrick O'Neill arrived in 1913 to be Father Lacey's assistant, he found active lay groups presenting shows and dances and establishing parish organizations under Father Lacey's guidance.

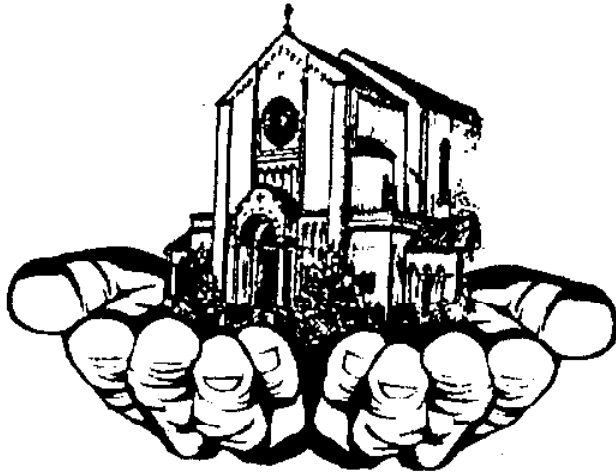
The Ladies Society was one of the first organizations established at St. Leo's. It grew and thrived from the start. A Sanctuary Society took care of the church interior from the day of the first Mass; it later became the Altar Society. Weekly whist parties were held in the rectory. It was crowded but fun, and Father loved the people and the excitement.

Devotional activities in the parish were by no means neglected through interest in social activities. Father Boyle, assistant to Father Lacey, organized an impressive choir of girls of the Sodality of Mary. One of the great parish photos shows them singing on the rectory porch when Mass was held outside during the terrible flu epidemic of 1918. Catechism classes for the children were conducted in the rectory, first by Mrs. Amy Thornton and later by Sisters of the Holy Names and Miss Louise McGovern. When the Holy Family Sisters established a residence in Piedmont in 1922, they took over the religious instruction.

In December 21, 1921, Father Lacey celebrated his Silver Jubilee in the priesthood. To indicate the esteem in which Father Lacey was held, the sermon on this occasion was given by the world renowned orator, Father Peter C. Yorke of San Francisco. At the Jubilee celebration Father Lacey announced the beginning of a campaign to raise money for a permanent church on the site.

NEXT EDITION: Building the Permanent Church





July 2000

We hope by now you are all aware of our yearlong pledge drive that will run until April 1, 2001.

Our goal is to raise \$1,800,000 so we can do the much-needed retrofitting, repairs and refurbishing in the Church.

We all want to SAVE OUR CHURCH for many more years and for future generations of worshippers.

Please be aware that besides cash we will also gratefully accept donations of STOCKS, BONDS, SAVINGS BONDS, SECURITIES AND REAL ESTATE. There might even be a tax advantage for you!

We are grateful for your spiritual, moral and financial support.

Again, Thank you!

The Save Our Church Committee

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

August, 2000

This is the fourth edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. It is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

FUND RAISING AND CONSTRUCTION

The remarkable parish growth continued and by 1920 it became almost impossible to accommodate the crowds at Sunday Masses. Fortunately, in those days there was no car parking problem. People walked and used public transportation. However, in the few years since its dedication, the small wooden church building had become too small. The services were so crowded that people were practically sitting on each other's laps. Young couples getting married often went over to Sacred Heart Church because St. Leo's could not squeeze in a very large party.

Starting in 1921, funds were raised for the permanent church. All parishioners contributed with a spirit that has completely amazed those of later generations. Many money raising events were held, including lunch parties in the old hall. Ladies of the parish, including Mrs. Delia Mulhern, sponsored card parties in their homes.

Finally, in the Spring of 1924, a general meeting was called for all parishioners and it was decided to build a new church. The plan submitted by George McCrea, architect, was approved by the people and the archbishop. The contract for construction of the reinforced concrete church was awarded to J.P. Brennan for \$84,500. Furnishings, organ, and Father Lacey's "extras" brought finished cost up to \$125,000, according to a parish chronicle. Coincidentally, Brennan's foreman was Matthew R. Connolly, father of a young man, named Nicholas, who was to have a great influence on this parish many years later.

Construction began in August, 1924. The full plan called for the priest's home to be built against the back of the church and facing Piedmont Avenue at the back of the present garden. The present rectory in that plan was to be the convent for a parish school. An old drawing shows this layout, which would have

made the parish plant even more unified. It was not possible at that time, however, to proceed with the full construction and so the convent was built to be used as the temporary home for the priests until the full plan could be completed. The old church was moved around to Howe Street. In later years it became the parish hall and eventually the school auditorium. Two private homes remained between the "rectory" and the new church, when the latter was opened.

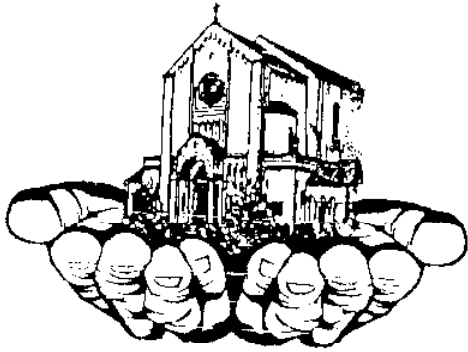
LAYING THE CORNERSTONE

Archbishop Edward J. Hanna came across the San Francisco Bay to lay the cornerstone on March 1, 1925. It was a day of great rejoicing. The Knights of Columbus and The League of the Cross Band were present in full uniform and impressive numbers. They escorted the Archbishop and his party in a parade from the train station at 41st and Piedmont up two blocks to the construction site at Piedmont and Ridgeway. The same corner lots that Father Lacey had purchased in 1911.

The souvenir booklet of the cornerstone ceremony contains a moving paragraph undoubtedly written by Father Lacey for the occasion: "Too much praise and gratitude can not be given to all the parishioners for their generous cooperation in the building of the parochial buildings. Few of the pioneers of the parish are left to worship in and enjoy the new church. Some have gone to their reward while many have moved away for one reason or another. To them also our thanks are due for we are now reaping the precious fruit of their sacrifices. The work is not yet finished for there remains the payment of a large debt and the erection of a school. And the people of St. Leo's will not rest until they have reached this glorious goal."

NEXT EDITION: Inside the new Church





August 2000

FOURTH MONTH REPORT & MORE

We have just completed the fourth month of our one-year pledge drive to SAVE OUR CHURCH. Thus far we have received 105 pledges for \$87,042.00.

We want to thank you for your faithfulness in honoring your pledges. If you have not yet pledged, it is not too late! Pledge cards are available in the Church and at the Rectory.

We have sent letters and/or grant applications to 11 different Foundations asking for financial help with our repairs and renovation of the Church. We will advise you of the results in the future.

Recently, we received a generous donation from a parishioner who had recalculated the value of his estate and wanted to share his good fortune with us. We are most grateful!

While we're on the subject of estates, we recommend that, if you don't already have a will, you should make one soon. You don't want the State to determine how your estate is distributed! There is a very informative pamphlet called Will Power in the Bookrack at the back of the Church for those who are interested. While you are doing your estate planning, we hope you will remember your Parish.

Thank you for your generosity and support!!

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

NEXT MONTH: PLANNING FOR THE REPAIRS AND REFURBISHING OF OUR CHURCH

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

September, 2000

This is the fifth edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. It is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

THE GREAT NEW CHURCH

Eighteen months after he had placed the cornerstone, Archbishop Hanna returned to St. Leo's to dedicate the newly completed church. On that September day in 1926, the press commented on the impressiveness of this cruciform church done in the style of the Italian Romanesque, with a tower rising from the crossing of nave and transepts, the whole crowned with a roof of burnt clay tile. Altars, confessionals, and stations formed an integral part of the interior design, made unique by innovative uses of concrete for walls and pillars.

The church was designed to be the dominating feature in a proposed parish group of buildings, being placed parallel to Piedmont Avenue. It was set as far back as possible so that a pleasant garden could be developed along the street. Thus, the church is set apart, visible in its entirety without the possibility of commercial intrusion.

The interior of this great new church was made complete by the installation of three altars. The main altar was a gift of the Fontaine Family and side altars given by the Morris Family.

Now, 700 people could be seated in comfort and hear Father Lacey, with his pleasingly heavy brogue, read the announcements and deliver his sermons. His voice came rolling down from the high, unusual pulpit. It sat on thin concrete posts, wrapping itself around a pillar midway on the left side of the communion rail. The priest went up some steps facing the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and came out majestically

over the altar rail, looking down on his flock below. Many a communicant, rising from the rail, bonked his head on the floor of this massive overhead pulpit. This fixture was removed after Father Lacey's death, many years later.

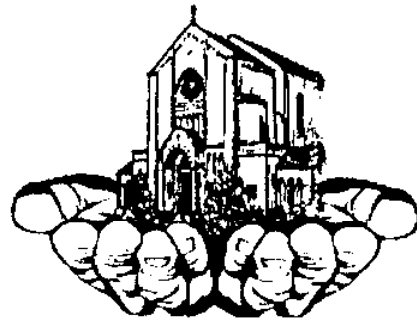
The building fund drive continued its momentum for a year or two after the new church was opened. Again, all sorts of money raising events were held. The St. Leo's "Theater Party" in April 1926 at the old Fulton Theater, 15th & Franklin Streets. Whists parties continued to be popular. An interesting relic of those days was 1926 Christmas Offering list, giving names and amounts contributed in four printed pages.

The new church organ had been given by the pastor out of his personal funds and now a fine choir was possible. Elizabeth Walsh, organist, and Anne Regan ran the choir for years, with evening rehearsals during the week and full programs on Sundays, including Benediction after the 12:15 Mass. There was an annual "night out" for the choir at one of the popular country clubs, as guests of Father Lacey. In 1927, Boy Scout Troop 39, sponsored by the Holy Name Society at St. Leo's, was established with Bob Power as Committee Chairman and Frank Cahill as Scoutmaster.

1929

1929 was a fateful year for St. Leo's Parish. Part of its territory was taken to form the new Corpus Christi Parish to the east. The Great Depression of 1929 struck the country and it lasted nearly a decade. It caught St. Leo's with a big debt unpaid and left many of the parishioners unable to help for a number of years. Servicing a parish debt in those times was a job calling for great leadership ability, unending patience, much faith, and boundless hope. A perfect job for Father Lacey.

NEXT EDITION: Building the School



UPDATE CONCERNING THE REPAIRS AND REFURBISHING OF OUR CHURCH

This is a brief update and explanation of what is being done as we progress toward the beginning of our major construction project to repair and refurbish our Church.

Father Johnson has contracted with CTA Architects for the Church project. Mr. Bob La Perle, A.I.A. will be the Project Director.

The construction is expected to start April 22, 2001 and is anticipated to take 7 to 9 months to complete.

The following work will be done to the Church:

Structural upgrades: which includes all of the retrofitting needed to protect the Church in the event of another earthquake.

Major Maintenance: upgrading the plumbing, electrical, and heating in the Church. Replacing the lower flat roofs on the Church and painting the interior and exterior of the Church.

Other Maintenance: re-leading of the stained glass windows and refinishing the pews, floors and kneelers. There will be necessary and mandatory ADA changes made to make the Church more accessible to disabled persons. Finally, there will be improvements made in the Church's interior and exterior lighting, repairs to the grand organ in the choir loft, improvements to the sound system and necessary liturgical changes.

For more information on the liturgical changes you are encouraged to attend the Discussion-Workshops scheduled for Wednesday, September 13 and 27, October 4, 11, 18, and 25.

Again, thank you for your generosity, support and pledges that allow us to undertake this extreme project to SAVE OUR CHURCH!

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

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October 2000

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BUILDING THE RECTORY

At the same time as the great new church was being built in 1925 and 1926, a convent was added at the corner of Howe Street and Ridgeway Avenue. Between the Church and the convent, two homes remained in what is now the Church parking lot. The master plan called for the parish's rectory to be attached to the Church at the northern end of the Church garden on Piedmont Avenue. Since the Parish was not able to build a school at this time, the priests moved into the "future" convent and it became the "temporary" rectory.

St. Leo's was early recognized as a good training ground for young priests. These young priests went on, eventually, to be given parishes of their own. At the same time, this parish was fertile ground for vocations to the religious life. Father Lacey knew that the number of vocations would increase as soon as he could open a parish school. He had always had his heart set on this; it was foremost in his hopes and prayers. However, any building was inconceivable during the Depression years. He was fortunate to be able to keep his parish solvent.

THE SCHOOL IS BUILT

Just after World War II, Father George Johnson arrived. From 1946, he and Father Thomas Garrigan (who arrived in 1935) worked with pastor Lacey through the very successful school building campaign and until the time of Father Lacey's death in 1951.

Postwar controls were still in effect when the first request for construction of the new building was made in 1947. A local committee deferred the school, but appeal was made to Washington by the Archdiocese. Late in 1947, the Office of Temporary Controls gave its approval. Father Lacey did not let any grass grow under his feet! For months he had

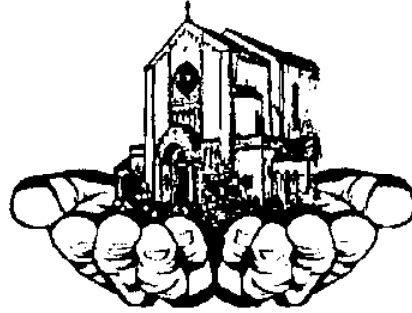
an architect's drawing of the school hanging in the church vestibule. The people were equally eager to get going. Many had been sending their children to other parochial schools that were either crowded or too far away. Funds had been accumulating and the plans were approved.

In less than a year after approval, St. Leo's School was completed, dedicated, and holding classes in the first five grades! Designed by architect William Schirmer and his associate, William Rich, the building was of reinforced concrete, two stories high, containing nine big classrooms, cafeteria, clinic, library and office. Attached at the northward end was a roomy auditorium - the original wooden church. It had been used as the parish hall for 20 years when it had been located on Howe Street behind the "temporary" rectory. The original wooden church was moved, again, a short distance up Howe Street, so that the school could be built between it and the rectory. To the north of this, a residence owned by St Leo's was converted and thoroughly modernized into a convent for the teaching sisters and the "temporary" rectory became permanent.

Even in those days costs showed a tendency to rise. The original estimate of \$150,000 for construction had grown to exceed \$300,000 by the time ground was broken by Pacific Coast Builders in 1948.

The day of dedication was October 18, 1948. The Archbishop, the Most Rev. John J. Mitty, came from San Francisco across the bay bridge, that had been opened in 1936. More than 1,000 people were present to hear His Excellency thank the sisters, priests, and brothers: "Who devote their lifetime to training children to be loyal and faithful to God, and devoted citizens of America." Flanked by his assistants, Fathers Garrigan and Johnson, Father Lacey thanked the parishioners and the people of the district who made it all possible. For once again he had demonstrated his ability to get support from merchants and neighbors of all faiths, as well as from his own generous flock.

NEXT EDITION: The Shepherd passes on



OCTOBER 2000

October marks the beginning of the sixth month of our pledge drive to SAVE OUR CHURCH.

In August, Father Johnson appointed a Church Building Committee to work with him to plan and oversee the work that will be done to our Church next year. The parishioners appointed to the committee are Grace Bacchi, Frits Fynaut, Kevin Kennedy, Stu MacIntyre and Jim Nemechek.

The committee has already met with the architect. They have approved the initial draft of his "Building Evaluation Study of the Church Building" and they are now in the process of interviewing for a General Contractor/Construction Manager for the overall project.

Please keep the Church Building Committee and the SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE in your prayers.

Thanks to all of you who have pledged and been so generous. It is because of **YOU** that we can move ahead. It is not too late for anyone who wants to make a pledge or donation, there are pledge cards and envelopes available in the Church and at the Rectory.

Sincerely,

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

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GOLDEN JUBILEE 1946

A great celebration was held to honor Father Lacey's Golden Jubilee in 1946. The local press was lavish in its praise of the man and his 35 years' work in north Oakland and Piedmont. The great majority of parishioners delighted in this recognition, for they had sincere affection for Father Lacey personally. They admired his work in building up both their faith and the physical plant in which to practice it. Many pointed out ways in which the pastor led them along the road to salvation.

There were those who disagreed with such praise for Father Lacey. Some of the dissenters had brought their feelings to a head just before 1930, by trying to have the archbishop recall their pastor.

This effort to get rid of Father Lacey had been successfully fought off by his flock, under the leadership of Daisy Keller. Petitions were signed by the hundreds; scores of letters went to the Chancery Office; people really demonstrated the affection felt by most of them for their pastor. The recall movement faded quietly away. Mrs. Delia Mulhern remembered one time when the archbishop was planning to move Father Lacey to Old St. Mary's Church downtown in Oakland. She told how all the parishioners wrote letters of protest and many said they would stop supporting the parish if their pastor were moved. He stayed.

So, when the old Irish pastor eventually reached his Golden Anniversary in 1946, he was still "ruiling the roost" at St. Leo's. He walked down the Avenue a little more slowly; he sometimes had a hard time climbing those steps to his familiar old pulpit. Yet, his mind was clear and his work for St. Leo's never faltered.

On Sunday, December 15, 1946, a reception was held in the parish hall directly behind the rectory on Howe Street. Members of the parish and non-Catholic friends from the neighborhood and from throughout the city came to pay their respects and to enjoy the show. The area weekly

paper praised Father Lacey as pastor of "one of the outstanding parishes of the state."

THE SHEPHERD PASSES ON

Father Owen Lacey died after a several week illness at St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco. It was on January 9, 1951, almost exactly forty years to the day from his arrival and the first Mass in 1911.

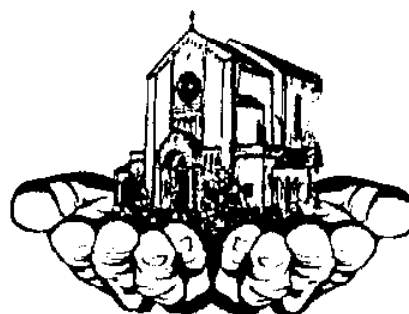
Most appropriately, it was the neighborhood weekly newspaper, *Piedmont Avenue Bulletin*, that presented the most fitting tribute to the pastor and friend to most people living and working in the area. The usual obituary was on the first page. Inside appeared the weekly column "It Seems to Me" by Reverend Philip Murray. Reverend Phillip Murray was the Minister at Plymouth Church, a lovely ivy covered brick structure that stood further down Piedmont Avenue, opposite Yosemite Avenue, and was torn down in 1958 to make room for a parking lot. Reverend Murray wrote:

Upon my return to the city last Thursday, I was shocked to learn of the passing of our good friend and neighbor, the Reverend Owen Lacey, pastor for more than forty years of St. Leo's Roman Catholic Church. Although I did not know Father Lacey well, I admired him greatly. He was a fine and refined figure of a man. His advanced age rested upon him graciously. As he walked about the streets he appeared to be interested in everything he saw, especially the people, all kinds of people. I am sure he had the shepherd's heart of concern for all members of his own flock, and beyond that, of his community.

To the loved ones bound by blood ties to Father Lacey, to the members of St. Leo's parish, and to the great Church which he served so faithfully and so long, the people of his community extend their sympathy. As was said of the martyred Lincoln, a tall tree has fallen, "leaving a lonesome place against the sky".

Father Lacey's funeral was on January 12, when a solemn Mass of Requiem was offered at St. Leo's. Archbishop John J. Mitty presided. He was the third Archbishop of San Francisco under whom Father Lacey had served while remaining at St. Leo's and building it into a parish of over 1000 families.

NEXT EDITION: The Leadership of Father Nicholas Connolly



November, 2000

We are now beginning the seventh month of our yearlong fund raising drive to SAVE OUR CHURCH. There is a great deal of planning and preparing going on for the extensive work that will be done on the church.

A week ago we concluded a six-week long series of workshops called our "Worship Space: Changes" presented by Father Nicholas J. Glisson. The purpose of these workshops was to develop a plan to present to our church architects so they can incorporate any changes we want with the existing plans to retrofit and repair our church.

During October the Church Building Committee met several times. Through a selection process the committee has chosen McNely Construction Company of San Leandro as the general contractor for the Church Project.

McNely Construction Company has extensive experience in doing seismic retrofitting and working on church structures.

The Building Committee also met with the architect again to go over his schematic design of the church plan.

We are most grateful to all of you who have already made your pledge or donation. However, we are still far short of our needed goal of \$1,800,000.

If you know any former parishioners or people with some connection to our Parish be sure to tell them what we're doing. We would be most happy to have them donate to our fund too.

Through your generosity we will reach our goal!

Sincerely,

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

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December 2000

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THE YOUNG PASTOR

To fill the impressive shoes of Father Lacey at St. Leo's, Archbishop Mitty immediately appointed one of his outstanding assistants, young Father Nicholas Connolly. Father Connolly was born in Oakland and raised in Berkeley. He attended St. Mary's High School, then began studying for the priesthood. He was ordained on June 16, 1934. He earned his doctorate in Canon Law at Catholic University in 1938. Father Connolly had been working for twelve years as assistant chancellor of the archdiocese. Yet, when he came to St. Leo's, Father Connolly was the youngest pastor in the archdiocese.

He had never visited St. Leo's, but he had read about it in letters from his dad, while Mr. Connolly was the foreman of the church construction work and young Nicholas Connolly was a freshman seminarian. This was a fortunate choice for the Parish, for tall, sensitive Father Connolly assumed, almost at once, the love for St. Leo's that had marked his predecessor, Father Lacey.

Father Connolly chuckled in later years as he recalled his first visitor on the day he arrived at St. Leo's. He had not even gone up to find his room yet when a man was ushered in and blurted out, "Father Lacey always bought his fertilizer from me. Are you going to continue?"

The second welcoming visitor, shortly after the fertilizer man, was parishioner Elizabeth Walsh. She was a member of a group of bridge players who whimsically called themselves the "No Belle Club." She explained that they made little sums of money which they had been giving to Father Lacey for church maintenance. The ladies wondered whether they might give it to Father Connolly thereafter! Pastors learn quickly how to answer such questions.

THE 1951 CHURCH RENOVATION

The first big job tackled by the new pastor was the much needed refurbishment of St Leo's

Church, inside and out. The exterior was painted in May and interior work was started in mid-October.

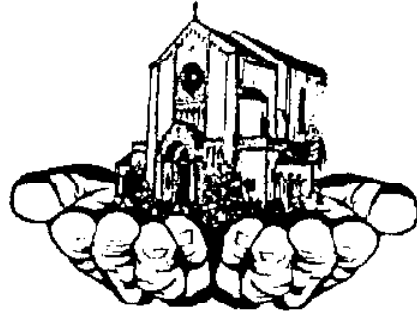
Monsignor Connolly tells the story of Lawrence Kelly, interior decorator, who attended daily Mass at St. Leo's. One morning the new pastor causally asked if Kelly had ever given any thought as to how the austere gray interior of the church might be brightened. "Have I!" exclaimed Kelly. "Just let me show you right after breakfast." Within an hour he was back with full color sketches, and one of them was chosen for the job. It served as the model in every detail for this 1951 painting and decorating project. The model was repeated in 1959, since it so well emphasized the architectural perfection of this very devotional church.

With the help and advice of decorator Kelly, the ungainly old pulpit was removed from its place above the altar rail. New lighting fixtures were installed, as were new confessionals, and improvements were made to the sacristy. When it was all finished and the scaffolding was removed, the results were truly breathtaking. "The monastic severity of the old finish" would not be missed, commented Father Connolly. The parishioners were unanimous in agreeing with their pastor's assessment of the big improvement. They appreciated the fine new public address system, as well.

Religious devotion at St. Leo's was on an upsurge in the early 1950's, partially inspired by the world wide Holy Year of 1951. Father Connolly believed in putting first things first and he stated that the initial consideration in the life of any parish is the "laying of a foundation of solid Christian piety and devotion to the God who lives in our midst."

Unfortunately, he was still tied to that desk across the Bay, putting in a half day's work at the Chancery office each morning before being able to take time for his pastoral duties at St. Leo's. Double duty was assigned to many priests at that time because of a shortage in the ranks. On the other hand, there were two good assistant priests, a fine faculty of sisters in the school, and experienced lay leaders. Also as the school expanded, adding a class a year since 1948, more and more parents were brought into a position where they could get involved and assist the Parish.

NEXT EDITION: Parish life and St. Leo's Parish School



December 2000

Happy Holidays! Yes, once again it's that time of the year when we give thanks to God for all the blessings he has given us. It is also the season for giving.

It is our hope that not only will you remember St. Leo's when you give thanks but also, but that you will remember us when you are in the seasonal giving mood.

As you probably know, we are entering into our eighth month of a yearlong fundraising drive. The purpose of this drive is so we can do earthquake retrofitting, some liturgical updates, and make other necessary repairs, so that we will be able to preserve our church for many years to come.

Although many of you have already made pledges and donations to our fundraiser, we have not heard from many parishioners and worshippers.

We are currently at the 70% mark of our goal of \$1,800,000, but we are \$542,289 short of our goal.

WE NEED YOUR HELP...WON'T YOU PLEASE HELP US SAVE YOUR CHURCH!

We hope that each and every one of you has a Happy and Holy Holiday Season.

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

January 2001

This is the ninth edition of a new monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

PARISH LIFE

The special St. Leo's devotion, an annual novena in honor of St. Theresa, always drew an impressive attendance for nine evenings in September and October. The other big annual evening devotion was a Parish Mission, usually scheduled for March as a part of the Lenten Season. This week was a time of spiritual help, practical instruction, and the solution of personal problems. Lasting spiritual revival often flowed from the Mission: "new habits of prayer and church attendance, reception of the Sacraments, and a revival of interest in things that make for a closer union with God." Priests from the Archdiocesan Mission Band usually came to conduct the Mission services.

During Lent there was always featured a series of sermons on Wednesday evenings, Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings followed by Benediction, and record-breaking crowds in Holy Week. In those days, the Holy Thursday liturgy was held early in the morning, but hundreds came just to receive Holy Communion and then returned for the evening Holy Hour.

Good Friday's "Three Hours Devotion" was always attended by a standing-room-only crowd. Among many excellent speakers presenting the "Seven Last Words" of Our Lord was Bishop Merlin Guilfoyle in 1952. As a speaker he was hard to surpass, but St. Leo's seldom disappointed in its choice of Good Friday speakers, thanks to the pastor's invaluable contacts at the chancery. This was before the days of Holy Saturday's Easter Vigil Service, and that day's unique liturgy was also scheduled for early in the morning.

During the afternoon and evening of this last day of Holy Week, the priests heard confessions for what seemed like endless hours. Each year the people were exhorted not to put off their Easter Confession until the last day, but each year the long lines on Saturday were unchanged and waiting seemed interminable. Like a visit to the dentist, some people delayed their visits to the

confessional to the last possible moment.

ST. LEO'S PARISH SCHOOL

It was amazing to notice how much of the parish life now revolved around the school and children. It was also remarkable to observe how important the school had become in the devotional life of St. Leo's. Never before had there been such May processions! All the children marched from school into church, the girls with tiny white veils, and carrying flowers to place by the statue of Mary, the May Queen. In the 1950's this popular devotion usually took place early on a Sunday afternoon and was followed by the school Folk Dance Festival in the school yard.

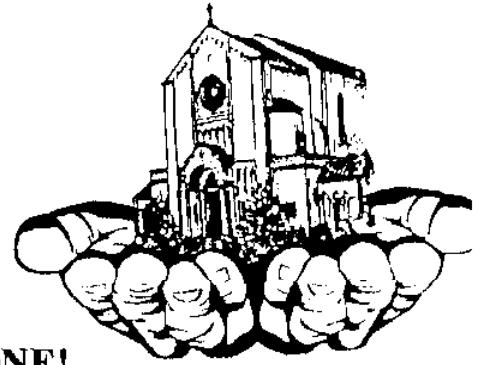
Eligible children usually received First Holy Communion at the nine o'clock Mass on Mothers' Day, and the church was packed. Parents, godparents, grandparents and the children competed for seats with the usual Sunday congregation. As more and more First Communicants filled the classes in later years, it became the custom for half to receive on the Saturday and the rest on Sunday. Eventually, of course, First Communion Mass was scheduled on Saturdays only, much to the satisfaction of everyone concerned.

The church was always busy on Sundays. There was the children's Mass at 9:00, with the teachers from school keeping an eye on the little angels. On various Sundays of the month different parish groups received Communion "in a body": the Altar Society, the Rosarians, the Holy Name men. School graduation ceremonies were held in church, the first was on June 13 1952 (Father Lacey no doubt smiling down from above). Several of the graduates were entering studies for priesthood and the various religious orders of sisters and brothers. The graduating class gave the school a lovely statue of the Blessed Virgin.

Lovingly remembered by all as the first custodian at St. Leo's School was Antone Berberich, who passed away in 1957. An even more popular and beloved custodian was personable Bill Todd, a native of Australia and man of all jobs. When Reggie Guichard retired from his duties as church sexton, Bill Todd assumed that job as well. He handled all preparations for the church ceremonies, and could be found rushing out at the proper time to "pass the plate" when ushers were not around to take up the collection.

NEXT EDITION: The Active Life: 1955-1960

JANUARY 2001



HAPPY NEW YEAR, EVERYONE!

This year promises to be an exciting one around our Parish. Construction work on the Church is scheduled to begin in mid or late April.

We have less than three months left of our yearlong pledge campaign.

Thank you to all of you who have made pledges, and a special thank you to those who have already paid them off.

If you still have an outstanding balance on your pledge, we would appreciate it if you will pay them off by April 1.

We have now collected \$1,299,588 or 72% of our goal of \$1,800,000.

If you have not yet made a pledge or donation, would you please consider it? Please take a moment to reflect on how important St. Leo the Great Parish has been and is to you!

Help us SAVE OUR CHURCH for future generations.

SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

February 2001

This is the tenth edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

THE MONSIGNOR

The pastor of St. Leo's on February 6, 1955, received recognition for his years of hard work in the service of God and parishioners. Father Nicholas Connolly was elevated by Pope Pius XII to the rank of "Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor" - the honor of becoming a member of the Papal household. On the following Sunday the people of the parish, family and friends welcomed Monsignor Connolly with an enthusiastic reception. He was presented with a massive "Spiritual Bouquet" from all of them.

A week later, the church "Tidings" carried this message from the pastor: "... words fail to express the warmth of my appreciation for those who worked so selflessly, for so many long hours, preparing and conducting the reception... I have encountered almost accidentally and at random, so many instances of service above and beyond the call of duty that I hesitate to single out any one, lest I seem to forget others, equally deserving."

The City of Oakland took note of the honor bestowed upon Father Connolly. There was a civic reception in March at the Athens Club, at which additional praise was heaped upon Monsignor Connolly and two other East Bay priests who had joined the ranks of Monsignori. Mayor Cliff Rishell was there, as was the city manager, the chief of police, fire department officials, and Joseph Knowland, publisher of "Oakland Tribune."

No one could know better than the people at St. Leo's how well their pastor had earned his promotion. They knew personally of his struggle to carry on two jobs successfully, one of them in another city. They had followed his thoughtful, sincere guidance as a shepherd and had turned to his consolation in their troubles. They had enjoyed his participation in their social activities and recording these activities with his camera.

ST. LEO' ACTIVE LIFE

The "active life" spread out in all directions from the religious aims for which St. Leo's was established. Thanks to the loyal Altar Society, faithful ushers, choirs, and altar boys, the

ceremonies have always been presented in beautiful and fitting settings. During the 1950's the new school was in full stride, fostered by a deeply interested pastor, a teaching order with the finest tradition of education, two well run parents' groups, and training a student body of more than 400 boys and girls. Sister Cyrillus received tremendous amounts of spiritual, financial, and physical help in running the school from members of the Mothers' Guild.

The ladies of the Guild sponsored and worked at all sorts of activities to raise money for the unusual school expenses such as cafeteria operation, projectors, and wages for gym instructors. Rummage sales were an annual project; the first "Christmas Fair" was in 1954. All kinds of spectacular dance parties have been Guild sponsored over the years, including the famous "Italian Dinner, Carnival and Dance" of 1957. Always a popular Sunday morning event was the Bake Sale, held three or four times a year in the kindergarten room near church.

Not to be outdone, the Men's Club, under the presidency of the late Bob Foudy, in 1956 held its own bake sale on the Sunday nearest St. Patrick Day. Head chef Jack O'Hara said "they laughed when dads went into the kitchens to bake, but some of the results were really edible!" There were cakes submitted by Monsignor Connolly and even Father Murray, but Father Driscoll wisely offered a huge Irish soda bread.

There was also an annual Men's Barbecue party and a parish picnic. The barbecue usually took place on a warm May evening at Sequoia Lodge in the Oakland hills. September of 1956 brought the first parish picnic and it was held in Redwood Regional Park, just over the hills. There, in the warm belt where dust and poison oak flourished in those early years, hundreds of families thoroughly enjoyed themselves. More recent picnics have taken place at Wildwood Acres, St. Mary's College campus, Roberts Pool park area, Cull Canyon Park, and Lafayette Reservoir. Later in the year there was the Men's club Turkey Whist, enjoyed particularly by oldtimers in the parish.

Another enjoyable annual contest was the golf tournament presented by the Holy Name Society. Some of the presidents of the Men's Club, in addition to Bob Foudy, were John McKenna, Jack Fowler, John Gilligan, Jack O'Hara, Ted Wurm, Sam McKee, Ed Collins, and Weber Lund.

NEXT EDITION: The Active Life: 1955-1960



FEBRUARY 2001

Can you believe it? We are into the 11th month of our yearlong fund raising drive, which ends at the end of March.

We are most grateful for the generosity of our parish family member, Olive Kinley, who in her will, left us three quarters of the proceeds from her home-when it is sold. This donation will move us much closer to our goal, but we estimate that we still have to raise approximately \$200,000.

JUST A REMINDER: There is a wonderful pamphlet in the bookrack in the vestibule of the church called WILL POWER. It is most informative and useful for those who would like to include St. Leo's in your estate planning. Besides Real Estate, we are most grateful to receive donations of **STOCKS, BONDS, SAVING BONDS, ANNUITIES, SECURITIES**, etc. (There might even be a tax advantage for you)!

If you have not yet made your contribution or pledge we would like to encourage you to do so.

The seismic retrofitting, repairs and liturgical upgrades that are about to be done on our church are an extraordinary undertaking and an extraordinary expense. To complete it we are calling on all members to be extraordinarily generous.

We are sure that when the work is done we will all be very pleased that through OUR efforts and support we will have **SAVED OUR CHURCH** and provided a beautiful and safe environment in which we can worship for many more years to come.

Sincerely,

SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

March 2001

This is the eleventh edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

SILVER JUBILEE

The 1950's ended on a note of celebration as the entire parish gathered on Sunday, June 14, 1959, to help the pastor celebrate his Silver Jubilee (25 years a priest). A Solemn High Mass at 11:00 started the day with Monsignor Matt Connolly, the pastor's brother, as celebrant. The honored jubilarian sat to one side, recuperating from surgery. Sub-deacon on that occasion was Father John S. Cummins, a cousin of the pastor. The parish's assistant priests, Fathers Driscoll and Quirk, were active in the service as well. The latter had been assigned to the parish in 1958.

A reception for the pastor was held in the afternoon. Following a brief program and the customary greetings, Monsignor was presented with a fine hi-fidelity music system from his flock. Then Cindy Lund stepped forward and handed him a set of keys. To what, he wanted to know. So, Monsignor Connolly was led outside and there on the sidewalk stood the surprise of his life: a new car from the parishioners as a token of their gratitude for his work on their behalf. For once, Nick Connolly was speechless! Smiling faces crowded about on the sidewalk and he was very close to tears.

THE 1960's

Monsignor Nicholas Connolly, pastor at St. Leo's Parish, perhaps unwittingly set the theme for the sixth decade of the parish's history when he wrote, in the Sunday "Tidings" issue in November, 1957, the following message: "A 'Catholic' to most Americans is somebody who is anti-Communist, against contraceptives, books and movies not approved by his Church. But Christ's test is: 'See how they love one another'." The decade of the 1960's was certainly a time of change - change in the world, in the church, in the diocese and parish, change sometimes so violent that without love very little would survive.

At the beginning of this period, the Church was much as it had been for scores of years, although evening Masses had been instituted during the 40 Hours Devotion and on First Fridays in 1955. Everything was in Latin, and the traditional High

Mass was celebrated each Sunday at 11:00. A talented men's choir, led by Mike Scanlan, sang at this and at the 12:15 Mass. Their accompaniment was a solemn organ played by Miss Sheila Scanlan and later Frank Denke, who was a renowned composer, performer and symphony soloist. There were always classes of instruction in the Catholic Faith, mainly for adults. Frequent announcements in the "Tidings" called attention to them and one noted proudly that as many as 125 adults attended some of the evening sessions.

However, early in the 1960's attendance at evening religious services began to decline. People were staying home out of a fairly logical fear of being on the streets at night, or so they claimed. Some had become chained to television, which was a very strong attraction when it was new. The Novena to St. Theresa was an early casualty and the Parish Mission was cut back to once every three years. Priests assigned to St. Leo's to assist the pastor around this time included Father Peter A. Kelly, briefly in 1959, the brilliant Father Thomas Liang from 1960 to 1962, and Father Joe Skillin who arrived in 1961 and was called away to be the bishop's secretary in 1962.

As changes took place at St. Leo's rather drastically in the sixties, so also did the old neighborhood change. The last streetcars ran up the avenue to Piedmont in 1948. Ten years later, the last Key Route "C" train drifted down the avenue, past St. Leo's, and across the Bay Bridge into history. New apartment buildings were springing up all around the area. Many of the old merchants whom Father Lacey called friends had died, and their businesses with them. Neighboring Plymouth Church, just down Piedmont Avenue, was demolished and replaced by a parking lot in 1958. Recording all these changes was the weekly "Piedmont Avenue Bulletin" (later "Piedmont-Oakland Bulletin"), which always made room for news of parish events.

People came to Sunday Mass in their own cars now instead of the public transportation. Now, there was a new problem for the pastor: parking space. Cliff Timm's Associated gas station, across from the front of St. Leo's, always provided space for several cars, but the problem rapidly grew acute.

NEXT EDITION: Changing with the times

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

April 2001

This is the twelfth edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

A HAPPY CHANGE

As the neighborhood around St. Leo's changed, the two old residences standing between the church and the rectory were finally made available for purchase and were demolished in 1964. This gave St. Leo's the needed parking space and eventually an entrance into the schoolyard. That same year saw the removal of several old trees from the church garden facing Piedmont Avenue; their roots were decayed and they were in danger of falling. The lovely memorial shrine of the Immaculate Conception in this same garden lessened the sorrow at the loss of the trees. The shrine had been carved in Italy and was erected in the golden Jubilee Year of St. Leo's, 1961, as a memorial to Father Owen Lacey and the other priests and the parishioners who had pioneered in this parish.

In the fifty years that had now passed since that first Mass early in 1911, the population within St. Leo's boundaries had grown to 10,000 people, with more than a thousand families "belonging" to the parish. This half-century milestone was not allowed to slip by without an appropriate ceremony. The commemoration was marked by a Solemn Mass at four o'clock on Sunday, January 8, 1961, presided over by Bishop Guilfoyle. A week later was the presentation of the unique show: "This is Your Life, St. Leo's." What a show it was! Fifty years of pictures of the growth of the Parish, narrated by Don Pearce, followed by a most appropriate variety show. This was a truly unforgettable production that could never be repeated. It brought the old days back to life and stirred up nostalgia by the ton. Nevertheless, it was no signal to relax and bask in the light of past glories. The members of this Parish were not that type. Later that same year, 1961, they started construction on the long-hoped-for "Parish Center" building across from the rectory, at the corner of Ridgeway and Howe Street.

CHANGES AT THE SCHOOL

School principal Sister Cyrillus was transferred in 1961, following the usual six-year term, and Sister Mary Juana arrived to take her place. She found a full, active school, but noted that about a quarter of the pupils were from homes outside of St. Leo's parish. More apartments, fewer large

homes, more business growth in the area had contributed to that situation. But the school's vitality continued as before. Its traffic patrol boys had just won a trophy and the merit award from the Oakland Chief of Police, thanks to the devoted guidance and assistance from ever popular Officer Kelly. The Mothers' guild busily supported school growth and progress in its customary round of varied activities. One of the more unusual fashion shows was that held on the lawn at the late Norway Hall on Piedmont Avenue in 1960. Combined with a bake sale, the smashing show was sponsored by Piedmont Avenue Merchants Association that year. In other years, the show was presented at the Edgewater Inn and at the Claremont Hotel. "Rambling Through the Years", at the latter, under co-chairwomen Betty Wurm and Julie O'Hara, mixed fashions of the old days with the latest styles.

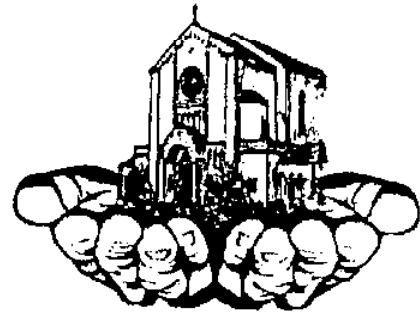
The "Tidings" on June 10, 1962, had a paragraph singing the praises of what it termed the "unsung heroes" at St. Leo's: "the eight capable, outstanding, and self-sacrificing Dominican Sisters who so devotedly conduct, teach, and guide our students . . . phenomenal tasks. Yet, the Sisters fulfill this task year after year and go unsung . . . let us just for this one time sing the praises of our heroes; let us extend our deepest and most sincere gratitude to these eight Sisters . . . let our praises go sung, rather than unsung."

DIOCESAN CHANGES

In 1962 the Diocese of Oakland was formed and Bishop Floyd Begin arrived; he was installed on April 28th. The East Bay area's gain was a loss to the people at St. Leo's, however, for their pastor was named Vicar General of the new diocese and chairman of the building committee. Father Quirk was put in charge of the office of the Propagation of the Faith; Father Skillin was tapped by the bishop to be his secretary; Msgr. Cummins, who was in residence at St. Leo's and assisted in the work, was appointed Chancellor.

St. Leo's had the honor of hosting Bishop Begin's first administering of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the new diocese, also the first dedication of a new building. Both took place on Sunday, May 6, 1962. The building was a shiny new Parish Center, consisting of a gym, meeting rooms, kitchen, a parish hall in an attractive structure designed by R. P. Fiedler & Associates and built by Reardon Construction Co. Total cost was \$207,000!

NEXT EDITION: MORE CHANGES



APRIL 1, 2001

This is the final monthly newsletter from the SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE.

When we started this phase of our fundraising drive we told you that the drive would be for one year. That year ends today!

We had hoped that we would reach our goal within the year, but unfortunately we only reached 74% of it. Thank you to all of you who supported us. If you have not yet made a donation or paid off your pledge we hope that you will do so now. We need your help more than ever. The bids for our work exceeded our estimates by far!

We can wait no longer to do the retrofitting and upgrading so we are proceeding with our church project and exploring every possible way to scale back or modify our plans to save expenses.

As we move forward we will be much further in debt than we wished but we will hope that our parishioners and benefactors will be generous to St. Leo's in the future and we will continue to place ourselves in God's hands.

Sincerely,

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

May 2001

This is the thirteenth edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

THE NEW PARISH CENTER

The Parish Center was dedicated on Sunday, May 6, 1962. It was built on a large lot which had been purchased, with a house, for \$10,000 back in 1951. A parishioner remembers coming out of church on Sunday mornings and seeing a flock of colorful canty chickens busily scratching away in that backyard.

The gym immediately became the center of parish social and athletic events. The 7th grade basketball team had just won the northern California CYO championship under the guidance of coach Otis Farris. By December, more than 100 boys were involved in basketball, girls had volleyball teams going, and women of the parish were playing volleyball every Monday evening. Even before folding bleachers were installed in 1964, the place was packed on Saturdays, with a game starting each hour. Dads and teens coached; mothers sold refreshments, including homemade cupcakes. Even when screaming at a rival coach or a "blind" referee, it could be said: "See how they love one another" (in the long run, that is).

CHANGES AT THE SCHOOL

Changes were taking place at St. Leo's School. Sister Carol Coenan was welcomed as principal in 1966. She was a dynamic teacher within valuable innovative programs and good administrative ability. The school cafeteria no longer provided hot lunches each day; it had been operated for years by Lisa Accomazzo and Mabel Deputy. Kindergarten was closed and the ladies held a special tea party honoring Mrs. Margaret Casey. More lay teachers appeared as the supply of teaching sisters dwindled: Barbara Hennesy, Virginia Martin, Mike Gustavson, Judith Huchthausen, Patricia Anne Stead, Mary McManus, and Mary Barbieri.

After many years as school secretary, Eva Collins retired and her place was taken by Wilma Barron. A wonderful innovation, dynamically run, was the Pre School Sunday School for tiny tots age three and up, started at St. Leo's in 1968. The success of this program had been an inspiration in other areas, where lay parishioners have had to take over and operated because of the shortage of priests, sisters, and teaching brothers. Another

inspiration was the very brief campaign done voluntarily by the men of the parish to raise money and get a car for the sisters working and teaching here.

DIOCESAN CHANGES

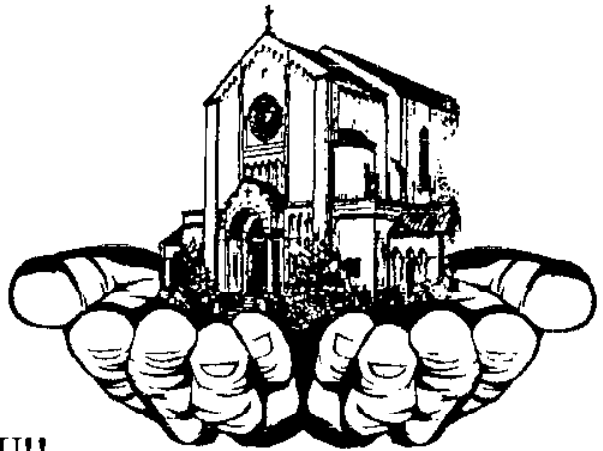
Early in 1963, Monsignor Connolly was elevated by Pope John to the rank of Prothonotary Apostolic, the highest honor that can come to a member of the monsignori. The pastor explained in the bulletin that "This is our bishop's way of telling you that he regrets the necessary work that has left me so little time with you during the past year." Late that same year, in a "once-in-lifetime" privilege, The Monsignor was invited to attend the Vatican Council as a "peritus" (expert) in Canon Law.

LITURGICAL CHANGES

Adult religious discussions were popular early in the 1960's. The evening meetings were particularly lively late in 1964 as the time approached for changes in the Mass liturgy. The Latin dialogue Mass had begun two years before, but Advent of 1964 brought some drastic changes, including parts of the Mass in English. The congregational singing started weakly a couple of months later, and then the mandatory lay readers. The first "Folk Mass" was not tried until late in 1967, on a one-time basis. It was scheduled again five months later, again in two months, and then more frequently until it was able to attain weekly status by the 70's.

Remember the Lenten Fast? It was lifted in 1966 and more positive acts of religious and social significance were recommended to take its place. In celebration that year, the first St. Patrick's Day Family Party was held in the big hall under the leadership of talented Fran Grant. More than 400 were there for dinner, songs and entertainment. They brought their own casseroles and salads, and there was much exchanging going on during the meal. This successful event was repeated in the next two years. Other social affairs going on in these years were annual dinner dances sponsored by the Guild, and the same group's bazaars and bake sales. The Men's Club, with Paul Hartshorn as president, initiated in 1966, an annual chicken barbecue in the Father Lacey Room, downstairs in the Parish Center building. Later presidents were Chuck Mitchell and John Blewett.

NEXT EDITION: MORE CHANGES



May, 2001

THANK YOU!!

Our yearlong Pledge Drive is now officially over. Before we close this chapter of our fundraising, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all of you who supported our drive to SAVE OUR CHURCH.

Yes, we fell short of our goal; and yes, the final costs to retrofit, repair, and remodel our Church appear to be much greater than we anticipated! No, we are not discouraged!

We had to choose between doing the work or closing the Church. We feel confident we have made the right choice; and we know that by the grace of God and with the generosity of our parishioners and benefactors we will eventually be able to reduce our debt.

Although the Pledge Drive is over, some debt will still remain. If you are able please use the new pink envelopes that were sent to you or continue using the yellow SAVE OUR CHURCH envelopes to make your contributions.

LET'S KEEP WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE OUR CHURCH'S DEBT!

Sincerely,

THE SAVE OUR CHURCH COMMITTEE

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

June 2001

This is the fourteenth edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

PARISH RENEWAL

St. Leo's remained at the forefront in all sorts of social programs. In Lenten weeks of 1967, groups of men and women gave a boost to Old Saint Mary's, the original Oakland parish now struggling in a depressed part of the city. Repairs and painting were done in the school; tutors assisted kids on a one-to-one basis; work was done in the clothing distribution center; typewriters were donated. The volunteers from Piedmont Avenue worked like beavers and all got out of the project a lot more than they gave. A special "Parish Renewal Program" at the start of 1968 tied it all together and set the St. Leo's Family off in other directions.

A senior citizens club for St. Leo's and the surrounding neighborhood was announced in February of 1968. Bob and Maureen Foudy, Ted and Betty Wurm made a survey of the problem, visited operating groups around the East Bay, and held the first meeting on March 13th. It was open to anyone over 50. Bob was elected president by acclamation, a club room was provided off the schoolyard for social meetings on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, and the "In Beata Senectute" club took off like a rocket. In May, the first of many potluck suppers; in June, the first bus tour followed by another in July (wineries were scheduled stopping places whenever possible). There were pizza parties, birthday parties, and various sorts of programs. Almost exactly a year after the club began operations, Bob Foudy died very suddenly and in his memory the group took the name "Robert Foudy Senior Citizen Club."

Another result of the "Parish Renewal Program" was the founding of a "Young Married Couples" group, also in March of 1968. This enthusiastic bunch was oriented toward social activities and social action projects. They changed the name to "St. Leo's Interaction Forum" a year later, calling themselves SLIF for short. A tremendous project and a great help to Monsignor Connolly was the parish survey they undertook. This was a survey of attitudes, hopes, plans, and desires which would be an invaluable planning aid for any parish.

During these latter years of the decade the pastor

had assistance from an unusual pair of priests. Father Theo Palis, a refugee from Communist Lithuania, was working here from 1964 to 1969. Father Eugene Poirer, S. J., a member of the Far East Province of Jesuit order, was in residence while he finished graduate work at the University of California from 1966 to 1968. Both priests worked hard for St. Leo's and made many personal friends among the parishioners.

THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY

In 1971, the 60th Anniversary of St. Leo's Parish, the Players presented another spectacular show. "Here We Are" had more than 100 in the cast! Martha Hawkins compiled the original script and directed the show; Don Winkowski was producer. All age groups worked in the production and behind the scenes: school kids, teens and adults. One memorable blackout number was a repeating revolving door scene depicting the rapid turnover of assistant priests at St. Leo's.

This was exaggerated, but had a basis in fact. Paul Feyen was assigned in 1967; Mike Tobin took his place a year later; then Jerry Kennedy relieved Mike in 1969. Father Briccio Omega (from the Philippines) also came to St. Leo's in 1969, bringing his great musical talent and a fine collection of guitars. The pastor noted in one Sunday bulletin that "Pastors have to get used to partings." He seemed especially saddened when "warm, cheerful and very efficient" Father Jerry left after eighteen months. Father Cauchi from Malta took Jerry's place for a few months, then Paul Vasser was assigned in June 1971. So the 60th Anniversary year found St. Leo's parish in something of a "revolving door" turmoil, as far as its priests were concerned.

The turmoil was above and beyond the control of the local parish, and St. Leo's was not the only one to struggle through such trying times. Fortunately, the laity seemed to take these things in stride and, working hard, they strengthened St. Leo's for the years ahead. The Parents Guild had combined Mothers' Guild and Men's Club in 1969 and had established husband-wife teams of officers. First presidents were Granny and Virginia Abbott, followed by Al and Nora Petersen in 1970-71, and Marv and Marge Walsh starting in 1971. This new system brought tremendous improvement and cooperation among parents with children attending the school. Sister Carol Coenan, the principal, and vice principal Mike Gustavson established a learning program in the upper grades that was the envy of other schools in the area.

NEXT EDITION: 1971

SAVE OUR CHURCH

A Newsletter from the Save Our Church Committee

July 2001

This is the fifteenth edition of the monthly newsletter for the parishioners and friends of St. Leo The Great Roman Catholic Church. In this year of our 90th Anniversary as a parish family, it is our hope that your interest in the history of St. Leo's will encourage you to contribute to the capital fund raising for seismic repair of our Church building.

NEW SOUNDS AND NEW LAITY

Through the cultural concern of some members of the parish, a Baldwin Classical Organ was installed during 1970, placed on the main floor near the front. Now the choir and the congregation were able to support each other, direction was simplified, and participation of all improved. A bequest by pioneer parishioner Miss Edna Rutherford, with additional contributions from musician Jack McDermott and another member of the parish made possible this enviable musical setup. A fine new choir was formed under the direction of Diane Gilfether and the beautiful new sounds of the 70's welcomed St. Leo's 60th birthday.

Members of the laity were now instructing those who were interested in finding out about Catholicism. This was the concern of IGM, the Information Group Movement, with a branch at St. Leo's headed by Rita Pafrey. So, where there were no longer enough priests to take care of these familiar duties, the lay people again stepped forward and helped. So, also, they assisted the dwindling number of sisters teaching at school. Volunteers went in to teach special subjects in which they were qualified: music, science, art and business, to name a few.

THE END OF 60 YEARS

St. Leo's began 1971 on an optimistic note. The Parish was sixty years old and still young, and still growing. It had never failed to forge ahead under the pastorates of Father Lacey and Monsignor Connolly, both of whom knew how to use the talents of their people so that the parish would continue to grow in spirit and in social concern. The men and women were going to their annual retreats; the children were crowning the May Queen; in Lent a daily Mass was added at 5:30 in the evening; in the Fall a tremendously expanded program of religious instruction for all ages was instituted under the direction of Sister Margaret Ann Ehlen; an enthusiastic group of children, youths, and young adults was arranging the well attended 9:45 Folk Mass on Sundays. Sister Carol received another assignment in the anniversary year and Sister Angeline Hauser

came to take her place as principal. Bill Todd, sexton, custodian, man of all jobs at all hours, would leave a year later.

As the seventh decade of life at St. Leo's began, Monsignor Connolly sent out a letter to his flock calling for the formation of a Parish Council. In 1972, he would set up a School Board to assist in running the school. St. Leo's was still on the track and running smoothly, with the shepherd at the controls and his flock not only following but helping in every possible way. Monsignor expressed this so well in a message he put in the parish "Tidings" on January 31, 1971:

"The friendliest parish just has to be St. Leo's," he wrote. "The combined efforts of so many people representing the various organizations within the scope of our portion of the 'People of God' confirmed what I already have long known - that we have an exceptionally friendly and generous people. Those who have contributed their time, their talents, their resources and especially their love will comfort and strengthen us in the days, months and years that lie ahead."

"We are grateful to our predecessors for the enviable heritage they have built and entrusted to us . . . Learning from the success of the past, we now turn happily to the future. May God give us wisdom, and be the strong support of all of us . . . a happy family that works and prays together."

We would like to thank Ted Wurm for writing the book that has been the source of information for this newsletter. Mr. Wurm's book, "St. Leo's Parish, Christian Service 1911-1971", ended with the year of 1971. This is the last edition of the Save Our Church Newsletter, unless someone volunteers to organize the collection of information to continue it. If you are interested, please contact Father Tim.