

May you find Christ here . . .

May you bring Christ to the world

150th Anniversary Celebration

*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
O'Fallon, Missouri*

September 18, 2021



The Most Reverend Mark Rivotuso

Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis

Rev. Nicholas Kastenholtz - Pastor

Msgr. William McCumber - Senior Associate Pastor

Rev. Partrick Russell - In Residence

Rev. Mr. Fred Volansky - Deacon

Rev. Mr. Richard Tadlock - Deacon

Hello,

This year we are celebrating our 150th anniversary as Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish here in O'Fallon. In some ways it seems like so long, and yet in other ways we still look to so much more in the future. It can be easy and good to track the history of the parish through the church buildings, school buildings, and rectory buildings that we have had here through the years, but we need to remember the reason for those buildings wasn't just to have buildings, but was for the people in the parish and community as a place we could learn, practice, and celebrate our faith.

I have appreciated hearing so many personal memories of people who celebrated their wedding, baptism, or First Communion here, to memories of their going to school or even Fall Festivals from decades ago. Some have told me about their parents' and grandparents' lives here, whose graves we might also be able to see as we walk through our cemetery. We realize looking back that they have all lived through many changes together; not only 15 pastors, but 10 archbishops, 12 popes, Vatican I as they were building the first church and then Vatican II, two World Wars and numerous other conflicts that many have given their lives for, the Spanish Flu and our current pandemic. Through all of this, our parish has been a place where this community has been able to find Christ, then to take Him with them in their lives, and bring Him to the world around us.

Hopefully, as we look back we are grateful for all that those in the past have done, the challenges they faced, the many blessings they received, and the joy they expressed in their faith and in being able to pass it on to future generations. May we continue to live that faith each day in our lives, and work together so that Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish will continue to be such a place for the next generation and for many more to come.

Peace,

Fr. Nick Kastenzholz

The beginning of O'Fallon was around the year 1855 when Arnold Krekel, Federal Judge for Western Missouri, issued a right of way through a tract of land, owned by himself, for the building of a railroad. At the time the railroad station was built there were no other houses in O'Fallon but there were German Catholic settlers living in the area since 1835.

Before long, people started building their lives and homes in the rich farm community around the Krekel addition, then known as the Village of O'Fallon. Many were immigrants from Germany and many were of the Catholic Faith.

Catholics living in O'Fallon had to attend Mass at All Saints Parish in St. Peters as well as send their children to school there since O'Fallon had no school for them to attend. By the fall of 1869 O'Fallon families belonging to All Saints met to consider the possibility of opening a Catholic School in O'Fallon. Soon another meeting was held along with eight families from St. Paul. This meeting brought up the possibility of not only erecting a Catholic school, but also the possibility of organizing a new parish.

With the preliminaries taken care of, the people applied to Archbishop Kenrick for permission to proceed with the work of building a school and church. Most Reverend Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis instructed his Vicar General, Father Muehsiepen, to study the project.

Father Muehsiepen studied the area and after meeting with the families of the area felt assured that they would never know defeat and gave his permission to build.

Mr. Henry Kister of St. Charles was hired to construct the first church built in O'Fallon for \$6,500 with the stipulation that the parishioners would supply the stone for the foundation, brick for the building, in addition to the sand and lime. They named the new Church the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary", and on Pentecost Monday 1870, the corner stone was placed in the building with the Vicar General, Father Muehsiepen presiding at the joyful occasion.

The work of building was continued in earnest and the structure was under roof by the fall of 1870. The church was ready for occupancy in the spring of 1871.

The solemn dedication of the church was planned to be held on September 17, 1871, then just three days before the dedication, on September 14, the first pastor arrived.

Fr. William Sonenschein, assumed the duties as spiritual leader of the parish, and Director of the building program, supervising the completion of the interior of the church. Soon after the dedication, the parish bought a house and an acre of land near the church for \$1,600 for a priest's residence. They also purchased pews for \$300 and later in the summer of 1872 procured a small church bell to be installed in the church tower to call the people of Assumption Parish to worship.



A week after the dedication of the church, the parish school opened with twenty pupils attending. The log schoolhouse was still under construction, so classes were taught in a little brick building. Fr. Sonenschein taught the children until the log schoolhouse was completed. Mr. Joseph Rustige was employed as the first teacher at a fee of \$25 per month. Mr. Rustige taught from September 1871 to March 1873.

In the fall of 1873 Father S Sonenschein had persuaded the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood to take over the operation of the school at Assumption Parish. Sister Paula, later named Camilla, and Sister Blanche were the first teachers assigned to the budding school. The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood taught and managed both the primary school and the high school for Assumption Parish for about 120 years.

It is fitting then, that today, since the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood do not have a Chaplain, that the Priests of Assumption also answer the needs of the Sisters.

Father Sonenschein abruptly resigned his pastorate and left O'Fallon on September 17, 1875. On April 22, 1876 Father Brockhagen, was appointed Pastor of Assumption Parish. He was born in Garbeck, a village of Westphalia, Germany. During his youth he frequently tended the cattle and helped his father with his trade because the family was poor. Fr. Brockhagen surprised his parishioners with his



knowledge of farming and cattle raising. At times, too he surpassed the good country doctor in his remedies and prescriptions.

After the death of Father Brockhagen, Reverend Henry Mueller, then the chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, cared for the parish as administrator until June 28, 1910 when Father Jasper arrived to take over the duties of running the parish.

Again Assumption Parish was without a pastor until June 28, 1910 when Reverend Anton A. Jasper was appointed pastor of



Assumption Parish. Father Jasper came from Immaculate Conception Parish in Augusta, Mo. where he had been a pastor for the previous five years. Father Jasper immediately focused his attention on the parish school. By this time the parish had grown to 130 families and the school building was inadequate. In 1914, a new school building was built on the site of

the old school. It included a hall on the second floor and meeting rooms in the basement.



The next pastor, appointed to Assumption Parish, was Father John Waeltermann.

He joined Assumption Parish on October 1, 1925, and the parish numbered over 150 families at this time and his main objective was to collect money for the building of a new church. In May of 1927 Father Waeltermann was transferred to a South St. Louis Parish.



Father Clement J. Moening was appointed to Assumption on June 12, 1927 and his chief goal was to take preliminary steps toward the building of a new church.

Under Father Moening's leadership the members of Assumption began to mine rock for the new church. By the winter of 1928 they had stockpiled 300 perch of rock on the grounds where the new church was to be built.

After stopping for the winter they again started to quarry in April of 1929, but after only two weeks the parishioners decided to discontinue the work. Beset by mechanical difficulties and the arduous labor of such a task, the idea of quarrying was abandoned and the machinery sold.

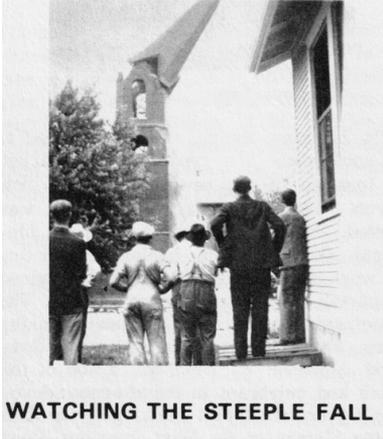
On September 11, 1929, Father Peter Kurtenbach arrived as the new pastor and under his leadership planning, construction, and opening of the new church became reality.



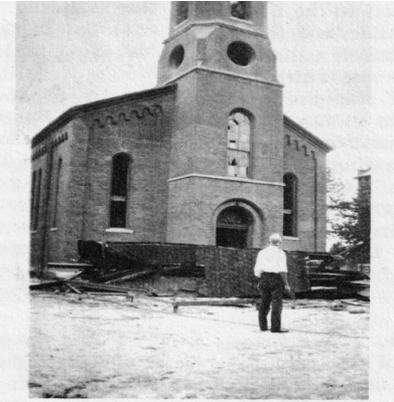
On April 6, 1930 at the First General Parish Meeting the question of rock or brick was decided. Upon unanimous approval of the parish meeting, the pastor was requested to accept the offer of the Weldon Spring Quarry and place the order for the necessary rock for our new church building. The amount of rock ordered for the new church was 1,700 yards of rock.

On May 11, 1930, the Building Committee, was announced and approved. Building Committee members were: Louis Sattler, Anton Westhoff, Joseph Zerr, Louis Schaeffer, Joseph F. Sigmund, Dr. L. H. Glosemeyer (President), H.B. Gentleman, Joseph Saali Jr., Bernard J. Wilke, Albinus L. Salfen, Edward F. Illy, and E.F. Debrecht (Secretary)

On Monday morning, September 22, our parishioners began to raze the old church



WATCHING THE STEEPLE FALL



THE STEEPLE HAS FALLEN



It took three weeks to remove the old building. The cornerstone laying for the new church took place on Sunday, November 16, 1930. Archbishop John J. Glennon of the St. Louis Archdiocese, laid the cornerstone. The cornerstone contained a brief historical sketch of the parish from its foundation in 1869 to the laying of the cornerstone on November 16, 1930. The names of the present parishioners and school children; names of the Sisters teaching in the elementary and high schools, lists of members of the various Sodalities, the Knights of Columbus, the names of the Archbishop, the Pastor, the President of the United States, copies of local papers and other numerous items.

While the church was being built, over the very spot where the old church had stood, the Sunday Mass was held in the Assumption Grade School hall and basement. The dedication of the new Church took place on July 4, 1931, on the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the parish, with Archbishop John J. Glennon in attendance.

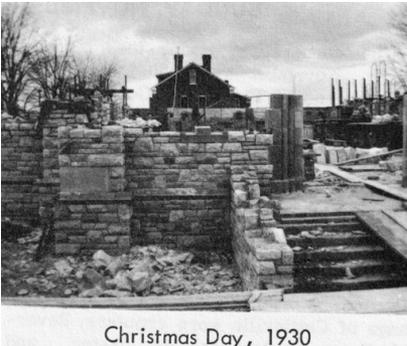
Father Kurtenbach ministered to the parish and in this beautiful new church until his death on August 21, 1937. He was buried in the Parish Cemetery.

Monday, September 29, 1930



November 9, 1930

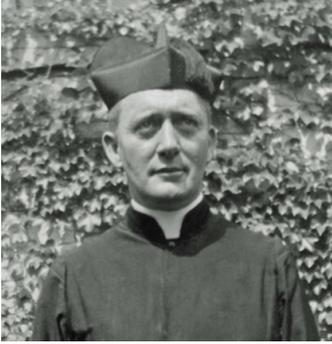
**ORDER IS BEING RESTORED
AFTER THE CHAOS**



Christmas Day, 1930



Saturday, April 4, 1931



Father George A. Haukap became pastor on September 19, 1937. During his leadership of Assumption Parish, our debt was paid off and two additional rooms were added to the high school. In October 1953 Father Haukap left Assumption Parish for an assignment in North St. Louis.

Father Raymond F. Diermann was installed as the new pastor on October 21, 1953. The parish was growing and for the first time in the history of Assumption Parish an assistant was assigned to the parish. During his time at Assumption, Father Diermann led the parish in constructing a new grade school building and a new convent for the Sisters. Up to this time the Sisters had to live at the Mother House across the street.



The small parish High School was now too small to handle the number of students that wished to get their High School education at a Catholic High School. Father Diermann called a meeting to suggest possible solutions and eventually remedy the situation. The decision was made to build a new high school. The board members were Fred A. Gentemann, President; Joseph Mudd, Vice-President; Francis E. Saali, Secretary; Emil Rau, Elmer Gentemann, Antoine Prinster and Herbert A. Westhoff. The board decided to build in accordance with the archdiocesan plan, pending approval of the archdiocesan building committee. The school was dedicated on December 8, 1955 with Archbishop Ritter presiding. Father Diermann was a driving force in establishing a regional high school which, when opened in 1962, which was St. Dominic High School. Father Diermann observed his silver jubilee on Sunday, May 29, 1960, at Assumption Parish in O'Fallon.

A "new" grade school was built



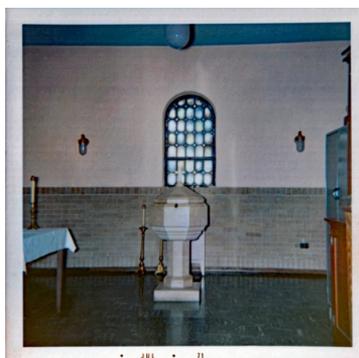
A third “new” church was built



On October 19, 1967, Richard Lubeley was appointed pastor of Assumption Parish. Before coming to Assumption Father Lubeley was Administrator of Bishop DuBourg High School, the largest high school of the Archdiocese. On February 27, 1971 he was named Monsignor, the first such honor for this Parish since it's founding.



During Monsignor Lubeley's time at Assumption the church was air-conditioned and it was through his leadership that the church was redecorated after the Second Vatican Council and for the centennial of the parish. The Baptismal font was moved from the crypt at the rear of the church to a prominent place in front so the congregation could better witness a Baptism. The High Altar was removed, redesigned and placed in a prominent place where everyone could better view and be a part of the Mass. A new Tabernacle was purchased for the back Altar and carpeting was installed on the floors of the Church.



It was during this time that the first Assumption Parish Council was formed according to the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council. The first Council was immediately put to work in planning for our Parish Centennial Celebration, Decoration and repairs to the church, obtaining Mass Booklets for the faithful and putting together a program booklet for the Centennial Celebration. As recorded on the original By-Laws, dated May 8, 1972, the members of the first Parish Council included:

Rev. Msgr. Richard J. Lubeley, , Rev James Grimaud, Rev Alfred Jewson, Sister Joanne Rataj CPPS, Henry Sachs, Ted Molitor, Catherine Gnade, Gerald Prinster, Carol Ochsner, Ivan Phillips, Ralph Pieper, Eileen Maher, Richard Saali, James Beauvaus, Jackie Behlmann, and Lynn Orf. Monsignor Lubeley was reassigned to a parish in South St. Louis in the spring of 1979.

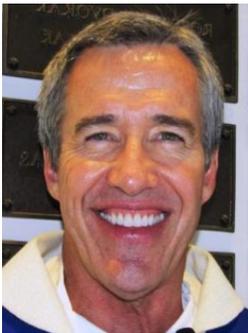


Monsignor Lubeley was followed by Fr. Theodore J. Brunnert on May 29, 1979. Father Brunnert took on the task of repairing many of the buildings at Assumption. He was instrumental in building the new rectory. The former parish convent was remodeled so it could be used as a school library.

The next pastor to be assigned to Assumption Parish was Father John (Jack) Burke. He was the eleventh Pastor of Assumption Parish and arrived on June 20, 1986. During his leadership the Church was again redecorated, a concession stand was built for the sports field and the Cemetery enlarged. Land was purchased for additional sports fields and many improvements were made to the buildings at Assumption. The parish was shocked and saddened with his sudden death on May 8, 1995. Father Burke was buried in the Parish Cemetery.



Father Joseph G. Kempf joined Assumption Parish in June of 1999 as our 13th Pastor. Father



Joe was assigned to Holy Infant Parish before coming to Assumption. He had been a priest for 22 years and this is his first assignment as a Pastor.

Because of the tremendous growth that had taken place in the O'Fallon area, and especially Assumption Parish, it was decided to ask for permission to go ahead with the plans for Assumption to build a new church and parish center.

Groundbreaking for our current church was Palm Sunday, April 13, 2003. A crowd of over 500 men; women and children filled the existing Church before the ceremony. In attendance to bless the ground and preside at the groundbreaking was Bishop Robert Hermann. Accompanying Bishop Herman was Pastor Rev. Joe Kempf, Associates: Rev. Ronald Rubbelke and Rev. Eugene Bendel, Deacons Rev. Mister Howard Vanbooven and Rev. Mister Fred Volansky.

Dedication of the new church was held on February 26, 2005.

Father Mitchel S. Doyen succeeded Fr. Joe as the 14th Pastor. 2014. Fr. Mitch reintroduced 24/7 adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; block rosaries inviting parishioners to pray the rosary together once a week within their neighborhoods, home visits through our core parishioners, inviting them to reach out and pray with other parishioners, visiting them in their homes and evangelizing with the goal of ‘making disciples’”. In July, 2019



Father Mitch was transferred to St. John the Baptist to serve as pastor.



In June, 2019, Father Nick Kastenholz was assigned pastor at Assumption. As Father Nick had only been at Assumption 8 months before Covid-19 began, it has been the driving factor on what could and couldn't be done in his time here. Father Nick is proud of how the parish and staff have shown their concern for one another and their desire to serve our community as our school and parish services had to suddenly operate remotely, from school classes to the celebration of Mass.

He said, “By establishing protective practices in regard to the virus, we have managed to accommodate many individual needs while providing a general environment that many have stated they came to because they felt safe to worship here.”

Under Father Nick’s leadership the parish is now beginning a Pastoral Planning process to involve the parish in determining our strengths, needs, and desires as we look towards the future. He says, “Coming out from the restrictions due to the pandemic is an opportunity to renew our parish as we look towards the future. While Covid-19 has affected many ways in which we can minister, it has also emphasized the need to be aware and attentive to the individual concerns of each person, demonstrating clearly the need to be flexible, but also emphasizing the importance of being a community and not just individuals in our relationship with God.”

Assistant pastors over the years have included Father Eugene Bendel, Father James Benz, Father George Bilyeu, Father Gary Braun, Father Theodore Brug, Father Joseph Weber and Father Tim Elliot, Father Robert Menner, Father Gregory Mikisch, Father James Pavlik, Father Bernard Schloemer, Father Robert Szydowski, Father John Keane, Rev. James Grimaud, Rev. Alfred Jewson, Rev. John Kaske, Father Jeffry Knight, Father Ronald Rubbelke, Fr. Jim Theby; Fr. Zac Povich; Fr. Steve Giljum; Fr. Andrew Meiners Msgr. William McCumber, and Father Patrick Russell.

Today we have about 3,250 families registered in the parish and an income of about \$170,000.00 per month to operate the parish. If you figure in the children of our parish we have over 9,500 members. Much thought and prayer must have occurred over the years when our forefathers were planning for their future generations, and what a great job they did. Now it's our turn to plan for our future generations in a way that will make them proud to know that we were looking out for them and their children in our thoughts and prayers and actions.

The torch gets passed on, from one generation to the next, but with the Grace of God and the fine leadership of our Pastors, we all pray to meet the goals that we set for our Parish Family and finally to meet again one day in Heaven to enjoy the fruits of our labors, for all eternity.

Special thanks to the fine people who compiled the History of Assumption Parish over the years so that the Priests and Parishioners who were a part of its very beginning to the present time will not be forgotten.

Some of the books and articles used in writing this history were the O'Fallon Centennial book 1856 to 1956, the O'Fallon, Missouri American Bicentennial book, published in 1976, the Souvenir of the Dedication of the Church of the Assumption B.V.M printed in July, 1931, the Assumption Centennial book printed in 1971, The Assumption Catholic Church 125th Anniversary Directory published in 1995, the Dedication booklet of the Assumption Catholic Church, dated February 26, 2005 plus the Minutes of Trustee Meetings of the Parish held over the many years.

