



150th Anniversary of St. Vital Church

As I mentioned before Masses last weekend, 2011 marks 150 years since the first Mass was celebrated in a small chapel named St. Vital. To mark the occasion we are planning a full celebration. I am also putting together an anniversary committee to discuss other possible activities. If you are interested in being part of that committee please leave your name with the parish office.

In the weeks ahead I am including in the bulletin excerpts from our parish history. The first one is the following:

The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry

The history of our Parish dates back to the year 1860 before Manitoba entered into Confederation and may be considered as one of the oldest established Missions in Manitoba. In that year, His Grace Archbishop Taché of St. Boniface built a small school house and entrusted it to the care of the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns). This small school was situated on the east side of the Red River, just opposite to the site of our present Church.

The official blessing of the building took place on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8th, 1860, and on the 20th of that month two Grey Nuns, Sister L'Espérance-Youville and Connelly took up residence in the building, returning to their Community to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion every day. This journey was undertaken by horse and carriage donated to them by the good Archbishop Taché, himself.

During the Winter months the Grey Nuns then made preparations for a little Chapel within the school. Their work was completed in the Spring of 1861 and on April 4th the first Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Taché, who placed this mission under the patronage of St. Vital, the patron Saint of his Co-adjutor Bishop Vital Justin Grandin. From this moment onward, Mass was celebrated twice a week.

The initial joy of having a Church and School within this little Community was soon marred, for no sooner than two weeks later the waters of the Red River began to rise, and the flood which followed forced the good Sisters to evacuated their new home. It must have been a sad occasion for the first parishioners to see these Sisters returning to St. Boniface by wagon, followed closely at hand by Archbishop himself on horseback, carrying with him the Blessed Sacrament.



The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry (Continued)

Fortunately, little damage was done to the building by the flood and they were able to reoccupy it at a later date. A description of the school is written in the records of the Department of Education, and a report by Mr. Royal, School Inspector of that time, wrote as follows:

"The School House of St. Vital is spacious, well illuminated, but of defective ventilation. The class under the direction of the Sisters of Charity is in excellent condition, and few schools of the same kind could boast of an equal standing, i.e., for its tenure, its progress and for the advancement of its pupils. The number of pupils 64 (38 boys and 26 girls)."

A description of the interior of this building is given by Sister Samson, who was in charge of the School and Chapel from 1880 until 1887. In her words:

"The Sanctuary was separated by folding doors, there was just room for the altar with a small shelf on each side, and a prie-Dieu and chair for the Archbishop with another Priest. The Blessed Sacrament was kept there and one can recall that Mrs. L. Riel came regularly to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Mass was said twice a week, but the Priests changed very often. I remember," says Sister Samson, "Monseigneur Taché, Monseigneur Grandin, Father Maisonneuve and Monseigneur Dugas."

Mr. Alexandre Nault, a member of our Parish at this time attended the school. He first went to the school in 1881 and stayed there until its closing in 1887, living as he did on the west side of the river. He had to cross daily by row-boat along with other children. He also describes it as a one-room school, located on Lot 48, between Mr. Sauvé's farm and Mr. Amable Nault's farm on Lot 47, the latter being on the north side of the School. He remembers a very small Chapel at one end of the classroom. There were sliding doors separating the two. He also remembers two Grey Nuns coming every Monday morning, returning to St. Boniface on Friday. He remembers that they had living quarters in this building, for he sometimes would drive them back to St. Boniface by buggy.



The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry (Continued)

November 16, 1885, was a dark day for all Canada, but especially for this little community. One of their parishioners, Louis Riel, died in Regina Jail so that right could prevail. On the following day, Bishop Dugas offered Mass in the little Chapel of St. Vital for the repose of the Soul of this great patriot. The story of this little mission would be incomplete, if we did not mention it. For the little chapel was so dear to that great man and his relatives. On a day in September 1887, the Chapel and School were closed for no recorded reason, and never again were they re-opened on the east side of the river.

Little is known of the Parish activity for the next ten years, but on September 21st, 1897, a Mission was re-opened on the west side of the river, in the area now known as Fort Garry. A home, the property of the Honourable Solomon Hamelin on the banks of the Red River was offered to the Archbishop as a residence for the Sisters. Just south of this building was the house of Mr. Firmin Hamelin which was then made available to the Community as a school. Mr. Alexandre Nault believes that the decision to rebuild on the west side of the river followed the increase in the size of the Parish on this side. Mr. Nault recalls that while the original Chapel and subsequent Chapels were dedicated to St. Vital the school buildings were always referred to as Grandin School.

Mrs. Joseph Plouffe describes the Sisters' new residence and chapel as built of logs squared and whitewashed. It stood on the south side of the Cou  e approximately where 934 Crescent Drive now stands.

The Sisters lived upstairs where there was a small Chapel, and access to these quarters was made by means of an outside staircase. Mass was offered here for the first time on Thursday, September 23, 1897. According to the records of the Sisters of Charity there were 68 people at this touching ceremony and 80 on the following Thursday.

It is hard to believe that many more than a small majority of these were able to enter that small building and no doubt many stood around the staircase to hear Mass.

Little is known of the second St. Vital School, other than it was located just south of the Sisters' residence. It was a little frame house, white in colour and containing two classrooms. The front entrance faced the river as was the case in most of the houses of that time, and from it one could see very little other than the river and a few willows.

We are grateful to Mrs. Joseph Plouffe for the description of these buildings. Although she did not attend school at this time, her sister, Mrs. Morin did.



The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry (Continued)

The first Sisters to come to this new site were Sisters Amyot and Joyal. They remained in residence from Monday through Friday, returning to St. Boniface at the weekends. From the records kept by the Grey Nuns at that time, it is interesting to note that Mass was celebrated at the St. Vital School on September 30th, 1897, just one week following the celebration of Mass in their own quarters at which 68 people were present. No doubt it was this experience which led them to believe that it would be more convenient to say Mass in the School. It was a wise move for 80 people arrived to hear Mass and the Sisters were delighted for their log entry ends with the word Bravo!

There is no doubt that the relocation of this School and Mission on the west side of the river brought about a new birth of Parish activity for in 1901, only four years later, a third Grandin School was then built. This was a two-room school of frame construction, situated on the east side of the Pembina Highway. There was a small Chapel in a recess on the wall at the end of one of these classrooms.

The Sisters moved from Mr. Solomon Hamelin's house to these new quarters, remaining there from Monday through Friday. They arrived every morning from St. Boniface by "democrat" with baskets full of provisions to last them the week.

An Oblate Father came every Thursday to hear confessions and Mass was said on a Friday before the Sisters returned to St. Boniface. Since there was no school nor church located on the east side of the river at that time, all parishioners crossed the river whether it was to hear Mass and receive the Blessed Sacrament or attend their school.

Sister Guichon taught here from 1908 to 1911 and we are grateful to her for the description of this school. She is a graduate of the St. Boniface Normal School, and it is interesting to note that the prevailing salary of that time was \$300.00 per annum.

The Community on the west side of the river was now rapidly growing and in the Autumn of 1912 a fourth St. Vital School was erected on the same side, east of the Pembina Highway. The Grey Nuns then moved into this new building which was placed under the direction of Sisters Owens and Samson.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface had been interviewing the Redemptorist Fathers of St. Anne de Beaupré asking them to take over the direction of the new Mission. On August 1st, 1912, Reverend Father Lemieux, C.Ss.R., arrived to take over the spiritual direction of the Mission and on his arrival papers were prepared for the canonical erection of the Parish. These papers were delivered to the Redemptorists early in the new year on January 5th, 1914.

to be continued...

The Redemptorist Fathers, under Father Caron, and with the help of many parishioners then built a church of frame construction on Manahan Avenue, which was the first Parish Church of St. Vital, in Fort Garry.

A large brick building of this fourth St. Vital School served the community well. Joseph Dumas, at one time member of the Legislative Assembly and Mayor of Fort Garry, was one of the trustees. Sister Guichon returned to this school in 1915 travelling daily by buggy from St. Boniface. The Sisters were no longer living on this side of the river. They did not relish that feeling of isolation and they had a good reason to feel that way since communications were poor and there were no near neighbours.

Soon after their arrival within the parish, the Redemptorist Fathers purchased 2 acres of land from Mr. H. Chevrier with a view to establishing a Monastery on the site. We owe much to these good men for their foresight in acquiring such an area of land. Had they not taken this step, we might never have been able to develop such a beautiful parish as we have and enjoy today. Alongside of the land purchased by the Redemptorist Fathers the Grey Nuns themselves bought 6 lots hoping to develop a convent, but unfortunately their hopes did not materialize.

In 1915 the Municipality of Fort Garry was established, and the school functioned as part of the public school system. The Sisters finally left in the Summer of 1917, the last teachers being Sister Latreille and Sister Guichon. The Sisters accordingly sold their property. With the arrival of many Belgian families, Flemish was spoken for awhile in the church, which was now beautifully decorated within. At this time also, the Mother House of the Redemptorist Fathers in the West was being prepared at St. Anne des Chênes, and on August 20th, 1916, the Redemptorist Fathers began to leave the parish. Thus, another chapter in the life of our parish came to a close and the final departure of the Sisters of Charity, who had been teaching in the community for the past 57 years as well as the early departure of the Redemptorist Father who in the past 4 years had acquired land and built a church must have had a profound depressing effect upon the parishioners in general.

However, a new era had dawned and the Archdiocese of Winnipeg was proclaimed in 1915. As a temporary measure Father Lietaert was placed in charge of the parish. He was succeeded by Father Dumoulin in 1917 and by Father C.K. Caisse in the following year. Although Father Caisse was not with us for very long, one important event occurred during his period of stay. In 1918, the Ladies of St. Anne of the St. Vital Parish were founded, and Father Caisse was their Spiritual Director. The fondest hopes of the Redemptorist Fathers were thus fulfilled.



The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry (Continued)

On September 19th, 1919, the Reverend Father Jacques Bertrand arrived in the Parish. Father Bertrand's devotion and tremendous energy is well known and it was this energy which was needed so much by the parishioners at that time. Although land and the Parish Church had now been acquired, there was still no residence for a parish priest and to meet this emergency, Father Bertrand had part of the old frame school building located behind St. Vital School moved onto the parish property. This building was transported during the Winter months and gave temporary living quarters to meet his needs. This building was approximately 40 feet x 16 feet in size. Father Bertrand also purchased a lot opposite the church on Manahan Avenue and there erected a small rectory, approximately 20x 20 feet in size. These efforts to find shelter were quite inadequate for the good pastor, and in 1922 Archbishop Sinnott of Winnipeg endeavoured to raise help within the parish to alleviate the situation from the 88 families residing in the area at that time.

In spite of this appeal there was no immediate result and seeing no possibility for a new rectory, the Reverend Father Bertrand was moved to St. Michael of Selkirk. And so, from 1922 to 1929, St. Vital was again without a resident priest, and became temporarily a Mission of Selkirk. He returned to the Parish every Sunday and Holy Day of obligation to say Mass, travelling mostly by public transportation; he would arrive at 7 a.m. by streetcar to hear confessions and say Mass, returning by taxi at 8 a.m. back to the City Centre and then by electric car to Selkirk. In addition to his commitments in Selkirk he was also the first Catholic Chaplain to Selkirk Mental Hospital, and yet this busy priest carried on the needs of our parish for all these years and did all he could to stimulate its further development.

It was Father Bertrand who acquired for us the present site for our Parish Cemetery. He acquired this land from the Municipal Council in exchange for land west of the highway which was being used as a cemetery, but which was inaccessible in wet weather. The council finally agreed to the exchange rather than accept the alternative which was to build a good road to this old site, a matter of considerable cost during those difficult times. Thus, Father Bertrand obtained with a few dollars in exchange for the original parochial cemetery acquired by the Redemptorist Fathers, 6 acres of land beautifully situated along the Red River. Permission was obtained from the Courts for the removal of the bodies from the old to the new cemetery in the Spring of 1929. It was during these years that a branch of the Catholic Women's League was organized within the parish. On June 29th, 1927, a meeting was held in the church to organize such a branch. Seventeen members were enrolled and a sum of \$2.00 was sent to the General Secretary in Montreal to establish →

an affiliation between the Ladies of St. Anne and the Catholic Women's League. By 1932 this bond of affiliation between the two bodies was cemented by the payment of National and Provincial tax for the first time.

In October of 1929, considering his good work among the people of St. Vital and Selkirk, His Grace the Archbishop of Winnipeg, offered Father Bertrand a parish of his own and it was then that he left for Dunrea.

Father Bertrand was immediately succeeded by the Right Reverend Monsignor Maurice Cournoyer, D.P., who at that time had been parish priest at Swan River.

In the Spring of 1930 additional land for the parish was acquired, and two lots were purchased from the Redemptorists for the purpose of building a rectory. The building began in September of that year and was completed by Christmas. In January of 1931 the Rectory was blessed and the Ladies of St. Anne and the Catholic Women's League organized a reception to which came over 100 guests. Later on that year Selkirk parish obtained its own pastor and the Parish of St. Vital in Fort Garry was, once again, blessed with the presence among them of a resident priest. One of his earliest acts was to form a Sanctuary Club for the first time. Already existing in the parish were the League of Sacred Heart and the Children of Mary.

The hardships which followed during the depression years need no description. However, in spite of these the church was again decorated, and the grounds of the rectory beautifully landscaped. The newly-acquired cemetery was still without a central cross. In 1934 such a cross was built by one of our parishioners and on September the 4th his Grace the Archbishop, accompanied by Father M. Cournoyer and many other priests and parishioners, went in procession to the cemetery for the solemn dedication and blessing of this cross. Sermons were given in English, French and Flemish.

On the 12th of June, 1938, the parish witnessed its first ordination ceremony within its own church when the Reverend Alphonse Minvielle entered the priesthood. Father Minvielle is a native of the parish and is the first of our parishioners to become a priest. One should perhaps at this time also mention that the parish has given the Congregation of the Infant Jesus, a nun by name of Sister Joseph Alvina. Sister Alvina was originally Miss Anne Marie Nault, who is a granddaughter of Mr. Alexandre Nault, our pioneer parishioner, mentioned earlier in this article. It is particularly fitting that we should mention at this time that during August 1961, another parishioner, Miss Lorraine Lachance, entered the Order of the Sisters of Sion in Saskatoon. These are the Sisters who made their home in our parish and who successfully carried on our program of education at St. Maurice School in the 60s. Sr. Lorraine is now in Rome.

In the Autumn of 1938, the parish celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the canonical erection of the parish, an event in which over 200 families participated.

The events of the following years need no description. The sound of gun fire was again heard in Europe and many young men from our parish joined the three armed services and they were accompanied by many ladies, also, to answer the call of duty. Those were sorrowful days filled with grief and anxiety on the part of parents and all parishioners. A few of these young people gave their lives and all they held dear to them for the love of God and Country. "They lay today where poppies grow in Flanders field." Their names shall not be forgotten and are preserved on the monument, to be found in the vestibule of the church.

Rev. Alphonse Minvielle had a brilliant military career as chaplain. He was in the campaign of Italy with the famous "Régiment des Trois-Rivières". From 1941 to 1945 he was a constant source of enlightenment for every soldier of the regiment.

Our own pastor was himself called to duty as an army chaplain. On September 22nd, 1943, he was appointed Padre to the 103rd C.I.B. T.C. stationed at the University of Manitoba where he served for two years. During this time he held three Services every Sunday, one at the Centre at 8:15 and two at the church at 9:15 and 11:00. In this way there was never any interruption of parish life on Sundays.

On February 10th, 1944, a Solemn Dedication of the parish Honour Roll was held in the church and the parish was honoured by the presence of the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, the Honourable H. McWilliams.

On October 15th, 1946, the Parish celebrated the 25th anniversary of their pastor's priesthood. Over 400 parishioners and friends attended a Solemn High Mass, which was followed afterwards by a Banquet held at the Highwayman. Monsignor himself offered this Mass while his Grace Archbishop Gerald Murray, C.Ss.R., Co-adjutor Archbishop of Winnipeg, assisted in the Sanctuary along with a great number of priests.

In the Spring of 1950, the Red River began to overflow its banks for the second time in the history of the parish and the flood which followed was the worst in living memory. Events which occurred between April the 30th and June 15th of that year will never be forgotten. Many parishioners had to leave their homes to seek shelter elsewhere, some to relatives or friends, and others to emergency accommodation in the West. Homes were destroyed, the parish was deserted. Our modest church with its little rectory and beautiful grounds were totally in the water. A dyke had been constructed on Manahan Avenue, leaving the church buildings entirely exposed.

On May 8th, 1950, the Blessed Sacrament was taken from the church by the pastor, wearing just plain clothes and hip-boots, and then given to the Reverend Father Macauley, who was standing by on the dyke in front of the church.

The Blessed Sacrament was then taken to St. Anne's church in St. James and all services of the Parish of St. Vital were suspended for several Sundays until the waters had finally subsided. This experience was a great shock for everyone, but especially to the pastor who watched his own home as well as his own church go under as the waters rose. His only access to the rectory was now by boat from the highway. The consoling words and personal financial help from Archbishop Murray were a great encouragement at this time. "Never mind, Father," said the good Bishop, "it will all be fixed up again." These words were said as he stood on the dyke and saw the inundated buildings. Needless to say his promise was kept and we shall long remember his kindness to the pastor and to all the parishioners of St. Vital in Fort Garry.

On October 29th, 1954, over 700 parishioners rallied at the Garry Theatre to pay honour to their pastor on the 25th year of service to this parish. A purse of \$1,000.00 was presented to him on this occasion. His Grace, Archbishop Pocock and many priests participated in the celebrations.

On March 22nd, 1958, the parish received a great honour. On this day, our own pastor was elevated to a Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor. Parish activities seemed to increase proportionately with this July event for at the same time a building campaign was instituted. The little frame church on Manahan was now over 40 years old and was no longer adequate for the needs of the parish. After being faithful in giving to the Archbishop Pocock Campaign for the Diocese a few years before, another campaign began with a parish banquet which was attended by over 400 people from the four corners of Fort Garry. Families pledged themselves to build a new church, and if possible, a school as well. Pledges amounting to nearly \$90,000.00 were made and an architect, Mr. Roy Sellors, was then appointed for this great undertaking. Couture of St. Boniface was the engineer for the project and contracted the building for \$106,000.00.

We are grateful more than ever for the foresight of our pastor, for now the parish owns over 8½ acres of land, and a master plan for a future Catholic Centre could be drawn up for the first time.

In July 1957 the parishioners were delighted to welcome for the first time in the history of the parish an assistant priest in the person of Rev. Edward Morand as the parish was growing so rapidly.

On September the 8th, 1957, exactly 97 years after the Blessing of the first Mission, His Grace, the Most Reverend Philip F. Pocock, D.D., Archbishop of Winnipeg, blessed the land and ceremoniously turned the sod for the construction of a modern Catholic church. In keeping with the times, the sound of bulldozers filled the air almost before the prayers were concluded.

At this time, also, Archbishop Pocock was consulting the Sisters of Sion in Saskatoon with a view to obtaining their help should a school be built at this time. Hope filled the air when the Sisters agreed to come and in the Spring of 1958 a four-room school was planned. Construction on the school began in May, with a tremendous responsibility incumbent upon Monsignor at this time.

On July the 6th, 1958, the new church was blessed by Archbishop Pocock, who also presided over the investiture of Monsignor Cournoyer as a Domestic Prelate. During this month, also, the Sisters established their first Manitoba Federation in this parish. They found temporary shelter in the home of a parishioner on Manahan Avenue, and they were able to be present at Monsignor's investiture along with their own Mother Provincial. In September of that year, 150 children registered at that new four-room school, and unfortunately not all applicants could be accommodated.

On the Feast of St. Maurice, September 22nd, the school was dedicated to that Martyr, who is the Patron Saint of Monsignor Cournoyer. The official opening and Solemn Blessing of St. Maurice School was conducted on September 28th by Archbishop Pocock in the presence of many parishioners and civic dignitaries from both Provincial and Local Government. The parish was most honoured, also, by the presence of the Premier of Manitoba, the Honourable Mr. Duff Roblin, on this occasion.

In addition to their work at the school, the Sisters of Sion immediately commenced a kindergarten, which was conducted in the church basement, also a Sodality Club.

During the Summer months, the former church was repaired and set up to serve more years as a Parish Hall, where our youth can have their organizations meetings such as C.Y.O. and C.F.M. Also the "Manahan Social Club", which is such a great help to the parish.

So ended one of the most eventful years in the history of St. Vital Church. 1958 can truly be described as a red letter year.

In the summer of 1960 four more rooms were added to the school, being the second stage of an ultimate sixteen-room school building program.

In addition, this year, the parish also built a Sister's Residence on Hudson Street, sufficient in size to accommodate six Sisters. The construction of a Convent as well as a High School and Auditorium is part of a long range master plan for the development of our Parish site.

Our new church in its beautiful setting is a pride and joy to all parishioners and is indeed a credit to the Community. It is symbolic of the will of a united parish and a monument to those of bygone days. The sod given by one family, Mrs. Ralph Brick, beautifies our ground around the church and St. Maurice School. Each year we see new additions to the interior of this fine edifice, gifts offered by individual families for the glory of God. Recent additions to the church have been such items as the stations of the cross donated by the Sellors family, new pews donated by the Claeys family, a Sanctuary lamp donated by Mathew Van Gils and family, Holy Water vessels, a baptismal font, a majestic marble altar with its new tabernacle donated by the children of Constant and Eminence Bossuyt, and six solid brass candle sticks donated by the Vermeulen family in honor of their father. We thank God for this fine inheritance.

During the 1960s the parish was pleased to have Fr. Ken Bernard helping Monsignor Cournoyer. For a short time Fr. Theodore Hoeks also helped out.

In 1967 at 74 years of age and with 47 years of work in our parish, Monsignor Cournoyer retired as our pastor and took up residence across the street from the Church he had built. Because of his long and outstanding connection with St. Vital Parish, Cardinal Flahiff appointed Monsignor, "Pastor Emeritus". "This is a recognition to him for all that he has done in that area."

The new pastor to St. Vital Parish was Fr. John Currie, He inherited a huge operation and the large and rapidly growing territory of Fort Garry. For almost a year, Fr. A.F. Seaman gave his services to the parish while attending classes at the University of Manitoba. Almost immediately Father Currie was faced with a struggle for the survival of St. Maurice School.

Enrolment in the parish school was 146 students for the 1967-68 school year. It was decided to drop grades 7 and 8 in order to reduce the number of teachers and at the same time increase salaries to increase confidence in the academic quality of the school as this was felt to perhaps be an obstacle with some parents. However, the enrolment for the following school year was only 87 students.

Map population trends appeared to be another obstacle. The number of families in the vicinity of the school with school age children was steadily decreasing.

September 1969, saw only 65 students at St. Maurice School. Cardinal Flahiff met with Fr. Currie and the members of the School Board to encourage them and give them hope in their struggle to keep the school open.

In the spring of 1970, Fr. Currie preached on the obligation of parents to see to the Catholic education of their children. A guest preacher, Fr. J. Driscoll of St. Paul's High School was also invited to address the parishioners.

The school board made visits to parents whose children were in the Sunday School Program to motivate these families to send their children to St. Maurice School.

Fr. Currie made personal visits to families of the parish. However, projected enrolment for September 1970 was a possible 75 students.

The decision was made to close the school in June 1970. Fr. Currie then set up a Sunday religious education program for the 350 parish children in grades 1 to 6 and another 150 children in grades 7 to 12.

Fr. Currie enjoyed the young people and the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) in particular flourished in the parish. Fr. Currie was very popular with the young people of the parish and is fondly remembered by many of these young men and women.

In 1972, while Fr. Currie was on a short sabbatical term, the parish was administered to by Fr. Edwin Kuefler.

After eight years of good work at St. Vital, Fr. Currie was moved from our parish and Cardinal Flahiff asked Fr. Edward Morand to return to Fort Garry as our pastor.

Father worked here for three years until he took over the neighbouring Our Lady of Victory Parish.

It was at exactly 7:10 p.m. on January 11th, 1978 that Father Patrick Morand came into St. Vital Parish. He had driven from Windsor, Ontario hoping to be on time for the 7 p.m. mass to concelebrate mass with his brother Father Ed. Father Ed and Father Patrick were to be together in the Fort Garry Parish until August 1978 at which time Father Ed took over his duties at Our Lady of Victory Memorial Parish.

After Father Patrick's arrival at St. Vital Parish masses were said on a regular basis at Victoria Hospital, Rotary Villa and Golden Door. On January 18th, 1978 a Legion of Mary was formed in our parish. A few years later, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was formed to give aid to the needy.

Adult Instruction classes were organized on a regular schedule as well as classes for public high school students. Sunday school classes were expanded with Neil Slykerman appointed as director. Adult Lay helpers were appointed to help out with the altar boys under the supervision of Lewis Egan. Lay Ministers of the Eucharist and Lay Readers were organized.

In September 1979 St. Maurice School was reopened. At the present time we have 244 children and are the largest of all the Catholic grade schools. On September 5th, 1979 a total of 61 children, Kindergarten to Grade 4 took their places in the classrooms. Our teachers were: Mrs. Alice Szarkiewicz - Kindergarten; Mrs. Marilyn Ouimet - Grade 1; Mrs. Ann Tizzard - Grade 2; Mrs. Helen Barker - Grade 3 and Principal; Mrs. Leslie Joseph - Grade 4; and Madame Georgette Badiou - part time French teacher. The school motto was "Integrity, Fidelity, Humility".

The school was incorporated under the Corporations Act of Manitoba on September 4, 1979.

As the school year progressed the school committee, which had been appointed to help the parish priest to reopen the school, eventually became the St. Maurice School Board. The board held its first meeting on December 19th, 1979. The first school board members were: Robert Muys, Donna McDougall, Tim Scatliff, Karen Loscerbo, Maureen Morris, Catherine Muys, Gerald Butler, Vern Fowlie, Helen Barker and Father Morand. Donna McDougall reported that the first annual sale of Grey Cup pool tickets netted a profit of \$2,490.00. In January 1980 St. Maurice School obtained use of the gym of nearby Pembina Crest School for two hours a week.

In March 1980 the St. Maurice School P.T.A. was set up with Jim Brousseau as the first president. Also, fourteen students were being bussed to school on a Fort Garry school division bus since it had some room to spare. But this bussing was a controversial item that was relatively short lived.

Meanwhile, over in the old church hall, the parish's Manahan Social Club was holding bingo every Tuesday evening. Someone once said that trying to heat the old hall was like pouring water into a wicker basket.

The reopening of the school, and the yearly addition of new grades, gave new urgency to the need for a proper gym and hall.

The Manahan Social Club funds on hand for a new hall were a far cry from what was needed to build a combination hall and gym. Driven by need, bolstered by faith, and confident his parishioners would be generous, Father launched the hall project in the spring of 1980.

A new hall had been talked about for a long time. But the talking, the hoping stopped in May when the bulldozers and backhoes began chewing up the church yard behind the school. It stopped as the dump trucks slugged their heavy burdens over to the Bishop Grandin Boulevard area where the piles of dirt became sound barriers for the people living near the busy road. It stopped when the pile drivers began thumping huge sticks of concrete into the ground to provide a foundation.

One of the parishioners, Robert Muys, took on the responsibility as contractor of this project.

The Speculation was over. The new reality was beginning. Meanwhile, when the bell rang on the first day of school in September 1980, a total of 141 students walked into classes. These were Kindergarten to Grade 6. For this one year, two new classes had been added, instead of moving up one grade a year. In October there were 146 students; K-29, 1-17, 2-22, 3-21, 4-23, 5-20 and 6-15. This school year of 1980-81 Mrs. Marie Houston joined our staff.

In May 1980 Mrs. Tizzard was appointed Vice-Principal.

On May 31st, 1980 the celebration mass presided over by Cardinal Flahiff was said for the opening of the new gym and parish hall. The gym occupied the top level, while the basement featured the parish hall, complete with stage, kitchen, wash-rooms and storage areas. The total cost was close to \$500,000.00, which was paid in full within three years.

In the summer of 1981, a profit of \$2,035 was realized for publication and sale of a book of childrens stories, "The Boy From Outer Space, And Other Stories", by Vern Fowlie.

On September 2nd, 1981 there were a total of 177 children in classes from Kindergarten to Grade 7. Miss Barbara Herriot joined our staff this year.

In October 1981, Karen Loscerbo and Maureen Morris revived the parish fall supper. The first turkey supper raised \$3,500.

In July 1982 arrangements were made for the Grade 7 and 8 students to take home economics and shops a Vincent Massey Collegiate.

A used 60 passenger bus was donated to St. Maurice School. School board member Vern Fowlie obtained the required drivers license, set up a route and drove the bus on its morning runs. Hired drivers were used the first year for the afternoon run. Problems forced the board to operate a morning bus service only during 1983/84. In the summer of 1984, the bus was sold. The bus operated south to St. Norbert and was used for morning school field trips.

In September 1982 we had 205 children registered in our school. Our teaching staff was comprised of Mrs. Donna Scharer - Kindergarten; Mrs. Helen Barker - Grade 1 and Principal; Mrs. Ann Tizzard - Grade 2 and Vice-Principal; Miss Dona Cairns - Grade 3; Miss Barbara Herriot - Grade 4; Miss Pamela Lipischak - Grade 5; Miss Mary Finlayson - Grade 6; Mrs. Marie Houston - Grade 7; and Mrs. Gisele Bettcher - Grade 8.

In April 1983 a rubberized floor was installed in the gym for \$27,465. Earlier the floor in the hall was tiled.

In September 1983 we had 204 students for Kindergarten to Grade 8. This year Miss Brenda Kolson and Miss Catherine Holmes joined our staff.

As the school expanded to include Grades 7 and 8 space became a problem. Two more rooms were needed. An extension was built at the south end of the school. Archbishop Adam Exner blessed the two new classrooms on December 11th, 1983. the cost of the addition was about \$95,000. Now there was space for one of the old classrooms to be turned into a library.

On June 24th, 1984 St. Maurice School paid tribute to its first graduating class. In September 1984, as the parish neared its 125th Anniversary, 212 students began classes.

While the major school and hall developments were taking place, the rest of the church grounds were also being changed.

The small, old garage by the rectory was torn down, and replaced with a combination garage and work shop. Monday, hopefully, is Father's day off when he dons his coveralls and works around the grounds or in his work shop. About 1984 a second, smaller garage was built, adjacent to the first one, for Father's truck and other equipment.

The grove of trees between the school and the Rotary Villa were cleared. People had used it for a dump. Loads of trash were taken out of the area, all the underbrush cleaned out and turned it into an attractive, shaded play area. Tim Scatliff spear-headed a drive to make and install play equipment among the trees. Huge tractor tires were embedded in the dirt and painted. Tim and his helpers built wooden benches and play rails. These were attractive, sturdy items designed for safety and to last.

The rectory also received considerable attention. It was renovated inside, and an addition was built at the back by Paul Deverdenne and Andre Desemplaare. The exterior was restuccoed. The garages, when completed, were stuccoed to match the rectory.

In the early 1980's, the windows on the north side of the church were replaced with colored glass. Later, the side windows on the south also were replaced with alternating colored panes. The church also was spruced up with new doors. In the fall of 1984 both the church and school were dressed up with new roofs.

Meanwhile, down on Crescent Drive, the parish cemetery also received attention. Father Morand spent considerable time cleaning up the grounds. A large white wooden cross was made by Salvador De Thomasis and was erected by Salvador De Thomasis and Bob Muys in the center of the cemetery with a paved driveway from the gate to the cross.

Father Morand started a regular series of Canon Law Classes in 1984, according to Bishop Adam Exner the only one in the diocese. These evening classes were open to all who wished to attend.

On March 31st and April 1st, 1984 a special display was featured in the church, outlining the persecution of Roman Catholics taking place in Soviet occupied Lithuania. Father Morand said three Sunday masses at St. Casimir's Lithuanian Church on April 1st so that Father Justinus Bertasius, pastor of St. Casimir's, could say the masses and preach at St. Vital Church. He talked about his experiences in Lithuania, a predominantly Roman Catholic country occupied by the Soviets, and of the scourge of communism. A special collection that weekend totaled close to \$1,000 to aid the struggling church in Lithuania.

For the next two summers we were happy to welcome to our parish as a summer helper Barry Schoonbaert, a seminarian from Deloraine, Manitoba.

Later that year, Father Patrick went to Peru to visit his brother, Father Dan, who was celebrating his 25th Anniversary of Ordination. That sparked an interest in Peru. Spontaneously, parishioners began giving Father Patrick donations to take to the Peruvian mission. Ever since, there has been a steady trickle of donations for the Peruvian missions.

In 1984 a new pulpit and lectern were installed in the sanctuary donated by the Cropro family.

September 1984 Canadians were privileged to have the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II visit our country. Many parishioners were able to attend the Winnipeg Papal Mass at Birds Hill Park. Among the lay ministers distributing communion to the large gathering were three of our own Parish lay ministers, Robert Muys, Tim Scatliff and Harold Weisensal.

On May 26th, 1985 Father Patrick celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Ordination. Archbishop Adam Exner concelebrated mass that evening with, Father Patrick, all his priest brothers and several local priests, including Msgr. McInerney, Msgr. Dunphy, Fr. Lavoie and Fr. Plucinski, all of whom are now deceased. A reception put on by the C.W.L. followed in the hall, where Father Morand received several gifts to mark the occasion.

The front windows of the church, facing Pembina Highway, were replaced with green double paned units. This solved a long standing condensation problem.

An elevator was installed in our new auditorium.

In August 1985 the church office was equipped with an IBM PC computer and monitor, along with an Epson LG 1500 printer. Funds raised from a chocolate sale were used to buy Apple IIc computers (complete with monitors) and a Panasonic KXP 1091 printer for the school.

The church's IBM PC was modified in early 1986 to include two hard disc drives within the unit. Software was obtained for the computer. Invaluable to helping with our computer programs was Tim Scatliff.

Grade 8 teacher, Brenda Kolson, began working with the students on the Apple IIc computers. IT is the intention of the school to increase the number of computers.

The Story of St. Vital Parish in Fort Garry (Continued)



When school opened in August 1985, we had 225 children registered for school. The teachers were: Mrs. Helen Barker - Kindergarten and Principal; Mrs. Elizabeth Odgers - Grade 1; Mrs. Ann Tizzard - Grade 2 and Vice-Principal; Mrs. Dona Ludwick (nee Cairns) - Grade 3; Miss Barbara Herriot - Grade 4; Mrs. Donna Scharer - Grade 5; Mrs. Marilyn Wasny - Grade 6; Miss Pam Lipischak - Grade 7 and Miss Brenda Kolson - Grade 8.

At the end of the 1984/85 school year, our Grade 6 teacher, Miss Mary Finlayson, left our staff and entered religious life with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

The anniversary year concluded with a special mass concelebrated by His Grace Archbishop Adam Exner on September 8th, 1985, followed by a reception in the parish hall. On behalf of the City of Winnipeg, Councillor Dave Brown presented the parish with three blue spruce trees.

The fall of 1985 marked the beginning of the archdiocesan financial campaign, Forward in Faith. St. Vital parish donated \$81,000 which exceeded our target of \$46,000.

Priests Serving St. Vital

The Redemptorists

In 1911, Archbishop Langevin interviewed the Redemptorist Fathers of Ste. Anne de Beaupré as to the possibility of taking over the new Mission. In that summer a new school had been started and it became imperative that the eighty some families should have a shepherd of their own. Finally, after due consideration, on the first of August, 1913, Rev. Father Lemieux, C.Ss.R., accepted the new territory and immediately started its organization. The people once more had their prayers answered and looked forward to again have Divine Service in their midst. In the fall of 1913, papers were prepared for the canonical erection of the parish, and were delivered to the Redemptorist Fathers on the 5th of January, 1914. We quote this valuable document:

"Decree of Canonical Erection of 'La Paroisse Catholique de St. Vital'"

Louise Philippe Adélard Langevin, by the mercy of God and favor of the Holy See, Archbishop of St. Boniface.

To all those to whom these presents shall come, we wish to make known, that we erect by the present: as a Catholic parish under the name of "La Paroisse Catholique de St. Vital," under the invocation of St. Vital, martyr, whose feast is celebrated the 28th day of April, the following - territory with these limits:

To the South: The northern limit of lot 124, of the Parish of St. Norbert

To the North: The southern limits of the City of Winnipeg.

To the East: The Red River.

To the West: The extremity of the lots of the Parish St. Vital

For the said Catholic parish "La Paroisse Catholique de St. Vital," Manitoba, entirely under the jurisdiction, in charge of the pastors or acting pastors, which we or our successors see fit to send there to confirm in all and always to the rules and discipline established in our diocese, especially to administer the Sacraments, to preach the Word of God, and to give the help of religion to all those in need; with the understanding that they owe respect and obedience to the said pastors or acting pastors and to provide for their maintenance.

Now, by this simple fact of this present decree, the said parish "La Paroisse Catholique de St. Vital," became a civil corporate body by virtue of Chap. XXII of the statutes of Manitoba, 38 Victoria (22 July 1874).

The present decree shall be read and published at the first Sunday High Mass which will be said in the new parish, after the reception of the said decree.

Given at Saint Boniface, under our hand and seal and the countersign of our Chancellor, this fifth day of January in the year of Our Lord A.D. 1914.

Adélard, O.M.I. , Archbishop of St. Boniface

By command of His grace, the Most Rev. Louis Philippe Adélard Langevin.

(Sgd.) J.H. Prud'homme, Chancellor

Father Arthur Caron

Father was a brother of Sir Adolphe Caron, a member of the MacDonald Cabinet, and of Lady Fitzpatrick, wife of Rt. Hon. Charles Fitzpatrick. In 1914, under his direction the parish built a church of frame construction on Manahan Avenue which preceded the existing church. (taken from "By Steps Not Leaps")

Father Omer Lietart

Father was born June 6, 1866, in Belgium. He joined the Redemptorists October 4, 1885 and was ordained, at age 24, October 5, 1890. He was sent to Montreal in September, 1894 and 1895 became professor at the Juniorate at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, as well as physical education teacher. Being a good walker, he led his students to admire the hills of Beaupré. He came to Manitoba with others of his order and first served in Brandon, Manitoba from 1901 to 1913. He preached many missions: Grande Clairière, St. Raphael, Deleau, ST. Amélie, Ste. Anne des Chênes, Meacham, St. Joseph and even St. Vital. He built a church at Souris, Manitoba. In July, 1913, he came to St. Vital where he stayed five years. From here Father went to Ste. Anne des Chênes until 1920. He then returned East. He celebrated his sixtieth anniversary as a Redemptorist October 4, 1945. He died June 30, 1947.

(taken from "By Steps Not Leaps")

to be continued...

Father Dumoulin

Father Dumoulin succeeded Father Lietart in 1917 but only stayed a very short time.

Father C.K Caisse

Father Caisse worked in our parish in 1918. It was during this good priest's time that the Ladies of Ste. Anne were begun. The group was named after Ste. Anne de Beaupré and is now our present day group of the Catholic Women's League in our parish. Father Caisse was their first Spiritual Director.

Father Jacques Bertrand

Father Bertrand came to our parish in 1919. While Father was here we acquired our parish cemetery. Father lived in a shelter at the rear of the church. We quote a letter from the Archbishop of Winnipeg to this effect:

Archbishop's House
353 St. Mary's Ave.

Winnipeg, June 16th, 1922

To the Parishioners of St. Vital

I have noted with deep satisfaction that your parish is being gradually organized and is making year by year substantial progress. The spiritual life has given many signs of growth and, whilst there is still much to be desired, the constant and zealous ministrations of a good priest are producing their effect in the better attendance at church services and in the frequentation of the sacraments. The hope is, indeed, well-founded that within a very short time St. Vital will take its place among the best parishes in and around the City of Winnipeg.

I desire to draw your attention today to a matter that cannot have escaped notice and that demands immediate action. Your Pastor is without a suitable residence. The situation may not be due to any neglect on your part, but you will admit at once, that it should not continue one minute longer than what is absolutely necessary. What is now provided is a mere makeshift, unfit for human habitation and we cannot permit that any of our priests be subjected to treatment, which would be unbecoming to their sacred character and at the same time seriously reflect on the faith and generosity of the faithful.

My wish is, therefore, that the Parishioners of St. Vital should take counsel together and submit to me within the shortest delay possible the steps they are disposed to take, in order to provide their parish with a suitable presbytery. I am aware that it is a question of finances, but the additional sacrifice will not be a serious burden, if all work together and each one does his share.

I strongly recommend that the heads of families bind themselves in writing to give so much per year, payable monthly, in order that the cost may be equitably divided and we have the assurance that it will be defrayed within a reasonable time.

Were we to be obliged to withdraw the priest from St. Vital - and we cannot tolerate his continued residence there under existing conditions - much of the work already accomplished would be undone and the future of the parish seriously compromised.

I have confidence in your good will and generosity and I commend the matter to your immediate consideration. Knowing your attachment to Holy Church and your appreciation of the benefits of a priest resident in your midst, I do not hesitate to ask from you this further sacrifice, necessary to the continued prosperity and development of your parish.

Most cordially I bless you and beg God to bestow on you His choicest graces.

Alfred A. Sinnott,
Archbishop of Winnipeg

Obtaining no immediate results and seeing no possibility for a new rectory, Rev. Father Bertrand moved to St. Michel of Selkirk and so from 1922 to 1928 St. Vital was again without a resident priest and became temporarily a mission of Selkirk. Father Bertrand commuted back to St. Vital for Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. In 1929 Father Bertrand was given the parish of Dunrea.

Monsignor Maurice Cournoyer

Monsignor was born May 11, 1894 in St. Jean de Wickam, Quebec. His family left for Worcester, Massachusetts in his early youth and he was educated there at Holy Name of Jesus School and later at Assumption College. He graduated in philosophy from the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec and then entered Grand Seminary in Montreal. In 1920 he taught at St. Boniface College and in 1921 he was ordained by Archbishop Sinnott at St. Mary's Cathedral. He said his first Mass in Quebec with his family. His first assignment was an assistant in Ste. Rose du Lac. He was first made a pastor in Swan River in 1925. In 1929 he was appointed pastor of Notre Dame Parish in Selkirk as well as St. Vital in Fort Garry. Immediate steps were taken to provide him with a residence here. The rectory was completed in 1930 and Monsignor finally took residence here. We now had our pastor in our midst and from then on he devoted all his time to St. Vital.

On March 22, 1958 he was made Domestic Prelate by Pope Pius XII in recognition of his devoted work in this parish and it was fitting that his investiture took place at the same time as the solemn blessing of the new church. This most colorful dual ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Pocock on July 6, 1958.

Monsignor Cournoyer retired in 1967 at 74 years. He celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Ordination in 1971. He was a life member of the Canadian Legion and also an Honorary Padre.

Monsignor died November 11, 1975 at 81 years of age. His funeral took place at St. Vital Church on November 15, 1975 with his fellow priests.

Father John Currie

Father John Joseph Currie was the oldest child of Claude and Eileen Currie. He was born March 31st, 1929 and baptized at St. Ignatius and attended school there up to grade 4. In 1939 his family moved to St. James and Father attended St. Ann's School, then St. Paul's High School and St. Paul's College. After graduating with a B.A. from St. Paul's College, he went to St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario and was ordained in St. Mary's Cathedral on June 4th, 1955.

He was first an assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral and St. Paul the Apostle until 1963. He was then appointed pastor of Souris, Melita and Tilston Churches from 1963 to 1967.

It was in 1967 that he succeeded Msgr. Cournoyer at St. Vital Church.

In 1973 after a sabbatical, Father obtained his Master's of Theology from Woodstock College in New York City.

In 1975 he went back to St. Paul the Apostle as pastor and was also the co-director of the Permanent Diaconate Training Program. In 1980 he took up his current post as pastor of John XXIII Parish at the Assiniboia Christian Centre.

"In 1967, to a priest ordained about 12 years, St. Vital Parish with a Church, hall, school, convent and rectory and territory which included all of Fort Garry, seemed overwhelming.

It was a strange feeling being almost the youngest Pastor in the City of Winnipeg and asked to implement the directives of Vatican II in one of its largest parishes. We priests had few guidelines at that time and yet many people had great hopes for the church as the council had just ended.

My most vivid memories are of trying to develop support systems for the children attending religious education classes, sharing problems and hopes with parish councils, the women who gave hours and years of their time and energy to the parish and Monsignor Cournoyer who had retired across the street and whose 47 years of work and faith I had inherited. It was a hard eight years at St. Vital, but invaluable and rich in experience, in faith and in maturity.

My greatest joy today is experiencing the number of young men and women who remember me with fondness when they were growing up. May they hand on the faith that was given to them in St. Vital Parish by their parents, teachers and the witness of so many faithful parishioners."

From Fr. Currie

Fr. Edward Morand

Born late Saturday night, August 4th, 1928 of Edward Patrick Morand and Rena Marie Reine Letourneau, Father Ed was baptized at St. Anne's Church on Sunday afternoon on August 5th before he was even a day old. The strong faith of his parents did not allow for delay in baptism. In Tecumseh, Ontario, the Catholic School at that time (St. Antoine) offered two courses - the English course - and the bilingual course. Little Edward was registered in the bilingual course. In Grade 1 that course offered only French. The little ones starting school mostly came from homes where French was the language spoken. Starting in Grade II both languages were used in the various subjects, St. Anthony's was the scene of Father Morand's primary education. For his High School education, Father Ed attended Assumption High School in Windsor, under the direction of the Basilian Fathers, Venturing into another Christian community a little removed from the familiar home surroundings would help broaden horizons. At Assumption, students could remain from Grades IX to XIII.

Young Ed was impressed with the teaching Fathers at Assumption and almost opted to join the Basilian Order. A parish priest advised him to try the seminary first.

In September, 1948, Edward Morand was a member of the new class at St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario.

After seven years of life, studies and prayer in St. Peter's Seminary, Father Morand was ordained to the priesthood on June 4th, 1955 at St. Peter's Cathedral in London, Ontario. Because an older brother was already a priest in the London diocese, and by this time four more younger brothers were students at St. Peter's, Father Ed volunteered to work in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg instead of his own home diocese.

And so, on June 19th (his mother's birthday) that same year, Father Ed arrived in Winnipeg to take up ministry in a "new" land he had never seen.

Archbishop Philip Pocock appointed Father Ed as his secretary and as vice-chancellor. The Chancery Office and residence of the Archbishop at that time were under the same roof as the Cathedral staff. On weekends Father Ed supplied pastoral help in various parishes when priests were sick or absent for holidays. When Msgr. Cahill suffered his first milder heart attack, Father Ed became a "part time" curate at St. Mary's Cathedral while retaining his obligations in the Chancery Office.

In July, 1957, Father Ed was appointed as assistant priest in St. Vital Parish in Ft. Garry. The Parish was to begin a building program including a new church, a new school, a new convent and the Archbishop consented to send an assistant to Father Maurice Cournoyer - who was later to become a monsignor.

Immediately upon his appointment, Father Morand made a door to door parish visitation. Many "new" people in the area did not know about the little Church half-way down Manahan Avenue. When the "census" was completed and Father had spent almost all his time visiting the area in his little Volkswagen, the Parish list was more than doubled.

And then, the new Church was built facing Pembina on one of the most beautiful properties on the Highway. Again, the Parish became more "visible," and again the number of parishioners increased. Then, the school was built in two phases. By now the "Parish Plant" was most visible to all but the blind. And again the Parish enrolment increased.

For five happy years, Father Ed served as assistant priest at St. Vital Church. It was a good time for the young priest - he did not have to worry about the financial problems and the major obligations of the pastor's office.

In July, 1962, Father Ed became Pastor of St. Theresa's Parish in Middlechurch with residence at the Home of the Good Shepherd where he also served as Chaplain.

By this time, Father Ed had begun a program on CBW: "Sunday School On the Air" with students from St. Maurice School. The Nowatzki boys, the Downey boys, Tim Scatliff, Robert Dybka were some of the panel members of students on the program. At the home of the Good Shepherd Father was chaplain for the Girls in St. Agnes, St. Ann's and Marymound - three separate divisions of the Home at the time.

In November of 1966, Father was called upon by Cardinal Flahiff to found a new Parish in Assiniboia-St. James. With a chalice, and a ciborium as a gift to the new parish, Father Morand was told: "Find a place to celebrate Mass on Sundays - find a place to live in your new parish - God bless you." Within a week, Father had made arrangements for Sunday Masses at the Ness Junior High School, and soon, new parishioners residing on Banting Avenue informed Father that they were moving to Gillam, Manitoba and their home was purchased as the new rectory. Within two years a new church was built on the corner of Rouge Road and Portage Ave. It is known as the "Assiniboia Christian Centre." It houses the Catholic Parish of John XXIII and the Anglican Parish of St. Chad. Along with Canon Douglas Steward, Father Morand is a "founding father" of that First Ecumenical venture.

The official opening was on Easter Sunday of 1968.

While Pastor of John XXIII, Father Morand was also the first R.C. Chaplain of the New Grace Hospital in St. James. He also served as Chairman of the Ministerial Association in the area.

In September 1970, Father Morand became Pastor of St. Lazare Parish. This was a new experience. It was the first occasion for our French Father Morand to celebrate Mass and preach in his "native" language. While Pastor of St. Lazare, Father Morand attended the University in Brandon and obtained his Bachelor of Education.

In 1972, Father Préfontaine was appointed as the new administrator of St. Lazare Parish, and Father Ed became the temporary administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Roblin, Manitoba with missions in Gilbert Plains and Grandview.

Father F.X. Macaulay now in his 80's and still Pastor of St. Ann's Parish in St. James retired in August of 1972. Father Ed Morand was appointed Pastor of that Parish effective September 1, 1972. As St. Ann's Parish was not a large Parish like John XXIII, Father Morand also became French teacher at St. Paul's High School.

When Father Currie was appointed to another Parish, and St. Vital Parish needed a new Pastor, the Cardinal asked Father Ed to return to St. Vital as Pastor. Father was already committed to St. Paul's High School and enjoyed teaching there very much. He hesitated to accept this appointment because of his teaching duties. The Cardinal assured Father: "You Morands thrive on work: you can handle both jobs." And so at the end of the summer, 1975, Father Ed returned to St. Vital Parish as Pastor. Of course, he was also R.C. Chaplain at the Victoria Hospital.

When Father Patrick Morand had completed his studies in Rome and at Laval in Quebec, he was appointed as the new Pastor of St. Vital Parish and Father Ed moved to the neighbouring Our Lady of Victory Parish. This move was in 1978. At Our Lady of Victory, Father Ed became chaplain of the three municipal hospitals - King Edward, King George, and Princess Elizabeth. He continued to teach at St. Paul's until 1980. At the present time Father Ed is still at Our Lady of Victory.

Father Ed is unique to St. Vital Parish in the sense that he was appointed there twice - once as assistant priest and later as Pastor. He has enjoyed both his appointments in St. Vital Parish.

Father Patrick A. Morand

Our present pastor was born and raised in Tecumseh on the outskirts of Windsor, Ontario. He was one of ten children, six of whom were ordained to the priesthood. He was ordained May 28th, 1960. Three weeks after ordination he was assigned to St. Augustine's in Brandon. He remained in Brandon for five years and was then assigned to St. Mary's Cathedral for fifteen months. Father Charles Vachon, pastor of Dunrea, suffered a heart attack and Father Morand was sent there to relieve him. He served Dunrea and missions for seven years. During that period he attended Brandon Teachers' College and obtained his Bachelor of Education degree. He was appointed pastor of St. John's in Portage September 1, 1973 and remained there one year. On September 1, 1974 he was sent to Rome to study Canon Law. He attended the Lateran Pontifical University where he obtained his Doctor's degree in Canon Law. During summer holidays, he returned to Canada and followed courses at Laval University in Quebec and obtained his Master's degree in Theology. On his return from Rome, he was assigned to the Toronto Marriage Tribunal and was appointed by Archbishop Pocock as Judge and Defender of the Bond for the Toronto Tribunal. In July 1978 he was appointed pastor of St. Vital Parish, Fort Garry.
(excerpts taken from "By Steps Not Leaps")

History of the Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary was founded in Dublin, Ireland by a layman named Frank Duff. It is an association of Catholic Laity.

The object of the Legion is the glory of God through the sanctification of its members, by prayer and active co-operation under ecclesiastical guidance in Mary's and the Church's work of advancing the reign of Christ.

Legionaries operate strictly according to the rules of the Legion Handbook. The system is invariably throughout the world and has ably demonstrated its universal adaptability. There are one and a half million active Legionaries and ten million Auxiliary members of the Legion of Mary operating universally today!

The Legion was first established in St. Vital parish by Father Edward Morand. It ceased to function for awhile and was reestablished in 1978 by the present parish priest Dr. Patrick A. Morand J.C.D. At one point there were two Praesidia, Our Lady Fortress of Grace, and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. The Praesidium of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal remains, with Father Morand as the Spiritual Director. Presently there are eighteen active members, fifty-nine auxiliary members, and four adjutorian members.

Legion members meet every week to study the handbook and to receive assignments of apostolic work. During the next meeting they report on the work done. Only Legion members can attend these meetings, and absolute secrecy is observed with regards to any matters discussed or anything learned in connection with the Legionary work.

The work includes home visitations and over 1,100 calls are made annually.

Included are calls to hospitals and senior citizen centers like the Rotary Villa, the Conquist Nursing Home and the Golden Door.

As the Legion of Mary is strictly a spiritual organization no material aid is given but whenever a need is seen the appropriate organization is notified.

"Our Oldest Parishioner"

Mrs. Virginie Perreault

Born on April 13, 1884, on the west bank of the Red River at the approximate site of the present Ramada Inn, she was baptized Virginie Sansregret at St. Boniface Cathedral on April 14, 1884. She is a great great grand-daughter of Marianne Gaboury, the first white woman in Manitoba. Mrs. Perreault is the third cousin of the famous Louis Riel.

In 1909 she married Edmond Perreault and lived on lot 13 Pembina Highway - later this was the site of an outdoor theatre which has since closed down.

Mr. and Mrs. Perreault lived on that farm until Mr. Perreault's death in 1950.

Mr. and Mrs. Perreault had five children - two sons, Edward and Celestin, both deceased and three daughters, Mrs. J. Pietryk also deceased, Mrs. L. Preston and Mrs. L. Mennie both living on Manahan Ave. in Fort Garry.

Mrs. Perreault was always devout and very active parishioner of St. Vital parish.

Maria Bonne

For Mrs. Maria Bonne the Catholic Church "has meant everything" in her life. Because of that she has been able to lead a double life. A good part of each day was spent carefully raising a family (giving her children a Catholic education), and the rest was spent bringing help and happiness to the sick and shut-ins. Maria was born on Dec. 16, 1905, in Belgium to Camiel and Clotilda Van Eenne. In 1907, Camiel and Clotilda bundled up Maria and her brother Rene, and all their belongings and moved to Canada, settling in Manitoba. Here the family soon added new daughters, Laura, Alice and Bertha.

Maria fondly remembers making her first communion in 1912 in a "little old church" then located behind the former Grandin School in Fort Garry area. The family moved several times, all in Manitoba, and Maria attended school until Grade 9 with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Lorette, Man. Her fondest memory of those school days was studying French. Those days with the sisters were "just beautiful, the happiest years in my life." It was there, in 1919, she was made a Child of Mary, and that meant a great deal to her.

After her schooling, she helped her father in his dairy business, delivering milk by horse and cart.

Then, in 1923, she married life-long friend Emerick Bonne. In 1924 they set up their own dairy in St. James.

Maria and Emerick raised seven children; Marguerite (1925), Elsie (1927-1951), Ed (1928), Bob (1930), Irene (1934), Oscar (1938), and Jenny (1943). (She now has 25 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren).

In 1936 they moved to the Fort Garry area. Her husband retired in 1964 due to ill health (he was working then for a cartage firm). He died in 1976. On Jan. 1st, 1978 she moved to the Rotary Villa.

Skipping back to 1927, that year Maria began visiting the sick and the elderly in the St. Boniface Home For The Aged, which became the Taché Nursing Centre. She kept up her visitations for more than 40 years, for the church, the Canadian legion, and the Belgium Club.

Moving to our parish in 1936 didn't slow Maria down. In her 1955-56 report to the parish, she said she made 449 visits to the sick and the Elderly in homes and hospitals. She brought 14 people home for meals, and did shopping for others. She also spent her own money in helping provide for her people. She bought a transistor radio for a blind lady to listen to the Polish programs, she gave a dog to a lonely person. She added in her report that the joy you bring to people will more than repay you.

Looking back on those days, Maria says people knew of her work and often would stop her on the street or buses and give her a couple of dollars to help out. She also raffled off crochet work to support her charitable activities.

Asked what her husband thought of all this, Maria said he was quite proud of her. Her whole family was proud of her charitable work and supported her.

About the happiest times of her life were in visiting the sick. "It made my day" to visit the sick, she said.

As if all that wasn't enough, Maria also sang in the church choir here for over 30 years.

Her sad memories include the death of her daughter Elsie, and the serious injury of daughter Jenny in 1950. (Jenny was hit by a truck and hurled 32 feet into a ditch. Many people in the Old Folks home chipped in to have mass said for her and she survived.)

When her husband died "It was so lonely," after his death, she said, that she went to church every evening.

Now, nestled in a cosy apartment in the Rotary Villa on Hudson Street, just behind the church, Maria still makes a point of visiting the sick in the home for the aged. Two of her prized possessions are a silver plate given in recognition of her 30 years with the choir, and a CWL certificate of merit (1980) for her work in the parish.

Maria has a devotion to St. Teresa and to the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Also, she wouldn't think of going to sleep without first saying her daily rosary. She sometimes starts a second rosary, but drifts off to sleep before she can finish it.

One thing she would like to see more of in the parish, she said, is for people to greet strangers and make them welcome. When the parish was smaller, Maria knew everyone. When she spotted a stranger she didn't hesitate to walk up to him or her and say hello and welcome him to the church.

"I've had a very busy life," said Maria. And she still keeps busy - visiting the sick, making afghans, crocheting carnations, etc.

Bourlet Family

The Bourlet family have been parishioners of St. Vital for many years and have celebrated many a happy occasion both in the old Church and the new.

John Bourlet, son of Victor and Alice Bourlet, was married by Msgr. Cournoyer in 1942, to Florence Charriere. His sister, Mary, married Ed Perreault, also from the Parish. Their children grew up in the parish. Two of John's children, Lillian and Dan, also attended St. Maurice School. In 1969, Father Currie married their daughter, Lillian, to Jim Lane, and in 1974, their son, Dan was married to Sandra Johnson.

Lillian and Jim are now raising their children in the original family home on Clarence. Their children attend St Maurice School. After four generations St. Vital Parish is truly home to this family.

Bossuyt Family

Mother and Dad were blessed with 10 children but only 6 survived.

Mary 1897-1964 married Fermin Wyndels

Joseph 1900-1945 married Gabrielle Ysenbaert

Beth 1903-1984 married Henry Powells

Marg 1905- married Harry Kleysen

Archie 1908- married Marie Ciszewski

Lucille 1913- married Marcel Vermeulen

Deceased: Jules, Leon, Valarie, Alice.

Our old church was built in 1915 by Fermin Wyndels, my sister Mary's husband. The new white marble altar, which we now have in our church, from Italy was donated by the Bossuyt family in memory of their Mother and Father.

Many pioneer dairy farmers in the province were Belgians. In the early 1880's Constant Bossuyt bought the Northwestern Dairy, the first dairy established in Winnipeg and renamed it the Manitoba Dairy. It is still owned and operated by the family. The location has moved several times but it is now at Oak Bluff.

The first Belgians to leave for the Gold-rush in Klondike were Charles and Peter Bossuyt. Dads two brothers, Dad (Constant) stayed back to take care of the Dairy operation. They left on June 2nd 1898 accompanied by Jules Turenne and Mr. Lafrance and 22 men 2 Indian Scouts the rest Metis. They had with them 150 head of cattle 400 sheep 50 ponies and detrained at Pyramid City, British Columbia. From here they proceeded by boat and by train to Rapide-des-cinz-Doigts where they bought a sawmill made barges and proceeded to the Yukon where they arrived Oct 23rd 1898. By 1901 most had returned except Charles Bossuyt who died in Dawson City Yukon in 1932 at the age of 80.

Petrus Bossuyt with his seven children came from Passendale Belgium in the early 1880's and settled in St. Vital near where the Winnipeg Canoe Club is located today. A few years later they moved to Kingston Road on the bank of the Red River and started dairying. They ferried their milk across the river on a raft where Lagimodière, nephew of Louis Riel took care of the horses. They then took the milk in eight gallon cans to Winnipeg through the Old River Park district up Osborne Street to Winnipeg. In the fall and spring when the river was not safe to cross they would go around the Norwood Bridge into Winnipeg.

In 1895, my Dad, Constant, the second son of Petrus Bossuyt went back to Belgium to marry Emmerance Vermeulen who was my mother. On return they stayed on the Kingston Road Farm. Dad, Constant, then took over the dairy operation and relocated on the corner of Pembina and Fleet Street in Fort Rouge around 1896. By the year 1900, Fort Rouge was developing fast and he was forced to relocate again in Fort Garry on an eighty acre strip of land which is now McGillvray Boulevard. In 1900, Dad (Constant) bought 40 acres west of Irene Street to Waverly and built a new barn. In 1904, Dad bought the 40 acres east of Irene Street to the CNR tracks. By 1920, the dairy operation was too small and a new barn with silos, milkhouse and dairy equipment was built.

Our milk was delivered door to door to customers. It was poured from the eight gallon cans into a two gallon can (20 lbs). The lid of this can was used to measure a quart of milk and emptied into the customers' container. My brother Joe was operating this route. By 1922, we operated a second route and I (Cyril), took over the second route at the age of fourteen. Those were the good old days. The work day started at 4:00 a.m. and finished at 9:00 p.m. Nobody knew any better those days. That was the way of life - and we were happy as a bug in a rug. An eight hour work day was unheard of and it was seven days a week. Delivering milk was done by horses till the year 1936 - the year they could fry eggs on the sidewalks in town. Horses had to be off the road by 9:00 a.m. on account of the heat. After 9:00 a.m. the odd horse on the road wore a straw hat and an ice pack on its head, that was the year the trucks took over.

By 1930 we made a switch to glass bottles. In 1937, Joe, and I, took over the operation. A disaster struck in the wee hours of the morning of March 6, 1943 - our barn and dairy was destroyed by fire. It was -36 below F. We saved most of the cattle but the operation was destroyed. We were advised not to rebuild as McGillvray Blvd. was to be built that summer and we would not be able to pasture our cattle north of our property. We relocated in Oak Bluff. Since Joe and I each had families of our own by now and only one house was on the property a second house was moved from the old farm. A new barn and milk house was built by the end of November. This is the year we started delivering our milk in cans daily by truck to Crescent Creamery. Improvements were made as the years went by. Joe passed away in 1945 at the age of 44 and I continued on with my wife and children until 1973 at the age of 65 when my four sons took over.

Brick families

Roland and Dorothy (née Stodgell) married by Monsignor M. Cournoyer on March 2, 1957. We have three sons: Gary married to Constance Sveiljornson with two children; Donald married to Sharon Carroll with one child; and Lawrence. We reside now in Churchbridge, Saskatchewan.

Maurice and Lorraine (née Boone) married by Monsignor M. Cournoyer on May 5, 1962. We have four children, Joseph, Sharon, David and Kenneth. The children were Baptized, attended Sunday School, made their First Communion and were Confirmed at St. Vital Roman Catholic Church.

Boone families

Daniel and Linda (née DeClercq) married by Monsignor M. Cournoyer on May 29, 1965. We have two children, Daniel (Jr.) and Lisa. The children were Baptized and made their First Communion at St. Vital Roman Catholic Church.

Joseph and Lynda (née Pietryk) married by Monsignor M. Cournoyer on September 17, 1966. We have two children, Tammy and Karen. The children were Baptized and made their First Communion at St. Vital Roman Catholic Church.

Mrs. H. Jones

I was born April 3, 1906 and baptized Mary Louise Bonne in St. Boniface, Man. I was the daughter of Ivo and Emmerence Bonne. I remember when the church was built on Manahan Ave. In 1925 my marriage to Henry Jones was performed by Father Bertrand. All of our 7 children went to Grandin School and were baptized in St. Vital Parish. Five of the children were married here. I was 7 years old when I moved to Ft. Garry 72 years ago with my parents.

Steve and Margaret Plouffe

Married in 1931 at St. Vital Church by Msgr. Cournoyer. They had six children, Eleanore, Dorothy, Wayne, Roberta, Steven and daughter Blanche who passed away. Also, 14 grandchildren and now great grandchildren.

Berthe Anne Marie-Louise Sidonie Trottier

Berthe Anne Marie-Louise Sidonie Trottier (née Hervo) was born in Fort Garry on April 11, 1910 to Mathurin Marie Hervo and Marie Angélique André and has lived in Fort Garry and remained a member of St. Vital Parish for her entire life. She attended St. Vital School, later called Grandin School and graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 1927. While a schoolgirl, she was active as a member and President of the Children of Mary of St. Vital Parish. After her graduation from Business College, she was employed as a secretary for the Municipality of Fort Garry until her marriage in 1935.

During the course of the next number of years, Berthe raised a family of seven children and found time to involve herself in church and community groups. She held executive offices, including President of the Ladies of St. Anne, Catholic Women's League, St. Vital Parish and also served on the Executive Council of the Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League. She was an effective organizer and faithfully gave her time and talents to raise funds for many community organizations. More recently, Berthe and her husband, Elie, enjoyed participating with the Stafford Seniors. At the present time, Berthe and Elie remain involved with the Parish and enjoy the company of their family and friends.

Joseph Elie Trottier

Joseph Elie Trottier was born in St. Norbert, Manitoba on March 9, 1908 to Elie Arthur Trottier and Georgina Kenny. He received his schooling at Vermette School and St. Norbert Boys School. After attending Business College, he started his working career in banking at St. Norbert but soon moved on to larger responsibilities for the Municipality of Fort Garry, where he continued in their employ for 42 years, retiring as Treasurer. In 1935, Elie married Berthe Hervo and they raised a family of seven children. Elie served on many public boards including the Archdiocese Building Fund and the Parish School Board. He found time to serve on the Parish Council and remained as an advisory member for many years. Elie served as Le Grand Chevalier or Grand Knight of the Conseil Provencher of the Knights of Columbus. In 1974, Elie received the highest municipal honour, The Order of The Gate for service to the Municipality of Fort Garry. For a time after retirement, Elie and his wife Berthe enjoyed attending the Stafford Seniors. At the present time Elie and Berthe remain devoted to St. Vital Parish and are spending their time relaxing and enjoying their family.

Knockaert Family

Camille and Marie Knockaert moved into the Parish in early 1931 from St. Boniface. I had been baptized in Sacred Heart Church. My brothers, George and Rene, in St. Vital Church. The three of us received our First Communion and were confirmed there.

Camille and Maria left the Parish for St. Jean Baptiste where they operated the hotel with Rene from 1963 until 1971, when they moved back into the Parish. Camille passed away November 11, 1977.

Rene married Jeannette St. Amant in St. Jean Baptiste. They have two daughters, Karen and Debra Lynn. Jeannette remained in St. Jean Baptiste after Rene's death June 13, 1980.

George married Bernice Lipp June 16, 1956 in St. Vital Church, where their three children, Glenn, Jill and Randy were all baptized and received First Communion.

Jeannette married Donald Goodridge April 13, 1950. Our wedding was one of the last before the Church was flooded. Our four sons were all baptized, received First Communion, and Confirmed in St. Vital Church.

Howard, baptized by Monsignor Cournoyer in October of 1953, attended St. Maurice Kindergarten. Sister Clare of Sion was his teacher. He married Kerry Laing in Hope, B.C. They have two daughters. Their oldest was baptized by Father Ed Morand at St. Vital Church.

Ralph was baptized by Msgr. Cournoyer in November of 1955 and went to St. Maurice Kindergarten. Sister Marie Elizabeth of Sion was his teacher.

Bruce was baptized by Msgr. Cournoyer July of 1961 and attended St. Maurice Kindergarten. He received his First Communion in 1969 when Father Currie was pastor.

Duncan was baptized by Father Ken Bernard in May of 1963. He attended Sunday School and received his First Communion in 1971 and was confirmed in 1975.

When Father Currie was pastor, each child received First Communion when their parents, teacher and Father felt they were ready. Then they received Communion with their parents individually instead of a group.

I remember Msgr. Cournoyer's yearly visit to my parents home (Atlantic Dairy) with his little black book. Also when we lived at the rear of Fort Whyte store and after Don and I were married, he visited our home.

Also when he came to Fort Whyte school to teach us catechism, we

would be gathered in one room and the Protestant children in another. In later years, Father Ed Morand came to the school and I remember Howard sitting on his knee during catechism class which was held in the basement rooms.

Don often spoke of his visits to the rectory where Msgr. Cournoyer gave him instructions in the Catholic Faith. Don was baptized and received Communion before we were married and was Confirmed at St. Mary's Cathedral. He was an usher at the 9:00 a.m. Mass for five years. He coached the Fort Whyte Hockey Team and some of the more enjoyable games were played against Charlie Murphy and his team from Our Lady of Victory, and Father Ed Morand and his team from St. Maurice School.

The three coaches were more concerned with the boys enjoying playing hockey than with winning.

Don passed away February 27, 1986, and was buried from St. Vital Church.

Vouriot Family

The Vouriot family came to live in St. Vital Parish in 1938 and Verniece still lives in the original home on Nesbitt Bay. She has been an active C.W.L. member for many years. She has taken care of the altars for the past seven years. Verniece sang in the church choir for more than twenty years and has been in the Legion of Mary since it has been in the Parish. Now she spends her time doing volunteer work and visiting shut ins.

For forty years her mother Antoinette Venne came from Saskatchewan to stay with Verniece and her children. Mrs. Venne took an active part in the Parish during her stays. She was a C.W.L. member and did sewing for the sacristy.

Vernon served as an altar boy for eight years for Msgr. Cournoyer while attending St. Mary's School and later St. Paul's High School. He is presently a Captain in the Armed Forces and resides in Ottawa.

Delann (Kangas) attended St. Mary's School and then attended St. Maurice and St. Mary's Academy. She is still a member of St. Vital Parish and lives in Fort Garry.

Memories of 1920 - 1980

My name is Germaine DeMeyer (Deneweth). I was the eldest of nine. When I was young, living in Fort Garry, the parish of St. Vital did not have a regular parish - the priest came from Selkirk to celebrate mass on Sundays.

Father Cournoyer came to the parish around 1928 - then everything for our family changed. My father and mother took a real liking to Father Cournoyer, and the whole family became deeply involved in the parish activities.

First they needed a home for Father; that got my father and other parishioners the job of collecting money to build a home. Then father brought in two nieces - Lucienne as housekeeper, and Margaret who still went to school. The girls and I became really very good friends.

The Ladies of St. Annes was formed - of which my mother was an active member till she died.

The girls formed a club called the "Children of Mary".

Our group was to help raise money for the upkeep of the home - plus a car for Father. We raised money by -

1. Whist drives every Sunday.
2. Socials and box lunches.
3. In winter, skate-a-thons and moccasin dances on the rink.
4. Concerts galore.

We had an Irish family (Carrabre), and the mother was talented in music and Irish dancing, and Mrs. Minville, helped her at the piano and also arranging the concerts. They always went over well.

We also had a Queen contest two years in a row. We had two girls: Bertha Trottier (Hervo) and I. We had to sell raffle tickets, and the one that brought in the most money was Queen. The first year I won, with \$1,000, with a very close \$990 by Bertha. It went another year, and again I won, against Elmira Perreault (Preston). We brought in about \$1600 together. People would also sponsor the girls. This money went towards Father's house, and later a car.

The boys in our family were all altar boys.

My dad, Ernest, built a rink, and with the help of Alphonse Menu as coach, started a hockey team. We had a good hockey team, made up of boys from Fort Rouge, St. Norbert and Fort Garry. They often played against the St. Boniface Lions, who had some players like Johnny Bruneteau

(Mud), who made the big time teams.

We also had a tennis court and baseball teams.

My dad collected in church, and in those days it was 10¢ a seat - and whoever could afford it bought a pew by the month. This also gave the pew owner the right to put people out of their pews.

Dad was active as the school trustee in St. Vital school and if we could keep a majority of trustees (French and Catholic), we would have French and catechism in school every day. St. Vital, or Grandin, was really a nice two storey school, four rooms, two grades to a room. The teacher had the authority, with the help of the principal, to really keep control of the pupils.

My being in the Children of Mary, and the boys being altar boys and in the choir, it seemed most of our Sundays and religious holidays were spent in church.

We had a beautiful, big choir. Our organist at the time was Maria Bellefeuille, and her sister Eliza Laurence was the soloist; our male Soloist was Mr. Bérard.

That choir took a lot of practicing along with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 3:00, and Vespers at 7:00 p.m.

During the week before school, Genevieve Ranger (organist) and I helped sing at Mass every morning. The only other attendants at that time were Mrs. Nesbitt and Mrs. Plouffe. We used to have Mass in the Vestry of the church. This went on till I was out of Grandin School and started working, then married in 1936 and raised four children, all starting at Grandin School and the same church.

Then in 1950 we were flooded out and we decided to put all the children in Catholic schools. Then the driving really started morning and night - one son to St. Paul's; our two girls in St. Mary's Academy, and one in St. Ignatius. For about five years, all our activities followed the children's schools.

When Father built the school in Fort Garry, our youngest daughter went to St. Maurice for two years, and we all got very involved with the Sisters of Sion, sewing altar cloths - purple ones (during Lent) for statues which all changed when the new church was built in 1957.

A few girls really took to the Sisters. My youngest girl joined the Sisters of Sion in Saskatoon, when she completed high school at St. Mary's, coming out again later. A few carried on, like Marie Soens and Maria Nault.

All preaching at that time was done in French and English. The new church was built mostly of pledges from the parishioners, and a lot of donations like pews, altar, tabernacle, etc.

My eldest daughter, Doreen DeMeyer and Joe Dusik were among the first to be married in the new church.

"125th Anniversary Celebration" September 8, 1986

A letter received from Cardinal George B. Flahiff

at St. Mary's Street
Toronto, Ontario

August 26, 1985

Dear Father Morand and dear members of St. Vital Parish,

How I wish that I could be with you as you celebrate the 125th Anniversary of St. Vital Parish!

My memories of the Parish during the years that I served as Archbishop of Winnipeg are very dear to me in every way. The building of the present church and the privilege that was mine to bless it are particularly precious memories for me. But what you are celebrating on September 8 is a reminder of the long history that your Parish has had and of its contribution to the life of the Church in that part not only of Winnipeg but of Manitoba. Let me offer my congratulations to you, Father Morand, and to all of you, the parishioners, as you continue to share in that life and contribute to it at this date in the history of your Parish. May God love and bless you all!

Be assured that the Mass that I shall be celebrating on Sunday, September 8, will be offered as a Mass of Thanksgiving in union with yours as you celebrate the 125th anniversary of St. Vital Parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Cardinal George B. Flahiff

"Friends of St. Vital Parish"

Monsignor Joseph Aimé Gerard Gervais

Monsignor Gervais was born April 28th, 1909 in Montreal and baptized the same day. He attended Bourget College, Rigaud, Quebec with the Clerics of St. Viator and graduated in 1928 with a Bachelor of Arts.

That same year he entered the Grand Seminary of Montreal under the Sumptians Fathers and also attended the University of Montreal where he obtained a degree in Philosophy and Theology.

He was ordained to the priesthood May 21st, 1932 by His Grace Archbishop Georges Gauthier in Montreal.

His first appointment was for three years to Our Lady Parish in Montreal. In 1935 he was transferred to St. George's Parish also in Montreal.

In 1936 Monsignor was appointed a visitor of Catholic Schools for the Catholic School Board of Montreal, a position he held for more than five years.

In 1942, Archbishop Sinnott of Winnipeg, asked Archbishop Charbonneau of Montreal to lend him a priest to take charge of a parish where the pastor was retiring due to ill health. Monsignor was asked to come West temporarily. He obeyed, came and took over as pastor of St. Eustache, Manitoba.

Monsignor was pastor at St. Eustache till 1960 when Archbishop Pocock assigned him to Dunrea and its missions as well as the Sanatorium at Ninette. Monsignor's next move was in 1962 to St. Francois-Xavier Parish and then to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Elie in 1970.

Monsignor called it "quits" in 1974 and began helping out in several parishes of the diocese.

On the 50th Anniversary of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, in 1966, Cardinal Flahiff invested Father Gervais as a Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor. Since Vatican II the name is now Prelate of Honor.

Monsignor Gervais was Sunday helper at St. Vital for many years. In 1985 he retired from our parish and resides at the Bishop's Residence in St. Boniface.

Following are remarks from our pastor:

"Monsignor Gervais' help in our parish was greatly appreciated. Monsignor is a man who does things in a very orderly fashion. He would arrive at church long before Mass time and greeted the people as they came to Mass.

Monsignor was a good confessor, a very kind and pious priest. Monsignor never suffered from the so called "identity crisis"."

Father Waclaw Plucinski

Father was born October 27, 1906 in Poland, the son of a poor farmer. He joined the seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1934 in Lodz.

With the outbreak of World War II, Father, as well as many priests in Poland were subject to harassments, repressions, humiliation, physical misery, arrests and deportation by the Germans.

From 1941 to 1945 Father was in concentration camp in Dachau, Germany where there was much cruelty and persecution of prisoners.

After he came to Canada he was pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Vilna, Alberta from 1952 to 1956. After surgery he was temporary administrator of St. Michael Church in Gimli, Manitoba. In 1956 he became pastor of Grandview, then Roblin and missions.

After surgery again Father worked in New York. From 1959 to 1974 he was pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish in Polonia, Manitoba. He remodeled the church, parish hall, and built a new rectory. Father erected a shrine to Our Lady of Chestochowa and a grotto which began the annual pilgrimages still held today.

Father retired in 1974 and helped in various parishes as well as published his memoirs. Moving to Fort Garry, he began helping at St. Vital Church and became a close friend of the St. Maurice School children.

Father passed away on February 1, 1986.

On the 125 Jubilee of St. Vital Parish my sincere congratulations, wishes and prayers are going to...

The PARISHIONERS of this parish living and those who passed away for their work and generosity.

The former PRIESTS and the present pastor FR. PATRICK MORAND for their spiritual work and leadership.

All the parish ORGANIZATIONS for their help and cooperation.

All the TEACHERS from ST. MAURICE and Sunday School for extraordinary work and sacrifice.

All the wonderful CHILDREN and STUDENTS with whom I had a privilege to pray and to work.

MAY GOD, OUR HOLY MOTHER AND ST. VITAL BLESS AND HELP YOU ALWAYS.

A.C. 1985

Fr. W. Plucinski

Fr. Andrew Mennen, O.F.M., C.A.P.

Father was born in Ault-Onival, France, April 1st, 1917. His parents were both born in Belgium, became war refugees at the start of World War I, first moved to Holland, then to England and then to France. The family returned to Belgium in 1919; shortly after his mother died at the age of thirty-two. Father entered the minor seminary of the Capuchins at the age of nine, and finished his preliminary studies at the age of seventeen. He then entered the Order of the Capuchins, made his year of novitiate and the three years of philosophy. In Belgium there was a law that every young man had to join the army for one year, so Father Mennen joined the army in the capacity of "medic". Shortly after this one year term was up, World War II had started and he had to join the army again. On May 10th, 1940 Belgium became involved in the war. After eighteen days Father Mennen was taken prisoner and sent to Greifswald, Germany, in Stalag C II. After seven months of tough experience he was sent back to Belgium, where he continued his theology in 1943. From 1943 to 1947 he was a preacher. In 1947 he came to Canada where he served many parishes in both Western and Eastern Canada. Here in the west, he was at St. Boniface, then Portage la Prairie, then Brandon, then Russell and again Brandon. Now Father helps Sundays in St. Vital Parish.

(taken from "By Steps Not Leaps")