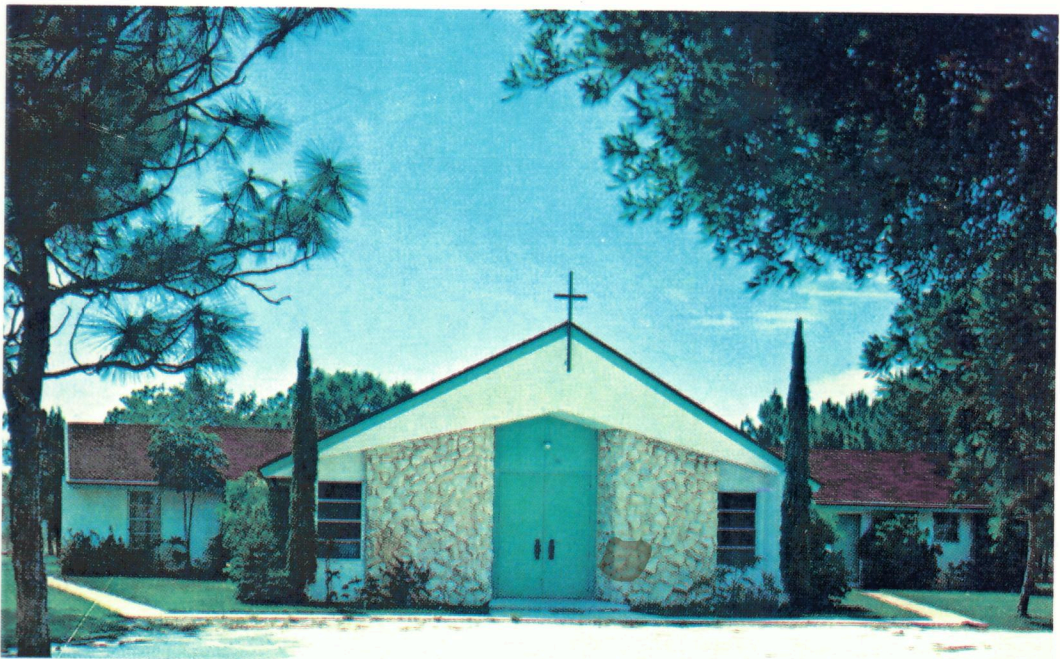


**OUR LADY OF THE
MIRACULOUS MEDAL CHURCH:
A STORY**



Post Card as a Mission Church, 1967

**Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Catholic Church
on Pine Island, Florida
2001**

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church:
A Story

Introduction

How do we tell a story? The words of the story lead us beyond mere words to the heart of the story, to a message that touches our spirit. The story that follows is grounded in historical facts, but it also is a story about the warmth and excitement of people on a journey. It is hoped that this story will remind us of or, perhaps, introduce us to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church on Pine Island.

It is interesting to note that the real story is not so much a listing of dates when things happened or buildings were built. The story is really about the vitality of the people of the parish who committed themselves to the Lord Jesus and to his church. So the story is about the spirit of the parish members; perhaps it also could be said that the story is about the parish members and the Spirit.

Many people who could have kept our recollection of the events accurate are no longer with us. What is included with the documented facts are the recollections told by those who are still here. Names are mentioned, because the story is about a church, i.e., people. Every reasonable effort was made to make lists exact and to recall events of the past. As memories fade and our history gets longer, it is possible that some names or important events were left out. Any such oversight was not deliberate, and no slight was intended.

We are grateful to the *Pine Island Eagle* for helping with insights to our history. Many parish members and some former members have contributed to this story, and we thank them as well. For some of us, the story will remind us of where we have been. For others, the story will show us how we have moved forward.

Do you know where our collection baskets came from? Why did it take an entire weekend for the early Pine Island Catholics to attend Mass? What did the fire do to our church? The answers are found in the story!

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church was a mission for 11 years, and has been then a parish for 25 years. This booklet is a souvenir of the 25th anniversary of the parish. Building on the past, we eagerly look forward to what lies ahead.

O Mary, conceived without sin,
pray for us who have recourse to you.

Fr. Tom Pokto O.S.A.

Pastor

Origin of the Miraculous Medal Devotion

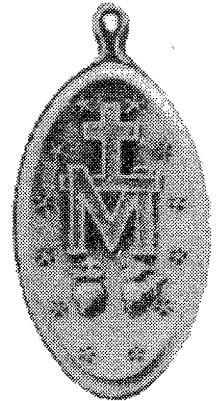
The Medal of the Immaculate Conception, commonly called the Miraculous Medal, was manifested to a spiritual daughter of St. Vincent de Paul, Novice Catherine Labouré. This took place in the chapel of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity, 140 Rue du Bac, Paris, France.

Catherine, during her novitiate days, received extraordinary favors from God, such as visions of the heart of St. Vincent and manifestations of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. In 1830 she was blessed with the apparitions of Mary Immaculate, to which we owe the Miraculous Medal.

Here, in St. Catherine's own words, is a description of the apparition of Our Lady on November 27, 1830, which makes it plain that the Medal originated with the Mother of God herself:



"Her feet rested on a white globe... I saw rings on her fingers.... Each ring was set with gems.... The larger gems emitted greater rays and the smaller gems, smaller rays.... I could not express...what I saw, the beauty and the brilliance of the dazzling rays. They are the symbols of the graces I shed upon those who ask for them. "[A voice said]... A frame...formed round the Blessed Virgin. Within it was written in letters of gold" 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.... Then the voice said: 'Have a Medal struck after this model. All who wear it will receive great graces; they should wear it around the neck....'At this instant the tableau seemed to turn, and I behold the reverse of the Medal: a large M surmounted by a bar and a cross; beneath the M was the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the one crowned with thorns, the other pierced with a sword."



The front of the Medal represents Mary standing on the earth, her foot crushing the head of a serpent, and her hands outstretched to all who ask her assistance. The prayer encircling her contains one of her most precious titles: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you." The rays of light from her hand symbolize the graces which she is only too eager to bestow upon those who wear her Medal and pray to her.

When St. Catherine related the vision to her confessor, he asked her whether she had seen any writing on the back of the Medal. She answered that she has seen none at all. "Ah!" said the good priest, "ask the Blessed Virgin what to put there." The Sister obeyed and prayed to Mary a long time for this information. One day during meditation she seemed to hear a voice saying: "The M and the two hearts express enough."

The Medal was made according to Our Lady's design. It was freely circulated and in a short time was worn by millions. In its wake followed innumerable wonders. Health was restored, sickness banished, bad habits broken, special graces given, dangers averted, blessings bestowed--until the little Medal of the Immaculate Conception became known by the name it bears today, the Miraculous Medal.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church:

A Story

The story of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church begins with people and land long before there were buildings or pastors or even a registered parishioner. When the Diocese of Miami was founded on August 13, 1958, there was included in the transfer of property a plot of land on Pine Island. This land had been purchased on January 26, 1954 by Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley of the Diocese of St. Augustine, through the Rev. Lamar Genovar of the Franciscan Order, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in Fort Myers and the real estate supervisor for the diocese. The Catholic Church in Florida owes a huge debt of gratitude to Archbishop Hurley for his foresight and wisdom in purchasing many pieces of land for the Church all over the state. Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church is grateful to be one of the beneficiaries.

Before the bridge to Pine Island was built in 1926, the few Catholics on the island included the Honc family in Bokeelia, the Celec family, and the Uhlar family who moved to the island in 1912 and lived on Maria Drive, south of Pine Island Center. Ludmilla and Vincent Honc, Sr. came to the island around 1918 and settled in Bokeelia, starting a nursery. For them to attend Mass required time and planning. In the waters around Pine Island there were 5 or 6 fish houses. Fisherman would use them to deposit their catch. A boat would come down from Punta Gorda on Monday morning with ice for each of the fish houses. The crew would stay overnight at Sanibel and return to the houses on Tuesday to pick up the catch and return to Punta Gorda. Wednesday they would again bring ice to the fish houses, stay over and return on Thursday to pick up the catch. Friday the boat would return with ice and pick up the catch on Saturday. But on many Saturdays, the Honc family would be waiting to catch that boat at what is now the pier at Capt. Cons to begin their trek for Mass. The boat would bring them to Punta Gorda where they would catch a train to Fort Myers. The train station was several blocks from St. Francis Church, which was their destination. They would stay overnight in one of the area hotels and attend Mass on Sunday. Sunday afternoon they would catch the train to Punta Gorda, spend the evening there, and catch the Monday ice boat heading to the fish houses and back to their home in Bokeelia. Needless to say, they did not do this every week but devotedly attended when they could. Sometimes Ludmilla's brother and sister would attend Mass with them.

The Honc family consisted of seven girls and two boys. Vince and John Honc, current parishioners, continue the Catholic tradition their parents started. Marie Honc, the oldest sibling, was the sacristan of OLMC from the beginning of our church until her death in 1993. Sister Vincent is a Daughter of Charity and Sister Kathleen is a member of the Order of St. Francis. Elizabeth lives in Fort Myers. Deceased are Mila Pottinger who owned a nursery in Cape Coral,

Agnes Ruppert, wife of Bill Ruppert of the parish, and Patricia. The priests at St. Francis Church during this time were either from the Jesuits out of Tampa or the Benedictines, from St. Leo's. Through St. Francis Church the Honc family became friendly with Father Jerome, a Benedictine priest, who was a botanist. After the bridge was built, Father Jerome would occasionally come out to Pine Island to celebrate Mass at the Honc Homestead. When asked about other priests who might have come out to Pine Island to celebrate Mass for the faithful, Vince remembered a Monsignor Paul Fusilier, a retired priest from the Diocese of Louisiana, who had a home in North Fort Myers, who would say Mass at the Civic Center at Pine Island Center before our church was built, and then on occasion in the new church. Vince recalled the first Mass in English in the 1960's celebrated by Father Paul at the Civic Center. He remembers him as being a very good homilist. Vince thinks there were about 100 people for Mass in the winter, and perhaps 30 in the summer. Kay DellaBitta, another parish member who was born on the island, attended church at St. Francis in the beginning and then at St. Andrew when that opened. She also remembers Monsignor Fusilier as a very personable priest.

In 1964 St. Andrew Church was founded in Cape Coral, and the first pastor, **Father Esteban G. Soy**, born in Gerona, Spain and ordained in Barcelona in 1962, was appointed on June 4. The parish boundaries included Pine Island.

In the spring of 1965 Father Soy asked the Catholics of Pine Island to take up a census of all baptized Catholics. They came up with 300 names, but many did not practice, in part probably because of the great distance to the nearest church. Father Soy reported back to Bishop Coleman F. Carroll of Miami and received permission to celebrate Sunday Mass on Pine Island. This was to be a mission of St. Andrew Church. On Palm Sunday, April 11, 1965 at 9:30 a.m., Father Soy celebrated the first scheduled Mass on Pine Island in the Greater Pine Island Civic Association building at Pine Island Center, next to the fire station. There were 97 participants.



Father Soy

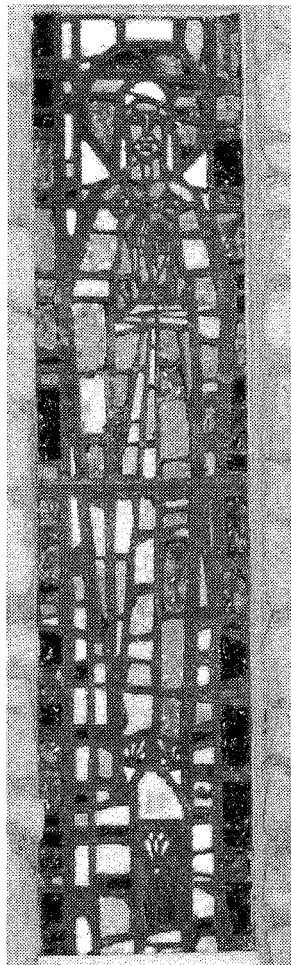
1966

The people were eager to have a church on Pine Island on the property already owned by the diocese. Father Soy requested and received a sizable grant from the Catholic Church Extension Society in Chicago. He also received a large donation in memory of Roland W. Bailey for a southern mission church to be built immediately and named Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. These donations were a great help toward building the new \$43,000 church. Plans were



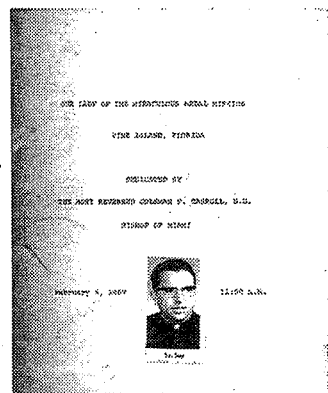
drawn up for our mission church by Murray Blair Wright, Architect, and Cosentino & Gam, engineers from Coral Gables, Florida, and submitted to Bishop Carroll on July 5, 1966. The model for the church was St. Peter Church on Big Pine Key.

Ground breaking for the new church took place soon after, and the church was completed in time for midnight Mass on Christmas, 1966. Rev. Joseph Coyle, O.S.F.S., the brother of church member Jean Lesch, was the celebrant. The original pews in the church were from Sacred Heart Church in Punta Gorda. They came dismantled and the men of the parish reassembled them. It took a week, and the pews did not last long. Later the pews from St. Andrew Church replaced these. These are still used today. Not much else is known about the interior of the building, such as the origin of the two statues, although Kay DellaBitta believes that the stones on which they rest came from Vic Vickers in Matlacha, and that the stained glass windows on each side of the altar came from a chapel which was dismantled in the Dadeland Mall outside of Miami. The glass in the windows on either side of the front door was clear in the beginning and replaced with the colored glass, but no one remembers when or by whom. No rectory was needed at the time. The original flora around the church came from Marie Honc's property.



1967

On February 4, 1967 Bishop Coleman F. Carroll dedicated Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church as a mission church. Rev. Lamar Genovar, the priest who originally bought the property, gave the homily. Cardinal Lawrence Shehan, Bishop of Baltimore, attended the dedication.



Dedication Program Cover

Post cards were made of our Mission Church, with the following address given on the back of the card: Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Mission, Pine Island, c/o St. Andrew Church, P.O. Box 845, Cape Coral, Fla 33904. It showed the front doors as being green, with green trim under the eaves of the roof. That replica is on the cover of this book.

1968

In 1968, Miami became an Archdiocese and two new dioceses were formed. On June 17,

1968, Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Mission became part of the newly established Diocese of St. Petersburg, whose first prelate was Bishop Charles B. McLaughlin.

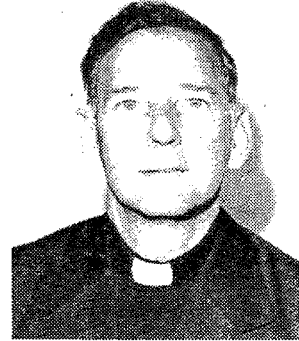
1975

Early in February 1975, Rev. Fredric P. Gehring, C.M., "The Padre of Guadacanal," conducted the first novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. A candlelight procession to the outdoor shrine of Our Lady was held on the concluding night of the novena. The novena was well attended. This was the earliest mention of our shrine.



1976

Father Soy was assigned pastor of Epiphany Catholic Church in Venice on June 7, 1976, and **Rev. Timothy Murphy** became pastor of St. Andrew with OLMM continuing as a mission church of St. Andrew. Father was born in County Cork, Ireland and ordained a priest in Dublin on All Hallows in June, 1960. He ministered in Brooklyn, New York City for 10 years before coming to St. Francis Church in Fort Myers as an associate for six years.



Father Murphy

St. John's Episcopal Church had services at the Catholic Church on Sundays at 11:15 a.m. from some time in 1975 to December, 1976, when they switched to the VFW Hall. Our Mass listing was at 8:45 a.m. on Sunday with Sunday School held after Mass.

An item from the 8/25/76 *Pine Island Eagle* announced the wedding of Diane Marie Vivian, daughter of St. James City residents, and John Malcolm O'Connell of West Palm Beach at OLMM Mission Church, with Father Timothy Murphy officiating. The write-up gave some interesting information. Hazel Miller played the organ for the service. The newspaper clipping further described that the altar was decorated with "lovely garden flowers, selected and arranged by Marie Honc and Mary Altman of Bokeelia." "Sister Kathleen Honc, Bokeelia, made and decorated a three-tier cake for the occasion." One can see the early involvement of some of our parishioners.

Hazel Miller supplied the music for all church functions and began the choir. Marie Honc from the beginning of our church as a mission, took care of the church's liturgical needs, altar





Hazel Miller

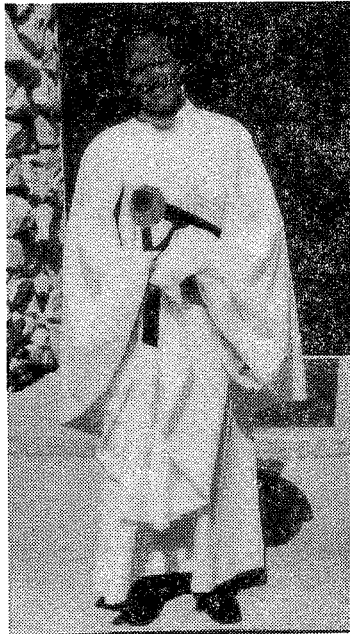
linens, cleaning, collection recordkeeping, flowers, robes, and everything that anyone could think of so that church ran smoothly. She humbly did this until her death in March, 1993.



Marie Honc

On October 21, 1976, Bishop Charles B. McLaughlin, made Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church an official Parish. **Rev. Robert D. Leib** was appointed our **first pastor**. He celebrated his first Mass at OLMM on October 24, 1976, followed by a reception on the church grounds. *The Pine Island Eagle* listed Masses at 8:45 a.m. on Sunday and 6 p.m. on Saturday.

Note: The creation of the new parish and the assignment were on October 21; but the document of canonical establishment of the parish was dated November 17, thus giving us two dates on which to celebrate our anniversaries.



Father Leib

Father Leib came from serving at St. Michael the Archangel Church, Siesta Key. He also served in parishes in Miami, Port Charlotte, Tampa, and St. Petersburg. Father Leib was born in Chicago in 1936 and had a twin brother, William. He was ordained May 30, 1964 at the Josephinum Pontifical College in Worthington, Ohio for the Diocese of Miami. The doors of the church in Father Leib's photo are painted bright red, a change from the earlier dark green. He resided at St. Andrew rectory for a short time until a manufactured home was purchased and moved to the property near the church to be used as a residence. It is not known how long Father Leib remained at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church.

1977-1982

In 1977 **Rev. Francis A. Dauss**, who had been Chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital for the previous 11 months, was appointed the **second pastor** of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church. An outdoor reception on the OLMM grounds followed a Mass on May 1, 1977. He was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania and was ordained on June 1, 1948 in the Peoria, Illinois Diocese. He served in that Diocese for 22 years before coming to Florida in 1970.

Under his encouragement the Altar and Rosary Society was formed on August 15, 1977. (This organization was the forerunner of the Women's Guild.) The 36 charter members were Mary Altman, Rachel Bacik, Mildred Caputo, Regina Coates, Mary DeBolt, Alma Decker, Mary DeMars, Kay DellaBitta, Dorothy Ellis, Dorothy Gallagher, Irene Grassi, Wanda Griffin, Mary Grimm, Marie Honc, Helen Huber, Doris Jones, Elma Keiser, Laura LaBelle, Nellie LaMeire, Joanne Lince, Jean Lesch, Mary Mailey, Mary Manacek, Barbara Matthews, Hazel Miller, Lynne Moore, Marian Poulsen, Virginia Richey, Gertrude Ritter, Bertha Rivard, Peg Smith, Mary Traverse, Barbara Uhlar, Fondel Ventimiglia, Sue Vivian, and Henrietta Wychoff. Helen Huber was elected President, followed shortly by Doris Jones. Marie Honc was treasurer. The Society was very active as indicated in their annual reports.



Father Dauss

The October 12, 1977 issue of the *Pine Island Eagle* published the Mass schedule as 6 p.m. on Saturday and at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday in the winter months. Daily Masses were on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday at 8:00 a.m. and at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday and Friday. CCD classes were at 9:20 a.m. on Sunday from Mid-September through Mid-May. Holy day Masses (except Christmas and New Year's) were at 8:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.



On April 16, 1978 Father Dauss was honored at a brunch provided by the women of the church, held on the church grounds, to note the first anniversary of his coming as our pastor.

Early CCD classes

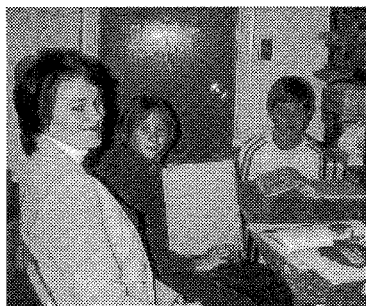
Irene Everdell and her husband, Harold, came to Pine Island in 1976. Irene took on the volunteer job of being the first religious education teacher. She became the coordinator and continued in this role until 1989. Helping her were Lynne Moore, Jean Turner, and Barbara Uhlar. The first year, 1976, she had eight students. It soon increased to as many as 40 students. Classes were held for 22 weeks of the year. They used Bible stories and an educational handout from the New Testament that came from the diocese. They used the kitchen area of the church



and the porch of the rectory for their classrooms. When it was too chilly, they took blankets and sat out in the sun for their classes. The names of some of the children in the early classes are: Keith, Kenny, Michael, and Mark Moore, Kelly Talamo, Lana Gillis, Patricia, Jennifer, John and Joanne Preston, Ken, Vicky and Elon Bradshaw, Dawn Marnell, Jeff, Heidi Everdell, Jennifer, Lisa Bollinger, Kathleen and Jenni. (These names were taken from a thank you card written to the Guild from the CCD.) Irene remembered that one time the children went to Cayo Costa by boat as a special outing. She also remembered Joan and John Larimore inviting the classes for a picnic on their property in Bokeelia. On First Communion day Father Dauss presented each of the communicants *The Catholic Bible in Pictures*.



Early CCD Classes



Caya Costa Outing

The following activities are from a report of the Altar and Rosary Society for the year 1979-1980 written by Mary Grimm, then president:

1. Retired \$1,000 Rectory Debt
2. Held a Mini December Bazaar
3. Had a spring and December luncheon for members and friends
4. Had a bake Sale 2nd Sunday of each month
5. Had the 1st parish Dinner in Feb 1980
6. Members cleaned the church weekly
7. Members washed Altar linens and cassocks
8. Purchased hymnal binders for choir
9. Paid for Sunday missals
10. Sent cards to the sick and shut-ins
11. Visited the sick
12. Transported parishioner to doctor appointments
13. Donated canned food and money to S.O.L.V.E. (unwed mothers shelter)
14. Gave a food basket and canned goods to a needy family
15. Gave monetary gifts to the altar boys and Lector at Christmas and Easter time
16. Participated in fall and spring Deanery meetings, day of Recollection, and Pontifax Day
17. Attended Mass on the 3rd Monday of each month and also attended the Novena of OLMM
18. Attended annual respect for Life Pilgrimage

By 1980, the debt on the priest's residence was paid. That same year the Altar and Rosary Society adopted its first set of standing rules. It met on the third Monday of the month from September through May. The above report indicates how active the Society was.

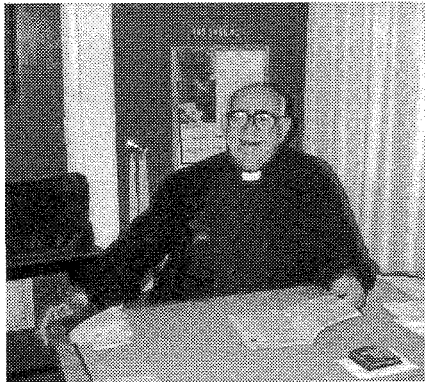
Father Dauss started a building fund, because more space was needed for worship and for the many social activities of the parish. Activities included a Pro Life Pilgrimage to Lakeland, Florida on March 22, 1981. The congregation survived a spaghetti dinner held in the Pine Island Civic Center on November, 1981, when there was a power failure in the midst of preparation. Two large motor homes, one in the front of the building and the other in the back, used their generators to supply power. The fire department sent a truck to light up the kitchen. Parishioners went home and came back with flashlights and candles and any kind of non-electric lights they could think of. The food was cooked on camp stoves. Over 400 people were served by candlelight.

In January, 1982 Bishop W. Thomas Larkin of the Diocese of St. Petersburg encouraged Catholics to register their support for the Hatch Ashbrook Amendment to nullify the Supreme Court Decision on abortion. Of the 85,000 signatures collected from the diocese, 147 came from Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish.



1982 - 1983

After five years as our Pastor, Father Dauss left on June 22, 1982. St. Andrew Parish supplied priests for our services until **Rev. John F. Lima** was sent to the parish in October, 1982.



Father Lima stayed until February, 1983, when **Rev. John P. Kane** was assigned to OLM as our **third pastor**. Just before he left, Father Lima started a Guest Book. His name is the first in the book. This book was in the back of the church and visitors were asked to sign in. The book was kept until early 1992. When looking through it, many priests, Monsignors, and sisters visited our church during this period. What was interesting to read are the names of some of our current parishioners and note when they considered them-

Father Lima selves a visitor (Grottanelli, LaMeire, Holland, Korbel, McNichol, Christensen, Holfelner, Edelen, Schons, D'Aleo, Carl, Wozniak, Jacot, O'Toole, Korleski, Relyea, Bolduc, Keefe, Harding, Cahill, Arcuri, Barwick). Also, on December 26, 1983 Joe DiMaggio from San Francisco, CA signed in as a visitor. Was this *the* Joe DiMaggio? If so, we

12-26 83	Joe Di Maggio	STREET	
		CITY	San Francisco STATE Cal

have his autograph.

1983

Father Kane was a native of Milton, Massachusetts and worked for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority before pursuing studies for the priesthood as a belated vocation. He was ordained on November 8, 1969 in Boston after completing his studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He had assignments in Tampa, Holiday, and Safety Harbor in Florida for ten years before being assigned here. In an interview with the *Pine Island Eagle*, Father Kane said he was looking forward to becoming involved in the community of Pine Island, and especially in doing ministry for the parishioners of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Catholic Church. The parish held a welcoming reception on March 27, 1983, after the 10:30 Mass. Our church was designated as a pilgrimage church for the Marian Year.



Father Kane

At the January, 1983 meeting of the Altar and Rosary Society, it was decided to change the name to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Guild. The Guild continued to be active and held its first rummage sale in February on the church grounds.

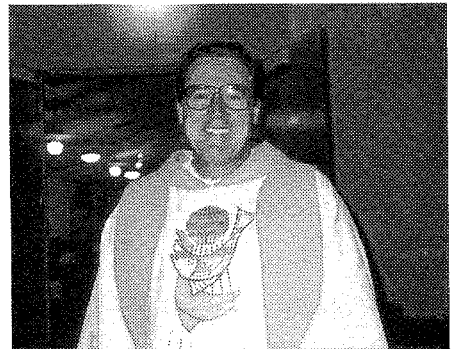
In November, 1983, the parish had another of their many spaghetti dinners. This one was held again in the Center Civic Building and the women supplied the desserts. It was a big success,



and Marie Honc was credited with making at least 20 pies. These were very popular dinners. Bill Ruppert, Sam Marzella, Howie Klipfel, Hervé Bird, and Pete Kendziorski seem to be having fun stirring the pot in the photo to the left. These annual fall spaghetti dinners continue to be held today. The names of the people in charge have changed over the years but the camaraderie and good times remain.

1984-1988

OLMM welcomed our **fourth pastor, Rev. Thomas J. Glackin** in January, 1984 with a reception held at the Methodist Fellowship Hall. Father Glackin was born in New York City and attended college in Rome. He was ordained on December 21, 1968 at Rome's Salesian Pontificio University. After ordination, he taught at Catholic high schools in New Orleans, Louisiana and in Ramsey, New Jersey. He was in Tampa as an assistant pastor from 1976 for eight years before becoming our pastor.



Father Glackin

Father Glackin immediately became involved in community activities in addition to parish activities. He represented OLMM in a 6:30 a.m. Community Easter Sunrise Service held at the Pine Island Methodist Church in 1984. Hazel Miller, our organist, provided the music. In August he spoke to the Kiwanians about the numerous changes taking place within the Catholic Church. He told them: "My purpose is not to convert you but to inform you." The public was to become better informed because OLMM had a monthly column in the *Pine Island Eagle* in October, November, and December of 1984 listing their upcoming events, Diocese news, religious celebrations, and news of all the active groups in the church.

On October 25, 1984 Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Church became part of the newly



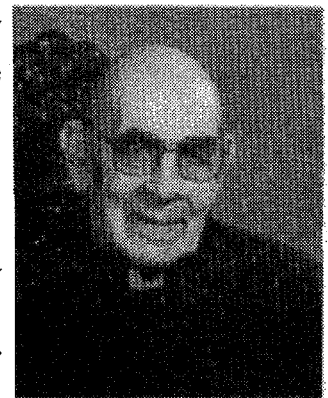
formed Diocese of Venice, and a group of our parishioners made the historic journey to the Epiphany Cathedral in Venice where they were joined with 1700 other people, 2 Cardinals, 75 Bishops, hundreds of priests, and fellow-Catholics to participate in the installation of Bishop John J. Nevins as the first bishop of the newly formed diocese.

Our parish began to grow and with that came extra help. Father Patrick Murphy, a visiting Jesuit, assisted Father Glackin with some of the Masses. Parishioners remember him as



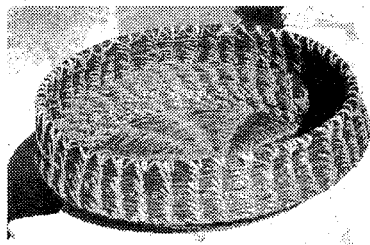
Msgr. Forker at a Halloween Party

being a large, saintly man, who wore sandals and who walked everywhere. He was very generous, giving away anything he had to anyone who needed it. Also Rev. Msgr. Thomas S. Forker, retired to St. James City, was available for many extra



Father Wells

Masses until his death on December 23, 1991. Rev. Walter Wells also came out to the island from Fort Myers and assisted at Masses.

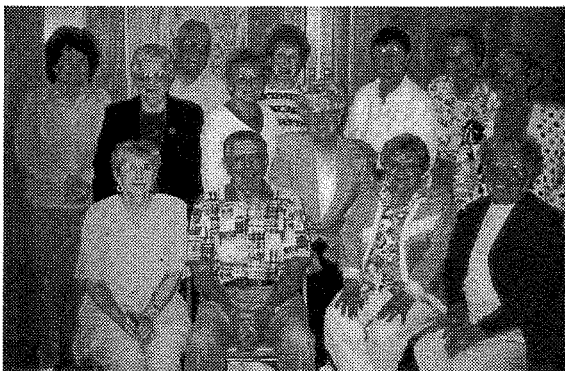


It was about this time that Gertrude Ritter (Doris Jones' mother) was asked to make some offertory baskets out of pine materials, to be used in the Church. The concept was new and the size needed to be large. Eventually, three large pine needle baskets were made and are still used in the church at Masses.

Rita Mustell, a Chicago resident who spent four months a year on Pine Island, supplied secretarial needs. She was assisted by Regina Krivacs, and when Rita moved back north, Regina took over, working two days a week at first, and then daily. The office was in the sacristy and was open to everyone. The bulletins were typed on a stencil and run off on an old mimeograph machine. The entire layout of the bulletins and the printing were done at the church, until later when they were typed in the office and then sent out to be printed by Leaman Printing on the island. The parish records consisted of registration cards that had been filled out when new people moved to the area. Marie Honc supplied these cards to Dolores Granito who computerized the list. This list was then used for the big fund drive for the Parish Life Center and also to set up appointments for our first photo directory which came out in 1988 and listed 417

families. After the Parish Life Center was built, the office was moved to one of the back rooms, near where the Pantry is now. It was too far removed from everyone to be effective, and so was moved back to the Church area. A large table was given to OLMM by St. Andrew Church and moved to the back office in the PLC. This table is now found in the meeting room of the PLC.

Marjorie Knitkowski cleaned the rectory during the time Father Glackin was here and continued to 1996. Before that the women of the Parish would do it. And between a priest



leaving and a new one arriving, Marie Honc and Mildred Caputo would coordinate the work. The rectory was turned upside down during those transitional periods. The church was cleaned weekly by volunteers. Kay DellaBitta and Norma Crouse are two of the early ones. For many, many years RoseAnne Gebhart coordinated the church cleaners. Today's list includes Barbara Anderson, Geri Bavis, Terry Bolduc, Pat Cox, Barbara

Grimm, Jo Haar, Millie Harding, Dan Higgins, Shirley Holt, Carol Humme, Ginger Jacot, Bernice Makin, Ed McDonough, Jean McKenna, Marie Powers, Barbara Promen, Doris Relyea, Marie Simpson, and Laurette Sutton. Jackie Coburn is the coordinator.

Many remembered the Anniversary Masses that were held once a month on Sunday. Those couples who had anniversaries during the month would sign up. Their names would be published in the bulletin, special blessings would be made at the Mass, and then they would all go for breakfast. These meals were first held in the rectory and then at local restaurants. Here's a photo of one of these happy groups taken in 1984.



Maryruth and Sam Marzella

Maryruth and Sam Marzella came to the island in 1981. Maryruth became the church organist after Hazel Miller retired in 1986, and played until 1991. Sam took on the job of scheduling eucharistic ministers, lectors, and altar servers for the Masses. He also trained the altar servers and did whatever else needed to be done. A couple of early servers remembered were Keith and Kenny Moore.

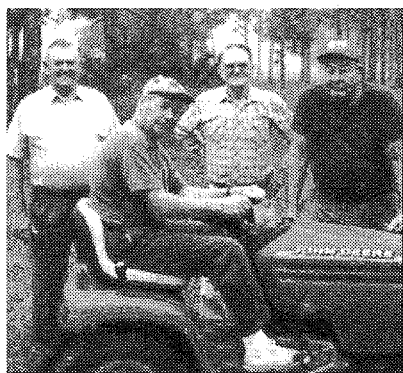


Today Elaine Delaplane schedules the servers. She looked up the names of the first female servers, who were Jessica Delaplane and Lisa McLaughlin. As of the spring of 2001, our altar servers are Paige Anderson, Megan Bucklin, Brittany Conlyn, Grantt Conlyn, Kelly Green, Rosario Guadarrama, Alfonso Huerta, Jhovana Huerta, Brittany Iandoli, Alysa Memoli, Steven Showstead and Michaela Valenti.

Some names from an early lector schedule include Ruth Boeh, Dolores Granito, Wilma Helmke, Betty Knobbe, Ed Harkenrider, John Kindler, Mary Mailley, Mike Shevlin, and Jack Wollenburg. Following Sam, RoseAnne Gebhart scheduled lectors and eucharistic ministers, and now it is Allyson Burnett in the summer and Juanita Leidecker in the winter. Our lectors now are Pam Anderson, Terry Bolduc, Greg Capellan, Helen Clayton, RoseAnne Gebhart, Joe Giorgio, Geri Green, Dolores Granito, Ced Gregorsky, Shirley Holt, Carol Humme, Greg Lambrecht, Juanita Leidecker, Mike Lester, Joan McCaffrey, Catherine Schons, and Melanie Voris. Eucharistic ministers are Jim and Nancy Banigan, Sue Barwick, Terry Bolduc, Allyson Burnett, Jan Cahill, Toddy Centa, Clyde Covault, Mary Rita Davis, Anne Dayman, Bill Donlon, Jo Elliott, Brendan and Barbara Grimm, Dave Grueser, Shirley Holt, Dave and Carol Humme, Stan Jock, Diane Lester, Colleen Mallery, Joan McCaffrey, Mike and Betty Newcomb, Barbara Promen, Catherine Schons, Geri Showstead, Zita Thorsen, Muriel Urrico, Frank and Cathy Valenti, Diane Vass, and Ron and Pink Wesorick.

Earl DeMars was in charge of the ushers. This job passed on the Gene Nykowski, Vic Green, and then George Hoyt. Our summertime ushers now include Bill Beelman, Clarence Bredhold, Vince Honc, Don Knoll, Mike O'Toole, Steve Showstead, Bill Turner, and George Williams, with assistance from Tony Ambrose and Carl Seemann.

The beginning Friday morning clean-up crew, a.k.a. "The Over the Hill Gang" included



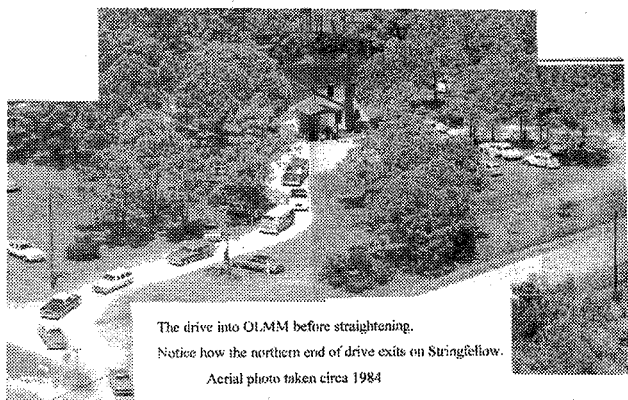
Some of the Current Crew

John Boss, Earl DeMars, Mike Grimm, Art Plouffe, Sam Marzella, and Art Rivard. Later members were Tony Ambrose, Bill Beelman, Jim and Jo Carroll, Tony Devlin, Jerry Elliott, Jim Green, Vic Green, Brendan Grimm, Vince Honc, Joe McGinn, Mike O'Toole, Dick Pearse, Morgan Porter, Rudy & Jane VandeGraff, and Greg Wilt. Their job, as it is today, was to clean up the grounds in preparation for weekend Masses.

The folding chairs used in our outdoors Masses and in the Parish Life Center were donated by the Arthur and Jeannette Plouffe. These chairs were stored in the back of the church before the PLC was completed.

Once on a very rainy Sunday, the oyster shells in front of the church were not absorbing much of the water. A parishioner stopped Father Glackin outside of Mass complaining, probably, about getting wet feet. Arthur and Jeannette Plouffe overheard the conversation and asked Father how much it would cost to pave the area in front of the church. Father gave a figure, and Mr. Plouffe said, "Do it and send me the bill." If you notice the sign when you drive on the paved road in front of the church, it is appropriately named "Plouffe Drive." Father Glackin at the Parish Life Center dedication gave special heartfelt thanks to Arthur and Jeannette Plouffe for their substantial financial contributions. It was around this time that the driveway was

straightened in front of the church and the original exit to Stringfellow Road was closed. Notice that there is now an extension to the roof line not seen on the picture in the post card shown on the cover of this booklet.



The drive into OLMM before straightening.
Notice how the northern end of drive exits on Stringfellow.
Aerial photo taken circa 1984

The street across from the Parish Life Center entrance is named Mackerel Drive. Its extension into the Parish Life Center is named Holy Mackerel Drive, a fun sign put up by the Marzellas.

There were many socials held during the time Father Glackin was Pastor at OLMM. Every month there was something going on. A typical year calendar included January: Guild card party; February: Valentine Dance; March: St. Patrick's Dinner; April: Easter Egg Hunt; May: Memorial Day



Picnic; July: 4th of July Parade; September: Labor Day Picnic; October:



Halloween Party and/or Spaghetti Dinner; and December: Parish Christmas Party. Some of the

parishioners came early in the morning of October 29, 1984 for a surprise birthday party for



Father Glackin.

Photos from the 1984 Fourth of July parade show Al Knobbe as Uncle Sam followed by Maryruth Marzella playing a music tape in a golf cart driven by Rick Zeltman and towing a small decorated trailer with Irene Grassie as the Statue of Liberty followed by the children marching, carrying an OLMM Catholic Church banner. The 1985 parade had Joe McGinn as Uncle Sam, and the 1986 parade had the children in the religious education classes led by Melani Meo-Long. The theme of the 1986 parade was "We Believe the Children Are Our Future."



The Easter Egg Hunt for the children of Pine Island was held on the church grounds beginning in 1984. Sam, Ed Wozniak, and Pete Kendzioriski were some of the men who coordinated the early event. The women of the Parish colored hard-boiled eggs that were used in some of the events. To this day, the Easter Egg Hunt has always been a big event for all the children of the Island. The Knights of Columbus coordinate the event and have helped make it very successful over the years. Steve Showstead has been the chair for the last few years.

A Capuchin Franciscan priest, Father Wendelin Shafer, visited our parish in 1984 and occasionally still says Mass here. Father Wendelin is the brother-in-law of parishioner Art McGee. He related the harrowing trek that Bishop Salvador Schlaefler, two other religious, and Father Wendelin had while leading 500 Nicaraguan Indian refugees across the border from Nicaragua to Honduras against the Sandinista's wishes. He later sent a photo of himself with



Father Wendelin with the Pope

During the 80's it was thought that a Couples Club would be a good group to have. The first meeting was at the Marzella's home and over 35 couples showed up. They were wall to

wall. It was a very popular group. A lot of people interviewed remembered the outings. RoseAnne and George Gebhart remember Norma and Ed Crouse being hosts for a huge fish fry where the entertainment was Father Glackin's slides of his student days in Rome. Other couples active in this group were Kay and Frank DellaBitta, John and Ida Kindler, Vince and Lois Hone, Doris and P.J. Jones, Art and Shirley Law, Al and Bette Knobbe, Paul and Ginny Balta. Toddy and Frank Centa hosted one with a theme of Greek food. These parties soon became too large for any one couple to host. A hall was definitely needed. This club sponsored the first Halloween Party held at the Center Civic Center. Art and Shirley Law chaired the event attended by over one hundred parishioners in various costumes.

The religious education classes for grades K-8 were still held on Sunday on the church grounds. High schoolers met every Wednesday to study St. John's Gospel and its significance for everyday life. Paul and Mary Reichardt assisted by Joe Bennett led the classes. Joe and Lynn Bennett were chaperones for an outing to Busch Gardens with our young people in February 1985.

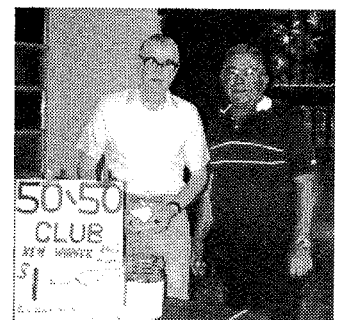
The first parish Christmas Party was held on December 15, 1984 at the St. James Civic Center. A visiting organist, Sarah Price, entertained after the turkey dinner. Mel Widmeyer strummed the banjo, the Children's choir sang and George Lever led the caroling. These Christmas parties continue to be a big Parish gathering. In recent years, Mary Hagan has



coordinated the young people's pageant and the Barwicks usually supplied a "Happy Birthday, Jesus" cake.

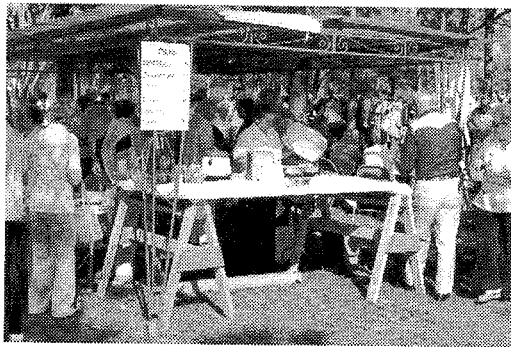
Christmas Pageant 1996

In the early days there was always a 50-50 drawing once a month outside of church. The money made on these was being put aside for our new parish Life Center. The photo on the right shows **Frank Holfelner and Sam Marzella** manning the table.



The rummage sales were held on Saturday in the first week in February and then again in November or December on Friday and Saturday. They continued to be very successful. In the





beginning the rummage sale was held outside to the north of the church in the open area. Items were stored in the little shed and set-up was done just before the sale. A small canvas tent was used and makeshift open covered areas were set up. When asked what happened if it rained the answer was "What do you mean IF? It seemed to rain every year during that time." Sometimes the men of the parish "guarded"

Early Outdoor Rummage Sale the items over night, just in case. George and RoseAnne Gebhart were the chairs in 1985, 1986, and 1987. Chairs in later years were the Boehs, the Raffertys, the Bolducs and the Arcuris for many years, the Greens and the Beelmans, the Mallerys and the Vorises. These have proven to be very big fund-raisers and require a lot of effort on all the parishioners to be so successful. The February events have not been held since 1997 because our hall has been used for weekend Masses during the winter months. However, the December sales continue.



More Recent Indoor Rummage Sale

In recent years items were collected nearly year round and then set up the week before in the Parish Life Center. Many parishioners give their time to work before, during, and in the clean-up phase of the sales.

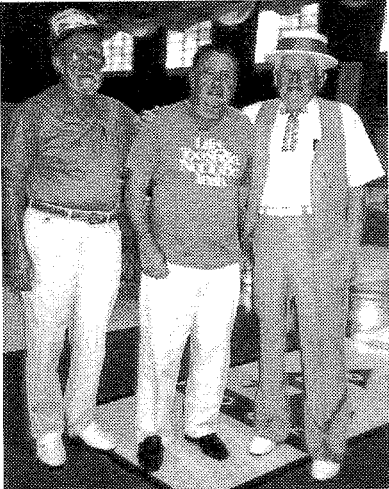
In January, 1985 and again in 1986 the parish chartered the Bay Queen out of Fort Myers for a day of food, fun, and music. The boat sailed up the Caloosahatchie and back. Al and Bette Knobbe chaired the events.

In January began the annual card party event. This first one was held at the Matlacha Hall, serving dessert. Doris Jones and Mary Ann Knoll were in charge. They hosted these parties for the church for many years. Jean Rafferty, Terry Heimerl, and Marge Steffes have taken over in recent years and they continue to be held usually the end of January, in the Parish Life Center.

February, 1985 was a very busy month with a Valentine dinner dance being held at the Pine Island Civic Center in February with Joan and Mike Shevlin in charge. Also in February Father Glackin was assisted at Mass by Bishop William Power of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Bishop Power and his friend, Father John McKinnon were vacationing on Pine Island for two weeks. OLMM had another first time event with a weeklong parish Mission. Father Robert Gately, a retired U.S. Navy Chaplain who was serving at the Epiphany Cathedral in Venice.

conducted a week of prayer and reflection for out parishioners.

The annual St. Patrick's Dinner has always been fun. It started out being held at the St. James Civic Association and is now held in the Parish Life Center. They served 478 dinners in 1985 and an apology was printed in the *Eagle* for those who were disappointed when they ran out of food. In 1986, 665 dinners were served. Corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, onions, carrots, scones, dessert continue (except for a few



years when they had stew or ham) to be the menu. Entertainment changed over the years until recent times, when live music has been provided for dancing. The Knights of Columbus are now in charge of the event.



Vic Green, Jim McCaffrey, Jim Banigan

Women of the parish were surprised on Mother's Day in 1985 by being presented with gardenia corsages at all the Sunday Masses.

On August 24, 1985 Bishop Nevins visited OLMM. Mass was celebrated and an outdoor reception was held.



The Ladies Guild continued to be active in the National Council of Catholic Women attending their local and State programs.



Maryruth Marzella, Ruth Boeh, Doris Relyea, Irene Grassie, Doris Jones, Bertha Rivard, Hazel Miller, Dottie Farrell, and MaryRita Davis

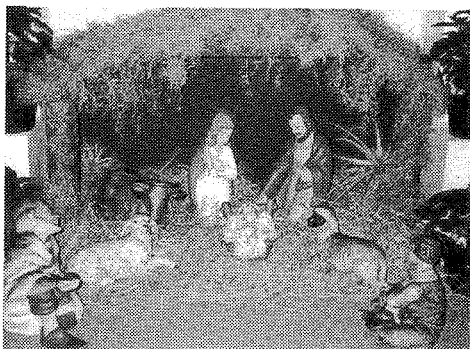
In 1985, OLMM obtained new and larger Stations of Cross from St. Ambrose Church in Parchment, Michigan through the efforts of parishioners, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Harkenrider. These are the Stations we now have.

The large outdoor stable manger was built by George Gebhart, Wilma and Jim Casey,



Clair Sharp and Sam Marzella in 1985. Because there was no room to store it after the holidays, it was dismantled and the wood used for other things. In 1986, George was again asked to build a manger. This is the one that is used today and is stored outdoors in back of the Parish Life Center. The new large outdoor crèche figures came from benefactors in memory of Joseph Palumbo, Nancy Sapia, Ludmilla and Vincent Honc, and Reuben and Elma Keiser in 1986. The figures before this time had been on loan. Jeanette and Arthur Plouffe donated the figures used inside the church in 1985. The large manger scene at one time was "guarded" by men who stood vigil overnight in a small travel trailer that was parked nearby. No vandalism was ever done and it was more

precautionary than required.



Indoor Crèche



Outdoor Crèche

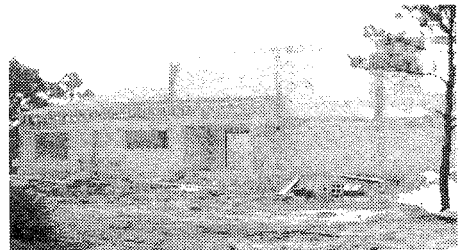
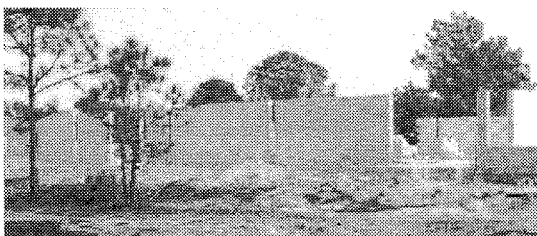
A new choir made its debut at the Christmas Masses in December, 1985 under the direction of Ellie Mezick. The folk choir began in 1986 under the direction of Carol Keiling, who was assisted by Debbie Marzella. The folk choir sang at the 8:30 a.m. Mass.

Most of the activities of everyone in the Parish since Father Dauss' time had been geared to the solution of a need for our own social building. The profit from the dinners, 50-50 clubs, bake sales, rummage sales, social events, etc. always had been set aside for a Life Center Building and this now totaled around \$200,000. On January 2, 1986 Father Glackin met with the Granitos to talk about formulating a fundraising plan. A course of action was planned. These were then sent to the printer in preparation for the parishioners. The blueprints already had been drawn up, with Jim and Wilma Casey as the general contractors. On January 5, 1986 an appeal was made for volunteers to stay after the 10:30 p.m. Mass to become solicitors for a formal fund drive. The ground was broken on January 19, 1986 for the OLMC Parish Life Center with Bishop John Nevins celebrating an outdoor Mass assisted by Father Glackin, Father Murphy, and many other priests. The Father James O'Riordan Knights of Columbus Assembly members in their ceremonial uniforms



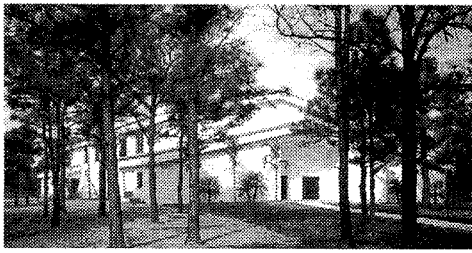
added to the occasion. The regular choir, led by Carol Keiling, decked out in the yellow robes, supplied the music. Also attending were Jim Elliott, the site work engineer, Wilma Helmke Casey, general contractor, Bill Fussell, County Commissioner, Fred Dudley, State Representative, and John Honc, who was thanked for the effort he had put forth toward the new Parish Life Center. Bishop Nevins said the Parish life Center was being built on the solid rock of deep faith and prayers. The children sang Happy Birthday to the Bishop since this day was also his birthday. They presented him with balloons. A barbecue followed the ground breaking. It was hoped that the building could be used as a place on the island to provide space for pre-teens, teenagers, and young adults to hold recreational and social activities, as well as a gathering place for activities of the adult community.

The cost of the building was projected at \$350,000 without furnishings. The fund drive began the week following the Bishop's visit, with the parishioners being asked to pledge toward the \$200,000 still needed. The volunteers started their calls to the parishioners on January 26 under the direction of Captains Michael Dumaresq for Bokeelia, John Kindler for Flamingo Bay, John Stokes for St. James City, and Jim Philbin for Matlacha. Thirty seven sets of names were thanked for their work in the church bulletin. Helen and Bob Albrecht, Ruth and Norbert Boeh, Sue and John Barwick, Ruth and Richard Buerger, Irene and Bill Busby, Beverly and Bob Craig, Kay and Frank DellaBitta, Muriel and Mike Dumaresq, Irene and Harold Everdell, Mary Hagan, Lucille and Verlin Haywald, Beverly Henderson, Helen and Frank Holfelner, Carol and Francis Keiling, Ann and Pete Kendziorski, Ida and John Kindler, Marjorie and Joe Knitkowski, Betty and Al Knobbe, Regina and Gary Krivacs. Joan and John Larimore, Shirley and Arthur Law, Lorraine and Art McGee, Jeanne and Dick McGonigle, Virginia and Neil Naples, Marion and James Philbin, Catherine and John Ricketts, Frances and Tony Ridolfo, Edna and John Rosenfield, Joan and Mike Shevlin, Marjorie and John Stokes, Sophia and Robert Verellen, Bernice and Ed Wozniak, J. Brooks, Barbara Garrick, Mary Mailly, C. Moelter, J. Gasperik, and Doris Relyea. By Palm Sunday, \$125,000 had been pledged of the \$200,000 needed. By the time of the dedication, \$221,356 had been collected or pledged. The first projected date of completion of the hall was not met because of truss collapses on two separate occasions. The hall was dedicated on March 6, 1988.



Early Construction Photos





The total amount of construction and grounds, basic kitchen appliances, folding tables, and chairs was \$576,000. Contributions were being accepted after the pledge date for the miscellaneous items still needed. 400 families were listed as donors in the Dedication Booklet. As written in the dedication booklet "Many sacrifices

Our Parish Life Center were made to make this long awaited dream come true. Faith, prayers and God's blessing have given us a Center that will accommodate the continuing growth of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church and the Pine Island community." The building is 90 feet wide, 180 feet long, and 32 feet high. It is the largest building on Pine Island.

The dedication was a big event on Pine Island. Bishop Nevins celebrated the Mass and blessed the building. Approximately 40 priests attended the ceremony. TV and media were here. A very nice reception was held after Mass in the new hall and our church was designated a Marian Year Shrine for the year 1988.

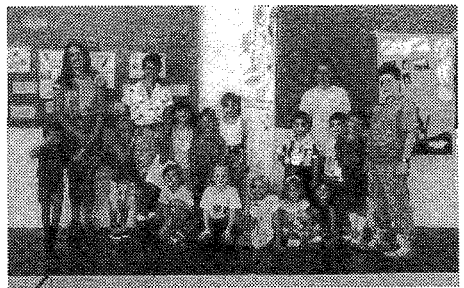
Between the time that the ground was broken for the hall and the hall completed we had our first paid secretary. Doris Relyea was in the sacristy "office" from 9 to 1 four days a week. She set up the bulletins, typed them, and ran them off on the mimeograph machine each week.

The upkeep of the Parish Life Center was done by Norbert (Nobby) Boeh who volunteered to be "the keeper of the Hall". He had the keys and was the man to see if events required setting up or maintenance was needed. Dick Lewis took over when Nobby moved and more recently Bill Beelman. This is a time consuming, sometimes unappreciated job. Needless to say, these men were assisted by others in the parish when the need arose. The Knights are always available as are the other men in the parish when the call goes out.

A small group in the parish put together a summer tour of England, Scotland, and Wales and went with Father Glackin. Father Glackin also celebrated a special healing Mass at church for those who needed it. People were transported by parishioners, attended Mass, and then ate lunch outside on tables set up for the occasion.

The summers of 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991 featured Summer Fun, a no fee, two-week summer program at the Parish Life Center for children of the Island, ages 6 to 12. The kids came at 9 a.m. and left at noon on Tuesday and Thursday. Sam Marzella, assisted by Terry and Roger Bolduc, among others, ran the program. Some of the other parishioners who helped were Candy Davies, Bonnie Green, Carol Keiling, Monica Meo, Sue Beard, Alice Burner, Sandy Reynolds,

Vickie Liptak, Carlin Herring, Beth Wierda and Rita Farmer. Over 70 children registered for the program and there were usually at least 40 in attendance. Music, art classes, dance, sports, and structured activities were featured. Local speakers were utilized, such as Dr. Sherry, who came and gave a presentation about dentistry; Art Bartlewski, who took the children to a local airstrip to inspect airplanes; the local fire department; and the Lee County Sheriff's Department. The children took part in the island July 4th parades. Dick Lewis picked up the program for the last time in 1992.



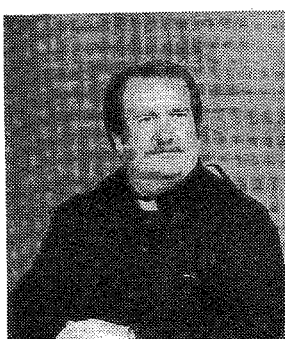
Summer Fun Photo

It was soon after the fund drive that Father Glackin wanted a photo directory of the church parishioners. He asked Dolores Granito to do this since she had put together a list of names and addresses of parishioners for the fund drive. Olan Mills was engaged, parishioners were called, and the first photo directory with all our parishioners names, addresses, and phone numbers listed was published in the spring, 1988. What soon became an unfortunate tradition was that as soon as a photo directory was published, our Pastor left. This occurred after our second and our third directory.

In looking back over the almost five years Father Glackin was OLMM's pastor, the name of Lynne Moore and her work with the children was prominent as were the names of Al and Bette Knobbe for chairing many of the events that united the parishioners. Dottie Farrell and Irene Grassie were always the 'behind the scene' hostesses. John and Vince Honc were involved in much of the repair work that was done on all our buildings, especially the old rectory, and Mike Grimm was always available for just about anything.

1988-1992

Bishop Nevins gave Father Glackin the responsibility to be the founding pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Collier County, and so a going away party for Father Glackin was held on October 2, 1988. We welcomed our new and **sixth pastor, Father Patrick Organ** on October 23, 1988.



Father Pat was born in County Clare, Ireland and ordained in 1971 in Kilkenny, after attending St. Kerien's College. He served as Parochial Vicar at Sacred Heart, Lake Worth, at St. Brendan and St. Andrew in Coral Springs, St. Bernadette in Hollywood, San Marco on Marco Island, and St. Charles Borromeo, Port Charlotte, before being assigned here.



The Parish Life Center was busy. Joan Larimore led exercise classes two mornings a week. These classes continue to this day. After Joan moved from the parish, Mel Meo-Long led them, and today Phyllis Ritenour leads them on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The voluntary fee collected has been used for various church functions such as helping to clean the hall floors.



The local Kiwanis Club in December, 1988 installed a church directory sign at Pine Island Center giving directions and mileage to all the churches on the island. OLMM is the third church in the list.

The rummage sales, St. Patrick's dinner, summer fun, a November family style German Fest, and even a New Year's Eve Party were held in the hall in 1989. During August, a Country Music Show was held with Roni Stoneman from Nashville's Hee Haw Program, our local country singer, Joe Leaman, and our own talented Father Pat on the flageolet (better known as the tin horn), George Fritz on bass, and Carol Keiling on guitar.

The big event of 1990 was Father Pat's Golf Tournament held at Alden Pines County club on January 23. Father Pat was a good golfer, and his friend Ken Venturi, winner of the 1964 U.S. Open Golf Championship enjoyed these outings. Many parishioners helped make this event a big success. Warren Casazza and Bill Donlon were the chair this first year, and Father Pat was on the team that tied for second place. Forty-three door prizes were donated and a dinner was held in the hall following the day's activities.

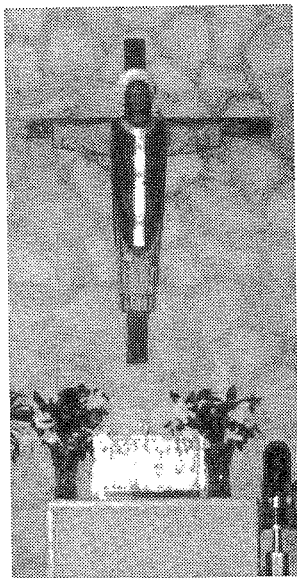


Ken Venturi and Father Pat

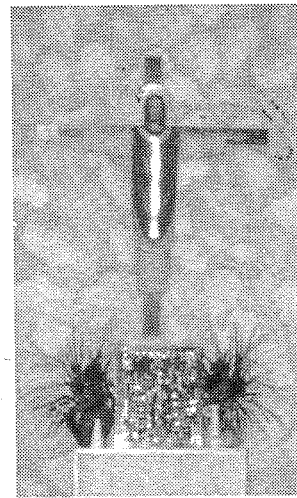
In March, country music again came to Pine Island by way of James Rogers of Dollywood, Tennessee. The Guild sponsored the show. Norbert and Ruth Boeh chaired the event. It was very well received.

The Guild members, when appearing as a body, now each wore a Miraculous Medal attached to a thin blue ribbon.

In 1990 we were given a new silver tabernacle which is still in use. The bronze one that we had was given to a Catholic church in the Immokolee area.



Former tabernacle



New tabernacle

In early 1987, the men started the initiation process for a Knights of Columbus Chapter for the Pine Island area. Paul Balta was the person to call with questions. On April 18, 1990, forty-nine men of the parish formed the Pine Island Council 10329 of the Knights of Columbus with Sam Marzella as the first Grand Knight and Father Organ as the Chaplain. They meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Their principle purposes are charity, fraternalism, family, youth, community activities, and Catholic activity. They started the parish pot luck dinners that are held once a month on the second Tuesday evening of each month. The charter members were Joe Arcuri, Jim Banigan, Roger Bolduc, Mike Bovee, Bob Brinkworth, Pat Cahill, Warren Casazza, Desmond Chatterton, Ted Delzeith, Bill Donlon, Bernard Donnelly, Mike Dumaresq, Jerry Elliott, Warren Garrison, George Gebhart, Joe Giorgio, Raymond Gormley, Vic Green, Glen Henrikson, Frank Holfelner, Richard Holt, John Honc, Vince Honc, George Hoyt, Richard Jarvis, Gary Jock, Stan Jock, John Kindler, Thad Lazowski, Joe Littlefield, Bob Loza, Sam Marzella, Jim McCaffrey, Ed McDonough, Ed McGillis, Joe McGlone, David Nichols, John O'Connell, Rev. Patrick. Organ, Mike O'Toole, Bill Ruppert, Vincent Same, Mike Shevlin, Albert Sibi, Frank Smentowski, Richard Tutt, Marinus VanOers, Mark Walden, and Herbert Webster. Their annual tootsie roll sales benefit Pine Island Elementary School's



Our Knights at a Parade



Exceptional Students Program. Their aluminum can recycle bin is found near the parking area of the Parish Life Center.

Different choirs have provided music for our Masses. A children's choir was begun by Carol Keiling in 1991. These children became known as Father Pat's Angels. They sang at



Mass once a month. They practiced on Friday nights for 30 minutes during the family fun night. Later, in 1995, Tish Wszolek began another children choir during Father LeGere's time. In recent times the regular choir sings at the 8:30 Sunday morning Mass. Tish plays the organ and Bette Knobbe is the cantor for the Saturday evening Masses with Rosemary Thomas assisting in the winter. The Sunday

morning choir remains much the same with Carol Keiling as Music Director. Members of the choir include Grace Becker, Jim Becker, Elaine Delaplane, Mary Hagan, Judy Hage, Bob and Marilyn Hedlund, Beverly Henderson, Lauren Lambrecht, Jean Lauderdale, Larry McCarthy, Betty Miller, Ginny Olding, Mel Schneider, Renee Swanson, Jean Turner, and Michaela Valenti.

The bulletins during Father Pat's time had news of the parish, jokes, words of wisdom, humorous bon mots "From the Pastor's Desk," and religious question contests for the young people of the parish. Father Pat would put in three questions and if you thought you knew the answers you could call the rectory on Sunday afternoon. The caller (sometimes he designated the first or second or fifth caller) would receive \$5.00, if correct. Some of the winners printed in the weeks following the contest were Jessica and Angela Delaplane, Tim Shevlin, Samantha Lewis, Lisa McLaughlin and Jamie Keiling. If Father Pat was going to be out of town on any week-end, he asked different parishioners to take the calls. This weekly contest continued throughout the religious education year schedule. The contest continued until 1992. His angels, as he called the youth, were very interested and excited to be involved.

Sister Elaine Robbins, of the Sinsinawa Dominican Order, assisted by Sister Marie McBride became our religious education leaders, taking over from Irene Everdell in 1989. They did this until 1991 when Richard and Shirley Holt began to coordinate the religious education program. Doris Relyea along with Jean Turner, Barbara Uhlar, and Candy Davies, were teachers under Sisters Elaine and Marie. Students received confirmation at St. Andrew since we had so few students at the time. Doris was also very active in the Respect Life Ministry, as were Mike Shevlin and Mary Mailly. They participated in pro-life parades, writing letters, and in prayer

sessions in front of a Naples clinic.

Current Respect Life Committee



Friday family fun night at the hall began in December 1990 and lasted until 1996. Games, refreshments and fellowship were available for anyone interested. The open invitation to Pine Islanders was listed in the *Eagle* each week.

The men's choir was started soon after Father Pat came. Bill Godfrey led it and the men sang at the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays until his death in 1996. They wore white pants and a burgundy jacket in the summer and navy pants and a burgundy jacket in the winter. Some men who made up the choir during its existence were Tony Ambrose, Joe Arcuri, Bob Brinkworth, Ralph Cerrato, Bill Donlon, Vic Green, Mike Grimm, Pete Kendziorski, Dick Kilroy, George Leidecker, Art Law, Dick Lewis, Bob Loza, Jack McNichols, Sam Marzella, Mike O'Toole, and Morgan Porter. This 10:30 Mass became quite popular because of this choir.



In 1990, Sam and Maryruth Marzella were Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus at our annual Christmas Dinner. Dick Lewis took over in 1991 and then Peggy Helmers and her husband did it for many years. In recent years, Geri and Steve Showstead listen to the children's request and hand out candy canes and gifts.

Acoustics continued to be a problem in the hall, so coverings on the walls were installed. This solved part of the problem. Next, drape swags were installed on the ceiling. This seemed to alleviate much echoing that occurred. The windows on the south side were tinted to decrease the glare and heat from the sun's rays in 1998.

1991 was a big year for the parish. We had our second Father Pat Golf Tournament on January 20, bigger than the first, with 160 Pine Islanders teeing off. Open champion Ken Venturi again was the guest of honor. Bill Donlon and Gino Grilli co-chaired the event.

Our new electronic bells installed through the generosity of the Plouffe family were now



rung every day at noon until a peaceful settlement in the Middle East was reached. Father Pat hoped that when islanders heard the bells, they would be encouraged to take a moment for silent prayer to remember our troops in the Middle East. He was quoted in the *Pine Island Eagle* saying "Our daily bells will speak of another kind of revolution: An invitation to pray with one another, for one another, for our troops in the Middle East and for peace in the world. Remember-prayer is a privilege, peace is a gift."

In June the parish celebrated the 20th anniversary celebration of Father Pat's ordination.

On October 15, 1991, a group in the parish started Bingo on Tuesday evenings. This night was later changed to Thursday in 1992 and then to Saturday in 1995 before we gave up Bingo in 1997, when the hall was needed for weekend Masses. Ruth Boeh, Dick Lewis, Toddy Centa, Jean Lesch, Ken Cox, Vic Green, Joe Arcuri, Mike O'Toole, Bob Albrecht, and Bob Raulerson were some of the early supporters and then the group became organized with Bill Donlon, chair, Marilyn Clements, secretary, and Terry Bolduc, Treasurer. This undertaking required much help from the parishioners to keep it going. The food sold, the free drinks, and the number of prizes given were a big draw and very popular with Pine Islanders. It was also a good fundraiser, increasing the revenues of the church.

At Christmas time, Father Pat announced the establishment of a food bank for all the people of the island. The Parish Life Center's kitchen would be used to store the food. The food bank was written up in *The Pine Island Eagle*.

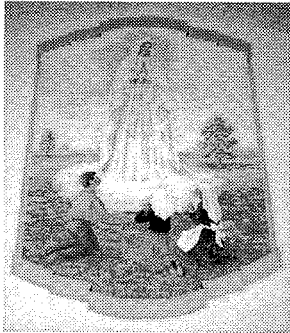
In 1995, our food pantry combined with other churches to form the Pine Island Food Pantry. Gradually other community and civic associations were added. Some guidelines were laid out, and FISH (Fellow Islanders Sending Help) let the Food Pantry use their telephone answering service for people in need to contact the Pantry. All food is now stored in the Parish Life Center in an area designated as the pantry. Shelves and refrigerator and freezer space are available for storage. There are over 50 volunteers who administer the food and other item distribution, monetary donations, and gift certificates, etc. In 1996 OLMM was one of twelve in the Diocese which received a \$500 grant for this outreach activity. Some volunteers involved in this activity from our church are Midge Allen, Darlene and Bill Beelman, Gail Cohorn, Pat Cox, Lorraine Farrington, Ced Gregorsky, Barbara and Brendan Grimm, Betty Johnson, Ed McDonough, and Barbara Promen. An average of three to four families are



Some of the Current Food Pantry Volunteers

helped weekly.

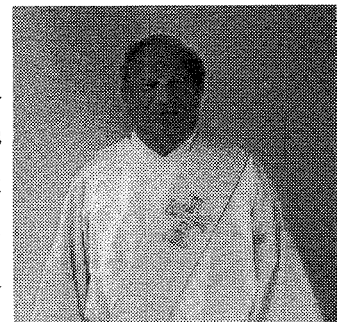
In 1992 our youth put on a variety show entitled "Small, Small World" in the Parish Life Center to the delight of the parishioners in January, and again we had our third successful Father Pat's Golfing Tournament with his good friend, Ken Venturi as guest.



For those who wonder why we have a painting of Our Lady of Fatima on the front of the Parish Life Center, here's the reason. Art and Candice Davies asked artist Irma Hawkins of Matlacha to paint the mural as a memorial to Art's mother. The work measures seven by nine feet. The year 1992 was also the 75th anniversary of the apparition of our Holy Mother at Fatima.

At Easter we held an outdoor Mass in front of the Parish Life Center.

In 1991 and 1992, we had a future deacon in training, Richard Holt, husband of Shirley Holt. Unfortunately, before he finished his studies he passed away on April 22, 1992. It wasn't until 1996 that we had a deacon assigned to us when Frank Urrico moved to Matlacha. Shirley Holt became the parish secretary in July, 1992, and was named Director of Religious Education as well.



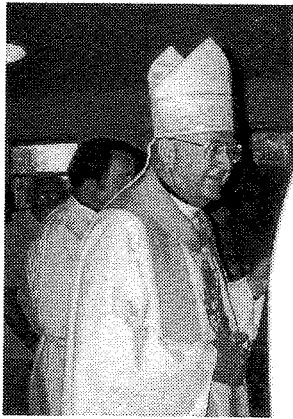
Rev. Deacon Urrico



Shirley with Father Pat, Terry Bolduc, and MaryRita Davis

On Father Pat's last St. Patrick's Dinner at OLMM we had the pleasure of hearing him play the tin horn. It was around this same time that we had our second parish photo directory. There were 517 families registered. Some of the photos taken during Father Pat's stay and used in our directory are shown on the next page. The directory was not out a week before we learned that Father Pat was being transferred.





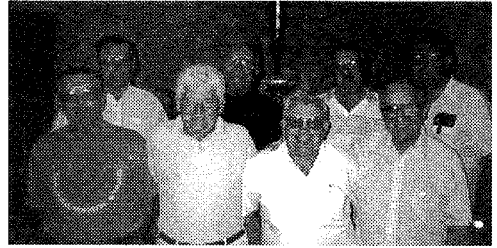
The Bishop and Father Pat



Vic Green, Jean Lesch with others in the kitchen



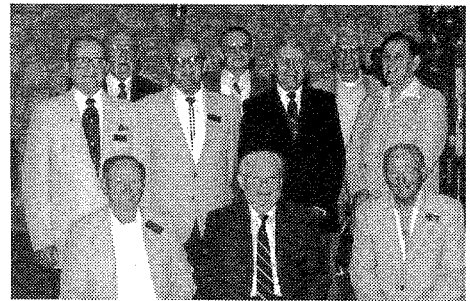
Eucharistic Ministers



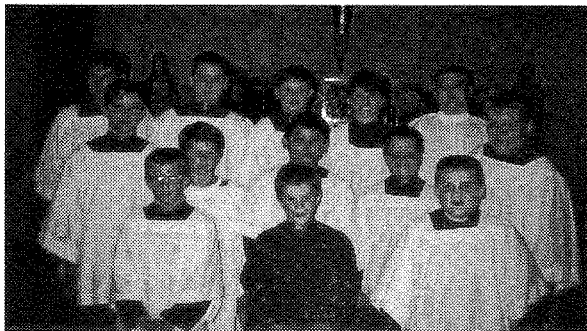
Older Altar Servers



The Folk Choir



The Ushers



The Younger Altar Servers



The Readers



The Bishop transferred Father Pat to San Pedro Parish in North Port, to begin May 21, 1992. On his new appointment Father has this to say of OLMM: "It was a team effort between the parishioners and myself at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. There was good cooperation. But while I will miss the Pine Islanders, I'm also looking forward to meeting with the beautiful people of San Pedro Parish who I'm sure will give me the same cooperation." He sent a letter to the *Pine Island Eagle* thanking his Catholic and non-Catholic friends for his time on Pine Island.

A farewell reception was held for Father Pat in May, 1992.

1992-1995

Bishop John Nevins assigned **Rev. Vincent LeGere** as administrator of OLMM on May 21, 1992. Father LeGere was ordained in Boston as a member of the Society of African Missions in 1960. After ordination he continued his studies at the Gregorian University in Rome. He served in Washington, DC, Liberia, West Africa, the Bahamas, St. Coleman Parish in Pompano Beach and St. William Parish in Naples, Florida. Father LeGere relocated to southwest Florida in 1985, the year after the Diocese of Venice was established, in service to his friend, Bishop Nevins. They knew each other as seminarians in Washington, DC.



Father Vin with the Sunday Morning Coffee Ladies: Alma Decker, Zita Thorsen, Doris Jones, Jean Lesch, and MaryRita Davis



Father Al

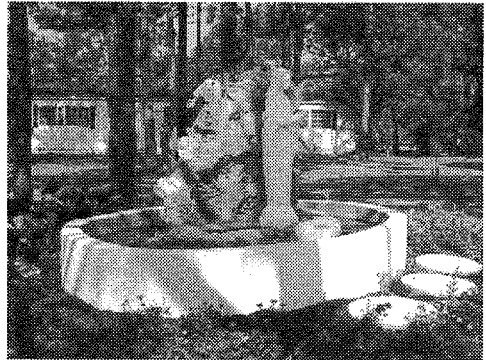
OLMM had Rev. Albert Cooney, S.M.A. as a permanent assistant to Father LeGere, staying at the rectory. Father Al was 17 years in Liberia, W. Africa as a Missionary Priest and most recently at St. Williams Parish for the past year and half. We also had Rev. Joseph Foley, S.M.A. from Fort Myers helping out. Father Joe could play a mean harmonica, or so some parishioners related. He also became the contact in later years at the African Caribbean American Mission on Michigan Avenue in Fort Myers for left over food from our many dinners and functions. When the local Civic Center no longer had meals for seniors the Mission was contacted. The Arcuris in the past, and more recently the Mallerys, do the transporting of excess food.



During the late summer, Hurricane Andrew wrecked havoc on the eastern coast of Florida, and OLMM and the Pine Island Moose Lodge 1954 transported three truckloads of supplies, collected on the Island to areas hit by the storm.

The first annual community Halloween Party was held in the Parish Life Center. Over 600 children attended. It was chaperoned by volunteers from the Island churches and civic associations. These annual parties continue to this day and are held in the Parish Life Center.

Soon after Father LeGere arrived the outdoor shrine to Mary was redesigned to include a waterfall. This was dedicated on the Feast of the Assumption, December 8, 1992. This photo also shows the original rectory in the background.



New Shrine, Original Rectory

Instead of a Golf Tournament, Father LeGere wanted a Mardi Gras. And so in February, the week before Lent began in 1993, and again in 1994, OLMM hosted a Mardi Gras on the grounds to the north of the Parish Life Center with rides, game booths, food, magic show, and bingo.



Father Al at the Ticket Booth

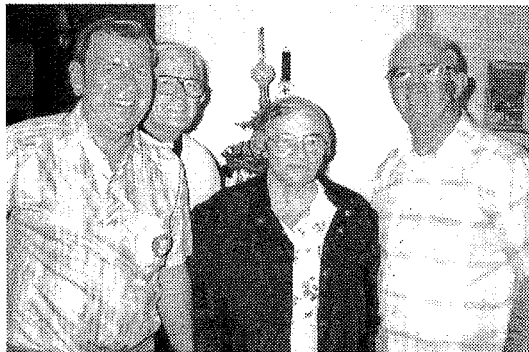
In February 1993, the Ladies Guild reluctantly withdrew their relationship with the diocesan C.C.W. because of changes, moves, deaths, reduced membership, and overload. It was decided that the Guild would focus more on support for our parish's activities.

In March, one of the mainstays of our church, Marie Honc died. No one who ever attended Mass here will ever forget her. Father Vin wrote:

This past week our church family suffered the loss of a member whom I would have to call the Founder of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, Marie Honc. No longer shall we see her setting up the altar and preparing for all the liturgical functions performed in our church. No longer shall we see her attending not just one Mass but every Mass and liturgy. We shall miss Marie very much and we extend our deepest sympathy not only to her family but to each other for Marie's

presence to us all was an inspiration for our own faith and a special blessing from God to each and everyone of us. I know that Marie will remember us all from her heavenly throne and, although we shall dearly miss her, we should rejoice in the knowledge that she has now reached the eternal reward of heaven which she so rightly deserved. God bless you Marie and I place Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church under your protection and guidance from above. From your heavenly position I am sure will flow many blessings to your church family, we the members of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church.

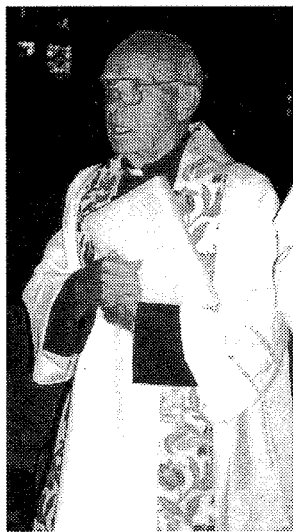
Father Glackin and Father Pat concelebrated her funeral with Father Vin. During the service the electronic bells started ringing mysteriously. Donations given to OLMM in her memory were used to buy the altar frontal with the altar cloth which came from Belgium and has the scene of the Last Supper.



Father Vin, Father Al, Marie, and Father Foley

Geri Green then became our sacristan, sometimes assisted by Terry Bolduc. When Geri retired as sacristan in 1997, our deacon and his wife, Frank and Muriel Urrico, took over. They currently are assisted by Jim and Nancy Banigan, Renae Burgett, Geri Green, Carol and David Humme, and Al Knobbe.

Foundation 2000, a special Bishop's Appeal, was begun in the spring. Our goal was \$50,000, with the proviso that any amount over that goal belonged to the parish. Bob and Dolores Brinkworth chaired that endeavor, and we collected \$68,000, which meant that \$18,000 was set aside for possibly a new rectory since the mobile home rectory was requiring more and more repairs.



The Bishop's delegate, Fr. Joseph Stearns, Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Punta Gorda, installed Father LeGere as the **sixth Pastor** of OLMM on June 6, 1993 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Father LeGere had served as administrator since coming to OLMM in 1992.

During this period OLMM was fortunate to have the services of **Msgr. Gerard Walsh**, Joan McCaffrey's uncle, retired from the Archdiocese of Newark and who had moved to the area. His smile and



friendliness along with his homilies will always be remembered, and his earnest appeal for funds for a new rectory insured the success of that drive. He assisted until his death in 2000.

On Father's Day, June 20, 1993, Vince Honc was riding by the church in the afternoon and saw smoke under the eaves. The church was locked, so he went to the rectory and the fire department was called. There had been a thunderstorm earlier in the afternoon and it was determined later that an electrical fire had been started in the air conditioning unit. Once the electricity was turned off the fire burned itself out. The insurance company viewed the church and the head of the diocesan building office came. The church could not be used for services until repairs were made, so daily Masses were held in the Parish Life Center meeting room and week-end Masses were held in the Center with the altar set up on the stage. Shirley Holt and the office were moved to the rear of the hall near the pantry. It was not until October that the Masses were moved back into the church. There were changes made in the church during this interim: the confessional which used to be the first door on the left in the church just before entering the sacristy was moved to the old kitchen area to the left of the wing area, the office was moved from the pantry area of the Parish Life Center to the front of that building where it is now located, the old office in the sacristy area became a vesting place for the eucharistic ministers, lectors, and altar servers, two air conditioning ducts were placed over the altar area, the chairs behind the altar had backs put on them and were re-covered, fans were installed in the north wing, a tile roof



New Cupola

Bishop Nevins came in the spring of 1993 to confirm sixteen of our young people. Nine other children received the First Eucharist.

Our church received a Gilbransen organ from the estate of Wanda Jones.

replaced the shingled one, a cupola was erected and the carillon speakers were placed there, and the inside was repainted to blend in with the rock formation behind the altar. A year later, Luella and Clarence Bredhold added the finishing touch by purchasing a light-weight decorative bell to place in the cupola. About this same time the tabernacle was moved from in the middle directly in back of the altar to just in front of the left stained glass window.



Father Vin and First Eucharist Mass

In August, 1993 Father Vin appointed six parishioners to be his Advisory Board to help him with decisions concerning Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church. They were Bill Donlon, Bernie Donnelly, Geri Green, Shirley Holt, Vince Honc, and Sam Marzella. These six remained for a year until Sam became ill and Ced Gregorsky took his place.

For three years beginning in 1993, our parish became involved in a RENEW program. Parishioners were invited to join small groups for a six week program to discuss themes, share their insights and concerns about Catholicism, and pray together. Dolores and Bob Brinkworth coordinated the program, assisted by John Barwick, Jerry Elliott, and Bob Loza. Those participating still recall the closeness they encountered with their fellow parishioners.

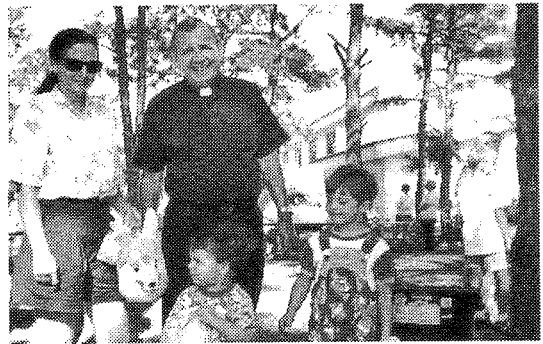
Our bulletin began to sport a colored cover picturing our church. These were made possible by the generosity of the Plouffe family.

In March, 1994 parishioners from OLMW went on their first cruise with Father Vin. These cruises continue to today, although now they are sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. George and Betty Hoyt coordinate the details.

In June, Father Vin heard that St. Raphael's Church in Englewood had some pews they no longer needed. Since our pews had been in the church since 1967 and were always being repaired, it was thought a good idea to go get these free ones. Twenty men from the parish got together, rented a sizable truck, made two trips to Englewood and brought back these many eighteen foot pews. No one had checked them out ahead of time and if you asked any of these men about their adventure, you'll see them smile and chuckle. They were too big, made of particle board, and of no use to our church. They were stacked inside the Parish Life Center for a while and then given away. Meanwhile, George Gebhart, Vic Green, Brendan Grimm, Dave Grueser, Joe McGinn, and others have kept our pews together so we can continue to use them.

Parish socials continued with the rummage sales, card party, Easter Egg Hunt, an ice cream social, bingo, anniversary breakfasts, and dinners.

BINGO
 EVERY THURSDAY - GAME STARTS 6:45 PM
 DOORS OPEN AT 5:00
**OUR LADY OF
 MIRACULOUS MEDAL CHURCH**
 ADMISSION PACKAGE - REG. \$15, JUMBO \$20.
 ONE (1) FREE STRIP - JACKPOT
 ONE (1) FREE STRIP - EARLY BIRD
 ONE (1) FREE GAME - 1ST SPEEDY
 ONE (1) FREE GAME - 2ND SPEEDY
 WITH EACH PAID ADMISSION
 COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON

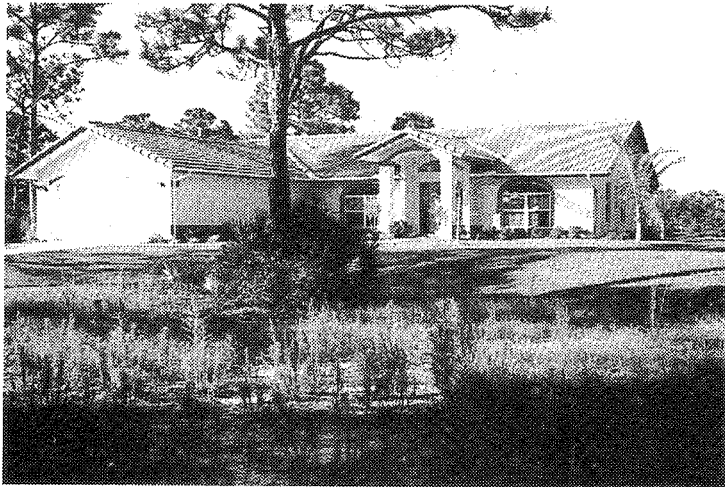


A Happy Easter Egg Hunt with the Bunny
 Bags made by RoseAnne Gebhart and Ed Crouse



Our church and hall have always been superbly decorated for the Masses. Marie Honc alone did it until her death, usually with monetary donations from parishioners for the big celebrations of Easter and Christmas. In recent years, Lynne Moore and her son supplied the weekly altar flowers, followed by Joan McCaffrey. Today the responsibility has been taken over by the Church Decorating Committee, chaired by Allyson Burnett along with Nancy Clark, Jackie Coburn, Dave and Mary Grueser, Lucy Lambrecht, and Melanie Voris.

In the fall of 1994, a fund drive was begun for a new rectory to be built on church property, with a driveway off Alcorn Drive. We now had \$18,320.69 in the bank from the



Foundation 2000 Drive. Neil Francis Construction Firm had the contract for the rectory. During 1995, over \$118,527 was collected from 295 donors to cover the cost of the building, furnishings, and shrubbery. An open house was held on December 10, 1995.

Our New Rectory

In the fall, there were special novenas to Our Lady of Guadeloupe. A large photo of Our Lady was given to Doris Relyea, who then organized novenas which were prayed for 52 weeks. Every week a different parishioner had the photo and said special prayers, before passing it on to other parishioners. After 52 weeks Doris contacted the Guadeloupe Shrine regarding its return and was told to retain it. This remains in Doris' possession today. These novenas became the start of the rosary group.



1995 began with a Parish Mission, with Fr. Ron Luka leading us, in January. Our Easter Mass was again celebrated outside the Parish Life Center. The choir wore new choir robes purchased after Kay DellaBitta obtained funds from interested volunteers.

In April Father Vin and the Advisory Board decided that OLMM should have a Parish Council. It was to consist of the Advisory Board and six members elected by the parishioners. On April 22 and 23, parishioners were given informational sheets and ballots. Joe Arcuri, Dolores Granito, and Carol Keiling were elected for two years, while Greg Lambrecht, Bill Ruppert, and Jeff Tolefesen were elected for one year. The Advisory Board now consisted of Bill Donlon, Ced Gregorsky, Geri Green, Shirley Holt, Vince Honc, and Ed McDonough. These twelve and Father Vin met monthly until this notice appeared in our February bulletin: "At the last Parish Council (January, 1996) meeting, the Executive Board of the Council felt that the Parish Council was not meeting its objective. Therefore the members of the Executive Board resigned and thus the Parish Council was disbanded." Even though the Council was only in operation for nine months some good came out of it. A *Youth News* bulletin was published monthly for seven months informing the parish of youth activities, and with photos and brief bios of some of the young people, especially those receiving Confirmation or First Eucharist. The religious education students and teachers kept the parish up to date on their activities. A new short-lived children's choir was begun by Tish Wszolek and made their debut at the Thanksgiving Mass. The Social Council member was now chair of all the church parties, such as the one in May for Father Al who decided to retire and leave us, but to be available for helping out, the open house for the new rectory, and the parish Christmas party. The old mobile home rectory was sold and removed from our property. The parish office became computerized.

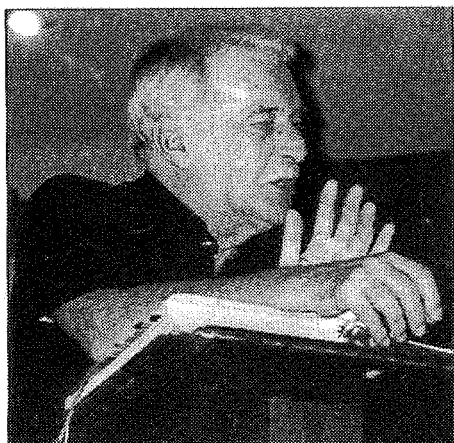
The church had a new altar microphone and new outdoor sound system installed, donated by Barbara Promen. And Angel Bags, put together by Maryruth Marzella, were to be found on the hooks in back of the church. These bags contained a soft angel doll made by Jean Lauderdale, a cloth book, a child's rosary, and a soft toy. They were and are on loan during services for small children not old enough to understand the Mass.

The Parish Life Center and the church were repainted during the summers of 1995 and 1996 by George Hoyt, who donated his time. The colors are now a light salmon color with terra cotta trim.

1996-1997

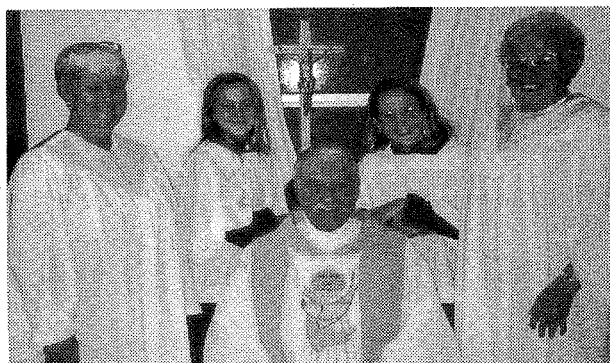
In January, 1996, Rev. Deacon Frank Urrico moved to Matlacha and began involvement with our parish. He began the training of altar servers, eucharistic ministers, and lectors; and he coordinated the RCIA classes. The timing of his arrival was fortuitous for OLMM because Father Vin had become ill and Father Al and Monsignor Walsh were available occasionally. In August the Diocese assigned **Rev. Arthur Hannaway** as our administrator. He was well liked and an immediate hit with the parish. To illustrate this point, the bulletin announced that RCIA





Father Art

class would be held in the parish office starting on Mondays in November. The class was intended for those who wanted to become a Catholic or renew their faith. Sixty-eight parishioners showed up, so the class was moved to the church. The church soon became the place to be on a Monday night. Father Art provided insight, answers, faith sharing and community for the hundreds of parishioners who wanted to be more informed. The sessions were referred to by some as "Priest on Mike" and were so well attended that those interested in becoming a Catholic needed their own class which Deacon Frank provided.



**Father Art with Altar Servers
and Eucharistic Ministers**

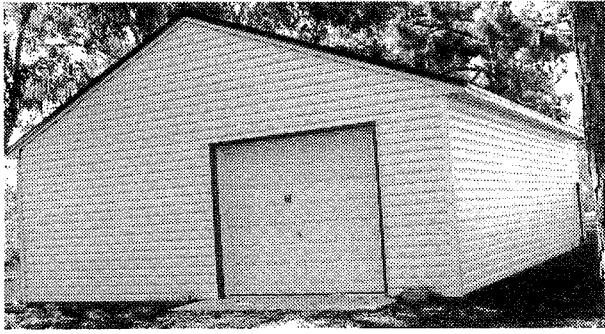


Father at one of our Socials

Father Art set up an office, using space from the secretary's office, with portable partitions as walls. These partitions were removed when Father Tom came, and floor to ceiling walls were built by Jim McCaffrey assisted by Jim Banigan, and Vic Green, with George Hoyt in charge of the painting.

We rented out our hall for Mangomania, a Pine Island Mango Festival, during a week-end in July. It was the most people our grounds and hall had ever seen, with thousands attending.

Our Friday morning clean-up crew had been repairing our lawn equipment to the point of no return. They asked Father Art for permission to display these worn-out pieces to the parishioners and to set up a table for donations for replacements. They soon had over \$10,000 which was used not only to purchase new equipment but also to finance the building of a new storage shed. This new larger shed, begun in 1998 and finished in 2000, was built with volunteer



The New Shed

help from the Parish, especially Jim McCaffrey and Carl Mallery, assisted by Tony Ambrose, Tony Devlin, Jim Banigan, Bill Beelman, Vic Green and son, Brendan Grimm, George Hoyt, Joe McGinn, Morgan Porter, Vince Honc, and Alan Tucker and sons. The shed is located in the back of the parish life center. The old shed was cleaned out and painted by Guild members. It now is used for storage for rummage sale items.

On Easter Sunday, March 30, 1997, Father LeGere died. Vespers was celebrated on March 31, and Bishop Nevins presided at his funeral Mass on April 1 in the Parish Life Center.

The Guild, Knights, Pantry Committee, and Respect Life Ministry (Geri Green, Millie Harding, Carol Keiling, Betty Johnson, Joan McCaffrey, Ed McDonough, Doris Relyea, and Zita Thorsen), along with our other groups continued their work. Our third parish photo directory came out with 513 parish families listed, and Father Hannaway was transferred to St. Patrick's Church in Sarasota in April. Father Al returned to the parish to fill in until the end of May.

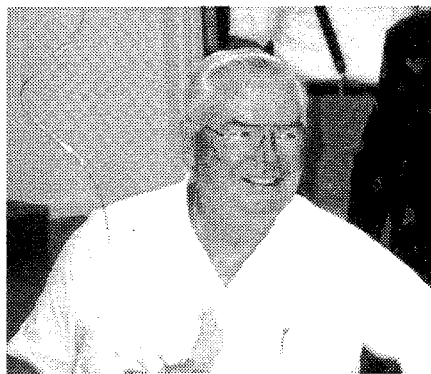
1997-2001+

Bishop Nevins arranged with the Augustinians to take responsibility for Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish. On May 31, **Rev. Thomas Pohto, O.S.A.**, became the **seventh pastor**. Father Tom was born in Euclid, Ohio, ordained in 1967, and spent much of his priesthood in the secondary and higher education apostolates in the Philadelphia and Miami areas, and at St. John Neumann High School in Golden Gate. Father Tom was installed by Father Jerome Carosella, Chancellor of the Diocese, at the 5:00 Mass on June 29, 1997. The parish celebrated with a dinner following the Mass.



Father Pohto at his Installation





Rev. John Sheridan, O.S.A., was assigned to help at the parish and at Blessed Katharine Drexel Church in Cape Coral for about nine months beginning in September.

Father Sheridan

Father Tom opened up communications in the church by having parish meetings to talk about our space problems. The church could not accommodate the number of parishioners for weekend Masses during the winter season, so the Parish Life Center was now used for the weekend and holy days Masses from December into April. This meant that Bingo which was now on Saturday evenings had to be discontinued. The Parish was asked at a February 9, 1998 meeting to consider four options, namely, (1) to do nothing, (2) to turn the Parish Life Center into our parish church building, (3) to build an addition onto our church, and (4) to build a new church building. Those in attendance expressed almost no support for options 1 and 2. Accordingly, a committee of eight was formed to study the feasibility of options 3 and 4. The committee consisted of Andrew Conlyn, chair, Allyson Burnett, secretary, Wayne Allen, Vince Honc, Carol Keiling, Ken Kloiber, Argie Schmeideke, and Deacon Frank Urrico. Their report was given to the parish in January, 1999, and another parish town meeting was held in February which recommended option 4, to build a new church building. A church planning committee was appointed that consisted of Allyson Burnett, Bill Donlon, Geri Green, Vince Honc, Carol Keiling, Joan and Jim McCaffrey, Argie Schmeideke, and Deacon Frank Urrico.

Some changes in the liturgy have become evident in recent times. Now, only the clergy and altar servers wear robes for Mass. The Lectionary is no longer carried in procession, either by the lector or by the deacon. Eucharistic ministers are seated among the congregation, symbolic of the basic meaning of liturgy, "the work of the people." Although it is not possible to have Holy Communion under both forms of bread and wine at the weekend Masses in the church because there is not enough room, now Communion is distributed in both forms at weekday Masses and at the weekend Masses in the Parish Life Center.

Cedelia Gregorsky was appointed the new Director of Religious Education in 1997 and classes went to a more comprehensive study with 26 sessions closely following the public school calendar. The classes used lectionary based materials with the readings of the day at the students' level. Pastoral practice in the Catholic Church in the United States regarding the sequence and



Ced Gregorsky

age for the Sacrament of Confirmation today is left to each Diocesan Bishop to determine. The norm of our Diocese in 1999 was to have "restored order," which meant that the order of the Sacraments of Initiation would be Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In May, 2000, Bishop Nevins came to confer the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist in the restored order for the first time in our Parish. In 2000-01 there were 73 students in classes (Pre-K through the Son Seekers teen program). Twenty one of these students received the sacrament of Confirmation and nine of these also received the Eucharist for the first time in May, 2001.



Some of Our Catechists



**The Ladies setting up for the
First Communion Party**

Today, our Catechists include Pam Anderson, Sue Barwick, Terry Bolduc, Allyson Burnett, Donna Busscher, Lindsey Busscher, Linda Cantu, Julia Ciano, Jo Elliott, Carol Humme, Dave Humme, Michelle Lester, Stephanie Lester, Donna McAvoy, Lydia Memoli, Catherine Schons, Cathy Valenti, and religious education intern, Jennifer Spillett.

Our bulletins were now done by the J.S. Paluch Company, which does many church bulletins. The main difference is that items for the bulletin need a lead time of over a week. Barbara Grimm, Mary Hagan, and Carol Humme formed a library committee and started a parish library of religious books which are kept in the office and can be checked out. The bulletins kept the parish informed of titles and brief summaries of some of the books.



We purchased a portable classroom building which was set at the edge of the parking lot near the kitchen. The additional classroom space for religious education classes was needed especially during the winter season when weekend Masses were celebrated in the Parish Life Center.



Portable Classroom

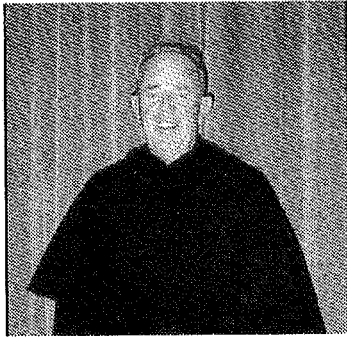
In January, 1998, Rev. Terrance Hyland, O.S.A led the parish in a retreat. And the front of the church was re-landscaped thanks to the Guild and the Knights.

Early in 1998, the parish was awarded an Environmental Justice Grant of \$1500 from the United States Catholic Conference. This was one of 19 grants awarded nationally! (The grants ranged from \$750 to \$1500.) The grant was for a project focusing on the environmental health of Pine Island. The project administered an environmental survey and supported Earth Day (April 25, 1998) activities including a "Keep Pine Island Beautiful Coastal Trash Pickup" and a two-mile March for Parks from St. Jude Harbor Nature Trail to St. James Civic Association to raise money for the Calusa Land Trust & Preserve of Pine Island. A few parish members made the full two-mile march in the heat of the day. The parish's Environmental Justice Program was spearheaded by Cathy Valenti, and supported by many including Julia Ciano, Jim Green, Millie Harding, Diane Lester, Gene and Donna McAvoy, Teddy McAvoy, Mel Meo Long, Sandy and Vincent Paglianete, Frank Valenti, and Michaela Valenti. As a result of the interest in the environment, the church signed up for the Adopt-A-Road clean up program for Stringfellow road from Villas to Sailfish. The parish regularly recycles its left-over bulletins and used Missalettes.

The Guild published its History in November, 1998. An anniversary luncheon was held and Father Dauss, our second pastor, attended.



Past Presidents of the Guild, Jean Lesch, Father Dauss and Father Tom



Father Jim

In 1999 we again had the assistance of an Augustinian, Rev. James Wenzel, O.S.A., during our busy months. Father Jim is a native New Englander who had just spent four years in the Order House in San Gimignano, Italy. Father Jim offered a four session education program on St. Augustine and the Augustinians for the parishioners of OLMM and those of Blessed Katharine Drexel. A large number from our parish attended and enjoyed these sessions.

On June 14, 1999 the Knights sponsored their second Flag Day celebration with a nine by 18 foot flag carried by our youth from the church parking lot to the flag pole area. A color guard led the Knight members. Scouts from Pine Island also took part. The Knights of Columbus Council #10392 received a prestigious award, the Star Council Award for 1998-1999, from the Knights Supreme Council in recognition for their overall excellence in areas of membership recruitment and retention, promotion of the fraternal insurance program, and sponsorship of service oriented activities.



Knights Flag Day Parade

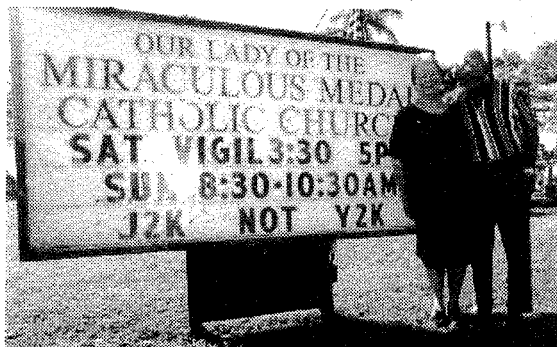


In July, 1999, Shirley Holt retired as the parish secretary, and **Renae Burgett** became the new parish secretary in August.

The Youth Group under Diane Lester's support continued to be active with summer programs, the Youth Rallys, and Friday night socials. Their float won first prize in the religious and civic organizations category in the annual Fourth of July parade. This photo was published in the Pine Island Eagle.

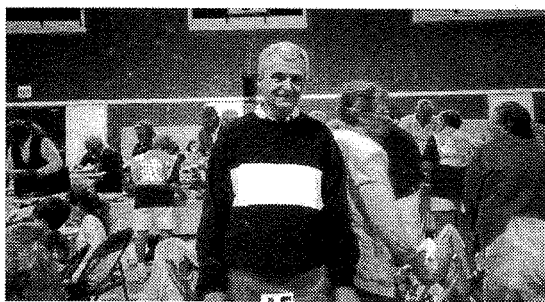


In preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, many parish members signed the Jubilee Pledge for Peace and Justice. A new bulletin board was installed outside the church donated by an anonymous benefactor. This new board replaced the weathered one. *The Florida Catholic* featured OLMM in their Jubilee series and printed this photo of the Marzellas (our sign keepers) with the sign and our J2K announcement.



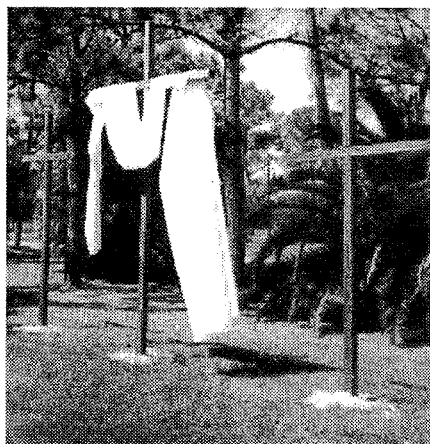
Maryruth and Sam Marzella noting that OLMM was concerned with J2K, not Y2K

The year 2000 and the start of the new millennium became a very busy year for Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church.

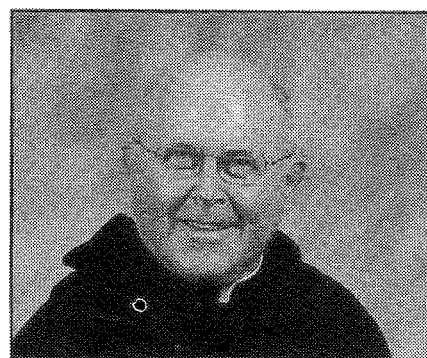


Father Tom at one of our socials

Many different activities took place this year beginning with a very successful retreat in January led by Fr. Simeon Gallagher, OFM Cap. The Guild held a Y2Kard Party and the Knights put on a Barbecue Dinner in February. The cross was draped and empty in preparation for Easter. Rev. Francis X. Gallogly, O.S.A. was assigned to assist us and St. Katharine Drexel Church, and we continued to have large attendance at our Masses in the Parish Life Center.



Father Frank



The parish in the past years had tried to do something for the relatively large Hispanic population on Pine Island. A solution came in the person of Rev. Aureliano Santa Olaya, the Priest in Charge of the Jesus Obrero (Jesus, the Worker) Mission in Fort Myers, who offered his services to celebrate Mass in Spanish on Sunday evenings. He also offered the services of his catechists to prepare Spanish speaking people for the sacraments. Because of other obligations Father Santa was not available every Sunday but beginning on Sunday, October 22 the first Spanish Mass (*La Misa en Español*) was held in OLMM church. These Masses have large



Father Santa

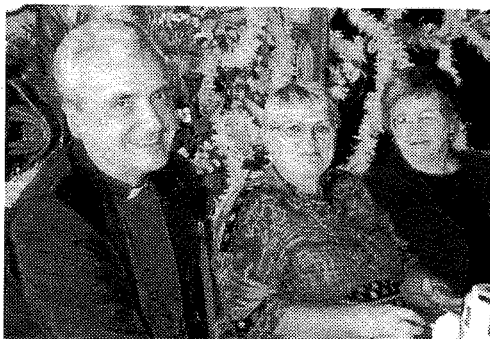
attendance and are very family oriented. On December 10, after Mass, the Pine Island Hispanic Community had a procession with two statues of Our Lady of Guadalupe followed by a pot luck dinner featuring tamales in the Parish Life Center, to which everyone was invited.



Father Santa after one of the Sunday Masses

Jubilee Mass 2000 was held at the TECO arena on September 24 with a limited number of tickets per parish. Two rows of our parishioners attended.

Photographs were taken for our fourth Photo Directory of our parish. This Directory with 500 families listed came out in June, 2001. Joan McCaffrey, the behind the scene organizer for most of the parish functions, was in charge of the Directory, assisted by Anne Dayman.



Father Tom with Joan and Anne

The Guild undertook a different fund-raiser with the collection of recipes and the publication of a parish cookbook. The initial printing of 200 copies of *Miraculous Manna* sold out by Christmas and 100 more were ordered. Only seven copies remained unsold as of May, 2001, but those wanting to see and use the recipes can check out a copy at the Pine Island Library.



For many years the Hospitality Committee served the parish from gala dinners to luncheons after funerals. Hospitality through the hands and hearts of many women and men and young people of the parish is always a major social activity. So the parish was saddened by the death in April, 2001 of Jean Lesch. She was a member of the church from its founding and for many years very much in the kitchen of parish hospitality. MaryRita Davis and Carol Humme now co-chair the

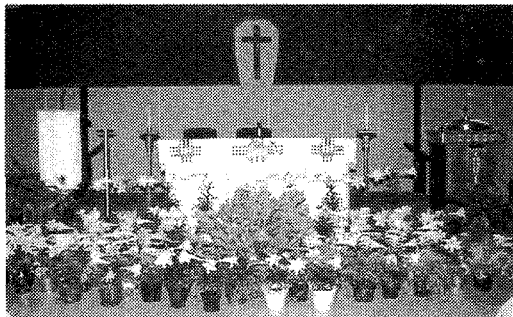


Jean, Alma, Zita, MaryRita, and Jo

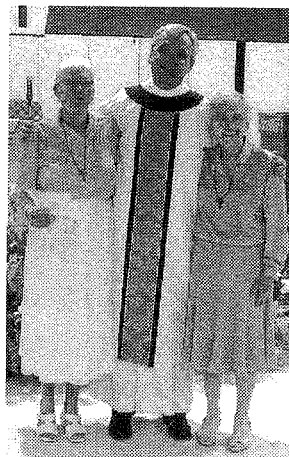
Committee. Hospitality also includes the coffee socials after the 8:30 Mass. These were first held on a table under the trees outside the church and now are held in the Parish Life Center. They provide an opportunity where we can sit and talk with one another for a few moments. These socials continue to be available with Geri Showstead and her fellow workers Pat and Ken Cox, MaryRita Davis, Jo Elliott, and Zita Thorsen, along with many excellent bakers and those who can help from week to week.

We again met our assessment for the Annual Bishop's Appeal, with the extra money put in a non-taxable account for the building fund. The official starting date for the capital campaign to raise \$900,000 for the construction of our new church building began on November 15, 2000 after more than two years of planning and research. The present church was built for 184 persons, and during the height of the season there were more than 400 persons for some of the Masses. December, 2001 will mark the fifth year of having weekend Masses in the Parish Life Center during the winter season.

Easter Sunday, 2001 was a joyful occasion.



The Altar Decorated for Easter Vigil in the PLC



Father Tom with two of our newly initiated members

OLMM has an advisory council on parish financial matters. The members of the current Finance Council are Geri Green, Judy Hage, Vince Honc, and Joan McCaffrey.

The Campaign Steering Committee fund drive under the direction of David Humme, chair, with Geri Green, co-chair, Jim Banigan, Bill Donlon, Joe Giorgio, Colleen Mallery, and Melanie Voris became an immediate success. The Team Captains were Ken Cox, Joe Giorgio, Dave Grueser, Betty Johnson, Ken Kloiber, Juanita Leidecker, Diane Lester, and Steve Showstead. Joe Giorgio made a model of the proposed church to remind our visitors that they too could be



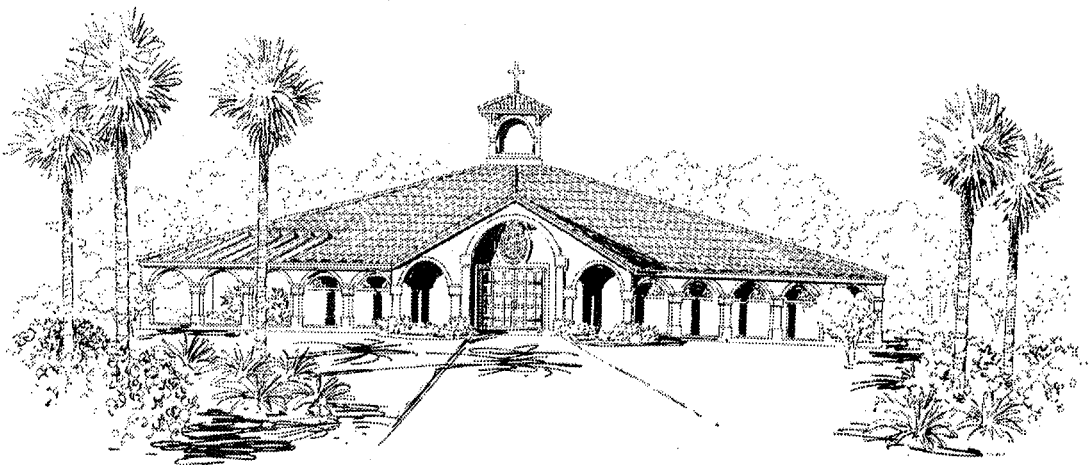
part of the fund drive. There were openings in the model's roof for donations.

The Team Captains then worked with the parishioners who volunteered to be solicitors. Those volunteers included: Tony Ambrose, Carol and Gordon Bodart, Dolores Brinkworth, Helen Clayton, Jackie Coburn, Betty and Frank Emmendorfer, Joe Giorgio, Dolores Granito, Dave Grueser, Donald and Patricia Hoehle, Shirley Holt, Carol and Dave Humme, Stan Jock, Betty Johnson, Ken and Virginia Kloiber, Barbara and Lyle LaPlante, Joseph LaPorte, George and Juanita Leidecker, Diane Lester, Bernice Makin, Colleen Mallery, Jean McKenna, Ruth Mellor, Jo Miller, Barbara Promen, Catherine Schons, Geri and Steve Showstead, Laurette and Ray Sutton, Fran and Paul Theberge, Frank Valenti, Pink and Ron Wesorick, and Victoria Winterer.

By June 30, 2001, the amount pledged was \$922,107 (more than \$22,000 over our goal) and actual payments received were \$555,223.69.

What a fitting ending for Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church's twenty-five years as an official parish. The only better ending would have been that we were able to celebrate our background and heritage in our new church building. Our former priests, our current pastor, Father Tom, and the parishioners have always been strong on religion, commitment, and community. We have much and many people to be thankful to for bringing us this far in our history, and we pray that the future of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church will be as productive as the past.





Our Proposed Church
From the Cover of the Information Booklet sent to OLMM Parishioners

“Celebrating Our Past - Building For Our Future”

