

## The 1960's

The community was busy raising money for necessary items for the hall including silverware, with the altar society having to vote due to limited resources. The decision was, in March of 1960, "that salad forks and spoons were more desirable than knives, forks and spoons."

The community of St. Anthony was alive with new life by the time Bishop O'Flanagan blessed and dedicated the new church, "in ritual splendor" almost two years later on June 13, 1960. The liturgy was said in Latin. Some 200 people came together.

A  
Sunday  
bulletin  
in 1961



announced the banns of marriage for Jeanne Miller and Harvey Dougherty, who celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Anthony in 1961. *Photo's included here of the Jeanne and Harvey Dougherty wedding & Jeanne's wedding dress.* By 1961 the community had begun the process of replacing the Quonset hut and trailer. Construction was begun on the rectory and the parish hall, which would be downstairs in the rectory. The Quonset hut was then sold to the Boy Scouts of America Troop #242 for \$1.

During these early years of the parish St. Anthony's serviced the Mission of St. Andrew when it was established in Eagle River. Families from Eagle River north to the border of Palmer's St. Michael's Parish were encouraged to attend the new Eagle River Parish. Father Francis A. Cowgill was named St. Andrew's first pastor.

June and Paul Cordasci, St. Anthony parishioners, were among those who left to assist with the new St. Andrews Parish. Many years later June and Paul would return to St. Anthony and once again share their time and talents with the parish community. From the start, stories attest to the hardiness of the people. Tales abound about the original church building. Folks would go forward to receive communion, then out the side door and through rain, sleet, snow or ice, tramp around to the back of the church and back in for the final blessing. Word is that it was easy for a parishioner to just hop in the car and leave after communion.

On March 27, 1964, during the Good Friday earthquake, the community was praying when the earth began shaking. Dan Brennen, acolyte, could no longer hold the missal due to the shaking so celebrant Father Joseph E. Shirey S.J. knelt and led the congregation in prayer until the quake stopped, before continuing the service. The church withstood the quake.

By early 1966, Anchorage had become an Archdiocese under Archbishop Joseph Ryan. The number of parishioners attending St. Anthony had grown to over five hundred families. Planning began for a larger church. This time the projected cost was not to be \$35,000 but \$360,000.

The old church was sold and plans made to move the building. Once again parishioners began raising funds. Ground was broken for our present church building on July 16, 1967. Construction began in the fall but was complicated by a November 2nd windstorm which blew down the structure.

Then, on December 6, 1967 word was received that the Holy Father had appointed Father Whelan Titular Bishop of Sicilibba and Coadjutor Bishop of Fairbanks. Bishop elect Whelan set his consecration date for February 22, 1968. He remained at St. Anthony until February 16, when Archbishop Ryan appointed Monsignor Francis A. Cowgill as the new pastor.

The February 18, 1968 Sunday bulletin informed parishioners of Monsignor Cowgill's appointment and invited them to attend Father Whelan's consecration on Thursday, February 22. The round-trip cost of the flight to Fairbanks was \$26.00 per person.



Monsignor Cowgill, RIP October 20,2000, came with diverse experience. Monsignor's initial assignment was to the Diocese of Juneau on June 7, 1952 where he served as principal and teacher of Pius X Mission School at Skagway. He then served as Assistant Pastor at Holy Family in Anchorage where he headed the CYO Deanery Council. Monsignor, along with Father Murphy and the Third Order of St. Francis began St. Francis House, now a program of Catholic Social Services. A stint in Kodiak rebuilding the church after the 1964 earthquake occupied him until the formation of Anchorage as an Archdiocese in 1966. He was called back to Anchorage as the first Chancellor of the Archdiocese. Monsignor also served as defender of the Bond in the Matrimonial Court, Secretary for Education, an Archdiocese Consultor and as mentioned earlier, the first pastor of St. Andrew's Church in Eagle River.

The building of the new church was going well. A letter from Ken Brady Construction stated the completion date was to be February 28, 1968 for the interior, with sidewalks and exterior work to be completed in the spring.

A note from the March 31 bulletin stated "PALM SUNDAY, April 7, we will definitely be in the new church. Archbishop Joseph Ryan will concelebrate the 8:30 Mass with Monsignor Cowgill and Father Cleary." The community was invited via this bulletin notice.

"CHURCH BLESSING AND DEDICATION: His Excellency, The Most Rev. Joseph Ryan, Archbishop of Anchorage, will solemnly bless and dedicate our new St. Anthony Church on Sunday, Oct. 27, The Feast of Christ the King."

Ministry to during the 50's and resulted in the Catholic Organization Mary Clare a sister newly New York spearhead the Anthony's would help



youth begun was growing the formation of Youth (CYO). Sr. Presentation arrived from helped to effort. St. parishioners organize the

CYO. Sr. Mary Clare PBVM would also go on to found catholic Social Services. In 2016 when the Archdiocese of Anchorage celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Sr. Clare would return and be able to see the growth she was so much a part of.

Pictured- Sr. Clare PBVM, Father Dan Hebert & Sr. Mary Louise who also had a role in the early days of Catholic Social Services.

In the fall of 1968 Louise Jackson was installed as the new president of the St. Anthony's Altar Society. Around this same time, the St. Theresa Little Flower of Jesus statue was donated to the parish by Theresa James. The following January Father Bartholomew Egan received a six month assignment as associate pastor. On February 16, 1969 Father Francis J. Fish was assigned as Associate Pastor. Father Edward J. Sterling C.S.Sp. another Associate Pastor and Father Fish accomplished a parish census by making home visits to parish families.

By August of 1969 with the new church finished, attention turned to discussion about a St. Anthony Altar Society, SAAS, column in the church bulletin to be called "S.A.A.Sey Says," Much discussion ensued. After a few months of the SAASey column, the idea was dropped. Lillian Tackes was then installed as president. Members included Mae Ferrari, Marilyn Coward, Peggy Bergsrud, Agnes Coyle, Irene Yaskolski, June Naccarato and Mary Ann Brockway along with many others.

Up to this point in time, St. Anthony s Religious Education Program had been coordinated by lay people; most notable was Jim Brenner, husband of the parish

secretary, Kathy Brenner. Jim a non-Catholic was conscripted into service as Principal of St. Anthony CCD.



Sr. Arlene Boyd RSM, *Arlene Boyd RSM RIP June 2015*, having arrived in Alaska in 1967 became available and so in September of 1969, Monsignor Cowgill appointed her Director of Religious Education. By October "St. Anthony Church CHATTER-A packet of Parish Pickin's," the first parish newsletter was being published. Sister Arlene's ministry marked the beginning of the Sisters of Mercy mission in Anchorage.

St. Anthony parish hall was now being heavily used by the parish as well as housing a Kindergarten class while Wonder Park *Sr.* Elementary School on 4th Avenue was being completed. Clark Junior High School now served as the center for Religious Education classes which were held on Saturday mornings. Sr. Arlene broke her leg skiing but that did not slow her down; in fact she didn't even use crutches. On occasions when parents forget to pick up their children, Sister Arlene drove them home.