

# Our History

## St. Anthony's Church (1859-1880)

Eight years after Port Townsend's founding by Alfred Plummer, the first church edifice ever built was that of our Catholic parish. Begun by a missionary, Father Louis Rossi, in 1859, the site was in Point Hudson at Jackson and Water Streets. A simple building, it neighbored the Charles Hotel.



*St. Anthony's Church  
1859-1880*

St. Anthony's first resident pastor, Father Prefontaine, arrived in 1864, remaining for three years before transferring to Seattle (he was so loved in Seattle that a fountain was later named to honor his memory). 1877 brought the acquisition of our Parish Cemetery on San Juan Avenue, followed by the arrival of Father Regis Maniouloux in 1880. For the next forty years he led our parish to new heights, but oddly enough, during that time, the seeds of our destruction were being planted and they would ultimately shake the very foundations of our parish, both figuratively and literally.

## St. Mary Star of the Sea (1881-1919)

Two lots at the corner of Taylor and Franklin Streets became available for his use, so in 1882 Father Maniouloux, with money borrowed from his relatives in France, there built a new church, renamed it St. Mary Star of the Sea, and furnished it with several fine French made statues. He also persuaded two French nuns, his own sister, Sister Emmanuel, and a cousin, Sister Madeline, to join him in Port Townsend. Both nuns served faithfully until their deaths. A rectory was built next to the church (it still stands, restored to much the way it looked at the turn of the century).



*The first St. Mary's Church  
(1881-1919)*

Around 1912, Father Maniouloux's niece, Jeanne Bessy, arrived from France to serve as housekeeper. Although she was strongly anti-Catholic, her uncle kept her in line, but only up until his death in 1919 (his grave is located in our parish cemetery). His possessions, which included the church, rectory, and furnishings, reverted to his heir, niece Jeanne Bessy. Miss Bessy's first order of business was to lock the parishioners out of the church. She demanded \$10,000 not to foreclose on the mortgage. She was offered \$5,000, which she refused, and foreclosed. Enraged, she smashed the French made statues and sold the stained glass, vestments and vessels. The church was demolished and a storage building was erected from the salvaged lumber. Church items which were unable to be sold remained there and deteriorated due to a leaky roof. In 1933, the parishioners finally retrieved the church records for \$85. By 1940, Miss Bessy, on State relief for a number of years, lost the church in lieu of overdue taxes. William Daly, a local attorney, arranged for the remaining statues to be returned to the parish.

Addison Lewis, a local non-Catholic and friend of the then pastor, Father McGrath, restored the statues, without charge. Two of the five statues, one of St. Anthony, were donated to another parish. The remaining three are in our current church (Our Lady and St. Joseph with Infant on either side of the altar, and Our Lady of Dolours, in the vestibule).

### **St. Mary Star of the Sea (1919-1945)**

After the church property was foreclosed upon, Mass was celebrated in the Odd Fellows' Hall on Lawrence Street for several months until the old Swedish Methodist Church on Blaine and Pierce Streets was purchased for \$250. A house diagonally across the street was purchased to serve as

the rectory and both structures were in very poor condition. At the same time, Father Frederick Klein was named pastor. His sister, Francesca, arrived from Germany to serve as housekeeper. Over the next several years dissension started to grow. In 1929 Father Klein thought building a school might help foster cooperation so he purchased property for \$2,300 which over the next ten years devalued to just \$500, angering parishioners even more. Father Klein, discouraged and suffering from arthritis and other ailments brought on by the dampness and drafts inherent in the poor structures of the church and rectory, resigned and returned to Germany in 1932. There he continued to serve mankind, in particular the Jews who were being persecuted under Adolf Hitler. He was ultimately sentenced to a concentration camp for his acts and died there in 1939. His sister, Francesca, married Henry Neumann, and they remained in Port Townsend until their deaths.

Father Peter Smythe replaced Father Klein and parish dissension continued to flourish, to the degree that protest meetings were held in town and delegates visited the Diocese to submit many petty charges. Father Smythe developed arthritis because of the continuing poor condition of the parish buildings, and in 1935 resigned from the parish.



*St. Mary Star of the Sea  
(1919-1949)*

Enter Father Dillon, who found the parish in deplorable condition, both spiritually and materially. Winds sweeping through the church made it impossible to keep the altar candles lit and the faithful were forced to remain well bundled throughout Mass. A wood stove heated the church and the walls and ceilings were filthy. Ragged curtains covered the windows and the kneeling benches were splintered and broken. Even the vestments were filled with mold. As a result, at his first Mass, Father Dillon announced that until the church was cleaned, no further Masses would be said there. In the rectory, winds would raise the rugs from the floors and the coal stove smoked so badly, Father Dillon would often be forced outside and into the cold. He too began to suffer from arthritis. Spiritually, the parish was in even worse condition. The majority of parishioners failed to attend Mass and had fallen away. The rebellious spirit of some

of the remaining parishioners continued as they threatened to "fire" their pastor. He decided to respond by "tightening the reins" and took steps to enforce the rules of canon law, even forbidding the choir to sing any music not specifically designated by the Church. A non-Catholic man and his sons offered to repair the church without charge, which Father Dillon accepted. This brought additional criticism from a hardcore group of five men of the parish who continued to discredit their pastor at every turn.

They were petitioning the Diocese to make ours a Jesuit parish, since the Jesuit order owned Manresa Hall (now known as Manresa Castle), which they used as a tertianship hall (house of study). The remaining congregation did not join with the agitators and by 1942 the spirit of rebellion was fully extinguished and a new spirit of cooperation began to develop. World War II and an influx of newcomers were having a good influence on the parish. At last, for the first time in 22 years, St. Mary's seemed to be back on its feet.

During the years that followed, improvements were made and new furnishings were acquired. The church, without a baptismal font since 1919 when Miss Bessy sold it, was the recipient of a new cast stone font, purchased by Mrs. Henry Neumann (formerly Francesca Klein, housekeeper) in memory of her late brother, Father Klein (the former pastor who was martyred in Germany).

### **St. Mary Star of the Sea (1945-present)**

Father McGrath became pastor in 1945 and during his tenure a new church was built at Blaine and VanBuren Streets (the potential school property Father Klein purchased in 1929 and for which he was ostracized). Funds were raised via parish dinners, raffles and pledges of money. In addition to our three French statues, items brought from the old church included the baptismal font (which has since been replaced), the crucifix (which hangs in our current chapel), and our current Stations of the Cross. In 1953 Father Walsh became pastor and over the next five years, reduced parish debt by 50%. In 1958, his replacement, Father Rafferty, continued to earnestly reduce the debt in a spirit of fiscal responsibility, a lesson obviously learned earlier in the century. In 1961, \$60,000 in parishioner pledges began the building of a new CCD Center and rectory. The structures were completed, resulting in increased parish debt, partially reduced by the sale of the old rectory, then completely eliminated when the spirit of our former pastor, Father Klein, again came to the rescue in that his sister, Mrs. Henry Neumann (Francesca), died and bequeathed approximately \$150,000 to St. Mary's; a paradox, in that we were broken financially by one housekeeper, Jeanne Bessy, only to be restored to financial health by a subsequent housekeeper, Francesca, coincidentally both family members of the pastors they served. Some may call this a paradox, others a coincidence, still others a miracle!

In 1973 Father Desmond McMahan became pastor and in 1976 he arranged for our first Parish Directory. Later that year, the Holy Family Chapel was built in the church and in 1982, the classroom addition was made to the parish hall.

Father Raymond Heffernan was appointed pastor in 1986 and continued our traditions of fiscal responsibility and adherence to canon law. At the same time, he placed focus on the religious

education of our young people and encouraged them in greater service to and participation in our various parish groups. He semi-retired in 2002.

Fathers Kurt Nagel and Gary Sumpter, whose extensive backgrounds in Catholic education proved invaluable to the young people of our parish, succeeded him.

Father Kurt Nagel is now the Pastor at Holy Family Parish in Kirkland, WA. Father Gary Sumpter has been reassigned as vicar for two small parishes, Our Lady of the Redwoods in Garberville, CA and St. Patrick's Church in Scotia, CA.

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### **A Biography of Fr. John Topel, S. J.**



Born in Seattle in 1934, John Topel attended St. Joseph's grade school and Seattle Preparatory School, where he was the valedictorian of his class in 1952. He then entered the Jesuit novitiate at Sheridan Oregon and pronounced his vows in 1954. After the regular course of studies, he was ordained in 1965.

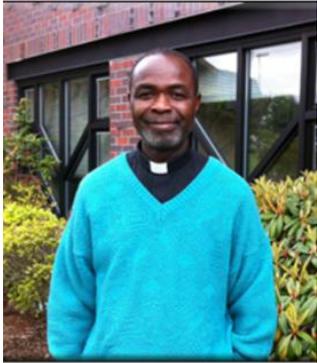
He has a BA in classical languages and an MA in philosophy from Gonzaga University, an STM in doctrinal theology from Santa Clara University, a teaching doctorate in biblical exegesis from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and a Ph.D. in biblical theology from Marquette University.

Fr. Topel began his career at Seattle University in 1971 as director of its Master's program in religious education (SUMORE), and then was a half-time administrator and half-time professor from 1973-1980. For two years he was a full-time associate professor of theology and then for two years was novice director of the Oregon Province Jesuits in Portland. Fr. Topel returned to Seattle University as Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1985-1989, and then was a half-time administrator and half-time professor from 1990-1996. In 1996 he received the Malcolm and Mari Stamper endowed chair in Catholic Intellectual and Cultural Traditions.

For most of his career he has taught a range of courses in biblical theology, with special emphasis on the gospel of Luke and on New Testament ethics. Since he has been the Stamper chair, he has returned to his first love, systematic and doctrinal theology. He is the author of *The Way to Peace*, a primer in the biblical foundations of liberation theology, which has been translated into Spanish and Italian and appeared in three separate English editions. His most recent book, *Children of a Compassionate God* won a third place award from the Catholic Press Association in 2001. He has authored three books, fourteen scholarly articles on biblical topics, a number of other articles in less scholarly journals, and over sixty scholarly book reviews.

He retired as emeritus professor of Seattle University in 2003, was priest administrator of Immaculate Conception church in Arlington, WA (2003-2005) and then came to Port Townsend as pastor of St. Mary's Star of the Sea, Port Townsend, WA where he served until June 30, 2016.

## **A Biography Father Peter Adoko-Enchill – Current Pastor**



Fr. Adoko-Enchill was born July 15, 1954, in a village in Ghana called Baifikrom. He was the third born of seven children. He entered St. Teresa's Minor Seminary (Elmina) at the age of 19. He completed his major studies at St. Peter's Regional Seminary (Cape Coast). Both his minor and major seminary studies were located in Ghana. In 2014, Fr. Adoko-Enchill's ordinary granted him permission to continue his ministry in the United States. Archbishop Sartain subsequently appointed him as Parochial Vicar to St. Mary's in Aberdeen. During his time at St. Mary's he also served the faith communities of Our Lady of Good Help (Hoquiam), St. Jerome's (Ocean Shores), and St. Paul's (Westport), Our Lady of the Olympics (Amanda Park), with the majority of his time spent serving the community of St. Anne's (Forks).

Fr. Peter has a passion for devotion to our Blessed Mother and prays the Holy Rosary always. Since his seminary formation period he has been involved for many years in the activities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. He finds joy and inspiration in reading spiritual books including the Holy Bible. He is energized always by the Word of God, and most especially by daily visitation to the Blessed Sacrament in the church.

He would like to encourage the faithful to appreciate their call as Christians and have time always to communicate with the Lord by having daily quiet time. The Lord is always waiting for us. "Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1986, for the Archdiocese of Cape Coast, Ghana. Previously he served his diocese in Ghana as a parochial vicar, chaplain of a girl's high school, and Spiritual Director for the minor seminary where he began his studies. He was also a Pastor and a Rector for a Minor Basilica in Ghana.

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It has been stated that "THE ONLY THING NEW IN LIFE IS THE HISTORY WE HAVEN'T LEARNED" and in the case of St. Mary Star of the Sea it can be demonstrated that we have learned, and moving forward may prosper beyond that which would have been achieved had we not suffered through our trials and tribulations.



*Our present church, dedicated in 1950.  
Photo by Victor and Josie Heins*

*A special note of thanks is extended to the late Mrs. Dorothy Plut who assisted in writing the history of St. Mary Star of the Sea. Mrs. Plut was a parishioner since her arrival in 1934.*

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### **The Origin of the name "Star of the Sea"**

What is the origin of the name of our parish, "**Saint Mary Star of the Sea**"?

*"Star of the Sea" is one of many of the titles of Mary. The title comes from a type of prayer we Catholics have, called a "litany", which comes from the Greek word for "supplication". A list of the names of saints (or individual titles of a saint, as in this case: 'Star of the Sea' is one title for Mary) is recited, and the congregation replies "pray for us". Due to the fact that this approach seems like a list, the word litany came into English as a synonym for "list".*