



ASSUMPTION BVM CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R.I.
OUR PARISH HISTORY 1870-2017

1870

Catholics of Elmwood petition **Bishop Francis McFarland** of Hartford for a church in this area. Congregations at **St. Michael's** on Oxford Street and **St. Mary's** on Broadway were increasing dramatically and the district between the two was becoming thickly settled. There had long been talk of the formation of a new parish to reduce the overflow in the **South Providence** and **Olneyville** churches and to afford greater convenience to those who resided in the Elmwood neighborhood. A young assistant pastor from **St. Michael's** by the name of **Father Michael Clune** saw the need and collected the necessary funds from people in the neighborhood to buy a site and erect a temporary structure. The site purchased by Father Clune was on **Linwood Avenue** but was ultimately rejected as the site of the Church by the Vicar General of the Diocese of Hartford, Father Hughes. It was Father Hughes himself who negotiated the purchase of the lot of land on which the present church and rectory now stand.

September 1870

Work begins at the site of the new Assumption Church at the corner of Potters Avenue and Jessamine Street. *Parishioners actually dig the foundation of the church themselves!* After a hard days work they would arrive late in the afternoon in their horses and wagons armed with picks and shovels and would work well into the evening. When construction of the original church building finally began it was the nickels, dimes and quarters of these newly-arrived immigrants that would ultimately build this Church.

June 1871

Rev. Michael M. Clune had been transferred to St. Patrick's but was appointed the *first pastor* of **Assumption Parish** when the large clapboard church building was nearing completion. One of Father Clune's earliest undertakings as the pastor was the organization of a choir of some **150** voices under the direction of a **Professor Keagan**. Initially there were approximately **1400** parishioners mostly of **Irish** descent. The presence of this new church and the availability of affordable housing would encourage the growth of this heavily **Irish** neighborhood. Many parishioners found work at the **Elmwood Cotton Mills** on Daboll Street. The mill had begun

operations just a few years earlier in 1866. The company made cotton cloths, prints, sheeting and fancy goods, The company's best known product called "*Elmwood shirting*" was a fancy grade cotton cloth which gave the company a reputation for producing high-quality goods. **Cable Electric Products** would purchase the complex in 1948. In the 1990's the buildings were purchased by the City of Providence and totally renovated. It is now the site of the **Charles Fortes Elementary School**.

- August 20, 1871 The new church is dedicated by the Bishop of Hartford **Bishop Francis McFarland**.
- January 31, 1872 **Pope Pius IX** establishes the *Diocese of Providence*. At the recommendation of the Bishops of the Province of New York, **Father Thomas F. Hendricken**, pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Waterbury, CT was appointed the first Bishop. Father Hendricken grew up in Ireland and after ordination was recruited for the Diocese of Hartford by the Second **Bishop of Hartford Bernard O' Reilly** who actually resided on **Fenner Street** in Providence. **Bishop O'Reilly** was also responsible for bringing the *Religious Sisters of Mercy* to the Diocese Providence in the 1850's. In a strange twist of fate, the Bishop's namesake and great grandnephew, **Fr. Bernard O' Reilly** would be ordained in Ireland and recruited by the **Diocese of Providence** more than a century later. As it turned out, Father O'Reilly's very first assignment was here at the Assumption.
- 1873 In the fall of 1873, the rectory was built and **Father Clune** moved from a little house on the corner of Cranston Street and Potters Avenue into his new residence. Then came the "*panic*" of 1873, bringing poverty and hard times. Though the wooden church building had cost only \$12,000, little reduction of debt was made during the remainder of Father Clune's pastorate. The completion of the rectory raised the valuation of the Church property to \$30,000.
- 1875 One of the outstanding events in the early history of the parish was the blessing of a bell valued at \$1300 (lots of money in those days) donated by two non-Catholics, **Mr. J.W. Smith** and **Mr. Daboll**, owners of a mill on Daboll Street. The bell bears the inscription "*From morning till night I will sound thy praise, O Lord*". This bell is still in use today
- January 1888 **Fr. Clune** passes away after 18 years as the first pastor of Assumption Church. He left behind a parish of some **3000** souls.
- January 1888 **Fr. Hines** is appointed the second pastor of Assumption Parish. Sadly, Fr. Hines passes away unexpectedly less than one month later.
- March 1888 **Rev. John Tennian** is appointed the third pastor. He was young and vigorous and an extremely hard worker. He quickly set himself to the task of renovating the 17 year old church and paying off the \$14,000 mortgage. Shortly after Fr. Tennian arrived the church is embellished with new Stations of the Cross and stained glass windows. Only two Sunday Masses are celebrated at this time.
- August 1893 A new organ is installed in the Church. The cost of this instrument was \$2000.00.
- Dec. 10, 1893 Assumption parish received its first permanent curate **Father Conlon**. On the first Sunday of 1894 the schedule of Sunday Masses was increased from two to three. Meanwhile, in a report to parishioners Father Tennian advised that "*owing to the meagerness of the monthly and annual*

collections last year and to the large amounts paid to the city for curbing, sewers etc., our church debt is considerably over \$1500.00."

- January 1899 After 11 years as pastor **Fr. Tennian** is named pastor of St. Mary's Church, Pawtucket. **Rev. Thomas L. Kelly** is appointed the fourth pastor. Fr. Kelly was in poor health during most of his tenure at the Assumption. He suffered a debilitating stroke on December 21, 1902. Although he recovered to some degree health problems continued to plague Fr. Kelly for the remainder of his time at Assumption.
- 1909 **Father Kelly** resigns as pastor due to failing health and is replaced by **Rev. John F. Haney**.
- August 14, 1910 Ground is broken for the new church. **Father Haney** had the honor of turning the first shovelful of earth followed by many older members of the parish who had performed a similar ceremony when the first church was built some 40 years earlier.
- Nov. 12, 1910 Led by **Fay's Military Band** thousands of people parade through the streets of the West End to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone for the new Assumption Church. An outdoor Mass is held at the site of the new Church. Some 40 priests and more than **5000** people are in attendance. In his homily **Bishop Matthew Harkins** made the following observations: *"As I look over this congregation today I find that many once loved faces are absent. They have gone to their reward and let us hope, are face to face with their God. They planned for this Church but were not given the privilege of seeing it erected. That privilege is yours. And your children, the grandchildren of those pioneer Catholics of the Assumption parish will enjoy it in the years to come."* Before **Bishop Harkens** laid the cornerstone, a box containing the names of the Trustees, copies of the local newspapers and of *The Providence Visitor*, a catalogue of LaSalle Academy, a badge of the Holy Name Society and some coins was lowered into place.
- June 2, 1912 The new Assumption church (the church we currently worship in), designed in the **Perpendicular Gothic** style by the architectural firm of **Murphy, Hindle & Wright**, is dedicated by Bishop Harkins. **Murphy, Hindle & Wright** specialized in ecclesiastical architecture and provided designs for many of the early 20th century church complexes in the Diocese of Providence. The firm was also responsible for the design of the **George J. West School** in the Mount Pleasant section of the city as well as the **Edgewood Yacht Club** in Cranston. As its name suggests, the chief characteristic of **Perpendicular** architecture is the emphasis on strong vertical lines. Windows were the *"artist's palette"* of the **Perpendicular** builders. Because of advances in the use of the pointed arch and supporting elements such as the flying buttress, window openings could be extremely large, and builders took advantage of their opportunity to create huge expanses of glass separated by thin, curving stone tracery in ever more elaborate patterns. Window area was maximized, while wall area was minimized. As one can readily see from the extraordinary windows in this church, which were made in Bavaria, the result is a lofty, open interior of extraordinary lightness and delicacy. Notable examples of churches built in the **Perpendicular Gothic** style are **Canterbury Cathedral** and **Winchester Cathedral** in England. Meanwhile, the original church building was repaired to be used as a Sunday School.
- September 4, 1923 **Fr. John F. Haney** passes away. During his tenure Father Haney had completely paid off the debt on the new church and furthermore there was a substantial sum of money in the parish treasury at the time of his death.

- October 1923 **Rev. Patrick J. Sullivan** is appointed the sixth pastor. One of Father Sullivan's first actions as pastor was to acquire the **Sherry Estate** at the corner of **Potters Avenue** and **Dexter Street**. This would be the site of the **Assumption School** that he founded. Ground was broken for the school in 1925.
- January 7, 1926 Assumption Convent is opened on Dexter Street (directly behind the new Assumption school) for the **Sisters of the Cross & Passion**. The Sisters of the Cross and Passion were largely a teaching order who were renowned in England and Ireland for the many schools they conducted there. The journey of the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion** began long before their ocean voyage across the Atlantic from England. Their foundress **Mother Mary Joseph Prout** instilled in her first postulants that their mission would not merely be confined to England. Rather, we can imagine she envisioned that one day the Sisters of the Cross and Passion would be teaching in America and other nations as well. The initial group of religious sisters came to Rhode Island from their Mother House in England in 1924 at the invitation of Bishop Hickey. In that first group of sisters was **Sr. Dionysius Fitzpatrick C.P.**, **Sr. Gonzaga McCunnin C.P.**, **Sr. Louis Myers C.P.** and **Sr. Pious Ruddins C.P.** Until the opening of the convent these Sisters conducted a hostel for young women in the former Smith Estate at 315 Elmwood Ave.
- February 1, 1926 A very important day in the history of Assumption Parish. The **Assumption School** opens its doors. Initial enrollment is 200 pupils in Grades 1 thru 4. Among those enrolled in the very first 4th grade class was 9 year old **Joseph White**. After graduation from the Assumption school **Joe White** would go on to attend LaSalle Academy. In those days the parish paid the tuition for its young men to attend LaSalle Academy and its young women to attend St. Xavier. **Joe White** appreciated that very much and never forgot it. For more than eight decades **Joe White** would serve Assumption Parish in just about every volunteer capacity imaginable until his passing on April 18, 2008 at the age of 92.
- 1929 **Father Sullivan** passes away. In November, **Rev. William J. Keefe**, then pastor of St. James Church of Arctic Center is appointed the seventh pastor.
- 1930 A significant part of the parish history that has been largely forgotten is the **Assumption Club**. According to most accounts, this organization was extremely active in the parish from around 1910 until the late 1950's. It would appear that the **Assumption Club** served as a kind of men's social club. The club would sponsor fundraisers for the parish and organize activities for the youth. In the early 1930's, two buildings were willed to assistant pastor **Fr. Francis P. Brady**. There was a rather large house located on the corner of Potters Avenue and Homestead Avenue and a one story brick building directly behind it on Homestead Avenue (this building still stands today). While these structures were never actually owned by the parish it appears that Fr. Brady allowed the **Assumption Club** to use them for the benefit of the parishioners. Over the next several decades the **Assumption Club** provided much needed recreation for the men and young people of the parish. There were four bowling alleys and a pool hall with 4 tables in the brick building. The basement of the house was turned into a boxing club. In fact, a featherweight champion of the world, **Joey Archibald**, trained in that gym as did former parishioner and future U.S. Congressman **Edward P. Beard** who fought several amateur bouts and even had one professional fight. Apparently, there were many such athletic clubs around the city and across the state at that time. The **Assumption Club** routinely fielded football, baseball and basketball teams and competed with teams from other such clubs. The men of the parish took advantage of the card room at the club and there was a meeting room there as well. With the

demise of the **Assumption Club** in the late 1950's, the property would be taken over by the Hope Council, Knights of Columbus.

February 1935

On Monday and Tuesday evenings, February 18 and 19, The **Assumption Catholic Club** presented the **17th Annual Minstrel Show** under the personal direction of Tom Giblin. The minstrel show was an American entertainment consisting of **comedy skits, variety acts, dancing and music** performed by white people in blackface. Minstrel shows actually began in the 1830's and over the next several decades helped give birth to many forms of American popular music including Ragtime, Blues, Dixieland, Barbershop Quartet, Country and Bluegrass. In the early part of the 20th century minstrels were largely supplanted by vaudeville as the most popular form of live entertainment. However, minstrel shows remained extremely popular as fundraisers for local civic and religious organizations and were very well attended. The program for this particular show lists a total of 20 acts. **Joe Houlihan's Orchestra** was on hand as well as a chorus. The best guess is that most of the performers were parishioners although guest acts did appear from time to time. Among the acts presented in this show was a song and dance by Lillian McCaffrey, a comedy act featuring Rosalind Flemming, Joseph Kenney and Joseph McNulty and dancing by the Daniels Trio. Ted Richards sang "Singing A Vagabond Song" while Charles Fay offered "Okay Toots" to the delight of all assembled. Chairman of the Minstrel Committee was James E. Curry. Other members of the committee included Ernest C. Munroe, Arthur Hoey, John Carmody and Francis Kelly. President of the **Assumption Catholic Club** at this time was William H. Hamlyn, Jr. Among the neighborhood businesses who took ads in the program were Lucy's Ice Cream Parlor, located at 576 Cranston St., Robert F. Carroll and Sons Funeral Home at 677 Cranston St., Huntington Café at 603 Huntington Avenue, Lombardi's Bakery at 814 Potters Avenue and Otto Henn Inc. located at 866 Cranston St. With the advent of the civil rights movement, minstrel shows would disappear from the American scene in the 1950's.

Later on in 1935 the parish hall would undergo extensive renovations. Remember that the parish hall was actually the original church building and was located on the site of the present day parking lot. Over the next few decades the parish hall would continue to host a wide variety of parish meetings and functions including the **Harvest Supper** and **Easter Card Party, CYO basketball**, the annual **St. Patrick's Play**, Saturday afternoon children's movies, communion breakfasts as well as meetings of the **Tabernacle Society, Holy Name Society, Mother's Club** and **Home and School Association**.

1936

As the parish continues to grow the decision is made to convert the basement of the church into a chapel. According to the parish census there are **1543 families** in the parish with a total population of **5764**. Meanwhile, **Assumption School** continues its remarkable growth. There are now 15 classes conducted by 14 Sisters of the Cross and Passion and one lay teacher. The number of pupils enrolled in the school has risen to **679**. There were four priests assigned to Assumption at this time. **Fr. William Keefe** was pastor. He was assisted by **Fr. Francis P. Brady, Fr. J. Allan Hughes** and **Fr. Edward V. Hughes**.

1944

Due to increasing enrollment in the Assumption School the parish decides to purchase the old **Potters Avenue School** from the City of Providence. This facility would be used for grades 7-9 until the mid 1960's and would come to be known as "*The Annex*"

January 26, 1946

Father Keefe passes away. He had been Pastor here for more than 16 years.

- March 14, 1946 **Rev. John F. O'Rourke** is appointed eighth pastor by **Archbishop Keough**, former Bishop of Providence.
- August 1946 Assumption rectory is redecorated and refurnished. There were four priests assigned to the parish at this time.
- December 1946 Total church debt of \$26,000 is paid.
- September 1948 Extensive repairs are made to the exterior of the Church. Bricks are repointed and all wooden surfaces including windows and doors are repainted. There was a young man singing in the choir at this time. His name was **Dan Trainor** and he would one day become **Father Trainor** and pastor of Assumption parish.
- January 1949 Restoration work on the interior of the Church is begun under the guidance of **His Excellency, The Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., Bishop of Providence**.
- December 1949 Year long restoration of the church and baptistry is completed. The pastor, **Rev. John F. O'Rourke**, cites Assumption Church as "*one of the finest Gothic churches in the East.*" There were three assistants assigned to Assumption at this time. They were **Father J. Allan Hughes, Father Timothy J. Sullivan** and **Father John V. Doyle**. At this time there were an estimated 8400 parishioners in Assumption Parish.
- April 14, 1951 Pastor **John F. O'Rourke** passes away.
- Sept. 11, 1951 **Rev. John L. Ryding** is appointed ninth pastor of Assumption Parish.
- June 1954 **Rev. George E. Archambeault** succeeds **Father Ryding** as pastor. **Fr. Archambeault** came to the Assumption after serving as pastor of St. Mary's in Warren. When Father first arrived he found that the rectory was in extremely poor condition. The roof leaked, the building needed painting and there were serious structural problems. When one of his assistants fell through the staircase and landed in the basement **Fr. Archambeault** decided it was time to build a new rectory.
- Mar. 14-16, 1956 The **Assumption Tabernacle Society** proudly presents the annual "**St. Patrick's Play**" in the parish hall. This years production is entitled "*Shamrock Hours*" and features the children of the **Assumption School** under the direction of the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion**. The annual "**St. Patrick's Play**" was a tradition in the parish for several decades. This production featured tunes like "*Let Us All Be Irish Tonight*", "**Tis A Great Day Tonight For the Irish**" and "*With My Shillelagh Under My Arm*". Former U.S. Congressman **Edward P. Beard** fondly recalls that his solo rendition of "*Danny Boy*" in this show was really his first public appearance. Sponsors for this event included Peter Pan Diner at 327 Elmwood Avenue, Barry-Holdridge Funeral Home at 684 Park Avenue in Cranston (still in business today) and Imperial Meat Market at 360 Cranston Street.
- May 1956 The priests of the parish move to a temporary rectory at 521 Elmwood Avenue. The old rectory is demolished and construction begins on the new rectory that is still in use today, There were four priests assigned to the parish at this time. **Fr. Archambeault** was the pastor and his assistants included **Rev. J. Allan Hughes, Rev. John V. Doyle** and **Rev. Anthony I. Robinson**. In the fall of 1956 a booklet is published listing the donors to the **Rectory Fund**. The donors are

listed on a street- by-street basis. What is most striking about this is the huge number of parishioners who participated in the campaign. For example, there were 65 individual donations from people living on Althea Street and 60 donations from parishioners on Potters Avenue. Most of the donations appear to be in the \$10.00 to \$50.00 range with the average donation being around \$20.00. The building is finally ready for occupancy in early 1957. The new rectory was a source of much controversy within the parish. Many parishioners were extremely upset at the final cost of the new structure and considered it very extravagant. The reality is that the costs associated with the construction of the new rectory would plunge the parish into debt for many years to come.

May 1959

The **Assumption Parish Mothers Club** compiles and offers for sale a cook book of favorite recipes in an effort to raise funds for the parish. This is a tradition that continues in many parishes even to this day. **Jeanne Guiot** offered her **Cream Meatball** recipe while **Claudia Waddicor** explained how to put together a real pork pie. If fried food was what you were craving you may have been tempted to try **Rose Fay's clam cake recipe** (her secret ingredient was Aunt Jemima pancake mix). Those looking for dessert ideas might attempt **Evelyn Carr's "Whacky Cake"** or maybe **Rita Trenn's "Cowboy Cookies"**. In the 1950's and 1960's there were also frequent cake sales to help to supplement parish income.

June 22, 1960

Bishop Russell J. McVinney appoints **Father J. Allan Hughes** the first Pastor of **St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish** in Narragansett where he will serve until his retirement in 1978. Father Hughes had been an assistant pastor at Assumption for a quarter century.

1960

Assumption Parish suffers a major blow when the **State of Rhode Island** and the **City of Providence** announce plans to substantially **redevelop** a large area in the vicinity of Niantic and Huntington Avenues. The new **Roberts Expressway** (now known as Route 10) would greatly improve traffic flow in the area. And the proposed **Huntington Industrial Park** would be a source of badly needed jobs for the community. But as a consequence, hundreds of families would be forced to move and the *Assumption would lose nearly 25% of its parishioners.*

May 28, 1961

Recall that young man who was singing in the choir back in 1948. Upon graduation from LaSalle Academy in June 1953 **Dan Trainor** decided to enter **Our Lady of Providence Seminary**. He continued his studies at Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and returned to Our Lady of Providence Seminary before being ordained by **Bishop Russell J. McVinney** on May 27, 1961. Having received all of his sacraments at the Assumption he said his first Mass here the very next day. Over the next decade Father Trainor would serve at St. Francis Parish in Wakefield, St. Rita's Parish in Warwick, St. Leo's Parish in Pawtucket and at St. Theresa's Parish in the Manton section of Providence.

1962

At this time there were a number of active membership organizations within Assumption Parish. Among the most important was the **Tabernacle Society** led by President **Mary Quinn**. The Society sponsored many fundraisers and social events throughout the year. There were monthly cake sales after all the Masses as well as the annual **Harvest Supper** in October and the **Easter Card Party** in April. There was also an active **Holy Name Society** and a vibrant **Home and School Association** in the parish at this time.

Oct. 11, 1962

Pope John XXIII convenes the **Second Vatican Council** in Rome. The far-reaching reforms enacted by the Council impacted virtually every element of Catholic life, as they included *a new vision of the role of the Church in modern life*, a new emphasis on *ecumenism* (stressing, to an

extent, the shared religious vision of all Christians), and a *reinterpretation of the liturgy* (with a focus on encouraging *lay participation*). What is quite remarkable in retrospect is that a total of four future pontiffs took part in the Council's opening session: **Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini**, who on succeeding **Pope John XXIII** took the name of **Paul VI**; **Bishop Albino Luciani**, the future **Pope John Paul I**; **Bishop Karol Wojtyła**, who became **Pope John Paul II**; and 35-year-old **Father Joseph Ratzinger**, present as a theological consultant, who more than 40 years later became **Pope Benedict XVI**. Over **2500** delegates took part in the opening session, making it the largest gathering in any council in church history. There would be four sessions of the council over the next three years before the Second Vatican Council finally adjourned on December 8, 1965.

- June 1964 Due to declining enrollment the **Assumption School Annex** is closed. In the 1970's the parish would sell this structure to a local businessman who would convert the building into a warehouse. In 2005 this same building, located just a couple of doors down from the rectory at 775 Potters Avenue would be sold once again and completely renovated and renamed "*City Place Condominiums*".
- 1966 As a result of the sweeping changes in the liturgy made by the **Second Vatican Council** a new marble altar of sacrifice is installed in the main church. Prior to Vatican II, the priest celebrated the Mass in Latin with his back to the congregation, making the Mass seem remote and relegating the people to the role of spectators. At this time a total of 6 Masses were celebrated in the church each Sunday. Masses were offered at 7:00, 8:30, 9:45 and 11:30 A.M. in the main church. Masses were also offered in the basement chapel at 8:30 (Children's Mass) and also at 10:00 A.M. There were three priests assigned to the Assumption Parish in 1966. Assisting **Fr. Archangeault** at this time were **Rev. Charles F. Dolan**, **Rev. James Thompson** and **Rev. William Girolamo**.
- Feb. 20, 1967 Parishioners are stunned to learn of the sudden death of Asst. Pastor **Rev. William Girolamo**.
- July 1967 Assistant pastor **Father Charles F. Dolan** is appointed pastor of **St. Patrick's** in Providence.
- June 1968 **Rev. George Archangeault** retires shortly after celebrating his 50th Anniversary as a priest. Over the past few years the parish population had decreased significantly as many families fled to the suburbs. Unfortunately, the new pastor would inherit a huge parish debt with fewer contributors to pay it off. Assistant pastor **Fr. Francis Guidice**, who arrived at Assumption in October 1967, would serve as interim pastor for a period of four months.
- September 1968 **Bishop Russell J. McVinney** appoints **Rev. Joseph A. Besse** as the 11th pastor of Assumption Parish. **Fr. Besse** came to the Assumption after teaching Latin and Greek for nearly a decade at **Our Lady of Providence Seminary** in Warwick. At the invitation of the new pastor **Sister Angela Daniels C.P.** arrives at Assumption from St. Bernard's in Wickford for what was supposed to be a *three month temporary assignment*. No longer able to teach due to health concerns, **Sr. Angela** was coming to help out in the parish office. Some forty four years later **Sister Angela** is still at the Assumption. What Sister has achieved during her years here is truly remarkable. She has played a major role in establishing such innovative programs as the **Indo-Chinese Advocacy Project**, the **Genesis Center**, **Matthew XXV** program for Aids victims as well as a host of other endeavors. Indeed, the history of the **West End** and our parish might have been quite different had **Sister Angela** chosen to leave the Assumption at the end of her "*temporary*" assignment in 1968.

- 1969-1970 A period of tremendous upheaval in the **West End**, the **City of Providence** and in urban areas all across America. Racial tensions were very high and the nation had drifted into a severe recession. Many frightened city residents decided to flee to the suburbs. The demographic changes in the neighborhood around Assumption Parish meant fewer parishioners of less means. Throughout this difficult period two courageous priests from Assumption parish, **Father Francis Giudice** and **Father James Ford** would be at the forefront of efforts to promote *social justice* and positive change in the area.
- June 14, 1969 The **Holy Name Society** sponsors “*Assumption Sports Night*” in the parish hall. The featured speaker on that evening was Providence College head basketball coach **Joe Mullaney**. Mullaney would go on to coach the **Los Angeles Lakers** of the NBA. The program also featured PC guard **Johnny Egan** and legendary local sportscaster **Chris Clark**.
- September 1969 The newly ordained **Father Bernard O’ Reilly** arrives at Assumption Parish. Fr. O’ Reilly was born in County Cavern, Ireland and attended St. John’s School of Philosophy. After graduation, he continued his studies at the Graduate School of Theology and was ordained to the priesthood on June 8, 1969. When asked how he happened to come to the Diocese of Providence Father O’ Reilly revealed that he was recruited by then **Bishop Russell J. McVinney** who was visiting relatives in Ireland during a break in the **Second Vatican Council**. Father O’Reilly recalls that upon his arrival at Assumption, one of his first obligations was to register for the draft as the Vietnam War was in full swing. Fortunately, members of the clergy were automatically assigned “conscientious objector” status if their number was drawn in the lottery. Father O’ Reilly has been a priest of the Diocese of Providence for more than 40 years now. He has served as pastor of St. Patrick’s Parish in Harrisville for the past 24 years. When someone asks Father where he grew up his invariably replies “*at the Assumption in Providence*” for indeed it was here that “*the seed of my priestly development began to take shape.*” Meanwhile, enrollment at the **Assumption School** has plummeted to just **275** students. Due to a growing shortage of religious sisters the parish is forced to hire more lay teachers. **Father Besse** is committed to keep the school open as long as possible. However, most parishioners consider it just a matter of time before the school will be forced to close.
- February 1971 **Father Joseph Besse** is appointed Pastor of St. Phillip’s, Greenville. **Rev. Daniel Trainor** is assigned to Assumption Parish, the parish he grew up in. He is to be part of a **Team Ministry** along with **Father James Ford** and **Father Bernard O’Reilly**. Team ministries were a fairly new concept at this time and were being tried out at a few inner city parishes in the **Diocese of Providence**. Although **Father Trainor** was designated as the Administrator the majority of the decisions were arrived at by the team. It was an attempt at shared responsibility. Although he had been appointed **Vicar for Community Affairs** by the Diocese **Father Frank Giudice** continues to reside at Assumption Rectory and help out with weekend Masses.
- June 1971 Assumption Parish celebrates its **100th Anniversary** with a special Mass on Sunday, June 20th at the Church followed by a reunion and dinner-dance at the **Rocky Point Palladium** on Saturday evening, June 26th. **Bishop Russell J. McVinney** was the principal celebrant of the Reunion Mass. This memorable event was co-chaired by **Mr. Joseph White** and **Mr. Thomas Meagher**. In all, *more than 40 parishioners served on the 100th Anniversary committee* including Mr. & Mrs. Edward Kehoe, Hope Griffin, Kay Dillon, Louise Tiner, Mary Quinn, William McKenna, Thomas Blessington, Adrian Tognetti, Anna Kelley, Tom Wallace, Rita Trenn, Mr. & Mrs. Angelo Caliri,

Sr. Angela Daniels C.P., Sr. Jean Audette C.P., Virginia Lawton, Mrs. Ernest Monroe, Eleanor Downing, Mrs. William Kilduff and Rev. Daniel Trainor, parish administrator.

Early 1973 The decision is made to raze the parish hall. This 102 year-old wooden structure had served as the original Assumption church. Unfortunately, the building was in need of major repairs and rising insurance rates made the hall a luxury the parish could no longer afford. When the building was demolished it was replaced by the current parking lot. Shortly thereafter the downstairs chapel would be dismantled and the church basement would become the new parish hall.

June 1973 The **Assumption School** closes its doors after 47 years. Declining enrollment and dramatically increased operating costs left the parish with no alternative. Many of the remaining students transfer to the new **Bishop McVinney Regional School**. For nearly five decades the Assumption School was staffed by the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion**. If you were among the thousands of students who attended the Assumption School over the years you are sure to remember teachers like **Sister Arcadius, Sister Collette, Sister Marie Louise** and the unforgettable **Sister Vincent Mary**, to name but a few. Although the school was gone the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion** would continue their work at Assumption Parish in a variety of capacities for decades to come. We cannot express in adequate terms our sincere appreciation for the undying devotion, the self sacrifice and the all-encompassing care by the Sisters who kept Assumption School a place where the spiritual well being and mental development of all those who passed through its portals were always first and foremost.

June 1975 **Father Robert Blais** is assigned to Assumption Parish by **Bishop Louis E. Gelineau**.

June 17, 1977 **Mr. Loring Johnson**, a parishioner at Assumption since the mid-sixties, is ordained a **Permanent Deacon** by **Bishop Louis Gelineau** at St. John the Baptist Church in Pawtucket. Bishop Gelineau had established the Permanent Diaconate Program in 1973 and Mr. Johnson was selected to be a member of the second class. *Deacons are ordained ministers within the Roman Catholic Church who perform various ministries in support of the Church, usually at a parish-level.* Lay deacons appear to have played a very prominent role in the early history of the Church. Following the **Second Vatican Council**, the **Permanent Diaconate** was restored as an ordained ministry in the Church. In the United States, the Diaconate was restored in 1968. Aside from assisting the priests at Mass on weekends and holydays, Deacon Johnson spent the next dozen years ministering to patients at the **Elmwood Health Center**, conducting **Marriage Preparation Classes** and helping to prepare the young men and women of Assumption Parish for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Nov. 21, 1977 This was the date set by the United States Conference of Bishops for introducing the option of receiving Holy Communion in the hand. *This was a rather controversial change at the time.* To illustrate, in an article in the **Assumption Parish Newsletter** edited by Parish Council President **William Piacentini, Father Dan Trainor** and **Father Robert Blais** addressed the issue in the following way: *“When Communion-in-the-hand is officially offered as an option we hope that priests and people keep an awareness of the fact that it is only an option. We hope that the overkill in argumentation on both sides of the dispute will be ended and no one will suggest that it is more “mature” to receive Communion-in-the-hand or more “reverent” to receive communion on the tongue. So let us have unity in this diversity of practice. Let those who wish to receive Communion in the manner of the last 12 centuries continue to do so. Let those who wish to receive Communion in the manner of the first 8 centuries do so. Let no one be forced to receive Communion in a way not wished. And, most of all let none think themselves superior because of*

the way they choose to receive Communion.” More than three decades later the idea of Communion-in-the-hand remains highly controversial in some circles. Both **Pope John Paul II** and **Mother Teresa** were personally opposed to this practice!

- 1980 **Rev. Robert Blais**, a member of the team ministry at the Assumption, is deeply disturbed by the number of homeless people he encounters in the West End. **Father Blais** decides to take action and establishes **Advent House**. The mission of **Advent House** is to provide homeless individuals, primarily those with substance abuse issues and/or mental health problems the structure and support they need to put their lives in order and become self-sufficient. *Advent House was the very first “homeless” shelter in Rhode Island.* Over the past three decades Advent House has undergone significant growth. Over the years Advent House Inc. has provided housing for **6700** homeless Rhode Islanders. Today Advent House Inc. owns and operates 9 facilities, with the goal of adding an additional facility each year.
- 1982 Responding to an influx of refugees from Southeast Asia Fr. Dan Trainor and Sr. Angela Daniels C.P. co-found the **Indo-Chinese Advocacy Project** and open the **Genesis Preparatory School for Indochinese**. Located in the old Assumption School building at 620 Potters Avenue the **Genesis Center** is a community-based school and support center. The initial mission of the school was to help newly arrived Laotian, Hmong, Cambodian and Vietnamese families overcome language barriers and cultural isolation. The refugees were taught how to shop for groceries and how to go about finding housing and employment. Although the Genesis School was a separate entity funded by a private foundation and not officially part of Assumption Parish many of our parishioners gave of their time and talent to this most worthwhile project. In 1987, Genesis changed its name to **The Genesis Center for Self-Sufficiency** as it prepared to expand its services to include a growing **Hispanic** population, as well as to address the increasing pressures for refugees and immigrants to obtain stable employment. Today the Genesis Center continues to offer day and evening adult education classes at its facility and offsite at local businesses. *Over the past three decades the Genesis Center has served more than 7500 students from 26 countries.* It is a remarkable success story.
- 1982 **Mr. Joseph Fay**, organist at the Assumption for more than 50 years, decides to retire. Joe is replaced by his protégé, 12 year old **Michael Comella**. Michael would eventually become Assumption’s Music Director and would serve the parish for some 28 years before departing in May 2010.
- Nov. 12, 1983 More than 1100 current and former parishioners attend the parish reunion at the **Rocky Point Palladium** in Warwick. Music for the evening was provided by the **Paul Borelli Orchestra**. Nearly thirty members of the **Sisters of Cross and Passion** were in attendance. **Sister Vincent Mary**, then living in Farmington, Long Island, NY taught at the Assumption School for decades. In a note she sent to accept her invitation she remarked *“my years at the Assumption were the happiest years of my life.”* Also in attendance on that evening were several priests who had been assigned to Assumption Parish in years gone by. Among them were **Father Joseph Besse**, **Father Bernard O’Reilly** and **Father John V. Doyle**. The event netted a total of \$25,000. The proceeds were used to purchase new exterior doors for the Church.
- 1986 **Bishop Louis E. Gelineau** has taken note of the influx of **Hispanics** from countries such as **Nicaragua**, **Columbia**, **Haiti** and the **Dominican Republic**. He issues a pastoral letter welcoming Hispanics to the Diocese of Providence: *“I call upon all pastors and parish staffs to welcome the Spanish-speaking into their parish communities. We are presented with a unique*

moment of history, when the prophetic, evangelistic, communitarian and missionary aspects of the church can take on new radiance in the Diocese of Providence. To this effort I commit myself. To it, I call you all.” Later that year the Bishop establishes the Hispanic Ministry program. Funded by a grant from the **Catholic Charity Fund**, the ministry has its roots in a ministry begun some two decades earlier by **Father Raymond Tetrault** at our neighboring parish St. Michael’s. From very modest beginnings, this ministry would flourish in the years to come and play an important role in the future of Assumption Parish.

1986

At about this same time, **Sister Cecilia Castrillon**, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary nun, arrives at Assumption Parish. She has been sent here by the Hispanic Ministry program of the Diocese of Providence to establish a Hispanic community. It was a pretty small group to begin with...perhaps about 20 people. Among them was a young couple, **Luis and Teresa Garcia** who would serve Assumption parish in myriad ways over the next two decades. Along with Sister Cecilia and assistant pastor Fr. Fred Sneesby, Luis and Teresa would play a major role in the establishment of the Hispanic community at Assumption. Teresa would one day become a full-time pastoral assistant while Luis would enter the Diocese of Providence’s Permanent Diaconate program.

May 6, 1987

Word is received of the death of **Rev. Anthony I. Robinson**. Fr. Robinson arrived as an assistant at Assumption parish in October 1950. During his many years at Assumption, Fr. Robinson devoted much of his ministry to the needs of the growing African-American community in the West End. In 1954, Fr. Robinson founded the **St. Martin de Porres Center** on Cranston Street and would serve as its director for many years. Poor health would force Fr. Robinson to resign from parish work in 1976. By this time he was pastor at St. Agnes Church in Providence. But Father Anthony Robinson would continue his special ministry to African-Americans and other minorities at the **St. Martin de Porres Center** for the rest of his life. **Father Dan Trainor** would often cite Father Robinson as an extremely influential figure in his own life.

Nov. 12, 1988

Time for another **Assumption Parish Reunion!** A very special reunion Mass was held at 5:00 P.M. in the Church. Concelebrants were **Fr. Dan Trainor** and **Fr. Fred Sneesby** assisted by **Deacon Loring Johnson**. The congregation was treated to a stunning rendition of “*Ave Maria*” from guest vocalist and former parishioner **Maureen Walsh**. Following the Mass a dinner-dance was held at the **Rocky Point Palladium** in Warwick. More than 800 current and former parishioners were in attendance. Music for the evening was provided by the **George Allen Orchestra**. Joining Father Trainor and Father Sneesby at the head table was our former pastor **Rev. Joseph Besse** and former assistant pastors **Rev. Robert Blais** and **Rev. Bernard O’ Reilly** as well as **Mr. Charles Mansolillo** who served as toastmaster for the evening and **Mr. Paul Tognetti**, Reunion Committee chairman. A highlight of the evening was the playing of the “*Assumption School Song*” by **Sister Lillian Dempsey, C.P.** It was amazing how many of the attendees remembered the song. **“Hail to the School of the Assumption!!!! Hail to the Assumption School!!!!”**

June 1991

At this point it had been about three decades since major repairs were made to the exterior of the church. Some repairs had been made to the roof, flashings and downspouts after the parish sold the convent on Dexter Street a few years earlier. The church building was now 80 years old and time and the elements had taken their toll. It was determined that repairs and renovation work must begin on the church as soon as possible. The **exterior bricks** were deteriorating and water was seeping into the church through the walls. Meanwhile, all of the **wood** on the church exterior needed repainting and the **church windows** also were in need of attention. The **front steps** had

to be replaced. To make matters worse it was clear that the **boiler** would not make it through the upcoming winter. After carefully considering all available options **Bishop Louis E. Gelineau** determined that the time had come for the parish to conduct a **Capital Campaign**. The campaign would be dubbed “**Assumption B.V.M. Church Restoration Campaign**” and the goal was set at **\$400,000**. This campaign would prove to be moderately successful and as a result most of the necessary repairs were made. In the brochure that was prepared to promote the campaign it was noted that the cost to *replace* the church by 1986 standards was some **\$5,000,000!**

September 1992

Sr. Mary Caffrey R.S.M. comes to Assumption to take charge of the parish’s “*Ministry To The Poor*” program. Central to this ministry was the **Food Program** which provided essential foodstuffs for hundreds of individuals each month. Beginning in 1996, Sister Mary also oversees “*The St. Nicholas Fund*”. This idea was the brainchild of Fr. Stanley Nakowicz of the **Providence Visitor**. This highly successful program, which solicited donations from **Providence Visitor** readers, provided toys for the less fortunate children of the West End neighborhood during the Christmas holiday season. As it turned out Sister Mary would be the first of a number of **Sisters of Mercy** who would serve at Assumption parish over the next 15 years. When Sr. Mary retired from active ministry in 1999, she was replaced by **Sr. Rita Bartley R.S.M** who oversaw “*Ministry To The Poor*” until her untimely death in March of 2006.

1993

In the early 1990’s the ministries of **Father Trainor** and **Sister Angela** took yet another unexpected turn. Much to her surprise, **Sister Angela** noticed that many of the people coming to the rectory in search of food or other help were ready to acknowledge that they or a member of their family was infected with **AIDS**. Around that same time, Father and Sister were hearing stories from a number of anguished mothers who told of sons who had gone off to live in places like New York City or Florida and had come home with the dreaded disease. This was a growing problem that demanded immediate attention. And so very quietly in 1993, the **Matthew XXV** ministry began at Assumption Parish. Working out of a small office in the rectory, the ministry served 12 clients with HIV/AIDS. It was supposed to be a “temporary” program. But a short time after the program began **Sister Claudine Picard**, a religious Sister of Mercy with 32 years of teaching experience came on board as Ministry Coordinator. As word spread of the services being offered here, the program grew by leaps and bounds. By 1998 there were over 300 active clients. Other parishes saw the considerable value in the program and offered to help. Funding was received from the Diocese’s Vision of Hope and Catholic Charity Funds. In 1999, the **Matthew XXV** program purchased a home on Congress Avenue in Providence to house those with AIDS who might otherwise be homeless. There were 4 to 6 AIDS victims living at “*Serenity House*” at any given time. According to **Sister Angela**, what makes the **Matthew XXV** program so unique is that it was able to help a significant number of clients reconcile with the Church and return to the Sacraments. In 2005, Matthew XXV was forced to close Serenity House. Adequate funds to maintain the property simply could not be found. Despite this setback, the Matthew XXV program continues to this day. Working out of her office in the Assumption rectory Sister Angela Daniels continues to perform this important work.

August 1993

Rev. William Brennan, beloved assistant pastor, passes away unexpectedly.

October 9, 1993

Another Assumption Parish Reunion, organized by the Sisters of the Cross and Passion was held. As was the case in the most recent reunions in 1983 and 1988 a Reunion Mass was held in the Church at 5:00 P.M. Once again a crowd of more than 800 crammed into the Rocky Point Palladium for a very memorable evening. Music for the evening was provided by **Fintan Stanley**. Father Trainor was joined at the head table by **Sister Mary Margaret Sheehy, C.P**

(aka **Sister Kenneth**), **General Superior of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion** who offered Grace Before Dinner. Also seated at the head table was **Sister Angela Daniels, C.P.**, **Sister Eileen Fucito, C.P.** and **Sister Mary Jane Holden, C.P.** who grew up in Assumption parish and was the chairperson of this event. Once again, **Mr. Charles Mansolillo** served as Master of Ceremonies.

October 15, 1993

Sr. Vincent Mary Ryan passes away just one week after attending the **1993 Assumption Parish Reunion** held at the *Rocky Point Palladium*. She was 92. As anyone who knew her will tell you Sister Vincent Mary lived life "*her way*". She was one of a kind. Sister entered the Cross and Passion order in 1924 at Bolton, England and professed her first vows in 1927. She taught at the Assumption School from 1935 to 1959 and remained very highly regarded among her former students. Always the most popular figure at parish reunions **Sister Vincent Mary** was under "*strict orders*" from the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion** "*not to die*" until after the 1993 reunion. Just one week before the reunion **Sister Vincent Mary** began making phone calls to her closest friends and informed them that the upcoming reunion would be "*her last public appearance*". Less than a week after the event she was gone.

July 1994

Sr. Marge Mancini R.S.M. arrives to assume control of the parish's fledgling Religious Education program. Sr. Marge recalls that when she arrived here "*there were about 40 names of students on a piece of paper*". Over her years at Assumption Sr. Marge worked tirelessly reaching out to the rapidly growing Hispanic population in the Parish. By the time Sr. Marge retired in June, 2003 the program had grown to more than 200 students with more than 24 catechists and teaching assistants helping out. Today, the Religious Education program continues to flourish thanks in large measure to the efforts of Sister Marge Mancini.

Oct. 15, 1994

After completing four years of studies, **Mr. Luis Garcia** is ordained a Permanent Deacon by **Bishop Robert Mulvee** in a ceremony at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Providence. Deacons have a number of roles and responsibilities within the liturgy or Mass. They include announcing the Penitential rite, proclaiming the Gospel, preaching the Homily, voicing the general intercessions (or petitions), assisting with the Eucharistic gifts, serving as a minister of the Eucharist, purifying the vessels after communion, and dismissing the people at the conclusion of the Mass. Deacons are also permitted to assist the Pastor of a parish by conducting Baptisms and officiating at the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. They may also preside at Funeral services (although not at a Funeral Mass) and prayer services. **Luis Garcia** continued his ministry at Assumption Parish until 2007 when he relocated to Florida. Luis is one of more than 18,000 Permanent Deacons currently serving in the United States.

Sept. 1, 2001

Rev. Gildardo Suarez joins Fr. Trainor as Assistant Pastor of Assumption Parish. Over the next few years, Father Suarez would play an important role in the growth of the Hispanic community in the parish. Meanwhile, **Father Guillermo Corrales** takes on new responsibilities as the full-time chaplain at Rhode Island Hospital while remaining in residence at the Assumption rectory.

Dec. 7, 2001

Father Trainor and **Sister Angela Daniels** are named recipients of the **Vartan Gregorian Award** which honors individuals who have made significant and outstanding contributions to the city's cultural and educational life.

Jan. 14, 2002

Assumption parish is stunned to learn of the apparent homicide of its beloved **Father Guillermo Corrales** while vacationing in his native Columbia. *El Mundo*, a Medellin newspaper, reported January 16 that the priest had suffered 25 knife wounds. Associates and relatives in Rhode Island

suspect he was assassinated by Columbian guerillas. They are believed to have targeted him since 2000 when he spent part of his vacation working with poor people in remote Columbian villages. Educated in his homeland, **Father Corrales** served at parishes in the Colombian Diocese of Bogota before arriving in the Diocese of Providence in 1996. For four years Father Guillermo divided his time between two distinct and important ministries. Father was a part-time assistant pastor here at the Assumption while also serving as part-time diocesan assistant for Hispanic Ministry. In 2001 he became the full-time chaplain at Rhode Island Hospital while remaining in residence here at Assumption. Father Corrales was incardinated into the **Diocese of Providence** in July 2001. Upon learning of the death, **Bishop Robert E. Mulvee** said, *"This is a terrible tragedy for Father Corrales' family and for the people of the Diocese of Providence. It is but one more example of the violence that permeates our society. I pray that God will help us all deal with this tragic loss. I ask all to pray for the repose of Father Corrales' soul and for an end to such senseless violence."*

Feb. 2, 2002

Three weeks after he was found murdered in his homeland of Columbia, more than 500 mourners gather in Assumption Church to honor the life of **Father Guillermo Corrales**. The principal celebrant was **Bishop Robert Mulvee**. Concelebrating were **Bishop Robert McManus**, **Bishop Louis E. Gelineau** and **Archbishop George Pearce**. Dozens of priests were in attendance as well as a number of Father Corrales' family members, many of whom live in the Pawtucket/Central Falls area. In his remarks, **Father Daniel Trainor** cited Father Guillermo as *"basically a simple man, a good man, with a sense of humor and an air of innocence about him. But most of all I remember Guillermo as someone who spent a week of his vacation up in the mountains of Columbia, baptizing and ministering to people in remote villages."* Perhaps the most poignant memory of this gentle priest is when he brought back a statue of the Baby Jesus from his native country. Fr. Corrales literally carried that statue in his arms all the way back to Providence. Father Guillermo was just 41 years old when he died.

Palm Sunday 2004

Responding to an invitation from Father Trainor **The Rays of Sunshine** begin a new ministry at Assumption Parish after more than 40 years at St. Mary's parish in Cranston. Led by the groups founder **Joe DiBiase**, the Rays of Sunshine began as a children's choir in the mid 1960's. Starting with just 15 children, Joe built a group of 84 young people to sing what he calls *"Music With A Message"*. During the 1960's, the group brought their unique blend of musical styles to churches all across New England. In the 1970's, **The Rays of Sunshine** visited churches throughout the U.S. and traveled to 9 countries in Europe including England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. They performed for Pope Paul VI and over 20,000 people! The 1980's brought The Rays of Sunshine into a new era singing Contemporary Christian music written and produced by **Joe DiBiase**. This new kind of music was designed and created by Mr. DiBiase and became known as MIDI music. Once again, **The Rays of Sunshine** took to the road, teaching a new and different way to praise God in both small and larges churches. Since 2004, **The Rays of Sunshine** have been a shining light at Assumption parish as they continue their ministry in music. Today the group consists of more than 30 people of all ages. You can experience the beautiful sounds of their voices in Praise To God each Sunday at the 9:00 A.M. Mass and on Holy Days and special feasts throughout the Liturgical year. Assumption Parish is certainly a richer community since **The Rays of Sunshine** have come among us and we deeply appreciate their enormous contributions to the spiritual life of our parish.

Spring 2006

Assumption Parish embarks upon its first **Capital Campaign** since 1988. The idea was proposed to Father Trainor by two energetic and enthusiastic young ladies from the Hispanic community, **Cesarina Santana** and **Luanne Santelises**. The goal for the Campaign, dubbed *"Preserving A*

Proud Tradition” is set at a modest \$200,000. Eventually, with the generosity and enthusiasm of all segments of the Assumption Parish community over \$420,000 in cash and pledges is raised. As a result, the interior of the main church undergoes its most extensive restoration since 1948. Shortly after the Campaign is announced **Fr. Dan Trainor** reveals that the Bishop has accepted his request to retire. His actual retirement was on July 1, 2006.

July 1, 2006

Father Gildardo Suarez becomes the 13th Pastor of Assumption Church. *Father Gildardo has the distinction of being the first Hispanic pastor in the Diocese of Providence.* Father Suarez was born and educated in Colombia. Father Suarez entered the seminary in Marinilla Antioquia at the tender age of 13. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Alfonzo Uribe Jaramillo in Jordan, Antioquia, on Feb. 15, 1992. He received his degree in Philosophy and Religious Sciences at the Catholic University in Rio Negro, Colombia in 1998. He served as assistant pastor at several parishes in Colombia before he came to the Diocese of Providence and was incardinated in July 2001. Father Suarez had been assistant pastor at Assumption since September 1, 2001.

Sept 24, 2006

Nearly 800 people attend the **“Fr. Dan Trainor Retirement Celebration”** at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston. Among those present were a large number of current and former parishioners of Assumption parish, community and religious leaders, as well as relatives and friends of Father Trainor. At Fr. Trainor’s request the music for this event was provided by **Fintan Stanley** who has entertained at a number of Assumption parish functions over the years.

December 2006

Restoration work on the interior of the Church is finally completed. Scope of the work included the painstaking restoration of the Sanctuary (Apse, Chancel and Proscenium Arch), the Nave and Choir Loft (Balcony) as well as the Side Aisles (including side walls, windows and side altars. Of special interest is the fact that the gold gilding, which was applied to both the main and the side altars in the late 1940’s has been totally removed, thus returning our Church to its magnificent original natural wood state. In addition, the Baptistry and the Narthex have also been completely restored. As with any project of this size some additional work was deemed necessary. Inspectors found that much of the wiring in the upper church did not conform to code. As a result, Henderson Electric was engaged to completely re-wire, clean and re-lamp the interior lighting. In addition, repairs were made to a small area on the exterior of the Church building where some leakage was discovered.

December 17, 2006

At a mid-day bi-lingual Mass marking the re-opening of the main church, **Fr. Gildardo Suarez** is officially installed as the 13th pastor of Assumption Parish by **Archbishop George Pearce**. The congregation greeted the Archbishop and Fr. Suarez waving white handkerchiefs which had been distributed prior to Mass. Concelebrating the Mass were our **Pastor Emeritus Father Dan Trainor** and **Father Joseph Creedon** from our sister parish **Christ The King Parish** in Kingston. Also assisting at the Mass was **Deacon Luis Garcia**. Lectors were **Gretchen Needham** and **Luis Frias**. Among those in attendance was **Mr. Robert A. Bove**, President of **Warwick Painting Company, Inc.**, the lead contractor for this project. *As the parish concluded its 135th anniversary celebration on this most special day it seemed like an especially good time to pause and thank the Lord for all of the blessings he has bestowed upon our parish and to remember all of the remarkable people who have served and worshipped here over the years.*

January 17, 2008

Assumption Church receives the **2007 Preservation Award for Institutional Restoration, Community Involvement and Stewardship** from the **Providence Preservation Society**. The citation read in part: *“It’s hard not to be astounded when you walk into Assumption Church on Potters Avenue. Beautiful murals cover the walls, gleaming in the light that pours through the*

amazing stained glass windows. When awed by this overwhelming beauty, it is hard to believe that only a few years ago the interior was in ruins."

April 12, 2008

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission's annual **State Historic Preservation Awards** honor individuals, organizations and projects for their contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's historic resources. *Assumption Church was chosen from more than 100 nominees to receive one of 8 such statewide awards for 2008.* Our current pastor **Fr. Gildardo Suarez, Pastor Emeritus Very Rev. Daniel M. Trainor, Paul Tognetti** from the Assumption Capital Campaign and **Carol Nelson** from the Diocese of Providence proudly accepted this award on behalf of all current and former parishioners and friends of Assumption parish. The inscription on the award reads as follows: *"An ambitious restoration resurrected this 1910 building's glory by restoring its fine murals, decorative painting, and stained glass. Inspired by Fr. Daniel M. Trainor, overseen by Fr. Gildardo Suarez, and funded entirely by parish members, the completed project links those who built the church, those who now must sustain it, and all those in between."* All in all, a very proud moment for everyone connected with Assumption parish.

August 24, 2008

More than 200 family members, friends and current and former parishioners attend the Dedication of the **"Joe White Parish Center"**. Throughout the summer months a dedicated crew of parishioners was hard at work making extensive renovations to the basement of the church. A brand new tile floor was installed, the walls were repaired and the hall was completely repainted. New carpeting was installed on the stage and a large quantity of new tables and chairs were purchased. At the May meeting of the **Assumption Parish Council** it was decided to dedicate the newly refurbished facility in memory of long-time parishioner **Joe White** who had passed away in April. On this day, the 9:45 A.M. Mass was celebrated in the basement and dedicated to the memory of our dear friend **Joe White**. Our Pastor Emeritus, **Rev Daniel Trainor** joined **Fr. Gildardo** in celebrating the Mass. A brief dedication ceremony followed. A magnificent memorial stone was commissioned and unveiled. It reads in part: *"Joe White Parish Center. Eight Decades of Devoted Service to Assumption Parish. Dedicated August 24, 2008"*. A wonderful picture of Joe, taken only months before his passing also appears on the stone. Many thanks to **Mr. James Forte of the J. Forte Co.** in Cranston for creating this beautiful stone that will permanently hang in the new Parish Center. Over the next few months the renovation work continued. New double hung windows were installed, curtains were hung and the kitchen and hallways were repaired and repainted.

March 1, 2009

Assumption Parish is presented with a magnificent new solid walnut lectern designed and lovingly built by **Steven Moro** of Richmond, R.I. (brother of parishioner Marilyn Kelley). This lectern was presented as a gift to the parish by members of the Moro family in memory of their parents **Florence and Lincoln Moro**. Our pastor **Fr. Gildardo Suarez** thanked the family for their generous donation and **Fr. John Rainone** blessed the new lectern which will be a fixture in our church for generations to come.

July 1, 2010

St. Anthony Church on Plainfield Street in Providence becomes a mission church of Assumption Parish. **Rev. Andrew McNair** is appointed part-time assistant pastor of Assumption Parish and will spend the vast majority of his time tending to the spiritual needs of the people of St. Anthony's. The decree from Bishop Thomas Tobin reads in part: **After consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Providence, and in accord with canon 515 2 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, I hereby:**

1. *Suppress St. Anthony Parish in Providence, Rhode Island and unite it with Assumption Parish in Providence, Rhode Island to form one territorial parish. The suppression and unification shall take place at midnight on July 1, 2010. This unified parish shall include the membership of the present Assumption Parish and the former St. Anthony Parish. St. Anthony Church edifice will remain open for liturgical use and serve as a mission for Assumption Parish.*
2. *Establish that the title of the current Assumption Church and St. Anthony Church buildings shall remain unchanged.*

As a result of the merger all parish registers containing the records of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage and deaths from St. Anthony's have been transferred to Assumption Parish. Meanwhile, Assumption Parish assumes all administrative responsibilities for the combined parishes.

September 2010

Deacon Rony Lopez arrives at Assumption parish after serving for 11 years at neighboring St. Charles Borromeo Church. **Deacon Lopez** was among 6 candidates ordained to the **Permanent Diaconate** by **Auxiliary Bishop Robert J. McManus** at the Cathedral of Saints. Peter & Paul on **October 2, 1999**. He continues to serve the Assumption and St. Anthony communities in innumerable ways.

May 1, 2011

Sr. Angela Daniels, CP celebrates 50 years of Religious Life at the 9:45 A.M. Mass. The Mass was concelebrated by the current pastor **Father Gildardo Suarez**, **Pastor Emeritus Very Reverend Daniel M. Trainor** and **Father John Rainone**. **Sr. Angela** was joined on this very special day by members of the **Sisters of the Cross and Passion**. A special program was created for the occasion which included the following **Words of Appreciation** from the **Assumption Community**: *"We would like to join Sister Angela's gratefulness of her 50th anniversary of Religious Life and we thank God for all He has done through her ministry at the Assumption since 1968. We have seen a clear manifestation of God's providence through the loving care she has shown us."* **Father Trainor** gave the homily which focused on the many hats that **Sister Angela** has worn over the years as well as the thousands of troubled souls Sister has assisted during her long ministry at Assumption Parish. At the end of Mass **Father Gildardo** joined the **Rays of Sunshine** in singing **"You Raise Me Up"** in thanksgiving for all that **Sister Angela** has accomplished during her half century of Religious Life.

June 5, 2011

Our Pastor Emeritus **Very Rev. Daniel M. Trainor** celebrates the **50th Anniversary** of his ordination to the priesthood with a 2:00 P.M. Mass in the church followed by a party and reception in the **Joe White Parish Center**. Approximately 400 current and former parishioners, members of the extended Trainor family and friends of Father Dan were on hand. Meanwhile, a total of 19 priests were on the altar with Father concelebrating the Mass. Providence **Mayor Angel Taveras**, a proud Assumption parishioner himself, read a proclamation declaring June 5, 2011 **"Father Daniel M. Trainor Day"** in the city of Providence. Music at the reception was provided by the popular Irish performer **Fintan Stanley**.

June 24, 2012

Assumption Parish marks the **100th Anniversary of the Dedication of the current Assumption Church** building with an *all-day celebration*. A **100th Anniversary Mass** was offered at the special time of 11:00 A.M. The main celebrant of the Mass was **The Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, D.D., Bishop of Providence**. **Rev. Timothy Reilly**, Chancellor of the Diocese of Providence accompanied the Bishop and served as the **Master of Ceremonies**. The Mass was concelebrated by Pastor Emeritus **Very Rev. Daniel M. Trainor** and our current pastor **Rev. Gildardo Suarez**. Also on the altar for this very special liturgy were **Rev. Robert Beirne**, a

retired priest of the Diocese of Providence who is currently in residence at Assumption parish and **Rev. John Rainone**, another retired priest who offers Mass several times each month at the parish. In addition, former Assumption assistant pastors **Rev. Francis Giudice**, **Rev. Bernard O’Reilly**, **Rev. Robert Blais** and **Rev. Joseph Henry** were also present in the sanctuary. The parish was also pleased to welcome around 10 **Sisters of the Cross and Passion** who were also in attendance. Following communion **Fr. Gildardo** joined the **Rays of Sunshine** for a moving rendition of “**Ave Maria**”. After Mass more than **500** present and former parishioners and friends of Assumption parish attended a dinner-dance at **Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet** in Cranston. Once again, the Boston-based Irish entertainer **Fintan Stanley** was on hand to provide the music.

December 5, 2014 The Park Theater in Cranston was packed for a concert presented by world-renowned Irish musicians **Phil Coulter** and **Andy Cooney** with special guest **Geraldine Branagan**. “**Celtic Twilight Christmas**” was sponsored by the **Home Loan Foundation** in support of the **Assumption Parish Food Pantry**. One hundred percent of the proceeds were donated to the cause. **John Murphy**, Chairman of **Home Loan Investment Bank** presented Pastor Emeritus **Father Dan Trainor** and **Sr. Angela Daniels C.P.** with a check for **\$50000.00** that would go a long way to alleviate hunger in the West End. The **Home Loan Foundation** continues to sponsor annual events in support of the **Assumption Food Ministry**

February 19, 2017 **Fr. Gildardo Suarez** celebrates the **25th Anniversary** of his ordination to the priesthood at the 11:45 A.M. Mass. A reception followed at the Joe White Parish Center.

"A CAPSULE HISTORY OF ASSUMPTION PARISH"

compiled and written by Paul Tognetti

Revised November 2017

Special thanks to Mr. Pat Dineen of Huntington Beach, CA., a former parishioner who has been researching the early history of Assumption Parish and the Sisters of the Cross and Passion for many years and who graciously consented to share his information for this project. Source material includes articles from *The Providence Visitor*, *Rhode Island Catholic*, *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*, "Assumption Parish 100th Anniverary 1871-1971" program, *documents from the Assumption parish archives as well as* a 1969 term paper entitled "*The Assumption Parish: 1871-1969*" by another former parishioner, Bryan J. Guiot, who was attending Our Lady of Providence seminary at the time. This paper was unearthed in the rectory in June 2006 as Father Trainor was preparing to retire. Meanwhile, a number of interesting documents were uncovered by parishioner Luisa White in 2010. I would like to extend a word of thanks to Marion Avarista and Michael Comella for their suggestions and comments along the way and to the many present and former parishioners who contributed their recollections of Assumption's rich history. ***The parish history is a work in progress. We are always looking for new material.*** If you have any information, memorabilia or photos that might be helpful please contact Paul Tognetti at 401-461-7718 or by e-mail at pmtognetti@gmail.com

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