

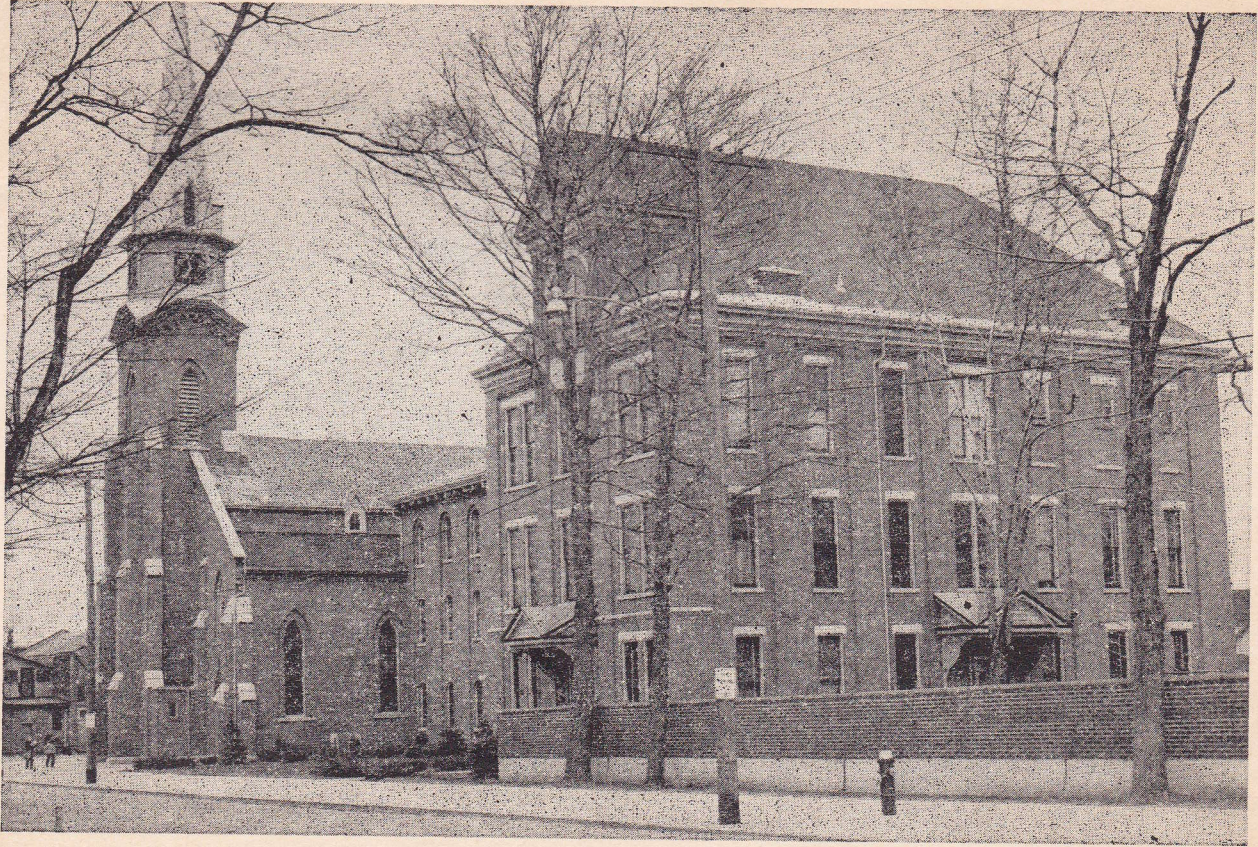
Centennial
of
St. Mary's Monastery

1861

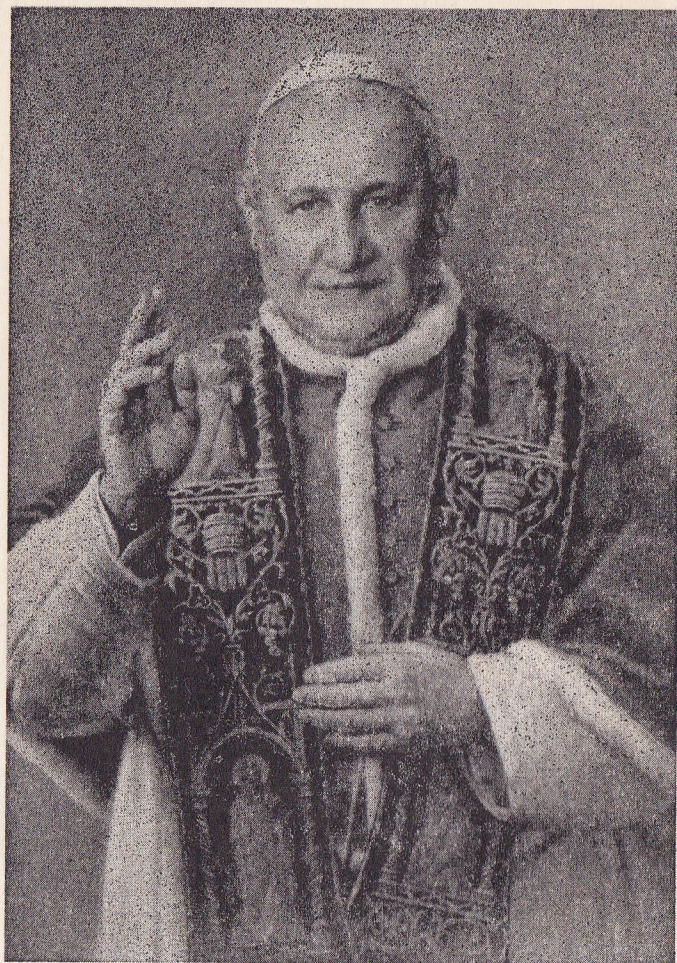


1961

DUNKIRK, NEW YORK



St. Mary's Monastery and Church



His Holiness Pope John XXIII



**Most Rev. Joseph A. Burke, D.D.
Bishop of The Diocese of Buffalo**

Centenary

Saint Mary's Monastery, Dunkirk, N. Y.

1861—1961

A centenary in the history of the Church is only one of twenty; and — if one considers the long gestation, in the Old Testament, of what was to be the Mystical Body of Christ — it is only one of many.

But, in the history of a monastic foundation, a century is a source of tremendous significance for the growth of the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church. During the hundred years since its foundation, the Passionist Fathers, Students, Brothers and Postulants of Saint Mary's Monastery have impregnated its walls with prayer and study and silence; and the seed of those years of sacrifice fructified Dunkirk and an area far beyond the City's limits.

It was not by accident that a Retreat of the Passionists was established in the City by the Lake, with its perfect natural harbor. Originally the terminus of the Erie Railroad in the days of the great trunk-lines, when pitched battles between armed mercenaries were fought for a right-of-way, Dunkirk gave, in its early days, promise to be what Buffalo actually became.

There are two possible approaches to the assignment of summarizing the hundred-years' history of Saint Mary's: a "cathedral" approach; and a "parochial" approach. One sets down a rigid outline and cuts and fits until all entries are conformed. The other admits only what the interested mind naturally inquires — and answers naturally.

The parochial approach, like a surveyor, calibrates the guide-lines. Later, the actual worker comes along to build the road, compensating for all unforeseen unevenness of terrain leading to the terminus. This history follows the parochial approach and offers only highlights: a survey; guide-lines.

I

The first survey leading to the present Saint Mary's Monastery began on February 10, 1860. Pius IX was Pope. Most Reverend John Timon was Bishop of Buffalo. Abraham Lincoln was President of these United States.

Father Albinus (Magno), C.P., had come to Dunkirk, accompanied by Father John Thomas (Stephanini), C.P., at the invitation of Bishop Timon. A Passionist Missionary, fulfilling the primary work of the Congregation, had prepared the way. In 1856, Father Gaudentius (Rossi), C.P., conducted a Retreat for the priests of the Buffalo Diocese. Immediately afterwards he was asked to preach a Mission in the newly completed Cathedral. His work bore unexpected fruit. The Passionists were asked to take over the care of St. Mary's Church. This was to be the site of the second Passionist foundation in the United States.

This Mother Church of Chautauqua County had been solemnly blessed and dedicated, under the title of Our Lady's Nativity, on November 12, 1853, by Bishop Young of Erie. Father Peter Colgan, the Pastor, was proud to show his visitors the scene of their future labors and the site of the Monastery that would spread Passionist zeal for souls to areas undreamed of then. Gothic in line but un-Gothic in its simplicity, St. Mary's had buttressed walls, a nave and two aisles, a square chancel and an unfinished tower. The ceiling was not plastered; the roof-beams and sheathing were exposed but polychromed. Parishioners were, for the most part, poor. Most of them depended on day-to-day employment at the terminal and machine shops of the Erie Railroad. They had built the church after great sacrifices; and its cost, \$9,400, still shadowed their future with debt. All they could afford for the priest's residence was a wooden shack. And yet, they had gone further: already Catholic education for their children was being assured in "old St. Mary's," a low, wooden shack on Robin Street. The Sisters of St. Joseph had come in 1858 to be the teachers. Their home, too, was poor. The generosity of some 800 parishioners had made all this possible.

Father Albinus had not hesitated. Poverty is the "standard" or battle flag of the Passionists. He had accepted the charge and returned to Pittsburgh, already planning for the expansion both of the Parish and of the new Province of the Passionists.

II

On April 19, 1861, Father Albinus came back to take permanent charge. Father Colgan met him at the Railroad Station with a carriage rented for the occasion. On the following Sunday, the new Pastor of St. Mary's was introduced to the people; Father Colgan said Good-bye, and the Passionist era in Dunkirk began.

Unerring instinct for the essentials is a Passionist characteristic. The education of young parishioners of the future was considered primary. Obviously, "old St. Mary's" was too small to serve. Brother Boniface (Feld), C.P., was put to work excavating a large, earthen-floored schoolroom out of the church cellar. For several years three Sisters of Saint Joseph conducted classes in this catacomb. Dedicated teachers do not demand an impressive physical plant for the planting of the seeds of knowledge. They need only dedicated learners. In cold and dampness, to the church upstairs when the Creek through the property burst its banks in spring flood-time, leaving their benches floating in the seepage, the teacher-learner correspondence continued — and from these unlikely conditions came the nationally known scholar and missionary, Father Robert (McNamara), C.P. The structure of his ecclesiastical learning was foundationed on elementary education in that cellar.

On July 6, 1861, a charter of incorporation was drawn up. Legal title of Passionist labors in Dunkirk was the label, "The Dunkirk Benevolent, Missionary and Scientific Institution," whose stated purpose was the "aid, support and instruction of missionaries for the benefit of the poor and for the instruction and spiritual education of the people of Dunkirk." A significant entry from the first Expense Book reads: "Month of December, 1860: Travelling expenses, \$1.70; Provisions

Continued

ST. MARY'S MONASTERY

One Hundredth Anniversary

Solemn Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving

May 28th, 1961, 12:00 Noon

Celebrant

Most Rev. Joseph A. Burke, D.D.
Bishop of Diocese of Buffalo

Deacon

Very Rev. Augustine P. Hennessy, C.P.
Superior of Holy Cross Seminary

Sub-Deacon

Very Rev. Charles Flaherty, S.S.C.
Superior of St. Columban's Seminary

Deacons of Honor

Rev. John A. Suplicki, Pastor, St. Hyacinth's Church
Rev. Valerio A. Bernardo, Pastor, Holy Trinity Church

Assistant Priest

Rev. John F. Poole, C.P., Pastor, St. Mary's Church

Master of Ceremonies

Very Rev. Msgr. Robert E. Murphy

Assistant Master of Ceremonies

Rev. Brian Burke, C.P., Vice-Rector, St. Mary's Monastery

Chaplains to Most Rev. Celestino Damiano, D.D.

Archbishop-Bishop of the Diocese of Camden, N. J.

Very Rev. Msgr. Edward Walker, Pastor

St. Joseph's, Fredonia, N. Y.

Rev. John L. Hrycyna, Pastor

St. Hedwig's, Dunkirk, N. Y.

Preacher

Very Rev. Ernest Welch, C.P.

Superior, St. Vincent Strambi Retreat

Servers

Seminarians, Holy Cross Seminary

Choir

Holy Cross Seminary Choir

Rev. Xavier Hayes, C.P., Director

One Hundredth Anniversary

Dinner

St. Mary's School Hall

PROGRAM

Invocation

Most Rev. Celestino Damiano, D.D.

Archbishop-Bishop of the Diocese of Camden, N. J.

Toastmaster

Rev. Brian Burke, C.P.

Vice-Rector, St. Mary's Monastery

Speaker

Very Rev. Msgr. William J. Snyder

Pastor, St. George's Church, Jewettville, N. Y.

Remarks

Very Rev. Gerard A. Orlando, C.P.

Rector, St. Mary's Monastery

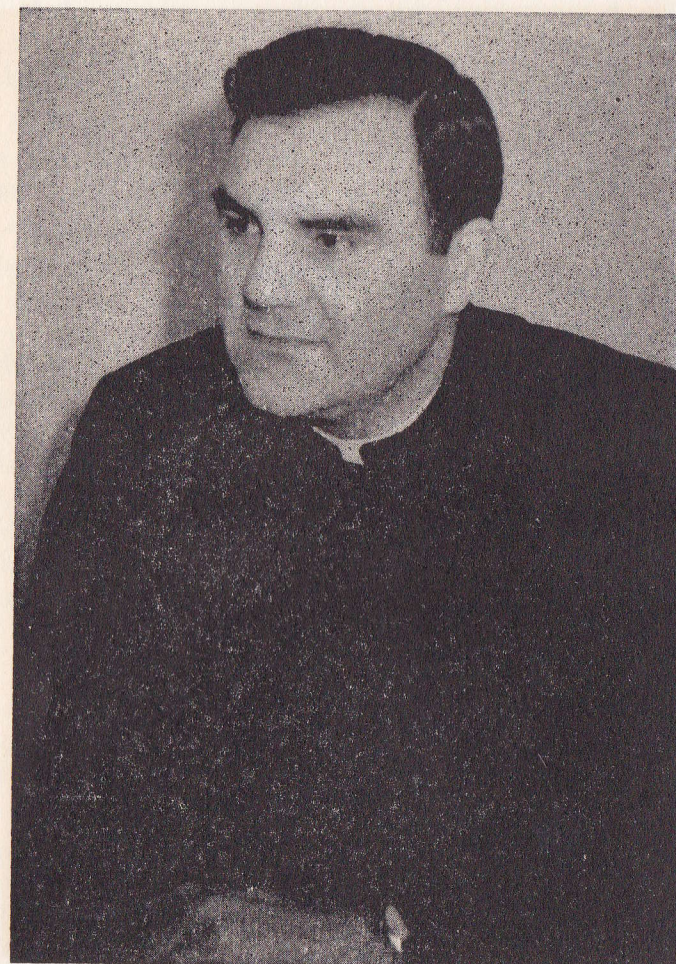
Blessing

Very Rev. Canisius Hazlett, C.P.

Provincial, Passionist Fathers



Father Albinus Magno, C.P.
Founder and First Rector of St. Mary's Monastery



Very Rev. Gerard A. Orlando, C. P.
Rector of St. Mary's Monastery



Father Brian Burke, C.P.
Vice-Rector of St. Mary's Monastery

for the house, \$10.00; To the Poor, \$5.00; To the Sisters of Charity, Buffalo, \$40.00. Total, \$56.70." Commentary on these entries is superfluous. But it should be stated that, in spite of the great increase in expenditure for travel and provisions demanded by an inflated dollar, the same ratio to unselfish charities has been observed to the present day.

In November of 1861, Bishop Timon legally transferred ownership of the Church, School and Cemetery to the Monastic Corporation.

The reason for these legal protections is the occasion we celebrate today. St. Mary's Parish was now St. Mary's Monastery and Parish. Father Albinus had brought the plans he bore mentally to Pittsburgh the previous February to fruition. The land next to the Church on Washington Avenue was now the property of the Passionists. And on *May 26, 1861*, the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, the cornerstone of St. Mary's Monastery was blessed by Bishop Timon. A little over a year later, the core of the present building was completed. St. Mary's Monastery was blessed and officially opened on Sunday, July 20, 1862. Proudly it bears the patronage of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

III

Pride in individual achievement is deplorable. Pride in group achievement is praiseworthy. The Passionists take justifiable pride in their group achievement.

Missions, once serviced by them in Westfield, Cattaraugus, Dayton, Forestville, Gowanda, Cassadaga, Fredonia, Brocton, French Creek, Ripley, Sinclairville, Stateline, Cuba, Wellsville, Friendship, Angola, Jamestown, Mayville, Sherman, Stockton, Silver Creek, Irving, North Evans, Eighteen Mile Creek, as well as Dunkirk's Sacred Heart (then St. George's) Parish, have been handed over to the care of the priests of the Buffalo Diocese.

Released from these obligations, which are assumed only as a temporary charge, in gratitude to the Diocese which shelters them, the Passionists were free to devote themselves

to the expansion of their own Monastery Parish — the results of which are apparent to all who consider the present extensive plant — and to their primary work of preaching Missions, Novenas and Retreats. Works which once, in an undivided American Province, took them all the way across the country, are now restricted to the Eastern Seaboard, from Maine to Florida and as far west as Ohio, and to Canada, from the Manitoba Border east to the Atlantic Coast Provinces. Six months of every year, at separated intervals, Passionist missionaries cover this vast territory, preaching the Sacred Passion of Christ: the Efficient Cause of Grace and the Sacraments.

The other six months of the year are devoted to a side of the Passionist life which is not suspected, and certainly not seen, by the majority of outsiders. And yet it is this side of the Passionist life which is the dynamo juicing the wires of their words. In the inspired conception of St. Paul of the Cross, half of every year is devoted to the Monastic Life. For one hundred years, in the middle of Dunkirk, Passionist Fathers, Brothers, Students and Postulants have been cultivating the Interior life of Divine Grace through a rigorous regimen of regular observance, signalled by their community bell, and by the wooden rattle, used in the night-hours when exhausted bodies are deaf to the bell. Five hours of prayer are made; silence and study observed, broken only by two 45-minute recreation periods a day, and an occasional longer recreation. This part of the Passionist life makes the words spoken with the lips live first in the Passionist's heart — and precisely here is pinpointed the reason for the fertility of Passionist preaching. Knowledge learned at the foot of the Cross becomes the wisdom that an earlier St. Paul, the Apostle, said "has made foolish the wisdom of this world."

Pride in individual achievement is deplorable. Pride in group achievement is praiseworthy. The resident Passionists of St. Mary's offer these hundred years of group achievement with pride to their parishioners, the people of the City of Dunkirk, of the Diocese of Buffalo, and of the United States.

But, as individuals, they retreat to their Retreat of St. Mary's, in humility, as they will again and again, to study and pray, lest, in those terrifying words of St. Paul the Apostle, "having preached to others," they themselves "should become castaways."

And in St. Mary's Monastery they find peace and assurance; for their home is under the powerful patronage of the Queen of Seven Sorrows.

FINIS