

A History of Saint Ann Catholic Parish

There is mystery in our spiritual beginnings here in Lansing, as there is with all great things. Records are sketchy or unclear, and memory is inadequate to fill in all the blanks of the earliest days of Saint Ann. Our civic roots extend even deeper than the life of our parish.

The State of Illinois was regarded as part of the “Northwest” of our country through the middle of the last Century. Chicago was incorporated as a city in 1837, with a population of only about 4000 souls. The Diocese of Chicago, created in 1843 by Pope Gregory XVI, included the entire State; the first Bishop was William J. Quarter.

In the same year a man named August Hildebrandt and his family settled in the area eventually to be known as Lansing; three brothers with the surname of Lansing settled here a few years later in 1846.



The Trinowski Family

Prior to the turn of the present Century a few Catholic families settled in the vicinity of Lansing. They attended various parishes in Hammond, Calumet City, Glenwood and Riverdale. The parish records of these churches contain names like Andrew Ward (a road contractor) Charles Neuffer, Matt Eslinger, Anthony Koselke, Edward Koselke, Anton Matuszewski, William Hastings, George Hagan, Max Trinowski (a farmer, whose house stood where the Village Hall now stands), Leo Barth, Charles Weinacher and Mrs. A. Van Steenberg.

Over the years they and their descendants told many stories about how they attended religious services on foot, by hayrack, wagon and automobile.

With these early Catholic families of the area begins the uncertainties about how it all began. One version of the story has eight families (another record says that it was seven, while another lists nine) approaching Fr. Armand C. Martin of Hazel Crest in 1913 with a request to celebrate Mass in Lansing for the few Catholic families living there.

Space was made available by Charles Neuffer (one record spells the name “Neupper,” while another has it spelled “Nufer”) in a hall he owned which had been used variously as a dance hall, community center, polling place and a magistrate’s court.



The building still stands today at the Southeast corner of Torrence and Indiana Avenues. This version of the story holds that by the Summer of the very same year, much of the work being done by the men of the parish, a small church was built at the corner of Ridge Road and Chicago Avenue at a cost of \$2,800. Each of the families were asked for \$50.00 for the construction, and the bricks and mortar were donated.



Father Marin reportedly approached the Catholic Extension Society for the construction costs that were not covered by the church members.

In 1911 Father Martin had already organized the parishes of Saint Anne in Hazel Crest and Saint Joseph in Homewood. His transportation to and from Lansing in those days was a horse and buggy.

Another version of the story of our roots says that the church was completed in the Autumn of 1914, and dedicated the following year by Archbishop George Mundelein, which is rather unlikely, as he didn't become Archbishop of Chicago until 1916. A story from the Lake County Times in October of 1916 reports that Archbishop Mundelein dedicated the new church on Wednesday, October 18, 1916, a story which may have the greatest historical accuracy.

One way or the other, it was a small beginning, because Saint Ann didn't become a full-fledged parish for almost another 30 years.

Still in 1914, Father Martin was named as the first resident pastor of Saint John in Glenwood, until then a mission which had previously been served from Hazel Crest. At this point, Saint Ann became a mission of Saint John's. It may have been small, but things were lively at Saint Ann ---dances were held regularly in the church basement as fund-raisers.

The first dance is said to have netted \$8.00. The little church was already recording its "firsts;" the first altar server was Paul Koselke, and the first wedding was that of Anna Eslinger and Edward Van Pelt. This wedding, which took place on Tuesday, September 14, 1915 was reported in the September 16, 1915 edition of the Lake County Times as follows: "Miss Eslinger is the first bride since the completion of the church. Reverend Father Martin officiated."

Another story from the same newspaper, dated July 29, 1915, and referring to a church service scheduled for August 1, 1915, reads: "Reverend Father Martin will conduct services at the new Catholic church here Sunday morning." This newspaper report, along with those of the first wedding and the church dedication strongly suggest that our original church was not completed until the Summer of 1915, and dedicated in the Autumn of 1916.

Life in this area was very different from what we know today! Although electricity came to Lansing in 1912, our little church had no furnace or plumbing, and a small coal stove was only barely adequate in cold weather. It is said that the Holy Water often froze in Winter. Residents of Lansing had wells instead of city waster, and rainwater from cisterns was regularly used for bathing. In Winter, farmers let their horses run wild in what is now Thornton Woods.

In Summer, gypsies set up their camps there, and

the prairie produced abundant wild blueberries. The South end of Lansing was mainly marsh-land that was eventually drained by the construction of Lincoln Drainage Ditch, creating more farm land. Onion farms were plentiful in those days. Another important part of the local economy was brickyards, Lansing had at least five. There was only one doctor in town, and most babies were born right at home.

Lansing may have been a quiet farming community, but changes were still happening. In 1915 Archbishop Quigley of Chicago died; and in February of the following year George Mundelein, formerly Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, was installed as Archbishop of Chicago. In the same year Ridge Road was finally paved by the Fred Lorenz Company. The First World War was already underway in Europe, with troops going over there in 1917. Here at Saint Ann, although there was no school, there was still a need for religious education for the children. Records show that members of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur began providing that service in 1918. They come from Saint Victor's Parish in Calumet City.

The Roaring '20's brought the Lansing Airport, built by Henry Ford in 1924. This was a significant event for such a rural area, but Lansing eventually had two airports, with the addition of a smaller "mosquito" airport just North of Bernice Road. In 1925 Father Martin was named Pastor of Saint Mary's Church in Minooka, Illinois (now in the Joliet Diocese), and served there until his death in 1946.

In his obituary The New World noted that he "organized parishes in Homewood, Glenwood, Thornton and Lansing, often wielding hammer and saw himself to realize the ambition of providing a place of worship for his flock." With Father Marin's departure, Father Edmund P. Kelley became pastor of Saint John's in Glenwood and continued to celebrate Mass weekly at Saint Ann until his death in 1930 at age 39. In the middle of the '20's there were reportedly about twenty families who were members at the mission of Saint Ann.

Technology progress arrived in Lansing in 1926 with the installation of a modern water and sewer system. With the addition of Lake Michigan water, Lansing began to develop as a residential community, and population grew, as did that of Saint Ann. By 1930 Father James E. Burke was named pastor of Saint John in Glenwood, also serving the mission of Saint Ann. The year 1931 saw the formation of the Saint Ann Ladies Club, with Mrs. Rose Brown as the

first president. More technology came in 1937 when plumbing and a furnace were installed in the little church. The mission church had grown to 90 families. Two services were now necessary on Sundays. and to help him in this, Father Burke engaged the aid of the Carmelite Fathers from Chicago.

The decade of the 1940's was a time of enormous change both around the globe and right here at home in Lansing. The first half of the decade saw the most terrible warfare the world has ever seen, leading to a very different kind of world by the time the war was over. Closer to home, the Archdiocese of Chicago got a new shepherd in 1940 when Samuel Stritch, formerly the Archbishop of Milwaukee, was installed as Archbishop of Chicago. The new archbishop didn't waste much time changing things in Lansing--by October of 1941 he had decided to do away with Saint Ann's status as a mission of an other church. Saint Ann now became a parish in its own right, with its first pastor Father Francis Bellerive, a man who had his own ideas about change, and eventually brought them to fruition. At first, though, he had to be patient and live a simple life-- for his two months at Saint Ann he lived in the basement of the church.

One change seemed to happen rather quickly. Early in that year of 1941 the little parish had just 67 families, but by Christmas time, just two months after Father Bell's arrival, the number of families had nearly doubled to 120. This growth spurt led the new pastor to increase the number of Sunday Masses from two to four by January of 1942. Amazingly, by the time Easter rolled around, parish membership had doubled again, and six Sunday services were necessary. By the end of 1942 over 300 families were registered at Saint Ann, including about 100 families from Munster, which had no parish of its own. This was also at a time when many young men and women were postponing marriage and going off to war.

At the beginning of 1943 Father Bell published a parish yearbook which revealed his ambitious plans for the future. The small yearbook was made up almost entirely of ads, apparently to raise funds for the building of a new church he envisioned for the parish. He wrote: "The plans for a combination Church and school are nearing completion. The Church will have a seating capacity of four hundred and fifty persons while the school will have a complete curriculum for eight grades. The large well-furnished rooms will accommodate thirty-five pupils each. Provision is also being made for a large basement to serve as a

gymnasium, with appointments to be installed for other parish affairs."

In the Spring of the same year the young parish had one of its "firsts." Bishop William D. O'Brien, an auxiliary bishop of the Chicago archdiocese, conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation for the first time at Saint Ann Parish. The Confirmandi included fifty-two children and fifteen converts to the faith. The Saint Ann's Men's Club also came into being during this year. These were men who donated their time, money and technical skills to the enhancement of the parish, and now they organized themselves into a club.

The year 1945 brought more change to Saint Ann. This was the year that Saint Thomas More Parish in Munster was founded. The parish census at Saint Ann shrank a little as a result, but today, more than 50 years later, there are still many Munster residents who are active members of our parish. 1945 was also the year that Saint Ann Sewing Circle was formed, organized by Mrs. Josephine Schoettle. Over the years this club produced vestments for church and beautiful quilts for fund-raising events. On the world scene, World War II came to an end in September with the surrender of the Japanese.

In July of the following year, Saint Ann held its "Seventh Annual Picnic" at the Lansing Sportsman's Club. An ad book was printed for the event, apparently to raise funds for the building of the new church, still a few years in the future. Ads included Ridgeway Motor Sales, Gus Bock's Hardware, Schroeder Funeral Home, Walter Schultz Real Estate and Insurance, Vierk Liquors, Lorenz Coal & Building Materials; names that are still familiar in the area. One of the ads was for Blair's Hatchery (Baby Chick Hatching--Light & Heavy Breeds), and reveals that Lansing of 1946 was still very much a farming community. At the parish picnic prizes were raffled off: a Universal Gas stove, a washing machine, an "ironer," an Admiral radio, an Emerson radio, two electric irons and a handmade quilt. The picnic included a "Ladies' Fancy Work Booth," and there were continuous Bingo games.

We can imagine that throughout the '40's Father Bell was very active with his fund-raising efforts, because his big project started just as the decade was coming to an end. In September of 1949, with great anticipation and hope for the future, the parish family of Saint Ann broke ground for their new church and school building. After ten months of construction the new church, rectory, and

school buildings were dedicated on July 5, 1950.



The cost of this large construction project was reportedly \$250,000. The original church, right at the corner of Ridge Road and Chicago Avenue, continued to serve the parish until the community moved into the new church building. When that happened the small, old church was torn down and the new rectory was built in its place. Now there was room for another priest, and the first Associate Pastor was appointed, Father Raphael Orozco.

That Autumn the brand new Saint Ann School opened with 296 students, and the tuition was a back-breaking \$35.00 for the year. The school was staffed by nine members of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Mary Immaculate, including the first Principal, Sister Mary Salome Gilmore. The sisters moved into the well-known 'white house' which was formerly been Father Bell's residence.

Originally one-story frame bungalow, big enough for one priest, it soon became a two-story house that accommodated the nine sisters. The large addition, with all the accommodating electrical, carpentry and plumbing work, was done by the men of the parish.

What to say about the '50's? The Eisenhower years, post-war prosperity, the birth of Rock'n Roll, the Korean War, McCarthyism, the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement, fear of the atomic bomb. On the National scene so much seemed to be happening. Here at home, the changes that came about at Saint Ann's during the decade of the '50's can be summed up in one word: growth.

Several new ministries came into being and the physical plant of the parish had to be enlarged as the parish census and school enrollment continued to expand. In 1951 the Men's Choir sang their way into existence (apparently women didn't sing in those days). In 1952 the Lansing Council #3540 of the Knights of Columbus was formed with the help of Father Bell. The first Grand Knight was Louis Visnak.

In the same year Father Roger Jones was appointed as Associate Pastor, and the Saint Ann's Nurses Health Organization was begun.

This group consisted of thirteen nurses and sixteen mothers who worked under the direction of the Cook County Department of Public Health for the betterment of Saint Ann students. In only the second year of the new school's existence, enrollment increased by almost 100 students. 1953 saw the formation of the Daughters of Isabella, Lansing Circle 896, with Evelyn Linn as the first Regent. Father John Eichleman was appointed as Associate Pastor.

By 1955 Richard J. Daley was successful in getting elected to his first term as mayor of the City of Chicago. The next years enrollment at Saint Ann School was getting out of hand, and a five new classrooms had to be added to keep up with the demand. Increasing school enrollment was apparently a function of an increase in the parish census, so by 1957 additional space was added to the church, allowing seating for 300 more people. In the same year Father William Murphy was appointed as Associate Pastor, and the Ushers Club was formed.

In the late '50's several more associate pastors came and went, while Father Bell stayed the course. Also in 1957, Our Lady of Knock Parish in Calumet City was formed from the Northern end of Saint Ann's and the Southern end of Saint Victor's. 1958 saw the opening of Thornton Fraction South High School, an important institution in the lives of so many current parishioners.

The decade of the 1960's was a period of both excitement and turbulent transition, although it started quietly enough. The big event at the beginning of the decade was the election of John F. Kennedy, the country's first ever Catholic President, and a man of considerable charm and wit. Many Catholics took pride in his election, as there had been a history of discrimination against Catholics in politics at the national level.

By 1962, here at home, Saint Ann School reached its largest enrollment ever with 890 students, in an era when life seemed to be good. In Rome, following the vision of Pope John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council opened in October, eventually leading to the realization that the Church needed to seek its roots in its earliest history and open itself to a new and more vital Spirit. In Lansing the Knights of Columbus celebrated their 10th Anniversary. In those days Dick Mauch was the Treasurer, George McNamara a Trustee, and Walt Jonassen the General Program

Chairman. Also, in '62 the Young Ladies Sodality was formed at Saint Ann, under the guidance of Father Byron Maher, an Associate Pastor at the time.

1963 was both a year of celebration at Saint Ann (fifty years since Father Martin first steered his buggy in our direction) and a year of tragedy for the country, with the assignation of President John F. Kennedy. So much had changed in half a century at Saint Ann, from the earliest gatherings in a dance hall to having our own church and the largest parochial school in Lansing. Three years later, there was another reason, as Father Bell celebrated twenty-five years as the Pastor of Saint Ann. This was a bittersweet occasion really, because it also marked the end of Father Bell's tenure as pastor of the parish. For the first time since Saint Ann became a parish, we had a new Pastor, Father George A. Slominski. Changes were also happening at the national level. Our country was becoming more deeply involved in a war in Vietnam, leading to both questions and protests about the wisdom of our involvement.

Back in Lansing, in 1967 Father Slominski led the effort that eventually produced Saint Ann's first Parish Council; and the CCD Program (Religious Education) was re-organized creating the Family Faith Program. As the decade came to an end in 1969, enrollment at Saint Ann School had dropped of to 720 students, indicating that the baby boom was definitely over.

Late in 1970, Father Bell returned to Lansing to celebrate a major milestone, 50 years in the priesthood. The parish bulletin of that Sunday in December paid special tribute to our first Pastor: "Good health, Father Bell. Thank you for sharing 25 years of your priestly life with us. Thank you for sharing this moment of joy and triumph with us. This place is just not the same without you."

In 1971 a new parish ministry was formed, the Funeral Luncheon Ministry. By 1972 two new shrines were purchased and dedicated in our church. Hand-carved in Italy, one portrayed the Holy Family. We also had a new organ installed in the church to enhance the weekly liturgies. Growth continued in 1973 when Saint Ann School opened a Kindergarten. This was also the year that the Parents Club was formed at the school.

The later half of the '70's brought many changes, both nationally and locally. In 1974 Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States in August; and the painful Vietnam War finally came to an end in April 1975. At Saint Ann, one of the changes initiated by the Spirit of the Second Vatican Council arrived in

1977 when parishioner Dick Mauch was ordained by Cardinal Cody as first permanent Deacon to serve the needs of our parish. About this time the parishioners of Saint Ann expressed a new out-pouring of generosity and social concern by sponsoring a large family of Vietnamese refugees.

This ministry, involving even the purchase of a home for the family, along with all their needs, was coordinated by several parishioners, including Frank and Diane Batinick and John and Phyllis Rowe.

1978 was the year that Koral Wojtyla became the first non-Italian Pope in 450 years, taking the name of Pope John Paul II. In 1979 there seemed to be a whirlwind of change. In March of that year, Father Slominski retired and Father Edward F. Harnett was named pastor. One month later another new ministry was begun when the Eucharistic Ministry to the Sick was organized. In May the Adult Catechumenate Program, now know as RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), was begun and in September the new Marriage Preparation Program started. The first communal Anointing Masses were begun in October '79. Parishioner Joe Rowe was ordained to the permanent Diaconate in December. By this time the parish census was 2700 families.

Ah, the '80's almost ancient history now. In 1980 the very first Saint Ann School Board was organized. In 1981 the Saint Ann's Ladies Club celebrated 50 years of life. At that time the Club had more than 400 members. Past presidents had included women like Martha Trinowski. Louise Koselke, Josephine Schoettle, Kathy Clinnin. Pam Lauer, Margaret Jonassen, and Jean Nosal. There was sadness in 1982 when Deacon Joe Rowe passed away early in the year. Father Harnett was assisted in his duties by two associate pastors at that time, Father William Fischer and Father Richard Sztorc.

The Principal of Saint Ann School was Ruth Traman. Also in 1982, Joseph Bernardin, then the Archbishop of Cincinnati, was named as Archbishop of Chicago. 1983 saw the Ministry of Care organized as a new ministry; and Erv Chojnacki was ordained a permanent Deacon in April. It was also in 1983 that a ministry for widows and widowers, WOW was first organized at the parish.

1984 was another busy year at Saint Ann's. John Rowe, the brother of Joe Rowe, was ordained a permanent deacon. A big change in the parish July 1 of that year was the installation of our third pastor, Father Norm Kunz. The "Review" Program began that Autumn, as did the Bridge, a drug and alcohol

intervention program. The parish also tried out a big fund raising effort, Show Biz Annie's, which had its successful debut in November. In 1985 we got two new permanent deacons, as Marv Studer and Joe Winblad were ordained.

The passing of an era came in 1986 when Father Francis Bellerive died on October 8, 1986. Born in 1893, at the time of his death he was the oldest priest in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Our associate pastors at this time in the history of Saint Ann were Father Eugene Burns and Father John Heffernan. It was about this time that the first Christmas Giving Tree Program was organized by Monica and Tom Lockton. The following year another new ministry was added to the life of the parish, the W. A. Y. (Welcome All Youth). A major milestone for Saint Ann was reached in 1988 when we celebrated seventy-five years of existence as a Catholic Christian community. During Lent of the same year the Living Stations, a ministry for youth of the parish, first began, under the direction of Vera Seymour, Dan Lemon and Ken Toosevich. As the new school year began in 1989, Saint Ann School got a new principal, Sister Eileen Morley, O.P. The parish also organized another new ministry, the Little Rock Scripture Study Group. That year our Village of Lansing was bulging, with a population of almost 30,000.

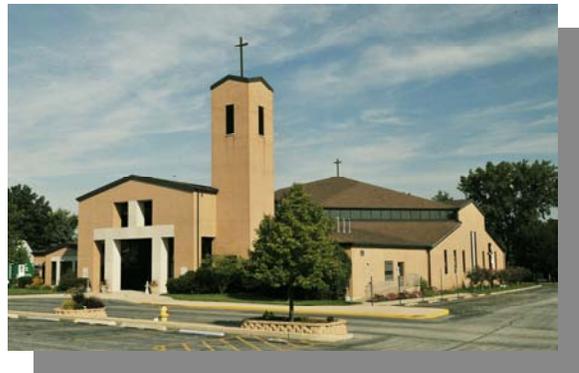
Change and growth has continued at Saint Ann in the '90's as the world has continued to change around us. In 1991, to the astonishment of many Americans who had lived their entire lives in fear of "godless Communism," the Soviet Union came to an end. In 1992 Father Norm, who had served us so well since 1984, retired as pastor, and was replaced by our fifth pastor, Father Michael A. Gabriel. In 1993, the sleepy little farming village of Lansing, now a robust suburb of Chicago, celebrating its 100th Anniversary. This was also the year that the Parish Mission Team was organized here at Saint Ann. In 1994 a new parish position was created, that of Pastoral Associate and was filled by Todd Williamson. In the Summer of '94 members of the parish participated in a mission to Juarez, Mexico.

This year also brought some sad moments as the popular Father Norm Kunz passed away in July, after a long fight with cancer. Father Larry Collins, who had served Saint Ann for several years, moved on to a new ministry at Little Company of Mary Hospital, and was replaced by Father Wojcieh Kwiecien. Later the same year the Tomorrow's Parish Program was begun under the leadership of Ted Cap, Linda Hibbs, Paul

Parise, Walt Jonassen and Wilda Warren, and led to the awareness that Saint Ann's Parish needed a new church building.

1995 brought the deaths of two of our deacons who had long served the parish, Marv Studer and Erv Chojnacki. It also brought the exciting news that Cardinal Bernardin had approved the building of a new church building at Saint Ann Parish.

Planning was begun immediately for the new building that would take us into the next Century, with a theme that was taken from the Prophet Jeremiah: A Future Full of Hope. Just last year, on September 8, 1996, the groundbreaking ceremony was held, officiated at by Bishop George Murry. Construction was begun very soon thereafter, but these events were accompanied by the sad news that Joseph Cardinal Bernardin had died. Also in 1996 our parish staff grew, with the additions of Father Joe Allen and Joe Ceh. Not long after their arrival we said farewell and good luck to Father Wojcieh Kwiecien and Father Dick Shannon.



Finally, after almost exactly a year of construction on September 27, 1997 our magnificent new church building was formally dedicated by Archbishop Francis George, the new Archbishop of Chicago. Saint Ann Parish has continued to grow in size, one of the factors which necessitated the new church. Our parish ministries, organizations and clubs now number fifty-two.

We have a unique vantage point at Saint Ann as the 20th Century comes to an end. We look forward to a new Century and a new Millennium, but we also look forward to the continuing growth of our community of Faith. Some day, future parishioners will look back at what we accomplished as part of their own dim past, their own rich tradition.

Like us they will also be looking toward their own future full of hope, the coming of the Lord.

Church Furnishings



The Baptismal Font...

The font of our church stands at the front doors. Symbolically, it reminds us that it is through our Baptism that we enter the family of our Church Faith. As we pass through the waters of Baptism in entering the faith, so we pass the font each time we enter the church building.

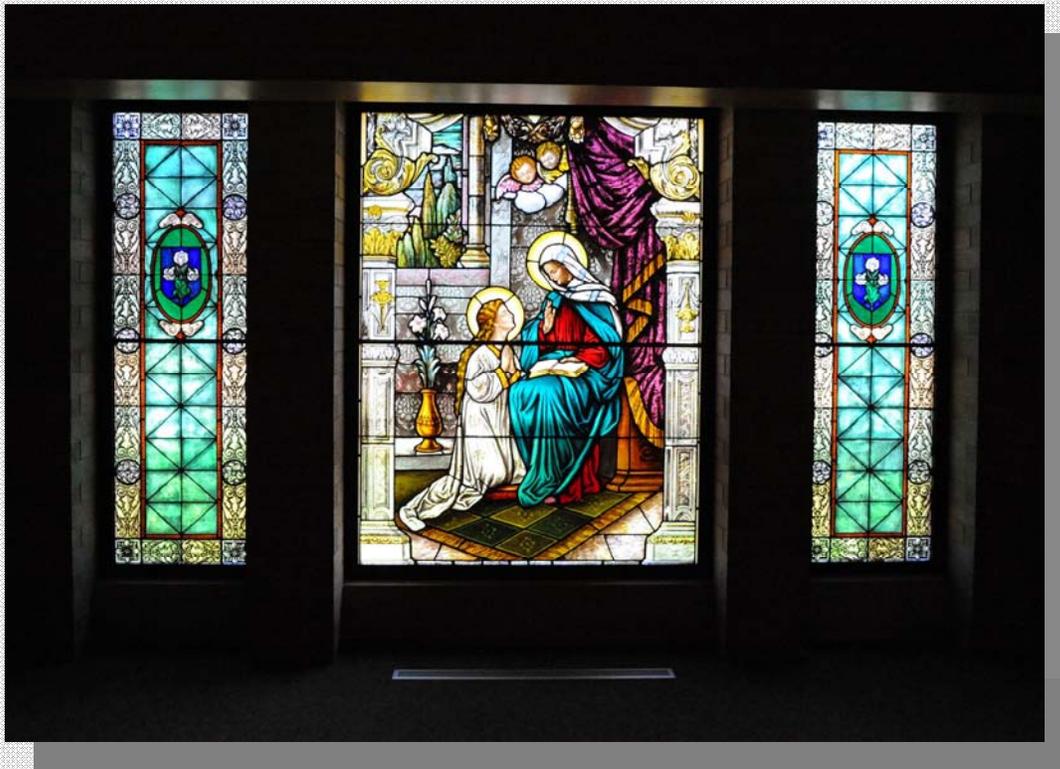
The shape of the font is also very symbolic. In the early Church Baptismal Fonts took only a few different shapes: cruciform (the shape or the cross), octagonal (eight sides representing the seven days of creation, plus one for the Resurrection- the day of the new creation). tomb shaped fonts (representing how we die to our old selves, and are born anew in Christ) and round of womb-shaped, the shape of our new font. It acknowledges the Baptismal Font as the womb of the Church - the womb from which new Christians are born.



The Circular Window...

Saint Ann is the central figure in the large, round window which dominates the sanctuary. With her arms wide open, she seems to have been caught in the wonderful dance of praise to God. This is reflected in the words, "Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

These are the words that are proclaimed not only by Saint Ann, but also by the entire Christian community, and are central to the liturgical life of our new church.



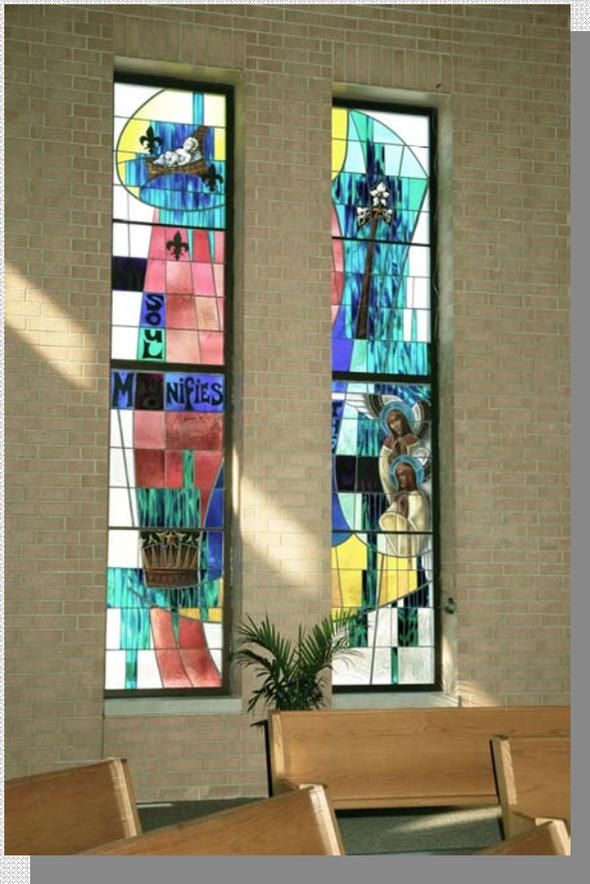
The Day Chapel Window...

In the South wall of the Church Chapel is a stained glass window that was originally made for the chapel of Saint Joseph College in Niles, approximately 90 years ago. This traditional window portrays the young Mary with Saint Ann, in the traditional pose of teacher, with an open book. Mary looks at her mother attentively, leaning on her mother's knee, seemingly listening as Ann speaks. Flanking this large, traditional window are two new windows which were designed to match the style of the older window. They were made especially by Rambusch Studios of New York who created all of the stained glass windows for our new church.

East Stained Glass Windows...

There is a legend about Ann and Joachim which tells of Ann sitting beneath a laurel tree where the sparrows had built a nest. Suddenly there were two angels before her, and they told her that God had heard her prayer for a child, "You will bear a child," they told her, "and your child shall be throughout the whole world." Ann got up and went to find Joachim. The two met at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, where Ann told him, "Now know that the Lord has blessed me."

This legend is represented in the East windows of our new church. In the panel on the right side, the Golden Gate of Jerusalem is pictured, along with a lily on a blue background, which symbolizes the Virgin Mary. In the left panel is a sparrow's nest and an open book, an ancient symbol of Ann's role as the teacher of Mary. Between the two panels are the words, "My heart exults in the Lord," taken from the Song of Hannah in the Old Testament Book of Samuel. Hannah has traditionally been regarded as a forerunner of Ann from the Hebrew Scriptures (Ann is a derivative of the name Hannah). Ann would have known Hannah's words of praise, and would have taught them to her daughter, Mary.



West Stained Glass Windows...

The words of her mother, Ann, found in the East windows are later echoed by Mary in her famous song of praise, the Magnificat (from the Gospel of Luke), which are written in the windows on the West side of the church; "My Soul magnifies the greatness of the Lord." The words of the song of praise are accompanied by traditional images. In the left panel are images of the infant Mary and a crown symbolizing her sanctity. The right panel contains two angels of Ann's vision, and a flowering staff, which symbolizes the nativity of Jesus, opposite the nativity of Mary.



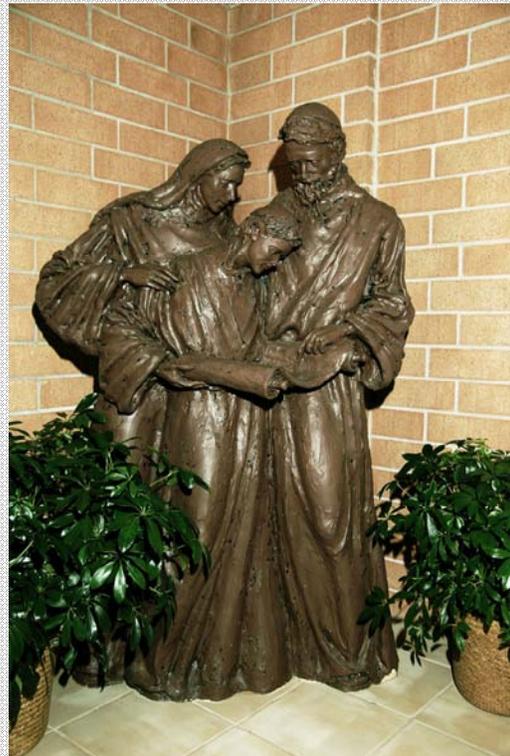
The Processional Cross...

Our processional cross is reminiscent of the timeless beauty of the Cross of San Damiano. This 12th Century cross can still be seen today in the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, Italy. The cross played a crucial role in the life of Saint Francis. In his day, the cross was kept in a church called San Damiano (St. Damian). This little church was in a state of terrible disrepair and yet the young Francis felt drawn there to pray. In prayer, before this very cross Francis, first heard God's voice. It is said that the cross spoke to him, "Francis, rebuild my church." Francis immediately set upon the task of rebuilding and repairing the church of San Damiano.

Our cross is patterned after the very special Cross of San Damiano. It leads us to worship and to service, just as the Cross of San Damiano led Saint Francis to his life of service and commitment. The shape and corpus are faithful to the original. Our cross is nine feet tall, and it is fashioned from brasswood. The cross itself is coated with 14K gold leaf. The background of the corpus is a beautiful blue, signifying a new mourning, the symbolic beginning of our new life in Christ.

The Holy Family Shrine...

The statue of the Holy Family stands in the South East corner of the church. With Mary and Joseph standing behind an adolescent Jesus, all three of them become a part of our worshipping community and area a model for our life in the Christian family of Faith. Standing with us as we praise and thank God, they become an active presence within our assembly, and not merely objects off to the side.



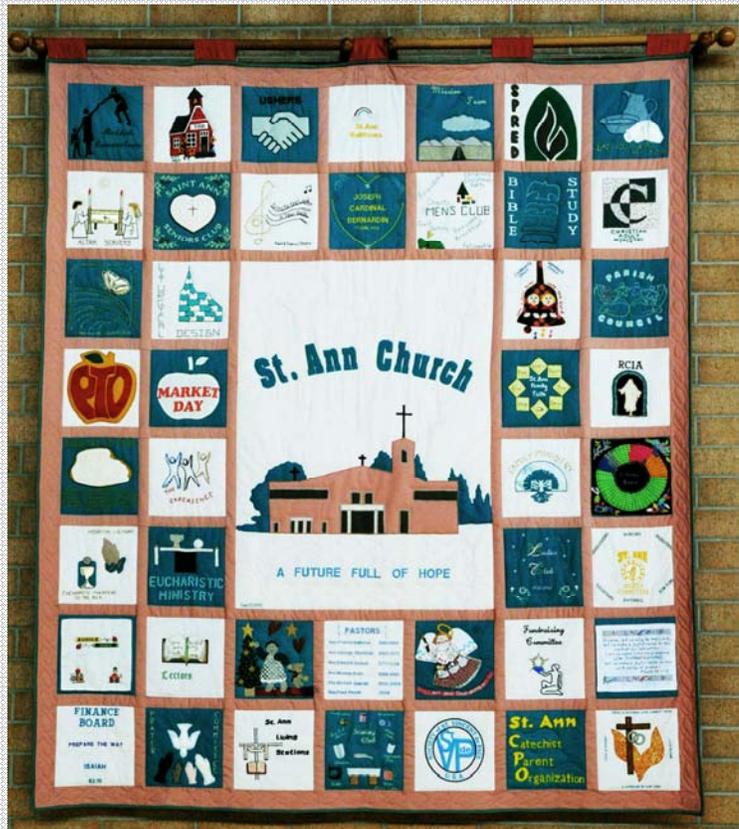


The Saint Ann Shrine...

The statue of Saint Ann located in the bell-tower in the Southeast corner of the Narthex, is a beautiful representation of the patroness of our parish. Created by the artist Suzanne Young of Michigan, it portrays Ann standing with book in her hand, her finger pointing upward, and a slight but obvious smile on her face. This life-sized Ann seems to invite us into her presence for meditation and prayer.

Parish Ministry Quilt...

In honor of the dedication of the new church, each ministry and organization designed a quilt which represents their service to the parish. The squares were assembled into this beautiful quilt by the Saint Ann Sewing Club.





The Ambo...

Similar to the open, curved base to the altar, the new ambo has the same basic symbolism of many intertwining branches in its shape and design. The Ambo has not been designed as a pulpit in the traditional sense, but as a focal point in the new church, from which the Word can be proclaimed to all peoples. There is also the representation of both the bow of a ship, and a harp, when the ambo is viewed from the side, this shape can be easily noticed. A boat, from the early Christian times, has symbolized the Church itself, while the harp was the traditional instrument of the religious folk songs of Israel, the psalms. The designer of the Ambo, Joseph Ramirez, in a presentation of the Ambo to the parish, referred to the people of Saint Ann as the "vine brought out of Egypt," the term used in Psalm 84 for the people of Israel. The design and its symbolism form the table of the Word of God for Saint Ann parish. From this sacred spot the Word of God is proclaimed to the community, helping to shape us into the People of God.



The Altar...

The Altar of our church, designed by Joseph Ramirez of Axis Mundi (a liturgical design company in Chicago), is in the shape of an ellipse, or oblong circle. Round shapes are classically feminine, and since our parish patroness is Saint Ann, it is appropriate that her feminine presence is represented in an object like the Altar (this is also one of the reasons for a round Baptismal font). The base of the Altar depicts the trunks of many trees, climbing heavenward and intertwining in the uppermost branches. These symbolic trees and branches represent the many diverse and unique people who make up our parish family. As the base supports the table of the Altar, so do our many parish families support our parish. The carvings in the waist of the represent leaves from trees that are native to the Lansing area.

In the center of the Altar is a perfectly round stone. This is an ancient symbol for the life-giving presence of God. The color of the marble in this stone matches that of the Baptismal font, as does the round shape of that stone. This makes clear the powerful connection that exists between the Sacrament of Baptism and the Eucharistic meal we celebrate in the liturgy. As Baptism leads to the table, so does our font lead to the table of the parish family.