

History of St. John the Baptist Church, Scottdale, Pennsylvania Up to 2014

The beginning of St. John's dates back to the year 1870. Prior to this time, the spiritual needs of the people in the Scottdale-Mt. Pleasant area were attended by the pastor of St. Vincent's Church, Latrobe. In the Fall of 1870, Immaculate Conception Church in Connellsville was established and our area became one of its missions.

The next six years saw the development of the B&O and the Pennsylvania railroads, the building of the Furnace and Rolling Mill, the opening of coal and ore mines and the erection of the coke ovens. During this period, Mass was offered at private homes and sometimes at the Ore Mines.

In March 1876, "The Little Church on the Hill" (the present site of St. Joseph's in Everson) was purchased to serve the needs of the rapidly growing population. Two years later, it was decreed that the "mission" become a separate parish with definite bounds and that St. John the Baptist be its patron saint. Fr. Thomas McEnrue was appointed as our first pastor in September, 1878. His pastorate continued until the appointment of Fr. Michael A. Lambing in July, 1879.

The congregation continued to grow at such a rate that an additional, known as "The Kitchen" became a necessary addition to the church.

Lots on S. Broadway were bought for the new building in March of 1881 and the contract awarded for the erection of a red brick building with a seating capacity of 400. The cornerstone was laid in May of the same year. A small frame house was also built for the pastor. The congregation began using the new church as soon as the floor was laid. Dedication services were held September 3, 1882. The bell was cast in 1882.

St. John's cemetery consists of two five-acre sections divided by Hornertown Road. The old section on Rt. 819 was dedicated in 1883; the huge granite cross was erected there in 1914. The new section on Loucks Lane was dedicated in 1949. Bishop Connare's grandmother is buried in the parish cemetery.

In May, 1889, land was purchased for a convent and a four-room brick schoolhouse. The School was opened in September of that year with the Sisters of Charity from Seton Hill as teachers; they resided in the newly built convent. Up to 1978 the Sisters of Charity were only Order to be with the school. The Total Abstinence Society Hall on S. Broadway, erected in 1891 under the direction of Fr. Lambing, was used to provide more classrooms.

A new rectory was built at the corner of Church Street and S. Broadway in 1893 and remained in use until 1962.

The parish continued to grow and in 1906 it became necessary to add an annex to the church. An expansion of the school was made in 1914 and again, in 1917. The eight-grade elementary school in 1923 became the first Catholic High School in Westmoreland County.

In April, 1931, after having served St. John's for fifty-two years, Fr. Lambing died. Fr. Patrick J. Graney succeeded him in July of the same year. Due to the Great Depression the high school closed in June, 1933 due to lack of funds. The following year the grade school was forced to close its door; it was not to reopen until 1941. ****Eight-grade graduates who wished to continue their Catholic education attended

Immaculate Conception High School in Connellsville. At mid-term of 1964, the newly built Fr. Geibel High School, a diocesan school staffed by several religious orders, including the Sisters of Charity, as well as lay teachers opened for grades nine through twelve.

In 1951, the Dioceses of Pittsburgh was divided, and St. John's became a part of the Diocese of Greensburg under the leadership of the Most Reverend Hugh L. Lamb. He died in 1959 and was succeeded by The Most Reverend William G. Connare, in 1960. The Most Reverend Norbert F. Gaughan was appointed Auxiliary Bishop in 1975.

After twenty-six years Fr. Graney passed away in November, 1957. In March 1958, Fr. Andrew J. Schneider assumed the pastorate and immediately began charting plans for the redevelopment of new structures for St. John's. These included the building of a church-school on the site of the old rectory and the already present church and the buying of property for a new rectory.

Fr. Schneider was transferred in December, 1960; Fr. Gerald A. Schroth replaced him as pastor, and implemented the plans of his predecessor. Early in 1962, the building campaign was launched. A residence located on the corner of Church Street and S. Broadway was purchased and completely renovated. This became the new parish house. The old rectory and church were razed. The last mass in the old Church was offered on 20 June 1962. The building of the church-school was begun. During the time of construction, the cafeteria and auditorium of the old school served as temporary church quarters, and still retained its teaching functions. In March, 1963, the cornerstone for a two-story church-school was laid; the ground level being the church and the upper floor the eight classrooms. Masses were said in the building for the first times on May 12, 1963; the children were in the new classrooms that fall. The new Church and school were dedicated on 14 July 1963

Fr. Schroth was made Monsignor in May, 1962. He died in September, 1972. Fr. William M. Gavron, a former assistant at St. John's was appointed to take Monsignor's place in October, 1972.

Demolition of the old school began in the Spring of 1976; the land on which it stood has been paved and was made a parish parking lot. In May, 1978, two parish-owned buildings on property adjacent to the convent were demolished.

In 1978 the parishioners numbered about 2,500.

Up to 1978 there were 22 vocations and 44 sisters, 8,017 baptisms, 3,315 marriages and 4,423 burials.

St John the Baptist was partnered with St. St. Joseph's by the diocese of Greensburg on 23rd June 2013.