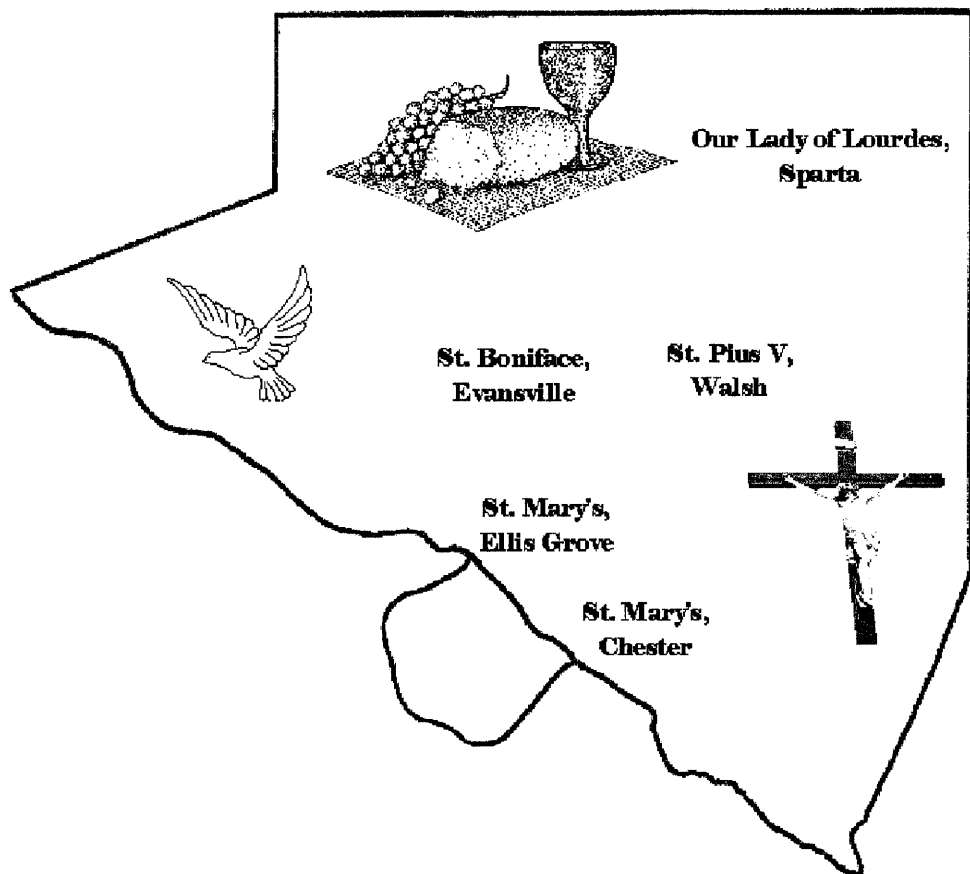


THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF



SOUTHERN RANDOLPH COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

In 2003 all parishes in the Diocese of Belleville began participating in a pastoral planning process titled "Into the Future". The first step of this process involved parishioners filling out a survey regarding the strengths and concerns of their own parish. Based upon this data, the parishes of the Diocese were divided into 30 "clusters". A cluster is defined as a group of parishes collaborating for ministerial and/or administrative needs. A cluster may be 2,3,4 or more parishes. A cluster may have one or more pastors or parish life coordinators. To cluster a number of parishes does not mean that a parish will close. The closing or merging of a parish is a different process.

There are **two main reasons** for adopting this strategy: 1) The **decreasing number of priests** over the foreseeable future indicates that we will not be able to provide parish ministry in the same way that we have in the past. Clustering aligns neighboring parishes into collaborative groups so that all the clustered can benefit from the strengths of the individual parishes. Without clustering, each parish would be on its own for meeting these current and future needs. The assumption in this strategy is that it is better to deal with these issues in a collaborative setting rather than an individual parish setting. 2) The need to **identify, train, and support lay leaders**. While this need emerges for many reasons regardless of the strategy used to deal with the future, the cluster approach provides a manageable structure to train and support lay leaders. These leaders are needed to assume or to continue a variety of parish and/or cluster ministries, for example, youth, PSR, schools, small Christian communities, adult education, liturgical, RCIA, pastoral council, evangelization, outreach to the poor, social justice, stewardship, community building, business managers, sick and homebound, etc. Some of this leadership will probably

be paid, professional ministers, either full time or part time, and other leaders will be volunteers. We believe that an adequate number of lay leaders will be available within the clusters to lead these various ministries.

Based on demographic data and the results of the "Into the Future" survey, a cluster was established in our region which includes 5 parishes: Mary Help of Christians - Chester, St. Mary of Divine Maternity - Ellis Grove, St. Boniface - Evansville, St Pius V - Walsh, and Our Lady of Lourdes - Sparta. Representatives of these parishes began meeting in the fall of 2003 as a cluster council. At that time officers were elected and continue to serve in this capacity today. They are: President - Bill Bayless (Sparta), Vice President - Mary Ann Stumpe (Ellis Grove), and Secretary - Eleanor Miller (Ellis Grove). Our initial task was to formulate a cluster plan which would be the basis for laying the groundwork for cooperation and coordination between our parishes. This plan was approved by the Diocese, and since that time has continued to be revised based on the assumption that our cluster will lose one priest on or before the year 2008.

It was felt by the cluster council that the time was appropriate for us to make our cluster more visible to all of our parishioners and to begin to implement some of the proposals laid out in the cluster plan. The first step in this process is the publication of this cluster booklet. This booklet contains general information about each parish in our cluster including mass schedules and a brief history of each parish. We hope you will find it informative and useful as we continue this ongoing process.

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, CHESTER

In 1842 the first immigrant Catholics settled in Chester. As a result of their repeated requests, the Reverend Nichols Perrin, pastor of Kaskaskia, provided for their spiritual needs and began celebrating Mass in people's homes once a month. In 1850 the first church was built, and was dedicated to Mary Help of Christians on July 29, 1853 by the Most Reverend Oliver Van de Velde, Bishop of Chicago, who at that time was the only Bishop in the state of Illinois. During the next decade, the number of immigrants to Chester grew even more. Making their way up the Mississippi from New Orleans, these pioneers were attracted by the already inviting community of Chester. Because of this growth in the number of parishioners, the need for a larger church was felt, and construction of the main body of the present church was completed in 1871.

In January, 1863, the first parochial school was opened and held in the basement of the church. After the new church was built, the first church building was converted into a two-room school and sister's residence. As enrollment continued to increase, the need for a new school was realized, and the present brick structure was opened in October, 1905. A new gymnasium was built in 1951, and the complex was completed in 1967 with the addition of a library and recreation room. Our school accommodated grades 1-8 until 1987, when a kindergarten and pre-school program was added. Currently there are 65 students enrolled in grades K-8, with an additional 35 students enrolled in our pre-school program. Our parish also has a PSR for those who attend public school or a school outside of our district. Our current PSR enrollment is approximately 30 students, and the catechists are all dedicated volunteers.

All through the years, parishioners have been a part of many groups and organizations that have helped both the spiritual and material growth of the parish. The Council of Catholic Women (also known as the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality) is the oldest parish organization, having celebrated their 100th anniversary in 1994. Their focus throughout the years has remained

the same - aiding in the care of the parish, both spiritually and financially. The Knights of Columbus Council 3790 was instituted in 1954, and has been active in all phases of service to the church, school, youth and community. Other active committees and organizations include the Parish Council, School Board, Parent-Teacher Organization, Liturgy Committee, Service Committee, Maintenance Committee and Cemetery Committee.

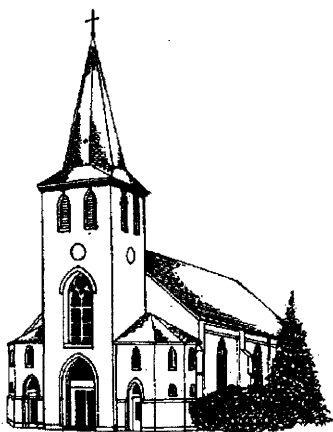
Our parish has a proud tradition of meaningful liturgical ceremonies. This is enhanced by our long-standing, wonderful choir. The generous and dedicated pastors that have graciously served us over the years also have contributed to this tradition. Serving our parish since 1892 have been Revs. C.J. Eckert (1892-1925), A.B. Lehmen (1926-1963), James McCormick (1963-1970), Charles Kribs (1970-1986), Dennis Schaefer (1986-2004), and Eugene Wojcik (2004-present). We thank God for them and all of the priests and religious for their tireless service to our community.

Mary Help of Christians parish is proud of its rich history, and our 450 families look forward to the future. To learn more about our parish, you may visit our church website, maryhoc.org, and our school website, stmaryschester.com. Better yet, come and pay us a visit. We hope you will feel at home here at St. Mary's.

Rev. Eugene H. Wojcik, Pastor - 826-2444

Mrs. Cheryl Gross, DRE - 826-2526

Mrs. Janelle Robinson, School Principal - 826-3120



ST. MARY DIVINE MATERNITY, ELLIS GROVE

From its humble beginnings in a rented room above a store at Riley Lake in 1932, St. Mary Divine Maternity began as a mission church attached to a different parish in the area every few years. In 1942, the mission church was placed in the loving care of Fr. Joseph Sense and became an independent parish in 1950. Due to the numerous floodings over the years, and the increased size of the congregation, the parish purchased 6 acres of land which included an abandoned tavern at the corner of Route 3 and Fort Kaskaskia Road in 1957. The building was remodeled into their new church and residence for Fr. Sense.

Forty years later, shortly after Fr. Sense's death on May 29, 1990, his bequest to his parish family was made known - that a new and permanent church was to be built. Within 2 years the new building was designed and built and the first celebration of the Eucharist took place on Christmas Eve, 1992. Bishop James P. Keleher held the official dedication on January 24, 1993. The parish continued to grow from that small group of people who worshiped in a small room over a grocery store, to 162 families who are active in many areas of the parish life.

The Holy Name Society, which is made up of the men of the parish, hold several fund raisers each year which provide financial support to the parish for improvements and maintenance. The Ladies Altar Sodality also help in the support by their fund raisers, in the area of liturgical supplies and give of their time and talent during the course of the year, holiday decorating, etc.

Our PSR classes have between 60 and 70 children each year from Preschool to 8th grade. All the teachers are volunteers, who give of their time and talents instructing our children in the truths of the Gospel message, and the faith of the Church. Also through our PSR program, we have a Children's Choir which practices regularly along with our Adult Choir who together do make a joyous noise unto the Lord!

St. Mary's Youth Group (CYO) keeps involved with both the parish and the community, visiting nursing homes, aiding those in need, sponsoring a pancake and sausage breakfast and building a float for the annual Popeye parade. They also participate along with our Confirmation Class in our annual 24 Hour Food Fast for the poor.

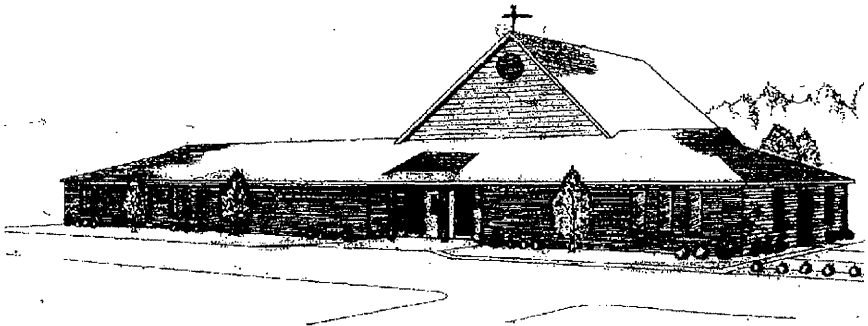
There are many other active groups in the parish which includes the Parish Council, Finance Committee, and our ladies who quilt, our altar servers, extra-ordinary ministers and liturgists and cantor, those who help maintain the landscape and garden, and all who lend a helping hand whenever and wherever needed. We may have a beautiful building, but it is our parish family who are the church and without them, all we have is a building.

Due to the shortage of priests, St. Mary Divine Maternity was the first parish to be under the leadership of a Parish Life Coordinator, who is a deacon. He takes care of the day to day business of parish life which also includes sacramental. On weekends for the Eucharist we are very fortunate to have the diversity of many different priests who came to celebrate for us. We know that Fr. Sense would be proud of how this parish has grown and thrived over the years. we pray that through the good grace of God that we may continue to be a spiritual and uplifting place of worship for many years to come.

Deacon Omer E. DuBois, Parish Life Coordinator: 859-3541

Carolyn Venable, CRE: 859-3541

Geralyn Valleroy, Parish Secretary: 859-3541



ST. BONIFACE, EVANSVILLE

The history of Catholicism in Evansville actually dates back before the building of the first church in 1860. When Evansville was laid into lots in 1834, one of the first three families to settle in the new town was the Edmund Eccles family. Mr. Eccles was born in England and was the first Catholic immigrant to settle here. More immigrants followed, most of them of German Descent. Until they could afford something permanent, they met in homes for worship. These services were conducted once a month; the first being conducted in 1859 by Rev. Wenceslaus Repis, who was serving Chester at the time.

Mr. Eccles and his wife, Melinda, deeded a plot of ground for the site of a new church to Nicholas Gross, Martin Wunderlich, Joseph Pautler Jr., and Leonard Roth, the first church trustees.

On April 7, 1860, the contract for the new church was let. The new church was built on the donated ground, which is now the old Catholic Cemetery. The frame building, 30x40 feet, was dedicated to the honor of St. Joseph and built at a cost of \$431.10. The parish school was first organized in 1863.

Shortly after a community celebration of Corpus Christi at the church on June 14, 1866, the church caught on fire and completely burned to the ground. Work began immediately on plans for a new church, and a new site was chosen. Two acres were donated by John Wehrheim, a non-Catholic; Mrs. Mary Feaman also donated one acre joining the above tract. The cornerstone was laid in May, 1867. The first Mass was celebrated in the new church on Christmas Day, 1867 with Rev. Louis Pommer officiating. On December 2, 1869, the church was formally dedicated by Father John Mohr of Red Bud in honor of St. Boniface, bishop and patron of Germany.

At about this same time in 1867, the first school building was erected west of the present church. It was a one-room brick structure, which cost \$830.00. The sisters of the Most Precious Blood were engaged to teach. Father Bernard Rossmueller arrived in 1877 as St. Boniface's first resident pastor.

In 1966 under the direction of Father Joseph Parasiliti both cemeteries were put on endowed care. In 1968 both old and new schools were razed and a new one was erected.

Father Robert Flannery began his ministry to St. Boniface in 1984. During his pastorate, a parish council with fully operating committees was formed and a new parish census was taken. A new rectory was built in 1986. On February 21, 1988, the first joint bulletin with St Pius V Parish, Walsh was issued.

Early in 2003, the diocesan planning process "Into the Future" was begun. After the initial processes were completed, St. Boniface began to meet with their assigned cluster parishes.

In the fall of 2004, the parishes of St. Boniface and St. Pius began a joint Stewardship Program.

The parish is also justly proud that thirty-one religious vocations - priests, sisters, brothers and a candidate for the permanent diaconate - have come from the members of this parish family over the years of its existence. The faith nurtured in the community of Evansville along the Kaskaskia is being shared literally around the world!

Rev. John J. Joyce, Pastor

Carol McCormick, CRE

Alice Ohms, Secretary

Phone: 853-4453 or 853-4435

ST. PIUS V, WALSH

The first Catholic settlers of this early congregation were the Ederers, Hennrichs, and Storcks who emigrated here from Germany in the early 1800's. These emigrants worshiped in Chester and Kaskaskia. From 1855 to 1906 they belonged to the Evansville congregation. On May 2, 1905 Lawrence Stork Sr., Michael Klein, and Henry Zitt Sr. contacted Rev. J.B. Schlotmann to obtain his consent to form a congregation in the hamlet of Walsh. Rev. Schlotmann secured from John Schulein three acres of land as a donation and then purchased seven acres in addition as a site for the new church and cemetery.

On August 31, 1905 the Bishop commissioned Rev. W. Van Delft, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes at Sparta, to attend to this new parish which he did from August 12, 1906 to September 30, 1910. On August 12, 1906 the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for the first time in Walsh. On September 3, 1906 the church was solemnly dedicated and both English and German sermons were preached. A parochial school was built in 1908, a frame building with a seating capacity of 34.

On September 30, 1910, Rev. Joseph Voll became the first resident pastor. In 1911, a rectory was built. In 1914 the school was closed as the parish was not able to support it.

In 1949 an agreement was made between Vincent Hennrich and the parishioners which stated that a hall would be built on church property which would serve the entire community. The parish was able to furnish the contents. In 1957 the interior of the church was renovated and in 1958 a new rectory was built under the supervision of Rev. Parasiliti. Under the pastorate of Rev. Joseph N. LeGrande the community hall was renovated and improvements to the church were made.

On July 6, 1972 Rev. August Giesen began his second term as pastor, and he oversaw more improvements to the church. In October of 1977, Rev. Giesen was diagnosed with cancer. On November 25 of that same year he suffered a heart attack shortly before Bishop Cosgrove came to visit him. Bishop Cosgrove

rushed him to the hospital where he was put into intensive care. During his illness, various priests served the needs of the parish. Beginning January 7, 1978, Rev. John Grote was sent by the Bishop to say weekend Masses. Rev. Giesen passed away on March 15, 1978. On June 22, Rev. Grote was appointed pastor and installed the following evening.

In November, 1978 an altar was erected on the parish cemetery in memory of Rev. Giesen. It is planned to have a Mass each Memorial Day for the deceased resting in the cemetery. Fr. Grote retired on January 31, 1988 due to failing health. Joint bulletins began with St. Boniface with the first issued February 21, 1988.

Rev. Robert Flannery was appointed temporary administrator effective February 1, 1988, while also serving as pastor of St. Boniface. This required us to decrease our number of weekend Masses to one. On August 10, 1988 Rev. Flannery was installed as Pastor, and served until July, 1990, when Fr. Joseph Rascher was appointed as Pastor. An extensive renovation of the church began in December 1996 and completed in 1997.

Fr. John J. Joyce was installed as Pastor in July, 1998 and resided in the rectory at St. Boniface. He then moved into the rectory at St. Pius in 1999 and still resides there today. In 2005 we celebrated our 100th jubilee as a functioning parish. Many hours of time and labor have been contributed over the years toward modernizing the church, the community hall, and surrounding premises. Parishioners have also been generous with their financial contributions to support our expenses.

Our stewardship committee has been meeting with St. Boniface for the past 3 years. Volunteerism is what holds us together. Thanks be to God for his abundant blessings!

Rev. John J. Joyce, Pastor

Mrs. Laura M. Coop, CRE

Phone: 853-4404

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, SPARTA

A Catholic religious gathering began in the Sparta area around 1850 with Mass being celebrated by visiting priests in private homes. Some of these families were settlers from the large French speaking community of Ste. Genevieve, MO. In 1892 an old riding academy on St. Louis Street was purchased and converted into a church. From 1892 until 1897, Mass was celebrated monthly. In September, 1897, the mission was upgraded to parish status and a new parochial residence was erected and the remodeled academy became known as St. Mary's Church. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Joannes Janssen dedicated the church on September 5, 1898. Hence, the church of Our Lady of Lourdes was initiated by the first resident priest, Rev. T.S. Bannon. There were 47 families who composed the congregation, with the right side of the church being reserved for Negro families and the left side for white families who were of Irish and German descent. Each side held separate family picnics in order to raise money for the church. In 1899, a new statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was placed in a niche over the main altar.

During the founding and early growth of the parish the principle employers of the area were the coal mines, the railroad, and a rayon factory located in Sparta. In August 1927 Msgr. Louis Ell noted a decline in the parish membership due to an unprecedented number of deaths. But on a more hopeful note he stated that the summer cottages at the country club provided the church with summer parishioners who helped with generous donations.

Several priests served the parish in the following years. They included Revs. T.S. Bannon, William Van Delft, Joseph Woll, August Honnewinkel, Fr. Mumbour, William Fisher, Eugene Traynor, Msgr. M.J. Gruenwald, Louis Ell, Francis Hodapp, Joseph Humma, Cornelius Collins, A.B. Olliges, James P. Burke, and Bernard Loepker. Fr. Michael Podrasky was appointed pastor in 1951 and served until 1959. During his pastorate the first Parish Hall was built and a fund was established for the building

of a new church.

The present church and rectory was built in 1962 at a cost of approximately \$220,000 during the pastorate of Fr. Raymond Malec. There were 80 families in the parish at this time. Fr. Malec served as pastor from 1959 to 1967. Fr. James Calhoun was appointed pastor in August 1967 and served the parish for 12 years until June 1979. During his stay the parish grew to 225 families in 1972, creating the need for the present parish center which was constructed at a cost of approximately \$230,000 and dedicated in May 1973.

Fr. Vince Haselhorst arrived in June 1979. As of December 1981 there were 340 Catholic households registered in our parish and plans were underway for an addition to the parish center to provide additional space and a hallway connecting to the church. Succeeding Fr. Haselhorst as pastor was Fr. William Rensing, arriving in June, 1985. The parish had 400 families registered in December, 1987. Fr. Lawrence Mariasoosai, OMI was appointed to the parish in March 2004, joining us from his native country of India. He continues as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes at this time, with approximately 310 families on the parish register.

A significant milestone in our history was reached on October 18, 1980 with the ordination of parishioner Mr. J. Richard Downen as a permanent deacon. Another historic milestone occurred with the celebration of our parish centennial in 1992. In the past many active parishioners have strived to carry on God's work in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes. At the present time many active parishioners continue to endeavor to carry on God's work in the parish and beyond.

Rev. Lawrence Mariasoosai, Administrator: 443-2811

Mrs. Lila Lehnherr, CRE: 443-2878

Mrs. Nancy Hutchinson, Secretary: 443-2811

CLUSTER MASS SCHEDULES

Mary Help of Christians, Chester

911 Swanwick St., Chester, IL 62233 (618) 826-2444

Website: www.maryhoc.org

Masses: Saturday 5:00PM, Sunday 9:00AM

Holy Day Vigil 7:00PM, Holy Day 8:15AM

St. Mary of Divine Maternity, Ellis Grove

7362 Shawneetown Trail, Ellis Grove, IL 62241 (618) 859-3541

Masses: Saturday 6:00PM, Sunday 8:00AM

Holy Day Vigil 7:00PM, Holy Day 8:00AM

St. Boniface, Evansville

1007 Olive St., Evansville, IL 62242 (618) 853-4453

Masses: Saturday 5:00PM, Sunday 10:00AM

Holy Day: as announced

St. Pius V, Walsh

7681 Walsh Road, Walsh IL 62297 (618) 853-4404

Masses: Sunday 8:00AM

Holy Day: as announced

Our Lady of Lourdes, Sparta

611 W. Broadway, Sparta, IL 62286 (618) 443-2811

Website: www.ollchurch.com

Masses: Saturday 5:00PM, Sunday 8:00 and 10:00AM

Holy Day Vigil 7:00PM, Holy Day 8:30AM and 7:00PM

CONCLUSION

We hope you have enjoyed reading this booklet, and hope that you will keep it for future reference. We also hope for your continued prayers as we continue to discuss ways that our cluster parishes can work together in the future. Pray also for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our Diocese.

Other ways that have been discussed to increase our visibility as a cluster include the possible creation of a cluster calendar and the organization of some type of cluster social outing. We know that there are many creative people among us. If you have any other suggestions for our cluster, you are welcome to attend our cluster council meetings (dates are published in your parish bulletin), or contact the pastoral council of your parish.

Thank you for all you have done to support the Catholic Church in our region for so many years, and for all that we know you will continue to do to insure its future. God Bless You!

In the Lord We Serve Together,
The Catholic Community of Southern Randolph County Cluster Council



For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:20