



The 50th Anniversary of
**THE HOLY ROSARY
CHURCH**



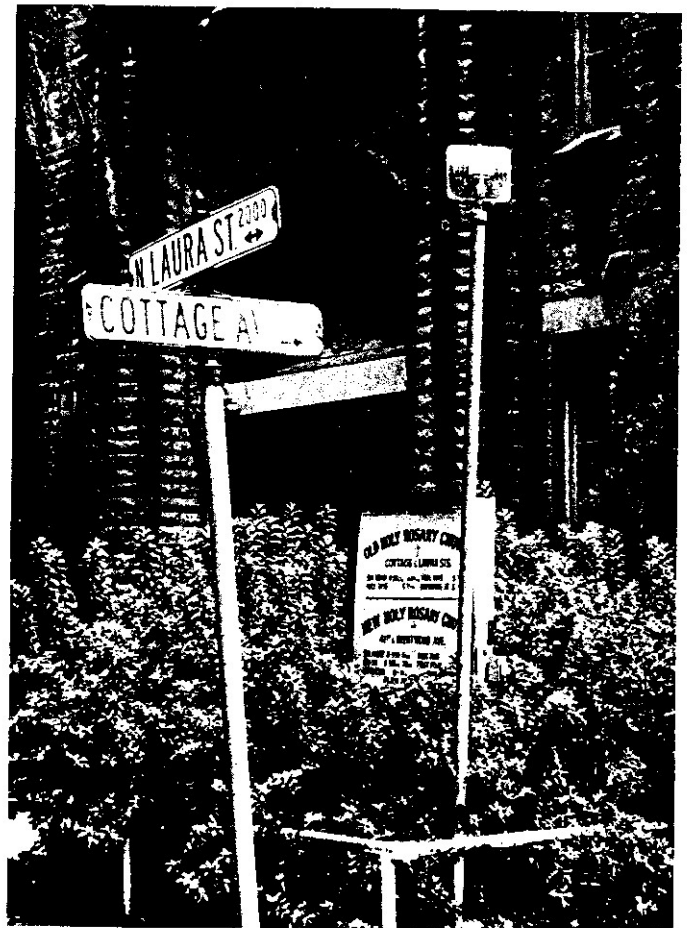
Monsignor Denis Lyons

By a most primitive natural impulse we crave for knowledge. Even very young children will ask endless questions to get better acquainted with their surroundings and wise parents will not shirk the task of satisfying their growing curiosity. Our interest grows in proportion, as we ourselves are personally affected or have taken an active part in shaping the events of the past. We feel that we form a part of our Nation, our State, our City, our Community, our Parish and our Family. The object of this booklet is to trace the origin and growth of Holy Rosary, what it has done for its members and what they in turn have contributed to its development.

THE ORIGIN OF HOLY ROSARY PARISH

The soaring Gothic cathedrals of Europe have been called prayers in stone with rainbow windows caught in imperishable lace and thrust heavenward as much by faith itself as by engineering skill. Fifty years ago Holy Rosary Parish said its prayer in stone, choosing the sturdy Romanesque type of architecture for the building which still stands today at Cottage and Laura Streets, serene and changeless in a neighborhood which has known many changes.

But it is only the middle of three structural prayers which the parish has made to the glory of God and the ennoblement of man. The first was of wood, a simple mission chapel erected in 1915 to care for the catholics in the Springfield area. At a meeting of the laymen, it was decided to erect a chapel on the corner of 16th and Boulevard Streets, on property acquired through the generosity of Bishop Curley. It was called Holy Rosary Chapel. Father Michael Maher of The Church of the Immaculate Conception ministered to the needs of the area. For two years Mass was celebrated by the priests from Immaculate Conception and the Sisters of St. Joseph instructed the children in their catechism. In 1917, the chapel was united with the parish in Lackawana (Our Lady of Angels) and Father William Barry came from De Land to be pastor of the united Chapels. In the fall of 1919, Father Barry purchased property on Cottage Avenue and after obtaining a permit, the men of the parish began the task of moving the chapel. By related stories, the building was moved by sheer power of horses, drawing it over tree logs to its present Cottage Avenue location.



As the congregation increased in numbers the chapel needed to be enlarged and the members had to bring their own chairs to the chapel. It seemed imperative to have a resident pastor to watch over the needs of the rapidly growing congregation. Up until this time the pastor was living in Our Lady of Angels parish, but now the congregation purchased a two story house on Cottage Avenue to be used as our Rectory.

In October 1921 — Holy Rosary became an independent parish.

In November of 1921, Rev. Dennis Lyons was appointed pastor of Holy Rosary and he immediately commenced to formulate plans for a new church. The property was purchased on Laura St. and in January, 1923 work was started on the new building and March 5 of the same year, witnessed the laying of the cornerstone by Bishop Barry. The first Mass in the new church was on December 24, 1923. The church was built to seat 475 people. The beautiful stained glass windows came from Munich, Germany. The stations of the cross, statues and windows were donated by groups of parishioners and friends of Holy Rosary. This new church on the corner of Laura and Cottage Streets was dedicated on Sunday January 20, 1924. By this time, Holy Rosary Parish had its first assistant Pastor, Father P. J Halligan.

In the spring of 1924, the rectory was moved next to the church on Laura Street, where it still stands today. The original chapel was converted to the parish hall for social activities.

Although Father Lyons remained in Holy Rosary but a short time, he left a lasting memorial of his tireless and devoted efforts on behalf of his parish, the attractive and substantial Holy Rosary Church.

Time has granted to Holy Rosary's second structural prayer, a stone church, now a half century old, a setting that has its own annual cycle of glory. In azalea time, the gray walls nestle down into a bubble bath of flowers while sunshine dapples the live oaks festooned with Spanish moss. Easter finery pales to insignificance beside the flowers and one recalls Jesus' admonition "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these." If there had been azaleas in Palestine when Our Lord walked the Earth he might well have chosen them instead to illustrate God's hand in nature.

And for all their glowing loveliness the flowers are very sturdy, lasting for weeks even in defiance of blustery spring winds and plummeting temperatures. Or perhaps the staunch walls of old Holy Rosary impart some of their strength to the blossoms. Surely there seems to be a protectiveness on



the part of the church building and an acceptance on the part of the azaleas. GOD had clearly decreed that His House and His flowers should be friends, mutually beneficial to each other.

A new pastor, Rev. John Nevin came from Fernandina Beach in 1926 to begin 16 years of service at Holy Rosary. During his pastorate the Altar Society went beyond the primary early duties of supplying the altar linens and undertaking the delicate task of laundering those lace trimmed cloths as well as keeping surplices and cassocks properly neat for the altar boys. Funds for the care of the altars were raised by sponsoring suppers in the hall, card parties and special collections for flowers.



When the news of Father Nevin's death came to Holy Rosary in 1951 it gave us all cause for reflection. The work Father Nevin did for Christ as a priest must go on. At a time when the Church in Florida was expanding so rapidly, when so very much work must be done for souls, his death was a great loss. Someone must step forward to fill the gap in the priestly ranks. The faithful of Florida are the ones who must carry on the priestly work.

Priests come from the people. Vocations are nurtured and fostered in the bosom of the Catholic homes. If there are to be priests for tomorrow the Catholic home must provide them.

CHURCH UNITY

In 1936, the Syrian liturgy was celebrated in Holy Rosary Church by Father Yazgi. At the time, there were about 700 people in the Syrian community. Father Andrew Shashy arrived in Jacksonville in Oct. 1950 and was appointed pastor of the mission in January 1951. In 1965, Father Shashy was made a Monsignor. He was invested with the robes of a Papal Chamberlain by Archbishop Hurley in Holy Rosary. The Syrian Mission in Jacksonville now has about 900 people to care for. Monsignor Shashy is the only resident priest in the United States of the Syrian Rite. Holy Rosary Church has long been the only church on the Eastern Coast of the United States celebrating both the Eastern and Roman rite under the same roof. Jacksonville is one of the few cities in America where divine services are held in the very language spoken by Christ and the Apostles nearly 20 centuries ago. Worshipers hear the Lord's Prayer pronounced in the same words as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Great changes and new vigor stemmed from the leadership of Rev. Michael Brown who took over the helm of Holy Rosary on July 16, 1942. Church committeemen zeroed in on one thing - paying off the parish debt. Father Brown inaugurated a 5 year plan - a pledge from each wage earner and "workless Bazaar Sundays." Victory came in just 4½ years, and on May 15, 1947 the church mort-



gage was burned at the spring bazaar. He was pastor throughout the war years and left an indelible record, which was recalled by sorrowing parishioners when word came of his death in April of 1951. The following memoranda written by Father Brown the day before he died were found in his rectory after his death.:

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to thank Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley for his kindness and interest in my behalf, and I hope God will continue to bless him in all his undertakings.

I also want to thank Bishop McDonough and all the members of the clergy for being so kind to me while serving in this Diocese for the past twenty years.

I also want to thank the good Sisters for their kindness and their prayers.

I also want to thank all of our Catholic people for helping me in my work."

Rev. John Cotter was appointed pastor in November 1947 and set about complete redecoration of the church, a task which was accomplished the

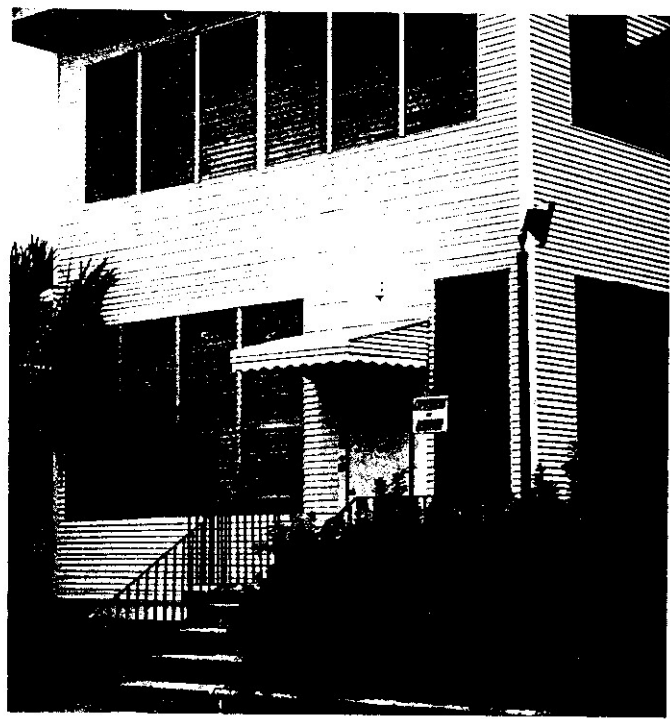
following year. The new organ was placed in the choir loft during this time and the men of the parish were the committee to help raise funds for the organ. The Catholic Daughters of America Court Holy Rosary #1045, and the Altar Society were very active on this project. The men of the Holy Name Society sanded and refinished the pews and cushioned the kneelers during this redecoration period.

In 1950, Rev. Peter Reilly came to Holy Rosary as pastor. He only remained two years, but under



his leadership a parish census was taken block by block.

In October 1952, Rev. Joseph Barry was appointed our Pastor. The parish was charged with establishing the First Holy Rosary School. Growth of the parish on the north end of Springfield made this imperative and property was acquired at Brentwood Ave. and 41st Streets. The first drive for the new school was not completely successful.



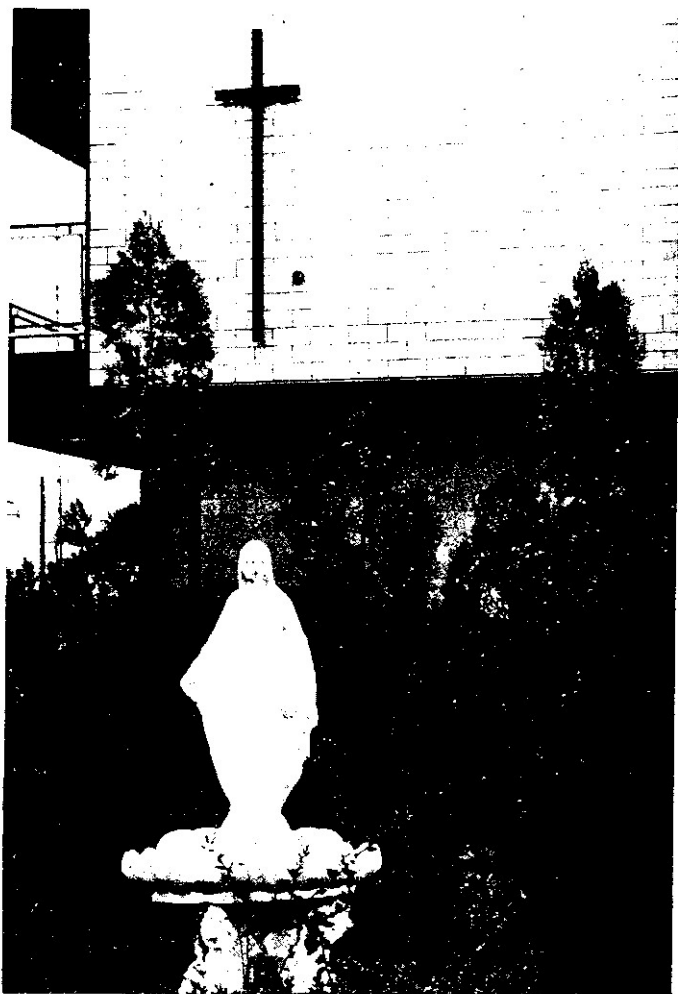
Rev. William J. O'Farrell became our pastor in 1955. His primary concern was the continuing efforts for the building fund. A second drive was needed to put the "New Holy Rosary School" over the top. It was a dream come true and on Sunday May 26, 1957 the ground breaking ceremony was held. The school opened in September for the 1958-59 term and the dedication was held on November 20, 1958. St. Joseph's Academy at 7th & Market Streets had been the school for the children of Holy Rosary Parish, but this had closed in 1955 and the classes had to be transferred to Immaculate Conception School, for 2 years. Now the parish had a school of its own. A shifting in Catholic education facilities was ended. The pastor stated the school was built for the salvation of the souls of



the children of our parish and he would not let anything stand in the way of giving these children the opportunity to attend this school with or without money. The school opened with 344 children enrolled and with 4 nuns on the teaching staff from the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph with Sister M. Paul as principal. The Sisters of St. Joseph left Holy Rosary at the end of the school year in June 1966 and lay teachers filled the gap until Sept. 1967. At this time the Sisters of Notre Dame from Toledo, Ohio answered our prayers and came to teach the children of Holy Rosary.

THE REDEMPTORIST FATHERS ARRIVE

In June 1960, The Redemptorist Fathers were called upon by His Excellency Archbishop Hurley to administer to the people of Holy Rosary Church. Rev. Walter J. Bueche, C.S.S.R. was appointed Pastor. Because of the increasing population in the Northshore and Lake Forest areas our parish had



to look for temporary quarters for Sunday Mass. The use of the Lake Forest School was acquired and for 2 years Mass was celebrated there. When this plan was no longer available, the Mass schedule was held in the administration office of our school. With these overcrowded conditions, the parishioners realized the need for a new Holy Rosary Church on the north end of town. In January 1963, the men of the parish began a fund raising campaign for the new church. Success was realized with a groundbreaking ceremony on April 5, 1963, for the new Provisional Church and Social Hall.

The third prayer in steel and stone had come into substantial being and was dedicated October 25, 1964 with the Most Reverend Joseph P. Hurley, Archbishop of St. Augustine officiating. The simple, functional, but attractive church took its place beside the Holy Rosary Parish School, which had opened doors in September, 1958 and had its official dedication on Nov. 20 of that year. The Rectory next to Old Holy Rosary Church continued to be the residence for the priests to assure constant attention for the expanding parish.

Faith without works is dead and it is the vigor and devotion of the parishioners which manifests itself in these visible and lasting signs of church and school buildings, rectories and social halls. Holy Rosary has been bountifully blessed by people such as those in the Holy Name Society, the Holy Rosary Altar Society, Parents Auxiliary, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Catholic Daughters of America, Knights of Columbus, Legion of Mary, St. Vincent De Paul and etc.

