

# **THE EARLY HISTORY OF O'FALLON AND THE FOUNDING OF ASSUMPTION PARISH**

There is evidence of Catholics living in St. Charles and the surrounding area back in 1776. The first missionary to take care of the people was Father Bernard de Limpach, a Capuchin monk. He functioned in this capacity from 1776 until 1789.

Somewhat later Father Felix de Andreis, C.M. commissioned Father John S. Acquaroni, C.M. to take charge of St. Charles, Dardenne and Portage Des Sioux.

In 1823, the Jesuit Fathers of Florissant were delegated to take care of the entire northwest part of the diocese of St. Louis between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

The constant stream of immigrants, mainly of German farmers and artisans, necessitated the change of boundary lines and the sending of German priests to care for the Catholic flock.

It all began around the year 1855 when Arnold Krekel, Federal Judge for Western Missouri, issued a right of way through a tract of land, owned by himself, for the building of a railroad. This area was to be known as the Krekel Addition and the railroad was the North Missouri Railroad, later known as the St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern, still later as the Wabash Railroad and today known as the Norfolk & Southern.

A railroad station was established and named after Colonel John O'Fallon. Colonel John O'Fallon was the son of Dr. James O'Fallon, he was a spirited soldier fighting in a campaign against the Indians and carrying messages of public consequence. He worked with General Harrison as a military leader and confidante; he was an Indian agent and trader, a member of the first State Legislature of Missouri, a successful businessman and a contributor to educational projects.. He promoted the construction of the Pacific Railroad Company and was the first president of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company. He also was named the first Adjutant General of Missouri and its first Governor.

At the time the railroad station was built there were no other houses in O'Fallon but there were German Catholic settlers living in the area since 1835. There were also some farmers, owning large tracts of land, and many of these were slaveholders.

The next year when Nicholas Krekel, son of Arnold Krekel, came to O'Fallon, he built a house in the dense forest and opened a general merchandise store. This was the beginning of the town that was named after the leader of the railroad and the namesake of the first train station in the area. It was indeed fitting for the community to honor Colonel O'Fallon by naming the town after him.

It didn't take long for people to start building their lives and homes in the rich farm community around the Krekel addition, then known as the Village of O'Fallon. Many were immigrants from Germany and many were of the Catholic Faith.

These proud German farmers had to attend church in St. Peters as well as send their children to St. Peters since the O'Fallon area had no school for them to attend. The Catholic families that were living in the O'Fallon area at the time were Antoine Mispagel, Joseph Pieper, Henry Boegel, Henry Mispagel, Frederick Westhoff, Henry Hennis, F. Hoeckelman, Theodore Westhoff, John and James Gentemann, Franz Kemper, Gertrude Roeper, Frank Schone, Henry Kirchoff, Henry Eike, Joseph Boegel, Henry Ahrens and Nicholas Krekel. By the fall of 1869 these families plus nine more families, that belonged to All Saints Parish at St. Peters, met on a Sunday afternoon to consider the possibilities of erecting a Catholic School in O'Fallon, because the distance to St. Peters was too great for their children to attend. Soon another meeting was held and eight families of German descent of St. Paul, also attended. This meeting brought up the possibility of not only erecting a Catholic school, but also the possibility of organizing a new parish. Everyone seemed very enthusiastic until finances were considered. The leaders, being of German descent, were undaunted, and one of them, Antoine Mispagel, arose and said, "Talking will get us nowhere. We can not build a church with words; we need money. I will give \$500." Turning to his neighbor he asked, "How much will you give, Joe?" Joe signed for \$300. By the end of the meeting \$2,500 had been subscribed, 165,000 bricks donated by an anonymous St. Louisian and four acres of land given by Judge Arnold Krekel. This was the beginning of Assumption Parish as we know according to fact and stories passed down through the generations.

With the preliminaries taken care of, these zealous people applied to Archbishop Kenrick for permission to proceed with the work of building a school and church. Most Reverend Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis instructed his Vicar General, Father Muehisiepen, to study the project. Father Muehisiepen studied the area and after meeting with the German families of the area felt assured that they would never know defeat and gave his permission to build.

Mr. Henry Kister of St. Charles was hired to construct the first church built in O'Fallon for \$6,500 with the stipulation that the parishioners would supply the stone for the foundation, brick for the building, in addition to the sand and lime. They named the new Church the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary", and on Pentecost Monday 1870, the corner stone was placed in the building with the Vicar General, Father Muehsiepen presiding at the joyful occasion. Because of the different homelands where many of the members came from the sermon was delivered in both English and German so all could hear and understand the inspiring words.

It is to be remembered that at the time this Church was being planned in O'Fallon, some of the neighboring towns or villages already had Catholic Churches. Their spiritual leaders attended the corner stone laying and they included, Reverend Conrad Rotter of St.

Peters, Reverend Conrad Tintrup of Dog Prairie (St. Paul) Reverend Theodore Krainhardt of Allen Prairie (Josephville) and Reverend William Faerber of St. Mary's Parish in St. Louis. Vicar General Henry Muehlsiepen delivered the English sermon and Reverend Conrad Rotter of St. Peters, the German.

The work of building was continued in earnest and the structure was under roof by the fall of 1870. The church was ready for occupancy in the spring of 1871. A little log schoolhouse was being built about the same time. Members of the parish did the carpenter work; the local handymen even built the altar.



The solemn dedication of the church was planned to be held on September 17, 1871, then just three days before the dedication, on September 14, the first pastor arrived. Father William Sonenschein, appointed by Archbishop Kenrick, assumed his duties as spiritual leader of the little flock, and director of the building program, supervising the completion of the interior of the church. Father Sonenschein was not unknown to the people since he had been pastor of All Saints

Church, St. Peters, Missouri. a few years before.

From an article from the St. Charles News dated September 21, 1871 it stated:

"We learn that nearly three thousand people were present at the dedication of the Catholic Church last Sunday. A train of twenty cars came up from St. Louis, loaded with people, and a large train well filled also went from St. Charles. An excellent dinner was served on the grounds, and the band employed for the occasion enlivened the day with their inspiring strains of music. The net receipts, which go to the church, amounted to nearly \$2,000. It is spoken as one of the most imposing scenes ever witnessed in this county."

Soon after the dedication, the parish bought a house and an acre of land near the church for \$1,600 for a priest's residence. They also purchased pews for \$300 and later in the summer of 1872 procured a small church bell to be installed in the church tower to call the people of Assumption Parish to worship.

A week after the dedication of the church, the Catholic school opened with twenty pupils attending. The log schoolhouse was still under construction, so classes were taught in a little brick building eighteen feet by sixteen feet. Father Sonnenchein, the new pastor, taught the children until the log schoolhouse was completed. Mr. Joseph Rustige

was employed as the first teacher at a fee of \$25 per month. He taught from September 1871 to March 1873.

Father Sonnenschein was a good and capable pastor, well liked and respected by all. He kept the members busy during 1873, when he had them erect a new rectory.

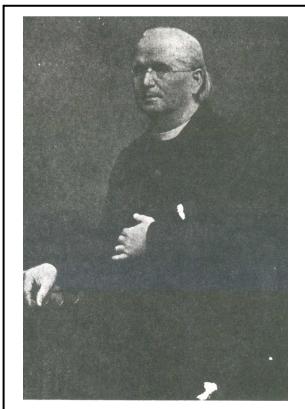
Prosperity seemed to follow Father Sonnenschein but most abruptly he resigned his pastorate and left O'Fallon on September 17, 1875.

While Pastor at Assumption Parish Father Sonnenschein had persuaded the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood to take over the operation of the school at Assumption Parish in the fall of 1873. Sister Paula, later named Camilla, and Sister Blanche were the first teachers assigned to the budding and promising school. It is fitting to mention that the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood and the Chaplain for the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood helped in many ways during the early birth and the growth of the Parish of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood taught and managed both the primary school and the high school for Assumption Parish for about 120 years. The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood operated their own High School for girls and a two year college, where they had one of the best nursing programs in the area. With the decline in vocations, and the number of Sisters was not adequate to run the school, they had to finally drop their teaching profession at Assumption. The Sisters also closed their High School and their College and later sold the buildings to the City of O'Fallon. The former High School is now the O'Fallon City Hall, the gymnasium houses the meeting rooms and courts and the college is now the City of O'Fallon Police Station.

It is most fitting then that today, since the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, do not have a Chaplain, that the Priests that guide the flock at the Parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also answer the needs of the Sisters.

Between September 17, 1875 and the next April 1876, Assumption Parish had no resident priest. Many difficulties came to light in the small parish and much disunity existed. Father Joseph Pope was sent to Assumption but he was unable to solve the existing problems.



Then on April 22, 1876 Father Brockhagen, was appointed Pastor of Assumption Parish. He was born in Garbeck, a Village of Westphalia, Germany. During his youth he frequently tended the cattle and helped his father with his Trade because the family was poor. In the open fields and under the skies, he learned to love nature and derived from it the secrets that helped him in later years as a physician both of bodies and of souls. Father Brockhagen's

influence for good was experienced almost immediately.

The parish in 1876, was comprised of approximately seventy Families, almost exclusively German. A bond of union was formed almost instantaneously between the members of the parish and Father Brockhagen.

The people were filled with renewed courage and confidence. They found their new pastor was a man of integrity; he was sincere, genuine, and whole souled, tolerating nothing but the best. He surprised his parishioners with his knowledge of farming and cattle raising. At times, too he surpassed the good country doctor in his remedies and prescriptions. It was a known fact that Father Brockhagen visited Union Station in St. Louis once a week to receive the sick. His treatment was not faith healing wholly, for he believed in medicine, yet only as a last resort. He carried his own medicine chest, filled with quaint herbs grown in his garden or found in the fields about O'Fallon.

One of the notable things in the life of Father Brockhagen was his literary ability in his "Hausfreund". For a number of years he contributed articles to the St. Louis "Amerika" and the "Herold des Glaubens". But because of the nature of the articles some of them were amended and even destroyed by the editor of the "Herald," Mr. Schwarz. Father Brockhagen was highly incensed by this treatment on the part of a layman, so he decided to edit a newspaper of his own. In January, 1882, he sent out sample copies to all parts of the County of St. Charles and neighboring counties, asking for subscriptions. He entitled his paper, "Katholischer Hausfreund" ("Friend of the Catholic Home"). Father's motive was to promote Catholic knowledge and life for the Counties of St. Charles, Franklin, Lincoln and Warren.

The subscription was \$2.00 annually. The first regular number was issued May 10, 1882. At first the newspaper was printed in St. Charles, but after Father's silver jubilee, using the money he received as gifts for his silver jubilee, he was able to purchase his own printing press.

Very soon the "Katholischer Hausfreund" lost the character of a county paper, because the number of subscriptions increased and spread over all the States in the Union.

Two very serious mistakes eclipsed the value of the "Hausfreund". The first, Father made by believing absolutely any correspondent asking him for a decision and giving it without investigation. The second was considering himself competent in deciding matters of difficult theological problems without consulting approved authorities. These two faults affected the suspension of the paper by Archbishop Kain in 1895.

A few years later Father Brockhagen again published a weekly under a different name the "O'Fallon Hausfreund". In the last edition, published December 30, 1909, he said farewell to his readers, because financial difficulties and the infirmities of old age necessitated the discontinuance of the paper. Though the publication had faults, it had been a great blessing and consolation for many troubled persons.

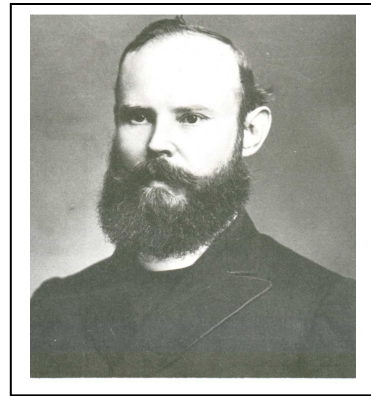
One Sunday morning, Father Brockhagen, made a casual statement that he would like the altar replaced with one more fitting to the dignity of its purpose. He even mentioned the approximate cost. The following Monday as he approached the altar, he found the exact sum he had stated, donated by one or more anonymous parishioners, placed on the altar.

The people of Assumption Parish appreciated their versatile pastor and expressed their gratitude in a very special way on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee as their pastor, April 30, 1901, and later on the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood, March 19, 1909.

But by November 1909 a painful illness forced Father Brockhagen to retire. He died on March 21, 1910 and was buried in the Parish Cemetery of Assumption.

After the death of Father Brockhagen, Reverend Henry Mueller, then the chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, cared for the parish as administrator until June 28, 1910 when Father Jasper arrived to take over the duties of running the parish.

Again Assumption Parish was without a pastor until June 28, 1910 when Reverend Anton A. Jasper was appointed pastor of Assumption Parish. Father Jasper came from Immaculate Conception Parish in Augusta, Mo. where he had been a pastor for the previous five years. Father Jasper immediately focused his attention on the Parochial school. The parish had grown by this time to 130 families and the school building was entirely inadequate. In 1914, a new school building was built on the site of the old school. It included a hall on the second floor and meeting rooms in the basement.



Father Jasper being very interested in Catholic Education started a Junior High School of two years in one of the classrooms of this new school. In 1923, the High School was accredited and recognized as the first Catholic 2 year High School in St. Charles County.

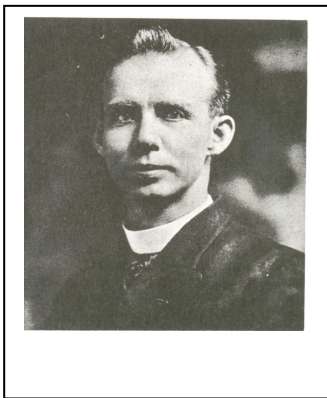
Father Jasper was untiring in his zeal for souls. He explained the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and encouraged full participation in the reception of Holy Communion. Regardless of infirmities that affected him, he went to the Altar to celebrate the Mass, even when prudence would have dictated his remaining in bed.

The serenity and peace, which characterized Father Jasper's life, were very much in evidence at his death on Friday evening, June 26, 1925. The solemn funeral rites of the Church were celebrated on June 30 in the presence of fifty-nine priests and approximately

1500 lay persons. Everyone who knew Father Jasper cherished his memory as a kind pastor, a faithful friend, and a selfless benefactor. Father Jasper was laid to rest in the Parish Cemetery.

After the death of Father Jasper, Reverend Martin Hellriegel, then the chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, was appointed Administrator of the Assumption Parish. He continued in this capacity until October 1925. During this period he made two significant contributions to the Parish, first he issued census cards to determine the number of families belonging to Assumption. It was noted that the congregation had grown considerably numbering at that time over 150 families.

Father Hellriegel was deeply interested in the children, training them in liturgical singing and the boys in serving at the altar. This second service to the parish was a lasting one, for the people of Assumption today participate in the Divine Service not only intelligently but also soulfully.



The next pastor, appointed to Assumption Parish, was Father John Waeltermann. He joined Assumption Parish on October 1, 1925, and the parish numbered over 150 families at this time and his main objective was to collect money for the building of a new church. The present Church was getting too small when you counted all the Families and the children. In May of 1927 Father Waeltermann was transferred to a South St. Louis Parish.

Again the people of Assumption were without a leader, but not for long. Father Clement J. Moening was appointed to Assumption on June 12, 1927 and his chief goal was to take preliminary steps toward the building of a new church.

Under Father Moening's leadership the members of Assumption began to mine rock for the new church. By the winter of 1928 they had stockpiled 300 perch of rock on the grounds where the new church was to be built. After stopping for the winter they again started to quarry in April of 1929, but after only two weeks the parishioners decided to discontinue the work. Beset by mechanical difficulties and



the arduous labor of such a task, the idea of quarrying was abandoned and the machinery sold. The rock that had been quarried by members of the parish was to be used in the foundations of the church.

On June 12, 1928, at the first Mass of a young man from the parish, Father Alphonse E. Westhoff, Father Moening announced that the pile of stones that had been transported to the parish property would soon form the foundation walls of the new parish church. But Father Moening was not to see the building of the new church. Father became ill and died on August 21, 1929; he was laid to rest in the Assumption Cemetery.

Father Moening is remembered for transforming the Junior High School into a four-year program and erected a frame building containing three classrooms, a science room and a typing room for this Senior High operation.

The frame building that was used, as the Senior High School was later purchased by the Knights of Columbus and moved to its present location. This building today houses the Knights of Columbus and is also used by Assumption Parish for funeral luncheons and other functions.

Monsignor Aloysius Wilmes, who helped serve Assumption Parish in his later years, was a member of the Assumption High School Class of 1931, the first class to graduate from this school as a four-year high school.



With the building of a new church on every mind, the appointment of the next Pastor was the talk of the Parish and the Town. On September 11, 1929, Father Peter Kurtenbach arrived and took charge.

Under his leadership the planning, construction, and opening of the new church became reality. In one of his first Parish meetings, about April 1, 1930, Father Kurtenbach addressed the meeting in the following way (taken from the minutes of the meeting).

"I am very happy today to open this meeting, for it affords me the opportunity that I have longed for all my life, to build a new church, a House of God. This is every priest's prime ambition, for we all will sooner or later be called away from this world, but would like to leave some work for God of which we can be proud when we are resting in our graves.



Furthermore, His Grace, the Archbishop has appointed me Pastor here to take charge of the spiritual welfare of the parish and to build a new church as soon as possible. You all know we need it bad enough. I need not dwell on this point any longer.

Indeed we should consider it a great privilege that this lot has fallen to us, to build a new church. For it is the House of God in which we receive the Sacraments, Graces to save our soul for the next world, where we hope to live forever in joy and happiness.

For to build this monument to the Honor and Glory of God will entail, indeed, great sacrifices on your part: for we cannot build Temples of God with words, it cost good hard cash.

I am of the opinion that we can raise the necessary money to build our church. I will try to make this clear to you. The church will cost about \$90,000.00. This is a great sum but need not discourage us. By the end of the year we shall have \$25,000.00 in the building fund and the money already paid for the rock not included. The Archbishop allows us a debt of \$30,000.00. We would need therefore to complete the building a subscription from \$30,000.00 to \$35,000.00. Now let us see whether we can stand a debt of \$30,000.00. To answer this question we need only to look up the financial income of the parish. Our pew rent is now \$2,300.00: Sunday collections averaged since the first of January nearly \$400.00 a month. Of course the envelope system that was introduced from the first of January has helped to make this collection successful."

Then on April 6, 1930 at the First General Parish Meeting the question of rock or brick was decided. Upon unanimous approval of the parish meeting, the pastor was requested to accept the offer of the Weldon Spring Quarry and place the order for the necessary rock for our new church building. The amount of rock ordered for the new church was 1,700 yards of rock.

On May 11, 1930, the Building Committee, was announced and approved. These men were: Louis Sattler, Anton Westhoff, Joseph Zerr, Louis Schaeffer, Joseph F. Sigmund, Dr. L. H. Glosemeyer (President), H.B. Gentleman, Joseph Saali Jr., Bernard J. Wilke, Albinus L. Salfen, Edward F. Illy, and E.F. Debrecht (Secretary)

On July 13, 1930 the New Church Building Committee met with Architect, Henry P. Hess and plans were approved to start building the new church.

On Sunday, September 21, 1930, the whole parish shared the joy of "breaking ground" for the erection of the new church. The ceremony was truly impressive. After a short devotion to the Holy Cross Invoking God's blessing, the parishioners walked to the spot where the erected Cross-marked the location of the new altar of the new church. The Veni Creator Spiritus was chanted. Father Kurtenbach gave a historical sketch of the parish, recounting the work of pastors who had served the parish from its beginning in 1872. After the ground breaking, the procession completed the contour of the new church building, singing as they walked, accompanied by the music of the Assumption Band.

They returned into the old church, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given for the last time and the Te Deum was sung. The bells sounded their last chorus from the tower of the old church. Their message was two-fold: farewell to the old and joy to the new.

Every person turned his attention to the actual work of removing the old church building and of making way for the erection of the new. Although this was a very busy season for the farmers, many came to assist in the work. They, as well as the townspeople, met on Monday morning, September 22, to clear the old church, and for three weeks they helped in the wrecking of the old building.

The cornerstone laying for the new church took place on Sunday, November 16, 1930 amidst color and pageantry, Archbishop John J. Glennon of the Archdiocese, laid the cornerstone. Reverend Peter Kurtenbach, the pastor, held the copper box that was to be placed in the cornerstone in view of all. It contained a brief historical sketch of the parish from its foundation in 1869 to the laying of the cornerstone on November 16, 1930. The names of the present parishioners and school children; names of the Sisters teaching in the elementary and high schools, lists of members of the various Sodalities, the Knights of Columbus, the names of the Archbishop, the Pastor, the President of the United States, copies of local papers and other numerous items.

It is estimated that about 2,500 people were present at the celebration and about 700 automobiles were parked on the property. After the laying of the corner stone the work on building the new Church continued with many of the local members of the parish helping in the construction, farmers hauled the stone from Weldon Spring because the stone at the local quarry on the Gentemann farm was not suitable to use in the construction. While the church was being built, over the very spot where the old church had stood, the Sunday Mass was held in the Assumption Grade School hall and basement. Some of our present members of Assumption Parish were baptized in the Assumption Grade School because there was no church at Assumption during the building period.

On the eve of the dedication, the three bells, after ten months of silence, rang out the Angelus, and continued their message of jubilation for an hour.

The dedication of the new Church took place on July 4, 1931, on the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the parish, with Archbishop John J. Glennon in attendance. The next few years saw the Parish grow slowly as the country was coming out of a depression but the Parish managed to pay off on the debt of the church, even during hard times.

The three first rites conducted in the new church were performed in behalf of the young; the burial of Mary Margaret, infant daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Wm. A. Menne, July 13, 1931; the baptism of Alice Mary, daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Clarence A.

Goellner, July 21, 1931, and the wedding of Louis G. Schaeffer and Miss Flora Kasmeier, October 7, 1931.

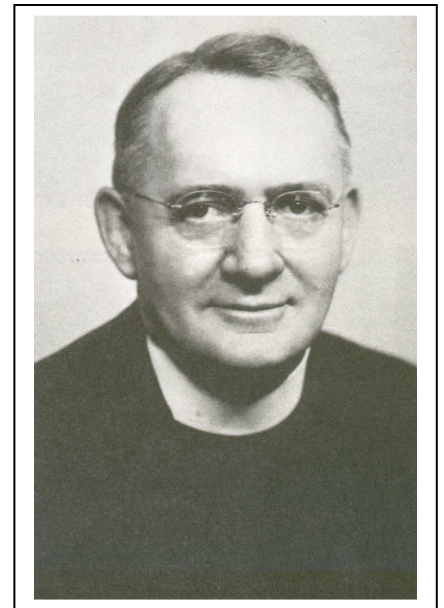
From a note dated September 1, 1935, Assumption refinanced the loan on the new church through Metropolitan St. Louis Co. in the amount of \$41,000.00 to be paid off over 10 years at 4 1/2 percent interest with payments to be made Serially. Collateral to secure the new financing included the 19 Acres the Parish owned, the New Church, the grade school building and the parsonage.

Father Kurtenbach ministered to the parish and in this beautiful new church until his death on August 21, 1937. He was buried in the Parish Cemetery.

Upon the death of Father Kurtenbach, Reverend Hellriegel, chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, was asked again to administer to the needs of the parish.

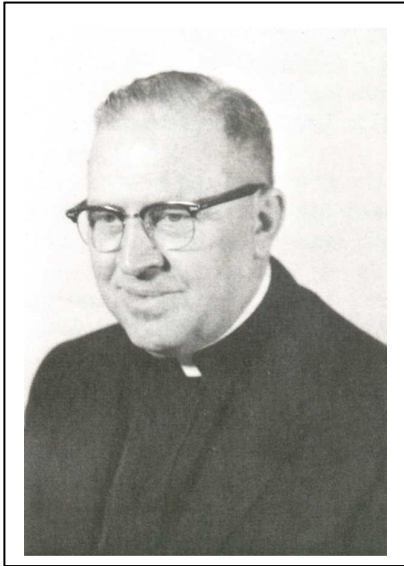
It wasn't long before another pastor was appointed to serve Assumption Parish. Father George A. Haukap became pastor on September 19, 1937. During his Leadership of Assumption Parish, the debt was paid off, two additional rooms were added to the high school.

It was during the time of Father Haukap that Assumption Parish sent many of their young men to serve in the military during World War II. Also for the first time in history, young women went off to work in the factories to aid America in winning a war against the very Country where many of their families came from, Germany. After the war was over many young couples were starting their families and the school was soon filled to capacity. Many new ideas came from the young couples of the parish as to the future of Assumption Parish.



In October of 1953 Father Haukap left Assumption Parish for an assignment in North St. Louis.

Father Raymond F. Diermann was installed as the new pastor on October 21, 1953. In one of his first meetings with the leaders of the different organizations of the parish, Father Diermann outlined a program of parish improvements that he felt needed to be done. The parish was growing and for the first time in the history of Assumption Parish



an assistant was assigned to the parish. Newly ordained from the seminary in 1956, Father Theodore Brug, was assigned as an assistant to Father Diermann. During his time at Assumption, Father Diermann led the parish in constructing a new grade school building and a new convent for the Sisters. Up to this time the Sisters had to live at the Mother House across the street.

The small white High School was now too small to handle the number of students that wished to get their High School education at a Catholic High School. Father Diermann called a meeting to suggest possible solutions and eventually remedy the situation. The decision was made to build a new high school. On April 20, 1954

Father Diermann selected seven members to serve on the school board and plan the building of the new High School.

The board of seven was composed of Fred A. Gentemann, President; Joseph Mudd, Vice-President; Francis E. Saali, Secretary; Emil Rau, Elmer Gentemann, Antoine Prinster and Herbert A. Westhoff. The board decided to build in accordance with the archdiocesan plan, pending approval of the archdiocesan building committee.

With the blessing and good wishes of the Most Reverend Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis, the drive for raising the money to build the new school began. The school was dedicated on December 8, 1955 with Archbishop Ritter presiding.

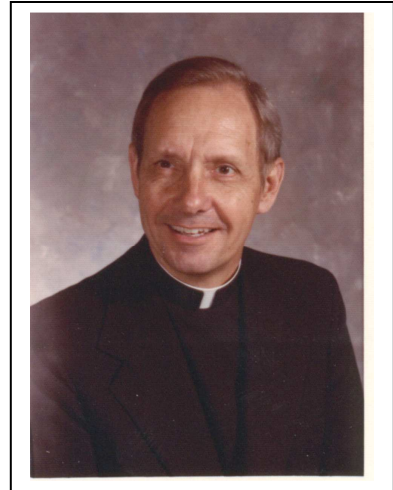
Later Father Diermann was a driving force in establishing a regional high school which, when opened in 1962, came to be called St. Dominic High School. Father Diermann observed his silver jubilee on Sunday, May 29, 1960, at Assumption Parish in O'Fallon. Father Diermann died suddenly in October of 1967 and he was laid to rest in the little Parish Cemetery of Dutsow, Mo. the small town where he grew up.

We are not sure but we think the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima at the corner of the church property facing Main Street was erected during the time of Father Diermann. This shrine is a constant reminder of Mary's message to Jacinta, Francis and Lucy, of prayer

and penance. Mary's folded hands are encircled with a rosary inciting passersby to share the joys, sorrows and glories of Jesus and His Mother. The contemplation of these mysteries is but a stepping-stone to heaven where the fruition will be realized only in eternity.

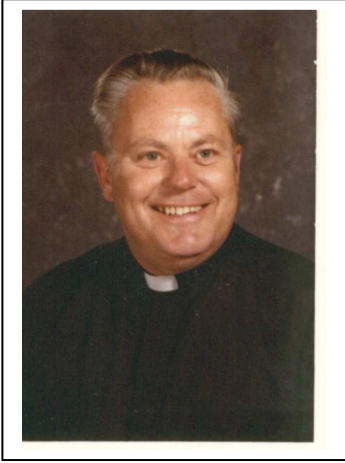
After the sudden death of Father Diermann, the one thing on the mind of all the members of Assumption was who would be our next pastor?

Then on October 19, 1967, Richard Lubeley was appointed pastor of Assumption Parish. Before coming to Assumption Father Lubeley was the Administrator of Bishop DuBourg High School, the largest high school of the Archdiocese. While pastor at Assumption, he was named Monsignor, the first such honor for this Parish since it's founding. That was on February 27, 1971.



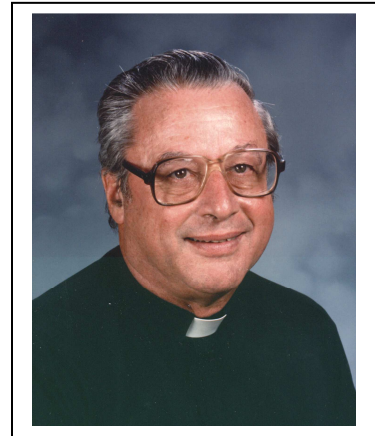
During Father Lubeley's time here at Assumption, the church was air-conditioned and it was through his leadership that the church was redecorated after the Second Vatican Council and for the centennial of the parish. The Baptismal was moved from the crypt at the rear of the church to a prominent place in front so the congregation could better witness a Baptism. The High Altar was removed, redesigned and placed in a prominent place where everyone could better view and be a part of the Mass. A new Tabernacle was purchased for the back Altar and carpeting was installed on the floors of the Church.

It was during Monsignor Lubeley's time here at Assumption Parish that the first Parish Council was formed according to the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council. The first Council was immediately put to work in planning for our Parish Centennial Celebration, Decoration and repairs to the church, obtaining Mass Booklets for the faithful and putting together a program booklet for the Centennial Celebration. The job of writing the Constitution and By-Laws was also given this group, a huge undertaking since this was to be the guidelines for years to come. As recorded on the original By-Laws, dated May 8, 1972, the members of the first Parish Council included: Rev. Msgr. Richard J. Lubeley, Rev James Grimaud, Rev Alfred Jewson, Sister Joanne Rataj CPPS, Henry Sachs, Ted Molitor, Catherine Gnade, Gerald Prinster, Carol Ochsner, Ivan Phillips, Ralph Pieper, Eileen Maher, Richard Saali, James Beauvaus, Jackie Behlmann, and Lynn Orf. Monsignor Lubeley was reassigned to a parish in South St. Louis in the spring of 1979.



Replacing him was Father Theodore J. Brunnert, who was appointed Pastor May 29, 1979. Father Brunnert took on the task of repairing many of the buildings at Assumption. He was instrumental in building the new rectory and during his time at Assumption a new electric organ was purchased for the church. The convent was remodeled so it could be used as a school library. In 1986, he was reassigned to a parish in Pacific, Missouri

The next pastor to be assigned to Assumption Parish was Father John (Jack) Burke. He was the eleventh Pastor of Assumption Parish and arrived on June 20, 1986.



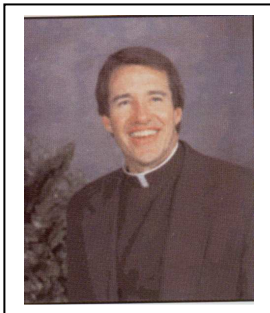
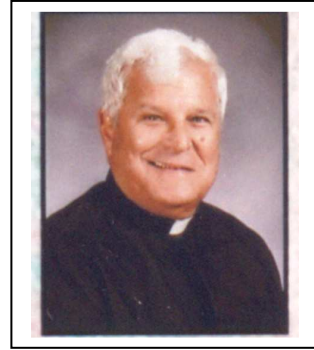
Some of his many accomplishments were the starting of the Endowment Funds for the planned Parish Center, the Cemetery Endowment Fund and The Education Endowment Fund.

During his leadership the Church was again redecorated, A concession stand was built at the sports field and the Cemetery was enlarged. Land was purchased for additional sports fields and many improvements were made to the buildings at Assumption.

Father Burke worked side by side with the parishioners on the many projects that were accomplished at Assumption Parish. The parish was shocked and saddened with his sudden death on May 8, 1995. Father John Burke was buried in the Parish Cemetery.

Father Robert Finn, administrator of St. Dominic's High School, took over the large task of helping the people of Assumption through the difficult time, until a new pastor was appointed. Father Finn lived at the Assumption Rectory and helped in the day-to-day activities of the Parish.

Father Robert Bousaubin was appointed the 12th Pastor of Assumption Parish in 1995. Father "Bob" spearheaded the 125th Anniversary Celebration Committee. Father Bousaubin came to Assumption Parish at a very difficult time and with big shoes to fill but he took all this in stride and led the Parish in a very positive manner, while getting to know his parishioners, their strengths and abilities. Father had been a Priest for twenty-seven years having been ordained on June 7, 1969. Father came to Assumption Parish from St. Cecilia Parish in St. Louis where he was loved by his Flock and where they hated to see him leave. We felt fortunate to have such a loving, dedicated Priest in our midst and prayed that we might have him as our Pastor for many years to come. Because of ill health Father had to ask to take on a lesser task and was assigned as an assistant at another Parish.



Our present Pastor, Father Joseph G. Kempf joined Assumption Parish in June of 1999 as our 13<sup>th</sup> Pastor, and immediately, along with "Big Al", became a hit with the children and adults alike. Father Joe was assigned to Holy Infant Parish before coming to Assumption. He has been a priest for 22 years and this is his first assignment as a Pastor.



Because of the tremendous growing pains that have taken place in the O'Fallon area and especially Assumption Parish, the job of what to do to handle the overflow at our Sunday Masses fell on Father Joe's shoulders. About 2500 families are registered in Assumption Parish and about 500 children attend the grade school. More Masses were planned as well as using the Chapel at the Sisters of the Precious Blood Mother House for one Mass on each Sunday.

The problem seemed to be solved, but more and more families wanted to join the ranks of Assumption Parish. Seeing that there was nothing more to do Father Joe began looking into the possibility of building a larger church.

Many meetings were held, feasibility studies were conducted and then after many months of hard work, prayers and what ifs, it was decided to get in touch with the Archbishop and ask for his permission to go ahead with the plans of Assumption to build a new parish center and church.

Many committees were formed to help Father Joe in planning for a new church. One of these committees was the Building Committee; this committee was given the task of working directly with the architect and engineers in the various phases in the design and building of the new church and parish center. Through the Building Committee an architect was hired to do the design work for the new parish center and church. Members of the building committee were: Lisa Hunnicutt, Will Krussel, Howard Margraff, Mark Martin, Don Swoboda and Sue Vanderbilt.

Another committee was the Liturgical Design Committee; this group studied in detail the interior planning of the new church, including the focal points of liturgical action and their relationship to one another. These included the altar, ambo, chair, tabernacle, font and the assembly area as well as statues, stations and artwork.

The Liturgical Design Committee was given the additional duties of naming of Saints for Statuary, organ and piano purchase, utilization of current church, materials and colors for the new church. The Liturgical Design Committee was also given the task of researching the past history of the parish and updating it to the present time.

Members of the Liturgical Design Committee included, Prayer & Hospitality, with Sharon Moore, Laura Modica, Judy St. Gemme, Mary Ann Huber and Mae Rose Prize serving on the committee. Public Relations included Rosemary Pieper, Karen Eisenbath, Ruth Rothermich, Shelly Schneider and Father Joe Kempf. Photography & Documentation included Debbie Gentry, Curtis Burkemper, Alan Neff, Tricia Neff, Neil Frederick and Sue Vanderbilt. History & Statistics included Paula Pieper/Ziegemeier, Deacon Fred Volansky, Joan Pieper, Ralph Pieper and Brother Steve Erspamer.

A Capital Campaign Committee was formed to raise the necessary funds in order to build the new parish center and church. This group took on the responsibility of contacting members of the Parish to collect money and pledges toward the building of the new Church and Parish Center. They handled the Advanced Gifts, the Special Gifts and the Corporate Gifts. They also had to take care of any follow-up after pledges were made to expedite orderly collections and record keeping. To everyone's astonishment the pledges exceeded the amount that was set as our first goal, to finance the Parish Center and build the outer shell of the new Church.

The big day for the groundbreaking finally arrived April 13, 2003 on Palm Sunday. The weather was great and a crowd of over 500 men; women and children filled the existing Church before the ceremony. The combined choirs led the congregation in singing the song "All Are Welcome" with appropriate lyrics for the occasion. The words to the song went "Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live, a place where Saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end divisions: All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place."



In attendance to bless the ground and preside at the groundbreaking was Bishop Robert Hermann, and as he himself proclaimed I am “the newest and oldest Bishop in the Archdiocese of St. Louis”. The 500 or more who attended met first in the existing church and Father Joe Kempf made remarks and introduced Bishop Robert Hermann. Following his introduction the different committees that were instrumental in the planning for the new church and parish center were introduced, prayers were said, songs were sung and then the entire congregation went to the new church site in procession with many of them carrying Palms from the Palm Sunday Service. Accompanying Bishop Herman was Pastor Rev. Joe Kempf, Associates: Rev. Ronald Rubbelke and Rev. Eugene Bendel, also accompanying Bishop Hermann were Deacons Rev. Mister Howard Vanbooven and Rev. Mister Fred Volansky.

One of the highlights, of the ground breaking, was the kindergarten class leading the procession and then surrounding the site; of the future alter, in the new church. This kindergarten class will be the first group to receive their first Communion in the new church. Members of the kindergarten class in attendance were: Jimmy Stiffler, Victoria Orf, Annie Renaud, Allyson Prize, Jarred Kues, Ben Naegele, Marina Zampese, Courtney LeConte, Mitchell Benedict, Josh Bushell, Zac Wilson, Brenley Deters, Mackenzie Stephens, Austin Brophy, Paige Whitehead, Sydney Gentry, also in attendance were Corey Boedeker, Dory Steckel, Natalie Hudanick, Taylor Sargent, Alex Bartoli, Andrea Mohr, Emily Summers, Adam Rushing, Jeffrey Rouillard, Keanna Bathon, Cory Schiller, Brian Engel, Blake Peirick, Mark Perkins, Andrew Vogel and Kortney Collins.

The members of the parish picked to do the symbolic groundbreaking were: Sister Marie Laurent CPPS from the Precious Blood Community, representing the Sisters for letting the parish use their church during our time of overcrowded conditions; Kylene Bauer, the grand daughter of Mary Huber of Twin Oaks Nursing Home, for the generous use of the Twin Oaks meeting rooms; Mike Yerion of the Knights of Columbus Council 2269 for the generous use of their hall on so many occasions for so many years; Donna Mudd Prinster for allowing the parish to purchase the home and land of her deceased parents, Joe and Genola Mudd, for future use and Bernice Ginnever for the very generous sale of her home and land for use by the parish. These two properties will become part of the parking lot for people attending the new church and parish center upon its completion. Also at the groundbreaking there was a sixth shovel that remained unused. That shovel stands for the role each of us has to play in the important effort of building more “holy space” for our ministries. Yet it stands also for the even more important work of building up a community of love and forgiveness.

After the prayers and the actual groundbreaking ceremony, which was done at the very site where the Alter will stand in the new church, the congregation then joined shoulder to shoulder around the entire perimeter of the new church site, signifying that any church must be made of “living stones”. A wooden cross-made from the limbs of a local tree marked the location of the new altar. Bishop Hermann walked the entire perimeter of the new church building blessing the people in attendance with Holy Water as he made the walk. After the groundbreaking and prayers all were invited to the school

gym for some refreshments. This also gave everyone a chance to look through the drawings of the new facilities, and time to visit with Bishop Hermann and with one another. Everyone in attendance was invited to sign one of the books documenting the groundbreaking of the new Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish church and Parish Center. It was documented that over 500 people at the groundbreaking signed our parish commitment. It read "This day –April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003- we, the people of God at Assumption Parish in O’Fallon, Missouri, commit ourselves to the building of the body of Christ. As we pledge ourselves to the construction of our new church and parish center, we know that we are building “holy space” for the work of God among us. We commit ourselves- not only to the construction of new buildings- but also to the building up the body of Christ in our midst. It is our pledge to follow humbly the way of Christ, to welcome warmly all who come here and to reach out courageously in service that God’s love might be known in our every gathering.” In order for more people of the parish to get the chance to sign the commitment it was decided by Father Joe to have it displayed again on the weekend of April 27, 2003. Many of the parish could not attend the groundbreaking for one reason or another and this will give all members of the parish a chance to feel a part of it and commit themselves to the pledge.

On June 30,2003 the Parish closed on the last piece of ground that was needed to form the new parking lot for the Church/Parish Center. It was the home of Bernice Ginnever, consisting of one acre of ground and fronting on Main Street. Then on the very next day July 1, 2003 the actual digging of the basement began for the new Parish Center. The dirt being removed was hauled across the street from the parsonage for fill to build yet another parking lot in the ever-expanding parish plan.

Dedication of the new church was held on February 26, 2005. A day that all of the members of Assumption were anxiously awaiting. Bishop Robert J. Herman, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, officiated in the blessing and dedication of the new church. After the services a reception was held in the new parish center

Assistant pastors over the years have included Father Eugene Bendel, Father James Benz, Father George Bilyeu, Father Gary Braun, Father Theodore Brug, Father Joseph Weber and Father Tim Elliot. Other fine assistants were Father Robert Menner, Father Gregory Mikisch, Father James Pavlik, Father Bernard Schloemer, Father Robert Szydlowski and Father John Keane. Others included Rev. James Grimaud, Rev. Alfred Jewson, Rev. John Kaske, Father Jeffry Knight and Father John Keane, who were assigned to Assumption only a short time when he died on May 16, 1995, just eight days after Father Burke.

Another priest who served Assumption was Msgr. Aloyius Wilmes, having served as Chaplain at St. Mary's Institute, while he resided here at Assumption Parish, and assisted the Pastor and the Parish until his death.

Our present associate pastor, who came to Assumption the same time as former Pastor, Father Robert Bousaubin, is Father Ronald Rubbelke. A short time later a fine Priest that had served Assumption years before as a young assistant, Father Eugene Bendel, again joined Assumption as an assistant.

Young men, who grew up in Assumption Parish and later became priests are, Msgr. Donald Rau, Father Theodore Pieper, Father Urban H. Knoll, Father James M. Mitulski and Msgr. John Peter Pham. Monsignor Alphonse E. Westhoff, now deceased, was also a native of Assumption Parish.

Young women, who attended Assumption schools, and later went on to join the religious life as sisters included; Sister Mary David Debrecht, Sister Mary Paschal Schaeffer, Sister Mary Alcuin Sigmund, Sister Mary Judith Orf and Sister Marie Loeffler. Also included in the list are Sister Luella Dames, Sister Julia Marie Wolf, Sister Mary Clement Salfen, and Sister Aniceta Loeffler, all members of the Precious Blood Sisters.

Some of the deceased Precious Blood Sisters from Assumption Parish are: Sister Mary Edgar Maher, Sister Catherine Marie Maher, Sister Ildephonse Mueller, Sister Eusebia Hoester, Sister Engelberta Schwerer, Sister Eustacia Eike, Sister Edmunda Eike, Sister Raymunda Krekel, Sister Inez Marie Prize. Sister Monica Eggering of the Sisters of St. Francis and Sister Mary Armella Klieman, Sister Mary Christine Roeper, Sister Louise Schulte, all of the Religioius of the Sacred Heart.

The World has seen a lot of changes since the founding of the City of O'Fallon and the humble beginning of the Assumption Parish. We have survived two world wars, earthquakes, floods, plagues, and men walking on the moon and the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York by terrorist. We have witnessed a Democracy that has made this the greatest Country in the World. We have the Freedom of Speech, the Freedom to attend the Church of our choice and the separation of Church and State. We have the Catholic Schools to teach us and give us the guidance to achieve any goals that we might dream of.

The little Village that was called O'Fallon has progressed through the years to become a City, even becoming a part of Metropolitan St. Louis. Located in probably the fastest growing County, St. Charles, in Missouri, it has a population of over 65,000 people and has one of the busiest highways in the United States, highway 70, running right through the center of the town. The railroad is still in the same location but no longer is used to transport people from O'Fallon to St. Charles and St. Louis but rather a means to transport freight across the United States. Main Street in O'Fallon has changed from a dusty gravel road to a four-lane highway complete with traffic lights.

Many changes have also taken place in Assumption Parish since the meeting of the eighteen members that had the vision that some day Assumption would be a thriving

Parish with 2500 families being part of the family. The little log schoolhouse that saw it's beginning in 1872 now has an enrollment of approximately 500 students in classes from kindergarten through eighth grade. The buildings now include the lower grade school, the upper grade school, that was the high school before St. Dominic was started, and the library and the kindergarten school that is now located in the building where the Convent was located. And of course don't forget that we now are in the age of computers, starting with the very young, our students have more knowledge at their fingertips than was ever dreamed possible even twenty years ago. Many changes have taken place over the years such as we now have Lay Teachers, having replaced the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, when their numbers necessitated their giving up teaching at the school. The last member of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood to serve at the Assumption grade school was Sister Pat Cody; she was the principal of the school for six years and served until the end of the school year 2002.

The Assumption Parish Family takes in many activities and organizations, including the R.C.I.A Program, Youth Ministry, Legion of Mary, St. Vincent DePaul Society, Parish Council, Athletic Association, the Health & Wellness Ministry, the Liturgy Commission, and of course the Quilters Group etc. Today the Pastor is helped in his never-ending task of ministering to the people of the Parish by Special Ministers, Lectors, Ushers, Greeters, Choirs and Organist. The Outreach Program and the many committees such as the School Committee, the Finance Committee, the Cemetery Committee, the Building Committee, the Funeral Luncheon Committee, the Sodalties, the Assumption Garden Club, the Knights of Columbus, and the list goes on and on.

From its humble beginning back in 1869, when 18 families from O'Fallon joined by 9 families from St. Peters and 8 families from St. Paul met and made plans to build our first church, Assumption Parish has been blessed by it's many benefactors, both in tithing and in special gifts to the Parish.

As the parish continued to grow, with 130 families in 1914, a new grade school was built along with a 2-year high school, that was started in 1923. Then in 1925 with 150 families they started to plan on building a new church. In 1931 the new church (now our Chapel) was built at a cost of about \$90,000.00. This was done with an income in the parish of about \$400.00 per month. This amount per month was raised only because the parish started the envelope system in January of that year.

Today we have about 2500 families registered in the parish and an income of about \$100,000,00 per month to operate the parish. If you figure in the children of our parish we have over 7000 members. Much thought and prayer must have occurred over the years when our forefathers were planning for their future generations, and what a great job they did. Now it's our turn to plan for our future generations in a way that will make them proud to know that we were looking out for them and their children in our thoughts and prayers and actions.

The torch gets passed on, from one generation to the next, but with the Grace of God and the fine leadership of our Pastors, we all pray to meet the goals that we set for our Parish Family and finally to meet again one day in Heaven to enjoy the fruits of our labors, for all eternity.

Special thanks to the fine people who compiled the History of Assumption Parish over the years so that the Priests and Parishioners who were a part of its very beginning to the present time will not be forgotten. Some of the books and articles used in writing this history were the O'Fallon Centennial book 1856 to 1956, the O'Fallon, Missouri American Bicentennial book, published in 1976, the Assumption Centennial book printed in 1971, The Assumption Catholic Church 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Directory published in 1995, the Souvenir of the Dedication of the Church of the Assumption dated July 4, 1931 and the Dedication booklet of the Assumption Catholic Church, dated February 26, 2005 plus the Minutes of Trustee Meetings of the Parish held over the many years.

And finally, this prayer, taken from the remarks of Father Joseph G.Kempf in the Dedication book. "God of all goodness, it is our pledge to follow humbly the way of your Son, to welcome warmly all who come here, and to reach out courageously in service to others. Bless our efforts, O God, that your love might be known in our every gathering."