

We are the Community. We are the Church.

*Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the First Mass
at Sacred Heart Church at Nelthorpe Street
on September 5, 2015*

25

February 21-22, 2015

Would you like to help raise funds for **Christian charities** by making the **Spring Used Clothing and Attic Treasures Sale** on **Saturday, April 18**, a huge success? You can donate used clothing and attic treasures, starting March 10, and/or help in sorting, pricing, fielding phone calls, preparing and distributing posters, advertising and setting up and dismantling the event. To volunteer or for more information contact **Rita Kelly** at **250-598-9558** or e-mail her at: **ritak@telus.net**

'76-'79: the parish's glory years?

"Those were the days, my friend, we thought they'd never end." And end they did.

There are many opinions about the three years when a Belgian Norbertine priest was Sacred Heart faith community's pastor.

However, this is for certain: when he was suddenly transferred to Gold River, the community was upset, like it had never ever been before, and never since.

In a letter dated 8 June '79, our parish council chair wrote to Bishop Remi De Roo saying the transfer "has caused widespread dismay and dissatisfaction" and asked, "on behalf of our whole congregation" to reconsider because of the priest's "outstanding record, and because of future continuing projects that are at a critical stage, for which his presence and guidance are essential." Children, too, wrote to the bishop. And he did reply. In one response to a nine-year-old he said: "I am pleased to know that you like going to Sacred Heart and that you have learned much from Father Guy."

A parish meeting was called and Msgr. William Bulloch was sent by Bishop de Roo to listen to the parishioners' views, but the decision had been made.

Fr. Guy Merveille, from Liege, Belgium, succeeded Msgr. William Bulloch as our pastor in September 1976 and in a short time greatly increased the size of the congregation — "more than double," as the letter noted. Chairs were added, three to four abreast, on the side aisles for the family Mass. The church, the letter stated, was "packed out Sunday after Sunday." Never before. Never since, except at some Christmas eve masses.

Comparative figures for 1975-76 and 1978-79 show that baptisms, confirmations and weddings almost tripled, the letter stated.

It noted that he instituted the "youth group [about 70], Teen



Mass, twice-monthly meetings of the elderly group [about 25], yearly bazaar for charities, Peace and Development," and revitalized the "Parish Council, choir, Family Mass . . . Adult Education."

"Over and above all this, Father Guy has been Pastor of Gillain Manor [for rehabilitation of alcoholics]."

"Father Guy has made the liturgy much more immediate and meaningful, a living experience."

He paid particular attention to the youth.

"Each Sunday the children's liturgy is carefully based on the themes the children are working on in their home religion programme and this approach elicits a very eager and enthusiastic response because it is pitched at their level of understanding," the letter stated.

These were some of the things he did:

- He terminated altar serving as exclusively a boys' domain by allowing girls as altar servers before it was officially allowed [see bulletin #9];
- During family mass, for the first time children brought the gifts to the altar and, after the Gospel, children were invited to the altar and were given a brief and informal catechetical lesson on the readings, the Gospel and other matters;
- He baptized infants during the Sunday family mass at the altar, surrounded by children, and welcomed them to the community;
- On Easter Sunday, all the children wore their own-designed hats/bonnets as they walked in procession to the church;
- On Halloween in '76, on the eve of All Saints Day, he asked all the children to dress up in the costume of a biblical character and he himself entered the church dressed as a leper covered in a blanket with a parishioner ringing a bell;



Continued on next page

- He started two children's choirs in uniform: Our Lady of Fatima Choir, for ages 12-13 for the 10 a.m. Family Mass, and Sacred Heart Choir, for ages 13-19 for the Teen Mass on Sunday evenings.

There were social activities and trips for the youth too:

- On Sunday afternoons, 50 to 100 children of all ages met for fun, refreshments and supper — fish and chips, chicken and chips, pizzas and McDonalds. They played games —hide and seek, tag, dodge ball, etc. They went skating at Oak Bay Recreation Centre, enjoyed the former Fun City [at Vanalman] with its huge slides, go karts and mini golf, and spent time at Mount Doug Park and Gyro Park beach. One afternoon, one of the children's father, who had a pilot's licence, took three kids at a time up in a piper cub for 15-20 minutes;
- When Fr. Guy needed to raise some money for a charity, the youth had a skate-a-thon and got pledges for each lap they did. They raised quite a bit of money;
- On 4 December '76, he took the youth group on a day bus trip to Seattle where they visited the Space Needle, Science Centre and the Lazerium;
- There was also a seven-day trip with 14-16 children and adults as chaperones to Disneyland, Universal Studios, and San Diego Zoo;
- In '79, the youth [10-14] had softball game against youth of St. Joseph's Parish.

Continued in bulletin #26

"Stop the Plane!"

At the start of the Disneyland trip, when all had boarded the plane in Vancouver and it was revving up for take-off, Fr. Guy yelled "Stop the plane!"

The flight attendant notified the pilot, and the engines slowed to idle. When asked what was wrong, Fr. Guy said that he had not blessed the plane and needed to pray for a safe trip. The annoyed flight attendant allowed him to do so.

As Fr. Guy was praying, the flight attendant looked out the window and saw something fly out from the engine. She alerted the pilot. The plane stopped on the tarmac while mechanics checked the engine.

The plane then returned to its bay at the airport and the passengers were told to disembark.

After they disembarked, the flight attendant told Fr. Guy that if he had not stopped the plane to pray, it might have had problems in mid-air.

The Sacred Heart Parish group sat inside the airport in a holding area for about seven hours as they had already been through customs. As there was nowhere to buy food, the youth got very restless and started acting up.

This prompted Fr. Guy to dig into his pocket and throw all the money he had on him — the money he was holding for many of the kids — up in the air and told them to collect it, sort and count it, and return it to him. This was a real "donnybrook" for the adults to monitor and to ensure it was done correctly! The airport security guards were also not too happy with Fr. Guy. When the group re-boarded the plane, they were served all the food and drinks they wanted. They did not arrive in Los Angeles until early the next morning.

— As narrated by a long-time parishioner who was on the trip



Catholicism in the continents

Focus on Asia

Continued from bulletin #24

Indonesia: Italian Franciscan monk Odorico Mattiussi, sent by the pope, reached Indonesia and visited Sumatra, Java and Banjarmasin in Borneo between 1318-1330 and in his book, *Travels of Friar Odoric of Pordenone*, giving the church information about Asia, he writes about the Java's Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit kingdom [1293-1500].

In the 16th century the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511 with missionaries following. St. Francis Xavier was there from 1546-1547 working in the islands of Ambon, Ternate and Morotai. He was followed by the Dominicans who converted many in Solor Island. With the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ternate in 1574, many Catholics in the northern Moluccas were killed or converted to Islam.

Dutch East India Company conquered Ambon in 1605 and subsequently the Catholics were forced to convert to Protestantism. The same happened in other places. In 1613 Solor Island also fell to the Dutch.

Today, there are nearly 7.5 million Catholics in Indonesia, or 3.5 per cent of the population.

East Timor: Since its independence from Indonesia, East Timor has become a predominantly Catholic country in Asia, a legacy of its status as a former Portuguese colony, with 900,000 Catholics or about 88.84 per cent of the population.

After Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed the former Portuguese colony, the Church played an important role: While just 20 per cent of East Timorese called themselves Catholics at the time of the invasion, the figure surged to 95 per cent by the end of the first decade after the invasion.

During the occupation, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo became a prominent advocate for human rights and many priests and nuns risked their lives in defending citizens from military abuses.

Pope John Paul's 1989 visit to East Timor provided a catalyst for independence activists to seek global support

In 1996, Bishop Belo and another leading activist, Jose Ramos-Horta, received the Nobel Peace Prize for their work towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor.

A number of priest and nuns were murdered in the violence in East Timor that followed the 1999 independence referendum.

Malaysia: The first Catholic priests landed in Malacca in 1511 as military chaplains to the Portuguese and Malacca became a stop-over for the thousands of missionaries. Between 1545 and 1552, St. Francis Xavier preached in Malacca. In 1641, the Dutch occupied Malacca and suppressed Catholicism. The bishops and priests fled to Timor. Today, there are about 850,000 Catholics in Malaysia, about three per cent of the population.

Continued in bulletin #26