

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*

26

February 28-March 1, 2015



Parishioners have big hearts for the needy

Nearly 30 parishioners showed up to help in the "Friendship Dinner" for the needy on Friday, February 20, at the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre in downtown Victoria. Parishioners donated \$1,205 towards the meal and other items. Expenses totalled \$561.30, enough for more such dinners. While Bishop Gary Gordon was unable to help because of a death in his family, Friar Dan Gurnick, Father Alfred Alilio and visiting Filipino priest, Fr. Edwin Gariguez, helped in serving the dinner.

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

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The letter of 8 June '79 from the chair of Sacred Heart Parish Council to Bishop Remi de Roo on the sudden transfer of Fr. Guy Merveille to Gold River also stated the parish pastor "has worked extremely hard to foster the spirit of Vatican II, and has done much in the area of ecumenism."

Ecumenism became a parish ministry and the late Ella Webb headed it:

- At a family mass in early January '77, the children gave a candle to Ella Webb that was taken as a gift to the Metropolitan United Church on Quadra Street where the president of the Canadian Council of Churches was a speaker;
- On 1 June '77, the parish council unanimously approved a motion to "approve in principle the proposal of building a community service centre, on our land, in communion with St. Peter's Parish." This Anglican church had approached our parish a month earlier to

build a complex on our church property to be shared by both communities;

- St. Peter's Anglican Church invited Sacred Heart Parish to a picnic at Rev. Mundy's Farm on Pender Island on 26 June '77;
- Rabbi Leo Abrami of Temple Emmanuel Synagogue was at Sacred Heart masses on Saturday and Sunday;
- There was a symposium on Protestantism and informative talks on Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism.

Other highlights of '76-'79:

- Canadians of Portuguese, Polish, Italian, Spanish and Latin American ancestries held Corpus Christi Processions at Sacred Heart Church grounds;
- In October '77, a second Sunday Mass at 8:30 a.m. was re-introduced because of the expanding congregation;
- The parish council, disbanded in '74 by Fr. William Bulloch, who elected to handle the council's responsibilities, was reinstated in '76;
- The parish established its own Development and Peace Committee;

- On 10 July '77, the parish became the first depositor in the diocesan Mutual Investment Credit [MIC] fund;
- An Adult Education program — weekly talks and discussions on the histories of the church and theology, ecumenism, social issues and concerns, canon law, the child and the family, and other subjects — was started on 16 October '77 and was headed by Dr. Edward Pires;
- The rectory's carport was converted in '77 into a meeting hall and chapel and was named Pope John XXIII hall in May '78 [Fr. Guy was the director of the Pope John XXIII Ecumenical Center in Paoli, Pennsylvania, in the early '70s before coming to Victoria];
- The parish held its first bazaar in '78 to raise funds exclusively for Christian charities — before, the parish bazaars, which began in '36 were for parish purposes. The change was instituted because the parish discontinued collections for the "Red Bag" in 1976.
- A main beneficiary of the "red Bag" collection and the bazaar was the late Fr. J. Murray Abraham, S.J., the Canadian missionary who established the St.

Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Centre in Kurseong, India, where farm projects helped the poor to help themselves. He came to the parish from August 21-22, '77, to meet with parish supporters;

- There were social and recreational events galore: Valentine's, Spring and Christmas dances; family movie night; a trip to the PNE in Vancouver, a curling bonspiel, bowling and ice-skating afternoons, and annual parish picnics

held at Mount Douglas Park, Gyro Park, and Beaver Lake Park;

"There is much work of Fr. Guy which still remains to be completed here," the letter to the bishop stated. "Featuring prominently, is his mission of helping the thirty four Vietnamese refugees who he has sponsored into Canada."

Fr. Guy presided over the welcoming of the "boat people" from Vietnam by the parish. Some were even given temporary residence in the rectory. Parishioners responded most generously and so many cans of food

were donated that they reached the ceiling of the church behind the altar.

"All of these people are still in the midst of the difficult process of resettling and continue to need a great deal of social guidance and spiritual direction. Ideally, Father Guy should be available to them for many months to come, until there is some degree of confidence that these people can fend for themselves," the letter stated.

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Vietnamese Refugee Project

A nine-page document in the parish files spells out the Vietnamese Refugee Project: "To relocate 50 Vietnamese families to the now defunct town of Butedale, B.C."

The document states that it is a project "introduced by" Fr. Guy Merveille, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council 1256, Victoria, and supported by Sacred Heart Church.

Butedale is on Princess Royal Island about 90 kilometres south of Kitimat and gets water from Butedale Lake west and 200 feet above the town and is served by two hydro-electric plants.

A Canadian Press [nation news agency] item carried by many newspapers, one of them, *The Citizen* of Prince George, on 26 November '78, quoted Fr. Guy as saying that the Canadian Fishing Co. had offered to sell 30 acres at the site for \$200,000.

"Merveille said the Victoria Knights of Columbus have promised \$25,000 toward the cost of purchasing the townsite," it reported.

"A spokesman for the council of Merveille's Sacred Heart Parish said the council is very enthusiastic about the project, and is prepared to contribute some money towards it.

"Everyone talks about doing something for our fellow man," the news reports quotes the unidentified spokesman. "We are prepared to do something about it."

"The spokesman said feasibility had been made, and were included in the presentation to two ministries. There is water, power and living quarters already at the town" and "the plan also calls for resource people to be located in the town to teach the refugees English as well as farming skills," *The Citizen* item stated. The two ministries were human resources and labor.

"Spokesmen in the ministries of labor and human resources confirmed the plan had been submitted to the government, and the ministers were "taking a look at it."

"Merveille said Human Resources Minister Bill Vander Zalm had indicated he was very interested in it."

In the item, "Refugee Settlement plan rejected," the CP story said acting premier Grace McCarthy had rejected the plan even though "Mrs. McCarthy said she knows nothing about the plan, and would be astonished if any ministry had given its approval."

"She virtually ruled out any chance of tax dollars being used to back the idea, noting that most of the refugees are merchants — not fisherman and farmers," the story stated.

"It would seem highly improbable that we would isolate people who are obviously not cut out for that kind of environment, that we would impose an isolation like that on them."

The project document states that with the purchase of Butedale by the Knights of Columbus, the town would be renamed "New Columbus" and will "give these new citizens a real sense of belonging." The plan outlines a "self-supporting strategy" with the refugees working in fishing, forestry, livestock, fowl raising, greenhouses, a store and tourism.

Fr. Guy Merveille seemed undeterred by Mrs. MaCarthy's rejection of the project. By 4 January 1979 he had a Vietnamese refugee project food hamper campaign to establish an initial food supply for the refugees. "This part of the project is being conducted by Sacred Heart's Youth Group in Communion with youth groups of other denominations," he stated.

The transfer of Fr. Guy in June ended the vision of Butedale being a place to settle Vietnamese refugees.



Catholicism in the continents

Focus on Asia

Continued from bulletin #25

Vietnam: While Portuguese Catholic missionaries visited Vietnam at the early 16th century, they did not have impressive results. Only after the arrival of French Jesuits Alexander de Rhodes and Antoine Marquez were more than 6,000 Vietnamese converted between 1627-1730.

De Rhodes created the Vietnamese alphabet, using Latin script, with diacritic or pronunciation marks, that continues to be used today, and is called Quốc Ngữ [literally "national language"].

Today, Vietnam has 5.7 million Catholics, or 6.8 per cent of the population.

Cambodia: A Portuguese Dominican, Gaspar de Cruz, was the first know missionary to Cambodia in 1555-56 but he failed to convert anyone because the country was run by a Bramene or Brahman [Hinduism] king and discovered that they were "the most difficult people to convert." He left disappointed.

Despite French colonization in the 19th century, Christianity made little impact. There are today around 20,000 Catholics in Cambodia which represents only 0.15% of the total population.

Laos: There are about 45,000 Catholics, many of whom are ethnic Vietnamese, concentrated in major urban centers and surrounding areas along the Mekong River.

