



## Proud History of St. Mary's

With the establishment of tanneries, hemp manufacturing and the New England Whaling Company in the prosperous Dutch settlement at Hudson in 1768, the history of the Catholic Church in the city was begun.

Thomas Jenkins, the first Catholic to locate in the section, according to available records, purchased a tract of land bordering on the river and was soon joined by twenty others of the same faith, attracted to Hudson by the commercial opportunities. They formed the first Catholic community. There is also a record of a number of French Catholics who resided in Hudson in 1797.

The religious activities of the group from this time to more than half a century later is clouded in obscurity, for no record has been found previous to 1841. Nevertheless, missionaries undoubtedly ministered to the section and tradition indicates that French priests visited the settlement annually.

The first priest with whom a consecutive record of Catholic activities in Hudson begins was Father Michael Gilbride, who in 1841 had under his jurisdiction Hudson and all territories to the North as far as the Van Rensselaer estate. It was during the pastorate of Father Gilbride that the property on the corner of Third and Montgomery Streets was purchased. Previous to this time Mass was said at various homes throughout the city and in the Masonic Temple at the corner of Third and Union Streets.

Father William Howard succeeded Father Gilbride in ministering to the spiritual wants of the people and began the actual construction of the first Catholic Church in the city of Hudson. In following out the work, the Catholic men of the section offered their services for a certain period each week, until the church was completed and a house

of God, built by their own efforts, was ready for religious services.

The parish had grown gradually until during Father Howard's regime more than fifty families were under his charge. Father Howard established in the parish the Holy Name Society, Sacred Heart Society and the Young Men's Catholic Association. He had as his assistant Father M. Guese.

The work of Father Howard was continued by his successor Father James S. O'Sullivan who labored here zealously from 1854 to 1872. When Father Thomas Keating assumed charge of the parish in 1872 there were more than five hundred Catholics. In Father Keating's time the Church was remodeled, and due to the necessity of having religious services for the people in the sections distant from the church, missions were established and two assistants assigned for the summer.

Father Patrick H. Beecham was assistant in 1873, Father Edward A. Terry in 1875 and Father J. J. Peyton in 1876.

In 1877 Father Patrick F. Smith succeeded Father Keating as pastor of the parish and during his more than twenty years of service had as assistants, Fathers James L. Meagher, P. M. Ahearn, M. C. Gavin, Roger Ward, M. L. Walsh, Patrick B. Dempsey, James R. Walsh, P. J. Donnelly and J. J. Dowd. Toward the latter part of his ministry Father Smith was in ill health and Father Donnelly was temporarily pastor with Father Dowd as assistant.

After the death of Father Smith, Father Joseph H. Fitzgerald was named pastor in 1902 and Father Donnelly was transferred to Palmer Falls. Father Fitzgerald was assisted in his administration by Father Thomas M. Farrell. The parish was under

the care of Father Fitzgerald for three years, when he passed to his eternal reward and was succeeded by Father James L. Walsh in 1905.

Acting as assistants under Father Walsh were Father Thomas M. Farrell, Father William D. Noonan, Father Edward F. Dalton, and Father Charles P. McCarthy.

Father Walsh, after many years of labor in the parish was granted a leave of absence due to declining health, and in July, 1916 Father William E. Keefe was appointed pastor of St. Mary's. Named as assistant at this time was the Rev. George E. Keefe.

In 1923 Father George Keefe was made pastor of St. Vincent de Paul's Church, Cobleskill, and Father John Rausch was assigned to the duties of assistant in Hudson. After two years, Father John Dignan succeeded Father Rausch. A few months later a second assistant, Father Charles A. Gaffigan, was appointed to St. Mary's.

The church, erected in the time of Father Howard, having served the parish for seventy-five years, was becoming inadequate for the six hundred families listed as parishioners; Father Keefe, therefore, took upon himself the task of raising funds for the erection of a new church.

In October, 1927 Father Dignan was replaced by the Rev. Francis S. Hicks as assistant. Shortly after, Father Charles Gaffigan was transferred, and in October, 1928 he was succeeded by the Rev. John J. Forman.

The fitting culmination of years of strenuous effort and tireless zeal came to Father Keefe and the people of St. Mary's on May 25, 1930 when the new Church was formally dedicated. Before the eleven o'clock Mass on that Sunday the Most Reverend Edmund F. Gibbons performed the solemn rite of blessing and dedicating the Church. The dedication ceremony was followed by a Solemn High Mass Coram Episcopo. Father Keefe was the

celebrant of this first Mass in the new Church, Father Hicks, the deacon and Father Forman, the subdeacon. The music of the Mass was sung by the Sanctuary Choir, the Male Choir and the Girl's High School Choir under the direction of Miss Eva Sciotto.

In his sermon that day our Bishop expressed his joy and pleasure in being able to dedicate to the worship of God the magnificent structure which was "most certainly a glory to Him and a source of pride to the priests and people who had striven so long and well towards its erection." He tendered his sincerest congratulations to all on this their day of triumph, and hoped that, because of it, the fire of faith would burn brighter in their souls and that along with their pride in this material temple, would go the realization that they were spiritual temples of Christ of which their church was but a symbol. He urged the people to lead lives of honor that the purpose of their new church might be fulfilled and the blessing of God descend upon them.

Attending the Bishop at the services were the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Joseph Delaney and the Rt. Rev. Monsignor John F. Glavin. The Master of Ceremonies to the Bishop was the Rev. J. Norbert Kelly and the Master of Ceremonies to the ministers of the Mass was the Rev. Joseph A. Franklin.

Among the visiting clergy were the Rev. Vincent Gorski, Rev. M. K. Mearns, Rev. Michael J. Dwyer, Rev. Lawrence Kelly, S.J., Rev. Ambrose M. Dwyer, Rev. Anthony Gorski, Rev. Vincent D. Archambault, Rev. Edward Dalton, Rev. Matthew Sheridan, Rev. P. J. Barrett, Rev. Aloysius J. Hogan, Rev. Thomas Flanagan, Rev. John King, Rev. Dominick Ottaviano, Rev. Emmett O'Connor, Rev. John L. Smith, Rev. Peter Kania, Rev. Felix Mancini, Rev. John J. Finn, S.T.L., Rev. James Gilloon, Rev. Timothy P. Holland, Rev. John J. Hickey, Rev. E. Ercolani, Rev. Christopher King, Rev. J. F. McDonald, Rev. Daniel Horan, Rev. Peter J. Donnelly, and Rev. John J. Fox.

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In the evening of that first day in the new St. Mary's a Solemn High Vesper service was conducted. As at the morning service, Father Keefe was celebrant, Father Hicks, deacon, and Father Forman, subdeacon. The Rev. Thomas P. Phelan of Mamaronock delivered the sermon. The singing of the combined choirs was under the direction of Miss Sciutto who, before the ceremony began, gave a short organ recital. The girl students of St. Mary's Academy, dressed in white, formed a living Rosary. Their procession was one of the most impressive parts of the evening service. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament then took place and the final services of dedication of the new St. Mary's Church came to a close at the end of a day of such a depth of religious fervor as had not been known in the history of the parish.

For the next six years Father Keefe continued to have his assistants, Father Hicks and Father For-

man. In January, 1937 Father Forman was transferred to Albany and in his place came Father Richard D. Dinneen.

Just a little more than a decade after the dedication of the magnificent new Church in which we worship today, Father Keefe was summoned by his Maker on August 5, 1940.

The eighth resident pastor and present spiritual shepherd of St. Mary's, Father John A. McCarthy, took over his duties on September 13, 1940. When Father McCarthy came to Hudson, Father Hicks was transferred to Schenectady and Father Michael McGarrahan came to replace him. Father McGarrahan was succeeded by Father Andrew Lenahan who, in turn, was replaced by Father Edward Daly.

In June, 1946, Father Joseph T. Ryan followed Father Daly as assistant, and when Father Dinneen was transferred to Albany in December, 1947, Father Robert F. Hart took his place.

