

HISTORY

HISTORY

1980

A 20-year dream moved a step, closer to reality when Father Richard Vaughan, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, included this item in the Dec. 30, 1979, bulletin: "Beginning Sunday, Jan. 6. 1980, a Mass will be celebrated at St. Stephen's, United Methodist Church, 45th and Western, at 11:15 a.m. The purposes of this extra mass is to begin to gather a Catholic community in the West part of Amarillo, with the future intention of forming a new parish, when it is authorized by our new Bishop. Father Joseph Tash will be in charge. We will assume that those who attend this Mass plan to be a part of the new parish foundation when it is authorized. It is not intended to be merely a Mass of convenience."

So it was that a new community was formed on that first Sunday of 1980, when approximately 300 people gathered to celebrate Mass through the hospitality of the people of St. Stephen's. In a very short time, another Mass was added to accommodate an overflow crowd. Under the leadership of Father Tash, a spirit of enthusiasm and cooperation quickly caught on, and it became apparent that, through the grace of God, a new house of worship would, indeed, be built.

On July 3, 1980, on the feast day of our patron saint, St. Thomas the Apostle officially became a parish when priests of the city joined Bishop L.T. Matthiesen and our pastor in concelebrating a Mass dedicating our new parish.

It was a year for many beginnings" The Altar Guild quickly was formed to serve as the foundation for many of the activities that first year. Lack of facilities did not stop a catechetical program from getting started. Well over 200 students from preschool to high school age were taught in homes, private facilities, public school rooms and a neighboring church. Lectors, were recruited, Eucharistic Ministers assigned, Knights of the Altar organized, a Parish Council elected, and a building committee met.

In November, a fund drive to raise \$500,000 for the down payment of the new church was begun. During this first fall, the first choir members met in a chilly Knights of Columbus Hall to sing together. They made a joyful sound that first Christmas.

As the year came to a close, Father Tash announced that we were most grateful to the people of St. Stephen's Church, but it was time to move on to a bigger facility. We had grown from a parish of approximately 300 people to one nearly twice that size in just one year. On Jan. 4, 1981, the parish of St. Thomas moved to the auditorium of Amarillo High School.

1981

By the middle of 1981, we had done it. The parish had topped the fund drive goal and was ready to build a church! It was June 1, 1981, when ground breaking ceremonies for our parish were held with local and civic leaders attending along with the enthusiastic parishioners. Father Tash had asked each family to participate in the ceremony by bringing an envelope of "home soil" to be placed in the foundation of the new church. It was an ecumenical celebration with our neighbors from next door, the Coulter Road Baptist Church, offering their facility

for a meal which followed the ground breaking.

This was the year in which Father Bert Horvath was welcomed as associate pastor. Father Bert served the parish for a year, leaving St. Thomas for a pastoral care position in Paris, Texas. We also welcomed newly-ordained Deacon Terry Pevehouse to work in our parish. Among his responsibilities was the organization of the adult catechumenate program. at St. Thomas.

Again this year, we celebrated many firsts. A class of 15 made its First Communion, 11 were confirmed, the first class of graduating high school seniors were honored, CYO groups were formed and CCD classes were expanded. It was the year of our first parish picnic held to commemorate the feast of St. Thomas and to observe the first anniversary of the parish. As 1981 came to a close, we were able to see real progress being made on our church.

1982

Finally it happened! On May 7, 1982, we sang "How Lovely is Your Dwelling Place, O Lord of Hosts" as Bishop L.T. Matthiesen dedicated our new parish home. With joyful hearts, our founding pastor, Father Tash, and the members of the St. Thomas family rejoiced and gave thanks for a magnificent accomplishment. At last our church was built. It couldn't, however, be a time for complacency: there was still so much work ahead. It was time to hire a secretary and a janitor, get the CCD classrooms furnished, provide a nursery, develop visuals and music programs, landscape the ground and form committees. The work of the Lord had to be done.

During 1982, Deacon Pevehouse's first catechumenate class completed its course of study and received the sacraments. Luis Hargain, an Augustinian Seminarian, was hired as youth minister for the parish. A Liturgy Committee was formed. A newcomer welcoming committee became active and the St. Thomas Men's Club was organized. As a parish, we had started our own traditions in the very beginning and the list of these continued to grow. Smiles were always evident when Father Tash took his basket, sat down and accepted the very young children's offerings during Mass. Other traditions included the parish picnic and, as Christmas drew near, there was a visit from St. Nicholas and the first of our St. Thomas Tree Trimmings.

Each family was asked to participate in this event by bringing its own ornament, personalized if possible, to decorate the tree. Through the Grace of God and the leadership of Father Tash, 1982 had been a year of accomplishment for St. Thomas.

1983

This year was characterized by a steady growth of families registered in the parish. It was also the year we knew something had to be done to repair the roof and stop the leaks every time it rained. Phillip Lindley came to serve our parish as a deacon in early 1983. In October, Phillip was ordained a priest in a wonderful ceremony in our church. He then served us as Father Phil and remained with us until June of 1984. The CCD program in the fall was directed by Franciscan Sisters, Bernice and Geraldine. The

HISTORY

Altar Guild was busy with such projects as its annual Casserole Carousel and the Stefan Kramar painting drawing. The Men's Club sponsored a Mardi Gras dance. The CYO sent delegates to the youth conference in Washington, D.C. Vacation Bible School was organized and adult education classes were taught. The rectory was completed in the spring of 1983 and the parish was given the opportunity to view it before Father Tash moved in. By the end of the year, St. Thomas took on a much more "settled in" look.

1984

By 1984, St. Thomas had grown to well over 600 families-an astonishing figure in only four years. In January, the St. Thomas News Group was formed and the first St. Thomas Newsletter was published in an effort to keep the parish community better informed. The group also began submitting newsworthy items to the West Texas Catholic and the local press. Stations of the Cross, painted by artist Stefan Kramar were completed. A telephone system to serve the parish complex was installed. A computer was donated, enabling the parish financial records to be computerized. Seventy-six additional parking spaces were added to the present lot and one-way traffic signs were installed to alleviate traffic woes.

Emil Rosolen, who had served his diocesan pastoral internship with us, left in July to attend school for two years at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio. We bade farewell to Father Phillip Lindley in July as he left to become parochial vicar of San Jose parish in Hereford. We also welcomed newly-ordained Father Michael Wood as our parochial vicar. Father Wood was with us until December when he was transferred to Stratford.

1985

Early in 1985, the Parish Council approved two paid staff positions with Shirley Greener, director of music and visuals, and Laura Taylor, director of youth ministry. The Men's Club became an integral part of our parish life as it spearheaded the first annual blood drive and made plans to establish a scholarship fund for deserving young people of the parish. Twenty two adults made up the fifth and largest catechumen class in our five-year old parish; twenty-one young people were confirmed and a class of forty-six received their first Communion.

As St. Thomas continued to show growth with well over 700 families registered, a long-range planning committee was established to study the needs of the parish in the next three to five years. The first parish directory was published this year; the reconciliation room was given a face-lift to have it better conform to liturgical guidelines; and the Senior CYO sponsored a successful "Night at the Sheraton" fund-raiser.

Gerald Diller was elected President of the Parish Council and in August, Emil Rosolen, sponsored for the seminary by the Amarillo diocese, was called to the order of Transitional Diaconate in ceremonies at St. Thomas. Rosolen then returned to the Josephinum Pontifical College in Columbus, Ohio, to serve his diaconate.

In October, Dr. Freddie Marasigan volunteered to

serve as youth director upon the resignation of Laura Taylor. The parish newsletter was named "Thomasing" in November after two years of being known only as the Newsletter. Work on the commemorative booklet on the Stations of the Cross was completed by artist Stefan Kramar and his wife, Mary, and Father Tash. A limited number of books will be published in 1986.

1986

It was announced early in the year that donations made possible the purchase of handbells for the music department and plans were subsequently made by music minister Shirley Greener and Jim Gardner, organist, to set up a training program for those interested in this phase of the music program. The Aquinas Club, a discussion group for young adults, was formed this year with Dr. Freddie Marasigan as director. The Altar Guild formed four circles in an effort to increase involvement of more parish women. These circles include St. Ann, St. Monica, St. Angela Merci and St. Francis. The Men's Club continued to be an important part of parish life and again sponsored a Mardi Gras Dance, Golf Tournament and Las Vegas Night. This year's Golf Tournament was highlighted with the awarding of \$500 scholarships to Laura Weick and Estelle Lopez.

Deacon Terry was named co-coordinator of the Diocesan Permanent Deacon program; Eveline Rivers of our parish was the recipient of the 7 Who Care Award for her work in providing Christmas gifts and clothing to needy Amarillo children; Evelyn King completed work in the Diocesan Integrated Ministries program; 29 were confirmed this year; 30 children received their First Communion and a class of 20 catechumens completed the RCIA program. In June, Father Emil Rosolen was welcomed as associate pastor after his ordination May 31, in his Garfield, New Jersey, home parish. Deacon Louis Hanemann and his family came to us from Louisiana during the summer and brought our clergy staff to four. Sister Bernice Noggler announced in September that approximately 450 students had registered for the fall Religious Education program.

The beautiful "Way of the Cross" books which Father Tash and Stefan Kramar co-produced were made available this summer. Rachel Miles was added to the staff as fulltime youth director and Bob Keller began his studies in the permanent diaconate. Jane Roberts turned over the responsibilities of editing the "Thomasing" to Olivia Mayer. Parish council elections were held in December with Mary Ruth Albracht, Ed Dietrich and Gary Van Bakel elected to a three-year term. Outgoing members were Gerald Diller, Mary Kearny and Jane Roberts. As the year of 1986 came to a close, we as a parish could once again count many blessings and celebrate when it was announced by Bishop Matthiesen that Father Tash had been named a prelate of honor by Pope John Paul II and in the future would be called Monsignor Joseph Tash.

1987

In early 1987, the side alcoves for the statues of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph were remodeled making a definite improvement to the interior of our

HISTORY

Church. Parishioners Michele Diller and Anthony Saikowski worked out the idea - she by committing a design to paper and he by executing the design.

The youth continued to play an important role in the life of our parish under the guidance of Rachel Miles who served as our youth director until July when she and her family moved to Houston. The reins of leadership were then taken over by Barbara Earthman. One of the special achievements of the youth this year was the design, production and sales of a special St. Thomas T-shirt. Michael Hoffman served as president of the youth.

Altar Guild members were busy with the sales of the St. Thomas "No Doubt About It" cookbook and were pleased once again with the proceeds from the raffle of another Stefan Kramer painting entitled "Quiet Winter." Tanya Cataldi was president of the Guild.

The celebration of Monsignor Tash's 25th year as a priest made May a particularly special month for clergy, friends and parishioners who came to wish him well.

Richard McDonald served as president of the Parish Council. Jerry Harpole was president of the Men's Club which again awarded scholarships to deserving graduates Michael Hoffman and Michele Stevens.

Four of our St. Thomas singers joined a 500 voice choir to sing at the papal Mass of Pope John Paul II in San Antonio. They included Shirley Greener, Stewart Bryant, Candi Wilcox and Cris Parra.

Bob and Raquel Lopez and Pat and Mary Pollard were honored as "Families of the Month" in a program began by the Knights of Columbus Council 4621.

We said good-bye to Deacon Louis Hanemann and his family who made many worthwhile contributions to our parish life during their year's stay here. The family moved to North Carolina.

Nearly 500 students were enrolled in the religious education program, according to coordinator Sister Bernice. Deacon Terry and Don Anthony continued their involvement in the catechumen preparation classes.

"THOMASING", the parish newsletter, was again taken over by Jane Roberts when Olivia Mayer took a job in Florida. It was announced that our parish history has been entered into the archives of the library at Notre Dame as part of an American Parish history collection.

As we came closer to the end of another year, many parishioners participated in the diocesan - coordinated RENEW program - a 2 1/2 year program meant to further our spiritual growth. Bob and Mary Jane Sloan, along with Monsignor Tash and Father Emil, headed this new program for our parish.

1988

We continue to enjoy God's Blessings! As president of the Parish Council, Bob Williams cited a few of these blessings: the leadership of the clergy, music ministry, service organizations, the youth program, the finance council, the religious education program. All of these have contributed to a very involved parish. New members serving on the Parish Council

this year were Joan Graham, Dee Ramirez, and Dean Melton

During the year, the Knight of Columbus honored the Phil and Paul Kyburz family and the Paul and Jenny Harpole family with "Family of the Month" awards. Servers of the month recognition went to Aaron Lancour, Chris Schrock, Michael Frieri, Joe Garza, and James Gabel.

The diocesan-wide RENEW program continued with the second and third semesters giving parishioners opportunity to reflect on their spiritual lives and the opportunities they have to become more receptive to God's will.

The St. Angela Merci Circle of the Altar Guild hosted several "Come as a Guest, Leave as a Friend" coffees to welcome parish newcomers. Laurie Bollig chaired the Altar Guild and Leon Kramer served as Men's Club President. Winners of the Men's Club scholarship awards this year were Paul Berg, Debbie Herskovitz, and Steven Keller.

We said good-bye in May to Father Emil who served our parish for nearly two years. Following several weeks of study at the University of San Francisco, he was assigned to the parish in Umbarger. We welcomed Father Allen Bruening from Ohio. He came to Amarillo to serve as Chaplain to three of the hospitals and became priest in residence at St. Thomas.

We continued to welcome adult catechumens and candidates to our faith and were saddened at the death in September of Don Anthony who touched many lives through his involvement with this program.

Gloria Luedecke completed the two-year course of study in the Integrated Ministries Program and continues her work with the DeFalco Retreat Center. Robert Busch was named youth minister in June when Barbara Earthman resigned to spend more time with her family.

In July, the parish celebrated with Robert Keller and his family when he was ordained to the permanent diaconate after four years of study. Eight of our youngsters attended a Summer Music Camp with music director Shirley Greener and children's choir director Cindy Hoffman 111 children participated in the Vacation Bible School of Religion and the annual parish picnic was held in August.

Several new organizations were formed this year - the over-50 crowd organized the Fabulous Fifties Club; a Mini CYO was formed to provide fellowship activities for the 4th, 5th and 6th graders; and the Bridge Club continued to meet. Proceeds from their yearly dues have purchased card tables for parish use.

As 1988 comes to a conclusion, we at St. Thomas know we have been richly blessed and we are grateful.

1989

The diocesan-wide RENEW program concluded after five semesters of study and became a challenge to those participating to share the Good News by continuing to build a warm and caring community at St. Thomas.

The Parish Council elected three new members:

HISTORY

Alan Hagemeyer, Wayne Stoerner and Dean Roper with Gary Van Bakel serving as President. The Altar Guild and Men's Club were headed by husband and wife team, Dean and Carmen Roper. Activities of both organizations were varied and included a 50's dance, the Men's Club Golf tournament, a fund raiser to benefit the Eveline Rivers project, as well as the raffling of the Stefan Kramar painting "In the Garden." Other organizations keeping both the young and older crowds busy were the youth groups and the Phoenix Club for those over 50.

Early in 1989, parishioners bade farewell to Deacon Bob Keller and his family who moved to Louisiana and welcomed Phyllis Gallatin who was named parish coordinator of Religious Education for pre-school through grade 5.

The Knights of Columbus recognized two of our families with Family of the Month awards: Bob and Mary Jane Sloan and Dean and Carmen Roper. Server of the Month award went to Ryan Gauna.

1990

In June of this year, St. Thomas parishioners gathered to celebrate the tenth anniversary of our parish. The celebration was highlighted with a mortgage burning ceremony in which our pastor of ten years, Monsignor Tash, burned the mortgage, marking the retirement of our 15 year indebtedness 7 years ahead of schedule.

Prior to the June celebration, a Faith in Our Future building campaign was launched with a pledge drive to fund a \$1,400,000 expansion program. The proposed facilities would include 17 classrooms and a formal parish hall as well as a basement and second floor for future use but not to be completed at this time.

Serving as parish board President this year was Dean Roper. Newly-elected members were Barbara Earthman, Paul Harpole and Charlie Sellers. Jamie Cornelius headed the Altar Guild and Rick Kaufmann was Men's Club President.

Men's Club scholarships this year were awarded to Aaron Lancour and David Wheir. Phyllis Gallatin was named director of the parish school of religion and Michael Wheir was named youth director to succeed Robert Busch who left to pursue a teaching career.

At the end of our tenth year, our parish numbered 760 families. Although we have lost a number of our early-day families, we continue to welcome new ones.

1991

As we as a parish entered our eleventh year, we as a nation were involved in a war in the Persian Gulf and were reminded that prayer continues to be the greatest deterrent to war.

New members elected to the parish board this year were Bob Cornelius, Robert Weick, and Lois Litsch. Outgoing members were Myrtle White and Dee Ramirez.

Father Al Breuning, priest-in-residence at St. Thomas since 1988, celebrated his 40th anniversary as a priest in April.

In May, ground breaking ceremonies were held for a 27,900 square foot catechetical center and parish social hall.

The Men's Club awarded scholarships to four of our parish's high school seniors: Sean Callahan, Brian Earthman, Tisha Brandt and Michael Herskovitz. Amy Reid was named youth director, succeeding Michael Wheir who moved to New York.

Other events in the parish included the celebration of Father Stan Sloan's first Mass. Father Stan is the son of Bob and Mary Jane Sloan of our parish. The 65th anniversary of the diocese of Amarillo, the 450th anniversary of the Catholic presence in Palo Duro Canyon, the 100th year of St. Mary's Parish in Clarendon, the 90th anniversary of St. Anthony's Hospital and the 10th anniversary of the Capuchin Nuns of Amarillo was celebrated in our church in August. Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Augustine Cacciavillan of Washington. D.C. was the honored special guest.

Stefan Kramar was presented with a plaque honoring him for his generosity in presenting the Altar guild with one of his paintings for the past years. These paintings have been the source of the Guild's fund- raising activities throughout the past ten years.

1992

In April of 1992, parishioners gathered to celebrate the completion of the 27,900 foot expansion of our parish facility. The 18 new classrooms accommodate the approximately 525 religious education students as well as opened up space in the existing facility for offices, a music room and adult education. Parishioners were particularly pleased to view the new parish hall, decorated in pleasing tones and designed for maximum access to the kitchen. It will accommodate 200 people.

Parishioners elected to serve a three-year term on the Parish Council were: Pat Pollard, Sandy Riney, Dianne Gorrie and Mark White.

Monsignor Tash completed and donated a beautiful piece of needlepoint to the Altar Guild. It was raffled and won by Myrtle White. Scholarships were awarded by the Men's Club to three seniors: Zak Sarrano, Eileen Pollard and Eva Blazejewski.

Monsignor Tash celebrated 30 years in the priesthood this year and wondered where the years had gone. Religious education, under the direction of Phyllis Gallatin, continued to be a vital part of parish life.

The rank of Eagle Scout was earned by two of our youth this year: Jason Mock and Ken Riney.

1993

On January 10, Father Robert Busch celebrated his first Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Thomas after being ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Leroy Matthiesen. Father Robert returned to New York City to resume studies toward his doctorate at Fordham University.

Jim Gardner was named music director succeeding Shirley Greener who resigned to pursue other interests. Shirley, who directed the choir from

HISTORY

its infancy when a small core of singers met in a sometimes cold Knights of Columbus Hall with a somewhat tired piano, has made an outstanding contribution to the liturgical life of our parish.

A "Building Our Future* campaign reached 98% of its \$200,000 goal by February. The drive is a part of the diocesan endowment campaign which will fund emergency situations in the diocese. 70% of the amount raised remains in the parish and the balance goes to the diocese.

Tim Reid and Blaine Westlake of our parish began the diocesan 4-year permanent diaconate program. New members serving the Parish Council this year were Gary Hans, Eileen Harpole and Kent Gardner. The parish's Couples Club was reorganized and plans were made to meet on a monthly basis.

The parish youth program sponsored an AIDS awareness program with members of the medical community serving as panelists and in August several parish youths attended World Youth Day in Denver to hear the Pope speak. Chris Schrock was the winner of the \$1500 scholarship awarded by the Men's Club. Vacation Bible School was termed a very successful event by Peggy Eitzen, parish coordinator.

In November, a parish mission was led by Vince Ambrosetti. Thanksgiving took on a special meaning this year when St. Thomas parishioners met for a worship service with the congregation of our neighboring Coulter Road Baptist Church - a first-ever celebration in the city. At the end of the month, Monsignor Tash announced his resignation from St. Anthony's Hospital after 25 years of service in many different capacities. Parishioners of St. Thomas gladly welcomed him as our "full-time pastor."

1994

As we entered another year, it was evident that the needs of our ever-growing parish had become even greater due to the expansion from 75 families in 1980 to over 900 at the end of 1993 - many of these were families with very young children.

The pattern of parish life was seen in the continued preparation and reception of the sacraments by both children and adults. Thirty-two third graders received the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time: 32 fourth graders were confirmed: 49 second graders received Communion and Confirmation and 61 youths, representing grades 6 through 12, were confirmed. Nineteen adults were welcomed into our faith community during the Easter Vigil after completing the RCIA program.

Elected to serve on the 10-member parish council were Connie Burton, Frank Snider, Julie Pierce and Andy Thorne; the Men's Club awarded scholarships to Christy Pinkham and Deanna Pollard at the club's annual golf tournament; a successful Bible Camp was held in the summer, directed by Julie Pierce and Martha Bufford along with St. Mary's volunteers; a 7:45 Mass was added to the Sunday morning liturgies and Father Busch was welcomed as priest-in-residence who gave Monsignor Tash a helping hand with daily and Sunday liturgies.

The parish newsletter "THOMASING" marked its tenth anniversary in January and editor Jane Roberts

thanked the core staff - Ruthie Boeckman, Eileen Harpole and Kathy Stoerner - for their support. Jane later decided to retire and Maureen Woltermann stepped in to continue the work.

Phyllis Gallatin announced her retirement as director of religious education for pre-school through grade five. After 44 years of work in Catholic education - 5 years of which she spent in our parish - Phyllis decided to see what else life had to offer her. Bernice Nogler was welcomed as the new director.

In April, Monsignor Tash led a group of 18 on a 10-day journey to the Holy Land with a short stop in Rome. Early in the year, it was announced by music director Jim Gardner that the St. Thomas choir had been invited to sing at the Vatican. To this end, choir members became very busy with a variety of fund-raising activities. Due to the generosity of the parish and the hard work of the choir, the dream became a reality on December 27 when 30 singers from the parish, along with 15 choir members from other churches and an additional 35 family members as well as Monsignor Tash and Father Joe Bixenman journeyed to Italy for never-to-be-forgotten experiences. These experiences included the celebration of Mass at several churches, a concert for over 2000 Italians and the Pope's Mass celebrated at St. Peter's on New Year's Day. The choir hopes to return in the year 2000.

LIFE Teen, an innovative and dynamic youth program, was introduced in September. This historic approach to youth programs answers four important needs in a youth's life: spirituality, emotional support, social activities and religious education. Instead of the traditional classroom, the students will participate in large group learning "experiences" through music, dramas, rap sessions and special speakers. Programming for TEEN life is created entirely by the CORE leadership which enlists young adult workers to volunteer in leadership roles. Earlier in the year, the basement of the church was renovated in an "effort to provide adequate space for the many activities," according to youth director Amy Reid.

1995

Our parish celebrated its fifteenth year in July with Monsignor Tash joining a number of the founding families in reminiscing about the early day challenges faced by a small force of dedicated families and joined present day parishioners in gratitude for the many blessings bestowed on us.

The needs of our youth continued to be a priority, and with that in mind, the Parish Council decided to complete the church basement and furnish it to meet the recreational needs of the young people. Moneys for this project came from the "Building Our Future" campaign begun in 1993 as part of a diocesan endowment program.

Ongoing activities continued with election of new Parish Council members including Ike Barnes, Anthony Ledwig, Marty Schrock and Carolyn Ringo. The Men's Club awarded scholarships to Jim Riney, Kim Roper and Jonathan Bowmer; the Altar Guild continued its important role in parish life; a number of youth enjoyed a camping experience at Pagosa

HISTORY

Springs, Colorado, three young Cub Scouts received the Parvuli Del Award. They were Reed Cornelius, Chad Stoerner and Blake Van Bakel.

In September, Amy Reid resigned her position as Youth Director so that she could devote her time to her young family. Jamie Cornelius took over the –“Thomasing” newsletter duties upon the resignation of Maureen Woltermann.

1996

As we began another year. Bernice Noggler, parish religious education director, expressed her gratitude to the forty-seven dedicated adults who faithfully prepare and teach religious education classes each Sunday. She expressed appreciation, too, to those volunteers who make the enrichment opportunities available to our children including the Bell Choir, the Mini-Youth Group, and the young peoples' orchestra. All of these activities contribute to the growth of our Catholic Christian community, according to Bernice.

New members elected to serve on the Parish Board were Dennis Beebe, Patty Smith and Joe Dugle. Officers include Anthony Ledwig, president, Andy Thorne, vice president and Marty Schrock, secretary. Jason Burton, son of Dwayne and Connie Burton, received the Eagle Scout award. The Men's Club awarded scholarships to five young people including Michelle Smithson, Amy Pinkham, Jenny Belcher, Carey Britten and Jaime Gloe. Fifty-five second graders received the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation in May; forty-two fourth graders received the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time and twenty-two were welcomed into our faith community during the Easter Vigil Liturgy. Deacon Terry Pevehouse was honored with a reception to mark his 15th anniversary with the parish. Two new deacons, Blaine Westlake and Tim Reid, were ordained to the Permanent Diaconate during ceremonies June 1.

Monsignor Tash announced that the adult education program would be enhanced this year with the addition of two Wednesday night classes and a class to be taught on Sunday mornings along with the one taught by him. Teachers will include Deacon Tim Reid, Deacon Terry and Rita Pevehouse. Deacon Blaine and Louise Westlake.

1997

On March 17 of this year, Bishop John W. Yanta was installed as the seventh Bishop of the diocese of Amarillo in ceremonies at our parish. He succeeds Bishop Leroy R. Matthiesen who retired after many years of service.

Altar Guild officers for the year included Lily Fong, president; Ceila Welsch, vice-president; Pat Chandler, secretary; Jane Roberts, treasurer. Serving the Men's Club were Greg Bednarz, president; Bill Pevehouse, vice-president Mark Britten, secretary; and Mike Knight, treasurer.

Our parish continued to be supportive of the WTSU/AM Catholic Student Center and was thanked by Father Robert Busch for the \$3371.65 collected in the most recent drive.

Monsignor Tash celebrated his 35th anniversary

in the priesthood and was honored with a reception hosted by the Altar Guild.

Adult Education classes continued to be offered on a variety of subjects taught on Sunday mornings by Monsignor and Deacons Reid, Pevehouse, and Westlake.

Monsignor announced that the kneeler needlepoint project was complete. It took 7 years to complete the 200 kneelers, with 97 women and 5 men involved with the work. All but 11 of the needlepointers were St. Thomas parishioners and over 15 million stitches were made. Special thanks went to Mary Kramer who chaired the project.

A statement from the Parish Council unanimously endorsed the work being done by the youth minister, Michael Lenz, with his S.T.A.Y. program.

John Mihm won the most recent needlepoint piece, “Santa and Sleigh” which Monsignor completed and gave to the Altar Guild for its fall fund raiser.

The year of 1997 was concluded on a musical note with Jim Gardner, parish music director, presenting a recital to dedicate the new pipe organ installed during the fall after many months of planning and fund-raising.

1998

As we began another year, our parish roster showed 1040 families registered - a remarkable growth in 18 years.

Early in January, the parish was host to Paul Rymniak of Florida who led a healing service addressing mental, emotional, spiritual and physical needs.

Letters of gratitude were received throughout the year from parishes in the diocese which receive monetary contributions from St. Thomas. These parishes included Holy Angels, Childress; Sacred Heart, Memphis; and St. Paul's, Kress.

Monsignor's famous “Padre's Salsa” was mixed by the tub-full and sold by the jar-full to benefit the WTA&MU Catholic Student Center. In April, Monsignor led a group of parishioners and their friends on a trip to Italy where they were touched by the Wonders of the Vatican and the highlights of a number of Italian cities.

The Catholic Daughters of America established a Juniorette program in our parish for girls ages 6-10 and a junior program for girls ages 11-18. A “knit and hook” group was organized for ladies in the parish to make hats to benefit needy children helped through the Eveline Rivers project.

Once again, Monsignor announced the “two-buck special” - an effective way to boost the Sunday offering by \$2 per family thereby making it possible to meet the current budget.

Bernice Noggler, director of education, continued to explain the Gospel to the children in K through 5th grade during the Sunday Masses. It has become an effective way to make the message meaningful for the little ones. In the fall, the Community Scripture Study resumed with the year's study entitled “At Home With the Word” based on weekly liturgical scripture readings. The Altar Guild sponsored a Day of Spiritual Growth for all ladies of the parish with

HISTORY

Phyllis Gallatin leading the retreat.

Jim Schooler was the lucky recipient of the most recent needlepoint piece completed by Monsignor Tash and once again donated to the Altar Guild.

New members elected to the Parish Board were Mary Lisa Thorne, Dr. Steve Astuto and Walt Kelley.

St. Thomas participated in the sixth annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. This service was first held at St. Thomas with our neighbor, Coulter Road Baptist Church. It grew in ecumenical spirit and this year included a number of other churches of the city.

It was announced in December that Father Robert Busch was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Fordham University in New York. Father Robert has been in residence at St. Thomas since his ordination six years ago.

1999

A number of parish staff changes were made in 1998. After being in residence at St. Thomas for six years, Father Robert Busch was assigned to St. Mary's parish in Umbarger and continued with his work as director of the Student Center at West Texas A&M at Canyon. In April Sally Braschler of our parish was named Youth Director replacing Michael Lenz who left to take a position with the Boy Scouts. Bernice Noggler resigned her position as Director of Religious Education in order to accept a position as Director of Religious Education for the diocese. Her parish position was filled by Eileen Dolan of Tulsa. Eileen took over the religious education position and also became director of social concerns.

Parish organizations continued their work with the Men's Club awarding six college scholarships following their annual golf tournament in May. The Men's Club complete work to enclose a trailer to transport equipment for casino parties throughout the community - one of the fund raisers for the men.

Under the direction of Eileen Dolan, the parish social concerns committee was organized in an effort to engage the parish in active outreach within the parish and community. One of the first projects was a Blood Drive held in November.

The Altar Guild continued its work which this year included a women's retreat directed by Phyllis Gallatin; a Mother-Daughter Banquet and the fundraising event for the past several years a raffle of one of Monsignor Tash's fine pieces of needlework. It was won by Mary Zinser.

Other parish-wide events included participation in Project Solidarity, a diocesan-sponsored program to aid the people of Honduras who suffered damage in a hurricane; sponsorship of a mission with the Good News Ministry; and giving support to the Junior Catholic Daughters organization in its effort to form a unit for girls ages 9-17. In December Bonnie Dugie, Charles Rivas and Carmen Roper were elected to the 10-member parish council.

2000

The Jubilee Year of 2000 was marked by several milestones. In March, parishioners gathered to wish our pastor, Monsignor Tash, a happy 65th birthday

and in July, the parish observed its 20th anniversary with a dinner and special recognition of the founding families.

The work of the Social Concerns Committee under the direction of Eileen Dolan began to make an impact on the parish. The blood drives continued on a regular basis; poverty meals were begun during Lent; and "coping with grief" sessions were offered for those who experienced the loss of loved ones. Other work of the committee included engaging Bud Welch to speak of his loss in the Oklahoma City bombing and his opposition to the death penalty. A "Remembering Church" program was begun as an active outreach to Catholics who are inactive, alienated or separated from the community of faith and desire peace and reconciliation. In addition, the committee continued to have outreach Sundays to give parishioners opportunity to contribute staples for organizations in need and also provided gifts for organizations at special times during the year.

Lupe Mayorga began serving a one-year internship at St. Thomas before returning to Houston to complete his work toward his Master's Degree in Theology and his ordination to the priesthood.

The Altar Guild made a study among its members to determine the need for its reorganization. The result was the disbanding of the circles and the return to general membership meetings offering both night and morning meeting times. The needlepoint completed by Monsignor Tash for the guild's fundraiser was named "Enchanted Santa" and was won by Charity Tallman.

The Men's Club awarded scholarships to Chuck Ledwig, Mo Harpole, Kristen Cornelius, Chris Barnes, Paul Green, Kerry Sullivan, Jessica Puchulski and Kendra Bednarz.

Other parish activities included meetings on Wednesdays mornings of the Community Catholic Scripture Study; publishing a new pictorial directory; witnessing the Confirmation of 64 young people; and celebrating the success of eight parish Boy Scouts who earned the Catholic religious emblem.

New members elected to serve on the Parish Council were Amy Reid, Margaret Drummond, Robert Danbold and Bob Schrock.

2001-2002

In reviewing the events of the past two years, we again became aware of the many blessings our parish has received and among those gifts is Monsignor Tash who celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood in May, 2002. Due to the efforts of Monsignor and Deacons Pevehouse, Reid and Westlake as well as the support of the parish staff and dedicated lay people, the programs that have been put in place continue to expand as our needs grow and change.

On a diocesan level, the Amarillo Diocese celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2001 and printed a 200-page commemorative book entitled "The Journey of the Diocese of Amarillo-75 years on the Llano Estacado, 1926-2001." During the summer of 2002, a number of people from our parish joined others from the diocese who attended an exhibition of Vatican frescoes at

HISTORY

Texas Tech University at Lubbock. Other diocesan activities included our continued participation in Project Solidarity, the Panhandle Partnership with Honduras, with several of our parishioners joining in the effort to work in building needed facilities and providing medical care for the poor in the part of our world. The ACTS Retreats held six times each year at the DeFlaco, Retreat Center were a source of blessings for men and women from our parish and throughout the diocese. St. Thomas continued to give financial assistance to struggling parishes including St. John's, Hart; St. Paul the Apostle, Kress; Christ the King, Sunray; Sacred Heart, Memphis; St. Mary's, Clarendon, St. Paul's, Tulia; St. Patrick's, Shamrock; Our Mother of Mercy, Wellington; and also The Catholic student Center at WT/AMU and the Prison Ministry.

The parish's Social Concerns Committee continued to play a vital role in the life of the parish. Among the ongoing projects were regular blood drives that earned St. Thomas recognition as the "church of the year" for its participation in the Coffee Memorial Blood Center drives in the community. Other activities were the Outreach Weekends held each month in an effort to collect food staples and basic care items for the needy, the Lenten Poverty Meals on Fridays with speakers from various social service agencies, the Easter Baskets project for children and the elderly, and the Christmas Tree project which provided gifts for those in need. A highlight for this committee was the sponsorship in January, 2002, of an appearance by Sr. Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, and nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for her stand against capital punishment.

Eileen Dolan, Religious Education Director, introduced the parish to a new activity named the Lent Event on Palm Sunday, 2001, when life in the land where Jesus lived was reenacted. With participation by men, women and children of many talents, the sets were designed and built for a market place to be set up in the gym and for the skits to be performed at various sites throughout the church. Eileen was very pleased with the support, enthusiasm and commitment of the participants in this parish-wide program.

Our parish continued to be supportive of the WTSU/AM Catholic Student Center and was thanked by Father Robert Busch for the \$3371.65 collected in the most recent drive.

In an effort to provide activities for the youth of our parish, the "Venturing Crew 4100" program was developed in July, 2001. This unique coed program utilizes extreme outdoor adventure as a fun method for building character, learning independence and developing leadership skills for youths 14 through 20.

Vital to the life of the parish were the ongoing education programs provided for the education of our children and the S.T.A.Y. youth program with opportunities for participation in social and service events as well as learn more about their faith. Adults were offered a variety of classes throughout the week including the R.C.I.A. program for those interested in learning about Catholicism.

The Men's Club and the Altar Guild played important roles in parish life as did the Monicas, a support group for widows of the parish, and the Catholic Daughters of America. The Music Department continued to enhance the liturgy with adult and children's choirs. Elected to serve on the Parish Council in 2001 were Blaine Roberts, Della Venhaus and James Veitenheimer. In 2002, Madonna Hogue, Jamie Cornelius and Dwayne Herring were elected.

At the close of 2002, the parish showed continued growth with 1235 registered families.

2003 – 2005

With Monsignor Tash as its devoted pastor, the parish of St. Thomas continues to build a faith community on the firm foundation established in the very beginning. In March 2005, the first of two milestones was reached. Monsignor celebrated his 70th birthday with no evidence that he is slowing down and, in July, the parish celebrated its 25th anniversary with special recognition of its founding families. Of those original 288 families, 81 remain a part of our parish today.

Due to the generosity of parishioners, we continue to meet parish needs on many levels. Among those were the maintenance of our facility with new solid oak pews, new carpet, paint, and a newly remodeled kitchen. In 2003, the Parish Council faced the problem of creating more classroom space for the growing number of children enrolled in the religious education program. After considering a number of plans that involved moving class times, it was decided that the larger classrooms could be divided into two to create the needed space. Additional artwork is being enjoyed through the generosity of parishioners. This artwork includes a new Risen Christ, a gift of Deacon Tim and Amy Reid; an oil painting of St. Thomas, a gift to Monsignor; and a new portrait of Monsignor Tash by artist Jack Sorenson.

In July 2004, St. Thomas joined parishes throughout the world in its response to Pope John Paul's request that all parishes establish a Perpetual Adoration Program. After months of planning under the direction of Helen Sage, the program was begun and is a source of great blessings for those who participate.

The Social Concerns Committee continues to spearhead parish activities. The first annual Health Fair was held in September 2003, giving parishioners the opportunity to take advantage of the services of various agencies which offer health screening and education. Blood drives continue and Committee volunteers worked together on such projects as Operation Aware, which provides Thanksgiving dinner for AIDS patients and their families. In addition, assistance is provided through Catholic Family Service as well as meeting the needs of clients at the Department of Protective Services. The Committee also assists in various projects with agencies throughout the community. In 2005, Journey of Hope speakers were sponsored. These speakers related their experiences in the loss of loved ones to murder and told their stories of forgiveness and reconciliation

HISTORY

and their call for alternative punishment to the death penalty – a message of non-violent forgiveness.

In October 2005, one of our young parishioners, Michael Ripperger, announced that he had joined with the Social Concerns Committee and XCEL to build a Habitat for Humanity house as his very ambitious Eagle Scout project. The parish gave overwhelming monetary support with a total of \$18,330 in contributions through sponsorship of a square at \$35.00 or general donations. Also, a number of parishioners owning businesses contributed materials and/or labor to reduce the cost of building the house. Volunteers will begin the construction of the home in March 2006.

Parish organizations remain the heartbeat of parish life and continue to search ways to be meaningful for women, men and youth. The Altar Guild continues to be the grateful recipient of Monsignor Tash's artistic needlepoint efforts. Each year he presents the Guild with a spectacular picture that is raffled as the primary fundraiser for the Guild. During the past three years, the lucky winners have all been parishioners. They include Madeline Coury, Magdalena McMordie and Paul Sowa.

The Men's Club long-standing tradition has been its spring Golf Tournament that offers competition and fun for the participants and monetary support for the recipients of scholarships for deserving seniors headed for college.

In July of 2004, Johnathan Sumpter was hired as Youth Director, replacing Sally Braschler who held this position for several years. Johnathan leads the F.A.S.T. and S.T.A.Y. programs in weekly activities, emphasizing the importance of service work. Among the projects are mission trips to needy countries.

Other organizations include Catholic Daughters, Common Grounds for men and women ages 25 to 35, the Monicas for widowed parishioners and the St. Thomas Bridge Club. The Serra Club, a national organization whose main focus is the fostering of vacations through the "Call By Name" program, is very alive in our parish and seeks prayer support from all parishioners. This prayer program asks families to pray for vocations before the crucifix on a weekly basis. The crucifix is passed from family to family with a special blessing.

Religious Education, under the direction of Eileen Dolan, continues to serve the children of our parish with Children's Church and religious formation for children and youth from kindergarten through grade twelve. In addition, the catechumenate process for adults and children (RCIA/RCIC) is available to those who wish to learn more about the Catholic faith. The second Lent Event was held on Palm Sunday, 2003.

Jim Gardner remains at the helm of the music program along with his assistant music director, Nicole Koetting, who conducts a summer music camp for children from kindergarten through sixth grade and directs a choir for children from kindergarten through first grade. In January 2004, a number of St. Thomas Choir members joined the Diocesan Choir on a trip to Italy to perform at various churches there.

The Parish Council continues its administrative work with the services of new parishioners elected each year. In 2003, new members elected were Kristi Britten, Dan Henke, Dr. Mary Ann Piskin and Dr. Kirk Coury. In 2004 they included Lonnie Miller, Pat Chandler and Jay Ricci.

The parish staff underwent several changes during this time period. Already mentioned were Johnathan Sumpter and Nicole Koetting. In 2005, the parish sadly said good-bye to Tim Reid, who had served as deacon for a number of years. He and his family moved to West Virginia. In July of 2005, we were fortunate to have Jim Brown assigned as deacon to join Blaine Westlake and Terry Pevehouse. Now serving in part-time capacities are Teresa Maas, secretary to Education and Youth, and Virginia Christian, bookkeeper. They serve along with Ruthie Boeckman, parish administrator, Judith Tucker, music secretary, and Julie Pierce, liturgical environmentalist.

Other activities begun include the blessing Monsignor Tash offers to all 16-year olds who have received their driver's licenses; a quarterly luncheon for newcomers in the parish and a dinner for couples in the parish that have reached their 50th wedding anniversary. St. Thomas continues to prayerfully support the parishioners who participate in the ACTS retreats; give to the Eveline Rivers project; helps the Capuchin Sisters through food sales; and regularly gives support to a number of diocesan parishes and community projects. Outreach Weekends support Project Solidarity with mission work in Honduras and included a \$10,000 gift for a variety of causes.

The THOMASING newsletter, begun in 1983, continues to provide an overall view, of parish activities throughout the year. In 2004, Cindy Laursen and Ruthanne Davidson took over this project when Jamie Cornelius moved. In 2006, Terry White will take over the parish history, which Jane Roberts has written since the beginning of the parish.

As we enter a new year, our parish census numbers 1300 families.

2006

We had a dinner to celebrate the retirement of long time church secretary Ruthie Brockman. Dana Nicklaus was elected president of the Parish Council.

2007

Msgr. Joseph Tash celebrated his 45th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a parish wide dinner at St. Thomas. Saint Mary's church burned down in a devastating fire. Many of the churches in Amarillo came to the parish's assistance. St. Thomas made a monetary donation and provided the funds for a new altar and other furniture. We had a pot luck supper to celebrate Deacon Jim Brown's retirement. The Altar Guild refurbished the Anna Tash Room (Bride's Room) and the Parlor. A Young Adult Singles Group was started. Pat Chandler was elected president of the Parish Council. A new parish directory was completed.