

**The 15th Anniversary of the Dedication
of the New St. Gregory the Great Church
March 13, 2004 to March 13, 2019**

Homilies by Deacon Andy Sabados and Deacon Bill Wilson

Deacon Andy Sabados

As I reflected on what I wanted to say about the dedication of the new church, I looked back at the old church, the church my wife Grace Ann and I joined fifty-two years ago, as a young couple. It was a church that many people thought was a Protestant Church with its clear glass windows and no signage to identify it as St. Gregory the Great Roman Catholic Church.

It was the church where we worshipped, our son was baptized, where both daughters were married and Grace Ann and I renewed our 25th wedding anniversary vows, and I had my Mass of Thanksgiving as a Deacon on May 10, 1998.

The basement of the church was used for so many things, our Bingo was held down there, the Holy Name Society and other groups held their meetings, and we shared fellowship on Welcome Sundays, Soup Night on Friday nights, prior to Stations of the Cross, we even housed the homeless to support the Interfaith Hospitality Ministry. Mass was held down there for the overflow crowd for Easter and Christmas.

We had 5,500 families so the decision was made to build a new church in 2001. In June of that year, we had procession from the Church to our Transitional Church in the Parish Center. I remember the Knights of Columbus carrying the tabernacle followed by other group members carrying items to set up in the worship space for our liturgies.

The Transition Church was now our worship space for liturgies, baptisms, funerals and also at least one wedding for a former Youth Group member

who decided this was her church and the place she would celebrate her marriage as she did all her other sacraments. Our parishioners didn't go to other churches for weekday and weekend Masses; they still came here to worship.

It was a sad day for me in October of 2002 when the back of the old Church was demolished, but after seeing the scale model of the new church, I realized this is going to be really GREAT!

On March 13, 2004 we processed from the Transition Church to the New Church where Bishop John M. Smith celebrated the dedication.

Up until now, I spoke about the different buildings that were, and are, St. Gregory the Great Church, however, the buildings are not the Church. The people who entered the doors of the Old Church, the Transition Church and now our New Church are really the CHURCH, the Body of Christ, the People of God.

Many of the people who made St. Gregory the Great, really GREAT, are no longer with us. They are gone but hopefully never forgotten, as those of us who remain are called to continue to do God's work.

We should be proud of our Church building but even prouder of the people who are CHURCH, all those who participate and support the various ministries here at St. Gregory the Great. Fr. Rich LaVerghetta wrote in the March 14, 2004 bulletin, "it takes a whole community of faith to build a church."

Our building is completed but the work of the Church continues, that the reign of God may come, a reign of justice and peace, as well as of holiness and grace.

Deacon Bill Wilson

Good Morning! You may be wondering what I am doing giving the homily instead of Fr Al. Well, Fr. McClane thought that being a parishioner here at St. Gregory's for close to 59 years, that I would be better qualified to speak about some of the history of St. Gregory's. He told me that today is the 15th anniversary of the dedication of the new church, which is really an addition to the original church. At one time, the early Catholic residents of Hamilton Square and Washington Township (now Robbinsville) traveled as far as New Egypt to worship God. I believe Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Mercerville was established in the early 1940's and in 1954 St. Gregory's, at that time a Mission Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, opened with it's first pastor, the Rev. Edward J. Draus.

My family started attending Mass at St. Gregory's in the summer of 1960. At that time we had our second pastor, Fr. Joseph Wade. In 1973, it was Fr. Joseph Bischoff, in 1978 Fr. Mac, the Rev. James P. McManimon became our pastor, in 1986 Fr. Joseph L. Ferrante the next pastor and in 1992 Fr. Richard Brietske. In 1995, Fr. Rich LaVerghetta, became the pastor and was the driving force behind the new church addition.

Fr. Rich's original concept was to build a chapel behind the rectory. But Bishop John Smith had a different idea. He told Fr. Rich that he felt there was going to be shortage of priests and that Fr. Rich needed to build a larger church that would hold close to 1,200 parishioners. Fr. Rich put a committee together and it was decided to save one half of the original church to be used as a chapel, and build a new worship space attached to the remaining portion of the original church. I believe the new church as dedicated on March 13, 2004. Fr Rich was reassigned in 2007.

My family and I have worshiped here under 9 pastors, and come this May 11th, I have been serving here for 28 years and 6 pastors.