

"A Century with Christ and Community" **1916 - 2016**

A Community of Living Faith

For one hundred years, the Church of the Epiphany has stood atop the Palisades, making the light of Christ manifest for all to see. Distinguished as the first parish in the Archdiocese of Newark to be "Epiphany," our parish was so named because the church property was purchased on the Feast of the Epiphany – January 6, 1915.

The parish proudly bears the title of the great feast of the "Manifestation." Just as the Star of Bethlehem once guided the biblical Magi through the darkness of night, so too has Epiphany reflected the light of Christ for a century – guiding all to faith in the One, True God.

While Epiphany today is a substantial parish community of believers, all good things start from humble beginnings. Founded by Msgr. Anthony J. Ferretti, the parish was destined for spiritual greatness under the leadership of many faithful priests, the commitment of dedicated religious sisters, and an abundance of support from the laity.

Msgr. Ferretti was born on March 6, 1864, in New York City to Benedict and Madeline Ferretti. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Hoboken, where young Ferretti attended Our Lady of Grace School. At the age of seventeen, he enrolled in St. Peter's College High School in Jersey City. He first entered the Passionist Order in Pittsburgh in 1887, but was forced to leave because of ill health. With his vocation to serve the Lord as a priest still burning in his heart, he entered Immaculate Conception Seminary in South Orange to study for the priesthood for the Diocese of Newark. He was ordained by Bishop Winand Wigger at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Newark on May 30, 1896.

Fr. Ferretti was a pioneer in spreading Catholicism to lower Bergen County. One of his earliest assignments was pastor of Shadyside Church, a former mission church in Shadyside (present-day Edgewater). From his pastorate in Shadyside, he was instrumental in the foundational years of both the Church of Saint John the Baptist in lower Cliffside (present-day Fairview) and Sacred Heart Church in North Bergen (Hudson Heights). Eventually, he was appointed in 1905, to replace Fr. Walter Purcell at St. John's Church in Fairview. At that time, lower Bergen County, sometimes known as the "wilds of Bergen County," was mostly forest, and few families lived in the region. Undaunted, young Fr. Ferretti remained dedicated to his priesthood and his call to minister to God's people, wherever they may be.

A vivid description of young Fr. Ferretti's drive and passion for the faith can be found in a 1953 history of the parish written by Fr. Robert F. Grady:

To hear Monsignor Ferretti recall those early days is comparable to having lived them oneself. It was a gigantic task facing a young priest, to come from an established Catholic city to a wilderness where the Church was not only misunderstood, but openly unwelcome. But to a priest of God such as Father Ferretti, this was just an added challenge to conquer souls for his Divine Master. Bearing the Standard of Truth, he fought for Christ. Head lifted high and the Cross his

only sword on earth's battlefield, never an inch did he yield in his fight for souls.

Steadfastly, he dared and did these many things for Christ the King, for the Faith, for the community and all under the mantle white and blue of Our Lady, Queen of Victory.

The First Steps of a New Community

While pastor of St. John's Church, Fr. Ferretti recognized the need for a parish church to minister to the spiritual needs of those living in the Grantwood neighborhood of Cliffside Park. Thus, on January 1, 1915, Fr. Ferretti petitioned Bishop John J. O'Connor to establish a mission church of St. John's in the Grantwood neighborhood. Upon receiving approval for his request on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1915, Fr. Ferretti purchased nine lots on the corner of Knox Avenue and the Public Service Railroad at a cost of \$3,310.00.

The parish's certificate of incorporation was signed on August 31, 1916, and contains the signatures of the bishop, diocesan officials, Fr. Ferretti, and the first lay trustees of Epiphany: John J. McEvoy, Sr; William H. Jackson, Richard Fox, and Martin Conroy. While incorporated as its own parish, Epiphany remained a mission church of St. John's in Fairview until Fr. Ferretti became the permanent pastor of the newly erected parish in May of 1921.

The estimated cost to build the church structure was \$100,000.00. Construction of the new parish church commenced in September, 1916, with the general contract being awarded to Hugh Montague & Son of Jersey City. The completed building was 103.5 feet long by 60 feet wide.

Construction was completed in December of 1916, and the cornerstone was laid by the Rt. Rev. John A. Sheppard, Vicar General of the Diocese of Newark, on the sixteenth of that month. At the cornerstone laying and dedication, the sermon was given by the Rt. Rev. Michael McGuinness, a close friend of Fr. Ferretti and pastor of St. Mary's Church in Paterson. Other friends of Ferretti's, Fr. William McLaughlin and Fr. Hubert Gartland, were also present for this momentous occasion.

The original gothic marble altar of the church was purchased with a \$10,000.00 contribution from Mr. Brown. From his home in Manhattan, Mr. Brown watched the construction of the parish atop the Palisades Cliffs and desired to contribute to its construction, even though he was not a Roman Catholic.

The first Mass at Epiphany was celebrated by Fr. Ferretti in May, 1917. Before the first Mass, there was a procession transferring the Most Blessed Sacrament from St. John's Church in Fairview to the newly built church. Hundreds of priests, religious, and laypeople made the mile trek down the trolley line, transferring the Eucharist to the newly founded church.

The new parish was composed of approximately one hundred families of Irish, German, and Italian extraction. The majority of these parishioners were new to the area, having moved from such urban centers as Jersey City and Newark. Things in the "primitive" Grantwood section of Cliffside Park were vastly different from the city, and Fr. Ferretti often recounted how Anderson and Palisade Avenues were once unpaved dirt roads, with the sole means of public transportation

being the old carline, running from Fort Lee to Jersey City, just past the church building. The first collection taken in the newly-founded parish was \$33.00, and the first Christmas collection amounted to \$300.00. Until Fr. Ferretti became the permanent pastor of Epiphany in 1921, Mass was only celebrated on Sunday mornings.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination in May of 1921, Ferretti was assigned as the permanent pastor of Epiphany, finally taking up residence in the parish he founded. One of his first decisions as pastor was to purchase a house to serve as a rectory. With a \$8,000.00 contribution from parishioner, Mrs. Lyons, Fr. Ferretti purchased the house at 228 Knox Avenue as Epiphany's first rectory. This house was eventually converted in 1929, into a convent for the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth (Convent Station), who would later staff Epiphany School.

Bishop O'Connor, in 1921, assigned the boundaries of the new parish: the Palisades Cliffs to the East; Bergen Boulevard to the West; McElroy Avenue in Fort Lee to the North; and Edgewater Road to the South.

In a history of the parish written in 1953, Fr. Ferretti listed the names of individuals and families who played integral parts in the founding and growth of Epiphany Parish in its earliest days, they include: "Mrs. Nellie Bastien, founder of the first Mother's Guild; Mrs. Seigrist, Edward and James Kenny, Mayor Neuman, the LeClerq Family, the Caroll, Scullion, and Conroy Families, Mrs. Mary O'Donnell, Ms. Isabel Mulholland, the Madden Family, and the Clahan Family."

From Infancy to Adulthood

By the late 1920s, the parish grew into a community of approximately 2,100 adults and 500 children. In 1927, after years of serving as the sole parish priest of Epiphany and dealing with a rapidly growing community, Fr. Ferretti petitioned the diocese for an assistant. Thus, in February of 1927, the diocese appointed Rev. John Henry Banks, who then assisted Fr. Ferretti for twenty-four years until Banks' death in 1951.

Fr. Banks was a beloved figure in the early years of Epiphany. Fr. Banks was born on December 11, 1890, in Boston. His family eventually moved to New York City where he completed his education under the care of the Christian Brothers. He attended St. Lawrence's College in Montreal and later entered St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers. Fr. Banks was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of New York on April 11, 1920, but later volunteered for duty in the Diocese of Newark, which was struggling with a serious shortage of priests. Before coming to Epiphany in 1927, Fr. Banks faithfully served for seven years in a number of other parishes in the diocese. He was later appointed administrator of Epiphany in April of 1936, when Fr. Ferretti fell ill. Many older parishioners can still recall the loving and friendly pastoral service of Fr. Banks to Epiphany.

As the parish continued to grow, Fr. Ferretti recognized the need for a larger rectory, and the establishment of a parish school. In early 1929, work was commenced on a new rectory attached to the church. The original thirteen-room building was completed and furnished later that year at a cost of \$40,000.00. Thomas Dunn of New York was the architect and the Herring Brothers Co. from North Bergen the contractors.

When Fr. Ferretti asked Bishop Walsh for permission to build a rectory and school, the diocese first denied the request, arguing that such a small parish could not financially support four buildings. Instead, the diocese suggested that Fr. Ferretti fund the rectory building project from his own pocket, as the diocese considered Fr. Ferretti to be “a man of considerable means.” Ultimately, however, the diocese *did* approve of the plan to build the current rectory, and Fr. Ferretti did not have to fund the project himself.

Construction of Epiphany School began in late 1929, and was completed in early 1930. The original school building had fourteen classrooms, and cost \$115,800.00. In order to fund these building projects, Fr. Ferretti sold a number of local properties that had been donated to the parish.

During the construction of the school building, Fr. Ferretti petitioned the Reverend Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Convent Station to provide him with a teaching staff for the new school. The Mother General at first denied his request, arguing that this region of southern Bergen County would never be populated enough to necessitate the building of a Catholic school. The Mother General was quite wrong in her predictions for southern Bergen County. After Fr. Ferretti continued to plead with the Mother General, she finally agreed to send four sisters to staff the school in September of 1930. Fr. Ferretti then proceeded to have the original rectory at 228 Knox Avenue renovated, and gave it to the sisters as a convent.

The Sisters of Charity began their service to Epiphany in September, 1930. The first superior of the convent and principal of Epiphany School was Sr. Cecelia Berchmans, S.C.. She was assisted by Sr. Alice Rita, S.C., Sr. M. Winifred, S.C., and Sr. Miriam Gertrude, S.C..

On September 7, 1930, Epiphany School opened for the first time. That morning at daily Mass, Fr. Ferretti proudly said, “Today, one of my fondest dreams has materialized; we have started our school with the finest order of sisters teaching. God willing, it will expand and grow.”

The original enrollment of the school was 150 students, and many continued to register. As a result of the high demand for education in the new school, three more sisters were sent. The Mothers’ Guild of Epiphany School was also founded under the direction of Mrs. Emma Diehl in the fall of 1930. As a result of the prayers, gatherings, and fundraisers of the Epiphany Mothers’ Guild, the school was able to grow considerably fast.

The first graduating class of Epiphany School was in 1934, with twenty-five students: F. Barrett, H. Bonatz, R. Bonatz, A. Cerrutti, M. Damm, N. Diehl, A. Drew, A. Esposito, A. Fiore, A. Guarriello, J. Herr, R. Horton, M. Jennings, M. Kelly, C. Mott, R. Murphy, L. Nagle, J. Nunn, A. Olivieri, M. Padovano, J. Phillips, M. Tell, R. Thomas, G. Tozzoli, and M. Winkler.

As the parish continued to grow, renovations to the buildings were necessary. In June of 1934, Bishop Walsh approved plans to build an addition to the Epiphany Convent since there were nine sisters living in a building that could only comfortably house four. At that time, one sister slept in a common room, three others slept in the attic, and another was forced to sleep in a hallway. Later, in 1935, the church hall was renovated with a new floor and fresh paint at a cost

of \$2,000.00

During the Great Depression, the local area was plagued with much unemployment and poverty, and the clergy of Epiphany did whatever they could to help those affected. In the spring of 1936, while delivering food to the poor, Fr. Ferretti suffered a massive stroke and was found lying in the street. Thus, on April 1, 1936, Fr. Banks became the administrator of Epiphany Parish while Fr. Ferretti remained the pastor. For twelve years, with deep love and appreciation for all of his parishioners, especially children, Fr. Banks nobly led the parish. Since he was the only priest (besides Fr. Ferretti) at Epiphany at that time, Banks required the pastoral assistance of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from New York and the Passionists of Union City to help meet the spiritual needs of such a growing parish. A loving description of Fr. Banks was written in a 1953 history of the parish:

Father Banks administered and looked after the needs of the parish in the noblest traditions of Father Ferretti. Those who had the pleasure of knowing him, can speak volumes of his fine qualities and noble traits...He had a heart full of charity for God's poor, and it was a common sight to see his car loaded down during the lean years of the depression; with food and clothing, he brought treasured assistance to his people in need. It is a known fact and often spoken of, that he gave his personal clothing to those who asked his assistance.

Mid-Century Boom

In May of 1940, in order to fill the pastoral needs of the people of Epiphany Parish, a newly ordained priest, Fr. Joseph C. Manz, was assigned by the archdiocese as an assistant to Fr. Banks. Later, Fr. Thomas A. Kenny arrived at Epiphany in July of 1946.

Fr. Manz was another beloved figure in the history of Epiphany Parish. Born on November 12, 1915, in Brooklyn, his family later moved to Saddle River. He attended St. Luke's Grammar and High Schools in Ho-Ho-Kus, and later attended Seton Hall University and Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington, Mahwah. He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Walsh on May 18, 1940, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Newark.

During the Second World War, a number of brave men of the parish enlisted in the armed services. Some of these men, however, made the ultimate sacrifice for God and country, and did not return home. These men are memorialized on a plaque, which hangs in the vestibule of the church. Those who gave their lives were: B. Barnao, J. Brennan, B. Buscemi, A. Carafa, J. Dolan, A. Fallotico, J. Florio, A. Johnson, T. Jones, W. Joseph, L. LaVelle, R. McEwen, P. McTeigue, J. Phillips, L. Schwarz, A. Sperlazzo, R. Suhrbier, V. Tomasselli, A. Vecchione, C. Verzi, L. Verzi, and R. Zaia.

In 1946, under the leadership of Fr. Banks, the parish took out a \$69,000.00 loan from the archdiocese in order to pay off debts from previous building and renovation projects. Later, in May of that year, Fr. Ferretti was being invested as a Domestic Prelate to His Holiness (monsignor) by Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh. Two years later, Fr. Banks fell seriously ill, and Fr. Manz succeeded him as the administrator of Epiphany. Fr. Banks later died on January 9, 1951, after thirty-one years a priest and twenty-four years of service to Epiphany Parish.

In 1949, in order to meet once again the pastoral demands of such a vibrantly growing

parish, the archdiocese appointed the newly-ordained Fr. Robert F. Grady as an assistant to Fr. Manz.

Under the leadership of Fr. Manz as the administrator of the parish from 1948 through 1957, many improvements were made, as the parish continued to grow. First, Fr. Manz recognized the need to renovate the church hall and school classrooms. Next, in 1953, in order to meet the demands of an increasing number of teaching sisters staffing Epiphany School, Fr. Manz purchased the LeClerq residence (232 Knox Avenue) for \$18,000.00 to serve as an additional convent. Later that year, he also established the first kindergarten class housed in the same building.

The presence of good and faithful priests and sisters in the parish could not but inspire young men and women of Epiphany to answer God's call in pursuing a religious vocation. As such, a number of young men and women chose to enter religious life. Fr. Vincent P. McCorry, S.J. was the first vocation from Epiphany. In June of 1952, Fr. James F. McLoughlin was the first diocesan priest to be ordained from the parish.

Many young women from the parish also entered into religious life, including: Sr. Mary David (June) Cornell, S.C., Sr. Catherine Imelda (Rosemary) McGavin, S.C., Sr. Mary Xavier Neillands, C.S.J.P., Sr. Mary Andre Della Pozza, O.P., Sr. Joseph Marie of the Sacred Heart, and Sr. Agnes Marie Schiemer, C.S.J. These religious vocations from the infancy of the parish are just the first in a long line of faithful vocations fostered by Epiphany Parish throughout her history.

By 1952, Epiphany School educated more students of Cliffside Park than any of the borough's public schools. The building, however, was overcrowded and the high enrollment necessitated the addition of more classrooms. Thus, in the summer of 1952, a boy's lavatory was converted into an additional classroom, and the other lavatories in the school were renovated for \$10,000.00

In 1952, Fr. Kenny, with the support of the parish Holy Name Society, began a Release Time Program for the religious instruction of children attending local public schools. The program, although met with much resistance from local non-Catholics, was approved by the Cliffside Park Board of Education, and public school students were released at 2:00pm to attend religious education classes at the church. The Released Time Program served students from Cliffside Park, Ridgefield, and Fort Lee.

Fr. Kenny's involvement with the Release Time Program, however, was not long. With the United States engaged in war during the Korean Conflict, there was a need for military chaplains. After petitioning the Archbishop, on July 10, 1952, Fr. Kenny was given permission to enter active service as a Navy Chaplain. He was assigned to the 1st Marine Division, and returned home safely after the hostilities in Korea were ended. To take Fr. Kenny's place during his military service, the Archdiocese appointed the newly-ordained Fr. Henry J. Nicolaus in 1952.

In the spring of 1953, with the permission of Msgr. Ferretti and Archbishop Walsh, Fr.

Manz began a campaign to enlarge and renovate the church building. Fr. Manz saw this as a necessity, since, at that time, the parish had grown to two thousand registered parishioner families. The renovation campaign included a physical addition to the rear of the church building, the installation of new stained glass windows, the repointing of the exterior of the building, an electronic bell carillon, and fresh paint and liturgical appointments, giving the parish an updated feel.

On July 5, 1953, Msgr. Ferretti broke ground on the construction, and the dedication of the completed church building took place on January 30, 1955, with Archbishop Thomas A. Boland presiding at the ceremony.

In 1956, Fr. Manz purchased the land adjacent to the church and the lots adjacent to the school from Public Service for \$6,000.00 to be used as parking lots for the church. Later in 1956, noting the need for more space for social activities, Fr. Manz purchased the property on Lafayette Avenue across the street from Epiphany School. This property was then converted into meeting rooms and was known as the "Annex." In the 1980s, the Annex was demolished to enlarge the church's parking lot.

After years of failing health, sixty years as a priest, and ninety-three years of age, Msgr. Ferretti died on May 19, 1957. His funeral was held three days later with Archbishop Boland presiding and Fr. Manz celebrating the Mass. The eulogy was given by Msgr. John Clark, pastor of St. Matthew's Church in Ridgefield.

A Flourishing Community

In June of 1957, Archbishop Boland reassigned Fr. Manz as the Procurator of Immaculate Conception Seminary, and Fr. William S. Sesselman was appointed the second pastor of Epiphany Parish.

Fr. Sesselman was born in Elizabeth in 1902, and attended Sacred Heart School, St. Benedict's Preparatory School, and Seton Hall University. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 8, 1930. Prior to his arrival at Epiphany, he served the communities of: St. John in Jersey City, St. Venantius in Orange, Holy Trinity in Passaic, St. Mary in Rutherford, St. Augustine in Union City, and as pastor of Our Lady of Victories in Harrington Park.

With twenty-seven years' experience as a priest, Fr. Sesselman began his pastorate of Epiphany with great energy, beginning a number of projects, including paving the church and school parking lots and converting the coal furnace of the school building to oil. He also expanded the school parking lot and playground with the \$20,000.00 purchase of the Mulhern property on Franklin Avenue behind the school.

In the summer of 1958, a new pipe organ was installed in the church by the Tellers Organ Company, at a cost of \$18,000.00. This organ replaced the original second-hand tracker organ, which was seventy-eight years old. The new organ, which still remains the organ of the parish to this day, has 1222 pipes and two manuals. Archbishop Boland blessed the organ on November 9, 1958, in memory of Msgr. Ferretti.

On January 6, 1959, the Kane property located on Lafayette Avenue across from the

school was purchased for \$18,750.00. This land was to be used as a living space for in-residence staff members, and for possible use as a third convent in the coming years.

Noting the crowded conditions in Epiphany School, Fr. Sesselman commenced a capital campaign in the spring of 1960, to build an addition to the school building. The original goal of the campaign was to raise \$250,000.00, but by the end of the two-year pledge period, \$268,818.00 was donated into the building fund. On September 6, 1960, the contract for the construction was awarded to Calabro Brothers Builders at a cost of \$458,000.00. The original school building was also renovated, with Neil Barker Mitchell as architect for the project.

The building project called for an auditorium-gymnasium, a new cafeteria and full-service kitchen, faculty lounge, a new library, four new classrooms, and a new kindergarten ward. Renovations of the original school building cost \$37,790.00, and the completed addition of the school came to \$570,534.00.

Ground for the addition was broken on September 18, 1960, by Fr. Sesselman, George Fischer, chairman of the Building Fund Committee; Mayor Gerald Calabrese, and Sr. Alma, principal of the school. The cornerstone of the new addition was laid on September 7, 1961, by Archbishop Boland, assisted by Fr. Sesselman, Fr. James Ferry, Assistant Director of the Apostolate of Vocations, Mayor James Madden, and Sr. Francis Raymond, school principal.

Epiphany in the 1950s and early 1960s saw the appointments of many newly-ordained priests. In June of 1958, Fr. Albert J. Matulis was appointed to replace Fr. Grady who had been reassigned to Holy Name Church in East Orange. In June of 1959, Fr. Thomas J. Petrillo was assigned to Epiphany, but was reassigned after only one year. Fr. Nicholas A. Carlino was appointed to fill the position vacated by Petrillo, but later took a leave of absence in the spring of 1961. Fr. Alfonse Arminio then replaced Carlino, and in 1962, Fr. Walter D. Cron was assigned, replacing Fr. James Ferry. In 1963, Fr. Matulis was moved to a Lithuanian parish, and Fr. Edward McDermott was sent in his place.

Between 1961 and 1964, further improvements were made to the church building, including: painting the interior, and installing canopies over all of the stairs to the church entryways. The fall of 1964, saw Mass being celebrated facing the people and laypeople began to have a greater role in the Mass. Parish membership peaked at 2,600 registered families, and school enrollment rose to 860. Later, in the spring of 1965, air conditioning was installed in the church and church hall. The fall of 1966 also saw the refurbishment of the church's pipe organ. In 1965-1966, Epiphany Parish celebrated her Golden Anniversary, commemorating fifty years of dedicated service to the faithful Catholics of Cliffside Park. The year featured an episcopal visit by Archbishop Boland; and a multitude of celebrations remembering past accomplishments of the parish, and anticipated new plans for the future of Epiphany.

In the spring of 1967, expecting further growth of the parish and the need for a larger pastoral staff, plans were made to build an addition to the rectory, and construction was completed on January 6, 1969. The new addition included: an expanded kitchen, a new priest apartment, an office, bathrooms, a laundry room, a conference room, and a two-car garage.

The ambitiousness of the parish continued on into the late 1960s, when plans were made and funds secured to demolish the two convent buildings and to build one large, modern convent that could house dozens of sisters. This was done in anticipation of the parish founding and building a Catholic high school in the near future. While neither the convent project nor the founding of Epiphany High School ever became a reality, these projects demonstrate the optimistic and ambitious nature of the faithful of Epiphany Parish so evident since her founding.

Changing Times

With the dawn of the 1970's, Epiphany Parish remained the center of the community, drawing thousands of people to Sunday Mass and hundreds of children to the parish school. By 1975, there were over 2,700 registered families at Epiphany, and over 500 students enrolled in the school.

In December of 1975, Fr. Sesselman, after eighteen years of service to Epiphany Parish, retired from active duty as a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark.

Upon his retirement, Archbishop Peter Gerety appointed a Team Ministry consisting of three priests to govern Epiphany. Instead of having one pastor as the sole leader of the parish, three priests were appointed, each with the same pastoral authority. This was a novel idea, one which only a handful of select parishes had the privilege of experiencing. The original team included Fr. Patrick J. Leonard, Fr. John F. Renard, and Fr. Peter J. Zaccardo.

Fr. Leonard was born in Newark and attended Our Lady of Good Counsel Grammar and High Schools. He later graduated from Seton Hall University in 1959, and was ordained by Archbishop Boland in 1963. He also later earned a Master of the Arts degree in Religious Studies from Manhattan College. His first assignment was that of associate pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oakland.

Fr. Renard was born in Fairlawn, and attended St. John's High School in Paterson, Seton Hall University, and Immaculate Conception Seminary. He was ordained a priest in 1965, and his first assignments were at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Roseland and St. Aloysius in Jersey City.

Fr. Zaccardo grew up in Orange and attended Our Lady of the Valley Grammar and High Schools, and later attended Seton Hall University and Immaculate Conception Seminary. After his ordination in 1964, Fr. Zaccardo ministered in Holy Trinity, Westfield, Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Ironbound) in Newark, St. John the Evangelist in Bergenfield, and Our Lady of the Visitation in Paramus. He also served as the executive director of the Bergen County C.Y.O.

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, under the newly formed Team Ministry, the parish experienced a variety of transformations - the parish boomed with lively events and welcoming fundraisers, and the school continued to be a vital component of the community. The post-conciliar time also saw the rise of lay involvement in the parish, demonstrable by lay lectors and Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers. In addition, there was a children's choir and folk group, the inclusion of contemporary music in the liturgy, and the founding of the parish pastoral council. Many parishioners often recall that the years under the

Team Ministry were some of the most vibrant and lively the parish has ever witnessed.

In 1979, the Team Ministry announced plans to completely renovate the church building, giving it a simple, contemporary feel, in line with the directives of the Second Vatican Council. Renovations began in early 1980, and the original estimated cost of the renovation was \$201,836.00, but the final cost was much greater.

The renovation included new pews and lighting, a simpler altar and sanctuary, carpeted floors, new confessionals, and the addition of a Daily Mass Chapel and the Chapel of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The most notable addition of the renovation was the installation of the church's iconic bas relief behind the altar. The relief is carved into the wall and colored with gold and silver highlights. It includes three individual sections, or "Epiphanies" of the life of Christ: the Baptism of the Lord, the Wedding Feast at Cana, and the Visitation of the Magi. Today, this relief remains Epiphany's most iconic feature.

The renovation project also included the later installation of a new stained glass window in the church's choir loft. The window is a depiction of the Blessed Mother under the title of "Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States". It features the Blessed Mother surrounded by the American saints: (from left to right) St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, St. John Neumann, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Isaac Jogues, and St. Rene Goupil. This window replaced the original one in the choir loft, depicting the Sermon on the Mount, installed when the church was first constructed.

The renovation committee was comprised of a number of church members, both religious and lay: Sr. Theresa Caruso, M.P.F., Joseph Castrianni, William Cron, Arthur Flachsenhaar, Sr. Patricia Michael, S.C., and Erwin and Cecilia Rahner.

After renovations were completed in late 1980, the church was rededicated by Auxiliary Bishop Garner on September 19, 1982. Part of the church's rededication ceremony was the unveiling of an original Salvadore Dali sculpture – "Crucifixion" – number 13 of 375. The sculpture, with an estimated value of \$13,500.00 in 1982, was donated by Hazel Invaldi of Fort Lee in memory of Alma Baldassari.

In 1979, to keep up with the ever-growing pastoral needs of one of the most active parishes in the local area, Fr. Antonio S. Villar (an adjunct priest from the Philippines, also known as Fr. Bob) was appointed to serve the people of Epiphany. In early 1983, Fr. Zaccardo was reassigned to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Newark, and Fr. Robert P. Cozzini was appointed as his replacement. Between 1975 and 1989, Epiphany Parish was served by five faithful priests: Frs. Cozzini, Leonard, Renard, Villar, and Zaccardo, keeping in line with the model of a Team Ministry.

In 1982, 2,600 registered families comprised the parish, mostly of Italian and Yugoslavian (Croatian) background. At that time, the school enrollment was 350 students, and daily Masses were held at 6:30am, 8:00am, and 11:30am. There were approximately 140 funerals that year. The parish pastoral staff of 1982 included: Fr. Leonard, Fr. Renard, Fr. Villar, Sr. Patricia Michael, S.C., Principal; Sr. Theresa Caruso, M.P.F., Director of Religious

Education; Sr. Emily McMullin, S.S.J., Director of Music; Sr. Mary Modesta (Alice Nora), S.C., Pastoral Associate for Seniors; and Peter Funesti, Youth Minister.

In 1986, the school received its first lay principal – Mr. James P. Barry. Although the school no longer had a religious principal, the Sisters of Charity continued to teach in the school until its closing in 2005. At that time, enrollment was in the low 300s, and tuition was approximately \$1,250.00 annually for one student.

In 1987, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill requested permission to assist the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth serving Epiphany Parish, and to reside in the convent at 232 Knox Avenue. The request, however, was denied by the Archdiocese.

A Move Toward Modernity

In February of 1989, upon the request of the Archbishop of Newark, the Team Ministry was dissolved, and its members reassigned. That same month, Fr. John Tully was appointed the new pastor of Epiphany Church, and he was installed as pastor in March. Fr. Tully, although only at Epiphany for a short time, rededicated the parish bingo hall as the “Monsignor Anthony J. Ferretti Hall” and the Spiritual Life Center as the “Rev. William S. Sesselman Spiritual Life Center”.

Not long after his appointment, Fr. Tully resigned the pastorate of Epiphany Parish and took a leave of absence from the priesthood. He was replaced by Fr. Thomas F. Olsen as administrator.

In 1991, Epiphany Parish celebrated her diamond jubilee, commemorating seventy-five years of service to the faithful of Cliffside Park. By the spring of 1992, Epiphany Parish had grown to be the largest and most active in the region, with over 2,400 registered families, and over 1,700 attending Sunday Masses each week.

After the diamond jubilee, under the direction of Fr. Olsen, the church underwent minor renovations. In 1998, the Maino Family donated a full-sized passenger elevator and side vestibule. The completed project also included a covered entrance to Msgr. Ferretti Hall and a memorial plaque tree. Fr. Olsen also arranged for the installation of the Epiphany Parish Rose Garden, one of the most beloved areas of the church grounds. The garden was dedicated in memory of Fr. Charles J. Watters, a chaplain in the United States Army, and priest of the Archdiocese of Newark. Fr. Watters was killed by friendly-fire on November 19, 1967, while ministering to troops in the Vietnam War.

Crossroads of the Third Millennium

After nine years of service to Epiphany Parish, Fr. Thomas Olsen retired from active duty in the Archdiocese of Newark in early 2000. He was replaced as pastor by Fr. Donald J. DiPasquale, the sixth pastor of Epiphany Parish.

Fr. DiPasquale was born in 1936, and was ordained from Immaculate Conception Seminary in 1962. When appointed, Fr. DiPasquale faced many challenges, including an aging

parishioner group, dwindling school enrollment, a sharp decrease in stewardship collections and donations, and a significant drop in Mass attendance. By 2005, there number of registered families amounted to 1,805. Despite these hardships facing not only Epiphany, but most of the churches in the Archdiocese, Fr. DiPasquale proved more than capable in maintaining the vitality of Epiphany Parish.

In 2005, after a significant decrease in enrollment, combined with rising operating costs, Epiphany School sent off her last graduating class. After seventy-five years of providing the youth of Cliffside Park with an excellent education rooted in the Catholic faith, Epiphany School merged with Christ the Teacher School of Fort Lee.

A few months after the closing of Epiphany School, the parish was no longer in need of a staff of religious sisters. In the spring of 2006, the last two remaining sisters, Sister Mary Ann Boyle, S.C., and Sister Rosemary McGavin, S.C., were reassigned to different parishes where they could continue to carry out God's mission. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth proudly served the faithful of Epiphany Parish for seventy-six years, from 1930 until 2006.

In 2007, noting the dated interior of the church building, Fr. DiPasquale commenced a capital campaign, raising over \$450,000 to renovate the aging interior of the church. Genovese Associates was commissioned to redesign the church, giving it a more refined and sophisticated feel. Construction began on February 13, 2009, and the majority of the project was completed by August of that same year.

The completed restoration project, "Caring for God's Household" included: painting the interior of the church, the installation of a marble aisle and sanctuary area, ceramic tiles throughout the church, refinished pews and chairs, and new vestibule doors. The project also included hundreds of miles of new wiring and electric cables, as well as the installation of a new dimmer-based lighting system.

As a Catholic institution comprised of many ministries and outreach programs, Epiphany further ensured its presence in the local community with the founding of the Epiphany Community Food Pantry in 2009. Since that time, Epiphany's ministry to the poor has become one of the jewels in the parish crown, garnering recognition from both the Archdiocese and secular authorities. The program continues to feed thousands of individuals each year.

In September of 2010, Fr. DiPasquale arranged for the installation of a new state-of-the-art sound system, installed by Monte Brothers Sound Systems. A large portion of the funds for this extensive project was raised by the Confraternity of Christian Women. Less than a year later, in the spring of 2011, Fr. DiPasquale appropriated the necessary funds to install a new roof on the church building, and to repair the water damages on the church ceiling.

After eleven years of dedicated pastoral service to the faithful of Epiphany Parish, in June of 2011, Fr. Donald DiPasquale, at the age of seventy-five, retired from active duty in the Archdiocese of Newark.

A New Century Ahead

Immediately after Fr. DiPasquale's retirement, Rev. Ken Evans was appointed by Archbishop John J. Myers as the new administrator of Epiphany Parish. Fr. Ken was born in 1946, in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and grew up attending St. Patrick's School and Bishop Kenrick High School. He later attended St. Peter's University and worked for the Archdiocesan Youth Office. Ordained in 1986, Fr. Ken previously served in a number of parishes. Immediately before coming to Epiphany, he pastored the Church of the Assumption in Roselle Park. Fr. Ken commenced a number of physical improvement projects to both the church and rectory. Within three months, the rectory office was renovated, and the entire rectory was repainted.

A few months later, with the advisement of the Parish Finance Council, Fr. Ken founded the Epiphany Parish Heritage Fund – a financial account to support the physical necessities of the buildings in the parish compound. The original Heritage Fund “wish list” was comprised of a number of physical improvements for the church and rectory, including the installation of tile flooring in the church and restoration of the church's stained glass windows. Work on the windows commenced in July, 2012, and was completed later that summer.

Multiple physical improvements were made in the summer of 2013. The church's pipe organ was completely refurbished, and renovation work was begun on the Chapel of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Observing that the front steps of the church building were crumbling, and no longer safe for use, Fr. Ken made plans to demolish the ninety-seven-year-old staircase and construct a new one. Work on the new steps commenced in June of 2014, and the new staircase was blessed and opened on Palm Sunday in March, 2015.

The summer of 2014 saw the renovation of the Daily Mass Chapel, which included fresh paint and the installation of new carpeting. A year later, a new air conditioning system was also installed in the Daily Mass Chapel.

In June of 2014, the Confraternity of Christian Women commemorated their 60th anniversary, honoring their former spiritual director, Fr. Donald DiPasquale, and posthumously honored long-time member Elizabeth “Betty” Bamert.

After years of non-use by the parish, the youth house/spiritual life center, adjacent lot, and the lot on which the Epiphany Convent once stood, were sold, and the funds were invested to ensure the parish's financial stability in the years to come.

Today, Epiphany Parish continues to grow in the number of families registering and joining the community, and in the vitality and strength of the Catholic Christian faith in the community.