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ST. MARY STUDENT PARISH & FR. GABRIEL RICHARD NEWMAN CENTER • FALL 2011

A Lasting Community: The transformation of St. Mary Student Parish

by Fr. Charlie Irvin, *Pastor, St. Mary Student Parish 1969-1979*

Since it was constructed in 1924, St. Mary Student Parish has provided a strong community of faith for Catholic students at Michigan. Having experienced St. Mary's during its formative years, Fr. Charlie Irvin, former pastor, offers a unique insight to the history of campus ministry here.



St. Mary Student Parish c.1930. Photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library.



St. Mary Student Parish today.

My experiences at St. Mary's began in 1947 when I was 14 years old. In that year my father joined the faculty of the School of Business Administration teaching real estate appraising and financing. He, my mother, and I became members of what was then known as St. Mary's Student Chapel. I was attending University of Michigan High School at that time and later matriculated to the University's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, graduating from the School of Business Administration in 1955.

Being born and raised in Ann Arbor and blessed with the educational opportunities afforded by the University of Michigan, I was able to uniquely experience St. Mary's Student Chapel (as it was then named) during the post-World War II years until the late 1970s. The postwar years brought with them an explosion in student enrollments at the University due to the benefits afforded by the GI Bill of Rights. With it, both the University and the City of Ann Arbor entered into a remarkable period of growth and transformation.

The major event during that time period (1947-1955) was, of course, the Korean Conflict. The American culture and the life of university students were traditional; traditional families where the norm, and traditional academic pursuits

were likewise normal. The pill had not yet arrived on the American scene, nor had drugs, "alternative lifestyles," and all other cultural forces that were the products of the sixties. The accepted beliefs of the past were being questioned. St. Mary's offered many opportunities to explore the intellectual underpinnings of our Catholic beliefs. I greatly appreciated these offerings and they were of great help to me. I am sure that many of today's university students likewise greatly appreciate them.

From 1955 to 1959 I was a student at U of M's Law School. During that time I suffered two very bad personal losses. Powerful questions swept through me: questions dealing with the goodness of God, the problem of suffering, and why God allows such things to happen to people. The spiritual support I received from St. Mary's and her priests was tremendous, for which I will always be enormously grateful. Frs. Frank McPhillips and John Bradley, the priests at St. Mary's during that time, were gifted men and wonderful priests.

Their examples deeply influenced me and played a large part in my eventual decision to enter the seminary and study for the priesthood. In the fall of 1960 I entered Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit and was ordained a priest (*continued inside*)

A Lasting Community *(Continued from cover page)*

for the Archdiocese of Detroit in June of 1967. Noteworthy is the fact that the Second Vatican Council convened in 1962 and closed in 1965 during my time in the seminary. What an exciting time to be in a seminary and training for the priesthood! Needless to say, my educational experiences at the University and the spiritual strengths given me at St. Mary's were of enormous help to me.

I celebrated my First Mass at St. Mary's on June 4, 1967 surrounded by my loved ones and the friends I and my parents had come to know over the years at St. Mary's. It was not the normal practice to assign a newly ordained priest to his home parish, but it happened to me. In an unusual move, John Cardinal Dearden, then Archbishop of Detroit, assigned me to be a priest at St. Mary's in 1967 and my tenure there lasted until 1979. I'll always be grateful for that.



Fr. John Bradley, who was given the title Most Reverend Monsignor in 1962, presided during the late 1950s and early 1960s, a time when the Catholic student body at the university was becoming more diverse. Photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library.

To say the least, the late sixties and early seventies were tumultuous years in our American Culture as well as in the lives of faculty and students at the University of Michigan. Much has been written about those years. One movie, *The Big Chill*, whose characters were U of M students, was a product of those years.

1969 saw the departure of Fr. John Fauser, the Rector of St. Mary's Chapel, and it brought about my establishment of a Parish Council, an innovation occasioned by the Second Vatican Council. I badly needed the advice and counsel of members of St. Mary's. They were of tremendous help in planning not only the transition but the future development of our faith community.

1965 brought with it the deployment of U.S. combat troops in Vietnam. It's hard to identify just when the Vietnam War began but certainly 1965 could give us a date with which to identify a full scale beginning of our involvement there. Needless to say, some serious moral issues arose, particularly for those young men who were subject to being drafted

in the military. Campus anti-war protests broke out all over the United States as well as in Ann Arbor. In May of 1970, National Guard soldiers fired on Kent State anti-war protesters, killing a number of them. It was a catalytic moment, a moment that profoundly affected U of M students. Conscientious objectors surfaced and I remember counseling some who were members of St. Mary's and who had requested that I sign their letters to draft boards stating their moral objections.

At the same time we had ROTC staff officers and their families, as well as ROTC students all of whom were St. Mary's parishioners. They also needed to feel welcome; they too needed to be spiritually nourished. I had to be careful in preaching my homilies in order to spiritually support parishioners regardless of where they stood on the Vietnam issue.

The Catholic Charismatic Community, known as the Word of God Community, was a significant part of the life at St. Mary's Chapel. The original founders of that Community came upon the scene at St. Mary's in 1967, one year before my arrival there as a priest in 1968. They were involved in renewal and evangelistic work among university students and were also engaged in outreach efforts from St. Mary's. Beginning with prayer meetings in local apartments, the Catholic Charismatics began in 1968 to have public prayer meetings in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's. By 1973 their numbers had grown to over 1,000. Our parish hall, located in the basement of the Fr. Gabriel Richard Student Center, was no longer able to accommodate them so they moved to a larger hall at St. Thomas the Apostle parish. Even during in the earlier days of campus ministry, St. Mary's was filled with students eager to grow in their faith.

Throughout the tremendous cultural changes of the sixties and seventies, St. Mary's provided much stability: the stability that is one of the chief characteristics of our Catholic Faith. While engaged in the cultural dialogue of those years, St. Mary's afforded to all who were a part of its life,

the blessings of Jesus Christ and the wisdom of our 2,000-year-old Church. The same will, I am certain, hold true in the future as the "Millennials" of our present time shape their values in cultural shifts presently occurring at the beginning of the new millennium in which we now find ourselves.

What a blessing St. Mary's is for the Church! What a blessing it will be for the future leaders of the parishes of our country after they leave Ann Arbor!



Fr. Charlie Irvin, Pastor, St. Mary Student Parish 1969-1979



Photo by George Marzonie

From 1971-1976, Fr. Dennis Glasgow (far left) was a member of the choir that played at the weekly Saturday Midnight Mass.

“Three rough groupings co-existed and overlapped in the early ‘70s parish: the social service doers, the charismatic prayers, and the Newman Club players. You could call it “DO PRAY, & PLAY.” I found a wonderful harmony of all these elements in the diversity of the Parish Council. The doers remembered to pray; the prayers felt called to do; the players both prayed and did—and they taught us all to party.” -Fr. Dennis Glasgow

Fr. Dennis Glasgow, campus minister at St. Mary since 2000, also had the unique experience of attending St. Mary’s during his time as a student from 1969-1976. From Led Zep-

pelin to Taylor Swift, Fr. Dennis has not only witnessed changes in culture but also in the liturgy, music, and governance of St. Mary Student Parish.

The Fr. Gabriel Richard Lecture Series

A Thomas Firestone Lecture

Rev. Gregory Boyle

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, January 19th, 2012

7:00pm at Blau Auditorium, Ross School of Business

followed by book signing

Fr. Boyle is a Jesuit priest and the Founder and Executive Director of Homeboy Industries, an organization that assists at-risk and gang-involved youth in Los Angeles, CA. For more information on this and other events, check out the full calendar of events at www.stmarystudentparish.org.



St. Mary Student Parish now offers a new and improved online giving program! When you give online, you can use your credit card to set up automatic payments that will go directly to the church conveniently and securely. For more information, visit our website at www.stmarystudentparish.org and click on the Online Giving link to create your account. **Thank you for your generous support!**

A Transformational Legacy

by Rev. Thomas Firestone
Pastor, St. Mary Student Parish 1996-2005

Over 65 years ago, Tom Donnelly along with 18 other members of the United States Navy V-12 program came from MIT to the University of Michigan campus. It was the beginning of a burgeoning love for Michigan that would last forever. Tom eventually ended up with an engineering degree as well as a Juris Doctor from Michigan Law. And he joined the ranks of one of the most loyal alumni associations in our nation. And like many Michigan Law alumni, he became a successful attorney working in the financial services industry in Pittsburgh.

But there is an all important sub-story to this Michigan adventure. Tom, the eldest of three children, was orphaned at a very early age. His Aunt Mary took the three Donnelly children and raised them as her own. The three children bonded strongly in the midst of their difficulty and would always hold their aunt in the highest regard.

Now when the eldest, Tom, came to Michigan he found an oasis of spiritual friendship at St. Mary Student Parish. At the time Fr. Frank Mc Phillips was the pastor and the associate was Fr. John Bradley who would eventually become a St. Mary's pastor. The basement below the chapel became a dance hall on Friday nights and Tom and his Navy compatriots would supply a jazz ensemble known as "Fu Fu Fenner's Frivolous Five." (Tom was also a member of the Michigan band.)

the first persons that pastor met was Tom Donnelly. He had come to Michigan on a beautiful fall day with his lovely wife, Marilyn, to watch the Maize and Blue in the Big House. The new pastor loved football and made sure that the Donnelly's always had seats in the Big House when in town. A true friendship grew between that pastor and Tom and Marilyn. So it was only natural that when it came time for St. Mary's to launch a campaign to get out of debt and to improve the



Since its renovation, Donnelly Hall has provided a welcoming venue to students, parishioners, and speakers alike.



Fr. Tom Firestone and Tom and Marilyn Donnelly celebrate the completion of the Capital Campaign at a dinner at the Michigan league in April 1998.

During Tom's stay at Michigan another tragedy entered his life. His brother was killed in a tragic street accident in Pittsburgh. Tom turned to St. Mary's for help, as so many students have done over the almost 100 years of its existence. And the staff and the students and the parish were there for comfort and solace. And Tom never forgot that spiritual comfort.

In 1996 St. Mary's received a new pastor. And one of

facilities that Tom and Marilyn Donnelly would lead the charge.

I must tell you that the love affair between Tom and Marilyn was something to behold. I believe this love was kindled by a love of their faith. They were devoted to their faith and a great cause that still needs to be advanced in our Church: the Catholic student at a secular university. Tom and Marilyn lived their faith daily by stirring the conscience of the Church on such vital issues as protecting God's children, economics, and yes, college students. They practiced what they preached!

Today at the very corner where Tom's brother died there stands a chapel dedicated to the students at the University of Pittsburgh. And when you visit St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor there is a hall dedicated to Tom and Marilyn Donnelly. There are two edifices that stand as monuments to a couple who spent their time, talent and treasure to make it possible for college students to grow in their faith as they grow in knowledge. God gave them a rich life and they knew how to spend it well.

There is never a day that goes by that I don't say a little prayer of thanksgiving for Tom and Marilyn. Gratitude is the greatest prayer of all. Tom and Marilyn were generous because they lived a life of gratitude. I only wish I could convey to you the delight that these two people brought to my life. Tom is now gone and his beautiful wife suffers from dementia. I love them dearly and my stories of them could go on and on. But at least in this brief article you get the idea.

Fall at St. Mary Student Parish

At the beginning of the semester, SMSP is alive with the enthusiasm of our students!



Giving to Saint Mary Student Parish from a traditional IRA

by Tom Schriber, *Saint Mary Parishioner*

Have you thought about making a year-end charitable contribution to St. Mary Student Parish (SMSP), or perhaps to some other tax-exempt organization that is a significant force for good in our community? One efficient way to do so is to contribute directly from a traditional Individual Retirement Account. (This is called a Charitable IRA Rollover.) The assets in a traditional IRA are pre-tax, which means that withdrawals for personal use are subject to federal and state tax as ordinary income. But under current provisions of the Internal Revenue Service, contributing directly from a traditional IRA to a tax-exempt organization is not a taxable event. What's more, the paperwork required is minimal, so that the process is relatively time-efficient and hassle-free for the donor. And for those with an IRA from which minimum annual withdrawals are required by the Internal Revenue Service, such contributions count toward satisfying that requirement. Yes, it's true that an

alternative approach would be to withdraw from the IRA and personally give the withdrawn amount to SMSP, then declare the gifted amount on that year's federal tax return to reduce your adjusted gross income and offset the federal and state tax liability incurred by the withdrawal. But that requires more effort and paperwork than gifting directly from the IRA. My wife and I considered both approaches in the case of SMSP, which we treasure as a force for perpetual good, and easily concluded that direct gifting from a traditional IRA would save us time and paperwork (and decrease our accounting costs slightly, too). If this might be of interest to you, you could discuss the possibility with Steve Wolbert, Development Director at SMSP, for further insights. Steve can also provide "how to" details if you then decide to proceed. Steve can be reached at 734-663-0577, extension 245, or through email at wolberts@umich.edu.

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