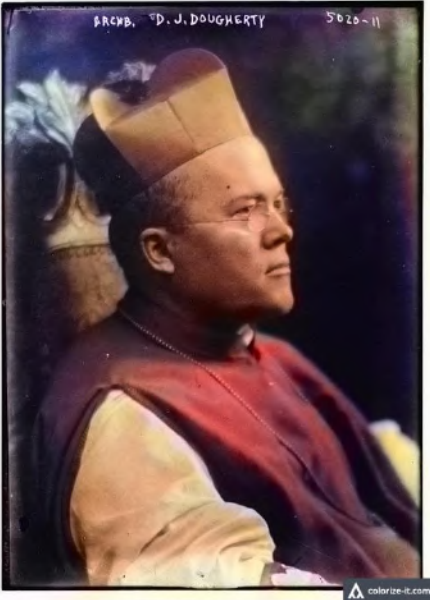




ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

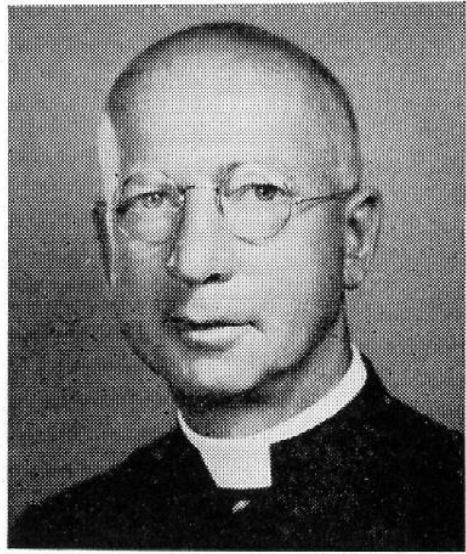
OUR FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS

The Parish of St. Mary's was founded by Archbishop Dennis Joseph Dougherty (later Dennis Cardinal Dougherty) of the Philadelphia Archdiocese in 1919 to meet the needs of students at Keystone State Normal School (now Kutztown University).



Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, at left. Kutztown, circa 1919, right.

Located in the beautiful East Penn Valley on Main St. in Kutztown, Father John Lorenz was named its first pastor on October 8, 1919. At its beginning, St. Mary's was a parish of four families and a handful of college students. The first recorded event at St. Mary's was the baptism of Catherine Rose Szilli on November 30, 1919, and the first Mass was said on Christmas Day of the same year. As the church had no buildings or land of its own, most parish functions were held in the home of Miss Mary Miller on the corner of Whiteoak and West Walnut Streets, or at Herman's Playhouse, which would later become the Kutztown Strand movie theater. On April 3, 1920, Father Lorenz purchased the site for what would become St. Mary's Church at 234 E. Main Street in Kutztown, followed a few months later by a purchase of the rectory in the adjacent lot. Masses were then said in the rectory.



Father John Lorenz as a chaplain with the American Expeditionary Forces in World War 1, left, and as a priest in the 1940s, right.



Rectory at St. Mary's Church in Kutztown, purchased in 1920.

Father John W. Tunner became St. Mary's second pastor in April, 1928. With a building fund started by Father Lorenz, Father Tunner was able to build the Spanish-style mission church in Kutztown that served our parish until 1994. The church was ready for its informal dedication on Christmas Day, 1928, and was officially dedicated by Bishop Gerald O'Hara on June 9, 1929.



Father John Tunner, above left, in 1930. Father Tunner was elevated to Monsignor in the Diocese of Victoria, British Columbia in 1978 (right).



St. Mary's Church in Kutztown, above, pictured in 1928, and below, pictured in 1942.



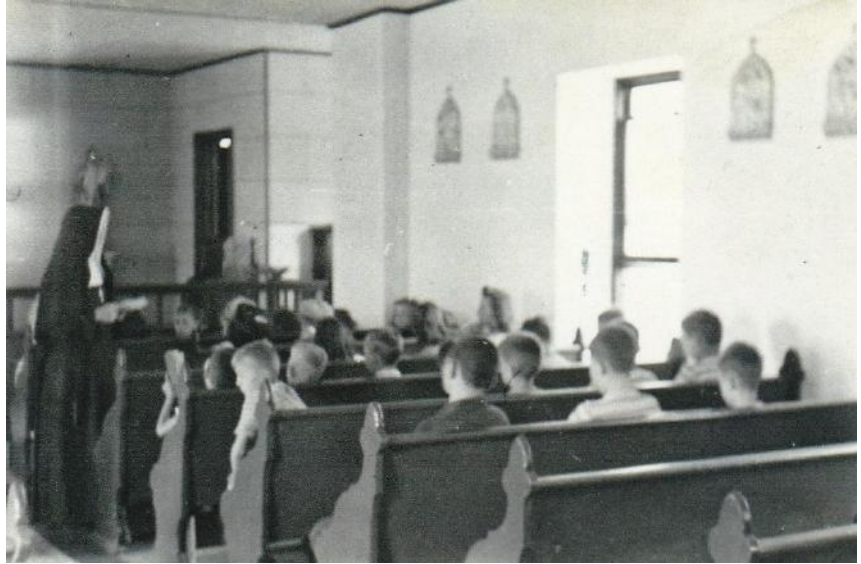
For parishioners living west of Kutztown, Father Lorenz had been saying Mass using a bungalow home near Evansville as a church. Nearby was an abandoned one room schoolhouse, which was sold to the diocese on October 5, 1928 and became St. Mary's chapel at Evansville. Parishioners sat on folding chairs and knelt on the floor; the building was heated by a pot-bellied stove.



St. Mary's Church at Evansville, circa 1939

Father Charles Keller became St. Mary's third pastor in 1930. During Father Keller's tenure, St. Mary's had its first recorded religious education program,

provided by Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The sisters would teach at Evansville from 1930 to 1969 and at Kutztown from 1936 to 1973.

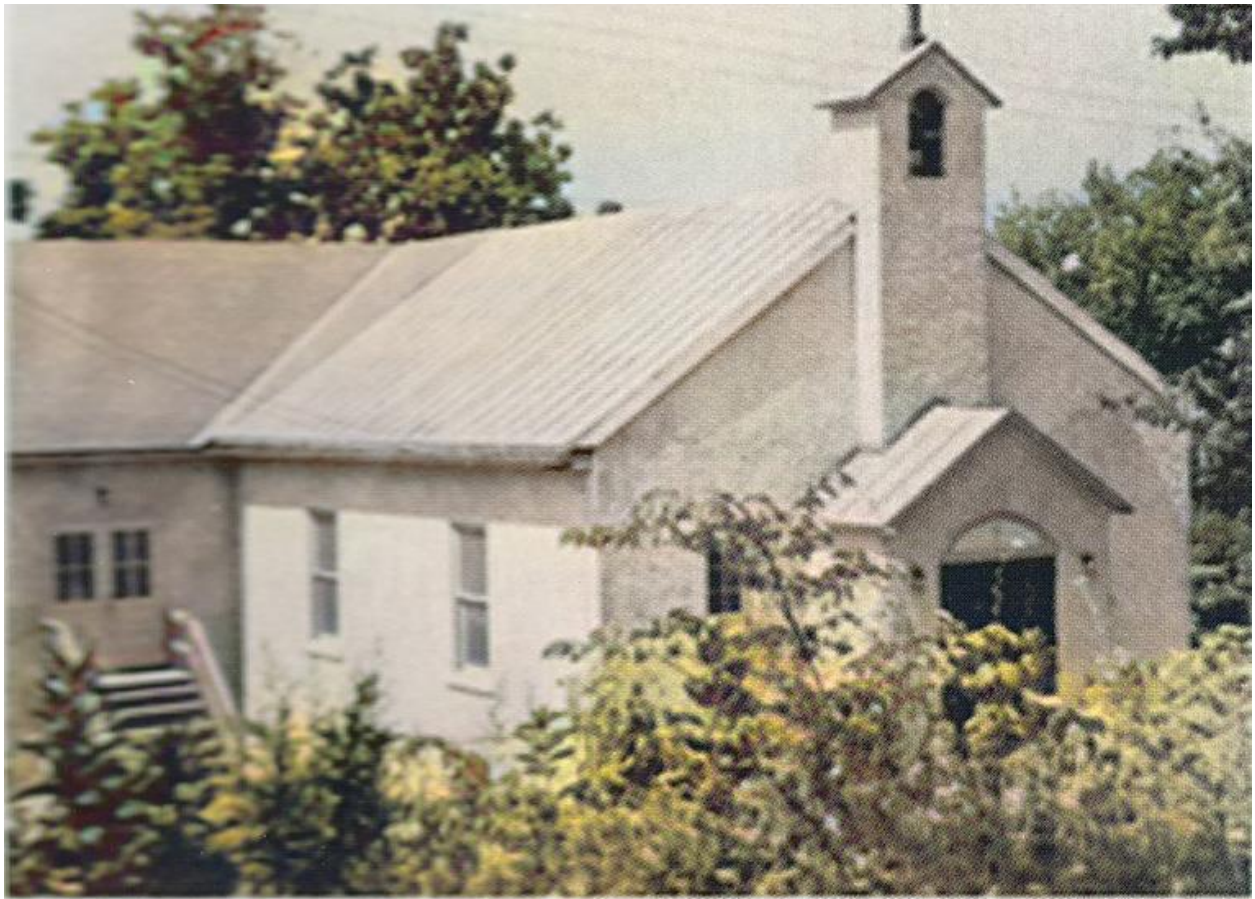


Father Charles Keller (left). Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus teaching at Evansville (right).

Father Keller was succeeded by Father Charles Otterbein (left) in 1939, by Father Vincent Joseph Hillanbrand (center) in 1940, and by Father Francis Adolf (right) in 1942.



Under Father Adolf's leadership, the church at Evansville was enlarged, with friends of the parish donating cement, steel, and lumber. Construction was completed on May 7, 1943.



St. Mary's Church in Evansville, circa 1950.

Father Adolf was also responsible for the enlargement of the church in Kutztown. Financial constraints prohibited building a separate church and tearing down any of the existing structure was also deemed too costly. A new wing was added to the mission style church, giving it an L-shape for extra seating during Mass. The addition was dedicated on the Feast of Christ the King, October 31, 1948. Father Francis Glunz, later to become pastor at St. Mary's, served as a sub-deacon at the Mass.



St. Mary's Church in Kutztown, 1948.

Father Adolf was assisted by resident priest Father John W. Brughmans from 1949-1951.



Father John Brughmans

In 1954, the outdoor shrine to the Blessed Mother, built in large part with help from the Furst family, was dedicated on Sunday, August 15, with 800-1000 people present.



Father John Zolondek, resident priest at St. Mary's from 1952-1962, led the Girls Choir of Central Catholic High School in two songs he had written, "The Bells of Our Lady" and "Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue".



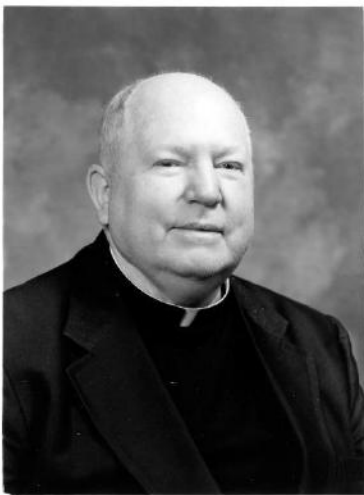
Father John Zolondek

Father Francis Fox replaced Father Adolf in 1955 and remained at St. Mary's until 1963. During his tenure, the Diocese of Allentown was created, with Joseph McShea being named its first bishop in February, 1961.

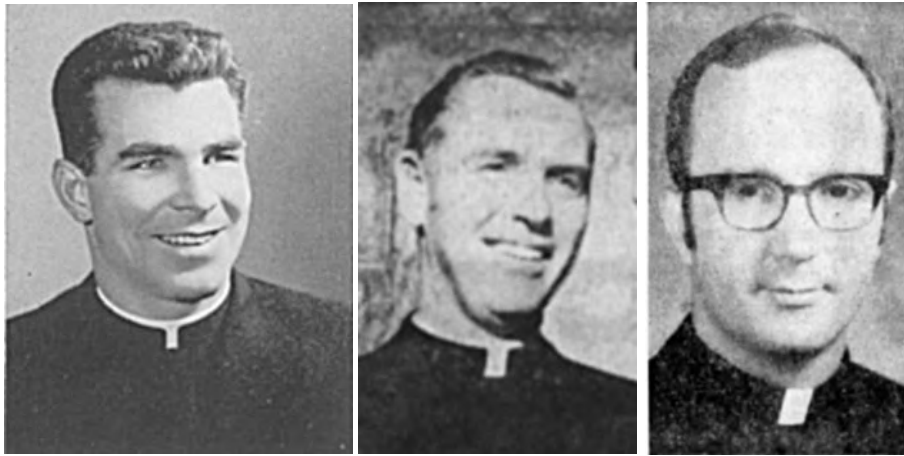
Father Francis Fox



On May 20, 1963, Father Francis Glunz became pastor at St. Mary's, and would be conferred the title of Monsignor on December 15, 1981. Monsignor Glunz served until being named pastor emeritus in 1986.



Father Glunz was assisted by resident priests Father Bruce F. Kelly from 1964-1965, Father Francis X. Barrett from 1967-1968, and Father Robert Quinn from 1968-1969. The Kutztown area, as well as Kutztown State College, was expanding steadily in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1969, the Allentown diocese purchased a private home on campus which was renovated and enlarged and would become the Christopher House Neuman Apostolate. Father Robert Quinn took up residence there.



Father Bruce F. Kelly, left. Father Francis X. Barrett, center. Father Robert C. Quinn, right.

During Father Glunz's pastorate, St. Mary's completed a major building project which saw the construction of an education building behind the church.





On November 26, 1978, an open house was held to celebrate the building's completion. The parish hall, built with the help of Mr. Stanley Nolan, would allow St. Mary's to sponsor parish organizations, hold parties, provide social services, and raise funds.

Father Walter Scheaffer succeeded Monsignor Glunz in 1986. On December 16, 1993 it was announced that Pope John Paul II had named Father Scheaffer a Prelate of Honor of His Holiness with the title of Monsignor, a title that was conferred on February 13, 1994 at the Cathedral of Saint Catherine of Siena.



Monsignor
Walter
Scheaffer in
1976 (left)
and in 2016
(right).

The parish continued to grow, and the existing church buildings were not adequate to accommodate the congregation. New property was purchased in

Richmond Township and a new church was built and dedicated by Bishop Thomas Welsh of the Allentown Diocese on October 8, 1994, the 75th anniversary of the parish. Jack Sherman supervised the building of the Church, Pastoral Center and the Religious Education Building. Ernest Solomon provided the wooden furnishing for the church and sacristy, Thomas Quirk, James Malenda and Jackie Boggs provided the artwork and liturgical appointments. John Schorpp crafted the reredos, the ornamental wooden screens, behind the Tabernacle and the Blessed Mother Shrine in the gathering area.



The Crucifix, carved by Thomas Quirk (left), and the Blessed Mother Shrine (right). The Blessed Mother statue was repainted by Karin Crossley in 2019.



The
Assumption
of Mary,
carved by
Thomas
Quirk.

The Pastoral Center was built and occupied on June 3, 1997, and the new Religious Education Building and Social Hall was dedicated on August 26, 2001. Doug Zucco provided the art piece “Mary at the Temple Ministering to the Children”. The walkway connecting the church and religious education center was completed in 2017.



Pastoral Center



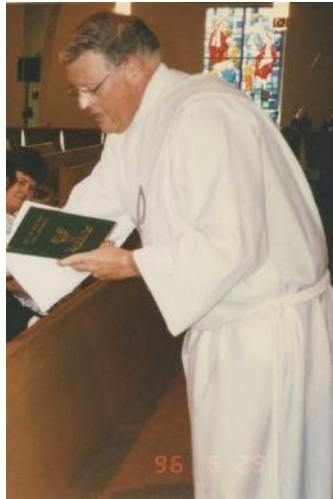
Religious Education Building

A son of the parish, Joseph Ganser, was ordained to the priesthood in 2013 (pictured here at his ordination with Bishop John O. Barres, left, and with the celebrants of his Mass of Ordination to the Priesthood, right.).



At St. Mary's, many dedicated parishioners have shared their faith as catechists under the direction of Ann Pirnot, Carol Bogansky, Dorothy Boyle, Nancy Bucci, Denise Krell, and Ann Pergosky. We thank Ann Pirnot for her thirty years of service to our religious education program. Our music ministry has been directed by Mary James, Jackie Jack, Cathy Henry, Maureen Fallon, Rose Bernsten, and Anne Sitarik.

Over the years our church ministry was enhanced by (pictured clockwise, from top left) Deacons John Coffin, Richard Stoud (with wife Marianne), Michael Flanagan, Thomas Miller and James Russo.



Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart Sister Marie Clark, Sister Barbara Lester, Sister Kathleen White, and Sister Patrice Cosgrove (pictured clockwise from top left) have served to enrich our pastoral ministry.



On May 22, 2016, Monsignor Walter Scheaffer celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination.



On October 13, 2019, we celebrated a Mass commemorating the beginning of our one hundredth year, with Bishop Alfred Schlert presiding.



A parish with humble beginnings and a handful of believers has grown in 100 years to a community with over 2,000 parishioners. The memory of those who have gone before us, the priests who shaped us, and the active faith of those with us now have been and will continue to be the foundation of St. Mary's. We dedicate ourselves to Mary our Mother for the glory of her Son, Jesus Christ.

