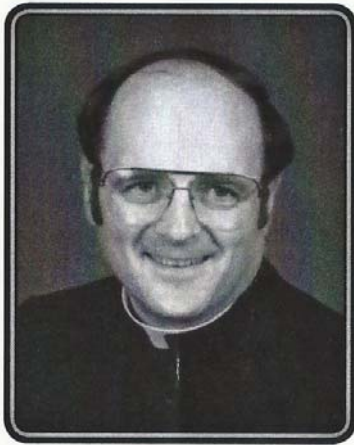


1980-1986: The Rev. Joseph (Jody) DeBias



Father Jody had visited here many times as Diocesan Vocations Director. He was a familiar face and an enthusiastic, gifted and innovative homilist. As pastor, he inspired the congregation with his homilies while frequently inserting his signature phrase “when the rubber hits the road”. He brought the Gospel to life by using parishioners who role-played biblical characters in the Sunday readings. No one will ever forget Walt Miller stepping into the shoes of John the Baptist coming to our congregation at the beginning of Lent.

Faith Formation

During Father Jody’s time, he initiated religion classes for those with special needs. He and Monica Anderson began faith formation classes for adults. They also began the new RCIA process (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), the process for becoming a Catholic.

Other Developments

Father Jody, with the help of Carol Updike, began the “Lunch Bunch” gatherings for the 55+ age group. This group meets monthly for Mass, lunch, and fellowship. Jane Roy became chairwoman of Father Jody’s Lunch Bunch. Lunch Bunch continues every 3rd Thursday of the month, now for all ages.

The Pastoral Council created our Mission Statement:

“We, Blessed Sacrament Parish, are a Christ-Centered community,
Committed to Worship the Father, Committed to Respond to
the Spirit’s gifts, Committed to Loving Service to All God’s People”.

Parishioners Don Baehl and John Hanna became ordained as permanent deacons in 1985. John assisted Father Jody. To name a few of John's duties, he delivers a monthly homily, visits the sick, brings the Eucharist to home-bounds, presides at communion services, performs some of the sacraments, and many other works of mercy. He represents the parish at Vicariate activities. He is Deacon like no other.

Music began to move even more toward a contemporary style. From the 1960's, music leadership evolved from choir director, to organists Margie Ruddle and Nida Richards, "Mickey" and folk music; Glenn Rodriguez; Carolyn Lang; Carolyn Tenery, Kristi Whisner; and presently Becky Barnes, as Music Director. Proper, inspiring music and partner with full congregational singing deepen Mass experience. Now we have bell choirs, children's choir and adult choirs at each Mass and on special occasions. Thanks to Becky and her predecessors. A parishioner donated a piano, used for everything.

Responding to the Holy Spirit's call to a different vocation, Father Jody resigned in 1986 after six years of service as our pastor. After a few more years, he chose to marry. He spoke of his decision at his final Masses, saying he was deeply concerned that people could become drawn to a narrower gift of his homilies than the full celebration of the Eucharist. The worship space was always full. He later worked in the area of organizational development and was part-time executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the Greater Kanawha-Putnam Area.

Outreach

Beginning in Father Cann's tenure and continuing into Father Jody's time, the parish began sponsoring resettlement families from Vietnam. One large family came and were housed at the Southmoor apartments and assisted with transportation, education, shopping and other living requirements. Two or three Vietnamese families were helped this way. All eventually left for larger Vietnamese communities.

In 1973, Kim Keene, now Resettlement Director for Catholic Charities of West Virginia, came to America and received help from our parish. Our parish intended to continue sponsoring refugee families providing assistance with housing, education, shopping, and other living requirements.