

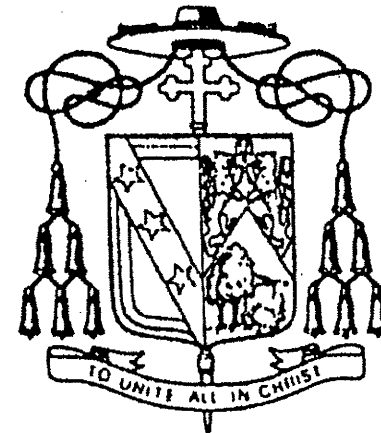
# Members of St. Joseph's Parish

Grundy, Virginia

October 12, 1991

Jose and Lee Abrenio, Joseph,  
Mark, Greg and James  
Andeli Areza  
Ann Mae Balagosa  
Nancy and Bob Baxter  
Ruby and Jimmy Coffey,  
Kathleen and Molly  
Hester and Gerald Davis,  
Elizabeth and Ellen  
Mary Ann Davis  
Angelita Dizon  
Gerald and Ann Dunlap and  
Mike  
Dolores Esparagoza  
Granwel and Nereza Esteban  
and Joey  
Mary Hecker  
Brenda and Charles Justice  
and Amanda

Joe and Debby Magee, Joshua  
and Ryan Tyler  
Frances and Rayburn Minton  
and Robbie  
Aven and Jo Owens  
James and Valeria Ratliff and  
Susan  
Pauline Champagne  
Jaculyn Hanrahan  
Rosemarie Miller  
Buster and Charlotte Stanley  
and Jerome  
Josephine Tamayo  
Bill and Pattie Thornbury  
Chuck Thornbury  
Nancy and Terry Whitt and  
Grace Lee  
Beth and Rick Wright, JoBeth  
and Aaron Robert



1966

1991

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*"... You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ..."*

*1 Peter 2:5*

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## Acknowledgments

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Bishop Walter Sullivan, Ann Edwards in Richmond and Mary Maier in Roanoke from the Richmond, Va., Diocese;

Brother Fulstino of the Pallotine Fathers in Wyandotte, Mich.

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*The Silver Anniversary  
Of the Dedication of  
St. Joseph's Church*

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*Grundy, Virginia*

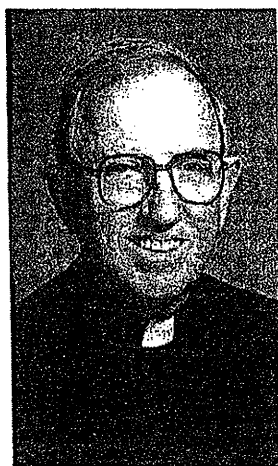
*October 12, 1991*



Bishop Joseph Hodges



Bishop John Swint



Bishop Walter Sullivan

To the parishoners of St. Joseph's Parish, Grundy:

I want to express to you my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of your 25th anniversary as a parish family. Yours has been a marvelous history of dedicated parishoners who have both a deep love for the Lord and for the church. Yours is the only Catholic church in Buchanan County, one of the poorest counties in Virginia, located along the West Virginia border.

I want to express my thanks to Father Daniel Bain, your pastor, who has given dedicated service these many years. Also, I am grateful to the Sisters who live in the small community of Hurley where they care for the people in their area. Their presence witnesses to the commitment of the church to be present among the people, to listen to their needs and to share in their hopes and dreams.

I have always enjoyed coming to St. Joseph's in Grundy to celebrate the Eucharist. Your parish has a marvelous spirit. I urge you to continue to be a sign of hope and sign of concern to the people of Buchanan County. It is with much regret that I cannot be with you on your 25th anniversary because I have made a prior commitment to celebrate Mass that same weekend at St. Mary's Parish, Blacksburg and at VPI.

I will be with you in spirit and prayers. Again, congratulations on your 25th.

Yours Sincerely,

Walter F. Sullivan  
Bishop of Richmond

*"... You form a building which rises on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is fitted together and takes shape as a holy temple in the Lord; in him you are being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the Spirit ..."*

*--Ephesians 2:20-22*

## 25 Years in Christ

### St. Joseph's Parishoners Celebrate

It began long before the physical building existed ... long before makeshift arrangements were made in itinerant places ... long before Catholics in the Buchanan County community opened their homes for the celebration of mass when a priest could be found.

It began in the hearts of a few dedicated people who wanted to continue to praise God in the manner to which they were accustomed, who despite the absence of a Catholic Church, sought to continue to practice the Catholic faith.

While the 25th anniversary of the dedication of St. Joseph's Church in Grundy is celebrated today, the "church" itself has truly existed since long before the construction of the church building in the mid-1960s.

On October 13, 1966, the physical church known to Catholics in Buchanan County as St. Joseph's was formally dedicated, but its history ... its roots ... go much deeper.

The construction of the church in Grundy marked the achievement of a milestone by early Catholics in the Buchanan community.

For years, mass had been celebrated in the abandoned dilapidated Dry Fork school building or at a banquet room in a local restaurant. Before that, it was celebrated in area homes including the Luke and Sue Owens and Tom and Mary Holland homes.

Other early Catholics in the county included Honora Johnson, known as "Gran Johnson" and her children, Harry Johnson and Mary Gwynn Johnson; Dr. Eugene Fusco; Frank and Evelyn Salak; Alexander and Ann Bohinski; Robert and Nancy Baxter and family; Bill and Pattie Thornbury and family; Bertha and Plato Sutherland and family; D.T. and Lillie Sorrent and family; and Aven and Jo Owens and family.

Masses were regularly said in the Luke Owens home up Slate Creek and at the Holland home on Long Bottom. When the Owens' moved to Long Bottom in 1957, Christmas Midnight Mass was said in their home.

But the problem then -- and until St. Joseph's was formally declared a mission parish in the early 1960s -- was finding a priest to celebrate the Eucharist.

As far as any local parishoners can remember, mass was first celebrated in homes in the Buchanan County area 40 years ago as early as 1951. It was, however, sporadic, dependent upon getting a priest to celebrate and attendance was based on word of mouth. Still, three to four families gathered when a priest was available.

A large banquet room owned by the Bohinski's was the first regular location for mass which was said on a Saturday two to three times a year and once at Christmas. The place later became the Midway Drug Store.

Fathers James Maher and Michael Gormley, of the Pallotine Order, from Pocahontas, said the masses and Fr. Maher also started the church in Richlands. Later Father Daniel Hayes, Father Alphonsus Hayes and Father Vincent Cunningham said masses on a rotating basis with Father Walsh.

Buchanan Catholics moved to their first church of sorts in May 1959 when the school building at Dry Fork was made available and rented by parishoners of the church for a mere \$15.

Upkeep of the building at Dry Fork was taken in turn by family members who cleaned the building and fired up the stove during the winter.

Baptisms at the Dry Fork church included those for Aven and Jo Owens and their two children, Kim and Cory; Nancy Jo Baxter; Chuck, Teresa, Steven and David Thornbury; Kerry and Michael Sutherland; Frances Davis; Steven Ray Cox; Martin Paul Edmondson; Jerome Stanley; Richard Scott Fox Jr.; Hazel and Zebedee Osborne; Luke Owens; and Ralph Davis.

But, occupants of the Dry Fork building included more than the men, women and children who practiced the faith. A family of wasps proved persistent in their desire to remain.

"I remember in the spring and summer watching Father Walsh say mass," Pattie Thornbury recalls. "We had trouble keeping the wasps nests out of the old building because the ceilings were too high for us to reach. Father's concentration was so that when he began mass he pretended not to notice the wasps -- two or three of them -- flying around him. So far as I know, he was never stung."

Thornbury also recalls another visitor to church one Sunday when a snake was waiting at the altar rail. Mass went on as usual and the snake was killed after mass ended.

But flying insects and snakes weren't the only problem as Salak and Thornbury recall. A leaky roof added its share of problems.

"Tell the Bishop it rained on me book," Father Walsh said," Thornbury and Salak recall. "That's when we started talking about a new church."

It was in the late 1950s that Buchanan Catholics first began looking for a more permanent place to hold mass. The building now occupied by the Grundy Bible Church was up for auction and county Catholics agreed to bid on it, authorized by the Bishop to spend \$15,000 for a new church. Fr. Hayes ordered the bidding to stop at \$12,000 so some money would be left for renovations. H.A. Street was the bidder for the Catholic Church, but competition was fierce and the Catholic church lost the building. The high bidders couldn't come up with their down payment and for a moment church representatives were hopeful the

***"... You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it..."***

***1 Corinthians 12:27***

building would be theirs by default, but Fred Shortt stepped in to guarantee the high bidder's bid and the Grundy Bible Church won out.

"We were really better off," recalls Salak. "There was no place to park and it would have cost to renovate it."

"We were heartbroken at first," Thornbury adds, "but we did end up much better off."

In 1961, Sue Owens wrote to Bishop John Swint, in the Wheeling, WV, diocese, to which Buchanan County was assigned. Owens wrote in April of that year asking that "something be done about the church facility in Grundy."

"As you know, we have no church in Grundy and have mass in an old school building which is in very bad condition," Owens wrote to the bishop. "We hope you will be able to help us get a church for our congregation is really growing and there are several prospective converts."

Her letter was answered and on February 6, 1962, Grundy, Richlands and Tazewell became a separate entity in the Wheeling diocese, split from Pocahontas and for the first time had a priest specifically assigned to the two-county area. Fr. James Walsh then moved to the rectory in Richlands and became pastor for the Richlands, Tazewell and Grundy churches.

In 1965, things really started to move and in April, a survey of the property which then belonged to George and Marlene Mitchell was conducted by Thompson and Litton. The two lots which now comprise the grounds on which the present day church is situated were staked out and the little more than half acre plot of ground was purchased.



**Fr. James Walsh**  
*Pallotine Priest*  
Born: 1923, Ireland  
Died: 1982  
Ordained: 1949  
Years at St. Joseph's:  
June 1957-August 1975



**Fr. Tim Welsh**  
*Benedictine Priest*  
Born: 1974, Ottawa, Ill.  
Ordained: May 28, 1961  
Years at St. Joseph's:  
August 1975 to June 1983



**Fr. Dan Baih**  
*Diocesan Priest*  
Born: 1938, Crozet, Va.  
Ordained: June 4, 1964  
Year at St. Joseph's:  
June 1983 to present

On May 4, 1965, the deed to the land was recorded and the existence of the new church building was well on its way. Some \$6,500 had come from the diocese with which to purchase the land and a series of fundraisers began to raise the money needed to build the church.

It was after Fr. Walsh wrote to the Catholic Church Extension Society that the physical church actually became a reality.

The Walsh letter was given to Mrs. Estelle Hartnett, of Brooklyn, New York, whose sister had left her some money. In Sue Owens' recollection, Mrs. Hartnett had a nice income and wanted to give money to a place where there were not enough Catholics to build a church. And so she picked the letter from Fr. Walsh and one from a North Carolina interest. There was a \$6,000 limit through the extension society, but Mrs. Hartnett wanted to give \$10,000 in memory of her late husband, Joseph Hartnett. For that reason, the hall addition was put into the plans designed by John Kodak, of Harman Mining and Frank Salak. Ken Fletcher was the builder.

The plans were pretty much based on Fr. Walsh's desires for the building, Salak recalls and he says the first plans were rejected by Bishop Hodges as being too expensive to carry through. The plans were scaled back initially, but halfway through construction, additional funding became available and the original plans were used.

Construction began in September 1965.

"We were remodeling before we even finished," Salak says. "We had to tear out some of the new construction to do it."

The additional funding making the plans possible also came from Mrs. Hartnett, who donated \$10,000 more. Her daughter, Mary, donated an organ to the church.

The first mass in the new church building was said on Christmas Day in 1965. There were no pews at that time, just chairs. Mass was said every two weeks for awhile and then weekly. The formal dedication of the church did not occur until 10 months later in October 1966 because the bishop was not able to attend.

The church was formally dedicated and named St. Joseph's in honor of Mrs. Hartnett's deceased husband on October 13, 1966. Among those in attendance were Mrs. Hartnett and her daughter. Also attending were Bishop Joseph Hodges, of the Wheeling Diocese; and Msgr. James J. Hickey, V.F., of Bristol. Visiting clergy from throughout the region also attended including the Revs. William F. Carr, of Bluefield, WV; John Savage of Princeton, WV; Seamus McGuire of Powhatan, WV; Raymond K. Radzeita, of Welch, WV; Joseph A.

Curtin of Pearisburg; Paul H. Laub of Pocahontas, WV; Alvin A. Martis of East Rainelle, WV; and Patrick J. O'Donoghue, of Richlands.

Bishop Hodges praised the local congregation for their dedication in bringing the church into being and assisted in the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone.

Walsh was the pastor at the time of the dedication. Members of the parish at that time included: Grace and Luke Owens, Steve and Robin; Frank and Evelyn Salak, David and Carol; Bob and Nancy Baxter, Frances, Robert Jr., Mary Patricia, Beth and Nancy Jo; Tom and Mary Holland, James, Tom Jr., Mike, Susan and John; Mary Gwynn Johnson; Barbara and Ralph Davis; Zeke and Hazel Osborne; Bill and Patricia Thornbury, William Jr., Steve, Teresa and David; Bertha and Plato Sutherland, Kerry and Michael; Larry and Emily Smithberger and Jeff; Buster and Charlotte Stanley and Jerome; Aven and Jo Owens, Kim and Cory; John and Loretta Kodak; John and Adeline Magee, Kenny, Patti, Joe and Michelle.

Following the dedication, a dinner was held at Hazel's, which is now Wanda's.

In 1968, the first Parish Council was formed and included Frank Salak, Sue Owens and Bertha Sutherland. The council was comprised of members from the churches in Grundy, Richlands and Tazewell.

Walsh stayed at the helm of St. Joseph's until August of 1975, shortly after reorganizations in the church saw St. Joseph's become a part of the Richmond Diocese.

During the summers - about every three years - Fr. Walsh returned to Ireland and the Pallotine fathers sent in "relief" priests which in turn introduced the local congregation to the various missions the Pallotine fathers had in Texas, South Africa, South America, Michigan and Nevada.

**ST. JOSEPH'S  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
DEDICATED BY  
MOST REV. JOSEPH H. HODGES D.D.  
BISHOP OF WHEELING  
OCT. 13, 1966**

In 1975, Fr. Tim Welsh, O.S.B., was assigned to the church. Welsh stayed until June of 1983 when current pastor, Fr. Dan Bain, a Diocesan priest, came to the community.

Deacons who served at the church have included Richard Mooney, 1977; Louis Benoit, 1979 and 1980; and Ed Moran, 1981.

As the church grew, it began to reach out to the community. The majority of its outreach in Buchanan County began to occur in 1977 after a devastating flood ravaged the community.

It was at about this same time that the Filipino community became firmly established in the county. Neresa and Granwel Esteban were the first to arrive and were followed two years later as Filipino nurses came to the community through a program at Grundy Hospital.

In the summer of 1976, the first nuns arrived in the area when three members of the Congregation de Notre Dame arrived in Hurley. They were Claudette Labrie, Julia Lydon and Rosemarie Miller. Sr. Miller is the only one of the original three still in the area. Throughout the years, Cathy Molloy, CND; Lorraine Duval, Daughter of the Holy Spirit; Barbara Arnesen, CND; and Pauline Desroches, DHS, have served in the Knox district of Buchanan County. Presently there are three sisters in the area, including Sr. Miller and Jaculyn Hanrahan,

CND, both of whom teach in the English department at Hurley High School and Pauline Champagne, DHS, the community outreach person.

A thrift shop in the Hurley community is still operated by the sisters.

Another outreach program of the church began after the flood of 1977 when the Buchanan County Housing Group was formed. *with the Buchanan Housing Group*

After the flood wreaked havoc, parishoners at St. Joseph's became directly involved in repairing damaged homes through volunteer help, coupled with donations received.

After flood repairs, were made, however, it became evident additional repair work was needed at homes throughout the county and the volunteer service was continued and still continues to operate today.

Fund raising projects cover the group's expenses, as do grant monies. The group works with the Rural Development Agency in Scott County providing weatherization for homes here and is the contact organization for the water project which works to provide running water for low income families by lending assistance with well drilling or hook up to public supplies.

In 1979, the student group from the College of William and Mary began making its yearly trek into the area during the college spring break to help the disadvantaged.

Socials were held a couple of times a year in the 1970s and Thornbury remembers them as being "great fun." The summer social was usually a barbeque affair at which Salak officiated as head chef and Maggie Gomez organized games and festivities for the children.

"I remember thinking what a diverse group we had," Thornbury recalls. "Our church members were all active in community affairs and enjoyed a good reputation in the community. We were close as members, but actual bonding came about because of the deaths within a short time of each other of several of our parish members."

The deaths to which she referred were those of Tom Holland, Luke Owens and Larry Smithberger and the tragic deaths of Steve Owens and Robbie Baxter.

Thornbury recalls the congregation really seemed to pull together then, each helping the other to get through it.

"It was sort of a crucible for us all," Thornbury says. "The parish seemed to pull together."

The physical church has changed little since its dedication 25 years ago, although a porch and a ramp were added to the front of the building. The altar was also changed somewhat in subsequent remodeling.

A stained glass window was added in 1982 when the Baxter family donated it to commemorate the life of Fr. James Walsh, who died that year in Ireland.

While numbers in the church have dwindled in the past few years as children grew up and moved from the area or others left because of economic conditions in the county, the parishoners still attending the church continue to practice what was started and made possible by events years ago.

The church building itself is 25 years old today, but the church - as scripture says - is not just the physical building.

While today 25 years of having a permanent home in which to practice the Catholic faith in Buchanan County is celebrated, also celebrated are the living, breathing people who as members came together and who continue to come together as one to become a dwelling place for God.

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*"... It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit. Now the body is not one member, it is many ..."*

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*1 Corinthians 12:12-14*