



Willi's Word

The Newsletter of the Community of St. Willibrord Parish
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Summer Edition - 2006

Summer is upon us! Here at Saint Willibrord's that means Bible Camp and your summer's issue of Willi's Word. In this issue, our church organist Alan Daye says goodbye, a parishioner writes about her pilgrimage to Italy and our Church historian gives us another chapter in the story of St. Willibrord's Parish.

Protestant Hymns in Saint Peter's

One Saturday afternoon, I was sitting quietly waiting for the five o'clock Mass to begin. The pews were beginning to fill up. The cantor was standing to the left, waiting to begin the singing. Many of my fellow worshippers had that slightly bored look of the five o'clock Mass-goer; but I could not have been more excited. This time I was not gazing up at our beautiful fresco of Christ the King in St. Willibrord's; rather, I was looking straight into the world famous, shining orange window of the

Holy Spirit, that beautiful window of alabaster that seems to glow with its own light. Here I was at last, a pilgrim at the heart of the Catholic Church, Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.



I was on my first trip to Italy with a small Church group from Ticonderoga, New York. For the past ten days, I had been in a continual state of wonder. I was amazed at the incredible, natural beauty of Italy, especially Tuscany with the

luminous green of its hills and fields contrasting so sharply with the blackish-green of the stately cypresses. The artistic beauty of Florence and the spiritual beauty of Siena had quite overwhelmed me. We had also attended an outdoor audience with Pope Benedict the Wednesday before. It was especially thrilling to my fellow travelers and their priest Fr. Bill Muench when the name of their parish, St. Mary's, was announced over the loud-speaker along with hundreds of other parishes from so many different countries. The Pope gave a little talk on a psalm in Italian, French, English, German, Spanish and Portuguese. Some parishes even sang a little song for the Pope when their church was announced. It was a delightful example of the universality and inclusiveness of the Catholic Church.

So here we were back at Saint Peter's for our last day in Rome, attending "the five" like so many others, the world over, because we would be flying home Sunday morning. I had just prayed for Fr. Cameron and Saint Willibrord's at the

tomb of Bl. Pope John XXIII which had been moved up into the basilica because of his beatification. Little did I know as I sat waiting for Mass to begin that my most touching experience in all of Italy would involve the playing of a Protestant hymn; for as I got up to receive Communion, the cantor, with a marvelous baritone voice, began to sing (in Italian of course) one of my best-loved hymns from my Protestant childhood: Abide With Me. As I knelt down to thank the Lord for coming into my heart in Holy Communion, I could not stop crying as the melody of Abide With Me continued to resound through Saint Peter's Basilica. A wonderful sense of the continuity of my life with God overwhelmed me with joy. My life seemed, at that moment, like one wondrous circle of coming from God and going to God. I will never forget the playing of that Protestant hymn at "the five" in Saint Peter's Basilica.

Dorothy Ormsby

My dear friends at St. Willibrord's

As we approach the end of the Easter season, I stand amazed at how fast the last weeks have flown by. It was on Easter Day that I stood before you, moved to tears by your outpouring of affection and appreciation as my ministry among you as your parish organist ended after a tenure of some six years. Those years, also, flew by quickly, and resulted in the creation of many beautiful friendships that will last a lifetime. As I look back, you may remember that I was visited by a mysterious illness during my first weeks with you. To this day I truly believe that it was through



your prayers that I enjoyed recovery to decent health. Together we have met new challenges, seen many changes in our community, shared our times of joy and of sorrow. Your love and support, and your good wishes for my success in my new position continue to be a true blessing to me, and you will always remain in my best prayers.

When I came to St. Willibrord's, I quoted a section from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as Sirach, wherein the writer tells us that the labourer, the farmer and blacksmith and their kind, won't sit in the judge's seat or teach in the assembly, but "These [the workers] keep stable the fabric of the world, and their prayer is in the practice of their craft". It is this last line that has directed my mission for most of my life, and now I simply pray in another place. Thank you for allowing me to be part of you, and for sharing the last six years of my voyage here with you.

Alan Daye

*"How good to celebrate our God in song; how sweet to give Him fitting praise.
The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, gathers the dispersed of Israel. He heals the
broken hearted, binds up their wounds. He numbers all the stars, calling each of
them by name." Ps 147: 1-4*

“The Cornerstone”

The days leading up to Sunday, Sept. 26 in the year 1926 were indeed eventful. Only the day before, MacKenzie King's Liberals returned to power following three months out of office when Arthur Meighen's minority Conservative government fell earlier in the week.

In east-end Montreal, at a ceremony held with great civic hoopla, a time capsule containing fifty-nine contemporary objects was inserted into one of the hundreds of stones making up pylon # 26 of the enormous Harbour Bridge (now the Pont Jacques Cartier) which was under construction at the time. Unfortunately, none of the dignitaries and officials present that day thought to record where in pylon # 26 the particular stone containing the capsule was placed and so it has likely been lost forever.

However, on Willibrord Avenue that sunny Indian summer day of Sunday Sept. 26 almost eighty years ago, the stone that was to be laid that day, though it would contain only one object, would always be readily locatable and well-marked. It would act as a reminder to those entering the church of the willing sacrifices made by that generation of parishioners as they saw their vision becoming reality through their prayers and their perspiration in what was to become today's beautiful and sustaining heritage church.

Hundreds of parishioners and neighbors gathered at about two in the afternoon to welcome Msgr. Georges Gauthier, (the acting Archbishop of the Diocese due to the illness of Bishop Bruchesi.) They gathered in the first church, their numbers spilling out onto the sidewalk in front. Then, led by Bishop Gauthier, Father McDonald, and others, some of whom would figure prominently in the future of St. Willibrord's, such as Fathers Martin Reid and Frederick Elliott, and sixteen year old altar server George Thoms, they processed to the site of the new church under construction. Less than nine years later, in this new church a-building, young George would become the first St. Willibrord parishioner to be ordained to the priesthood. Ultimately, he would be Father Cameron's predecessor as Pastor.

When the long procession arrived at the location of the stone on the site of the new church the big crowd fell silent. Msgr. Gauthier blessed the rising structure which would open officially the following April. He then addressed the crowd briefly, congratulating the parishioners for their deep faith and for their support of Verdun's first and only English-speaking parish (which it remained until 1944.) Then with a flourish scooping of cement, the Bishop deftly applied trowel to stone and positioned the lead-lined block containing its single object into place to much cheering. While it isn't recorded, it is likely everyone then retired in true St. Willibrord fashion to the church hall for a reception.

The inscription of the exact date on the cornerstone, plus the unprecedented occurrence following the ceremony (in which parishioners were invited to endorse a special minute in the parish records book as a memento of the occasion), tell us that this singular generation was able to foresee just how important this day was to be to the future of St. Willibrord's.

Today, some four generations later, we, today's parishioners, are the ones charged with the challenging responsibility of stewardship of our church building. Those faithful folks back in 1926 built it and, all of us, as heirs, are the custodians of its maintenance and good health. So far, the parishioners, alumni, and friends of St. Willibrord's have done a commendable job and continue to do so as the present refurbishing of the exterior confessionals will attest.

We, though smaller in numbers, are as committed to the preservation and maintenance of our building as those of our 1926 forebears were to building it. This fact is constantly borne out in the generosity of all who have contributed and continue to fortify and assist the building fund as we endeavor to erase our present deficit of 170 000 dollars in order to continue to maintain our church building in excellent structural health for generations to come.

Oh, yes! The object in the lead-lined box within the corner-stone?
The original deed to the first church.

Paul Moreau

A Few News Items

This was the busiest year yet for our soup kitchen: The Hospitality Centre. We are feeding more guests than in the past and therefore are very grateful to those who have donated financially to our efforts as well as to our hard-working coordinator - Tess Alonar and to our faithful volunteers: Steve Kuzak, Esther Weibel, Ed Bond, Richard Davies, Tim Kerwin, Rene Simoneau, Bill Owen, Barbara Lamouche, Rosemary Fox, Denise Fox, Maurice Daigneault, Sterling Smith, Rev. Gerry Westphal and students from Rosemount High School, MIND, and Prospective.

"I was hungry and you gave me food." Mt 25:35

While visiting Montreal on Church business, Canon Émile Seiler from Echternach, Luxembourg, paid a visit to St. Willibrord's Parish. He was glad to find a Parish named after his country's patron saint. Father Cameron showed him around the Church and told him about our pilgrimage to Echternach in 1998 to visit the tomb of Saint Willibrord.

We received from Ed and Josephine Scott of Calgary Alberta, a wonderful book on the spirituality of aging called Winter Grace by Kathleen Fischer. It approaches the problems of aging by relating them to certain parables in the Gospel. We heartily recommend this book filled with much wisdom and hope.

St. Willibrord Parish Mass Schedule

Saturday5pm
Sunday9am, 11am
Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri8am
Wed7pm

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Friday8- 11am

Upcoming Events

Mass for Sick & Elderly - July 16, 11am
Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick will be celebrated

Bible Vacation Camp - June 26 - July 7
Call the rectory to register. Sign up early!