

A BRIEF HISTORY

run by Dennis McBride. All these groups were established to build community and shape the future that we have today at St. Gregory's.



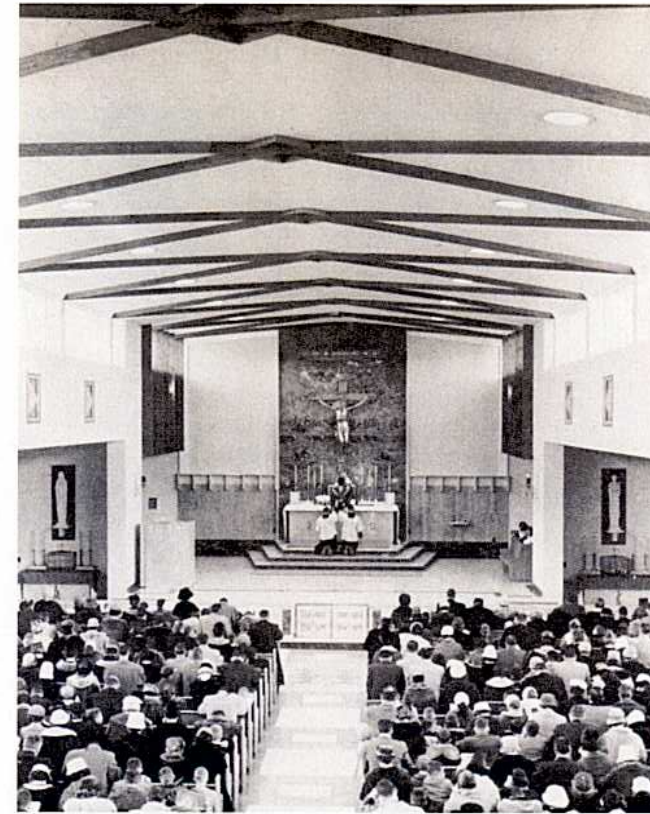
Following a December, 1957 survey and census of the Catholic families, Father Clarkson launched the Building Fund Campaign in April, 1958 with Joe Primeau as its Chairman. Mr Primeau, along with other men in the parish, secured pledges in excess of \$83,000 which made the construction of the church possible. Through the efforts of Dennis McBride, a further \$12,000 was acquired by soliciting new members of the Parish. Many of our parish organizations also held a variety of community activities to raise additional funds for the church.



It took a year of working with the architects and builders to develop the plans for the church before they were presented to His Eminence Cardinal McGuigan for approval. On July 22, 1958 at a very simple but moving ceremony held at the site where the church was to be erected, the first sod was turned by Father Clarkson. He was assisted by the Most Reverend Percy H. Johnson, Reverend C. Dougherty of Our Lady of Peace Parish, the architect Dr. A. Kulpa, and the general contractor, Mr George Le May.

St. Gregory's Church is a fine example of the modern

trend in church architecture that took shape in the '50s. Acute angles, straight lines and vertical planes were effectively combined to create a degree of functional efficiency. Its pews, which seat 600 people, provided unobstructed views of the marble main altar, communion rail, and pulpit. It even boasted a crying room where mothers could take small babies!



On June 14, 1959 at 7:45 a.m., the first Mass was celebrated at St. Gregory's Church. Later that afternoon, 125 excited children received their First Holy Communion in the new building. The official opening and blessing of the church was celebrated on September 13, 1959 by Cardinal McGuigan.

The choirs were formed under the directorship of Mr. Don Frazer and Mrs. Frazer; the organist. The first baby was baptized on Sunday August 2, 1959 and the first wedding took place on Saturday, August 15, 1959.

In subsequent years, St. Gregory's has celebrated many baptisms and marriages. There are four choirs: The Children's Choir, the Youth Choir, the Senior Choir and the Tuesday Evening Choir. We have seen the parish grow from 300 families to over 2,000 families.

During the past fifty years, we have been served by five Pastors: Father Henry Clarkson, Father William O'Leary, Father Charles Reeves, Father Steve Kopphenstiener, our present Pastor, Father João Bertão and one Administrator, Father Boulos Saleh. Father Clarkson had celebrated thirty-five years as an ordained priest. He died of a stroke on October 21, 1975 shortly after that anniversary.

The volunteer groups of St. Gregory's have always been an integral part of the parish community. Among those assisting the pastor in the everyday operation of the Parish are Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, the first six of whom were dedicated in July 1973, the Pastoral Council

with John Plunkett as its first President, the Altar Society, and many others lending a hand in a variety of ways.

In 1976, the Church underwent its first major renovation in response to the new Liturgy that was a result of Vatican II. In July, 1968, DeMonford Studios was commissioned to develop the stained glass windows for the main level of the Church and in May of 2004, the same studio was commissioned to create the upper level stained glass windows. Both these projects were sponsored by donations from parishioners.

Major renovations were undertaken in July 2008. The steps and railings were upgraded, the front and side doors of the church were replaced with beautiful etched glass doors, and a barrier-free washroom and the long awaited elevator were installed. Additional improvements are currently being made to our kitchen and auditorium with an eye to the future. The structure of the Church continues to be improved to serve the needs of our community with the support and sponsorship of the parishioners.

St. Gregory's Church has always been blessed with having Assistant Pastors who were first appointed in the early years of the church and today, it continues to be blessed with having wonderful visiting priests assisting the Pastor on Sundays. It has also welcomed many newly ordained priests who have celebrated their first Mass at St. Gregory's.

Over the years, St. Gregory's has welcomed families from all over the world. This was especially so during the Canada-hosted 2002 World Youth Day celebrations. Through the guidance of our WYD Parish Co-ordinator, Ann Andrachuk, St. Gregory's parishioners opened up their homes to our international guests. The friendships that were nurtured still continue today.

The 50th Anniversary celebrations began in September, 2008 with a special Mass celebrated by Bishop John Boissonneau followed by a lovely reception. They continued with our Gala Dinner Dance at Famée Furlane and the celebrations will conclude with our Anniversary Mass at 12:00 noon on Sunday September 13, 2009 with Archbishop Thomas Collins as our main celebrant.

St. Gregory's Parish is warm and welcoming to all people. □

