

Our Lady of La Salette, Rainham



Golden Jubilee 1938-1988

*A SOUVENIR OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE
OF THE PARISH OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE
1938 - 1988*

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE

1 RAINHAM ROAD
RAINHAM, ESSEX RM13 8SP
Telephone: Rainham 52897

15 August 1988

Dear Friends,

A jubilee is a time of rejoicing and we have great cause to rejoice as a parish in this Golden Jubilee Year. We rejoice, first of all, in God, and have set aside this year to celebrate His favour to His people.

The past 50 years is a story of God's provident care and blessings as witnessed in the lives of so many people who worked to establish, build and nurture this faith community at Rainham. We celebrate their faith, example, devotion and service to our La Salette Parish. It is that same spirit which continues to energize us in the present day as we seek to become what the Lord calls us to be.

To observe our jubilee year we present this booklet not only to retell our history but to capture something of the spirit of our life together in the first fifty years. We are indeed grateful to those who have shared their memories and stories of the years gone by. Special thanks is given to Ed and Janet Speight who have willingly taken on the research and compilation of this booklet, and to West & Coe for their financial assistance.

In marking this historical point in time we look forward into the future as a people of faith. It is very fitting that we welcome The Reverend Frederick R. Flaherty, M.S. as our new parish priest, marking the beginning of our next fifty years.

May God continue to lead and guide the La Salette Parish into our future when He will become "all in all."

Sincerely,

James H. Kuczynski M.S.
Rev. James H. Kuczynski, M.S.
Parish Priest

BISHOP'S HOUSE
STOCK, INGATESTONE
ESSEX CM4 9BU
STOCK 840268

In the same year as the diocese gives thanks to God for the sixty years ministry of the La Salette Fathers amongst us, the parish of Rainham rejoices in celebrating its Golden Jubilee. The Lord has done wonderful things through generations of parishioners, so ably ministered to by many dedicated priests of the La Salette Order.

It is very appropriate that we celebrate such an anniversary; it enables us to be truly grateful for what has been achieved and it also gives us an opportunity to be renewed in our commitment as co-workers with the Lord in furthering the Kingdom of God.

I send you all my warmest congratulations and the assurance of my prayers that the Lord will lead you from strength to strength in joy, peace, love and hope through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady, to whom your parish is especially entrusted.

Thomas McMahon
Bishop of Brentwood.

Missionaries of LaSalette

Office of the Provincial

July 6, 1988

Dear Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings and best wishes as you celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Parish of Our Lady of La Salette, Rainham, Essex.

During its history, the parish at Rainham and the Missionaries of La Salette, Province of Our Lady of Seven Dolours, have enjoyed an inter-relationship which we, indeed, celebrate and value. It is a life-giving relationship which has nourished all in faith and commitment.

At La Salette, Mary called her people to listen to her Son, to accept the good news of Reconciliation. For fifty years at Rainham, the Missionaries and parishioners of Our Lady of La Salette have worked together in partnership as ambassadors of reconciliation. At this point in the partnership we give thanks to God who has begun this good work and through His loving presence to His people continues to bring it to fulfillment.

I also pay tribute to the dedicated spirit of the founding members of the parish who, with their priests over the years, have created a supportive community of faith which continues to nourish and strengthen God's people in the present day.

In this Marian Year, I invoke the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, who has promised at La Salette to pray uncessingly to her Son on our behalf. May she ask the Father to send the gift of His Holy Spirit upon the parish community at Rainham in this jubilee year. May that gift of the Spirit continue to enliven you so that you may come to know the greatness of God's love for you.

With every prayer and blessing,

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Reilly
Reverend Thomas A. Reilly, M.S.
Provincial Superior

P.O. Box 6127 · Hartford, Connecticut 06106 · (203) 232-5343

A History of the Parish of Our Lady of La Salette, Rainham, Essex, England

Fifty years ago history was being made by a dedicated priest and a concerned bishop. The parish of Our Lady of La Salette was established in October 1938: the first catholic parish in Rainham since the reign of Henry VIII, almost 400 years ago.

The Priest was the Reverend John Patrick Cotter M.S. and the Bishop of Brentwood, the Rt. Reverend Arthur Doubleday. It was the very same Bishop who had invited the La Salette Missionaries to England in 1928 to help him in ministering to a rapidly expanding diocese. The Bishop's invitation and its timing was crucial, knowing as he did at the time, that an expedition to England the previous year by the Missionaries had failed.



Father John Cotter - The First Parish Priest



Bishop Doubleday

Father Etienne-Xavier Cruveiller and Father Louis Sorrel left Grenoble on October 15th 1927. On the 18th they crossed from Calais to Dover and they celebrated Mass in Westminster Cathedral in their official capacity on the 19th October. The following day they travelled North and on Thursday morning the 20th October, in the Presbytery of St. Cuthberts Blackpool, they presented their credentials in the form of an official document from their Superior General Father Celistin Crozet M.S., to Dr. Pearson, the Bishop of Lancaster, begging that their Institute be admitted into the relatively new diocese.

The response from the Bishop was devastating. He suggested they visit the district of Appleby and Kirby Stephen in Westmoreland, where he said the faith had almost disappeared. The following day the Priests started out and took three days to tour the possible new parish. Although they could not fail to be impressed by the beautiful scenery of the Lake District, seeing England at her stunning autumn best, the landscape could not fail to hide the fact that the Bishop was right. There were far too few Catholics in the area to support the Priests and they could see there was no future there for the La Salette Missionaries. Bitterly disappointed, they returned to Blackpool. Out of politeness they wrote to the Bishop telling him that the Fathers could not take charge of the area he had suggested. On October 24th 1927 they started the return journey to Grenoble, sorry and unhappy that they had failed in their mission to establish a footing for the Congregation in England.

Father Sorrel was in Rome in November 1927, as was a young Father Cecil McDonald studying at the English College. Father McDonald knew of the visit to England the previous month and had frantically tried to contact the two Fathers by telegram before they left Grenoble but had failed. The telegram which they read on their return urged them to speak to a contact in London, who might be able to gain them an audience with the Bishop of Brentwood. Father Sorrel was in no mood to return to London and face another possible rejection, so instead he wrote to the contact. There was no reply. The idea of establishing a house of the Institute in England had been postponed to an unknown future.

Also in Rome at this time was none other than the Bishop of Brentwood the Rt. Rev. Arthur Doubleday. Father McDonald, who was eventually assigned to the missions in Madagascar, managed to approach the Bishop. On Sunday the 20th November 1927 Father Sorrel, accompanied by Father McDonald, was presented to the Bishop of Brentwood. This time the interview was an outstanding success. This could have been due partly to the fact that the Bishop had served as Curate in the Parish of our Lady of La Salette and St. Joseph in Melior Street, Bermondsey and had made a pilgrimage to the site of the apparition at La Salette some years earlier. The Bishop gave his assurance that he would willingly receive the Missionaries into his diocese, in fact he had several places that would be suitable. On his return to England he would give the matter urgent consideration and in three or four weeks would make a definite proposal to the Superiors of the Order. Father Sorrel went away elated. At long last the breakthrough had been made.

Father Emile Replat, Superior of the La Salette Seminary, Altamont, New York, was the man chosen to be the first representative of the La Salette Missionaries in England. He arrived in Dagenham to become Parish Priest of St. Peters and Rainham, and celebrated his first Mass in St. Peters on 11th February 1928. The following day he went to Cowper Road, Rainham, where in his own words "I said Mass before a congregation of about 50 members, taxing to its capacity the tin Chapel". Although the building itself left much to be desired he was soon to find out that the Catholics of Rainham were a determined and resolute congregation. Until his arrival both St. Peters and Rainham were served as Missions of SS. Mary and Ethelburga in Barking led by Father Van Meenan, Father Holmes and Father Brady.

Father Jules Van Meenan was a truly remarkable man. Born into a wealthy family in January 1877, he left Belgium as a young man to study for the Priesthood in England at Oscott College near to Birmingham. He completed his studies and was ordained in 1902 on the feast of St. Peter and Paul. He worked for the Diocese of Westminster operating mainly in the east-end of London until in 1918 when the first Bishop of Brentwood, Bishop Ward, appointed him Parish Priest of Romford. Such was the mans missionary zeal and enthusiasm that in 1923 he became Parish Priest of Barking as well as Romford. It was in this capacity that he was able to welcome the La Salette Fathers to Essex, showing them kindness after kindness, encouraging them in their early days in adjusting to their new cold and damp environment. They could wish for no finer example. In 1930, as Canon Van Meenan, he was moved to Hornchurch to form the Parish of St. Mary, Mother of God. Here was another challenge and he started all over again not resting until he had built a new church and school. He was a man to whom this whole area owes a tremendous debt. He died peacefully in 1966.

Cowper Road Church, which opened on Sundays and Holy Days for Mass and Wednesdays and Saturdays for Catechism, was no more than a corrugated iron hut about 75 feet long and 25 feet wide. It was poorly lit and had no running water. Its history is difficult to trace: it would seem that the building had existed since the very early 1900s and yet as late as 1939 it was still being referred to in correspondence with the Bishop as the "Rainham Church" or "Rainham Chapel". Any name that it might have had in the beginning is almost impossible to trace and confirm. It was forced to close during the first World War, mainly due to lack of Priests, and it was not opened again until 1923. What is certain about the church however, is that Sunday Mass was attended over the years by the Catholic families of Rainham: families such as the Cooks, the Deleas, the Dunks, the Eckersleys, the Feeneys, the Gleasons, the Hellings, the Hills, The Kielly brothers and their sister Nell when she came to visit, the Lennons, the Leydens, the McCarthys, the Parfreys, the Rusts, the Wilsons, the Wisbys. The names could go on and on and still not include all those who attended and gave their time and support wholeheartedly.

There was a Mr. Button from Ferry Lane, for example, a shepherd on the marshes, who took the collection. Mrs. O'Donnell, Mr. Hancox and Mr. Trendgrove contributed their skills over the years to playing the organ, and Miss Jessie Lowe gave her time to teaching children their Catechism. Mrs. Stebbing, a non-Catholic who lived near by, who used her copper to heat up water so the ladies could clean the Church. One lady especially, Mrs. Rust, spent many unselfish hours as a labour of love, looking after the church and the vestments. All this occurred a long time ago but it is still remembered with great fondness by many of todays Senior Parishioners.

Rainham in the early 1900s was a rural community, standing on the north bank of the River Thames and situated 15 miles due East from the centre of London. Farms and farming dominated the area perpetuated today by the names of the large farms such as Berwick, Launder's Brights etc. Built up roads were rare, narrow paths and dirt-tracks being commonplace



Rainham Village in the early 1900s

which meant the most usual form of transport was horse and cart. Bicycles became very popular, providing the body and the tyres could withstand the bumps; but the most common method was to walk. The rustic setting was popular not only with locals but also with people living in the east-end of London. Southend was as yet undiscovered and so Rainham proved to be a very convenient holiday rendezvous at weekends and public holidays. From the Phoenix public house they strolled or rode along Ferry Lane to the riverside, and there they could sit down on the grassy banks and enjoy the river views and perhaps a simple picnic. For the more energetic, they could walk along the riverbank or take a pleasure trip by motor or rowing boat. A drink at the "Three Crowns" public house before starting for home was all part of the holiday ritual. However quaint it may seem now, it was not unknown for some couples to come from London to Rainham, or the surrounding district, to spend their honeymoon.

Helping Father Replat in those very early days were Father Fortier and Father Herbert. For Father Wolfgang Joseph Fortier it was his first appointment having only been ordained in 1927. Over the years came other Priests and they in turn stamped their own individuality on the memory. Although they lived at St. Peters, because of the enormous amount of time they spent ministering locally, the Priests were as familiar in Rainham as they were in Dagenham. Priests like Father Eugene Lynch, newly ordained in May 1932 who stayed until 1938. He returned from the United States to St. Peters in 1943. Also ministering was Father Ryan who is still alive and well and living in the United States. Father Cox is remembered as the only La Salette Father to be buried in this country. He collapsed and died at the Heathway, Dagenham and was buried at St. Patricks Cemetery, Leytonstone. Because of ill-health Father Gleason left England late in 1938. Try as he might he hadn't the strength to face another cold and damp English winter. It is ironic that after recuperation in the United States he was to die of malaria in the warm climate of Burma. Into his place at Dagenham came Father Timothy Donovan.

By the turn of the decade significant changes took place which changed the face of Rainham dramatically. The London County Council, in an ongoing attempt to abolish slums and alleviate overcrowding in the inner city, had begun building the Becontree Estate in neighbouring Barking and Dagenham. Thousands of people left the city and came East. The other major event was the arrival of the Ford Motor Company to Dagenham. Since 1911 the Company had operated in Trafford Park, Manchester but production had increased to such a volume that it outgrew the site. A Mr. Edward Grace of Henry Ford and Son of Cork, Ireland was given the task of selecting the site for the new Ford plant. In 1925, in spite of opposition, he chose 500 acres of marshland near the Thames in Dagenham. He paid £155,000. In 1929 Edsel Ford "cut the first Turf" and in 1931 production began. Ford workers and their families, numbering almost 2000, were transferred from Manchester on trains and coaches and absorbed into local areas including Rainham. From 1932 onwards thousands of people were heading for Essex from all over the world but especially from Ireland.

On July 26th 1931 St. Annes of Gale Street Dagenham was opened up and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary took up residence there. At the invitation of the Bishop they came to Dagenham in order to perform missionary work among the poor and to prepare the way for the school in which later on they would teach. A tremendous task right from the start, the Sisters set about the job in a positive and determined fashion. It wasn't long before they were as well-known and as popular as the priests. They accomplished wonders, especially among the children. Sisters Xavier, Mildred and Constance walked on a regular basis to Cowper Road Church to give religious instruction to the children and then to assist other members of the family in any way they could. The Sisters were always welcome wherever they went and were always a source of inspiration and love.

In 1932 Father Replat sadly returned to France. Desperately sorry to leave, he had become very much attached to this part of the world and to the many people who had shown him so much kindness. During his stay and in spite of many difficulties and hardships, he created the first parish census through sheer determination and devotion. This census was to prove so very valuable in later years.



Father Roux with altar boys Dan Rust, Tom Rust, Clem Leydon, Jim Fleming



Father Roux and Father Dolan entertaining visiting priests

On Sunday May 23rd 1932 Father John Cotter arrived in Dagenham, from Fairmont West Virginia, to take up his duties. Not a man to waste time he immediately set about raising money for a new school. Building work was started in August 1932 and the school was opened on February 6th 1933. Many children of Rainham families travelled the distance to St. Peters school in order to attend the only catholic school in the area. On completion of the school he set about building a new presbytery. Started in June 1933 it was completed and occupied in November 1933. This emphasized the sheer enthusiasm and drive of the man.

During the first four years of Father Cotter's stay, the parish of Dagenham and Rainham had grown considerably. An accurate measure can be gauged by the fact that in 1931 the Ford Motor Company employed 3551 people but by 1936 this had increased to 10,396. If one adds dependents to this number the size of the problem becomes more apparent. This together with an increase in ancillary industries in the immediate area stretched existing facilities to the limit. Both St. Peters and Rainham churches were bulging every Sunday morning; instead of 5 Masses each week-end the number increased to 10. Father Cotter approached the Bishop with the problem and was told that if the La Salette Fathers could find, and buy, a suitable site large enough to build a church, a presbytery and a school, then the Bishop would consider favourably a new separate parish in Rainham.

Late in October 1936 Father Cotter wrote to his Superior-General Father Cruveiller, who himself had been involved in the first search for a ministry in England, to inform him of the Bishop's statement and urging him to give the matter his earliest attention. Over the following months he became a familiar figure as he tramped the Rainham countryside, his dog Boots usually leading the way, desperately seeking a site for the new church. Throughout 1937 he walked, watched and waited until at last he saw what he wanted. The property that was known as "the Dovers Farm" was sold at auction to estate developers named Dovers Farm Estates. They in turn received permission from Hornchurch Council to build a new housing estate on this land. Father Cotter approached the developers and asked to buy approximately 5 acres of the land explaining why the need was so urgent. They listened sympathetically but that was all. They had a prime site and they knew that they would make a far greater profit building and selling houses. For a while deadlock prevailed.

Throughout the Parish of Dagenham and Rainham, Father Cotter was renowned for his oratory. The rumour is that his Homily on Mothers day brought a tear to many an eye. In fact his fame spread farther afield and the story is told that a certain Father Heenan from Ilford used to cycle to St. Peters on occasional Sundays to hear the sermons of Father Cotter. They must have been good to have inspired that particular priest who went on to become Cardinal Heenan. Father Cotter began his own personal war of attrition: he had waited a long time for this and he was not going to give in. Eventually his efforts produced results and the Estate Developers agreed in principle to sell approximately 5 acres of land to the La Salette Fathers. The next stumbling block was the price which was astronomical. Attacking this problem in a similar manner with patience and endurance, it wasn't too long before the Estate Developers capitulated. A very triumphant and delighted priest

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The telegram that Father Cotter had been waiting for.

wrote to Bishop Doubelday on December 8th 1937 to inform him that the land was now available and it would be bought and paid for by the La Salette Fathers. Was the Bishop still agreeable to the formation of a new Parish in Rainham?

The Bishop replied that he was.

From January 1st 1938 and throughout the year, Father Cotter was in continuous correspondence with the Bishop and his own Superior General Father Cruveiller. Finally on August 8th Father Cruveiller wrote to the Bishop agreeing to the purchase of the farmland and officially relieving the Diocese of Brentwood from all financial responsibility. On August 24th the deposit of £225.00 was paid with the balance due on October 31st. Actual possession took place on September 7th 1938. The official document was signed on behalf of the La Salette Fathers by Father John Cotter, Father John Roux, Father John Dunne and Father James Gleason. On October 2nd Father Cotter was officially announced as Pastor and Director. The end of an era had been reached; the beginning of the new was about to start.

The boundaries of the new parish were stipulated by the Bishop's Office. In the beginning they looked like this:

St. Peters	The boundary between St. Peter's Parish and the Rainham Parish will be a line drawn from the Thames on the South to the London Midland and Scottish Railway on the North at a point just East of the sanitorium; the sanitorium will be the dividing line and will remain within the limits of St. Peter's Parish.
Hornchurch	A line East from Suttons Farm to Hornchurch Royal Airforce Station; Suttons and the Airfield to be in the Hornchurch Parish. The East side of the Rainham Road to be in the Rainham Parish.
Upminster	The boundary between Upminster and Rainham Parish to be Warick Lane cross road at the point where Warick Lane crosses with Upminster Road. West of Warick Lane to the Airfield and East of Warick Lane to the Grays boundary with Upminster Parish, to be in the Rainham Parish.
Grays	From a point just East of Rainham Cemetery, South to the Rainham-Wennington Road. Along this road to South Hall. From South Hall by the stream, which passes under the railway, to the Lighthouse at Coldharbour.

What did the "Dovers Farms" consist of? What exactly did Father Cotter get for £4550.00s.00d? There was a farmhouse that was over 150 years old, a couple of barns and several outbuildings, plus a magnificent orchard of over 300 apple trees. The Farmhouse was to become the presbytery while the largest of the barns would be converted to become the badly needed new church. Three tenders were invited and when returned only £3 separated the three quotes. A building firm from Brentwood, owned by a Mr. Saunders, was chosen. His bill came to £1700.00s.00d.

By the October of 1938 Cowper Road church was in such a state of disrepair that Father Cotter, with the permission of the Bishop, began to say Mass in the presbytery. In his own words he said "the Chapel in Cowper Road is in such a state that it won't last much longer and moreover it cannot accommodate the people with any comfort on Sundays". By now he and Father Roux, had left St. Peters and had moved into the farmhouse. It would seem that they "inherited" a housekeeper named Miss Summer but she was an elderly lady and soon resigned as the work proved too much for her. To replace her Father Cotter managed to persuade Mary Nicholson to defect from St. Peters. He appealed to all the men of the parish to give some of their spare time in helping to assist with the conversion of the barn. The response was good. As always finances were very tight so it was essential that they helped themselves as often as they could. They all wanted to have the new church ready for the first Mass the following Easter.

The race was on! Night after night gangs of men reported for duty. The nights were dark and bitterly cold and most of those men had already completed an eight, nine or even ten hours shift elsewhere. The men that were on shiftwork, and most of them were, sometimes went straight to the church early in the morning to work for a few hours and take advantage of the daylight before going home to bed. There was a spirit of purpose and determination. Whether tradesman or labourer no demarcation lines were drawn or required, everyone gave their best. Today after all those years the names of those men are still remembered: men such as Joe Lennon, Jim Henry, Tom and Joe Kielly and so many more.

Due to the heavy financial commitment, Father Cotter put out an open letter to all parishioners explaining the need for more donations. He told them that the outdoor collection would be re-organised and he especially asked for sixpence from everybody in the second collection at the church. Again the response was good. Efforts were doubled and money was raised from all quarters. Dances, Whist drives, Jumble sales and even Boxing Shows were held. These proved very popular and other parishes were keen to send their particular 'champions' along to support the cause. A huge debt of gratitude was due to Rainham Working Mens Club who contributed their facilities willingly for all sorts of events. The ladies of the parish as always proved invaluable in organising their money raising events.

It has been a difficult year but enough had been achieved to warrant a sense of satisfaction. The parish had evolved, Guilds and Solidarities were firmly established, boundaries had been set and a new church would shortly be opened. A bombshell exploded when Father Cotter received a letter from the Bishop telling him that the name of the new church, Our Lady of La Salette, would not be allowed: it must have another saints name in the title. He was shattered. Over the next couple of months reams of correspondence flowed between Rainham and Brentwood. Father Cotter pointed out that there was a basilica in La Salette in France with the same title. The Bishop acknowledged that fact but within his own diocese he wanted to be absolutely liturgically correct and he insisted that the answer should come from the Vatican.

Rainham Catholic Building Fund

GRAND DANCE

IN THE

HAIG HALL

UPMINSTER ROAD, RAINHAM, ON

Thursday., Nov. 3rd, 1938

AT 8 p.m.

Come along and enjoy dancing to the music of
BROADWAY BLUES BAND

SPOT PRIZES, &c.

Admission 1/-.
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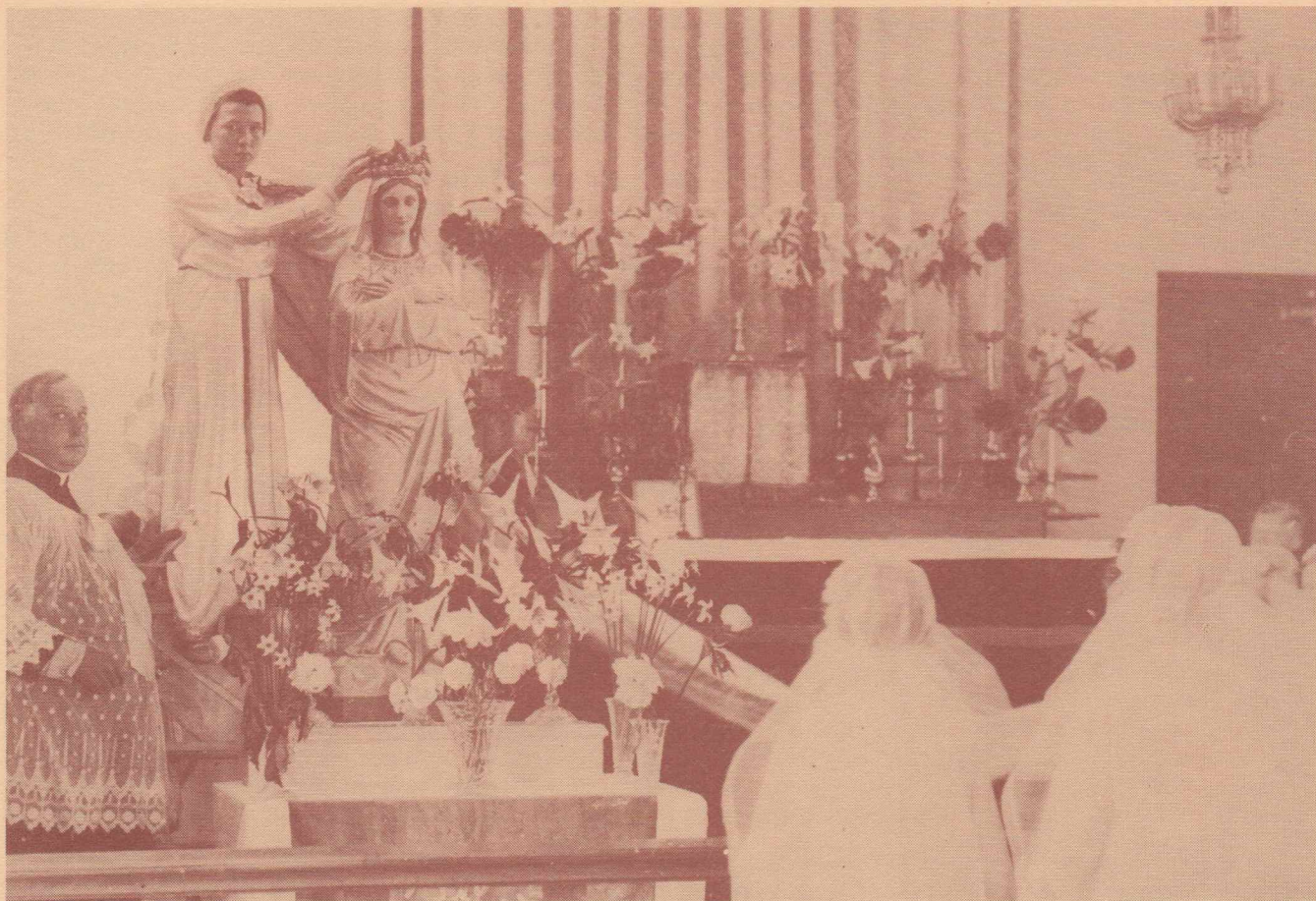
Fund raising dance notice.



Easter Monday and an enthusiastic holiday crowd support a fund raising Boxing Tournament



A Children's Christmas Party held at Rainham Working Mens Club.



Mary Lennon performs the first May Crowning Ceremony in the new church in May 1938. Father Cotter is in a supporting role.

For the first time since coming to England, Father Cotter was at an all-time low. At one time he was so depressed by all the bureaucracy and in order to end the matter, he suggested to his Superiors that the name of the new church might be 'Our Lady of La Salette and St. Theresa'. They declined the suggestion and persevered with what they called the "British formalities". In the meantime work on the new church continued with hopes still high that it would all be completed by Easter Sunday April 9th 1939. A desperate Father Cotter wrote a final letter on March 19th to his Superiors in Turin and pleaded with them to make available to the Bishop all the relevant paper-work that they had without delay.

Success! On March 31st Father Cotter received a letter from the Bishop informing him that agreement had been reached regarding the title of the church and that he himself would be along to inspect the new church on Monday April 3rd. This he did and it was an elated Father Cotter who celebrated the very first Mass on Maunday Thursday April 6th 1939. The Mass was served by Clem and Victor Leyden along with Dan and Tom Rust. A few weeks later Father Cotter purchased from Lyon at a price of £7.10s.00d a replica of the statue of the Crowned Virgin of Our Lady of La Salette. It is this same statue of Our Lady of La Salette that still has prime place in our present church and for fifty years has been the focus of fervent devotion to the Weeping Mother, Our Lady of La Salette. Donated by Mr. Issac Helling on behalf of himself and his family it was positioned in the church and crowned in the May procession by a young Mary Lennon.

September 1939 saw the beginning of war: a time that saw disruption among families, with men volunteering to serve in the armed forces, children being evacuated and sometimes whole families moving out completely. Father Cotter saw only some of this because he left Rainham in 1941. In nine years he had truly left his mark on the people of St. Peters and Rainham. He was a priest of the old fashioned school, who made many friends and we only have to look around us to appreciate all that he did for Rainham.

Father William Dolan, who was serving as assistant at St. Peters, took over in Rainham in 1941 and stayed throughout the war years. During these years the church and several buildings were damaged, especially during the weeks of the Battle of Britain, when the nearby air field at Hornchurch was subjected to constant bombardment. Fortunately Church and Priest escaped any serious injury. The most serious damage was to the church roof with slates likely to stay in place only until the next attack. As the war slowly continued this became an ongoing saga and the roof wasn't finally repaired until 1946. Window frames, broken glass, loose slates and doors were the usual casualties of a bombing raid. The presbytery did not escape unscathed and took several knocks. At the end of the war, Father Dolan left the parish to return to a seriously ill mother. Father Roux also left about this time.

1946 brought Father Fred Julien, Father Tom Conners and chronic shortages. Father Julien came to Rainham via Manilla where he had spent the war years in a Japanese P.O.W. Camp. It did not take him long to settle in and review the situation. In February he wrote to his Provincial requesting finance to build a new hall for use as a social centre, and thus a

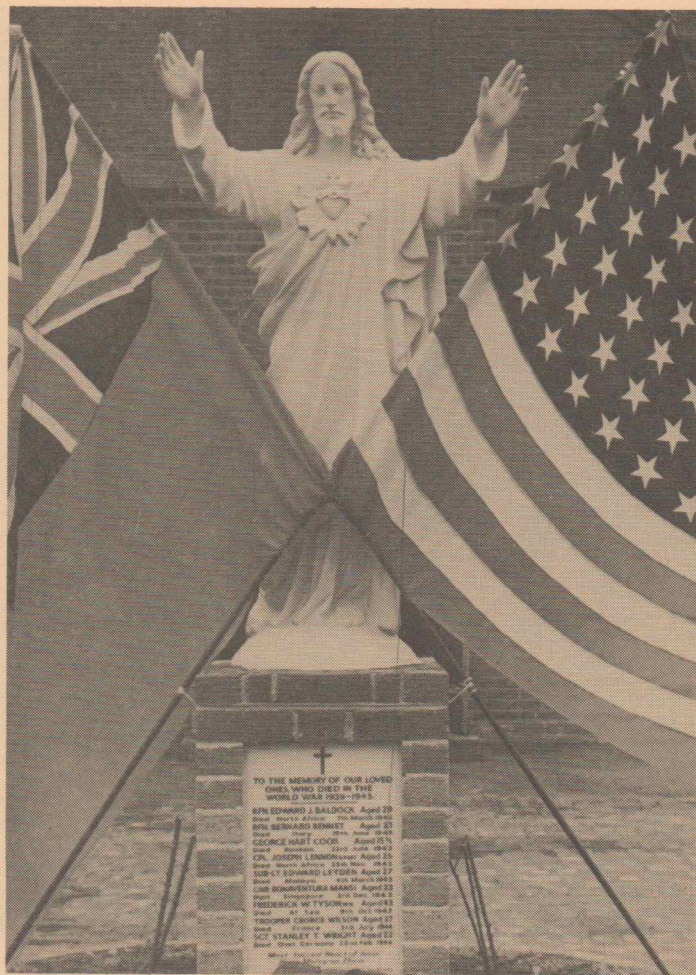
means of increasing parish income. A similar project at St. Peters had already proved a success. He went on to say that 80% of the bricks were already available and that the men of the parish were ready once again to use their skills and give their time. He asked for an early reply so that the men could take advantage of the long summer evenings. He closed the letter by apologising on behalf of Father Conners who couldn't write because he had a broken wrist, a result of falling off his bicycle, and to avoid the same accident happening again would it be possible to buy a car? . . . Please!

His request for finance was granted. The money was made available; once again the men of the parish rallied round and bricks and cement became the order of the day. They were so successful that the hall, which had previously been one of the brick built stables, was completed within a few months. The present Social Hall now stands on that site. Under the banner of Victory celebrations, a party was held in the hall on June 8th 1946 for 175 children. The hall was decorated with an assortment of flags of all nations courtesy of Joe Lennon and the Royal London Docks. The children were served with sandwiches, cakes, tea and, miracle of miracles, a little ice-cream. This was a tremendous effort on behalf of all concerned, and a major triumph especially for the Ladies of La Salette considering the severe rationing that was in effect at that time.

The following year Father Julien returned to America. During the year he had spent in Rainham he had never been 100% fit, undoubtedly because of his war time incarceration, and while here in the parish he never spared himself. Situated so close to the R.A.F. Fighter Squadron Base at Hornchurch which was an obvious target for the Luftwaffen, Rainham suffered more than its share of grief Father Julien proved an invaluable comfort to those who suffered the loss of family not only locally but all over the world. Sponsored by a small group of families he supervised the purchase of the statue of the Sacred Heart as a memorial to those who died.

RFN Edward L. Baldock	Died aged 29	March	1943	North Africa
RFN Bernard Bennet	Died aged 23	June	1943	Italy
George Hart Cook	Died aged 15½	June	1943	Rainham
Cpl. Joseph Lennon	Died aged 25	November	1942	North Africa
Sub-Ltn. Edward Leyden	Died aged 27	March	1942	Malaya
Gnr. Bonaventura Mansi	Died aged 23	december	1943	Singapore
Frederick W. Tyson	Died aged 43	October	1943	At Sea
Trooper George Wilson	Died aged 27	July	1944	France
Sgt. Stanley Wright	Died aged 22	February	1944	Over Germany

The statue was originally positioned immediately outside the church but it is now situated outside the presbytery. The Sacred Heart Memorial was dedicated and blessed by Mgr. Thomas Newman, a La Salette missionary in Burma, on Sunday 4th May 1947. Mgr. Newman was appointed the first Bishop of the Diocese of Prome, Burma and was consecrated Bishop by Pope John XX in St. Peters Basilica, Rome.



*Parish War Memorial Shrine dedicated
and blessed by Monsignor Newman
on May 4 1947.*

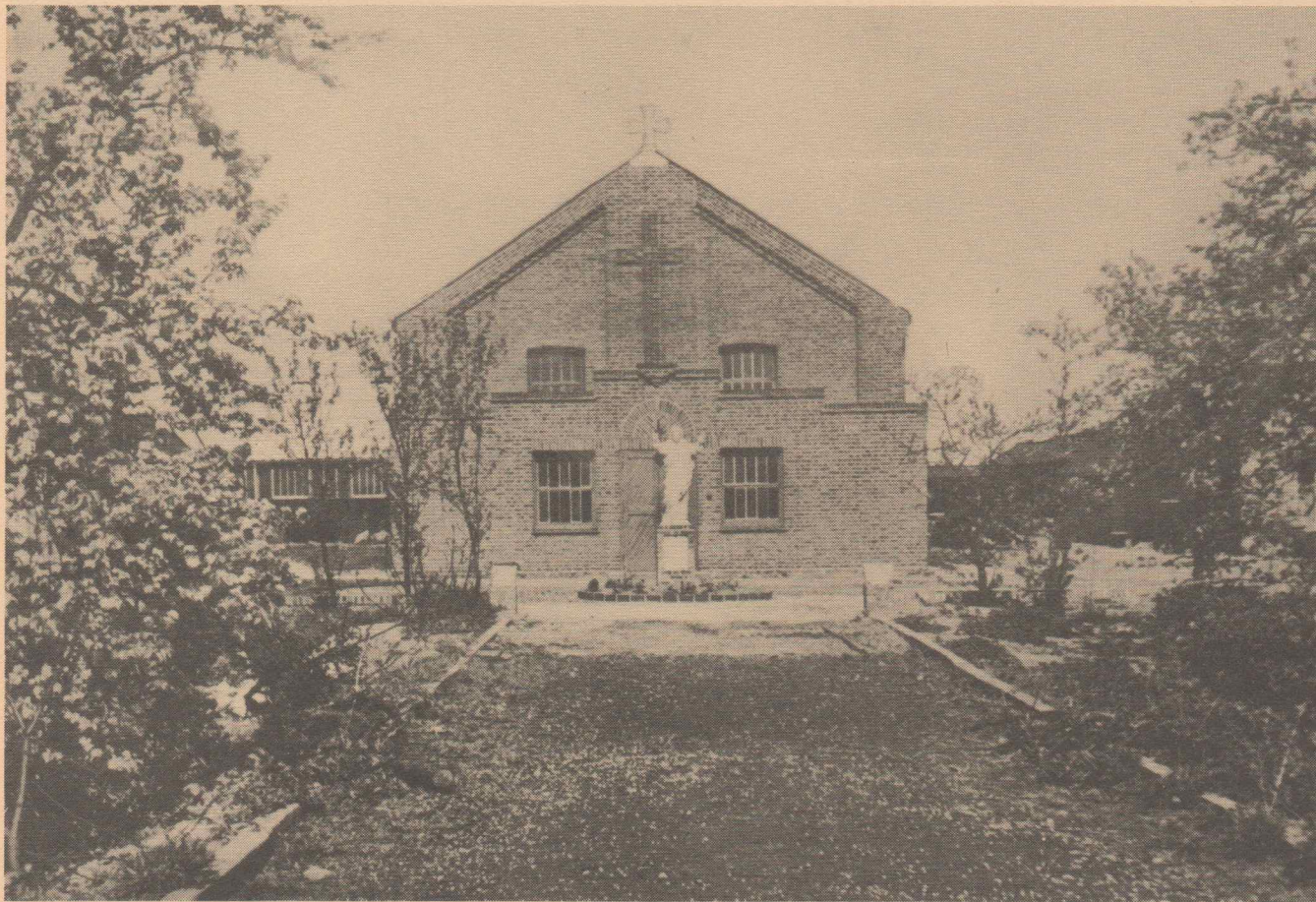


Monsignor Newman giving his Homily before First Communicants in May 1947. Alongside him are Father Rohrman and Father Thomas Rush (St. Peters)



The Ladies of La Salette

*Back Row L-R - Mrs. McCormack - H. Geary - E. Hall - M. Kiely - M. O'Leary - E. Henry
Front Row: L-R - L. Teale - R. Hill - Father Rohrman - M. Rust - K. Keane*



*The Church of Our Lady of La Salette This photograph shows the road that never was.
The local authorities would not approve a road leading directly onto the busy A13.*

Father John Rohrman arrived to replace Father Julien in 1947 and Father Connors returned to America to be replaced by Father Joseph Horgan. Unfortunately, due to ill health, Father Horgan was forced to return to America after a stay of only 18 months. During his tenure, Father Rohrman initiated a substantial period of building, culminating in the glittering prize of a new school. He, and once again the men of the parish, increased or improved existing facilities. The Church was decorated and enlarged, toilets were built and the sewerage system greatly improved. A road was started from the front of the church to the main gate, but the local authorities refused permission for the road to join the A13 main road directly outside. His ministry in Rainham lasted 13 years during which time he was without an assistant. He was not without a Housekeeper and he was served throughout his time by the loyal Phyllis Dibbs. The highlight came when Bishop Beck gave him permission for building to start on a new school. The parish was again experiencing growing pains, so much so that as early as 1950, plans were drawn up to provide a Primary school with places for as many as 280 pupils. The school was started in 1955 and opened in January 1957 and soon became an integral part of parish life.

To help pay for this venture Father Rohrman introduced to Rainham a money raising scheme called St. Peters Enterprise Club, that had been running in that parish for some time. Joe Lennon, Jim Henry, Tim McCarthy Snr. and Fred Parfrey took charge of administration and with scores of helpers, parish income was greatly increased.

In 1960 there was a straight swap between the Parish Priests of St. Peters and La Salette taking Father Rohrman to Dagenham and Father Balgenorth to Rainham. Assigned to Rainham at the same time was Father Joseph Sullivan. Although it turned out that his stay was not for very long Father Balgenorth soon became involved in parish activities. As early as 1960 the new school was proving to be too small for the ever increasing influx of families so he applied for additional classrooms to be built. He was granted permission but denied the 75% grant. Later in the year the Ministry of Transport, through Compulsory Purchase, took an acre of land off the parish property to improve the junction between Rainham Road and New Road. That one acre cost the Ministry more than the whole estate had cost Father Cotter but it represented money in the bank towards the school extension. Probably the two innovations that Father Balgenorth might be remembered for most of all was the introduction of Sunday evening Mass and the start of the weekly Newsheet. His was a brief but memorable stay at La Salette. In 1961 he returned to the United States of America where he continued to work, but illness caught up with him and he died in 1965.

The sixth Parish priest, Father Joseph Nolan, arrived in 1961. he struck up an instant rapport with Father Sullivan and soon the pair of them threw themselves into the parish needs. Organisations, Groups, all kinds of activities were encouraged. The youth club was re-formed with Tim Manning and Margaret Rust lending an invaluable hand. Processions such as the May Crowning and Corpus Christi once more took a rightful place in the order of priorities. Nothing was too much trouble for these priests: Father Nolan had the relaxed approach to life and great difficulty in saying 'no' especially to children. Father Sullivan proved to be exactly the opposite: ever present throughout the parish he promoted all kinds of activity. Where else could you go to Mass on a Sunday and buy apples at the Presbytery door?

A spirit of awareness, commitment and awakening could be sensed during this period of La Salette history. The war and all its horrors was gradually receding into the past and for the first time people started to look to the future with optimism. There was a full employment, the shop windows had started to fill up and the future looked secure. Father Nolan was also looking forward: he knew exactly what was required to bring the parish up to date and to prepare for the next fifty years.

Father McNulty arrived in 1963 to replace Father Sullivan and he was just in time to witness the birth on paper of the biggest project the parish had ever undertaken. Plans were drawn up to build a new Church, a new Presbytery and to add extra classrooms to the school. A new Church was an absolute necessity. The roof had suffered damage several times during the war and although the slates had been replaced again and again the result left much to be desired. Dampness caused condensation to form and stream down the walls. It was a fact it was often warmer outside the church than inside. Electric heaters would have been installed but suspect wiring caused many difficulties, sometimes plunging Church, Church Hall and Presbytery into darkness.

Parishioners living close to or near the Parish boundaries were tempted to attend other new Churches such as Elm Park or Aveley. These had far better facilities with comfortable seats, kneelers and central heating which by comparison made Rainhams Church very cold and very antiquated. A bold plan was urgently required to carry La Salette into the seventies and beyond. For the first time ever, money was not necessarily the restricting criterion. It was an important factor but in 1963 a new system of "Planned Giving" had been established.

The Cathos Envelope Scheme was designed to provide a sound financial footing through parishioners pledging and contributing a fixed amount of money on a regular basis. With this guarantee, Father Nolan was in a position to lay the foundations to the parish as we know it today. In 1965 the classroom extensions were completed and work started on the new church. As soon as that was underway a committee was formed to study the possibility of starting a Catholic Social Club. This would provide a focal venue for social events for all parishioners and act as a source of revenue for the Church Building Fund. The obvious location was where the church hall now stood. With a "yes" decision from the priest and committee, work started on renovating the hall. Contractors were necessary to carry out the bulk of the work but again parishioners contributed their labour. Their reward came in August 1967 when a splendid Social Club was formally opened. There were 12 original committee members and of these twelve two names, Douglas Johnson and Lilly Teale, were put forward as Founder Members.

In July and August that year, with the help once again of volunteers, the building that had stood for over 150 years, and had served as a presbytery since the time of Father Cotter, was demolished and replaced. With his usual shrewdness Father



The Church after under-going renovations during Father Rohrman's time.



Father Nolan, Father McNulty and Janice Hood

Nolan decided that the best time to attempt this work was during the summer holidays and especially during the Ford Motor Company shutdown when many potential "volunteers" would be available. Parishioners and priests were amazed as they watched their new modern church being constructed before their eyes. It was huge compared to what they were accustomed to in the old church. The new church was designed according to the new liturgical trends and changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. A 'wish-bone' steel structure designed by Mr. John Newton of Gerald Murphy, Burless, Newton and Partners, the church stood prominently on the Dovers Corner roundabout on the main A13: a visible sign of the presence of the church to the surrounding neighbourhood. Still uncompleted the first Mass was celebrated in the church on Christmas Day 1966. It was a memorable event, for when the Mass began at midnight the electricity failed and the Mass continued in candlelight. Work on the new church continued and it was a proud day in October 1967 that the Bishop of Brentwood, The Right Reverend Bernard Patrick Wall, in a Mass of Dedication, blessed the cornerstone.

Father Nolan left Rainham in 1975: if he looked over his shoulder he would have experienced a tremendous feeling of achievement and satisfaction. With the help in the early days from Fathers Sullivan, McNulty and in the latter days with Fathers Nowinski, Nally and Rival, he has given the parishioners of La Salette a fresh start and a sense of purpose both spiritually and materially, and most of all it showed.



A meeting of The Holy Name Society. L-R - Jack Buttmer - Bill Dalton - Bill Napper - Father Nolan - Ed Scriven - Jim Bell.



Members of La Salette School

*Back Row L-R - Mr. Jackson - Mrs. O'Connell - Mr. Cook - Mrs. Wheeler
Front Row L-R - Mrs. McDonald - Mrs. Simmonds - Mrs. Harrington*

Father Nolan was succeeded by Father Michael Flanagan. As with all other Parish Priests of the time, Father Flanagan's concern was the implementation of the changes and spirit of the second Vatican Council. He worked to encourage and introduce the laity to the proper roles in the organization of parish life. After preliminary meetings a constitution was adopted in 1978 forming a parish council, as a representative forum of lay opinion seeking to motivate, guide and direct the parish. Lay Ministries were also being established. The first Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist were Derek Capon and John Fisher. A team of lay Catechists were also trained to help in sacramental preparation, especially First Eucharists. Other changes of this time included the Saturday evening Mass and the design of the Reconciliation Room for the adoption of new rite on Penance.



Father Mike Flanagan



Father Nolan with Father Carl Yusivitch

During his stay in Rainham Father Flanagan was helped over the years by Father Carl Yusavitz who later on concentrated his attention to the struggles of the people of Africa; Father Frank Bouchard who will always be remembered for his passion for large cc motor cycles and Father Eugene Brennan who left in 1986 to go to the Missions in Argentina: a priest who had a great love of people but a weakness for a football team called the Washington Redskins. Father Flanagan returned to the States in 1981 to be replaced by the present Parish Priest Father James Kuczynski who is assisted by Father John Dolan.

In 1984, through the generous help of parishioners, a long-standing financial debt was finally paid to the Missionaries of La Salette who had provided an interest free loan in order to build the present church. Free of debt, the parish was able to prepare for the consecration of the church.

A novena of prayer to our Lady of La Salette was celebrated. On successive nights of the novena the congregation was happy to welcome back the different La Salette priests who had served the parish: Father Fred Julien, Father Joe Nolan and Father Mike Flanagan, along with other visiting La Salette Missionaries. On the Feast of La Salette, 19 September 1984, The Rt. Rev. Thomas McMahon, Bishop of Brentwood, celebrated the Rite of Solemn Dedication. The Superior General of the La Salette Missionaries, the very Rev. Eugene Barrette, M.S., and the Provincial Superior, the very Rev. John O'Neil, M.S., along with Brentwood Diocesan Clergy, joined a church filled with past and present parishioners to celebrate the festive day. During the ceremony all the La Salette Missionaries present anointed the walls of the church with Holy Chrism in twelve places marked by crosses designed by a parishioner, Mrs. Maria Gill.

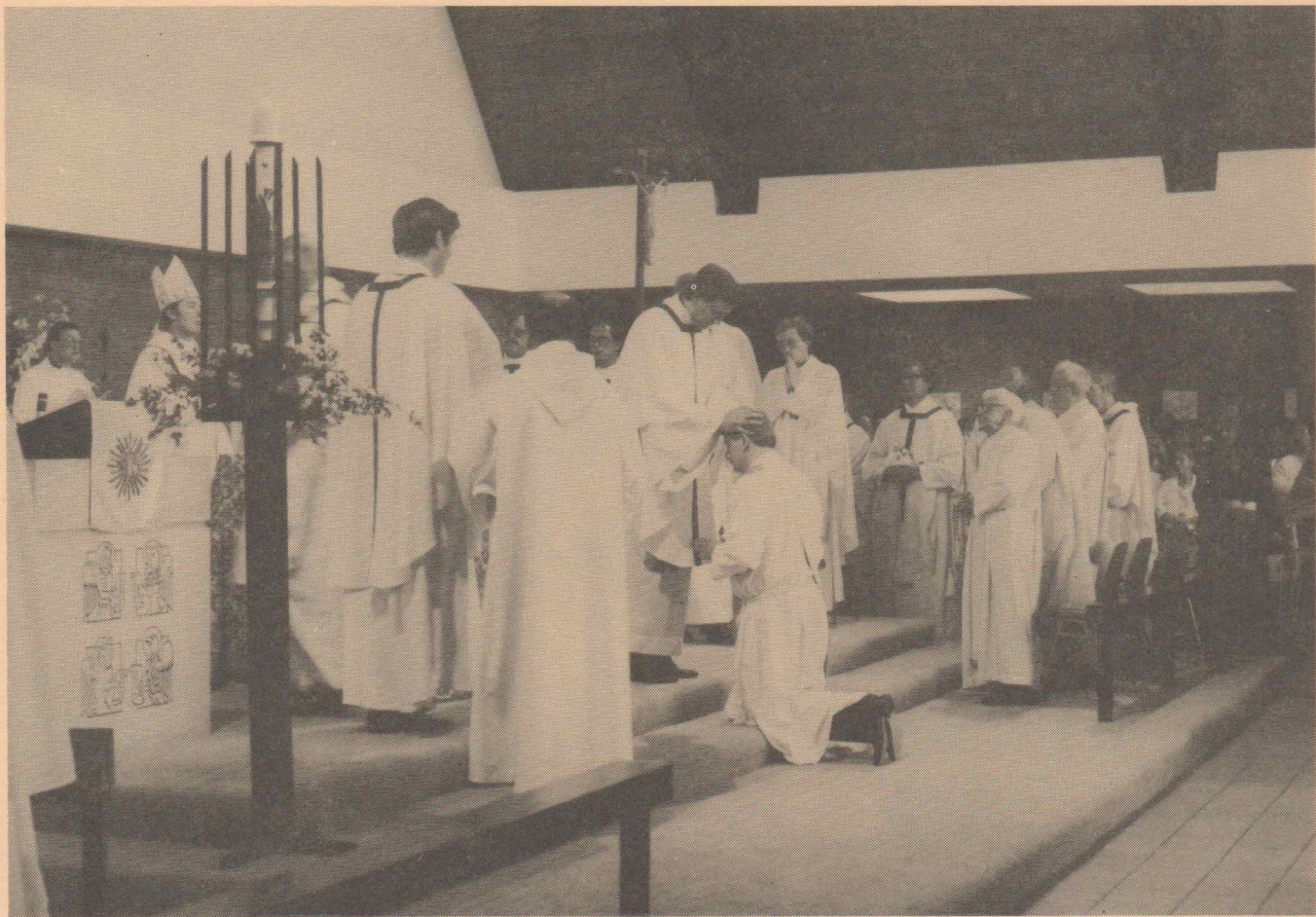
Before the altar was consecrated, relics of Sts. Thomas Becket, John Vianney and Maria Goretti, along with particles of the stone upon which it is believed that Mary appeared at La Salette were placed in the altar. In a moment of great joy and emotion Mr. Jim Henry, who, along with others, built the boundary walls on the parish property, built the Social Club, demolished the old presbytery brick by brick, and was Clerk of Works for the building of the new church, fittingly came forward to enclose the relics in the aperture of the altar. The words of Psalm 83, sung to music especially composed for the ceremony by Kevin Ruxton and Vince Nicholls, captured the spirit of the day: "O Lord, they are happy who dwell in your house."

Yet another happy occasion in recent history was the ordination of the priesthood of Paul McNamara on 16 May 1987. He was assigned to the parish as a deacon by Bishop Thomas McMahon who ordained him a priest for the Diocese of Brentwood. This was the first ordination to the priesthood to take place at La Salette Rainham. Forty-one years earlier, Father Gervase Leyden, a Franciscan whose family lived at Rainham Road South, celebrated his first Mass here at La Salette on March 17 1946 having been ordained at Brentwood Cathedral by Bishop Doubleday.

Two young women also entered into the religious life from the parish of La Salette. They are Sister Joan Henry, MPS, who entered the Religious Teachers Filippini in Medstead, and Sister Miriam Maloney who entered the Ursuline Sisters.



Father Jim Kuczynski and Father Eugene Brennan with Catechists - Margaret Earl - Bernadette Sullivan - Maureen Capon



Ordination Ceremony of Father Paul McNamara

The present year, 1988, marks the 50th anniversary of La Salette, Rainham. The Golden Jubilee Year began with a Mass of Thanksgiving on January 1st, and continue to be observed with a series of liturgical and social events throughout the year.

To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the parish, Goddard & Gibbs Studios, London, were commissioned to design a stained glass window to be installed to the side of Our Lady's Shrine.

The window, a semi-abstract presentation of Our Lady of La Salette, is made of richly coloured hand made "antique" glass. The main focus is the figure of the Weeping Mother encircled in light and ringed with a border of multi-coloured roses and chains as seen in the apparition. The second most important feature is the La Salette cross with hammer and pincers, symbols of the passion and reconciliation. The rich blue areas that surround the figure of Our Lady are dotted with tears, while in the right hand area, the amber and brown shapes refer to the spoilt wheat and crops about which Our Lady spoke in her message. At the left hand side, stylised pathways climb to a representation of the Basilica set among the mountain peaks.

The Jubilee Window is a most appropriate way to commemorate the foundation of the parish which is so steeped in the devotion and message of Our Lady of La Salette. As the original plans for the church intended for a stained glass window, the Jubilee Window adds a dimension of completion in this special year. In the years to come the Jubilee Window will celebrate the faith, devotion and dedication of parishioners, past and present, in the first 50 years of La Salette Parish History.

Finally, this has been an attempt to recapture the very early days of La Salette Parish Rainham and record it on paper. It is as accurate as a memory can be when time has turned many pages and in this case many memories have been shared and many pages have been turned. A million sincere thanks go to all those people who gave their valuable time, their stories and their treasured photographs, and who cared enough to make this presentation possible. Apologies for not recording all the stories and all the names but these too continue in the living memory of the faith of the community in Rainham, the foundation stone of the church which proclaims "Jesus is Lord."

Ephesians 2: 19-22

So then, you are not strangers or foreigners any longer; you are now fellow citizens with God's people and members of the family of God. You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the Prophets and Apostles, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself. He is the one who holds the whole building together and makes it grow into a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord. In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a place where God dwells through his spirit.