

# Connections

The Newsletter of Immaculate Conception Parish

February 2001

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### 150th Sesquicentennial Year of Celebration

Your parish began its year long  
sesquicentennial celebration!

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Share and grow your  
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### Immaculate Conception History - 1833-1871

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News about and for  
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Immaculate Conception

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## The "Year of Building Community" Begins

Community takes place when we "reach out" to all, always remembering God's word and the message of his Church is directed to one and all, and all God's people, no matter what their philosophical, ethnic, or racial backgrounds may be, are truly welcome in God's Church - which is our church.

By Father Edward Kelley, Pastor

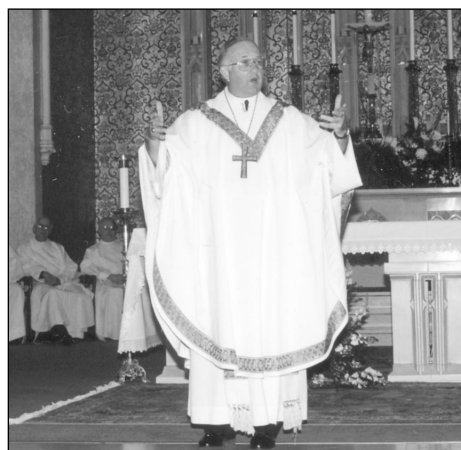
Friday, December 8, 2000, marked a milestone in the Immaculate Conception Parish history. On that date, our sesquicentennial celebration which has a theme of "A Year of Building Community" began with the words of Auxiliary Bishop Francis Christian who urged us to say "Yes to God and Renew your faith in the Spirit of Mary."

Our Parish community changes as does the community we serve. Older homes in our parish are being converted to businesses or condos which are occupied by young singles/ married couples. As our older membership declines, we are seeing an influx of younger families and singles.

Our parish needs to be "all things" to all those who approach our doors seeking God's word and to experience religious ministry and outreach. Each of our Parish worship services provide separate and distinct worship experiences. Our Saturday evening Mass is a traditional celebration with traditional hymns, the Sunday 9 a.m. Mass is a family Mass with the contemporary music group, and the Sunday 11 a.m. Mass is a traditional choir sung Mass.

The Parish is expanding its outreach to the entire downtown community with additional outreach to the elderly who occupy the "senior housing" in the area, through such programs as Bereavement Ministry, Friendly Visitors, Eucharistic and other religious celebrations, Anointing services and other outreach geared toward our senior parishioners.

Outreach to young families is enhanced by the activities of the Parish Life/Social Committee with social activities that bring Parish families together.



Auxiliary Bishop Francis Christian on the  
Feast of the Immaculate Conception,  
Friday, December 8, 2000 at the  
Mass celebrating the beginning of the  
"Year of Building Community."

Our hospitality ministry provides a warmer and more welcoming atmosphere by greeting parishioners as they enter the Church for worship services. Our women's club is making a concerted effort to accommodate their programs and meeting schedules to the needs of young mothers. The youth of the Parish are active in the celebration of liturgy by service as lectors, altar servers, Eucharist ministers, and ushers. Youth social programs are being offered in cooperation with the Office of Youth Ministry of the Diocese and we are examining the possibility of employing a "youth minister" in the

next budget year.

Community takes place when we "reach out" to all, always remembering God's word and the message of his Church is directed to one and all, and all God's people, no matter what their philosophical, ethnic, or racial backgrounds may be, are truly welcome in God's Church - which is our church.



Father Kelley, Bishop Christian, Father Kelley,  
and Monsignor Phillip Kenney looking over some  
historical photographs of Immaculate Conception

Photos by Peggy Darnell, Parishioner and Photographer

## Immaculate Conception Organizations

### — Immaculate Conception — Women's Club



As most of you know the Immaculate Conception Women's Club was founded in 1997 to assist the Parish spiritually, financially, and socially. Our primary emphasis in the first years was to financially aid the Parish. Recently our focus has been balanced between the financial and social aspects of the Parish. This has been a natural progression and we hope, in the near future to incorporate the spirituality to a much fuller extent.

President Sandy Tobin invites all women of the Parish to join, and of course, as always everyone is welcome to attend our meetings or assist at functions and events. Recently with your support we held a successful Christmas Bazaar (our fourth). I was

fortunate enough to man the Snack Bar and had a wonderful time, renewing old acquaintances and meeting new people. I believe everyone enjoyed the day, and many were seen leaving the school loaded down with so many purchases and prizes, that they looked as if they were in cahoots with Saint Nick himself.

On December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, our Parish held the "kickoff" Mass to its sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary. We were so blessed to have Bishop Christian along with a dozen priests concelebrate this glorious Mass - not something one is lucky enough to see everyday! Afterwards, the Immaculate Conception Women's Club, along with other Parish groups, hosted a lovely reception in the lower Church.

Our next event is a Saint Valentine's Pot Luck Dinner on Saturday, February 10th. Father Kelley may open his "Sesquicentennial Logo Shop" at this time. Don't miss the pot luck - I enjoy them because it is a great way to meet and socialize and sample items from those with better culinary skills than I.

Another upcoming event is the Easter Bunny Breakfast which will be held Saturday, April 14th. The breakfast features delicious pancakes and if his schedule permits, a visit from the Easter bunny. The children especially love this event!

Our meetings are held at half past six on the third Wednesday of each month, usually in the Parish Meeting Room of the Rectory. Newcomers are always welcome! Hope to see you there.

*Written by Janice Ferguson, Women's Club member*

## HEALTH TIPS from our Parish Nurses

**When you hear about our Parish Nurse program, do you wonder: What's special about Parish Nurses?**

Our Parish Nurses program does not replace the need for our own doctor. Yet, conducting a medical ministry through the parish, using trained, licensed Registered Nurses, can help reach the source of many ailments, stress and anxiety. Stress has long been identified as a major factor in heart disease. Some health professionals estimate that 60% or more visit internists for physical symptoms that have psychological.

Yet, modern medicine rarely has the time or capability to use our spiritual beliefs and resources to help us cope with the stress we all face.

Throughout the Old and New Testament, we find advice about faith, trust, and hope in God, and how to use our God given spiritual, mental and physical resources to cope with problems that seem beyond our capacity.

Listed below are some recommended ways to control stress, to live lives characterized by more peace, wholeness, less stress:

1. Accept circumstances beyond your control (Matt 6:25-27, Psalm 27:1-6)
2. Maintain a positive outlook (Psalm 71, Psalm 46)
3. Embrace the present (Luke 10:38-42)
4. Renew yourself and feed your spirit (Psalm 103:1-18, Psalm 25)

Parish Nurses can help parishioners use their beliefs to reduce stress in their lives, and decrease susceptibility to many of the illnesses resulting from stress and anxiety.

## PARISH ACTIVITIES YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN

### Disciples in Mission

Picture this: exploring the gospel, sharing insights, a small group setting, learning and growing in your faith, and helping others to grow as well. This wonderful experience is available in our parish during Lent through our Disciples in Mission program. Parishioners meet in small groups once a week for six weeks. The groups discuss gospel readings for the Sundays of Lent, and explore ways to put faith into action.

This is the second year of Disciples in Mission at our parish. Last year there were seven groups consisting of sixty parishioners which met at different times and days in order to accommodate many varied schedules. We hope that many more will take advantage of the program this year.

Many parishioners were enthusiastic about the program. Bridget Barker said: "I enjoyed the Disciples in Mission program. It helped me to focus on the weekly readings and gain insight into their meanings. It was a nice way to prepare for Easter."

Ramona Connelly said: "The Disciples in Mission program gave me the chance to think about the Gospel readings in light of my own experience and that of others in a small group setting."

Disciples in Mission will begin with a prayer campaign in which parishioners will pray for the success of the program. Prayer cards were distributed at masses on January 20 and 21 This will be followed by "Sign Up Sunday" on February 4. If you are not able to sign up at that time, you may call Sister Mary Joan Walsh at 436-6612. The groups will begin their discussions during the week of February 25, and will meet for the last time during the week of April 1.



## Immaculate Conception Parish History - 1833-1872



*Peduzzi Home on the corner of Congress and High Streets as it appeared in 1835*

Beginning in 1833 the first masses in Portsmouth were celebrated at the Dominick Peduzzi home above Mr. Peduzzi's Confectionery Store located on the corner of High and Congress Street. Mr. Peduzzi opened his home and hospitality to visiting Catholics and missionary priests. The first regular

Catholic services were celebrated by Father Constantine Lee and by 1836, Portsmouth was organized as a mission of St. Aloysius Church of Dover of which Father Lee was pastor.

By 1840 it became necessary to find larger space to serve the ever-growing Catholic community of Portsmouth. The Underwood house located at the westerly corner of Atkinson and Pitt (now Court) Streets, opposite the William Pitt Tavern was leased to John Morrison for religious purposes and became the new meeting place for Portsmouth's Catholic community.



*Underwood House on the corner of Atkinson and Court Streets in 1842*

Between 1835 and 1851, Irish immigrants fled their homeland due to the famine and found work in Portsmouth as laborers, spinners, carpenters, hosiery weavers, and laundresses. These Irish immigrants were the core members of the ever-expanding Portsmouth Catholic Community.

### ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Early in the 1850's, the congregation's size of 300 parishioners outgrew the Underwood house. In 1851 a new Catholic Parish was organized under the title of St. Mary's, the third parish to be organized in New Hampshire.

Father Charles McCallion, the first resident pastor, arrived on Nov. 21, 1851 and began organizing the parish with the acquisition of a parcel of land at the corner of Summer and Chatham Streets for the sum of \$1500. This parcel of land was known as Circus Field on Mason's Hill, a place where traveling circuses and carnivals would set up for city celebrations.

During the spring of 1852, the parishioners volunteered their skills and services and construction of the first church began. St. Mary's was simple in design. On October 8, 1852, the new church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, as St. Mary's by the Most Reverend John Bernard Fitzpatrick, D.D., Bishop of Boston. In 1854, Pastor McCallion was replaced with Rev. John O'Donnell and Rev. James Donnelly. These pastors remained only a few months and in June, 1855, Rev. Patrick Canavan became the new pastor. It was under his leadership that St. Mary's was completed. In 1855, the unfinished church was completed. At Pastor Canavan's urging, The Women's Club took on the task of raising funds for a cemetery to serve the parish needs. The Church purchased the needed land in 1859 across the road from the Portsmouth

Plains for \$650 and St. Mary's Cemetery was established. In September of 1865, Pastor Canavan transferred to Somersworth and was succeeded temporarily by Rev. John Barry. In 1866, Rev. Daniel W. Murphy succeeded as pastor. Pastor Murphy enlarged St. Mary's, had it frescoed and had a spire erected. He also purchased land at 202 State Street to erect a parochial school. In 1868, the school was built on the land (which is currently located between Temple Israel and the Matthew Marsh House). In June of 1869, Pastor Murphy was transferred to Keene and was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Cannon Walsh after serving as pastor in Exeter.

On November 27, 1871 tragedy struck when a fire of suspicious nature destroyed the church on an early Monday morning.

In a feature article dated November 29, 1956 in the *Portsmouth Herald* commemorating the 85th anniversary of Immaculate Conception it was reported that "In the midst of the tragedy, when firefighters were exerting themselves to the limit, an unknown person with a warped sense of humor, spread the story that the navy yard buildings were afire.

The city engineer actually gave orders to dispatch two engines across the Piscataqua before he discovered the alarm was a silly hoax.

Public resentment over the false alarm spoke out in the newspaper of the following day as an editor chastised 'That funny fellow who got up the report would have decided gain could he swop his head off in exchange for a medium-sized squash.'

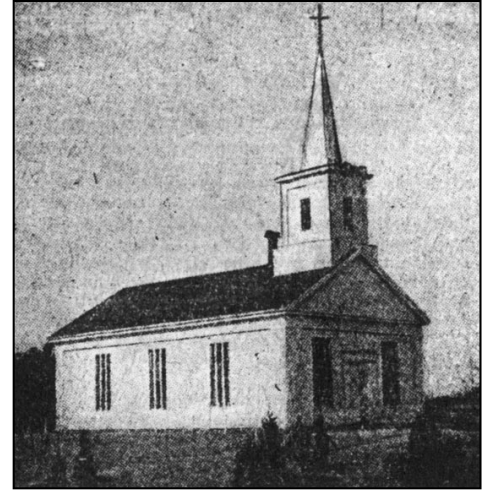
The fire also awakened the public to the need for additional water reservoirs, and local journalists carried letters urging the inadequacies of the water system be remedied".

Another result was the discovery that the Church property was underinsured for \$12,500 with the loss estimated at \$20,000.

On December 3, 1871, a parish meeting was called by Pastor Rev. Walsh to discuss fund raising for the new church. Father Walsh proposed a much larger, more architecturally striking brick church to provide for the needs of the large Portsmouth parish for many years to come. Attitudes during this period changed dramatically, for during the meeting Father Walsh spoke of the support of the community and thanked them publicly for their help during St. Mary's difficulties. The estimated cost of \$40,000 to \$50,000 posed a huge financial burden for the parish members to bear. The parish realized that to raise additional funds it would be necessary to sell the school property on State Street. This sale was completed in 1873 which also resulted in the parish ceasing operations of the parochial school until it could raise the necessary funds to build and re-open a new school.

On November 10, 1872, the cornerstone of the new church was laid. During the construction, church services for the parish were held in the Temple, which was on the site of The Music Hall.

*Watch for the next Connections when we cover another period of Immaculate Conception history. Much of this history comes from the Alexander V. Munton history that was published in 1977. John O'Sullivan, a parishioner, is conducting additional research and updating the history with additional facts as well as writing the history from 1977 to the present. If you have any items, stories that may be of interest, you can contact John at 603-436-1622 or email him at [adcetera@mediaone.net](mailto:adcetera@mediaone.net).*



*St. Mary's in 1852.*

Here's Your

# Connections

to the Events and Goings on of  
Immaculate Conception Parish

## PRAYER LINE

A telephone "prayer line" has been established here in the Parish where you can leave your special petitions or circumstances. A volunteer team member will then pass on these petitions to "prayer partners" who will keep you in prayer for the next week. You may place your special request by telephoning the Parish Prayer Line at 433-5642.

Additional information will be provided when you place your call.



*Tidbits about  
What's going on in  
your parish this quarter!*

### Stained Glass Window Update

The two stained glass windows on the right side of the Church closest to the Saint Joseph's altar are still in jeopardy as we await their repair. They are

- 1) The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and
- 2) The Marriage Feast of Cana.

As this was written, "The Apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to Saint Margaret" window was being reinstalled. And before this will have gone to print, The Rising of Lazarus should be out for renovations.

### Calvary/St. Mary Cemeteries

New rules and regulations have been printed. Guidelines available upon request.

To all "holders of burial permits", please note that we are in the process of computerizing and updating our cemetery records. We need current owner names and addresses (and/or names and address of their heirs). Many of our files have not been updated since the family's last burial and we need the identity of a current next-of-kin. Please feel free to call the cemetery office (436-0048, ext. 1) with changes that could be pertinent to more accurate record keeping. If you have any other questions or concerns regarding rules and regulations, you are encouraged to call the Cemetery Manager at any time.

## Parish Prayer Program

The Parish Prayer Program is off to an impressive start. As part of our 150th anniversary celebration, a beautiful statue of the Immaculate Conception is traveling from household to household throughout the parish this year. Along with the statue, there is a special prayer for the parish and a journal. Participants have the statue for one week.

There has already been an enthusiastic response to the program, and parishioners of all ages have participated. Many people have commented that the prayer program has brought a sense of peace and order to their lives. The journal is filling up with prayer requests and inspiring reflections. CCD students are using a large map of the area to keep track of the statues travels.

There are still many opportunities to participate in the program. Won't you join us in prayer for our parish? **Please contact Kate Gordon at 431-8920.**

## Parish Sacraments

The following Sacraments were administered in our Parish since our last publication.

### BAPTISMS

Dominick Armando Riccio

### MATRIMONY

Karen S. DuBois  
and Piero G. Garofalo

Carol A. Burnham  
and John P. Bergin

### FUNERALS

Emmitte Kelly  
William Howard Dunton  
Joseph W. Saviskas  
Timothy Driscoll  
Stanley W. Machaj  
Cedelle "Lou" Levasseur  
Yvette Irene Bergeron  
Agnes Tomkinson  
David S. Packard  
Joseph T. Lawlor  
Florence Coughlin  
William Maguire  
Catherine Ahearn

We ask God's perpetual light to shine upon all the souls who have departed this world.