

*Souvenir of  
Dedication*

*Sunday, Nov. 4  
1951*



*St. John Nepomuc Church  
Prairie du Chien, Wis.*

A Verbal and Pictorial Account  
of the Building Program  
of St. John Nepomuc Parish

## DEDICATION

This booklet is dedicated to those members and friends of St. John's Parish who by their sacrifices of means and labors made the new St. John's Church possible, and to those who will continue to make sacrifices and to labor until this beautiful edifice for the honor and glory of God is completely furnished and paid for. May God in His infinite bounty reward everyone for any and all sacrifices made to this end.

Father Paul J. Monarski

*With appreciation and best wishes  
to Mrs. Elizabeth Bram*

Compiled By

The Very Rev. Paul J. Monarski, Pastor

*Father Paul J. Monarski.*

## DEDICATION PROGRAM

10:30 A.M. BLESSING AND DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH

11:00 A.M. SOLEMN PONTIFICAL HIGH MASS

Celebrant - The Most Rev. John P. Treacy, S.T.D.

Assistant Priest - The Very Rev. A. F. Giunta, S. J.

Deacon of the Mass - The Rev. Thomas A. Finnegan, S.J.

Subdeacon of the Mass - The Rev. George T. Andrews, S.J.

Deacon of Honor - The Rev. Aloysius F. Baumann

Subdeacon of Honor - The Rev. Paul J. Murphy, S.J.

Master of Ceremonies - The Rev. James P. Finucan

Assistant Master of Ceremonies - The Very Rev. Paul J.  
Monarski

Sermon - by The Rev. Chester Wrzaszczak, J.C.D.

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Cross Bearer, Acolytes, Thurifers, Mitre Bearer, Crosier  
Bearer, Book Bearer, Candle Bearer, Gremial Bearer -  
St. John's Knights of the Altar.

The Proper and Ordinary of the Mass sung by St. John's  
Choir of Mixed voices.

Mrs. William Nugent, Directress

Mrs. Joseph Marousek, Organist

Mr. John Pintz, Mr. Jake Fischer, Mr. Felix Bohonek, Mr.  
Joseph Cosgriff, Mr. George Polodna, Mr. Charles  
Wachuta, Mr. Paul Glynn, Mrs. George Polodna, Mrs.  
Cyril Plihal, Mrs. Frank Korback, Mrs. Jos. E. Mezera,  
Mrs. Dan. P. Fagan, Mrs. Harvey Frantz, Miss Cecelia  
Benda, Miss Jean Panka, Miss Marcella Panka, Miss  
Jeanette Peterson.

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12:00 Noon DEDICATION DINNER

2:00 P.M. PARISH BAZAAR ALL AFTERNOON AND EVENING

5:00 P.M. LUNCHEON







CHANCERY OFFICE, DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE

422 HOESCHLER BUILDING, P. O. BOX 795  
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

AL 2-5640

October 10th, 1951

My dear Father Monarski and  
devoted People of St. John's Parish:

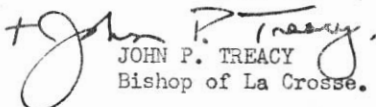
Whenever your parish comes to mind I think of the magnificent tribute the devoted people of St. John's Parish paid to their good pastor on the occasion of his twenty-fifth anniversary in the priesthood. When Father Monarski mentioned at that time that he was working on plans for a new church I had great confidence that people who were so devoted to their good pastor would never fail to make a success of the construction of a new church for their parish. The presence of the magnificent new structure which you have built is witness to the fact that my confidence was not mistaken.

There are many good things about the construction of new churches outside merely the decoration of fine property with glorious new and modern buildings. It is not only the physical beauty of a neighborhood after which the Church strives when She urges the continual renewal of Catholic properties. Rather it is the encouragement of the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the Church which are made necessary by the development of each new building project. Nothing seems to draw people closer together in a spirit of prayer and sacrifice which is the soul of our faith than the combined efforts that the faithful are occasionally obliged to make to reconstruct their parish property. Therefore I rejoice not only at the construction of a fine new church but at the great spiritual program and the many sacrifices and supernaturally motivated gifts to the Church which have been brought about through this marvelous church's construction.

To you the people and the pastor of St. John's Parish I offer my sincerest congratulations and I hope that your parish never loses the grand spirit which has characterized it ever since I have been in the Diocese of La Crosse.

Wishing you an abundance of God's choicest blessings,  
I am

Devotedly in Christ,

  
JOHN P. TREACY  
Bishop of La Crosse.

# City of Prairie du Chien

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

October 12, 1951

Very Reverend Paul J. Monarski, Pastor  
St. John Nepomuc Congregation  
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

Dear Father Monarski:

On behalf of the City of Prairie du Chien, I wish to extend to you and to the members of your Parish my sincerest congratulations on the completion of your new Church.

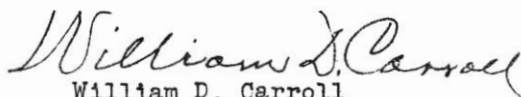
You and your parishioners have every right to feel happy and proud with the completion of this splendid edifice dedicated to the worship of Almighty God.

When the forebearers of your parishioners came to Prairie du Chien they were fully cognizant of the necessity of retaining and increasing the faith which they had received in the lands of their ancestors, and in order to do so erected the original St. John's Church. Their heritage has been passed on to your parishioners, who, realizing that now, as never before in our history, Faith and Religion must take a pre-dominant place in our individual and collective lives, have, in the construction of this Church, expressed their gratitude to Almighty God and invoke His blessings in the years to come.

The efforts of yourself and your parishioners have contributed immeasurably to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the entire City, in which all of us can take some measure of justifiable pride.

Again I wish to express our congratulations and our wishes for your continued success in the service of our Creator.

Sincerely yours,

  
William D. Carroll  
Mayor of Prairie du Chien

# MAYOR CARROLL'S ADDRESS

On the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of St. John's Church

July 23, 1950

Reverend Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
and Members of St. John's Parish:

I am sure very happy to be here at the laying of the cornerstone for this great church, because I feel that it is a great advance in religion—building a structure of this kind. We need religion in the present time, perhaps more than any time during the history of the world, and all of those who contributed and aided, or will aid in the completion of this church, are doing a great service to the community.

Religion is one of the things that we must build in the community today, if we are to have peace throughout the world. In many places in the world today people are barred from practicing the religion they believe in. They are not able to attend church, and that is especially true in those nations that are back of the iron curtain.

I want to say to you here today, that this church is only a carrying out of the program of those Bohemian people who came here in the early 18th century and later, as immigrants, from the old world. They came here and they have built a great community. They are among our best. They built our farms, they went into business, and they were all very successful in building the community we live in. They left the old world, the same as other immigrants, to get a better place to live, and rear their families. They came here and they did all of that, and they also brought with them their religion, and they built the original church of St. John's, that's across the road now, in 1891. Those who are here today can pay them great tribute by building this magnificent church that you are about to complete.

I want to pay a little tribute to your pastor because I have known him a long time and he has done a great deal, not only for your parish in building a new home here, and being foremost in building this fine new church, which you expect to finish soon, but he has been an outstanding citizen of our community, and our community is much better because he has lived among us.

Now I want to say that I believe I speak for all of the people of the city of Prairie du Chien, when I say to you that we are all proud of your parish, your pastor, your sisters, and also the building of this new church. This church will last longer no doubt, than few of us who are here will remember, and no doubt will last for a hundred years or more, and it will become a monument in the city of Prairie du Chien, and a step forward toward a better community, and more will practice the religion they believe in.

Now you not only are going to have a wonderful church here, but I hope you will be able to carry on with your pastor, and that he may enjoy all of the things that go after building a fine church as you are about to build.

On that basis, I believe the city and all people in the community is going to benefit by this new church you are about to complete.

I thank you.

# REVEREND CHARLES BRADY'S SERMON

Delivered on the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of St. John's Church - July 23, 1950.

**"The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man, but for God"  
(Paralipomenon xxix., 1)**

Fifty-nine years ago, to be exact on August 30, 1891, at this very hour the formal laying of the cornerstone of your present church took place. Some of you present today remember that occasion when Father Kremer congratulated the good Bohemian people of this city for their profession of faith, and their sacrifice of material wealth in order to give to Almighty God a temple worthy of Him. Today you gather again to witness the laying of the cornerstone of another and better edifice for the service of religion. Many of you present today are the descendants of those great pioneers of the past. You are not satisfied to live on memories of great deeds done by your forefathers, but you take up where they left off to even surpass them, not only with mortar and stone, but with a greater temple in your hearts of faith and good works. I deem it a privilege to be asked by your illustrious pastor, Father Monarski, to say a few words on this memorable occasion. I take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate Father Monarski for his leadership in this diocese and in this city. You too, good people of St. John's parish, are to be congratulated in accepting that leadership and giving to the church "a house (that) is prepared not for man, but for God."

In accepting this sacrifice you make a profession, like the Israelites of old, that you are the servants of God of heaven and earth. You pay a tribute of homage and reverence to the Creator of the universe. You acknowledge Him to be the Lord of the hill and of the valley, of the sea and of the dry land - that you are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

In erecting this church to the honor of the living God, you make a great and sublime act of faith, and not content with eliciting it in the heart or expressing it with the lips, you turn it into stone, and you make it immortal. For this building will tell your children and your children's children that you honored the Lord, your God, and that His name was sanctified among you.

Hence it is, my friends, that remembering for Whom you are building a house, remembering in Whose honor this edifice was to be raised, remembering that every effort of yours would be less than His benefits, you determined to do the best thing in your power, and thus to give Him all that your means would permit.

There are many in the world nowadays who would ask why this expenditure? What need has Almighty God of our building or of our decorations? What means this splendor of public worship? Why this incense, these lights, these vestments, this music? Is it not in spirit and in truth that He requires to be adored? Is it not the homage of the heart that God seeks?

This heresy was propounded in the earliest days of Christianity in the very hearing of our Divine Redeemer. "When Mary poured the precious ointment on the head of Jesus, one of the disciples - it was Judas Iscariot said why was not this ointment sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?" Now he said this, says the Evangelist, not because





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ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL



ST. JOHN'S RECTORY





he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and holding the purse, used to take what was put in it. (Mark xiv. 4 John xii. 6) It is true, my brethren, God does demand the homage of the heart, He does seek to be adored in spirit and in truth—but brethren, where is the human heart that can feel deep reverence for almighty power or warm gratitude for the boundless mercies conferred on us, and not manifest these feelings outwardly?

The homage we owe God is primarily the homage of the heart. God is spirit, and in spirit and in truth He must be adored. He rejects as worthless, nay as hateful, all worship that does not proceed from the inmost will of man. He will not receive the prayer of the lips, if the heart is far from Him. No sacrifice will appease Him, nor will the pomp of ceremonies, nor the gold of the temple, nor the garlands of the altar, be acceptable to Him unless we offer Him besides the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart. But we also assert that the worship that is altogether confined to the heart will not always suffice without its outward manifestations. If we do not confess Christ before men, He will not confess us before His Father who is in heaven. Hence the temple and the altar, the Sunday and the festival, the rites, the ceremonies, the prayers are what give to religion a body and a shape.

We must adore God, in accordance with the manner of being He has conferred upon us. If He made us pure spirits like the angels in heaven He would demand from us only obedience and love. If He made us like the beasts of the fields, He would have demanded from us as from them only a blind compliance with the instincts He has given them; but as He has united in man a rational intelligence with a material body; as He has given us those bodily organs to receive and to express the sensations of the soul; He wishes to be honored by us not by the spirit alone, not by the body alone but by the whole man.

We must not belie the honest and truthful impulses of our nature. As they instinctively urge us in time of danger to raise our voice to God in prayer, and to sing the song of praise in time of joy, so we are naturally and reasonably moved to meet together as members of the same community, to bless God for His common benefits, to pray to Him for our common wants, to offer Him sacrifice in acknowledgement of His supreme dominion. Now, my brethren, as when men meet together for literary or scientific or commercial or social purposes, they will build for themselves edifices, to honor the society of which they are members, or whose objects they are engaged to carry out, and when we build a stadium or a theater we see it inaugurated with public rejoicing, is it not reasonable, my brethren, when we combine together in Christian society the purpose of which is to pay honor and obedience to the God of heaven and earth, and to work out the business of an eternal salvation, is it not right and fit that we build ourselves temples in which this weightiest business of life may be transacted, in which the interests of eternity may be secured, in which God may be adored? Should they not stand on earth as memorials of the great Christian compact which binds man to man, and all men to God?

Brethren, to Him the best must be given, for it is He who has given us all. He does not stand in need of us or of our goods, but we stand in need of Him; and we need above all things to be constantly reminded of His power and dominion; of His mercies and of His judgements; and our hearts must be raised heavenwards and drawn away from earthly pursuits and sensual pleasures; and for this purpose religion speaks to our senses



through her gorgeous rites, and through them salutary impressions may be made on our souls. As the figure of the world dazzles and bewilders us, and leads us to seek our happiness on earth, so that same figure of the world, all earthly splendor, must be, as it were, pressed into the service of God to lead us to heaven and to the adoration of God in spirit and in truth.

This sentiment of our common nature is confirmed and, in the clearest manner, recommended by God's Holy Word. We find in the book of Exodus that while yet the people of God journeyed in the wilderness, the Almighty prescribed to them the form of the tabernacle and the materials of which it should be composed, and God wished that all should be the voluntary offering of the people. "Let everyone" said He, "that is willing and hath a ready heart, offer them to the Lord: gold and silver and brass;" and all the multitude of the children of Israel going out from the presence of Moses offered first fruits to the Lord, with the most ready and devout mind, to make the work of the tabernacle. And such was their zeal that Moses commanded them to cease from offering gifts because "the things that were offered did suffice and were too much" (Exodus xxxv-5 & xxxvi-7.)

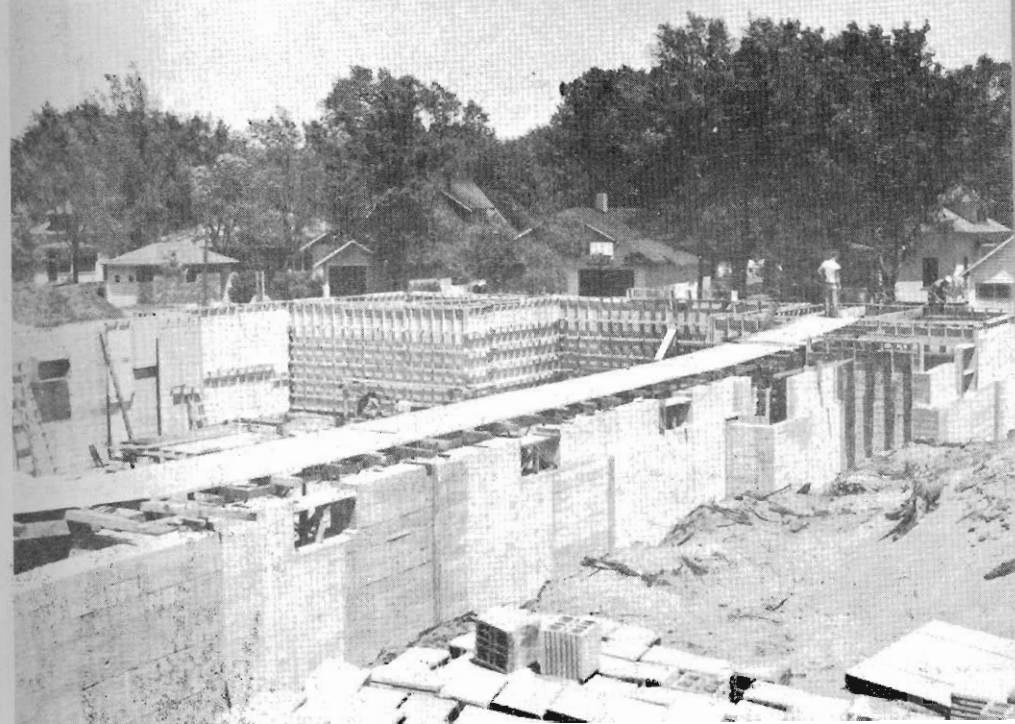
That piety, brethren, was acceptable to God, and the Spirit of Truth has recorded it in the Bible for our instruction and example. Again we read that when King David was transferring the ark to Sion, he and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord, with joyful shouting and with sound of trumpet, and he offered holocausts and peace offerings before the Lord and he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. And the Holy Spirit marks in a signal manner the acceptance of his devotion for we read that his Queen Michol, the daughter of Saul, when she beheld him dancing before the ark, deemed all his display unworthy of his royal dignity and considered it buffoonery. But mark the judgment of God. She was cursed with sterility in consequence of her pride. (2 Kings vi - 23)

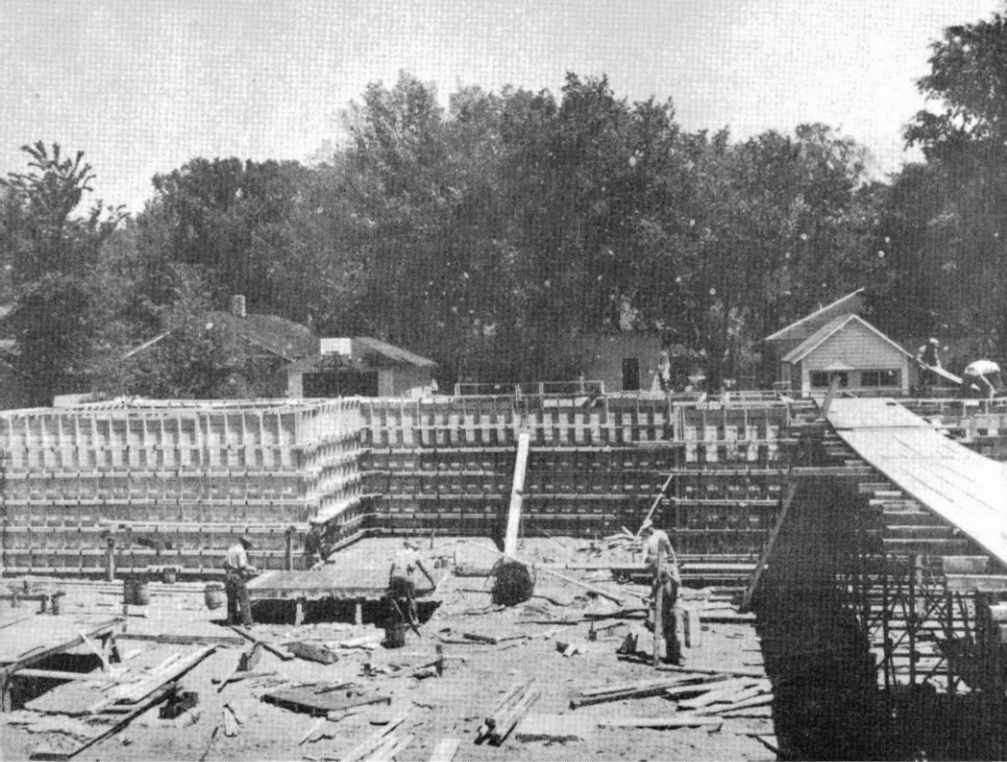
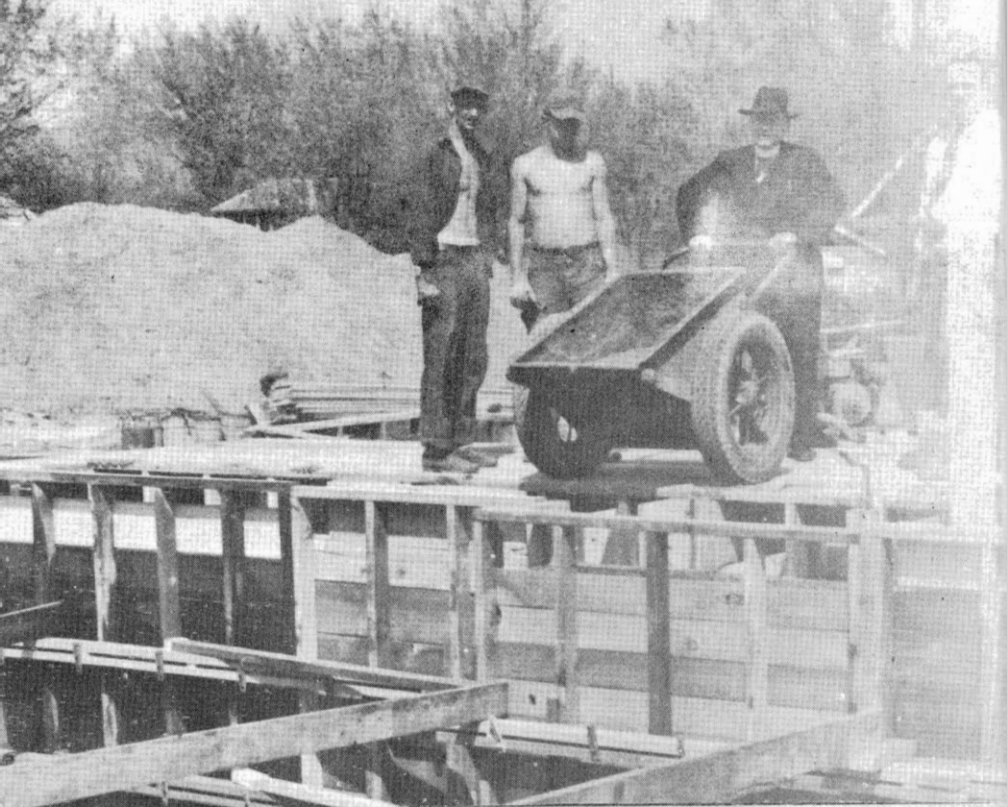
We read further on, how this great king wished to build a temple, but the Lord ordained that this work should be confided to Solomon, his son, who as a peaceful prince was a type of our Divine Redeemer, and then we see under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, this magnificent structure was raised, and how the riches of the world were used in its construction and how it was dedicated with solemn rites and again how the Lord showed Himself pleased with all this manner of worship.

When the people were to be punished for their infidelities by the captivity of Babylon, the destruction of this first temple was the most manifest signal of the wrath of God.

After the return from the captivity, the prophet Aggeus is sent to warn them to rebuild the house of the Lord. "Because, saith the Lord, My house is desolate, and you make haste everyone to his own house. Therefore the heavens over you were stayed from giving dew, and the earth was hindered from yielding her fruits. Build the house and it shall be acceptable to Me, and I shall be glorified, saith the Lord". (Aggeus 1. 8 & 10).

Thus brethren, you see from the whole history of the Jewish people, and from the sacred text of the Bible, how opposed to the spirit of God is that dry, cold, heartless philosophy, which would scoff at the efforts we make, to give glory to God with the offerings of our substance and with the works of our hands, and by the solemn and impressive forms













of public worship. Like the scoffing daughter of the rejected Israel that philosophy is cursed by God, and cursed with eternal barrenness. No fruits of virtue or grace will flow therefrom.

The prophet Aggeus foretelling the destiny of this latter temple built by the Jews says that its glory should surpass that of the temple of Solomon because the "desired of nations" was to sanctify it by His presence and to fill that house with His glory. The "Desired of nations" has come my brethren, "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." The Savior of the world has promised to abide with us all days even to the end of the world. In many ways does He fulfill that promise, but in a most special manner by His mysterious presence in our churches and on our altars in the holy Sacrament of His love. For this Incarnate God present with us we build a house-a house in which the work of redemption may be brought home to each one - realized in the soul of each individual Christian. Here, the soul will be cleansed from sin in the waters of Christ's Baptism. Your children will be made the children of God and heirs of Heaven. Here the contract is made in which the soul renounces the devil with all his works and pomps and in return she is made a sharer of the Divine Nature by sanctifying grace and a member of the church.

Here, when the young Christian is beginning his career in the world, when the early assaults of passion are begun to be felt, and announce to him that the great Christian warfare has commenced, the bishop will administer to him the Sacrament of strength and fortitude, will stamp his forehead with the sign of salvation which is also the sign of victory and will send him forth strong with the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost to do battle for the Lord and for His holy faith, and if needs be to die for it. But as in the Christian warfare, there will be some who will desert their leader, allured by the false promises of the enemy, and some will grow faint and weary of walking in the narrow way, by which Jesus Christ leads His elect, and will betake themselves to the broad way of the world, which leads to hell; and some will squander away, like the prodigal, the treasures of grace they received, and like the prodigal, touched by divine grace, all these may seek to return to their duty and allegiance. The tribunals of penance will be here erected, where there will be peace for the troubled, and pardon for the guilty, where the mercies of God will be poured into your bosom with a measure heaped up, and pressed down and overflowing.

In this house the word of the Gospel, which is the wisdom and the power of God, will be ever preached. You will here receive the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, to know whom is life eternal. Here you will be instructed in the mysteries of your holy religion, and in the duties you owe to God, to your neighbor and to yourself, and with that knowledge, the fire which Christ came to kindle on earth will be lighted in your hearts. Thus purified from sin, instructed in heavenly truth, inflamed with blessed charity, you will advance even here to the table of the Lord where you will receive the crowning gift of love in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. You will be fed on the Bread of Angels, the strength of God will be communicated to your souls and in that strength you will walk to the mountain of God.

From that table you will see in the depths of the sanctuary the altar on which the great sacrifice will be daily offered, that sacrifice by which all the works of the just, all the tears of the penitent, the duty of adoration, thanksgiving, penance and petition, which is due from all the people - the faith, the hope, the charity of each member of this great

family will be gathered and bound up together in the person of Jesus Christ, from whose merits all values are derived, and offered together to the Eternal Father in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Redemption is here brought home, not to the individual alone. Society is here redeemed and sanctified. For at the foot of this altar, the bridal vow shall be plighted, and thus shall be placed under the safeguard of religion that contract upon which depend the peace and happiness of families, the peace and prosperity of this nation.

And when your spirit shall have parted from this earthly tabernacle here will the Church offer up prayer and sacrifice for your soul's peace; and from this spot, with the requiem she will sing over your mortal remains, will go forth the bidding of eternal rest from her who holds the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Truly this is the house of God and the gate of heaven.

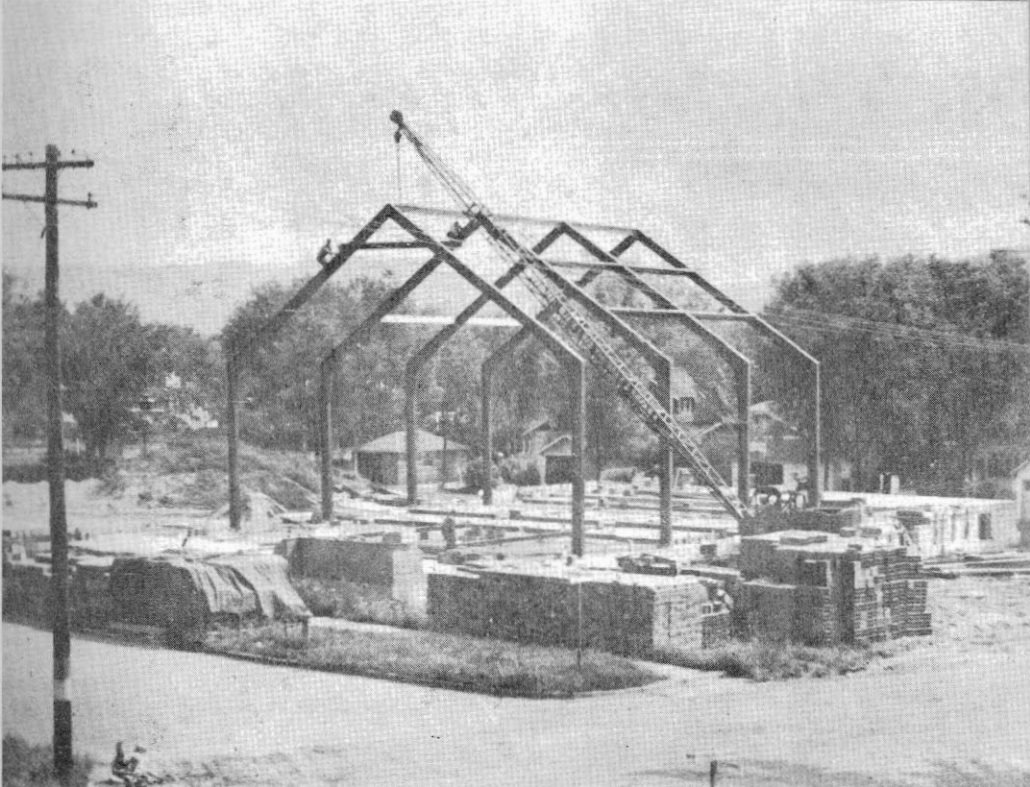
Here, too, you have not an image but an abridgement of Christ's Church on earth; for here will assemble the adoring multitude under the guidance and jurisdiction of one pastor, reciting together the symbol of one and the same faith, the prayer of one and the same hope, bound and knit together in brotherly love, partaking of the same sacraments, bearing the same word of life, sheltered under the same roof as under the expanding wings of God's Providence and protection, kneeling together in the nave which is a symbol of the barque of Peter—that barque in which Christ's fishermen are constantly casting their nets for the souls of men, that barque which has Christ Himself on board, that barque in which we securely sail through storm and calm, through deep and shallow, until we come to the Kingdom of God, to the place where His glory dwelleth.

And here, brethren, we have an image of that spiritual temple which we should raise to God in our own hearts. To learn this lesson should be the principal fruit of this ceremony today.

The first thing you meet here is the font of holy water, by which you are reminded of the piety and cleanliness of heart and freedom from sin with which you should approach God, and walk before Him. As you will advance in the church you will see the tribunals of penance. Erect one in your hearts. Summon yourself every day before it by a diligent examination of conscience and pass judgement on yourself by penance and contrition for your daily faults. You will have here the holy altar. Erect another in your hearts in which you make to God the sacrifice of your passions, and from which may ascend to heaven the sacrifice of devout prayer.

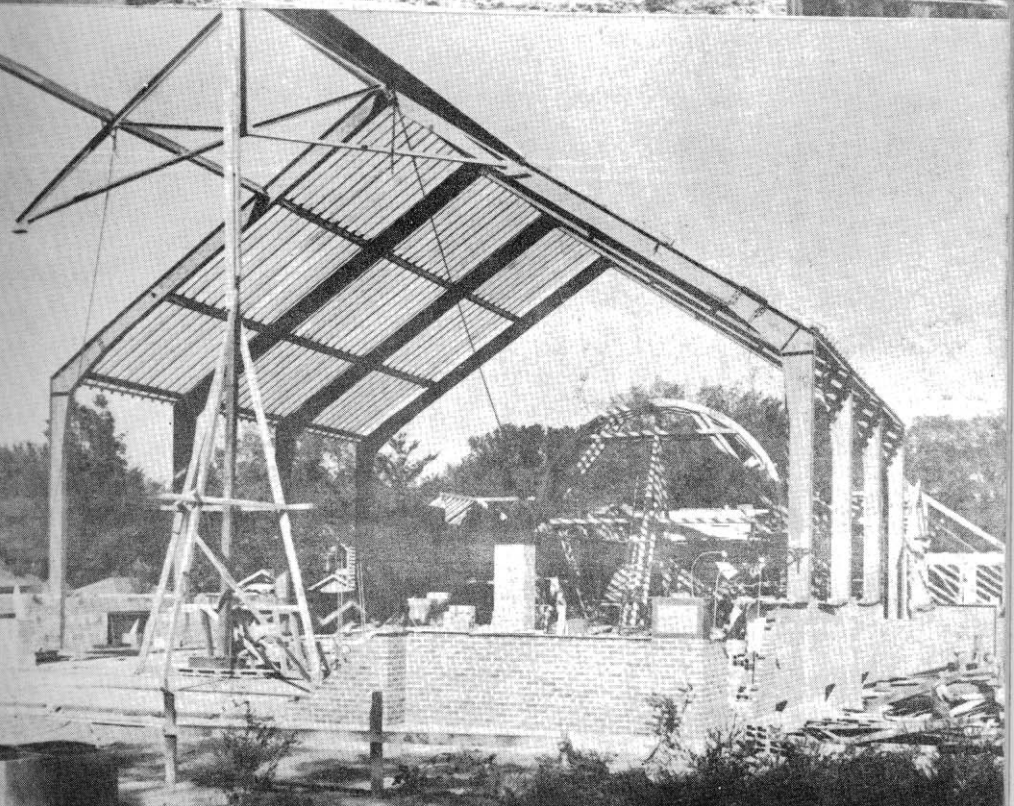
All the neighbors will find a place here every Sunday and kneel together in peaceful prayer. Let your heart expand with brotherly love. Let every neighbor find a place in your good will; and as you are one body when you meet here together, so let there be but one heart and one soul in this parish.

God bless you all and may you live long and happy to enjoy the sacrifice that you so generously accepted. Amen.

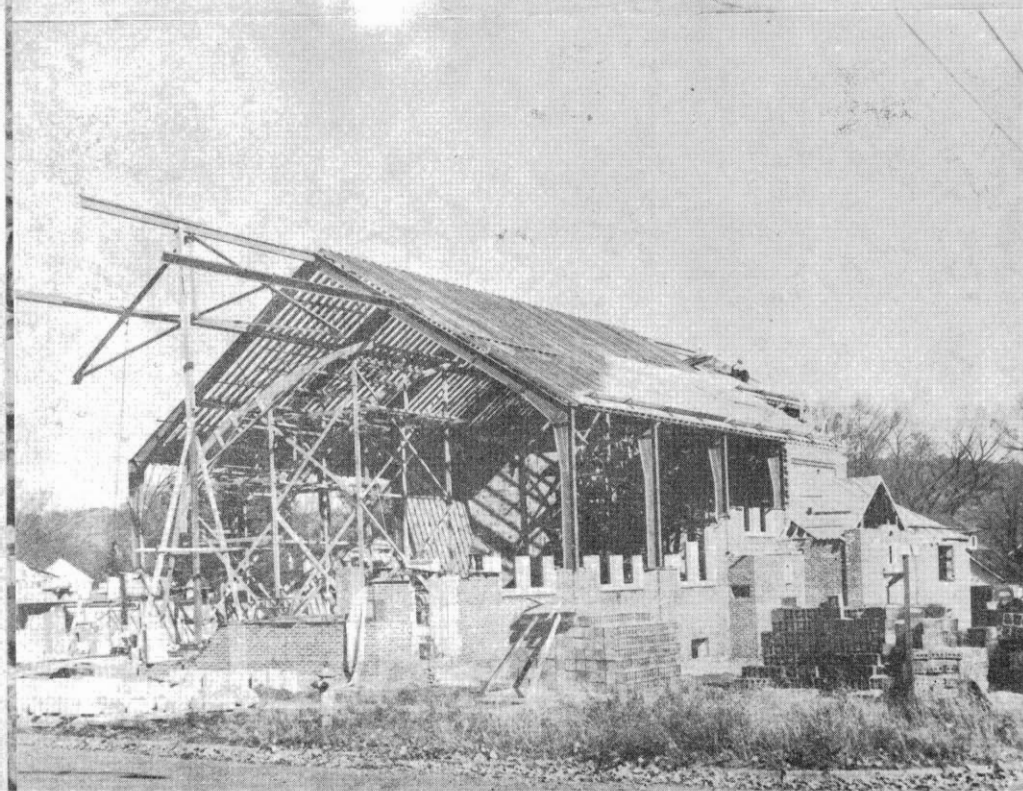
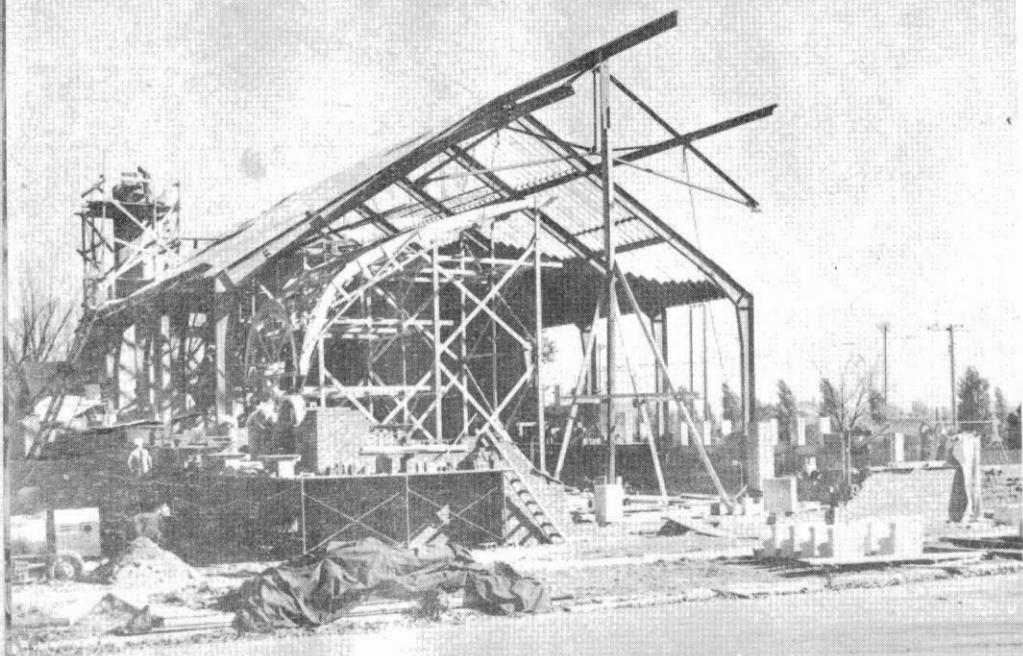












# ADDRESS OF REVEREND PAUL MONARSKI

On the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of St. John's Church - July 23, 1950.

Reverend Fathers, Mayor Carroll, Members and Friends of St. John's Parish:

The laying of the cornerstone of this church is indeed a momentous event in the history of St. John's parish, not only because it is the official beginning of the construction of a house of God, and not only because it is the first dedication of the bricks, stones, concrete, wood and steel of this structure to the honor and glory of God, but also because I believe, it marks the beginning of a new era in the history of this parish.

Toward the end of the last century, about one hundred fifty Bohemian families that emigrated from the Old World, settled in or near Prairie du Chien. They were willing to accept all the difficulties and inconveniences in a strange land, but they were unwilling to permit their spiritual life to suffer on account of the handicaps of language and the strange customs they encountered. To overcome these difficulties they organized their own parish with the permission of the Bishop, and built their own church where they could hear the word of God preached in their own language, and where they could pray and sing in their mother tongue. Their sacrifices to accomplish this were blessed by Almighty God because in this way they were able to keep their faith and the faith of their children alive and strong during the critical time of their civic acclimation. In this St. John's Church served its purpose well for many years.

However time and attending circumstances gradually and inevitably changed the national character of St. John's parish. As the older people became better acquainted with the language of their adopted country, and as their children became less inclined to use or even to learn the language of their parents, and because of their inter-marriage with non-Bohemians, the use of the Bohemian language at divine services became more and more impractical, to the point that even as long as twenty years ago, the exclusive use of the English language in church had to be adopted.

This circumstance had a direct bearing on the growth of this parish. Membership was no longer restricted to those who were conversant with the Bohemian language. Increase in parish membership reached the point as early as five years ago, that a larger church became urgently necessary. For the past four years three Masses were necessary to accommodate the parishioners on Sundays and Holy Days.

According to church law a parish is described by territorial boundaries and when so limited is called a canonical parish. National parishes are not limited territorially but only by the ability of the members to understand the language used. Since the national character of St. John's parish had practically vanished, our Bishop suggested several times that territorial boundaries be established to conform with canon law. I hasten to assure you this will work no hardship on anyone. Your loyalty and sentimental attachment to your present parish will be duly respected in this change.

It is evident for many reasons that the establishment of territorial boundaries for St. John's parish will tend to increase its membership making a larger church even more necessary - in fact, a number of Catholic families in the neighborhood would have joined the parish before this had there been a less crowded condition in our church.

Because we lacked the facilities, our parish social functions were not as frequent nor as extensive as we desired. The work in finding and preparing a place in town for such parish affairs was always so extensive that only great enthusiasm for them motivated the members of the parish to undertake that task from time to time. The provisions made in the basement of our new church will reduce the work connected with these affairs to a minimum. We have planned a modern kitchen and dining room and other modern facilities for various social gatherings.

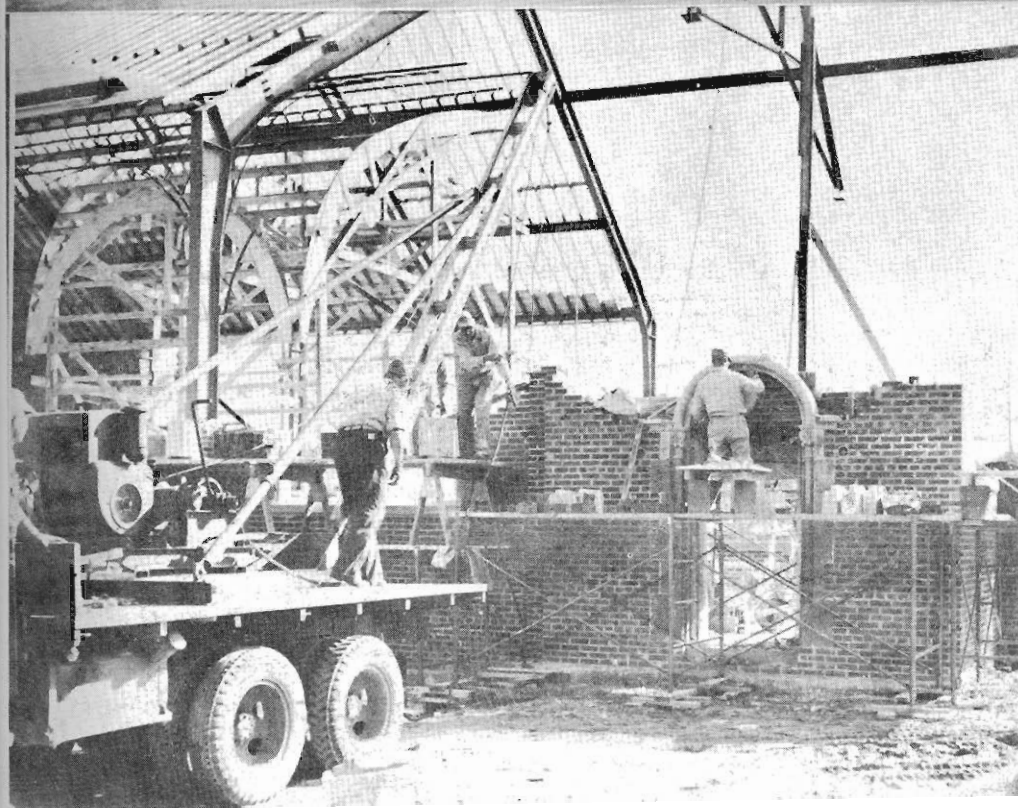
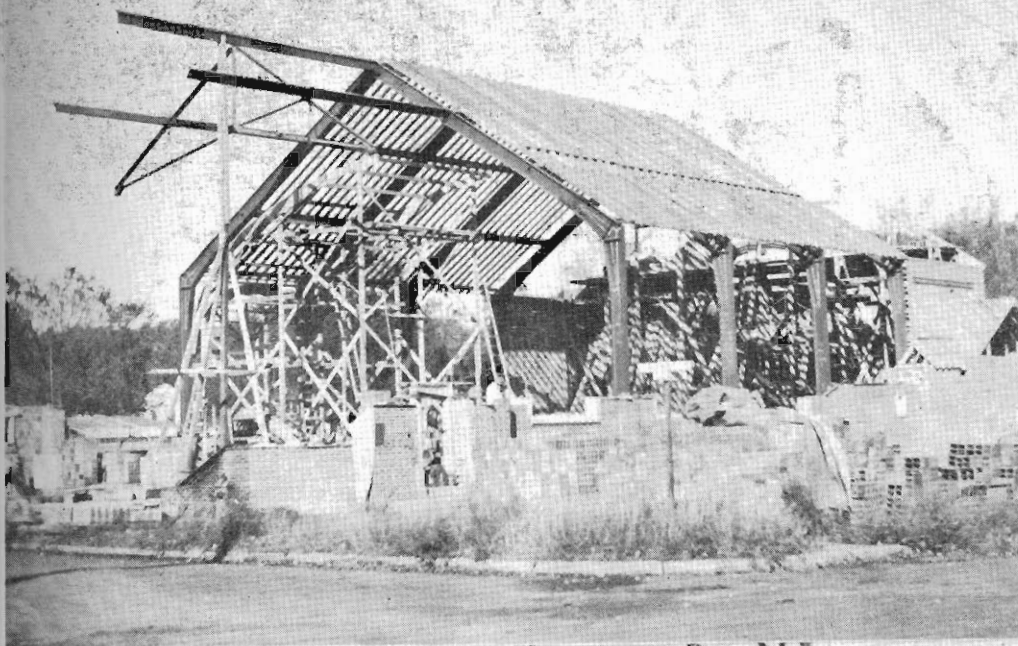
Our parish organizations have also been hindered in their work for the lack of a proper meeting place and sufficient room for their activities. Provisions in the new church basement will also solve those problems and so be conducive to more extensive and intensive activities of our societies in the future.

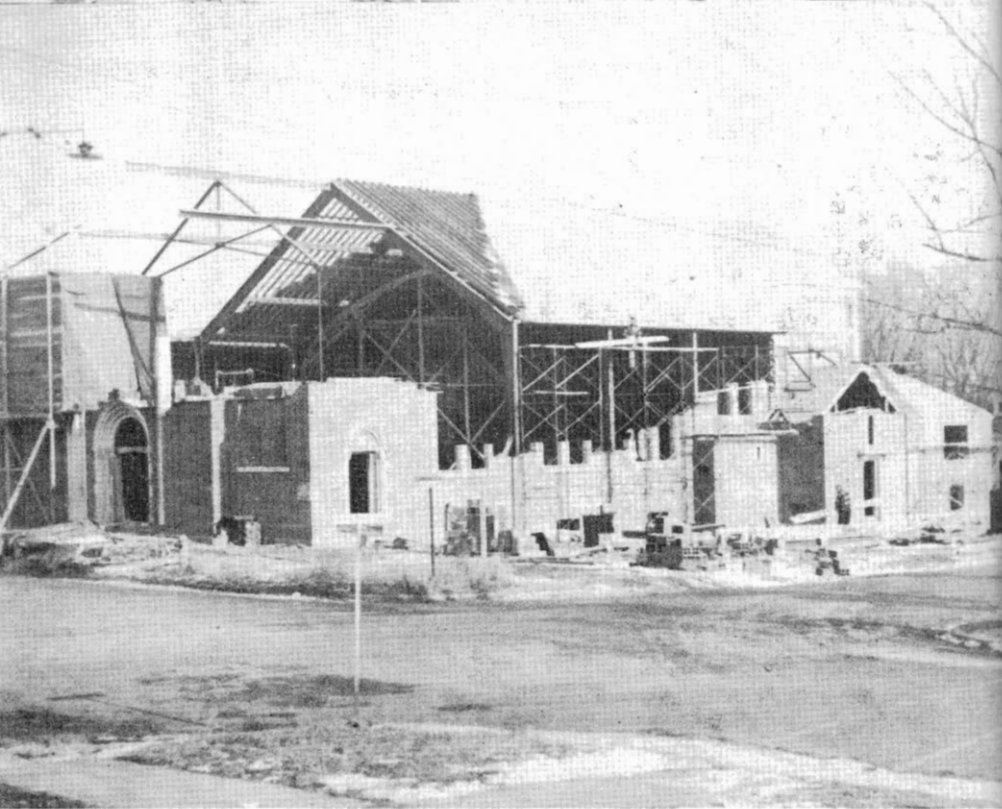
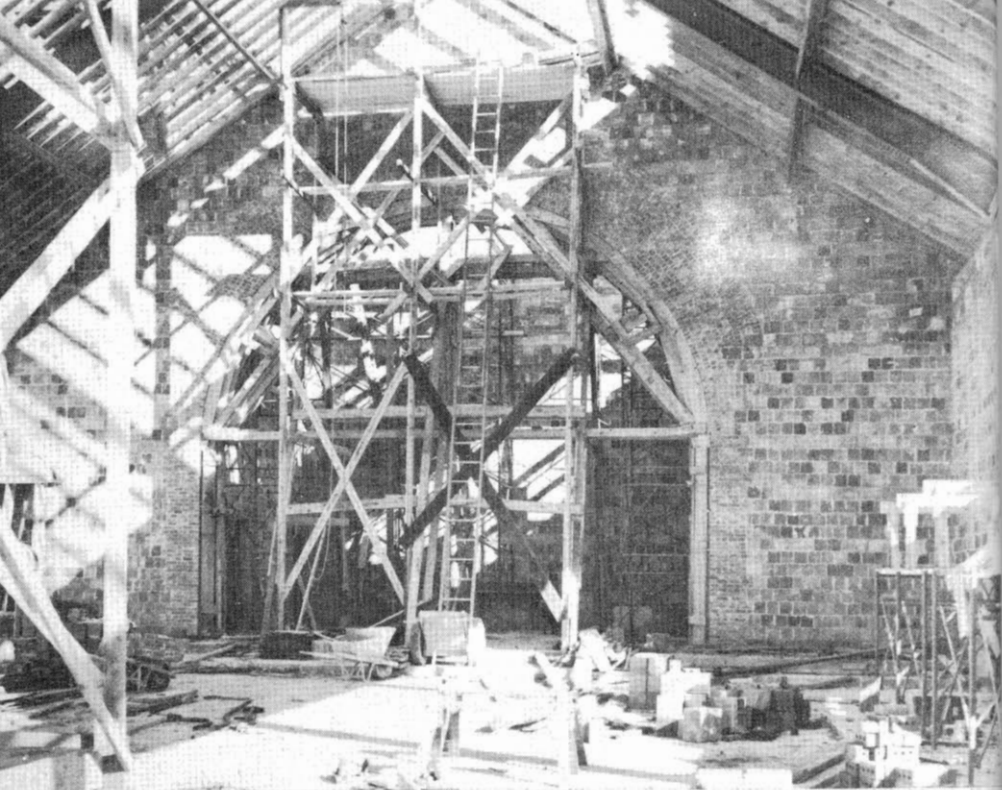
Even our church services had to be simplified and curtailed on account of a lack of proper room and equipment. In the new church there will not only be ample room in the nave for people, but also proper space in the sanctuary for more solemn services. The pews will be comfortable, modern equipment will provide for fresh air, and comfortable temperature will be provided in winter and summer. These favorable conditions will no doubt, be conducive to greater and more frequent attendance at church services, and the elimination of many of the usual hindrances should also promote better attention and greater devotion.

Considering all the advantages our new church will provide, I feel the urge to make a prediction. Predictions may be just wild guesses or statements concerning the future based on observations made in the past. My prediction is the latter kind. I have always felt that the spirit of St. John's parish is much greater than externals have indicated. I predict that when the spacious new church permits the spirit of St. John's parish to really spread its wings, it will soar high and far in its flight of progress.

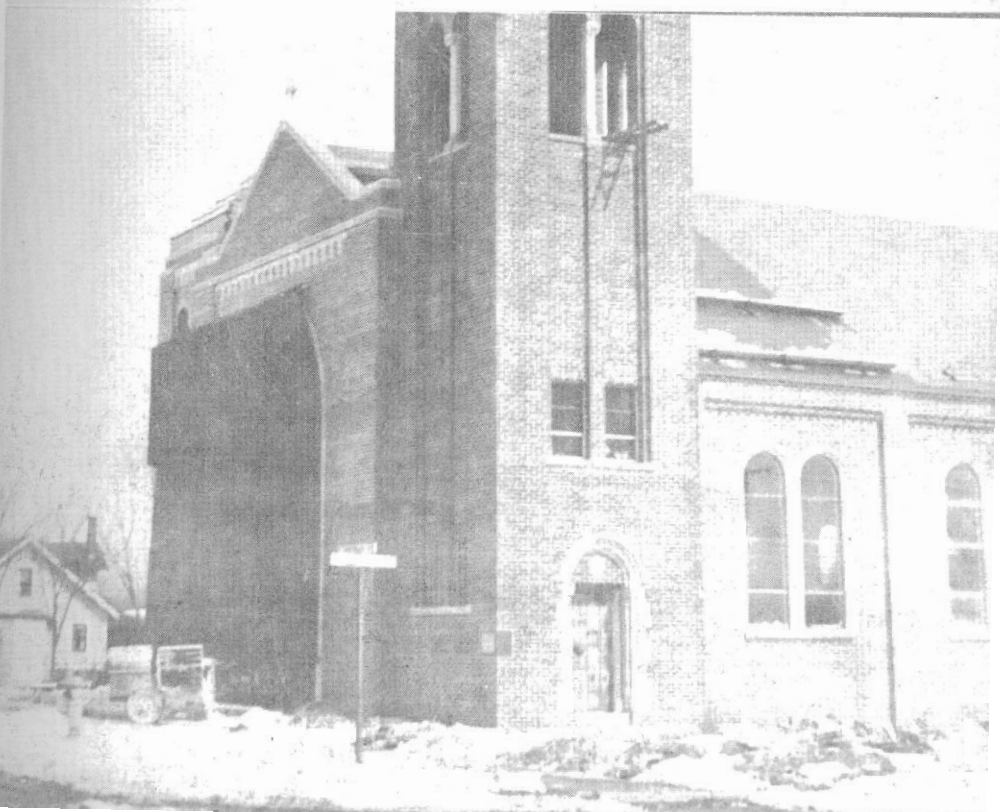
Now that I have talked myself high into the air and possibly gotten myself out on a limb, I had better come down to earth and proceed with the business at hand - the laying of the cornerstone. However, before I do so, I would like to use this occasion to thank the Vach-Werner Monument Co. of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, who so kindly donated this beautiful stone, through the courtesy of Mr. Frank Vach. I also wish to thank Mr. Lawrence Novey who made and donated the copper box that will contain the memorabilia which will be placed into the cornerstone. I want to thank Father Brady for his grand sermon, also Mayor Carroll for gracing this occasion with his presence and for his address. Thanks also to all the Reverend Fathers for being present and last but not least, thanks to all the members and friends of St. John's parish, who have contributed in any way to make this such a grand occasion.

Thank you and God bless you.











# A HISTORY OF THE BUILDING PROGRAM OF ST. JOHN'S PARISH

St. John Nepomuc's Catholic Congregation of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin was organized in the year 1891 upon the suggestion of Father Phillip Kremer, pastor of St. Gabriel's Parish, to accommodate those members of his congregation who were of Bohemian descent, and who preferred to speak that language. Father George Kiefner was appointed the first pastor of the parish by the Right Reverend Kilian Flasch, Bishop of LaCrosse.

The frame church which has served St. John's Congregation up to the present time, was built under his direction during the summer of 1891 and was dedicated on December 13th of that year. The first rectory, the building immediately south of the present rectory, was built by Father Kiefner in the year 1893, and a two room school, the front part of the present school, was built in the year 1902. Father Kiefner remained pastor of St. John's Parish until August 1904 excepting the period from 1898 to 1901, during which Father Xavier Till served the parish as pastor.

Father Ferdinand Cech was pastor from 1904 to 1905; Father Anthony Billk from 1905 to 1918; Father Cyril Smetana from 1918 to December 1923. During his pastorate a two room addition to the school and a sister's convent were built at the cost of almost \$25,000.00.

Father John McNamara was pastor for a few months in 1924 until Father Francis Boos-Waldeck was appointed in June of that year. Father Boos-Waldeck remained pastor of St. John's Parish until October 1927. The Jesuit Fathers of Campion College had charge of the parish from that time until the appointment of Father Paul Monarski in July 1928.

Several grave problems confronted Father Monarski when he became pastor of St. John's Parish. In the first place the parish had dwindled considerably in membership on account of circumstances brought about by its national character. Secondly a debt of \$10,000 still remained on the school - convent addition; thirdly, all of the buildings were in considerable disrepair, and finally there were no funds in the parish treasury.

The transition from the national character of the parish to its present status was slow and somewhat difficult because the national feeling of many of the parishioners was rather intense. However, they gradually came to realize that this national character could not be retained, and after this conviction became general, the parish grew even beyond its original accommodations.

As the parish dwindled in numbers it also suffered materially. The burden of the \$10,000 debt was bitterly resented because those members who remained to shoulder it felt that the cost of the school - convent addition had been excessively high to begin with, and that they had already done their duty by way of contributions toward that project. This grudge against the debt on the part of the parishioners made it very difficult for the pastor to collect funds to pay it. Besides, all of the buildings were in such urgent need of repairs that the current parish income barely sufficed for that task.

After a more adequate parish finance system had been adopted, the necessary repairs and remodeling were gradually accomplished. The most

important of these were putting a new roof on the school, putting a basement with a furnace under the rectory, installing a new furnace in the school and church, and painting all buildings inside and outside. So, despite the financial depression of those years, all parish debts were paid by the end of 1937, and all parish buildings were put into good condition. In those ten years the parish had also grown to such an extent that the church with its 285 seating capacity had become definitely too small.

The three classroom school also had become over-crowded as the attendance of about 100 in 1928 had increased to about 180 in 1948. More school room was attained by converting the school chapel into another classroom, which arrangement still prevails.

It was decided at a parish meeting in January 1938, to do something about the rectory which was also inadequate, mainly because one room had to serve as waiting-room, office study and living room. More frequent callers, especially for convert instructions, required better arrangements. At first remodeling of the rectory was considered. However, it was finally decided to build a new rectory instead. At a parish meeting held August 14, 1938 it was decided to ask His Excellency, the Bishop, to approve the construction of a new rectory on the lot between the old rectory and the church, according to the plans and specifications submitted by the architect, John Flad, at the cost of approximately \$9,000. His Excellency gave his approval readily, and construction by the contractors, Konicek and Polodna, began August 29, 1938. The job was soon done, and the pastor moved into his new home January 3, 1939.

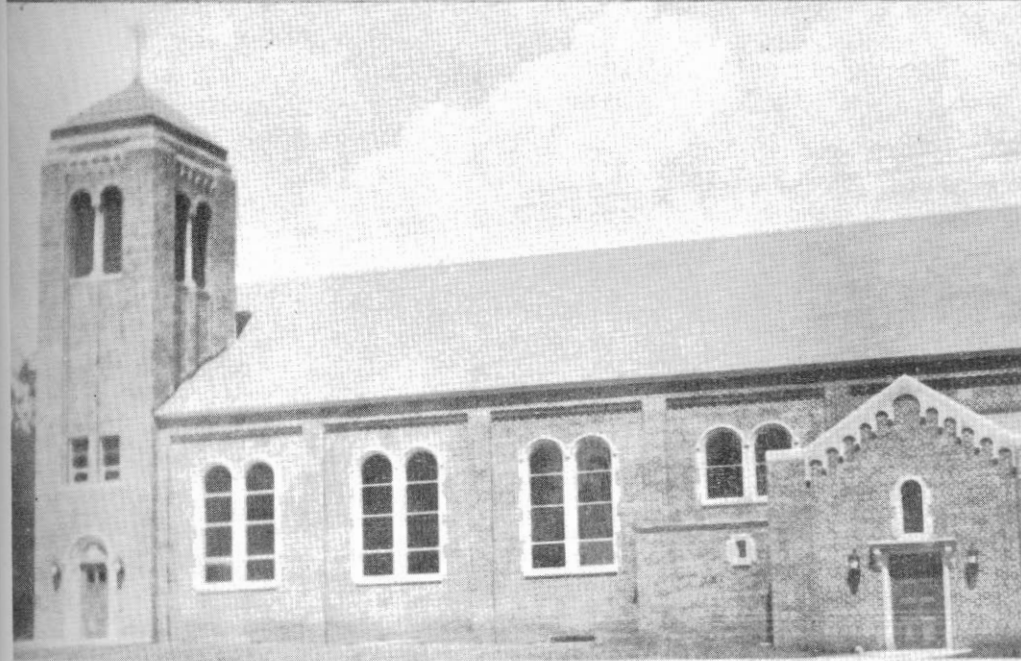
\$2500 of the funds for the new rectory were realized from the sale of the old rectory, and within a year after the rectory was built, sufficient funds were raised to pay for it completely.

The problem of providing for an increasing attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holydays was not so easily solved. When this problem became acute World War II made the building of a new church impossible, not only for the duration but also in the difficult times that remained even after the war. A temporary solution of that problem was achieved when the pastor obtained faculties to say a third Mass on Sundays and Holydays to accommodate his parishioners. However, after five years the increased attendance at Mass made even this accommodation insufficient, and the need for a larger church became even more urgent.

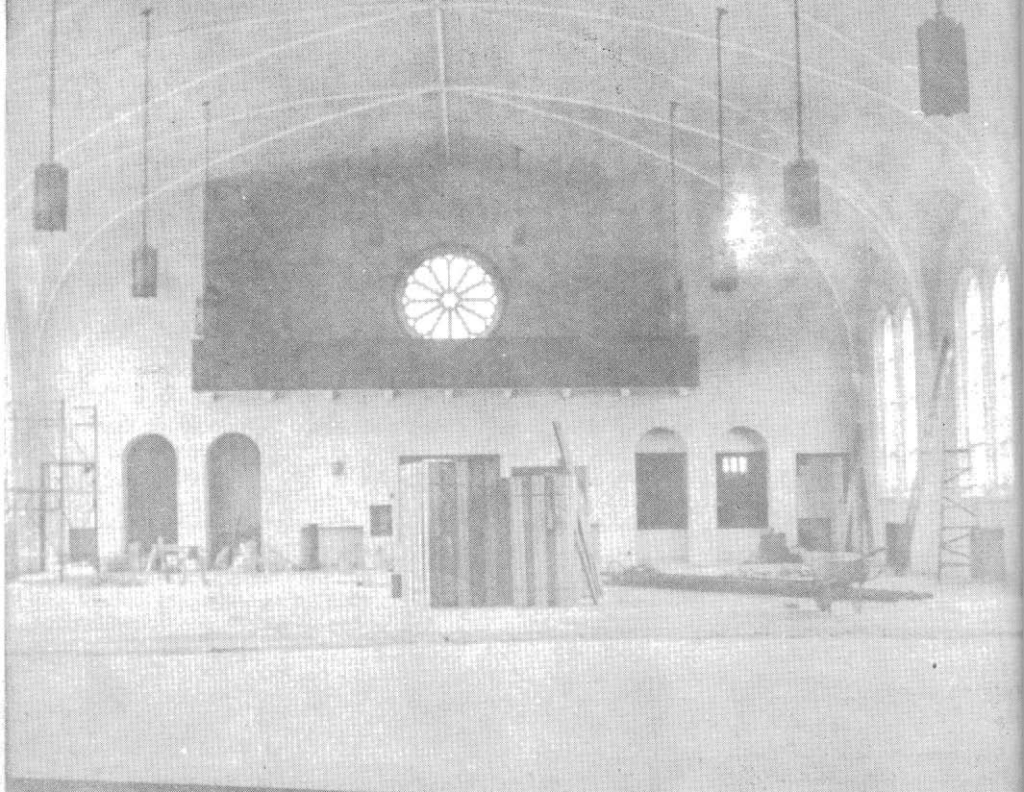
This increase in membership of St. John's Parish was possibly one of the reasons for making St. John's the Deanery Parish, when Bishop McGavick established the Prairie du Chien Deanery in May 1944, consisting of the parishes in Crawford and Vernon Counties.

Although it was impossible to build during the war, and inadvisable to do so in the time immediately after it, serious efforts were made to raise funds for the new church. The very first contributions towards the new church had been made in 1937 by a former parish trustee, Anthony Prochaska, in the form of a bequest of \$1,000, but for five years after that the fund remained at that amount, mainly because the rectory was built in 1938, and because there was not yet the urgent need for a larger church. However, from the year 1942 to the present time the fund for the new church has been increased to about \$131,000.

The first concrete step toward the realization of a new church, besides the raising of funds for it, was the purchase for its site, three 80x140 foot











lots from the Duffy estate in August 1947. Several attempts had been made before to purchase these lots, particularly, just before the new rectory was built, but they were not for sale at that time. For that reason the plan had been to build the new church on the site of the old church. The old building was to be moved either onto the school grounds, or onto the lot directly north across the street, and to be used there until the new church was finished. After the problem was studied closer, it became evident that several considerations, such as the sewer, grade, drainage, high front steps, the moving of the old church and making it usable during the construction of the new one, especially if that continued into the winter, made a different building site most desirable. For that reason the one still living owner of the lots, was again approached concerning their purchase, and just as the transaction was about to be consummated, she died suddenly. However, the lots were finally purchased from her heirs for the sum of \$3,000.

With the building site acquired, it was decided at a parish meeting in January 1948 to take more direct steps toward the construction of a larger church. A building committee was appointed, and authorized to engage an architect to make preliminary sketches and plans for the new church. That was not so easily done. Although several architects were contacted, and although they all seemed to be interested, none could be induced to begin working on our plans immediately.

Mr. Carl Billmeyer of the A. F. Billmeyer & Sons firm of Wisconsin Rapids was finally engaged for that work. Even so, the drawing up of the plans and specifications proved to be slow work, and it got to be more than a year before they were completed. At a parish meeting in January 1950 it was definitely decided to begin the construction of the new church in the spring of that year. The building committee was authorized to solicit construction bids, to accept or reject them, and to decide all questions concerning the building of the church.

By April 1950 the plans and specifications were complete, and bids were solicited. Twenty contractors submitted bids on the various phases of the work. On April 12th the bids were opened, and with the consent of His Excellency, the Bishop, the contracts were awarded as follows:

The general contract went to Theo. Molzahn & Sons of LaCrosse for \$149,249. The heating contract was given to R. H. Lovold of LaCrosse for \$11,773. The McGuire Hardware Co. of Highland, Wisconsin got both plumbing and electric wiring contracts for \$3209 and \$3541 respectively. The Minneapolis Honeywell Regulator Co got the temperature control contract for \$2455. The E. Hackner Co. got the pew contract for \$6800. Besides these there were smaller contracts let later for furniture and fixtures, making the estimated cost of the new church, including the most necessary furniture and fixtures, about \$200,000.

A ground breaking ceremony took place on Sunday, April 16, 1950, and the excavating was begun April 26th. This was done mostly by Loren J. Slaght of Bridgeport, Wis. After the forms were made the pouring of the concrete foundation was begun May 15th. From about that time on the aggravating delays due to shortages of materials or the slow delivery began and continued throughout the time of construction right down to the present day. There is still work to be done, the delay of which is causing us some concern even now. At first it was reinforcing steel, then the steel beams, then the brick, and so on without end. Even the cornerstone which was quarried near St. Cloud, Minnesota, and was donated by the Vach-Werner Monument Co., of La Crosse, was delayed

in delivery due to a railroad strike which kept it stranded in the freight yards of Minneapolis for almost two weeks.

The cornerstone was finally laid on Sunday, July 23, 1950 with considerable ceremony. Father Monarski was appointed by His Excellency, Bishop Treacy, to perform the ceremony in his stead. Thirteen priests and a great throng of members and friends of St. John's parish attended. Mayor Wm. Carroll and Father Monarski gave short talks, and Father Charles Brady, pastor of Seneca, preached the festive ceremony. (These addresses appear later in this booklet.)

The brick laying was aggravatingly slow. This was due somewhat to labor trouble, but mostly to slow delivery of the cut stone trim, some of which arrived on the job more than a year after it was ordered. Most of the brick laying was done during the winter months, even in sub zero weather under the shelter of tarpaulins—all materials used under those conditions were of course, heated. Even the roof was put on during the winter. The stainless steel cross, which was made and donated by Lawrence Novey, was put into place on the tall tower on March 22, 1951.

Even with that much done by the spring of 1951, the work dragged on slowly so that the job which was to be finished in eight months actually took more than a year and a half to finish. Even at this writing, two weeks from the date of dedication, there is still work to be finished on the plumbing, electric wiring and the heating system.

In the meantime the men of St. John's Parish did much work on the church themselves. They removed the trees from the building site in the fall of 1949, and later did all the back fill and grading. They assembled and installed the pews, made all the cabinets and tables, and did all the heavy moving.

The ladies of St. John's did much work too, such as cleaning, and making various items for the new church. They also undertook a great many projects to raise funds for the new church. Although the kitchen and dining room were not altogether equipped, they served a wedding dinner and a testimonial banquet as late as two weeks before the date set for the dedication of the church.

The construction of St. John's new church was attended by many great difficulties, aggravations and worries for us. However, it has turned out to be a beautiful and practical structure, and as more of the furniture and fixtures are installed, its beauty is being enhanced to the great satisfaction of all concerned.

Another thing that stands out now most favorably, and was a great source of consolation even at times of greatest disappointments concerning the building, is the high enthusiasm and consequent spirit of sacrifice evidenced by the parishioners of St. John's for their new church. That spirit is indeed marvelous. The fact that when all contracts are redeemed, there will be a debt of only \$75,000 or \$85,000 on a project that cost more than \$200,000, is substantial proof of St. John's wonderful parish spirit, and a source of encouragement for the future.

Right now the members of St. John's Parish are happily busy preparing for the dedication of the new church on November 4th of this year. This booklet is intended to commemorate this most important event in the history of St. John Nepomuc Catholic Congregation of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.









