

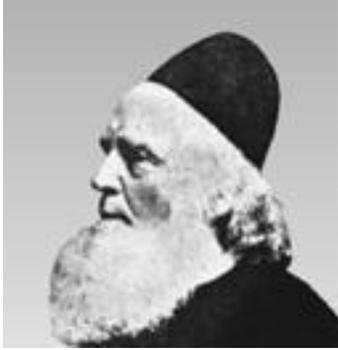
Article I. Honor the Past...Plan for the Future



1887 First Church



The Congregation of St. John the Baptist in Waunakee was established in 1874 with the blessing of the Most Reverend John Martin Henni, Archbishop of Milwaukee. Reverend W. G. Miller supervised St. John the Baptist, which was a mission of his parish, St. Mary of the Lake in Westport. At the time, the congregation was composed of nineteen German Catholic families from the Westport and Ashton/Springfield Corners areas* and Mass was celebrated twice a month in Waunakee. These founding families treasured their faith and sacrificed greatly in order to build a Catholic school for their children's education. Money was scarce, but the parishioners purchased a site and erected a one-room frame building which served as a church and school.



In 1875, a separate school was built and staffed by lay teachers. Father Miller remained pastor until September, 1880. He was succeeded by Reverend Francis X. Etschmann, also pastor of St. Mary of the Lake.

Father Etschmann was in poor health, and found that shepherding both congregations was too great a task for him. He resigned in the summer of 1881 and was succeeded by the newly ordained Reverend Matthew M. Gerend.



Father Gerend began to celebrate Mass at St. John the Baptist weekly, in addition to his duties as pastor of St. Mary of the Lake Parish. He was able to obtain three sisters from the Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac to staff the parish school. The parish built a convent for them in the spring of 1882 at the cost of \$725.

Over the years, the Congregation of St. John the Baptist grew rapidly and it was soon evident that a larger church was needed. According to parish records, the congregation approved the construction of a new church at a meeting held January 6, 1885.

The foundation of the church was laid during the summer of 1886. Records described the new building as “a stately edifice, built entirely of quarry stone.” It measured 42 x 100 feet and had a seating capacity of 400 persons. It was well furnished throughout, having hardwood pews, cathedral glass windows, a furnace and many other modern conveniences. The building cost the parish approximately \$15,000. The congregation proudly moved into their new church in 1887.



Reverend Bernard A. Siepker was appointed the first resident pastor of St. John the Baptist in 1889. The parish had grown to 85 families and the school enrollment was at 100 students. Shortly after his arrival, the parishioners built a rectory for Father Siepker at a cost of \$2,700.

As the parish continued to grow, it became necessary to expand the size of the church. New side wings were added in 1906 and the

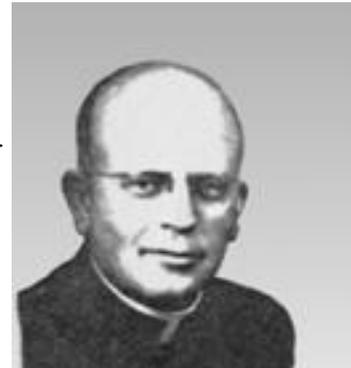
interior was remodeled to include a new sanctuary, sacristies, and a choir loft. The cost of this project was \$9000.

Reverend C.J. Hausner served as pastor of St. John the Baptist from 1917 until 1935. Under his direction, a new convent was built in 1922. The interior of the church was repainted and redecorated in honor of the parish's Golden Jubilee celebration on June 4, 1924. Father Hausner was a leader in promoting the observance of Good Friday. He urged businesses to close from noon to 3:00 p.m., and had remarkable success in Madison and its surrounding communities.



Reverend Michael J. Jacobs served as pastor from 1935 until July of 1946. He was instrumental in making preparations for a new parish school. A building fund was established and plans were presented to the congregation in January 1946.

When Reverend Nicholas B. Schneider was transferred to Waunakee in July 1946, he decided to construct the new school across the street from the existing building.

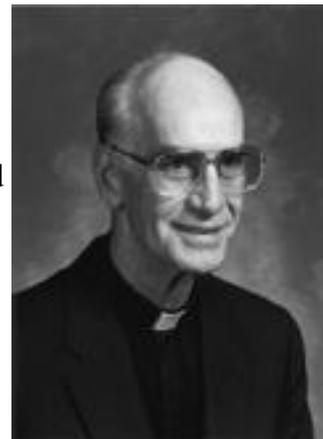


Bishop William P. O'Connor laid the corner-stone for the new eight-classroom school on September 26, 1948. The structure was completed in 1949 at a cost of approximately \$200,000.



It was also in 1948 that St. John the Baptist received its first Assistant Pastor, Reverend Benjamin J. Reddington, who served the parish until 1951. When Father Schneider was forced into retirement due to poor health in 1952, he was succeeded by Reverend Raymond H. Ziegler. During Father Ziegler's tenure, the school again grew crowded. Plans were made for a large addition to that building. It was dedicated and blessed by Bishop O'Connor on September 17, 1961. The cost to the parish was \$583,000.

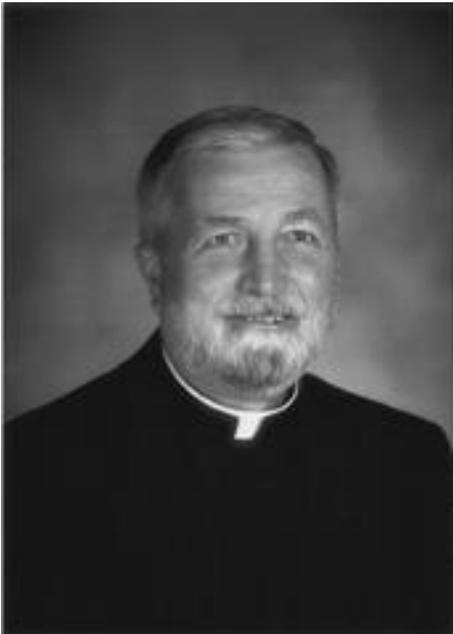
When Reverend Elmer J. Dietzel was appointed pastor of St. John the Baptist in November 1969, the congregation had grown to over 1,000 families. In anticipation of the parish's Centennial celebration, the interior of the church was again repainted and redecorated. The stained glass windows were repaired and refurbished.



A Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1981 in honor of the Sisters of St. Agnes and the 100 years of service they provided to St. John the Baptist Parish and School.

A new parish center was constructed in 1987 under Father Dietzel's direction. This addition, which cost \$352,000, included a gathering area, office space, living space for the priests, restrooms, and a handicapped entrance. Bishop Cletus O'Donnell dedicated it on Sunday, June 18, 1988.

St. John School Endowment Fund was established in 1989 to assist with the every-increasing costs of operating our parish school. The most recent renovation of the church interior began in 1992. Extensive work was done, including repainting the walls, altars, statues, stations of the cross, ceiling and pillar detailing, and rebronzing the tabernacle and candlesticks. Above the altar, a stained glass ceiling light depicting the Eye of God was discovered and restored. It is believed to have been part of the 1906 alterations and was hidden by several layers of plaster and canvas. A new sound system was installed, the radiators and roof were replaced, and the entire building was rewired.

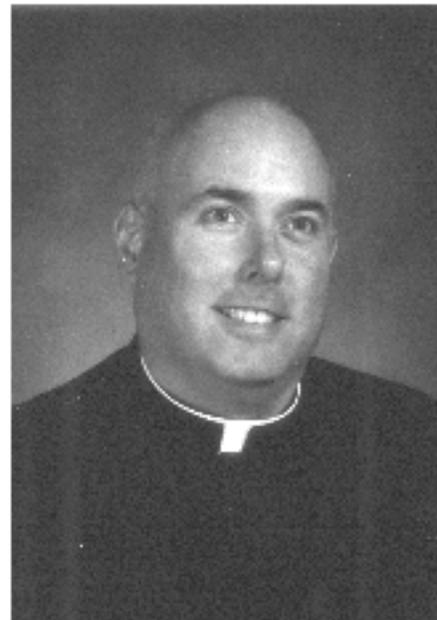


Reverend Bruce M. Hennington was appointed pastor when Father Dietzel was transferred to Brodhead in 1994. During the years of his leadership, he began the process of assessing space needs for our various parish programs. St. John the Baptist was growing at an amazing rate, as was the Village of Waunakee.

When Reverend James L. Gunn was assigned to St. John the Baptist in 1999, he continued to meet with the Facilities Planning Committee. The group determined in early 2000, after much discussion with numerous boards and committees of the parish,

that additional space was necessary to meet the demands of the rapidly growing congregation.

A feasibility study conducted by Kirby/Smith Associates showed that the majority of the parishioners preferred that St. John the Baptist remain a "campus," rather than build the new church on a greenfield site. St. John the Baptist contracted with Groth Design Group to draw up plans for a new church, expanded gathering space, offices, classrooms, kitchen and dining room.



The parish and Village officials negotiated closing the 100 block of East Third Street to make way for the new building. Infrastructure which was located below the surface of the pavement needed to be relocated. Numerous parcels of land on East Second and East Third Streets also needed to be purchased by St. John the Baptist.

In the meantime, two Building a Community of Faith capital campaigns were conducted from 2003-2006 and \$8.5 million was pledged toward the project. J.H. Findorff & Son was selected as our general contractor. Reverend Eric Sternberg was named parochial vicar at St. John the Baptist upon his ordination in May 2005. He and Monsignor Gunn continued to work closely with the Facilities Planning Committee, the architect and general contractor. On June 2, 2007 Bishop Robert C. Morlino blessed the construction site for Phase I, which includes our new church nave and narthex. The remaining rooms will be added to the east side of the structure sometime in the future, as Phase II.

* Heming, Harry H., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin from the Earliest Time to 1898, Catholic Historical Publishing Co., Milwaukee, WI, ©October 9, 1896.