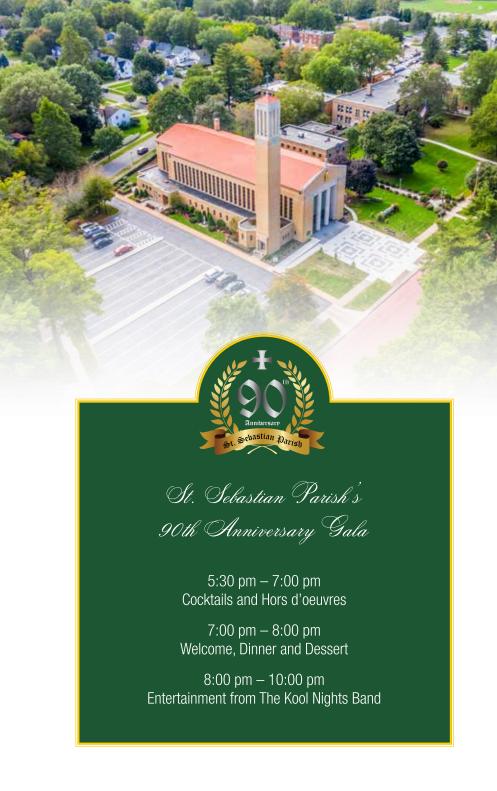


1928-2018

90th Anniversary Gala

Saturday, November 10, 2018 Zwisler Hall





Greetings,

1928 was the last year that a silent film was nominated for an Academy Award (until 2011), it was the year that sliced bread was invented (the best thing since bagged bread), and it was the year that our parish was founded. For 90 years St. Sebastian Parish has been ministering in West Akron, once known as Maple Valley, bringing glory to God and benefit to her people.

As I write this letter to you, I along with a few of your fellow parishioners, are heading on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in honor of our 90th anniversary. While there, we will be contemplating the life of Jesus and the events and people who were at the very beginning of our faith. Everything we do and have is a result of the actions of these early Christians. I hope we return with a renewed vigor to keep the fires of faith burning when we return home.

But it is also a great time to think of those people who were a part of the founding of the parish a mere 90 years ago as they gathered in the Rankin School auditorium as a new parish under a new pastor: Father Hilary Zwisler. It is a worthy thing to contemplate that everything we have as a parish is because of the prayers, actions and generosity of those early Sebastianites. Our land, our buildings, our traditions of faith flow from them through the generations until it is expressed as the Church in 2018. We would be doing nothing more than our duty by praying in thanksgiving for all that they have handed on.

And, I would like to add, that I am grateful to all of you who continue the mission of the parish, who take up the faith and live it, particularly in these trying times. I pray that some day, maybe in another 90 years, a new generation will look back to us and be grateful that we carried the torch in our day so that it might be passed on, still burning brightly, to them so that they too might benefit from all that this parish and people have to offer, preparing them to pass this great gift on to future generations.

The world moves quickly from sliced bread to smart phones, but through the ages one thing is constant: the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives. Our parish is very fortunate to have shared the beauty of the Eucharistic celebration together for 90 years. I remain as always deeply grateful to be your pastor. Please know of my prayers for your continued growth, practice and celebration of this great faith of ours.

May God bless you,







Our 90-Year History

From 1910-1920, Akron experienced a population boom of more than two hundred percent, and by 1928, Akron's St. Vincent Church had again become too overcrowded - despite the establishment of the nearby parishes of St. Bernard, St. Mary, St. Paul and St. Martha. In July of 1928, the Diocese of Cleveland selected Rev. Hilary Zwisler to start a new parish to serve the West Hill area. Father Zwisler rented Rankin School gym from the Akron Board of Education for the celebration of Mass while plans were being made for the first building. The first Mass at Rankin was celebrated on August 5, 1928.

In 1929, construction began on a new building, a combined church and school. Father Zwisler made the school building a priority and hoped to have it ready for the start of the school year. The school was not completed until November 1, 1929, so for the first few months of the school year, the children had classes under the instruction of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in a Knights of Columbus building on West Market Street. Since its establishment, St. Sebastian Parish School has been home to more than 5,500 students. The church was completed soon after the school, with the first services held November 28, 1929, Thanksgiving Day.

- 1928 Diocese of Cleveland appoints Fr. Zwisler to establish a new parish; the St. Sebastian Sanctuary Society is established to provide support for the sanctuary and sacristy, even before the church is built.
- **1929** The original St. Sebastian Parish building a combined church, school and convent was built. The original student-teacher ratio was 220 students to six sisters.
- **1938** The rectory is constructed during the parish's 10th year of existence. The parish debt is paid; construction of the brick parking lot begins; the playground is established.
- 1950 Due to swelling enrollment, a convent was built on church property to house the sisters who taught the school's 650 students. Their quarters had previously been in the eastern wing of the school building.
- **1952** A recreation center was built across the street. The center, which is now called Byrider Hall, houses the school's gymnasium and meeting rooms.

- **1957** Fr. Hilary Zwisler is made a monsignor by Pope Pius XII.
- **1960** The new church, built to seat 1,000 people, is dedicated. The project took two years of planning, one year of fundraising, and two vears of construction. Akron Architects Robert Kraus and William Helmkamp designed the church. The old church became the school lunchroom and social hall, now known as Zwisler Hall.



First Graduating Class 1930



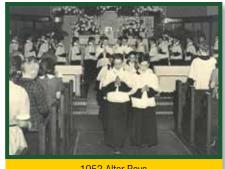
Msgr. Zwisler Celebrates First Communion

- 1968 Monsignor Zwisler retires and is succeeded as pastor by Fr. Charles Byrider. Msgr. Zwisler lives in the rectory until his death in 1971.
- **1969** A junior high wing was built.
- **1970** The school library was established.
- **1971** The St. Sebastian Parish Foundation is established.
- **1985** Fr. Byrider retires and is succeeded as pastor by Fr. John McDonough.
- **1990** Parish Pastoral Council is established to structure shared responsibility in the parish.
- 1995 Fr. McDonough retires and is succeeded as pastor by Fr. William Karg.
- 2000 Principal Sr. Mary Pat Leopold retired, marking the departure of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary after more than 70 years of faithful service to the school by 150 sisters.
- 2001 The parish finishes remodeling the convent building to house the new Beringer Center for Early Learning, which includes a preschool program, kindergarten classrooms and auxiliary services. Also in 2001, a new computer room was created in the basement classrooms of the main school building, and the Victor E. Buehrle, Jr. Science Wing was dedicated.
- 2003 Zwisler Hall was completely remodeled, adding a full-size catering kitchen to support various school and parish events.
- 2007 St. Sebastian Knights of Columbus Council #14255 is established.

- 2008 Fr. Karg retires and is succeeded in 2009 by Fr. John Valencheck, the 5th pastor of St. Sebastian Parish.
- 2011 The school library is completely refurbished and rededicated as the Helen Barry Hamlin Library. Sebastian's Garden, an outdoor classroom, is established. The parish moves the development and business offices to Forest Lodge.
- 2012 New pipe organ is installed.
- **2013** The Academy of Culture and Arts is established.
- **2015** Brick parking lot is renovated.
- 2016 The parish helps open the Julie Billiart School at St. Sebastian, Akron.
- **2018** The Cornerstone of Our Faith capital campaign raises over \$1 million for the restoration of the church; work is completed April-June, 2018. Parish celebrates its 90th Anniversary.



Former Pastors Fr. Byrider, Fr. McDonough, and Fr. Karg



1953 Altar Boys



Thank you!

St. Sebastian Parish Church is a beautiful and awe-inspiring place that serves as a cornerstone of faith for our parishioners and an anchor of the West Akron community. In May of 2017, the St. Sebastian Parish Foundation, at the request of Fr. Valencheck, launched The Cornerstone of Our Faith, a \$1 million capital campaign to restore our beloved church to its full beauty and grandeur in time for the celebration of our parish's 90th Anniversary in 2018.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, the Cornerstone of Our Faith campaign surpassed its goal just one year later in May of 2018. Restoration work began in April, and the majority of the projects were completed in three months, by the end of June, 2018. Projects included refinishing the terrazzo floors, restoring all 113 pews and 240 kneelers, installing new exterior doors, redesigning the main entrance and plaza, restoring the altar mosaic, installing a sound loop, installing new lighting, cleaning the exterior, painting the interior, and restoration of the shrines, brasswork, woodwork and marble.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of The Cornerstone of Our Faith Campaign! Your support of our church will have a lasting impact, ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to gather and worship in our beautiful church. Listed here are the names of everyone who gave a gift to the campaign from its inception through October 1, 2018. This list will also be displayed for one year at the church's main entrance, and a complete list of donors will be included in the Foundation's 2018 Annual Report.

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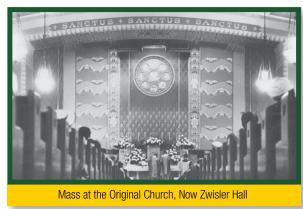
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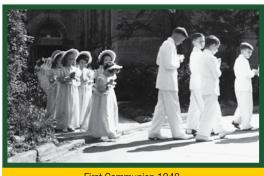
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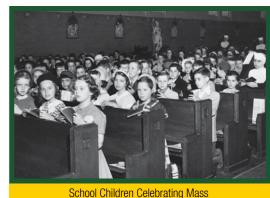
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Parish's 80th Anniversary Mass, with Three Pastors Pictured at Center: Fr. McDonough, Fr. Valencheck, and Fr. Karg

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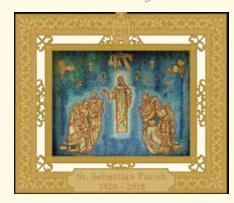
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Commemorative Tems

90th Anniversary Ornament



Pew Hat Clip with Notepad



If you would like to purchase either of these items, please contact the rectory office at 330.836.2233.

Thank you for your constant support and dedication!



St. Sebastian Parish kicked off a year of 90th anniversary celebrations with a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated by Bishop Nelson Perez on June 30, 2018.

Mission Statement for Saint Sebastian Parish

St. Sebastian Roman Catholic Parish is committed to growing in holiness with the Eucharist as the center, source and summit of our lives. We give witness to our Catholic cultural tradition through Jesus Christ, by speaking and working in faith, hope and love.

