

St. Leo's Pittsburgh to be Torn Down

Catholic Ministry to the people to continue on many different levels

St. Leo's was administered by the Carmelites of the Most Pure Heart of Mary Province until June 1992. Previous to taking over responsibility for St. Leo's in 1958, the Carmelites had administered Holy Trinity Church in Pittsburgh since 1875.

St. Leo Church, a vacant North Side Roman Catholic church that once served as a parish for German immigrants, now is facing probable demolition, much to the dismay of some residents of Marshall-Shadeland who hate to see part of their community's history destroyed.

In November, Providence Connections Inc., an outreach ministry of the Sisters of Divine Providence in McCandless, PA, bought the church, its school, and rectory on Brighton Road for \$300,000, according to Allegheny County property records.

With diocesan permission, the sisters bought the buildings from Risen Lord Parish in Brighton Heights, which took over St. Leo as part of a consolidation of four parishes in 1993. The consolidation left Risen Lord with several vacant buildings and a large deficit.

The Rev. Thomas Galvin, pastor of Risen Lord, said proceeds from the sale helped reduce the deficit from \$1 million to about \$450,000.

Galvin said statues, stained-glass windows and the altar were removed from the church last summer. Some were placed in storage and will be used

when Risen Lord Church is renovated.

Galvin said five German-made stained glass windows removed from the church were taken to a cathedral in the Virgin Islands that was damaged several years ago by a hurricane.

"They were gorgeous. Two come out of the baptistry," including one depicting the Baptism of Jesus, he said, adding that another grouping of stained glass windows depicting the seven Catholic sacraments are in storage.

Galvin said the Sisters of Divine Providence plan to remodel the former St. Leo rectory and school for their Providence Family Support Center, currently at another site on Brighton Road. The center provides day care, parenting classes, counseling and leadership classes for families.

Sister Maria Fest, director of resources for the Sisters of Divine Providence, said the sisters would like to operate a day care program at the St. Leo site. They also plan to operate preschool and after-school programs and summer camp there.

The idea of tearing down the church isn't sitting well with some residents, including Joe Brown, project coordinator for the Brightwood Civic Group, which serves Marshall-Shadeland and Woods Run. To try to prevent the demolition, Brown nominated the church for historic status with the city's Historic Review Commission.

But last Wednesday, when the nomination was scheduled for a public hearing, Brown withdrew it, saying the Brightwood Civic Group did not support his actions.

Carole Annis, founder of the Brightwood Civic Group, agrees with Brown. "I don't think it should be torn down. They should preserve it," she said.

The St. Leo Parish was formed in 1888 and was named after Pope St. Leo the Great. The Brighton Road church is the parish's second church. The foundation for the church, which is Italian Renaissance in design, was laid in 1906 and the church was completed in 1915. Galvin said it was founded as a

German Catholic parish, primarily serving German immigrants.

This article by Jan Ackerman originally appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on January 17, 2001. It is reprinted here with permission.



**St. Leo's Parish Church
Pittsburgh, PA**

Prep Commission Finishes; General Chapter Set for Sept 4-21, 2001

From January 26 until February 3, the members of the Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter met for the second and final time at the General Curia.

Members of the Commission are Cees Bartels (President) of the Dutch Province, Mario Alfarano (Secretary) of the Neapolitan Province, William J. Harry (PCM Province), Michael Plattig (Upper German Province), Josué Ghizzoni (Parana Province), Fernando Millán Romeral (Baetica Province) and Edison Tinambunan (Indonesian Province).

At the meeting the responses received from the Provinces and Commissaries to the questionnaire were reviewed and major themes were selected for study and development at the General Chapter. The specific topics to be dealt with at the Chapter are working as Carmelites in parishes, new ways of looking at community life, service to the neediest, formation and social communication.

The reflection on each of the themes will follow a methodology similar to the *Lectio Divina*. The hope of the Commission is that the initiatives will enlighten and offer a number of possibilities to be implemented in the various Provinces. We also hope that in all of these we learn how these

initiatives came about and how these are rooted in our Carmelite identity.

The Commission developed an *ordo capituli* setting out the orderly procedures for the work of the Chapter. The Commission also prepared a draft of the Chapter schedule and some other preparations which will create a warm hospitable environment for the Chapter members to do their work. The Superiors General of the Discalced Carmelites is scheduled to address the group. Liturgical celebrations include a major Marian celebration as part of the special Marian year called for by the Prior General. Also planned are meetings with representatives of the wider Carmelite Family.

Seven members of the Most Pure Heart of Mary Province will be attending. These include John Malley, Leo McCarthy, John Welch, Bernhard Bauerle, and William J. Harry and elected representatives John Russell and Jerry Payea. The Province of St. Elias selected Mario Esposito and Redemptus Valabek as delegates to join Michael Driscoll, the current Provincial.

A webpage (carmelites.org/prepcom.htm) has been developed which will allow anyone interested to follow Chapter preparations. Daily summaries will be posted online in the three

official languages of the Order (Italian, English, Spanish) during the Chapter itself. A prayer card for the Chapter will be distributed throughout the Province.

**Fernando Millán, O. Carm.
Baetica Province**

