

2018 2019



PILGRIMAGE TO OUR PAST

Celebrating 200/225 Years of Students & Parishioners for Others

December 2018

Lot 72: Where It All Began

The History and Architecture of the Chapel of St. Ignatius and Surrounding Holy Trinity Buildings

In 1787, when John Threlkeld “granted” Lot 72 to Reverend John Carroll for five shillings, our area of Georgetown was quite a different place—thickly wooded landscapes and paths would eventually give way to the streets and buildings that we now recognize. As Georgetown pre-dates Washington, DC, it had a completely different naming convention for its streets. Lot 72 faced First Street (now N Street). Reverend Francis Ignatius Neale, S.J. arrived in 1792 to become the first pastor of a growing body of Catholics in Georgetown and the surrounding area who needed a public house of worship. While it had no official name at first, this “Chapple” would eventually come to be called Trinity Church.

Two men are often referenced with the building of the first church: Leonard Harbaugh and James Doyle. Leonard Harbaugh was a prominent builder at the time and had many projects in and around Georgetown, including the Department of Treasury Building and Georgetown College’s second campus building, “Old North.” Original handwritten invoices from Leonard Harbaugh for carpentry, planks, nails, shingles and other materials appear in the Holy Trinity archives. Fr. Neale’s community was generally poor and unaccustomed to giving money to support the Church, so funding for the building was slow and therefore work on the building stalled. The foundation was likely completed in 1792 while interior woodworking and bricklaying were completed in 1793, with final building completion 1794. Early records show James Doyle, a builder, provided many building supplies and arranged to receive “pew rents” in return. Upon his death, his will requested education for his sons while the “pew rents” were returned to the church.

The architectural style for the original “Trinity Church” (the Holy Trinity name was not used until much later) is considered Georgian (popular from 1714-1840), a style in which symmetry and simplicity are key. The two-story chapel with its central steeple had the main double-doors in the center with windows on either side. Along the length of each side of the building were two rows of three multi-paned (six over six) windows. The steeple includes a distinctive octagonal campanile. With few other buildings nearby and rising up

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Parishioner Reflection

An Auspicious Beginning with the Sisters of Mercy

I entered first grade at Holy Trinity on September 5, 1944—but it almost didn’t happen. Though my mother had chosen Dunblaine (at Immaculata) for me, when my plumber father inspected the building, he found it not to be fireproof. So down 35th Street he drove to two brick buildings each with a 1918 cornerstone. He judged them to be a firm enough foundation for my future.

Those two buildings became the cornerstone of my young life. In those days, one’s parish was not only the center of

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from the hill from the Potomac River, what a wonderful landmark Trinity Church must have been.

Early building details are limited and while research indicates that the original footprint of the first church was 35 feet by 65 feet—it was likely even more humble at approximately 36 feet by 40 feet.

The interior was simple, with heavy wooden ceiling beams, likely first used in ships that worked the Potomac. There were no pews in the center of the church (until 1832), but rather an open gathering space for those who did not pay pew rent including African-Americans who either stood or brought stools/chairs from home. Interior galleries were later built and accessed by exterior staircases for use by African-Americans as the white population of the church grew.

Father Neale bought additional lots (#73, #74 and #75) surrounding the church in 1796 and 1810 to extend west to Gay Street (later Lingan Street and ultimately 36th Street). Some of the ground was used as a graveyard and as late as 1900 one tombstone remained to the rear of the original church. Throughout the early years, Catholics flocked to the new church, and it was no longer able to accommodate the congregation. In 1806, Fr. Neale made an appeal for more funds to widen the church and then to lengthen it. The Church was expanded by adding two “lateral wings” and early documents show these were used for confessionals and sacristy storage areas. Even today, you can faint traces of these archways on the left side facing the courtyard (currently the school playground). A final addition was built in the rear extending the depth to be used as the boy’s sacristies.

Overcrowding brought the need for a larger church. After the completion of the second church in 1851, the last public worship in Trinity Church took place in 1863. It was later used as a boy’s school—this occurred in 1876 with work completed in 1877. The Sunday school room was on the first floor while the upper floors were devoted to the use of the parochial school and three to four large rooms.

In 1916, the rectory was moved from the corner of 36th and O Streets to its current location to make room for the building of the new girl’s high school. Concurrently, the parish built the new boy’s school on the corner of 36th and N Streets. Shortly thereafter, the parish hall (now our recently renovated Trinity Hall) was opened to much fanfare in 1923.

After the completion of the new schools in 1918, Fr. McDonald then remodeled the first church to serve as a

convent for the Sisters of Mercy, who were teaching at the high school and parochial schools.

The departure of the Sisters of Mercy in 1979 changed the first church again—this time into parish offices. This would remain until the 1990s when Fr. Madden, and an ambitious set of Holy Trinity parishioners led the effort to restore the historic 1794 structure back to its original purpose, while also expanding the Parish Center to include significant office space and investing in infrastructure costs such as fire prevention, heating and cooling systems. The renovations included building nearly 30,000 square feet of meeting space below the chapel and along the side (under the East Garden) and wrapping around to the back to include McKenna Hall.

Led by Kerns Group Architects, the restoration was completed in 1999 and won The American Institute of Architects’ Religious Architecture Design Award in 2000. The project also included the beautiful, contemporary and grace-filled interior of Chapel of St. Ignatius, inviting current and future generations to reflect, pray and serve others for many years to come.

—John George

225TH ANNIVERSARY LECTURE SERIES

January 26, 2019

Implementation of Vatican II Liturgy

Panel includes: Msgr. Kevin Irwin, Gail Ramshaw, John Buscemi, & Deacon Paul Covino. Moderated by Jim Sabak, OFM & David Pennington

February 23 & 24, 2019

Catholic Marriage & Family Life: A Discussion with Tim & Susan Muldoon

March 13, 2019

Birthing from the Side of Jesus

An Evening with Sr. Barbara Reid, O.P

For more details and to RSVP, please visit
www.trinity.org/HT225



You are invited to share stories and memories of how your experiences at Holy Trinity have shaped your life, your faith and your family. Stories may be used on our website and in the bulletin and will be added to the parish archives. Please submit stories HT225@trinity.org. Photos are also welcome!

Reflection, *cont. from page 1*



worship, but also family activities and one's circle of friends—and no one helped forge this connection more than the Sisters of Mercy. They had been teaching at Holy Trinity since 1918. Sixteen in number, teaching both grade and high school, they lived in the Convent of

Mercy, the original church and current chapel. Almost all held degrees, unheard of at that time in Catholic elementary schools. Of infinite variety, they were extraordinary women who made flesh for us the Word to whom they had pledged their lives.

My first grade teacher, Sister Mary Dorothy, was fresh from Ireland. I can still hear the brogue as she took attendance, rolling her R's: "Margaret Irent Murphy; Daniel Joseph Kelliher!" The first letters we learned to put at the top of every paper we wrote were AMDG. Sister taught us to say the Angelus each day at noon. Music? To sing was to pray twice.

Still, I cried for the first two weeks of first grade. Sister Dorothy did not scold me, never even said, "Stop crying, dear." Rather she smiled affectionately and gently placed a knowing hand on my shoulders as she swished down the aisle between the desks with their stained inkwells. What's more, she let my teary-eyed mother stay on the steps just outside the first grade classroom. There the much-loved principal, Sister Mary Cephas, would appear, sit with my mother, comfort her, and the two began a fond friendship.

The sisters were vibrant and visible. They lived the mission of their 19th century Irish foundress, Catherine McAuley, who spent most of her life as a lay woman running a house on Baggot Street Dublin, for "the poor, the sick and the ignorant," which became the Mercy motto.

In 1944 the war was still groaning on. The neighborhood was definitely pre-gentrification. Families were large; many were struggling. These sisters seemed to have a sixth sense for the pockets of poverty in the parish.

No one in the parish paid tuition. Some students went home for lunch. The rest of us brought brown bags and ate on our laps on long benches in the school basement. Milk was three cents, but free for those without the money. In one corner of the room was a Mercy institution: The Poor Table. We were encouraged to contribute the overflow from our lunches, or just a goodhearted sharing of our cookies, for the inevitable students with no lunch.

Like lunch, recess was sparse. Our playground was the knee-scuffing cement surface between convent, church and school. Our playground equipment consisted of a jump rope and a dodge ball with a sister in charge wrapped in a mere woolen shawl. By December she was cold, and so were we.

But fortunately, like so many other Jesuit schools, we had the theater. The tradition of "The Jesuits and the Arts" was a perfect match for these sisters. Nothing sparked their creativity more than the presence of that space. And nothing placed us in the midst of the magic of the theater more than the Christmas play.

By early December of first grade, my tears had dried. In the corner of the classroom, the Infant of Prague statue now had a purple cape in place Pentecost green. Sister Mary Dorothy was writing a Christmas play for our class. She chose me to begin the play. The curtain would open and I was to say with exuberance, "We're writing a letter to Santa. My, it's a hard thing to do."

At the same time each of the other teachers was writing a play for her class. During that month, we spent as much time in the theater as in the classroom. Suddenly our world became larger. We who were "class" were now part of "school." Just being in that theater space breathed excitement about the upcoming Sunday before Christmas when we would be performing for our parents. By the time of the Christmas play, we had rehearsed so much that I could recite the entire script to my Grandmother across town.

Not only teachers, but also parents must have resonated with that line: "My it's a hard thing to do." The finished production had eight acts plus scene changes, and frequently lasted four hours. "Does the Christmas play always have to be on the day of the NFL playoff game?" my father asked repeatedly. Our mothers, many of whom had made a costume or two, were distracted by unwrapped presents and unbaked cookies waiting at home. But we first graders were plunged again into an even larger level of belonging, the parish.

When the final curtain opened with its tableau, a huge sigh rolled through the full house. The well-worn baby doll of years past was gone. In its place in the Blessed Mother's arms was the real article, baby Jimmy O'Donnell. (Jimmy's older sister, Anne, would enter the Mercy order 10 years later.) The "Silent Night" that the weary parents had been waiting for was sung and the play was over.

But thanks to these sisters, what remained, though I did not have words for it until years later, was a felt sense of Word Made Flesh, Christ playing in "ten thousand places." And there was much more to come.

—Natalie Ganley

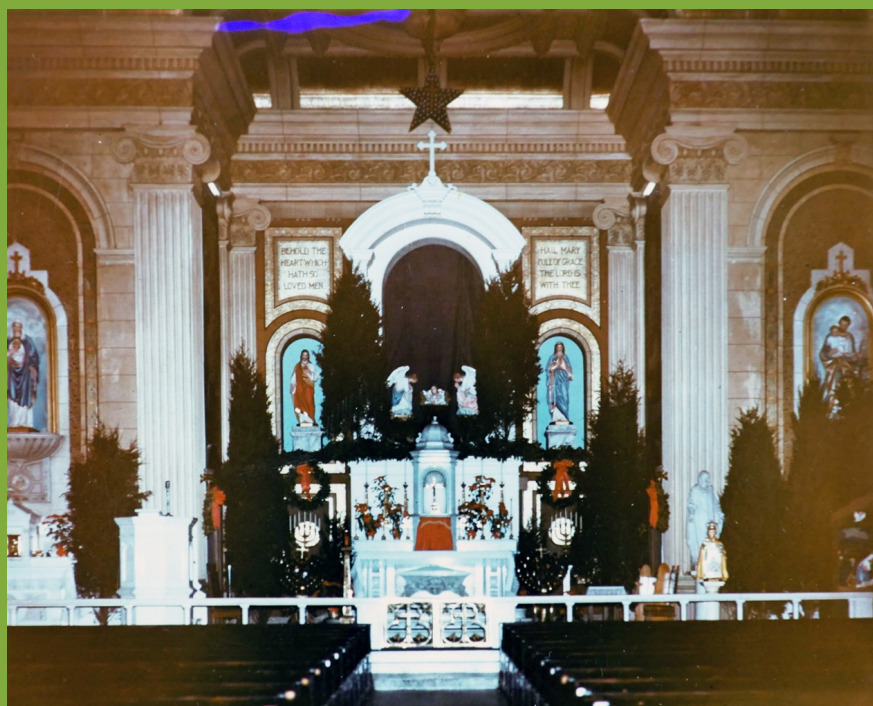


Anniversary Christmas ornaments, travel mugs and candles are now on sale at the Parish Center Reception Desk, Monday through Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm!



TRINITY TRIVIA: CHRISTMAS EDITION

- Before its renovation, the church before its renovation had three sacristies. The one on the right where the Baptism font currently stands was reserved on Midnight Mass for the Sisters of Mercy so that they could be “out of the view of the congregation.”
- In the 1930s, ushers for the Midnight Mass wore tuxedos. They escorted pew holders who had tickets from behind the altar to their seats. After that, the back doors of the church were open to the public.
- The altar boys at Midnight Mass wore red cassocks with white surplices, Buster Brown collars and red bows and they started rehearsing the Monday after Thanksgiving. They sat on benches on either side of the sanctuary gates and came to call themselves, “the benchwarmers.”
- The very musical pastor in the 1940s, Father James McCarl, would come down the aisle at the 9am children’s Mass on Christmas Day, gathering the children with him and singing, “Come, Come, Come to the Manger.” They processed first to the manger and then back to their places for Mass. In later years, the processional hymn at most Christmas Masses was almost universally, “O Come All Ye Faithful.”
- In years past, a “living” Holy Family would begin Mass. A father, mother, and their baby would volunteer to dress as Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus and process down the aisle as the congregation sang “Silent Night.”



Recognize the altar? This is a picture of Holy Trinity after its 1940s renovation.

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