



# PILGRIMAGE TO OUR PAST

*Celebrating 225 Years of Parishioners for Others*

March 2019

## Remembering the Altar Society

The first Mothers Club started in 1933. By the 1940s, the mothers prepared monthly luncheons for both schools. Almost every yearbook devoted a page with photos and expressions of appreciation for their work. The 1952 yearbook called them “the backbone of the school.”

In 1959, the legendary Roach sisters, who had been attending to the altar cloths and vestments, retired from volunteering. The new pastor, Rev. Martin Casey, S.J., spotted the camaraderie and generosity still alive in the Mothers Club of the school. He wondered, *would these mothers like to become an Altar Society?*

And so began “the longest running show” in the parish—45 years of dedication both to the parish as a whole and to each other as well, with the added vow to make sure it was not, “all prayer and no play.”

The Altar Society’s duties and numbers grew quickly. They not only were in charge of vestments, but also inherited larger tasks such as polishing the brass on the gates of the altar rail (which was later removed once Vatican II changes were implemented in the church). On Sundays, Altar Society members held baskets in back of the church for donations for flowers. They helped count the Sunday collection and stripped the palms for Palm Sunday. They mounted famous bake sales that netted more than a thousand dollars. They sponsored card parties in the Hall of Nations. They raised scholarship money and slipped in emergency funds for needy students through the year.

From the beginning, they met monthly for Mass and the rosary, then breakfast and a meeting at the Rosslyn Hot Shoppe—part of the chain started locally by J. Willard Marriott in 1927, now the Key Bridge Marriott hotel. They said the rosary for the dead at DeVol’s Funeral Home and took communion to the sick. They even organized live music and dancing on the barge along the canal for all parishioners—the menfolk included! They organized retreats and jaunts to Southern Maryland and always remembered to have a “basket of cheer” ready to open and toast the coordinator when the event was over.

As their work increased, so did their age. In 1973, one of the charter members, Helen Estep, recruited her nieces Judy and Linda Miller to recruit friends who were in their 20s and 30s to help with the yearly bazaar. Fourteen volunteers met for weeks and stacked the shelves of the bazaar with hand-made holiday treasures. Young Julie Aaron and Kathleen McCarthy were invited to a Sunday meeting to give the results. This first bazaar netted \$10,000!



**Altar Society of 1993.** Front Row (L-R): Ruth Ellsworth, Julie Aaron, Delia Goetz, Helen Dougherty, Kitty Nolan, Frances Larkin. Back Row (L-R): Mary Catherine Lydadne, Regina Van Dorn, Ruth Kuhn, Peg West, Ferina Goyer, Alice Carty, Natalie Tholl, Marlene Maddalalone, Doris Brown, Bridie O'Donnell

The Altar Society created a category for these younger women called “associates” and booked them for the next year. Their second bazaar yielded \$13,000. When Kathleen and Julie went to the meeting to report this success, they discovered they had been unanimously nominated and elected president and vice-president, so they had to be quickly upgraded to members. The addition of the younger set assured that the first members, as they became more limited, would continue to have transportation to meetings and to continue being active members of the group.

The Altar Society women were experienced fundraisers. With profits from card parties, bazaars and bake sales, they were able to underwrite the 1961 restoration of the front doors of the church and purchase the brass candlesticks. At the next restoration, they gave \$25,000 for the Altar of Repose in memory of their long-term moderator Rev. Michael Dougherty, S.J. Continually, they were the only parish organization actually lining parish coffers rather than depleting them.

From their beginnings, the Altar Society eschewed any suggestion of joining some larger national Catholic group such as Ladies of Charity. They were (and would remain) independent, with their own charter and purpose and their own way of implementing Robert’s Rules of Order—a manual of parliamentary procedure that is based on the consideration of the rights of the majority, of the minority, of individual members, of absentee members, and of all of these groups taken together.

*Cont. on page 2*

## Altar Society, *cont. from page 1*

If the treasurer mentioned a report that flowers were sent to a member who was going home Tuesday, there would ensue an immediate discussion about who would provide meals for that week. Some of the professionals among them, accustomed to stricter protocol, were initially horrified, but it became very clear that the well being of each other was truly the rule of order—*cura personalis*, as the Jesuits up on the hill might say.

Reflecting back on the Altar Society activities during the changing times in the church, one sees that in the scope of their service, they laid the framework for many of today's parish organizations such as bereavement, social concerns, parish life, art and environment, Eucharistic ministers, prayer groups, clothing and food drives and more.

At one time, the Altar Society numbered as many as 80, but membership decreased to only a handful in the 1990s. Still asserting their independence, Bridie O'Donnell, one of the core members from those first Mothers Club days, had Regina and the officers write to the pastor to say that it was time for the Altar Society to disband. The pastor accepted the letter and the \$15,000 that remained in their hands. (Bridie died in 2005. Regina Van Doren, who served for 17 years as president, still operates as historian, and keeps their meticulous records that read like a history of Holy Trinity at the time.)

The parish has missed their presence, their humor, their versatility, their initiative, the loyalty they brought to each other and the lively spirit they brought to the parish. Father Jim Maier said it best, "the Altar Society might well be the model for the kind of caring that should be the hallmark of what it means to be parish."

—Julie Aaron & Natalie Ganley

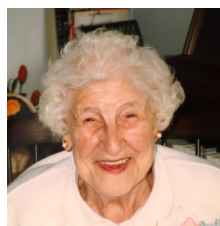
## Altar Society Song

The Church belongs to everyone;  
But not everything is free.  
And that is why we have to run  
The Altar Society.  
We sew and bake; your money we take;  
The vestments, the flowers,  
They're yours; They're ours.  
And we are always in the black;  
The Altar Society.

*Melody: "Best Things in Life Are Free".  
Paraphrase originally written by Catherine Nolan for the Parish Jubilee in 1984.*



## Bridie O'Donnell's Irish Soda Bread



*St. Patrick's Day would not be Patrick's Day during the '70s and '80s without Bridie's Irish Soda Bread, sliced and buttered and looking for takers in the dining room at the rectory or at a meeting in the parish center!*

### Ingredients

3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
2 tablespoons caraway seed  
1 pint sour cream  
1 cup raisins  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 egg yolk

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°. Into a large bowl, mix dry ingredients and caraway seed. Into another smaller bowl mix raisins, sour cream, egg and baking soda.
2. Make a well in the dry ingredients, add sour cream mixture. Beat with a wooden spoon until just blended, then knead lightly in bowl.
3. Form into two 8-inch rounds and place in two iron skillets. Brush top of each loaf with beaten egg yolk.
4. Bake at 375° for 1 hour. When thoroughly cool, slice 1/3 inch thick with soft butter, then stack buttered slices on a serving plate. *Makes two loaves*

*They claim in Ireland the bread stays only fresh for 24 hours, but that's never been a problem with Bridie's loaves at Holy Trinity!*

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have a favorite photo or story or memory?  
Please share it by emailing [ht225@trinity.org](mailto:ht225@trinity.org).



# The Women Religious of Holy Trinity

## Part I: Sisters of the Visitation

*Since 1818 four religious orders of nuns have taught the children of Holy Trinity. Our series begins with the Sisters of the Visitation, who taught the girls at the Benevolent School.*

Alice Lalor was an Irish immigrant who helped found and became superior of the first order of Visitation nuns in the United States. Traveling from Kilkenny, Ireland to Philadelphia in 1795, Lalor had formed close friendships with two fellow passengers, both widows, with whom she soon established an informal religious community under the guidance of Father Leonard Neale, S.J., founder of Holy Trinity. They engaged in various types of charitable work and greatly assisted Father Neale in his endeavor to educate Catholic girls. The effort was unsuccessful due to the yellow fever epidemic that swept Philadelphia.

Two years later as president of Georgetown College, Neale reached out to Alice Lalor inviting her to come to Georgetown to “try again” to educate girls. Alice Lalor, widow Maria Sharpe, and her daughter set out for Georgetown by stagecoach and took up residence with three Poor Clare nuns,

refugees from the French Revolution, who had been unsuccessful in starting a school for girls in the area. A few months later, Maria McDermott, a Philadelphia widow, joined them, and Fr. Neale used her “dowry” to purchase a house separate from the Poor Clare convent.

In 1816, Pope Pius VIII granted Fr. Neale’s request that Alice and the two Marias become affiliated with the Visitation Order in Europe. In his request, Fr. Neale had promised a free education for Catholic children. Establishing the Benevolent School (also referenced in documents as the St. Joseph’s Benevolent School) in 1818 on the Visitation campus was a way of fulfilling this promise. The sisters operated the school serving orphans and the children from local families in need, while also running an “academy for young ladies.” The Georgetown Directory of 1830 states “a benevolent school is attended by the Sisters where they educate gratuitously three or four hundred females annually, clothe sixty or seventy and afford a sustenance to thirty or forty daily.” In 1844, the sisters purchased the Adam Robb House on Fayette Street (present-day 35th Street), now called Lalor House, as a



*The connection continues! Our Pre-K classes visit and read with the Sisters of the Visitation every month during the school year.*

building for the Benevolent School.

Lalor House served as the home for the Benevolent School for over 70 years. In 1918, when the girls moved to the new Holy Trinity school buildings, the Visitation sisters concluded their teaching of Holy Trinity children and continued their commitment to education through their academy of girls which continues today.

*Adapted from “History of the Religious Women Who Taught Our Children & Enriched Our Lives” by Peter Higgins.*

## Parishioner Reflections: Remembering Sister M. Cristopher



### Sister Mary Christopher, RSM

I will never forget that first assembly in the theater with our new principal, Sister Mary Christopher, in September 1953. We 35 sophomores along with the other classes were seated; Sister

Christopher was standing in front of the orchestra pit. She had a smile as wide as the white starched coif that framed her face. She seemed clearly at home in her skin.

It was no wonder. I learned later that she had grown up on R Street, walking distance from my house and from the church. Her parents, John and Susan McQuade Bourke, had been on the committee that raised the \$90,000 in 1918 for the two schools that still flank the church. Her mother was one of the earliest members of the Mothers’ Club. Her sister, Mary, had been a student at the old St. Joseph’s School (now Lalor house at Visitation) and was in the first graduating class of Holy Trinity High School. Sister Christopher herself, (Pat Bourke), attended Holy Trinity for 12 years.

Her presence that day would have been electric in any setting. “I have always maintained,” she began in her strong voice, “that anyone in charge has the privilege of one irrational rule that they do not have to explain to anyone. Now this is my rule: It is about chewing gum. From now on, any stu-

dent I see chewing gum will come to my office on a Saturday morning from 9 to 12 and sit with me while I work. So don’t say you were not warned or that it isn’t fair. And remember when you come to my office it means I have to be there also.” And so began three years for us of this inexhaustibly human and perceptive woman who was (and stayed) years ahead of her time.

She was astute in her ways of getting to know us. For example, if you were late, you went first to her office for a “late slip” so you could get into your first class. This reporting to the principal resulted in her knowing everyone’s excuses, some of which alerted her to a crisis where a Sister of Mercy might be able to help. She knew, for example, the large family where the father was dying and there was no money for a scholarship for the fifth child. She found one for the student at a Mercy college in the South.

She strengthened the school academically. Granted, she was somewhat partial to Catholic schools. But college counselors had not been invented so she filled that role for us. Consequently

## Fr. James L. Connor, S.J.

Fr. James L. Connor, S.J. has dedicated his life to faith and justice with over 50 years in Jesuit Ministry.

From 1968-73, he served as Provincial of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus. In 1975, he became president of the U.S. Jesuit Conference in Washington D.C. In 1980, he participated in the funeral of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was martyred in El Salvador in 1980. The funeral ended suddenly after a bomb exploded outside the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador, causing great chaos. This experience underscored that his heart has always been with social justice, and he continued this work throughout his life.

He became the pastor of Holy Trinity in 1981 (and would serve until 1987). Upon arrival, his motto became: "Power to the People—i.e., the people in the pews, the people who ARE Holy Trinity parish."

He credits all that happened during his tenure to the "People-Power." In his exit interview published in the "Holy Trinity News" in May 1987, Fr. Connor provided two typed pages listing 31 accomplishments which he titled "For which to be grateful" during his one

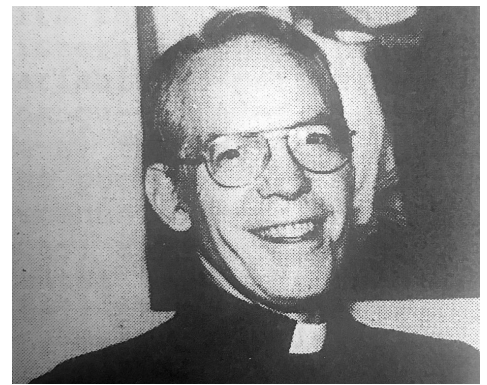
and only experience as a parish priest.

In addition to parish prayer groups, Fr. Connor and an administrative committee began oversight of parish budgets and priorities. A council committee examined finances. At their recommendation, the parish resumed Sunday offertory collections and established the annual Parish Pledge.

In three years, the financial support of the parish increased from \$400,000 to \$1,300,000 a year—of which 10% was immediately tithed to social concerns. This invigorated an already vigorous Social Concerns Committee.

The Marriage Preparation program was introduced and modeled on the program in another parish yet tweaked to adapt to the needs of young Holy Trinity engaged couples. Mass was introduced at the parish picnic at Georgetown Visitation on Trinity Sunday. The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process was introduced in 1983 for people interested in becoming Catholics.

Around this same time saw the formation of the Jesuit Center for Spirituality, offering the retreat of the Spiritual Exercises in its Annotation 19 form, and then training others to direct these



retreats of the Spiritual Exercises. In recent reflections, Fr. Connor cites countless Holy Trinity parishioners that were involved as part of these "People-Power" activities. He also oversaw the "great Bicentennial."

Following his time at Holy Trinity, Fr. Connor became the Director of the Woodstock Theological Center. From 2003-9, he served as the Maryland Province Provincial Assistant for Mission and Continuing Renewal from 2003-9. Today, he is at Loyola University in Maryland, where he teaches, offers retreats and speaks on a regular basis. In 2014, he earned the Robert M. Holstein Faith Doing Justice Award from the Ignatian Solidarity Network.

—John George

## Parishioner Reflections, *cont. from page 3*

more girls from our class went to college from then on than in previous years. You would not call her "chummy" but during that time at Trinity her modeling the richness and promise of religious life sent more students to the Mercy novitiate than ever before.

Her personal lifelong passion was education. It was in her DNA. Her father had insisted that she go to college and not enter the convent right after high school. She obeyed him but after two years she left to enter, because as she said, "If I had not gone then I would never have gone." At 30 she was already principal of Mt. St. Agnes High school in Baltimore. She had an MA in Education administration from Catholic University, and went on to be an assistant professor of education at Loyola College.

Years later, I saw Sr. Christopher again outside our new parish center. I recognized her immediately, even without the habit and a half century older. I motioned her inside and we had 30 magical minutes about our

lives since 1956. She was still vibrant, still on mission, carrying with her that day a fist full of brochures advertising the Mt. St. Agnes Theological Center for Women where she was an advisor.

After she left I wondered if I should have broken that chewing gum rule. After all, being in her presence for a whole Saturday morning might have been a gift in itself. But there was more waiting. She lived into her ninth decade and at the Mass on the day of burial, her dear friend, Sister Pat Smith, spoke of something I had never heard. Sister Mary Christopher had chosen to be inscribed in her vow ring years before these three words: "Quid nunc, Christe?"

"What now, Christ?" As she lived them, I felt them to be a final gift to us, her students, to make our own.

—Natalie Ganley

## 225TH ANNIVERSARY LECTURE SERIES [WWW.TRINITY.ORG/225](http://WWW.TRINITY.ORG/225)

### A BUS TOUR OF MARYLAND JESUIT SITES

May 18: A day-long tour of significant Jesuit sites: Historic St. Mary's City, St. Inigoes, & Port Tobacco (\$35/person)

**ART & FAITH:** We are now accepting reservations for a one hour behind-the-scenes tour of the Great Masters Room at the National Gallery on June 20 and June 22 at 10am and 2pm each day. Space is limited.

For more information or to RSVP, please email [HT225@trinity.org](mailto:HT225@trinity.org)