



# PILGRIMAGE TO OUR PAST

*Celebrating 225 Years of Parishioners for Others*

June 2019



*The December 9, 1997 Metro section of The Washington Post*

## The Inquiry of 1997

*The Year The Washington Post Reported on the Cardinal's Yearlong Investigation of Holy Trinity*

This article has been removed for the time being as per the author's demand.  
You can read about this time period in our history from our linked resources found at [www.trinity.org/PTOP](http://www.trinity.org/PTOP).

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## The Inquiry of 1997, *cont. from page 2*

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“ Requiring an oath and tape recording meetings are usually used only to investigate the embezzlement of parish funds or other serious concerns. ”

—Canon Law Expert

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“ If the problems cited here are not effectively addressed, I am prepared to bring about necessary changes... ”

—Cardinal Hickey

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### Editors' Note:

*A complete listing of sources may be found on our website at [www.trinity.org/PTOP](http://www.trinity.org/PTOP). Thank you to members of the staff, the Parish Pastoral Council, current parishioners and the 225th Anniversary Committee, who reviewed the article. We had several considerate and fruitful conversations in regards to publishing the article.*

*For those parishioners who witnessed the events of 1997 or were part of the interrogations, this period in our history may be a source of pain or regret. However, what struck many of us when reading this piece was the example, yet again, of Holy Trinity responding to controversy through reflection and prayer. The accompanying reflection by Paula McCabe on the prayerful discernment that also occurred in 1997 echoes many of the approaches we are using today in the midst of the sexual abuse scandal.*

*In fact-checking this article, we came across some unexpectedly apt thoughts recorded in the minutes of the January 10, 1998 meeting of the Parish Prayer and Discernment group: “There was a suggestion that we should yield to the uncertainty and the mystery. Growth doesn’t occur in a state of certainty. Bob Mulderig remembered a few lines from Father Greenfield’s homily on the Solemnity of Mary: ‘Cherish the Old. Welcome the New. Live with both in the present moment.’”*

# Parishioner Reflections

## *Prayerful Discernment in 1997 and Beyond*

In early 1997, when the James Cardinal Hickey, then leader of the Archdiocese of Washington, opened an investigation into liturgical and other matters at Holy Trinity, there was a well-founded fear that the ecclesial inquiry might force an end to the Jesuit affiliation of the church that the Society of Jesus began more than 200 years earlier.

As word spread about the Archdiocese's probe of their Church community, Holy Trinity parishioners became distraught and many spoke of a sense of powerlessness. With computers just coming into wide use and social media's full potential still years away, parishioners were at a loss for how to respond to the Cardinal's investigation and about how to support their pastor in this fraught moment. It was in this context, a couple of weeks into the imbroglio, that a parishioner, speaking about it with others at a coffee hour following mass, asked, "Why don't we pray? Why don't we pray about this?"

The suggestion to pray may sound ordinary today—especially to Holy Trinity parishioners familiar with Ignatian spirituality and its discernment process. But in 1997, amid the crisis and the fear it raised, the notion of gathering to pray *as a community* (beyond a regular Sunday mass) had not been a first thought. But with the suggestion, a powerful process came about, shaping a remarkable, Spirit-filled time at Holy Trinity.

What resulted was a series of weekly 90-minute Saturday morning gatherings, known as "Parish-wide Prayerful Discernment," and held in what is now the Big Room of the Lower School. The sessions continued, week after week, for nearly a year, each session attracting some 50 to 75 people, including the pastor occasionally. Notably, *no one*—lay or clerical—lead the effort; it all just somehow fell into place.

A volunteer would read a brief passage from Scripture, and then all would go quiet. After a little while, someone would be moved to speak, followed by silence. Then another parishioner would speak, and then silence. The pattern repeated many times, the silence creating space for the concerns and emotions provoked by the Cardinal's investigation of the parish. Sur-

prisingly little eye contact was made during these sessions and there was none of the back-and-forth typical of meetings when the stakes are high. The focus was on listening, discerning where Holy Spirit was leading.

Drawing on the collective wisdom of the group inspired by the Spirit, the prayer gatherings at Trinity in 1997 reflect a model that differs some from more directed prayer and discernment approaches, as well as from other decision-making processes like working groups seeking immediate answers, strategies, and concrete action plans. In key ways, these sessions at Trinity were much like Quaker meetings, where there are also no moderators or leaders, just the faithful gathered to discern in the Spirit. Trinity's prayer gatherings "held" parishioners in a challenging moment, offering them sanctuary, solace and hope. They also provided an opportunity to share the latest on the Archdiocese's investigation, including updates directly from the pastor. These reports tamped down rumor and also were a source of hope.

These gatherings proved very helpful to the pastor, according to a parish staff member and close associate of the pastor at the time, and were a sign of solidarity. No formal count is available of overall attendance at the weekly "Parish-wide Prayerful Discernment" sessions, but one estimate suggests that a third or more of the parish at the time—some 1,000 parishioners—participated overall. Consensus then was that the whole experience—for parishioner, pastor and parish—was invaluable and its impact immeasurable. It was a sustained and stunning demonstration that, through ongoing prayerful reflection and discernment, particularly *as a community*, we live into where the Spirit calls.

Some 20 years later, the "Parish-wide Prayerful Discernment" process at Holy Trinity remains a vibrant example of the power of collective discernment rooted in trust that the Holy Spirit is always with us. This tested model may well be a resource for our times, a source of light and hope in this challenging moment in the universal Church.

—Paula McCabe

## *The First Power of One*

I remember the day Fr. Mark Horak, S.J. dropped a brochure on my desk. He had come from a pastor's meeting. The brochure was information about a parish-sponsored annual volunteer day. Fr. Horak thought it was worth looking into.

For several weeks, parishioners were invited to meet to explore the possibility of Holy Trinity hosting such an event. There were voices of concern; so many parishioners were already volunteering. Would the day stretch some too thin, or would it encourage others to be involved?

With the support of the many parishioners already working directly with outside organizations, along with many others involved in their neighborhoods, volunteer opportunities were explored and identified. Each organization was asked to identify their specific needs; age and energy appropriate guidelines were put into place. Then, with the support of a volunteer sign-up software program, the "Power of One" was launched.

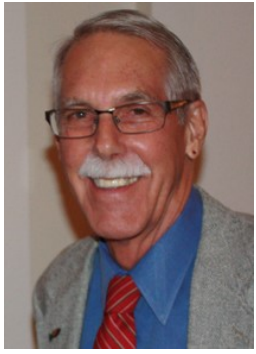
The day began with Mass. Seniors volunteered to man sign-in stations. Parishioners of every age group came out in force. Kids and their families gleaned farm fields and cleaned up the canal. Teens came together to knit hats for NICU babies; rosaries were knotted for military men and women. So many sandwiches were made for shelters that we had to find offsite freezer space.

Men and women of all ages and backgrounds scraped, painted, scrubbed, sorted and counseled throughout the day in DC, Maryland and Virginia. At the end of the day, volunteers came back to the parish center for dinner and to celebrate the parish community and days' achievements. The energy that night was Spirit-led!

What I remember most is that, while there was no end to the needs of so many, Holy Trinity parishioners were up to the task, open to the challenge, and at the end of the day, grateful for the opportunity. I am grateful to have experienced the Power (of being) One parish.

—Mary Lynch  
Holy Trinity Director of Development,  
2002-2013

# The Maier Years



In 1985, after completing an eight-year term as the Maryland Province Master of Novices, Rev. James T. Maier, S.J. was assigned to Holy Trinity as an associate pastor, with the intent that he

would succeed Rev. Jim Connor, S.J. as pastor in 1987. The years of 1987 to 1993 were eventful for Holy Trinity, in large measure because Fr. Jim Maier was willing to engage people where they were, and to allow them to share in the Church's pastoral and liturgical life.

Jim Maier was born and raised in Pittsburgh and entered the Jesuits at Wernersville, PA in 1957. Rev. Tom Gavigan, S.J., who was his novice director, would precede Fr. Maier to Holy Trinity as pastor, arriving in Washington in 1964. Fr. Maier was a beloved biology professor at Loyola College in Baltimore before he was asked to become Novice Director.

One of the hallmarks of Fr. Maier's term as pastor was the empowerment of the laity to take leadership of the parish. George Arnold, and later Ellen Crowley, led the very successful Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Linda Arnold and others coordinated a robust Adult Education series on Sunday mornings and occasionally on Saturdays. Anna Thompson was the Director of CCD (now known as Religious Education or RE), and she and Fr. Ed Dougherty led the Confirmation Program. Monica and Deno Reed led the Marriage Prep Program, and they were succeeded by Doris and Al Lindquist. Ann Murphy, Carl Sylvester, Margaret Costello and Mary Kennedy were presidents of the Parish Council during Fr. Maier's term.

During Fr. Maier's tenure the Retreat in Daily Living grew dramatically, in part because Fr. Maier was so supportive of Fr. Jerry Campbell and the Georgetown Spirituality Center. With the support of Fr. Joe Sobierajski, Fr. Dougherty, Natalie Ganley, Ellen Crowley and others the retreats attracted 30-40 retreatants two or three times each year.

In November 1989, six Jesuits and two women were killed by El Salvadoran military at the University of Central

America. Following their martyrdom, Fr. Maier launched a partnership with Maria Madre de Los Pobres, a poor barrio parish of San Salvador. Fr. Maier led groups of parishioners to El Salvador on more than one occasion. In 2020, that twining partnership will celebrate 30 years!

Holy Trinity School grew during the Maier years. Fr. Maier was a staunch supporter of Anne Marie Santora (later Crowley), the first lay principal of the school, and Fr. Maier actively supported her efforts to strengthen the faculty and expand enrollment. Fr. Maier was instrumental in increasing scholarship dollars for the school to bring a diverse student body to Georgetown from across the city.

In 1991, Raymond McGovern, an active parishioner, launched a "silent protest." The issue was the male-only clergy. Ray had been energized by his daughter, who asked why she couldn't be a priest. Ray did not have a good answer for her, so he decided to voice his protest by standing in his place throughout the liturgy. As parishioners learned of his cause, some chose to join him in standing, while others were not inclined to support a "tilting at windmills" protest. The protest did engender discussion and Archdiocesan leadership took some interest in the situation, after a few parishioners complained that Ray and his supporters were a distraction in the liturgy.

Throughout Fr. Maier's years, the parish picnic thrived, with "The Not-Ready for Prime-Time Players" (a troupe of parishioners and staff, under the director of Tom Costello and Herbie DiFonzo, including Pam Lucey, Anna Thompson, MaryRita Wieners and Fr. Ed Dougherty) spoofing the parish and other "unholy topics." Richard McCooey, the proprietor of the 1789 Restaurant and the Tombs, was the force behind the scenes of the picnic, donating the food and the staff to cook it!

The Jesuit community during those years consisted of Fr. Maier, Fr. Tom Gavigan, Fr. Jerry Campbell, Fr. Joe Lerch (succeeded by Fr. Joe Sobierajski), Fr. Larry Madden, Fr. Ed Dougherty, Fr. Joe Lacey and Fr. Ned Hogan. In May 1990, the Jesuits moved into the completely renovated Rectory. They were a very engaged team, and their leadership was appreciated across all sub-communities in the parish.

In 1993, there was a bit of controversy about the successor for Fr. Maier. Cardinal James Hickey and his advisors

were initially opposed to Fr. Larry Madden as the new pastor, believing him to be "just like Fr. Maier." The Jesuit provincial, Fr. Ed Glynn, interceded and Fr. Madden succeeded Fr. Maier in the summer of 1993.

In 1996 Fr. Maier left the Society of Jesus, and now lives in South Pasadena, CA with John Turk, his partner of many years. For most of his time in California, Jim worked in leadership roles with AIDS Project Los Angeles, delivering services and support to AIDS patients throughout the LA area.

—Ned Hogan



## FOUNDER'S DAY WEEKEND

Please save the date to celebrate 225 years as parishioners for others!

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

10am — James Martin, S.J. on Faith & Family

7pm — Mystery on Holy Hill

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

11am — Anniversary Celebration Mass

12-4pm — Founder's Day with:

- \* Chapel Chats
- \* Parishioner reflections
- \* Arts & crafts
- \* Petting zoo
- \* Prayer labyrinth
- \* Food trucks
- \* Biergarten
- \* And more!