



# Principal Leaving for Religious TV Post

By Roger W. Smith

From a 25 percent increase in the percentage of graduates attending four-year colleges to a sharp decline in the dropout rate, Bishop Ford Central Catholic High School in Windsor Terrace has prospered during Brother Michel Bettigole's tenure as principal. The numbers don't tell the whole story, though.

The 48-year-old educator, a member of the Franciscan order, is retiring at the end of the school year to become creative director of Channel 53, a cable television station run by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens. He leaves behind a reservoir of good will among faculty, students and administrators, who gathered to honor him at a testimonial dinner on April 30.

"We hate to see him go," said Joseph Moran, the chairman of the school's board of trustees. "He was able to work with the board, the pupils and the faculty. He was a very good administrator and spiritual leader of the school."

After the dinner — which was attended by Assemb. Peter Abbate, a Bishop Ford graduate, State Sen. Christopher Mega and Councilman Sal Albanese — Bettigole, an opera buff, was presented with four opera tickets by the student council. The senior class gave him a ticket for a free ride in a helium balloon.

A former social studies teacher, Bettigole inherited what one current administrator called a chaotic situation at Bishop Ford, the largest Catholic high school in Brooklyn, when he became principal in 1980.

He began a highly successful enrichment program for students with academic difficulties and, in his own words, devoted "an awful lot of energy" to working with potential dropouts.

"I really believe that with the right type of school setting and teachers who are competent, caring people, there's no reason why virtually any student shouldn't be able to get his or her diploma," he said in a recent interview. "High schoolers are a critical age group. If you lose a young person at this age, it's very hard to



Photo by Oliver S. Morris

Brother Michel Bettigole, in front of Bishop Ford High School.

get them back on track again."

Bettigole is proud of the fact that more than 90 percent of Bishop Ford graduates continue their education. "What I like most of all," he said, "is that many of our students are the first in their family to go to college. I was the first one in my family."

A native of Woodside, Queens,

Bettigole graduated from St. Francis Preparatory High School in Fresh Meadow, Queens, and received bachelor's and master's degrees from Hunter College, where he studied political theory. He has had a lifelong interest in the Russian Revolution and in the relationship between religion and literary works.

Bettigole's success as a principal, according to students and faculty, results from a rare combination of administrative and interpersonal skills. "He's able to communicate with people at all levels," said Rocco Grella, the school's assistant principal.

"He's very approachable," said Karri Barbour, a junior who is running for student council president. "Any time you have a problem, you can always go to talk to him. He's very open-minded. He cares a lot about the students at Ford, as well as people in general."

Bettigole, who lives in Downtown Brooklyn, spends one day a month working in a shelter for the homeless in Park Slope. "It gives you a practical insight into the political and social problems facing the city," he said.

Inspired by Bettigole's example, members of the senior class have volunteered to work after school at the shelter. "It's a challenge for them to put their religion into action," said Bettigole, who has greatly expanded extracurricular programs at Bishop Ford.

Members of the student body, which includes a large percentage of minority students and a smattering of non-Catholic students whose religious persuasions range from Baptist to Islamic, say that Bettigole has constantly manifested his concern for them in countless ways.

"He'll stop you in the corridor for the littlest thing and say, 'How are things going?'" said one student, Bob McDermott, whom Bettigole recently drove to a college interview in New Jersey.

Bettigole said that he expects his new job with Channel 53, which began broadcasting in March, to be a challenge. "The challenge will be how do you give people a religious experience over television without being unctuous," he said.

"I have mixed feelings about leaving," Bettigole added. "I am excited about starting something new, but I am really going to miss working directly with young people. I am a little apprehensive about that."

*N.Y. Newsday*

*5/10/88*





# Oldest Lutheran Church Marks 125th Anniversary

By Roger W. Smith

Although it was formally organized 125 years ago, Trinity Lutheran Church in Middle Village actually began its existence even earlier than that.

Until 1977, the church occupied a site in Lutheran Cemetery in Middle Village, where a group of Lutheran immigrants from Germany built a "mourner's chapel" in 1851. The chapel was destroyed by fire half a century later and was replaced by an imposing stone church built in the Gothic style that became a neighborhood landmark.

In 1977, shortly after it had been completely renovated, "the church in the cemetery," as the structure became known, was also destroyed by fire. A new, architecturally modern edifice was constructed 2½ years later.

Now located on a site adjacent to Juniper Valley Park, the church is celebrating its 125th anniversary. The oldest Lutheran church in the borough, it held a special service yesterday to culminate a yearlong celebration of its anniversary.

"This church has persevered," said the Rev. William Lazareth, bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "It has moved from the edge serving the dead to the middle serving the living. That seems to me to be a paradigm of what the Christian Church is all about."

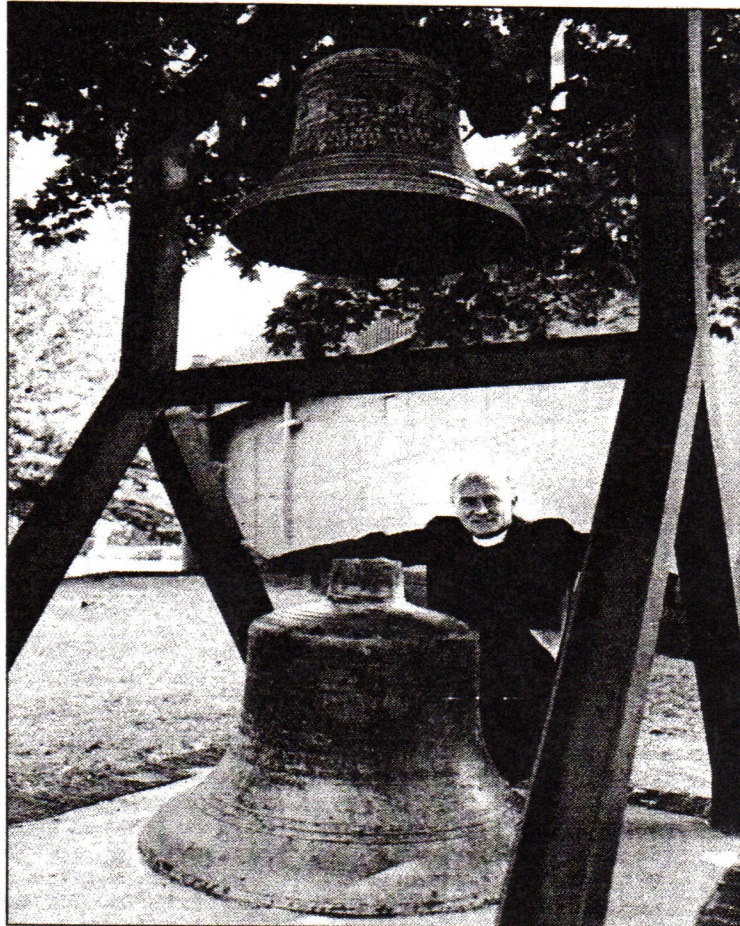
According to parishioners, the church's pastor, Rev. Paul Pfadenhauer, a Ridgewood native, has played a significant role in unifying the congregation and giving it a strong sense of purpose since assuming his present position in 1978. The church is also celebrating Pfadenhauer's 10th anniversary as pastor.

"He's a very dynamic person," the president of the church's board of trustees, Joan Dowdle, said of Pfadenhauer. "He's always asking, 'What can we do to build our congregation? What can we do to help other people?'"

According to Pfadenhauer, the church is beginning to place more of an emphasis on evangelical activities. "There is a worldwide emphasis stirring in the Christian community towards evangelism," Pfadenhauer said. "It's not just a matter of adding members to a roll. It's leading people to a greater commitment to Christ."

The church has become more active in dealing with social issues in recent years, Pfadenhauer said. Its programs include counseling for families with drug-related problems, two large Alcoholics Anonymous chapters, contributions to Third World countries and collections for a local food kitchen. The church began a women's organization this month, and it is planning to begin a fellowship group for senior citizen members in October.

The 54-year-old pastor, who likes to do gardening in his spare time and who has acted in several off-Broadway shows (he studied acting during the 1960s), also has an interest in charismatic forms of worship, which involve activities such as the laying-on of hands to alleviate suffering. The church holds three healing services a year, conducted by Pfadenhauer and a guest pastor. The



The Rev. Paul Pfadenhauer, with bells from the earlier buildings.

Newsday / Richard Lee

services "have been effective," Pfadenhauer said.

Pfadenhauer previously served as pastor of Grace and Saint Paul's Church on Manhattan's West Side, where he developed a strong interest in opera and ballet in addition to the theater. He originally had some misgivings about transferring to a parish in Middle Village.

"It was a little scary at first," Pfadenhauer said. "Being in Manhattan is a lot different than being in Queens. But my apprehensions were ill founded. I feel very much at home. The people are very friendly."

Emil Busching, a 68-year-old retired salesman who serves as church historian, recalled that when he moved to Middle Village and began worshiping at the church as a 10-year-old boy in 1931, the area was still a farm community with "cows walking the streets."

Church membership peaked during the 1920s, when the area still had a high percentage of German immigrants. It dropped off steeply during the 1960s and 1970s, but it has since stabilized, Pfadenhauer said.

In May, the church held a reunion for about 250 current and former members. The former parishioners, who came from as far away as Ohio, were "a little surprised" to see the modern architecture of the new church building, Pfadenhauer said.

"After experiencing the warmth of the worship, they felt that the building was right for the congregation as it has evolved," the pastor added. "They were glad to see that there was still vitality in the congregation's life."



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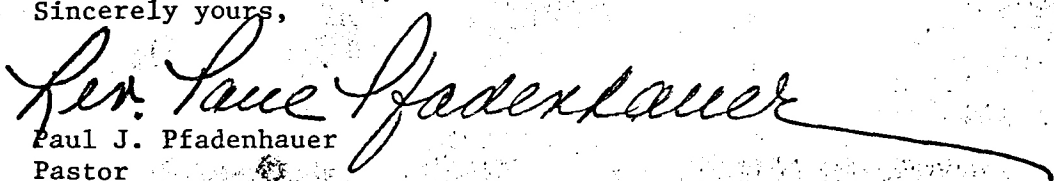
Mr. Roger Smith  
Newsday  
95-25 Queens Blvd.  
Rego Park, NY 11374

Dear Mr. Smith:

Everybody here at Trinity Lutheran Church was extremely well pleased with the fine coverage you gave us this past Monday in Newsday upon the occasion of our 125th Anniversary Celebration. Those of us who were interviewed by you especially appreciate the accuracy with which you reported exactly what we said. Thank you very much.

The 125th Anniversary Committee would like you to have the enclosed copy of our Commemorative Journal as a token of our appreciation for your interest and good work on our behalf.

Sincerely yours,

  
Paul J. Pfadenhauer  
Pastor

cc: Mr. Al Cohen



# Renovated Park Slope Church Is Dedicated in Ceremony

By Roger W. Smith

When the Rev. Ernest Fiorillo became pastor of Saint Augustine Roman Catholic Church in Park Slope five years ago, many of the stained glass windows were hanging loosely from their frames, pieces of moulding were falling from the leaky ceiling and the angels painted on the church's dome were fading away.

Once called "the Notre Dame of Park Slope," the church, at 116 Sixth Ave., was built 100 years ago in the Victorian Gothic style and has been restored to its original grandeur. The renovated structure was dedicated Sunday at a mass presided over by Bishop Francis Mugavero of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens.

An overflow crowd of about 800 worshipers attended the mass, which was sung in three languages — English, Spanish and Creole — reflecting the parish's ethnic diversity, and which featured Renaissance and baroque music performed by the Brueckelen Brass Quintet (The group uses the old Dutch spelling of the borough's name).

"This is a great event in the history of the parish community of Saint Augustine," the congregation was told by the guest homilist, the Rev. John Coppinger, a member of the Society of the Atonement, a religious order.

"There is a great sense of spirit in this parish," said a parishioner, William Cahill, a 37-year-old attorney who was accompanied by his wife, Regina, and his children, Caitlin, 4, and Liam, 2. "One of the things that is so exciting is that this modernization has been accomplished in a way that is so reverential to the past and that highlights the architectural qualities of this church."

The renovation, which took nearly three years to complete, was done by Mount Kisco, N.Y.-based Gasparri Studios, a firm that specializes in ecclesiastical restorations, at a cost of more than \$500,000.

About one-fourth of that amount was raised through contributions. The rest of the borrowed funds will be raised through the sale or rental of church property, said Fiorillo, who has played a major role in reinvigorating the parish.

The interior of the church, which had not been painted since 1952, has been entirely repainted. The angels on the dome have been restored to their original luster, ornaments have been gold leafed and the stations of the cross have been gilded with glazed colors.

The marble on the altars was meticulously cleaned, and a platform was built in front of the main altar, using marble imported from Italy. The pews have been refinished, the organ pipes have been cleaned and glazed with silver and a new sound system and lighting have been installed.

Besides restoring the church's physical beauty, the renovation reflects changes in the Roman



Newsday / Alan Rais

The Rev. Ernest Fiorillo, in the restored Saint Augustine Church.

Catholic liturgy over the past two decades. Pews now face the altar from the sides as well as the front, giving more worshipers a sense of participating in the mass. The confessional rooms have been enlarged, so that parishioners can sit down and talk with a priest if they wish.

The baptismal font, which has been moved to the back of the church, is surrounded with 12 new paintings of an equal number of saints of various races and nationalities, done by Thomas Glisson, a local artist who is a member of the parish.

Built in 1888 in what was then a predominantly Irish Catholic neighborhood, Saint Augustine's was constructed using choice American stained glass and the best Italian marble. Three altars for the brownstone edifice were purchased in 1896 at a then-steep cost of \$55,000. The parish, which was founded in 1870 not far from the church's present site, originally served the Prospect Heights and Crown Heights sections of Brooklyn, in addition to Park Slope.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many parishioners moved to the suburbs, decreasing attendance and hurting the church financially. An usher at the dedication mass, Rudolph Jack, said that the renovation was likely to "help a lot in getting . . . [parishioners] back" to Saint Augustine's. The church currently has about 800 families on its mailing list.

"Some people thought this church had died," said Coppinger, who grew up in Park Slope and was baptized at Saint Augustine's. "The people of Saint Augustine's would not let it die. Perhaps more importantly, God would not allow it."







