

“exclusive” Jackson Heights. Finally able to escape from their cold-water flats in Manhattan, many Irish Catholics moved to the neatly shrubbed, red-brick suburb. The surrounding areas were filled with plants, grass, trees, gardens, and benches, all contributing to the park-like effect of the community. In fact, there was a “greening law” which decreed that every house had to have shrubs. The exodus from Manhattan to Queens was further accelerated by soldiers returning from service in the two World Wars and the Korean conflict. These men needed housing for their families. In fact, the Catholic population of Queens became so dense that Cardinal Spellman quipped, “I’ve lost most of my diocese to northern Queens.” The eucharistic motif, the theme of thanksgiving, was to be definitely noted by those fortunate people who were able to leave the tenements of Manhattan for the opportunity of a better life in Queens.

The Queensboro Bridge, an expanding subway system, elevated lines, and street railways — which radiated from Long Island City — brought more people into the pastureland. By 1919, the elevated line was extending down Roosevelt Avenue and the population of the new development of Jackson Heights increased sufficiently for the Bishop of Brooklyn, Charles R. McDonnell, to establish the St. Joan of Arc Parish. Until the construction of the present lower church, that parish was served by a simple wooden structure. After St. Joan’s lower church was built, the frame structure was moved up Fillmore (35th) Avenue to 93rd Street where it served as a chapel of ease for the eastern section of St. Joan of Arc Parish.

Blessed Sacrament Parish Established

Until the mid-1920’s, the area now included in Blessed Sacrament’s Parish was not densely populated. Increasing development, and the flight of many Manhattan residents to suburban Queens County led the diocesan authorities to the realization that a new parish would be needed in eastern Jackson Heights and western Corona.

The third Bishop of Brooklyn, Thomas E. Molloy, established the new parish of the Blessed Sacrament on June 5, 1929. The first pastor, Father James McMahon, formerly of

St. Leo’s in Corona, took up residence on June 29, 1929. Father McMahon lived at St. Joan’s Rectory as a guest of the pastor, Father Ward Meehan, for a brief period. By October 7, 1929, Father McMahon was able to secure lodgings at 35-11 93rd Street. Meanwhile, by September 8, 1929, the old wooden chapel was enlarged to accommodate the many members of the new parish. Even though the Great Depression began on October 29, 1929, the parishioners rallied to preserve their fledgling church despite the national financial disaster.

Parish societies were formed and one of them, the Holy Name Society, has survived to the present day. The first parish carnival was celebrated in October, 1929. The first Holy Communion class received Our Lord in the Eucharist on May 30, 1930. That same year saw the establishment of the Young Men’s Lyceum, the forerunner of many contemporary youth programs.

The original wooden church after the blizzard of 1947



Joseph Wundrok, Jr., and Edward Hanlon in front of the Main Altar on their First Communion Day in 1946