

“We boast of you in the Churches of God for your patience and faith; in all your persecutions and tribulations you are enduring.”
 (2 Thes. 1:4) St. Paul

THE BIRTH OF A CATHOLIC PARISH IN BUCKINGHAM

1996 - 1999

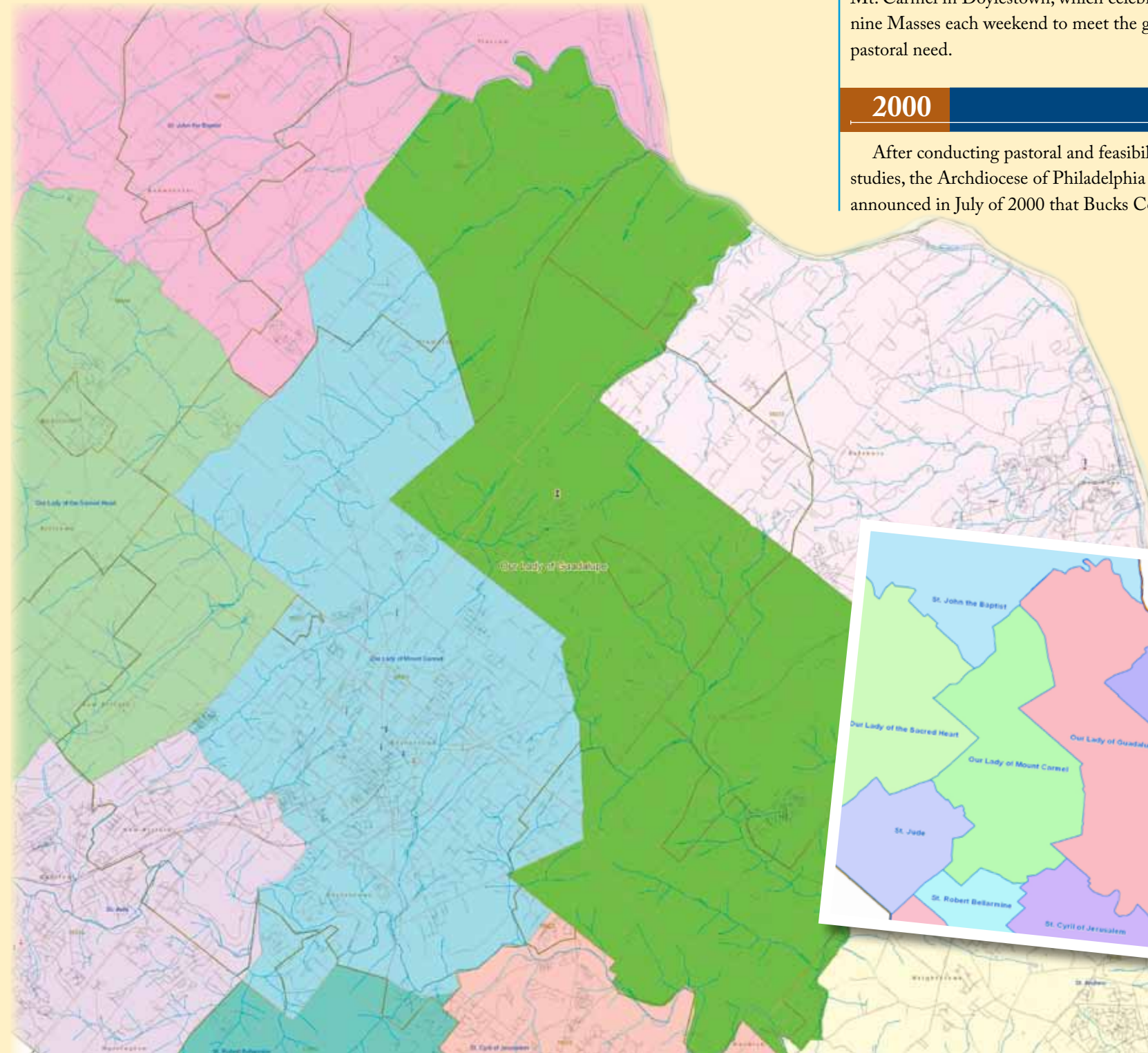
A 1996 Philadelphia Archdiocese study revealed that a significant number of city-dwelling Catholics had followed the new home construction boom to the outlying suburbs between 1980 and 1995. In Bucks County, alone, the number of Catholic parishioners increased by nearly 43,000 during that period.

With an eye toward accommodating this growth, the Archdiocese began acquiring land in Bucks County, including thirty-four acres at York (Rte. 202) and Quarry Roads in Buckingham in 1996. Purchased for \$800,000, this parcel was known as the Diemand tract.

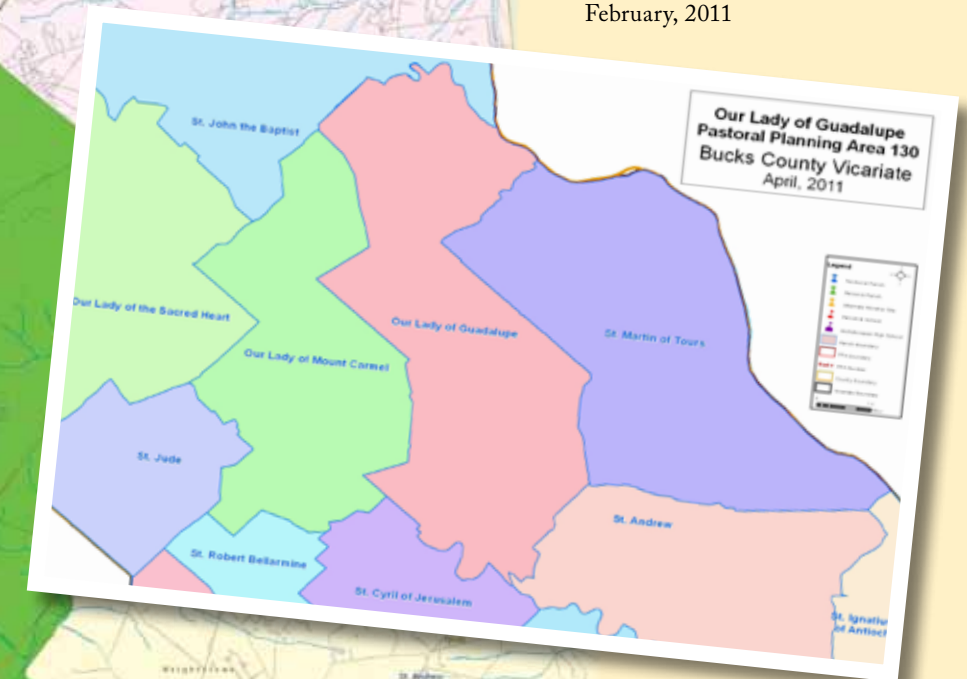
By 1998, the number of Catholics in Bucks County had swelled to 229,295. More than 16,000 of them were members of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Doylestown, which celebrated nine Masses each weekend to meet the great pastoral need.

2000

After conducting pastoral and feasibility studies, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia announced in July of 2000 that Bucks County's



◀ Pastoral Planning Area 130
 BUCKS VICARIATE
 February, 2011



first new parish since the creation of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Bensalem in 1976 was to be formed from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish in Doylestown. It was to be located in Buckingham, a township that had seen an overall population jump of more than sixty-two percent over the prior twenty-year period. Boundaries were marked and approximately 1,500 affected families were notified. The Diemand tract would be explored as a potential site on which to build the church.

Reverend Joseph J. Quindlen, who was serving as pastor of St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church in Cheltenham, was appointed First Pastor of the new parish in Buckingham. Reverend Robert B. McDermott, formerly of Saint Agnes Parish in West Chester, was named First Parochial Vicar. Deacon Joseph N. Gousie, Sr. from of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Doylestown, was assigned as Permanent Deacon.

Parishioners called their new faith community "Our Lady of Guadalupe," a name choice which prevailed in a parish process that also considered the names, "Blessed Sacrament" and "St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross." Fr. Quindlen noted that the name reflected the continuity between the past and present, as both Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Our Lady of Guadalupe venerate the Blessed Mother. Also fitting was the fact that Pope John Paul II concluded his 1999 apostolic exhortation, "The Church in America," with the invocation, "Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, pray for us!" Fr. Quindlen would later include that exhortation in each weekly parish bulletin.

A townhome in the Fireside development near Durham and Hansell Roads was purchased



to serve as the parish home for priests, and parish offices were leased at HollyBerry Square shopping center on Route 202. Religious education was held in conjunction with that of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Sunday Masses were conducted in the auditorium at Central Bucks East High School and would continue to be held there and at the Holicong Middle School auditorium until June, 2011. Parish liturgical ministries began to assemble, including a Set-Up and Take-Down Committee.

Their job was to load up a brown, 1993 Chevy van to capacity with the liturgical accessories necessary to conduct a Mass, including the silver and gold tabernacle which was deliberately housed in an inconspicuous, cardboard banana box. Fr. Quindlen was the first driver of the van, which would arrive at the school where volunteers would unload it and prepare a wooden, portable altar on the auditorium stage, only to put it all away after the last Mass on Sunday and make the return trip back to the parish office.

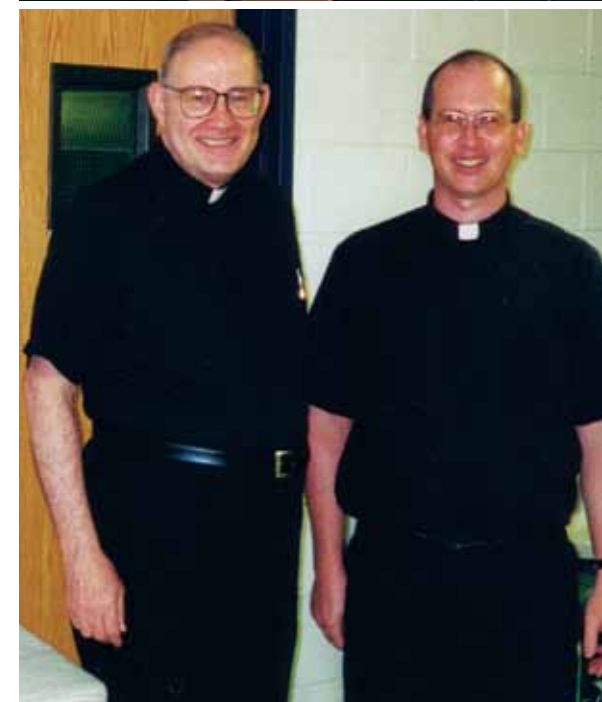
After robing in an adjacent classroom, the priests and deacon would lead the congregation – often before a backdrop of the school's current theater scenery and occasionally under a disco ball – to the deafening sound of slamming auditorium seats.

Grateful to have a place to worship, however unconventional, the parishioners and clergy became acquainted with one another and were happy to end the year with their first Christmas Mass as a parish family.

2001

Parishioners marked the first Confirmation, Easter Triduum and Holy Communion celebrations.

The Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) for children was fully established at the parish and was now taught at Holicong Middle School by parent volunteers from our parish. The parish Pastoral Council and Finance



*Credit to: Joan Fairman Kanes/
Philadelphia Inquirer Suburban Staff*

"Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be His people."

- Revelation 21:3



Credit to: Joan Fairman Kanes/Philadelphia Inquirer Suburban Staff



Come to Him a living stone...
precious in the sight of God and,
like living stones, let yourselves be
built into a spiritual house...

- 1 Peter 2:4-5

Council were established. We became a Tithing and Stewardship community.

2002

A parish Building Committee was established to advance the development of the Diemand tract. An appreciation dinner was held for parish employees and volunteers. And, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes for adults interested in the Catholic Faith began.

2003

Now 1,828 families strong, the parish initiated a Children's Liturgy of the Word program to help young children appreciate Sunday scripture at an age-appropriate level. A parish website was launched.

Meanwhile, progress was made on the Diemand tract preparations. *Diserod Wolff Kelly Clough Bucher Architects* of Hatfield, PA (now known as *KCBA*) was selected by Fr. Quindlen and the Archdiocesan Building Committee. *Gilmore & Associates, Engineering and Consulting Services* was the firm chosen to conduct land development studies.

Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young Attorneys was selected to handle legal matters. *Community Counseling Services Co., Inc. (CCS)* in New York was hired to launch the capital campaign.

An aerial flyover to survey the physical site was completed by the architects. *Gilmore & Associates* contracted with a soil engineering company to evaluate the geology of the site.

Unfortunately, plans for building the church on the Diemand tract were suspended, primarily due to its limestone geology. Parishioners were informed: "According to the unfavorable test results, our parish property is not suitable for our purpose – namely, erecting the number and size of facilities with accompanying parking spaces needed to accommodate a large suburban parish."

2004

Despite the setback, the parish gained nearly twenty more families and established a Youth

Ministry program.

Deacon Joseph N. Gousie left the parish to become Executive Director of Community Services for Autistic Adults & Children in the Washington, D.C. area.

A forty-acre site, known as the Beck tract, at Ash Mill and Mechanicsville Roads was considered for purchase as our second potential church site and an agreement of sale was reached. Feasibility and planning studies commenced and Father Quindlen and the Archdiocese conducted their first meeting with Buckingham Township about it.

More than 1,000 Buckingham residents opposed the proposition as unsuitable for the location. They signed a petition and began voicing protest at Township meetings, leveraging the *Buckingham Organization for Rural Preservation* to discourage the Archdiocese from settlement on the property. Rather than begin legal proceedings that would postpone the project indefinitely, it was decided that we would be better served by looking elsewhere.

Concurring with the Township Supervisors that "a church should be a community asset – not a battleground," Fr. Quindlen and the Archdiocese welcomed the Township's willingness to provide a list of alternate locations that would comprise twenty-five acres or more, qualify as ideal locations and demonstrate the ability to close within nine months. Nineteen possibilities were presented and explored.

In November the Archdiocese reached an agreement with the Thomas Jackson family to purchase its thirty-acre farmstead on the corner of Durham (Rte. 413) & Cold Spring Creamery Roads for \$2.1 million. The family had owned it since 1965. The Jackson tract agreement was a fitting Christmas present for parishioners after a tumultuous year.

2005

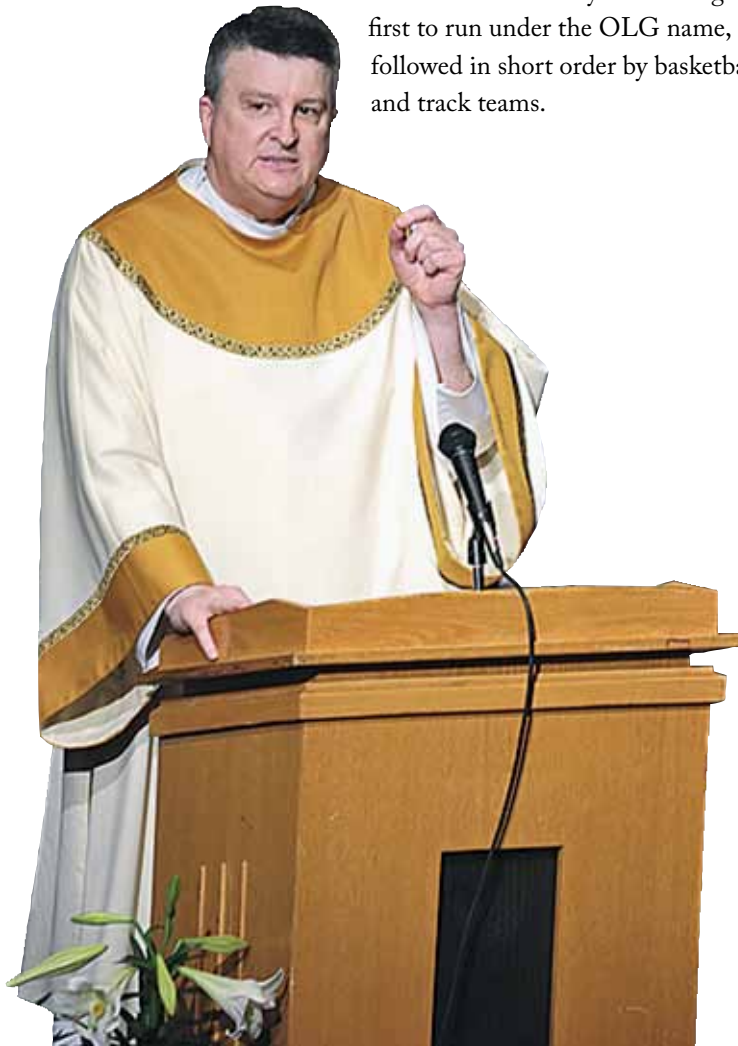
Gilmore & Associates presented the proposed Jackson tract initial site plan to the Bucks County Planning Commission and worked with the Township's Zoning Board to iron out variance issues. The plans were revised and approved, paving the way for the Archdiocese to

close on the Jackson tract in October.

It was finally time to give the parish a reason to hope. The architects held interactive presentations for the parish, presenting the first sketches of the master site plan. The Capital Campaign, "Building on a Foundation of Faith" was kicked off. Fr. Quindlen worked to maintain momentum with a congregation that was perpetually waiting for the other shoe to drop. "What's the best parish in Bucks County?" he would ask us on Sundays. "Our Lady of Guadalupe!" was the response, sometimes given with enthusiasm, and sometimes not.

Buckingham residents Allen and Diane Menard bought the Beck tract from the Archdiocese for \$1.6 million, creating three lots and a twenty-five-acre conservation easement. Buckingham Township called the deal a "win-win," thrilled that "a situation that began so acrimoniously [could] turn out so wonderfully."

The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) program was founded at the parish that year, with the Cross Country team being the first to run under the OLG name, followed in short order by basketball and track teams.



2006

In June, Father McDermott left the parish, much to the dismay of the congregation. Archbishop Justin Cardinal Rigali appointed our well-loved Parochial Vicar as the new Dean of Formation, College Division, at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook. Father Walter J. Quinn, O.S.A., a retired priest living at Villanova and affiliated with Priests For Life, became our Weekend Assistant. Deacon Robert P. Gohde, formerly of St. Theresa of Avila in Valley Forge and Epiphany of Our Lord, Plymouth Meeting, was assigned as Permanent Deacon.

A "conditional use" hearing to officially approve the plans was conducted and, after some clarifications, conditional approval was granted. Revised architectural renderings were placed on display in the Holicong Middle School vestibule before and after Masses.

2007

The barn located on the Jackson tract was dismantled by Bucks County Timbercraft personnel. The materials were reconstructed and used in a new home about one-half mile away on Carversville Road.

Preliminary approval of plans was granted by the Buckingham Board of Supervisors in July, allowing the parish the right to develop the Jackson tract. Issues such as lighting, needed to be addressed and final approvals from PennDOT, Buckingham Township and the Archdiocese were pending.

Angie Parker joined the staff as parish secretary.

2008

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia sold the Diemand tract to Buckingham Township for \$1.2 million and ten Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) valued at \$350,000 – \$400,000. These were necessary to tie into the main sewer line at the Jackson tract, instead of our having to install an on-site septic system. The parish was informed that it would need to spend \$100,000 in road



Credit to: Sarah Webb/Catholic Standard & Times

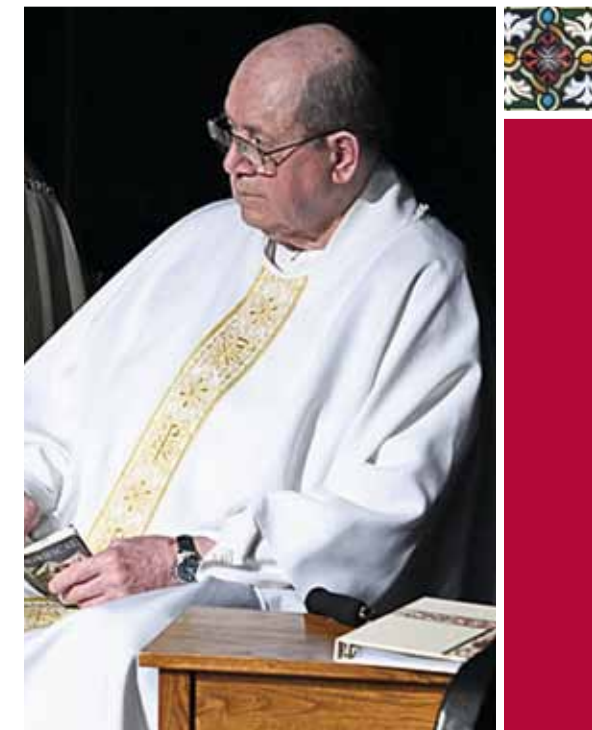
improvements at the Jackson tract site.

Mary Jane Stephans was named Religious Education Secretary and Karen Talocci was hired as Pastoral Administrator.

2009

Our founding pastor, Father Quindlen, who had faithfully answered the call to lead our parish family to a new home and who remained steadfast despite so many upsets and difficulties in getting us there, was called yet again. This time, Cardinal Rigali asked him to take over as pastor at Epiphany of Our Lord in Plymouth Meeting, where the current pastor was about to retire.

Reverend Joseph P. Gentili, who served as Administrative Secretary to the Archbishop Emeritus and as Director of Pastoral and Apostolic Formation at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, was tapped to serve as the new pastor



“Your house is a house of prayer, and Your presence makes it a place of blessing. You give us grace upon grace to build the temple of Your Spirit, creating its beauty from the holiness of our lives. Your house of prayer is also the promise of the Church in heaven. Here Your love is always at work, preparing the Church on earth for its heavenly glory.”

- Preface of the Mass of Dedication



of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Buckingham. An installation was held on the site of the new church. He would later that year be given the honor of “Chaplain of His Holiness” by Pope Benedict XVI, warranting the title of “Monsignor.”

Homeowners near the Jackson tract organized to protest the church complex and the possible building of a school. A beleaguered congregation braced itself for more turmoil. In the end, the parish worked closely with the Township and our new neighbors to ease concerns and work out compromises.

All approvals were finally received and the green light was given to begin construction. An official Groundbreaking Ceremony took place in May, led by Cardinal Archbishop Justin Rigali and attended by enthusiastic parishioners.

Ed Zapisek was hired as parish Business Manager.

Construction on the new church officially began with the dismantling of the farmhouse. Excavation of the church basement and retention basins commenced and curbing for the parking lot was put in place.

The townhome for the priests’ residence was sold and a new parish rectory that better met the meeting space needs of the parish was purchased on Ash Mill Road in order to alleviate the urgency for building a new one on the site, garnering a considerable savings of \$1.5 million.

2010

The parish office and St. Juan Diego Chapel were moved to the Cold Spring Creamery shopping center, directly across from the building site.

Religious Education classes were moved to Cold Spring Elementary school.

The framework on the church building was completed and a great deal of the exterior and interior construction was accomplished. When the cupola was lowered into place, Monsignor Gentili blessed the site and the construction workers at a topping-off ceremony. Later, upon learning that Buckingham did not have a flag of its own to represent the township, Monsignor

obtained permission to commission one. He had one made for the new church and donated one to the Buckingham Township Supervisors.

Town Hall meetings were held at Holicong Middle School to kick off the second Capital Campaign, “Proclaiming Our Foundation in Faith + Stir into Flame the Gift of God.”

Meg Szewczak was appointed Director of Religious Education. Gail Downing was named Director of Youth Ministry. An official parish Music Director, Paula Furman, was hired to lead the parish music program.

2011

All construction efforts continued at a feverish pitch to achieve a Certificate of Occupancy by June 11th, the date of the Dedication of the new church.

