

# OUR MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL PARISH HOMER GLEN, ILLINOIS

(a brief history)

On July 18, 1996, the Bishop of Joliet, the Most Reverend Joseph L. Imesch, established a new parish in Will county with boundaries at Route 80 to the south, Route 355 to the west, 151<sup>st</sup> St. to the north, and Will-Cook county line to the east.



Bishop Imesch invited the Augustinians to staff the new parish and Fr. Thomas L. Osborne, O.S.A., was named Pastor. He was formally installed by Bishop Imesch on September 22, 1996.

Shortly after the official establishment of the parish, office space was rented in the Ace Hardware Plaza Mall on 159<sup>th</sup> St. With the help of the Knights of Columbus from St. Jude Parish in New Lenox, the space was divided into a “Day Chapel” and an office.

The chapel was to be used for weekday masses and the office became the base of operations for the new parish.

At the end of May, Mrs. Maureen Smith was hired as Parish Secretary and Bookkeeper and Sr. Therese Tusek, O.F.M., was hired as Pastoral Assistant in August.

Space was secured at Homer Junior High School on Bell Rd. for the celebration of weekend Masses. A newsletter was composed and sent to all residents of Homer Township announcing the new Parish and the first Mass was celebrated on Saturday August 31, 1996 at 5:00 P.M. in the school cafeteria. This joyous event was attended by about 50 worshippers along with an honor guard of the Knights of Columbus.

A Parish planning committee met for the first time on September 11, 1996 resulting in the formation of Finance, Liturgy, Social, Education, and Building committees. The name of the Parish was chosen by parishioners at a special meeting held on Sunday October 3, 1996. Although several names were suggested, Our Mother of Good Counsel was chosen by an overwhelming majority.

In November, upon the departure of Leanne Stoterau, Don Luksetich was hired as music director. In those first few months, the parish grew from a handful of people to more than 200 by December when the first parish social activity, Santa’s Breakfast, proved to be a roaring success. The enthusiasm for the parish continued with capacity crowds in the HJH cafeteria at 4:00 P.M. Mass on Christmas Eve as well as on Christmas morning.



In April 1997, the Planning committee approved the purchase of a house on Sulky Dr. to serve as the rectory and parish office. Fr. Tom was finally able to move into the parish boundaries from St. Jude Parish rectory and everyone benefited from more office and meeting space along with a monetary saving from a mortgage payment lower than rent.

The final act of the Parish Planning Committee was to draft a Parish Council Constitution. This document gave rise to the present structure of a Parish council and six commissions. The first council elections were held on the weekend of May 17-18, 1997.

One of the first achievements of the Parish Council was to create a parish mission statement:



**We, the family of Our Mother of Good Counsel Parish, call ourselves to be the LIGHT of CHRIST, leading all to unity with God. We do this by our community worship and celebration of the Sacraments, prayer at home with our families, sharing our joy and responding to the needs of others.**

During this same time, the Education committee along with Sr. Therese began to set up a religious education program for the children of the parish. This included developing a curriculum, engaging a staff, and finding a facility that could meet the needs of the program. In May of 1997, after the departure of Sr. Therese, Mrs. Janet Litterio was hired as Religious Education Coordinator and on September 17, 1997 the program was initiated at Schilling School with about 20 volunteer teachers and aides and 194 children in grades kindergarten through eighth.

In June 1997, Fr. Don Lewandowski, O.S.A., was assigned as Associate Pastor. He was also appointed director of Religious Education while continuing to teach part time at Providence Catholic High School.

The Parish Building committee expanded its membership in November of 1997 and began development of a concept plan for the construction of a permanent building for worship and office space on 9½ acres near 160<sup>th</sup> & South Bell Road. After the architectural firm of Straka/Kaip was engaged in January 1999,



the committee presented a plan to the Parish Council which was approved in June.

Each year, since the founding of the parish, the anniversary was marked by a parish picnic in the local forest preserve. In 1999, this event was moved to the church grounds and the first Anniversary Fest was held August 26-29. On Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup>, the grounds were officially blessed by priests and congregation with children of the more than 400 registered families scattering across the open fields with small vials of holy water to complete the service.

Groundbreaking for the new building was in March 2000, the cornerstone was blessed on November 19 that same year, and the parish office officially opened in the new building on



March 19, 2001. Bishop Imesch formally dedicated the building and consecrated the worship space on March 30. The parish had 510 registered families at that time and by the middle of 2004 had grown to 970 families.



Fr. John M. Ohner, O.S.A., was named second pastor of Our Mother of Good Counsel parish in 2006 and was officially installed on December 2 by the Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain, Bishop of Joliet.

Deacon Sal Lema served the parish as pastoral assistant from March 2005 to March 2007. He was followed by Deacon Dan Rittenhouse from February 2008 to November 2010, and Deacon Joe Dalpiaz in May 2011.

As of June 2012, the parish had 1,469 registered families. The Religious Education program which is now conducted at Homer Junior High School served 637 children, taught by over 100 volunteer teachers and aides.