

The Rev. Russell Connors served as interim administrator for St. Mary's until Msgr. Lawrence P. Cahill was appointed pastor a few months later in June.

In the summer of 1979, Sister Virgileen Fletchler of the Sisters of St. Joseph was employed by the parish as a special minister to the elderly and shut-ins. In this capacity she generously and faithfully served hundreds of members of our community until her retirement in June 1988. Sister Muriel Petrasek of the Sisters of Notre Dame succeeded her as minister to the elderly in 1988 and continues to this day.

Unfortunately, Msgr. Cahill's tenure as pastor was far too brief. A kind and gentle man who greatly loved the opportunity to serve the people of St. Mary's parish, a diabetic condition forced him to resign from a job he cherished.

So in the summer of 1981, after spending much of his tenure hospitalized, he resigned as pastor with great sadness.

On September 1, 1981, the Rev. Joseph C. Weigand was appointed as the 13th pastor of St. Mary's Church. Bishop James A. Griffin, the Vicar of Lorain County, installed Fr. Weigand as pastor exactly two months later on All Saints Day, Nov. 1.

Under Fr. Weigand's leadership, the always active St. Mary's community continued showing its devotion to others.

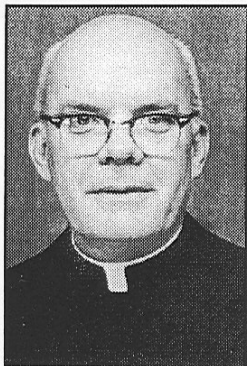
In the spring of 1982 a ramp was constructed on the north side of the Church to meet the needs of a number in our community. Bishop Griffin blessed the ramp June 12 of that year.

Msgr. Cahill honored

In the summer of 1982, one classroom in the Pius X Building was renovated to serve as a meeting room for adult educational purposes. It was dedicated to Msgr. Cahill because of his commitment to scholarship and named the Msgr. Lawrence P. Cahill Catechetical Center.

In the fall of 1982, a Hot Meal program under the direction of Mr. Ray Adams and the Parish's Social Concerns Commission was begun to try and meet the needs of members of the city who were hurt by the poor economic conditions at the time. The program received national attention in the Wall Street Journal in January 1983.

Perhaps January 1983 was more notable due to the



Msgr. Lawrence P. Cahill

efforts of St. Mary's parishioners to set up a skills bank to provide services especially needed by the older adults in the community.

Later in June 1983, a native son of the Parish, Mr. Frank Humphrey III became the first Permanent Deacon to be ordained and was appointed by Bishop Pilla to minister to St. Mary's Parish. Mr. Humphrey also serves as principal of St. Mary's Parish School of Religion (P.S.R.).

Two other parish members were also ordained Permanent Deacons — Mr. Edward Dillon on May 31, 1986, and Mr. Robert Dybo May 21, 1988. Both were also appointed by Bishop Pilla as ministers to St. Mary's. Along with assisting at parish liturgies they have served the church community in numerous capacities with our spiritual, sacramental and social programs.

In January 1987, St. Mary's Church was closed to allow for a much needed renovation — the first since Msgr. Newton directed a refurbishing 26 years earlier.

The renovation committee had to be very conscientious about preserving the Victorian-Gothic style of our Church, while at the same time conforming to the liturgical standards called for by Vatican Council II.

Sunday masses were celebrated in St. Mary's Hall while work was being done, with weekday liturgies still being held in the lower chapel of the church.

On Palm Sunday 1987, the congregation processed with the blessed palms from the Hall into the beautifully restored church.

Church renovated

The renovation included restructuring the sanctuary, bringing it closer to the community, as well as equipping it with new furnishings. Other long overdo renovation work included: new pews, a new sound system, restoration of the classic oak wainscoting on the walls and the railing on the choir loft, new frames for the rose windows on either side of the church, protective lexan coverings for all the windows, new aluminum framed ventilators on the windows, a new stairway in the rear of the church for access to the lower chapel, a new sacristy, new restrooms on both levels, new mahogany veneer exterior doors, new Reconciliation rooms, as well as a complete overhaul and refurbishing of our historic, tracker-action organ.

The result of the renovation was one of the most beautiful and functional churches in the diocese.

Improvements have since been done to beautify the exterior of the church — planters constructed in front, new concrete sidewalks, a parish sign in front of the rectory and trees planted along Middle Avenue.

In 1994, air conditioning was added to the church for the benefit of those with respiration problems, and a new roof was installed.