

## Parish History

St. Fabian Parish was founded in response to rapid population growth in the Farmington area in the early 1950's. In 1958, the late Edward Cardinal Mooney appointed the Reverend Francis J. Szaniawski, the founding pastor, to build a church to serve the growing number of Catholics in what was then Farmington Township. Parishioners came from Our Lady of Sorrows Parish on Power Road. The church was eventually dedicated to a Roman farmer named Fabian, who went to the Vatican to witness the election of the new pope in January of the year 236 AD, and who, through a remarkable turn of events, was elected the 20th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

The first Mass was offered at Dunckel Middle School with a congregation of about 600 men, women, and children attending two Masses that were offered on Sunday, July 15, 1958. The first Rectory was located on 14 Mile Road between Drake and Halsted. Under the direction of Fr. Frank, the parish moved forward rapidly with the building of the rectory on Red Clover and the laying of plans for a permanent church being drawn up by the Fall of 1958. Groundbreaking for St. Fabian Church took place in November of 1958, a month after the death of Cardinal Mooney in Rome on October 25, 1958. The prototype church was completed in September of the following year. It was dedicated by the new Archbishop of Detroit, the Most Reverend John Dearden, who was installed as Ordinary of Detroit on January 29, 1959.

The original church was meant to be temporary, with a permanent church to be built later on the parish site that is presently called Malloy Field, after the late Msgr. Charles Malloy, our second pastor. "Prototype" churches were intended, by the nature of their construction, to act as multipurpose buildings after the original usefulness had been outgrown. Future plans for a new church were never realized because the temporary church was "permanitized" by the addition of 2 transepts to the original church (increasing the seating to 720), and by reorienting the axis of the church (the original altar stood opposite of where it is now). This renovation, placed under the Rev. Seamus Ryan, the third pastor of St. Fabian, was completed in September of 1983. Cardinal John Dearden rededicated the renovated church just as he dedicated the original one.

Fr. Szaniawski asked the Bernardine Sisters to teach in the Religious Education department and to staff the future school. In October 1958, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) was set up for the parish. Classes were held in the homes of the parishioners. There were 15 such centers before the school was built. In September 1959, the First Communion Class of the parish was brought to the Lord's Table.

In the spring of 1962, Mother Carmella accepted the task of staffing the Parish School. Groundbreaking for the school took place on March 24, 1963. Attending the ceremony were Fr. Szaniawski, Mother Carmella and members of the congregation, and priests and sisters from the surrounding area. The school was dedicated by Bishop Henry Donnelly on October 20, 1963. With its completion, religious education was moved from the homes in the parish to the new school. Children from grades 1-12 were taught by six Bernardine Sisters, four Sisters of Atonement, two priests, six seminarians and lay teachers. Almost 800 students were registered in the program.

In 1965, Mother Carmella assigned four Bernardine Franciscan Sisters and one lay teacher to St. Fabian School. On September 8, 1965, the school was officially opened with 163 students – 82 boys and 81 girls. The first Principal appointed for the school was Sister Mary Berenice. There were two first, two second and one third grade the first year of the school's operation. Additional classes were opened in the succeeding years. The tuition was \$75 yearly for each family, regardless of the number of children enrolled.

There have been six pastors at St. Fabian:

Rev. Francis Szaniawski founded the parish in 1958

Msgr. Charles Malloy, appointed in January 1967, and under whose administration the convent was built, grew the parish to double its size

Rev. Seamus Ryan succeeded Msgr. Malloy in November 1979. He was pastor during the rebuilding program that included the gymnasium named after him, and the renovation of the original church into a permanent place for worship by the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the parish.

In November 1984, Rev. Norbert Kendzierski was assigned to St. Fabian. During his administration the parish offices were completed, a landscaping program was undertaken, new lighting was added to the parish campus, improvements were made to the gymnasium, a computer system was installed in the administration offices, religious education department and parish school, and a new state-of-the-art Rogers 925 organ was installed in the church, completing the renovation begun in 1983.

Rev. Brian Chabala was appointed pastor on February 21, 1996. He undertook the much needed task of expanding our grade school to kindergarten through 8th grade. Under his leadership we also added 43,000 square feet to our facility, including a new gymnasium, cafeteria, Religious Formation Offices, School offices, and a Youth Center for teens. Part 2 of this campaign involved renovating the social halls and kitchen. Part 3 renovated the church proper as described below.

Our present pastor, Rev. Jeffrey Day, was assigned to St. Fabian Parish on July 1, 2011. His enthusiasm and energy have continued to add to the improvements made by our former pastors by creating an after-school Kids' Club program, and preschool program.

In 1993 new faceted and stained glass windows were added in the transept and vestibule of the Church. They were the gifts of Robert and Lois Kundak and William and Alice Chorkey. The transept windows are "The Creation" (South) and "The Redemption", or Re-Creation windows (North); the vestibule door windows are identified as "The Children's" windows. The vestibule also acts as our "cry room." These works of art add both beauty and light to our worship space. The transept windows are the work of Robert Sassak and Eric Sassak, and the vestibule panels are the work of Sr. Christine Schneider LLJ/TOSF.

A sanctuary renovation was done in the summer of 1994. It, along with the main aisle and vestibule of the church were redone in polished and matte tile and marble. The marble is "Rosa Duqusa." The design of the sanctuary conforms with the semicircular configuration of the seating in Church and is the work of architect Robert Sassak, Ltd. The marble tabernacle "throne" is the gift of William and Alice Chorkey, and the principle donors to the sanctuary renovation were Larry and Judy Wisne. Skylights were also added to the nave of the Church at this time.

In 1998, under the guidance and support of our fifth pastor, Rev. Brian Chabala, a building campaign: "Sharing Our Faith, Building Our Future," was undertaken to add 43,000 square feet to our existing facilities. The addition includes a new gym, cafeteria, middle school classrooms, an art/science room, media center, computer center, school administration offices, Christian Formation offices, and a Youth Center for teens. This expansion completes our school, which now services kindergarten through 8th grade, and allows for the ever-increasing growth of our parish activities.

In 2000 renovation began on what used to be the gym, social hall and kitchen. The gym was converted into a large meeting room by dropping the ceiling, carpeting, lighting fixtures, etc. The smaller social hall was redecorated to match, and the kitchen was given a major overhaul, doubling its size, and adding state of the art appliances.

In 2010 renovation began on the church proper. Chairs were replaced with oak pews, the interior was painted, new carpeting was laid, and a spectacular new baptismal font was commissioned to be built at the main entrance into the church proper. The font was the original creation of Richard Home and David Bradley of RJH Tile & Marble Co. This font was created from the generosity of many parishioners.

Under the guidance of Fr. Jeff, in 2011 we took on the archdiocesan program “Changing Lives Together.” As a result of that campaign, funding was provided to build on a new Gathering Space, ushers’ room, young child/bride’s room, new restroom facilities, basement for storage, and a conference room. We were also able to update the church’s sound system, and provide current technology for the school, including a security system.

The parish has been fortunate in having the assistance of two regular weekend associates: Rev. Victor Clore, pastor at Christ the King Parish in Detroit; and Rev. John Huber, a Basilian priest from Catholic Central High School. Rev. Chris Welsh assists on several weekends, and for every Wednesday and Thursday morning liturgy, along with his duty as Chaplain at Wm. Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

Two other priests who played important roles at St. Fabian are: Fr. Edward (Ned) Donoher, a Basilian priest who taught at Catholic Central for 53 years. He was a weekend associate at St. Fabian for over 30 years. Fr. Ned passed away December 11, 2010. Fr. James Mazurek, a diocesan priest “on loan” to Detroit from his home diocese of Pittsburgh, PA, worked primarily at St. Mary’s Preparatory School in Orchard Lake. He also was a greatly loved weekend associate at St. Fabian for over 30 years. In January of 2011 he was called back to his home diocese to become Pastor of 2 parishes.

This brief history only touches the surface of our fifty-four years of existence as a parish. Names, dates, and numbers say little about the spirit that animates this church dedicated to a Third Century Pope and martyr. The true history of St. Fabian Parish is written in the hearts of those who lives have been enriched by the Gospel, and who have in turn fostered in this parish a genuine love of God and an unselfish service of neighbor, both within our parish and beyond it.

Because of those people, past and present, the most promising chapters of our history are yet to be written.