

St. John the Evangelist

Severna Park, Maryland



PARISH GUIDE BOOK

APRIL 1973

PARISH HISTORY

St. John's as a mission of St. Mary's Church in Annapolis, Maryland.

This is the prayer of Joseph T. Brenan which may well be said to be the start of St. John's Parish. The date is October 12, 1901.

"I shall build a church—on my land I shall build and maintain a church not for me and mine alone, but for the whole community for all who seek refuge. I know I cannot bargain with you, God, but please let Mary Agnes live until the priest comes—and I shall build a church in Your honor—and call it "St. Agnes" for those souls who long to worship you."

God heard Josephs' prayer. A priest from Baltimore arrived and attended to his wife.

Mary Agnes Brenan died 5:30 A.M. October 13, 1901. True to his promise, Joseph T. Brenan was granted permission to build the church at Robinson Station by James Cardinal Gibbons by the end of the same month. On December 14, 1902, the Very Reverend Father Provincial William Luecking of the Redemptorist Fathers dedicated the new church, after which he celebrated Solemn High Mass. The novices of St. Mary's, Annapolis constituted the choir. In the years to follow, the Redemptorist priests from St. Mary's served this community of 70 Catholics on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. As the means of transportation improved, the Catholic population grew and by the mid-twenties St. Agnes Church just could not serve the needs of all the people. A new building had to be erected.

In January, 1927, with permission of Archbishop Michael J. Curley, the new site on Old Annapolis Road was selected and purchased from Mrs. John Sullivan of Baltimore.

In appreciation of Mrs. Sullivan's generosity in having reduced the sale price of the property, she was given the honor of suggesting a name for the new church. On September 14, 1927, the Very Reverend James Lynch of the Redemptorist Fathers celebrated the first mass in the new church of "St. John the Evangelist." Fathers Joseph Driscoll, John O'Regan, John Prendergast, Lawrence Meighan, Joseph Lorden and Thomas McPartland successively acted as Pastor's of St. John's Parish. Also having served St. John's over the years were the Reverends: Daniel Callahan, Kloman Riggie, Charles Riepe, Edward Lynch,

Joseph Krach, Melvin Rutkowski, Charles Lafferty, Joseph Messer and George Glick. During this time the Sunday School and summer school were under the direction of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

St. John's as a Parish on its own.

Under the genial, gentle, zealous and self-sacrificing guidance of these Redemptorist priests, St. John's grew to such proportions that Mass had to be celebrated in two places each Sunday—in the church and in the community hall. Appreciating this growth and recognizing the need for a resident pastor, Archbishop Francis P. Keough appointed Father Joseph E. Raley as the First Resident Pastor on June 27, 1959. Within one month, Father Raley had obtained the services of the Sisters of St. Joseph from Chestnut Hill to staff his school. Land along Ritchie Highway had been purchased, prior to his coming, and in September 1960 a rectory, a convent and a new school were opened with an attendance of 565 children. The school was planned purposely without an auditorium knowing that the auditorium would be used as a church. As soon as the 12 classroom school was completed, planning for the new church began. As the old Chinese proverb says: "When you are thirsty it's too late to dig a well." The ground for the present church was broken on May 6, 1963, and dedicated on May 10, 1964.

At the present time, St. John's has over 1700 families numbering over 7000 parishioners, all of whom have a right to be proud of our History. The prayer of one man soon became the prayer of many and grew into the prayer of all. Let us give thanks, praise and glory to God forever.