

LONG ISLAND BAHAMAS

**The Catholic Community
Of Long Island, Bahamas**



75 years of growth in faith

1929-2004

**ST. GEORGE-BUCKLEYS
ST. PIUS X-THE BIGHT
HOLY TRINITY-TAITS
OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL -HAMILTONS
ASSUMPTION-DUNMORE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION-MORTIMERS
SS. PETER AND PAUL-CLARENCE TOWN**

**RELIGIOUS PRIESTS WHO HAVE SERVED THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
(AND WIDER) COMMUNITY OF LONG ISLAND**

1929 – 1934	Rev. Denis Parnell, O.S.B. Fr. Denis lived on San Salvador and visited Long Island)
1935 – 1941	Rev. Arnold Mondloch, O.S.B. (Remained in residence until his death in 1945).
1941 – 1955	Rev. Cornelius Osendorf, O.S.B. Pastor
1952	Rev. Herman Wind, O.S.B., Temporary Administrator
1955 – 1960	Rev. Herman Wind, O.S.B., Pastor
1959 – 1963	Rev. Peter LaVierge (1959 - Associate; 1960 – 1963 Pastor.)

**OCTOBER 3, 1963 – THE JOSEPHITE FATHERS AND
BROTHERS ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR LONG ISLAND.**

1963 – 1970	Rev. Adelard Auclair, S.S.J. – Pastor
1963 – 1967	Rev. Louis Saporito, S.S.J. – Associate
1967	Rev. Joseph Calamari, S.S.J.– Associate
1968	Rev. Michael McCaul, S.S.J. – Associate
1969	Rev. George Dahn, S.S.J. – Associate
1970	Rev. Michael McCaul, S.S.J. – Pastor
1970 – 1973	Rev. Walter Cerbin, S.S.J. (1970 – Associate – 1971 –73 Pastor).
1971 – 1973	Rev. Paul Ortner, S.S.J.– Associate

- 1973 – 1980 Rev. Joseph Calamari, S.S.J. and Rev. Paul Ortner, S.S.J. Co-Pastors
1980 – 1982 Rev. Joseph LeFrois, S.S.J., Pastor Rev. Joseph Calamari, S.S.J. Co-Pastors
1982 – 1983 Rev. Joseph LeFrois, S.S.J., – Pastor
1982 – 1986 Rev. Patrick Healy, S.S.J. – Associate
1983 – 1986 Rev. Arthur Colbert, S.S.J., – Pastor.
1986 Rev. Patrick Healy, S.S.J. – Pastor
1987 – 1989 Rev. Peter Kenney, S.S.J., – Pastor
1990 – 1997 Rev. James Sheehan, S.J., – Pastor
1997 – 2000 Rev. Mel Taylor, O.S.B. – Pastor
2000 – Present Rev. Patrick Fanning, ss. cc., – Pastor

**RELIGIOUS SISTERS WHO SERVED THE ROMAN CATHOLIC (AND WIDER)
COMMUNITY OF LONG ISLAND**

MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

Agatha Blais
Sandra Allard
Theresa Bucharme
Lise Jacques
Lydia Williams

URSULINE SISTERS

Sr. Phyllis Wright, osu
Sr. Margaret Kelly, osu

History of the Catholic Community of Long Island

The Father Denis ERA

On May 19, 1929, Henry Taylor, the young school teacher at Roses School, Long Island, was anxiously scanning the horizon for the mailboat that was due to arrive at Clarence Town from San Salvador. A month before, while on a visit to Nassau, he had inquired at the Cathedral whether a priest could come to Long Island to baptize his newly-born first child. By chance, Father Denis Parnell, O.S.B., who had baptized Henry in Nassau five years previously was on hand. Father Denis, then stationed at San Salvador, enthusiastically agreed that he could make the trip from San Salvador to Long Island on the mailboat and have a two day stop-over while the boat completed its southern circuit.



In those days there was no dock at Clarence Town. The mailboat had to anchor a couple of hundred yards out in the harbor and both the passengers and freight were ferried into shore in a dinghy. Father Denis was a small, energetic priest, a veteran missionary, having spent seven years in Nassau, and two years in San Salvador. He scrambled to shore, embraced

Henry, and almost immediately began enthusing about the possibility of evangelization on Long Island. During the next two days, he said Mass in the building in Clarence Town that was Henry Taylor's grand-aunt's store, and there he baptized the baby. He made many contacts in Clarence Town and the nearby sections of Long Island, and made plans to begin a regular series of visits to Long Island. The Catholic Community of Long Island had begun!

We accept the date of May 1929 as the beginning of continued and organized Catholic evangelization on Long Island, but there had been isolated examples of Catholic presence over the centuries. Long Island was the third point of landing for Christopher Columbus and his company of explorers on their first voyage of discovery in 1492.

It is questionable as to whether there was a priest present on that first voyage.

In 1925, Father Bonaventure Hansen, O.S.B., wrote about Catholic people scattered throughout the islands: "During the last Easter season, two Catholic ladies came from Deadman's Cay, Long Island on a voyage that took seven days. They had to wait for a month before they could get a boat to return home. They had waited seven years for this opportunity to receive the sacraments." The two ladies were Fredricka and Rosalee Cartwright who had been baptized on Andros by Father Gabriel. They met Father Denis on his first visit to Long Island, and became contacts for developing a strong and Catholic community in Hamiltons.

Henry Milton Taylor was born in Clarence Town in 1903 and was reared in the Anglican faith by two grand aunts. He attributed his first curiosity about the Catholic Church to an incident when he was eleven years old. He was reading aloud to his grand aunts from the novel "Ivanhoe". Ivanhoe makes a statement to his fellow knights that, having been to Mass that morning, he has no fear of dying, should that befall him in the coming combat. Henry asked what this "Mass" was that seemed to give men courage. His

aunt replied that it referred to an old "Romish" custom that people no longer practiced. Henry's interest was aroused and when the opportunity presented itself on a visit to Nassau in 1921, he attended vespers at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. He began a correspondence with Father Gabriel, which was continued with Father Denis. In 1924, Henry was received into the Catholic Church by Fr. Denis.

Imagine for a moment Long Island as Fr. Denis saw it for the first time in 1929. The island, 180 miles southeast of Nassau, was a strip of land 60 miles long and, depending on where you were, from one to three miles wide. It had originally been settled by loyalist plantation owners from Georgia and South Carolina, following the American Revolution. Around 1793, several loyalist families arrived with their households and slaves, and began an intensive effort at cotton planting.



RECTORY

The first three years proved promising but the shallow, rocky soil was quickly depleted, and the island settled into a barely productive subsistence agriculture. In 1929, there were over 5,000 people scattered along one poorly developed road that ran the length of the island. Travel from one community to the next was on foot or horseback. At that time, there were no motor vehicles on the island.

Contact with the outside world was still mainly by sailboat. Telegraph contact with Nassau had only been established in 1925 and the telephone was still years away.

Fortunately, Father Denis was an excellent horseman and began to visit the communities north and south of Clarence Town. One of his first contacts in the south was Donald Burrows of Woodhill near Mortimers. He was baptized in 1931 and became the nucleus of a rapidly growing Catholic community. Mortimers is twenty miles south of Clarence Town and at least three hours journey by horseback. Yet the records indicate that Father Denis made that long journey on every one of his visits to Long Island.

Seven miles to the north of Clarence Town lies the community of Hamiltons. Father Denis quickly built upon the presence of the faith in the persons of Fredricka and Rosalee Cartwright. Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Cleghorn Cartwright, Torrington Treco and Joseph Darville were baptized into the faith.

In Clarence Town the Moses Davis family became the first converts to the growing church. In Taits, a community two-thirds of the way between Clarence Town and Mortimers, Michael Burrows became a convert to the faith, and his home at Pinders Hill became a focal point for another Catholic community.



*OUR
ROMAN
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY AT
HAMILTONS TODAY*

EARLY DAYS – *No Catholic Buildings*

In those early days there were no church buildings for the celebration of Mass or prayer as community. Father Denis traveled from community to community, making friends, giving instruction and offering the Mass in the homes of Catholics. From the beginning of his efforts, he worked toward establishing catechists for the developing Catholic settlements. The office of catechists had been employed very effectively in all of the Bahamian missions. Catechists functioned very much like our present day permanent deacons. They gave instruction, conducted lay services in the absence of a priest, and took care of the many matters of pastoral administration. By the end of four years, four flourishing congregations had been formed. In Clarence Town, Henry Taylor and Moses Davis guided the growing church which had increased to twenty-five members. The faith had spread quickly to Woodhill and Mortimers where Donald Burrows was catechist for sixty-seven baptized Catholics. Lee Cartwright led the thirty-eight members of the Hamiltons area. In Taits, thirty-eight Catholics gathered for worship at the home of Michael Burrows at McKenzie Hill.

In 1934, Fr. Denis was transferred from San Salvador, and

went back to the United States, where he spent more than 40 years in mission to Native American Indians in Minnesota. The four years of his sacrificial missionary effort bore much fruit. Of this, the sacramental registers give abundant proof. From May 19, 1929 until Father Denis' last visit in January of 1934, 168 Baptisms were recorded. He came to found an infant church; he left behind a flourishing Catholic community.

During 1934 several visits to Long Island were made by priests from Nassau, especially Fr. Bonaventure Hansen, O.S.B. The value of the catechists in carrying out the work of the Church in the absence of a priest was well proved during this period. They kept the Catholic community active and united until the next big step in its development took place – the appointment of the first permanent pastor in September of 1935.



FR. KENDRICK FORBES AT HIS FIRST MASS AT SS. PETER AND PAUL, CLARENCE TOWN

THE FIRST PERMANENT PASTOR —

Fr. Arnold Mondloch, O.S.B. had spent eight years in the Bahamas when he came to Long Island as its first permanent pastor. He was an accomplished builder, dentist, agriculturist, and a very forceful and hardworking priest. One of the greatest obstacles Father Arnold had to contend with was a deep prejudice against the Catholic Church and a resulting antagonism. In Clarence Town the church was able to acquire the house and store of Henry Taylor's grand aunts, but the process of buying property in other areas of the island was long and difficult. Fr. Arnold lived in the former home of Mr. Taylor's grand aunts, and offered Mass in the building near the dock which had been the store. Because there was no place to stay when Fr. Arnold traveled north and south, he bought a station wagon that came to be known as "Fr. Arnold's chapel car". He offered Mass on the back of the wagon, using the tailgate as an altar, and at night he put a tent over it for sleeping.

From the beginning, all would agree that he gave tremendous service to the people. He introduced the practice of pit-farming, digging deep pits to bring the plant roots down to water level. He introduced a fescue type of grass to the island, sowing the seed "Johnny Appleseed" style along the roadway. He taught Long Islanders how to preserve food through pressure cooking, and how to store corn and keep it free of

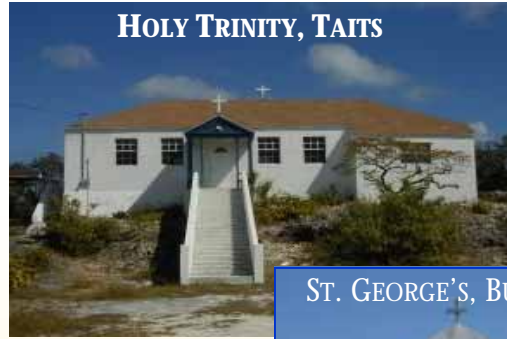
weevils. Above all, there was his medical and dental work that broke through the walls of prejudice and began to open doors and hearts to the priest.

In 1936, the church acquired property in Mortimers from Mr. Arthur Major, Sr. In the same year, Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Cartwright of Hamiltons donated a piece of property for a church, and plans for permanent parish buildings began to develop. During this time, Fr. Arnold was also caring for San Salvador, as did Fr. Denis before him. He shuttled between the two islands, but made Long Island his principal residence. Despite his tremendously busy schedule, he carried on a study of the Arawak Indians, the first residents of Long Island, and in the process, discovered some rare and valuable Arawak artifacts.

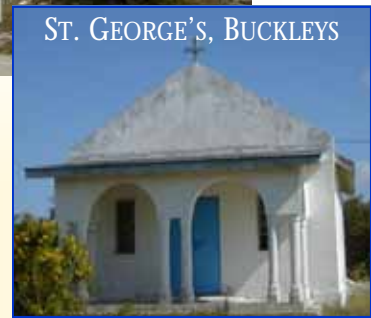
In 1938, Fr. Arnold undertook the building of a church in Hamiltons. At that time, the task of large-scale building was unbelievably difficult. Roads were almost impassable, and motor vehicles almost non-existent. Sand and rock, the essential materials, had to be carried by hand or by donkey, and lyme had to be made on the spot using a long, difficult process of burning limestone in a home-made kiln.

THE MIRACLE OF THE SAND –

Many people in Hamiltons can still recount the story of “the miracle of the sand” that occurred during the building of the church. Sand, which was in great demand for the building process, had to be carried from Iron Cove, a distance of three and a half miles from the construction site. When this supply of sand began to run out, with the church only half completed, Fr. Arnold began an intensive program of prayer. After a period of heavy storms, an abundance of sand was found at Bone Fish Cove, where the sand had never been seen before. This location was only one and one half miles from the church site. The good people of Hamiltons were convinced that this was a miraculous answer to their prayer.

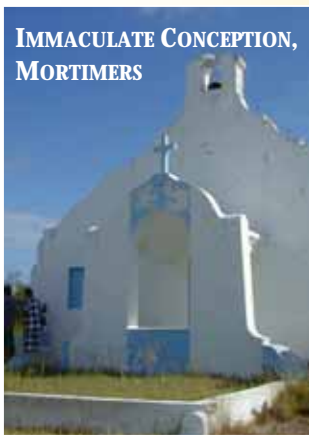


HOLY TRINITY, TAIT'S



ST. GEORGE'S, BUCKLEYS

In 1939, Fr. Arnold began to construct a church at Mortimers, and while that job was in progress, he started work on a church at Tait's on a piece of property that had been recently acquired. The Mortimers church was a sand and lime building that followed the lines of the church at Hamiltons. The church at Tait's was a wooden construction that was stuccoed a few years later. An interesting feature of the church in Tait's was the roof, which was constructed in Nassau. The various parts were numbered, and then the roof was disassembled, shipped to Long Island, and reassembled. The Mortimers church was completed in 1940, and the church in Tait's in 1941.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, MORTIMERS



ST. PIUS X, THE BIGHT

FATHER CORNELIUS —

The years of work and sacrifice exacted a terrible toll on Fr. Arnold. His health and vitality suffered greatly and in 1941, Father Cornelius Osendorf, O.S.B. was sent to take charge of the parish in Long Island. Fr. Arnold remained on the island until his death in 1945.

Father Cornelius had come to the Bahamas in 1934 after having spent several months in a medical missionary course at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City. He had little use for his medical and dental skills in Nassau, but they became the mainstay of his apostolate on Long Island. The following is a direct quotation from a letter Fr. Cornelius wrote in 1963; it is a brief account of the work this great priest accomplished in his fourteen years on Long Island:



In 1941 I was appointed to Long Island and took charge of the island. At that time we had four missions; beginning at the South it was Mortimers, Tait's, Clarence Town, and Hamiltons. By 1943 I started at Dunmore where we had only one Catholic, and in 1944 and part of '45 I built the church on the hill at Dunmore.¹ In 1946 I built the new church at Clarence Town. We had the first Mass in the new church on Christmas Day of 1946. In 1947 I completed the church and already I had bought the old house at Lower Deadman's Cay... a two-story building with an attachment on the west side, therefore away from the road. By 1947 I started repairing this building and on the 13th of January 1948 I said the first Mass in that area. At that time we had no Catholics in that area at all – a radius of six miles – but little by little we began to grow. Also about 1950 or thereabouts I was able to buy the property at Buckleys where we have St. George's Church. About that same time I bought the property at the Bight where we now have St. Pius X Church. This area has never been developed much because we had to spread ourselves so thin. We had said Mass in the house on Pinder's Hill, just two miles north of the church for over seventeen years – the home of Mr. and Mrs. "Mane Knowles. They are still the main Catholics though we have a few others.

I did go to the North several times a year, mainly on tooth-pulling expeditions. I would usually stay a few days, saying Mass in the jail there privately. I said Mass in McCanns at the school and at the North End in the school, but it was always more or less private since we had very, very few Catholics. There was one settlement to the North of Simms, known as O'Neills, away from the beaten track at the time when there were two girls who were Catholics. I got there maybe once or twice a year.

In those days we did not have the roads we have today and a trip from Clarence Town to the North End took half a day. It was really a workout! It was mainly the medical and dental work that gave me the contact with the people. Finally I would get in here and there and at least make friends with them."

1. Mr. Clifton Deveaux related to Fr. Fanning, ss.cc., that there was no church of any faith in Dunmore because "ministers passed us by as being 'too poor'".

If any one priest could be called the “Father” of the Long Island Roman Catholic community, Father Cornelius would be that man. He had become a living legend in his own lifetime. Many stories are still told to this day of his great strength and vitality, of his fearless attack on evil and injustice, and of his deep kindness, which he hid under a gruff exterior. He was affectionately known as “Cornbread”, and still, after so many years, is held deeply in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. In 1955, he was honored by the queen for outstanding social work on Long Island, and received the order of the O.B.E. (Order of the British Empire).

SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH, CLARENCE TOWN and MONSIGNOR JEROME HAWES, THE HERMIT OF CAT ISLAND –

The most lasting and impressive memorial to Father Cornelius’ building skills is the massive and majestic church of SS. Peter and Paul in Clarence Town. In 1942, the church acquired property at the top of Gun Hill, the highest site overlooking Clarence Town harbour. In 1946, Fr. Cornelius began the challenging job of building what was then the largest Church in the Bahamas outside of Nassau. The plans and sketches for the Church had been drawn by Monsignor Jerome Hawes, who was at that time living as a hermit on Cat Island.

Although Monsignor Hawes had never served as a Catholic priest on Long Island, his name is well known and revered by the Catholic community. Jerome Hawes was born in London, England in 1876. His artistic talents led him to study architecture, and after a short career of designing houses, cottages,

and eventually a church, he became an Anglican priest. After a few short assignments in London, he chose to work in the missions in the Bahamas. In 1908 a devastating hurricane struck the Bahamas, expending its most destructive force on Long Island. The Anglican Father Hawes was sent to Long Island, where he spent the next two years rebuilding six of the ruined Churches.

One of these, St. Paul in Clarence Town, is a remarkable building through which he introduced the principle of the keyed arch to Long Island architecture. In 1909, his long-felt attraction to the Roman Catholic faith caused him to resign his post in the Anglican Church. He traveled to the Franciscan Monastery in Graymoor, New York, where he was received into the church in 1911. Four



**ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF
SS. PETER AND PAUL
CLARENCE TOWN**

years later he was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, and spent 25 years in western Australia, where he built many churches, including a cathedral (the cathedral of Queensland actually has a bronze facing for his tomb, awaiting his burial, although he was not buried there!). In 1940, Monsignor Hawes received permission to retire, and he returned to the Bahamas. He went to Cat Island where he built Mt. Alvernia, his hermitage. He spent his remaining years there as a hermit. He continued to use his unusual architectural talents to enrich the

church and the islands of the Bahamas. He responded to Fr. Cornelius' request and designed the magnificent SS. Peter and Paul Church which now crowns the heights of Clarence Town, a scant 500 yards away from his other achievement, St. Paul's Anglican Church. The Church of SS. Peter and Paul has become literally and figuratively a landmark in the Bahamas for sailboats, cruise ships, tourists, and pilgrims.

THE SUCCESSION CONTINUES –

In 1952 Father Cornelius was recalled to Nassau to supervise the building of a school at the Cathedral, and a young Benedictine, Father Herman Wind, O.S.B. was sent to replace him for a year. Father Herman went on to other family island assignments, but was the logical successor to Fr. Cornelius when he was recalled to Nassau to serve as Vicar General for the diocese in 1955.

Fr. Herman continued the very busy pace of mission development set by his predecessors. Under his direction, St. Pius X Church in the Bight was constructed. For one year Fr. Herman lived in the building that had served as church and rectory in years past. In 1956 he received permission to build a rectory and obtained the help of Fr. Humbert Smythers, O.S.B. who had been forced by apartheid poli-

cies to leave South Africa. The rectory, completed in 1957, served in later years as a convent, and now serves to receive guests.

Communications and travel had gradually improved on Long Island; yet in 1955, conditions were still quite primitive. Narrow, steep roads made driving slow and hazardous. Fr. Herman reports that there were 24 gates across the road between Clarence Town and Salt Pond.

These gates, built to enclose the sheep and goats, had to be opened and closed again on passing. A trip to the North end of the island required one-half day. Despite these difficulties, Fr. Herman was dedicated to serving the few scattered Catholic families in the northern area.

In May of 1959, a newly ordained Diocesan priest, Fr. Peter LaVierge arrived as an associate to Father Herman. Father Peter was a veteran of the British Navy where he served as an officer during World War II. Desiring to become a priest, he chose the Bahamas as his field. Father Peter spent six months as an associate to Father Herman and in January 1960, he became pastor of the Catholic Community of Long Island. The responsibility for the church on Long Island, which the Benedictine Order had served so faithfully for 31 years, was transferred to the then Diocese of Nassau.

Father Peter LaVierge is well remembered as a friendly, out-going young priest with a special concern for young people. He was much concerned with extending their horizons by trips and excursions and he was enthusiastic in encouraging continuing education. His effectiveness far out-lived his short pastorate on the Island.

Our account of the spread of the Catholic Church on Long Island has been mainly concerned with the growth of physical structures. Important as this development was, it was only an outward indication of the real accomplishment of the Benedictines, one of a deep and strong Catholic tradition. A love of liturgy, and a strong sense of security in the faith was basic to the Benedictine heritage and religious charism of the Order. One indication of the depth of their work among the people of Long Island was the great number of religious

vocations that this young church produced. In 1939 there were 12 young women in the convent, and 2 young men studying for the priesthood from Long Island. Eight churches had been built, each with a growing parish family. The Catholic Church had a strong foundation on Long Island.

In 1963, the development of the church on Long Island reached another milestone; it became the responsibility of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart (S.S.J.), the Josephites. This religious community was an independent American religious society with headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland since 1893. In 1963, the Josephites had 225 priests serving the black Catholic community in the United States in 75 parishes.

Two years previously the Society's Council had agreed to the Holy

**SUNDAY IN DUNMORE—
PART OF OUR ROMAN
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**



Father's plea for all religious communities to take on a foreign mission assignment. After two years of search and consideration, the Society decided to accept the invitation of Bishop Leonard Haggerty, O.S.B., and assumed responsibility for the church on Long Island. On September 29, 1963, Father Adelard Auclair, S.S.J., and Father Louis Saporito, S.S.J., joined their fellow Josephites in a mission-sending ceremony at St. Pius Church in Baltimore, and on the following day, they departed for Nassau. This undertaking was new for both Fathers Adelard and Louis, as well as the Josephite Society.

Fr. Adelard was a veteran missionary with 19 years of experience in Houston, Texas, and a succession of parishes in rural south west Louisiana. Father Louis was a priest of only three years, but like Fr. Adelard, he was full of energy, zeal, and a high degree of manual and mechanical ability, which were almost survival necessities in the family islands of the time. Preparatory to their leaving, both had taken a brief, intensive



medical course at St. Joseph's Hospital in Baltimore.

Bishop Haggerty had arranged to have Fr. Herman remain on Long Island for several months to soften the abruptness of the change and also to give the new priests a period of enculturation and direction. They had a deep appreciation and awesome regard for the accomplishments of the Benedictines in their 33 years of service.

Long Island in 1963 had progressed much from its situation on Fr. Denis' arrival in 1929. Roads, while still difficult in spots, had improved greatly. Air contact with Nassau and the outside world had been established. Telephone service, both local and international, was spotty, but functioned. Through a migrant worker contract program with the U.S., many Long Island men had worked in the United States, and had brought home earnings which seemed meager in the States, but were considered princely in the depression-ravaged Long Island. Finally, the Diamond Crystal Salt Company opened a solar evaporation project for making salt in the southern part of Long Island, providing employment for almost 100 of the population.

Skills learned still have a positive effect on the Island to this day, among them – carpentry, plumbing, electrical training, welding, and mechanics. The Diamond Crystal Salt

Company was in full operation, and many of the “foreign” employers were Catholic, from the United States, Canada, or Latin America, and they were very supportive of the mission. Unfortunately, Diamond Crystal Salt suspended operations in 1982.

With two priests on the island, the Catholic Church likewise experienced a religious prosperity. For the first time, Masses could be celebrated in all eight churches on a regular basis, and two trucks provided by the Josephite community improved transportation and communication. Fr. Louis and Fr. Adlard entered enthusiastically into their work. They threw themselves into the tasks of renovating and repairing all the parish buildings which had suffered, not from neglect, but from the sheer impossibility of one man being able to fight the ravages of tropical weather and termites.

For several years the priest on Long Island made a visit once or twice a year to Inagua, the southernmost island of the Bahamian archipelago. This trip was made on the mailboat, which took 26 hours each way over seas that were usually extremely rough.

Now that there were two priests on the island, they made the trip each month. The thirty Catholics in Inagua – most of whom worked for the Morton Salt Company – had never had so much attention! In 1968, Fr. Adlard constructed a small church with sleeping quarters on Inagua.

**BUILDING THE
“NEW” OUR LADY
OF MT. CARMEL**



ASSUMPTION BVM CHURCH, DUNMORE



THE BURIAL OF ALEXANDER TAYLOR

THE ARRIVAL OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN -

From his first months on the Island, Fr. Adelard was convinced that the greatest need of the mission was for Sisters who could extend the program of religious education for young people, and strengthen and enrich the Catholic presence in many ways. He began an intensive search for available Sisters, and in 1964 he received the promise of three Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate of Quebec the following summer. The Oblates were lay women who committed themselves to a particular alliance with Christ in order to spread His message for love and peace. A frenzied program of fundraising, begging and planning began, leading up to construction of a new convent on the hill-top, next to SS. Peter and Paul's Church in Clarence Town. The new convent, which now serves as the Rectory, was built during the summer of 1965, and was completed on September 1st, the day before the arrival of the Oblates. Father Peter Kenney, S.S.J., who had also spent the previous summer on Long Island, worked along with Fr. Louis and Fr. Abelard on the project.

The arrival of the Oblates greatly expanded the outreach of the mission. One of the Sisters taught in the public school, and helped support the mission. All of them taught religion, singing, and arts and crafts in the many settlements served by the mission.

MINISTRY CONTINUES ON ALL FRONTS

Since there were two resident doctors on the island by 1963, Fr. Louis and Fr. Adelard were seldom called upon to utilize their dental and medical skills, but the local doctors were quick to enlist the help of one of the Oblate Sisters who had experience as a mid-wife. The presence of these dedicated women gave new vitality to the mission. The best remembered of the six Oblates is Lise Jacques, who spent seven years on Long Island, developing and directing an excellent cate-

MRS. ENA MAJOR, WHO RECEIVED THE DAMIEN AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE POOR AT THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY MASS.



chetical program. For five of those years Miss Jacques continued to labor by herself, the only Oblate on Long Island. In 1977, she returned to Canada.

In 1968, Fr. Sylvio Auclair, Fr. Adelard's older brother, who had spent 40 years in the missions of northern Canada, came to live in retirement on Long Island. Fr. Sylvio remained until his brother finished his pastorate in 1970. He added much by his quiet, prayerful presence.

Fr. Louis went on to another assignment in 1968, and was succeeded by Fr. Michael McCall, S.S.J. who, after serving one year as an associate, became the second Josephite pastor of Long Island.

In 1971, Fr. Walter Cerbin, S.S.J. came to Long Island, first as an associate, later as Pastor. Father Walter is remembered for his interest in gardening. In addition to doing experimental farming and introducing some new varieties of crops to the island, he collected and cured botanical specimens for the New York Botanical gardens. His most memorable experience was aboard the M/V New Day, when it caught fire, and sank on a voyage to Inagua. Fr. Wally spent several hours adrift in a life-boat in shark infested waters.

In 1973, the mission entered a new phase with two co-pastors, Fr. Joseph Calamari, S.S.J., and Fr. Paul Ortner, S.S.J. Father Paul had been on the island for two years as the associate pastor with Fr. Cerbin. Fr. Paul and Fr. Joseph possessed a tremendous range of talents. Fr. Paul had extensive mechanical and building skills and a great interest and aptitude for arts and crafts. It was Fr. Paul who introduced macramé and shell craft to many of the parishioners. Fr. Joseph resurrected the role of priest as dentist and ministered to the dental agonies of poor people all over the island. He was also a great sports enthusiast and organized sports activities and programs in the parishes.

Fr. Paul undertook the task of re-roofing the church in Taits, and built a beautiful hall to serve the needs of that community. He also revived the band which had been founded in Fr. Cornelius' time, but which had long since lapsed into inactivity. He acquired new instruments and uniforms, and inspired new life into the band by his infectious enthusiasm. By 1977, he had developed a well-drilled marching band of 38 members, under the direction of Mrs. Hazel Newman, that added local culture and liveliness to all Long Island social occasions. Two of these outstanding events were the celebration of Bahamian Independence on July 10, 1979, and the observance of the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Church on Long Island in May of 1980.

In September of 1980, Fr. Paul completed 10 years of productive service on Long Island, and was assigned to the United States. He was replaced by Fr. Joseph LeFrois, S.S.J. Father LeFrois' arrival presented a problem. It was the custom in the Bahamas to call priests by their first name, and since there was already one Fr. Joseph on the island, he came to be known by his middle name, thus Father George. Father George is remembered for his increased emphasis on the liturgy and his introduction of the guitar to liturgical use.

YOUTH AND LEADERSHIP –

Despite the year by year increase in the number of Catholics, as evidenced by the bulging Baptismal registers, the total number of Catholics remained below the peak it had attained in the late 1960's of about 700 members. The reason for this has become obvious over the years, as the lack of employment opportunities on the island makes it very difficult for our younger members to remain on Long Island. Both college opportunity and employment possibilities see over 80% of the youth leave, and this constant drain of potential for the parish is not only difficult for the Church, but for leadership in the island in general. It continues to be one of the greatest obstacles to growth in the mission.

The first Parish Council was organized in 1982. Since the Catholic community was divided into seven separate parishes, spaced widely apart, there had always been a problem with creating a sense of community, while at the same time preserving the indi-

viduality of each smaller community. The Parish Council brought a greater cohesion to the church on Long Island. Parish Council members from each community met together monthly, and came to understand and share the needs of the total church.

In 1982 Fr. Joseph finished his long assignment to Long Island and the Bahamas, and was replaced by Fr. Patrick Healey, S.S.J. who served as an assistant under Fr. LeFrois. Father "Pat", only five years ordained, was the youngest Josephite assigned to Long Island. He brought a great deal of enthusiasm and zest to his new assignment. Fr. Pat is well



**DEACON PATRICK DARVILLE
AND MR. HENRY MAJOR,
CATECHIST**

remembered for his energetic tackling of the problem of the deteriorating towers of SS. Peter and Paul Church. Over the years the twin 40 foot towers of the Church designed by Father Jerome had become well-known and beloved landmarks of Long Island. Cracking had developed which threatened to destroy them. Fr. Pat developed and directed a project of reinforcing and rebuilding each tower with a strengthening wall constructed within each turret. The task took an incredible amount of labor and material, and the towers, "better than ever", will continue to guide mariners into Clarence Town Harbour for many years to come.

In 1983 Fr. Arthur Colbert, S.S.J. replaced Fr. LeFrois as pastor. An accomplished pianist, Fr. Arthur developed the Long Island Chorale, an ecumenical singing group of more than 30 voices that enriched the social and cultural life of the Island.

Since the last of the Oblate Missionaries had left Long Island, the mission had been without Sisters. In 1985, the Ursuline Sisters of Chatham, Ontario (Canada), agreed to extend their work to the Bahamas. Two Sisters, long experienced in the social and teaching ministry of the Church in the northern United States and Canada, came to Clarence Town. Ursuline Sisters, Phyllis Wright and Margaret Kelly, began an active apostolate of catechetical development, music instruction,

and social outreach. Sr. Phyllis will long be remembered for her concern and involvement with the aged and sick, and Sr. Margaret developed a very effective catechetical program with the aid of dedicated teachers. She also worked with the catechists in revising and improving the celebration of the Eucharist in the absence of a priest, which was one of the more important duties of the catechist. Sr. Phyllis was recalled to Canada in 1988, but Sr. Margaret continued on for many years until 1992.

When Fr. Arthur returned to an assignment in the United States in 1986, Fr. Pat Healey became the pastor. For the first time in twenty years, the Catholics of Long Island were served by only one priest.

FR. FANNING WITH MRS. MARGARET TAYLOR AND GRAND DAUGHTER, PATRICKA



For twenty-four years, the Josephite Society had served the material and spiritual needs of the Catholic community on Long Island. The Josephites had been most generous in supplying men and means over the years, but the growing problem of a scarcity of priests and religious made it evident that the Society would soon have to relinquish its commitment and return responsibility for the mission to the then Diocese of Nassau. In 1987, Fr. Peter Kenney, S.S.J., replaced Fr. Pat as the pastor. Fr. Peter was assigned the sad task of preparing the mission for the withdrawal of the Josephites. He began a vigorous program of repainting and repairing the churches and parish buildings of all seven faith communities on the island. His original one year commitment was extended to two years, but the date of completion of the Josephites' mission was set for July 1989.

Two very wonderful events highlighted this year. A young man from Dunmore, Alfred Dean, completed eleven years of study and was ordained a priest for the Josephites, and celebrated his first Mass in Dunmore in June of that year. Also, Sir Henry Milton Taylor, Kt. J.P., the Acting Governor General of the Bahamas, came to Long Island in January, and participated in a Mass of Thanksgiving at SS. Peter and Paul Church. The young school teacher from Long Island had gone on to an illustrious career in the Bahamian political life, and had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his outstanding service to the people of the Bahamas. What a joy it was for the community to have one of their original members return sixty years later in a position of prestige and honor.

RELIGIOUS SISTERS FROM LONG ISLAND -

In the past 75 years, the Catholic community of Long Island has also made a tremendous contribution to the church at large in the Bahamas in the persons of its native daughters who went on to religious life, including Sr. Veronica Burrows, O.S.B., Sr. Miriam David Carroll, F.H.M., and of course, Sr. Mary Benedict Pratt, O.S.B., who recently retired as the Superintendent of Catholic Education for the Archdiocese of Nassau.





MOST RECENTLY –

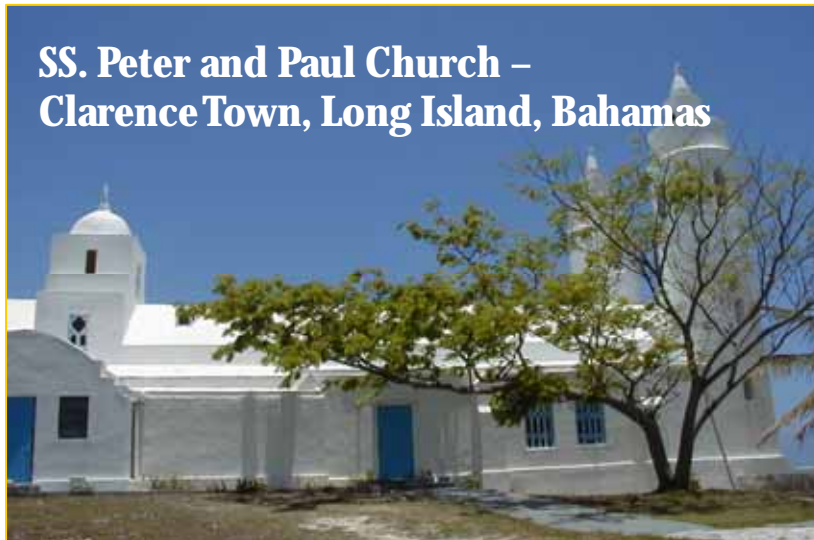
In the ensuing years there have been three priests who have held the position of pastor of the parish. The first after the Josephites left was Fr. James Sheehan, S.J., a member of the Jesuits, a brother priest of then Bishop Lawrence Burke, S.J., who served the community faithfully. During Fr. James' time, Mr. Patrick Edward Darville was ordained a Permanent Deacon at SS. Peter and Paul in Clarence Town on June 5, 1993 (and recently celebrated his tenth anniversary of ordination in 2003).

The community felt tremendous loss when Fr. James Sheehan died unexpectedly while out of the country in 1997. Fr. Mel Taylor, the prior of the Benedictine Community in Nassau, then came to Long Island in October of 1997, and was both resident pastor and "commuter" until September of 2000. He is very strongly remembered here by the people as someone who gave deep attentive service, especially among the poor of the island. During Fr. Mel's time, construction began on the new church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Hamiltons, which alleviated the overflowing congregation. Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Hamiltons was dedicated by Archbishop Burke, S.J., and is a great testament to the talents of the constructors of the church building. Following Fr. Mel, Fr. Patrick Fanning, ss.cc., a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, arrived as pastor, and holds that position in the present day.

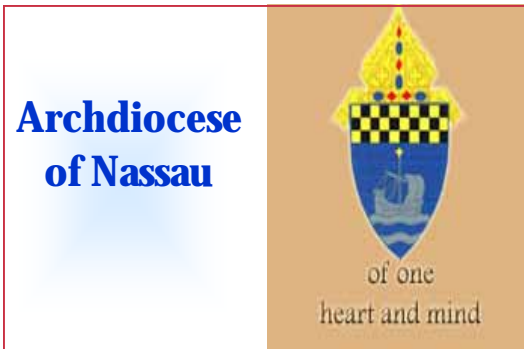
Fr. Fanning's religious congregation has been serving in the Bahamas since 1961 in parishes such as St. Joseph's, and Our Lady of the Holy Souls, all in Nassau, and for many years at St. Francis de Sales in Abaco and St. Bede's. They also staffed for a time the churches of Harbour Island and North Eleuthera.

A NOTE OF THANKS TO GOD –

We also recognize and give thanks to God that one of the sons of the soil has been ordained for the Bahamas in the person of Fr. Kendrick Forbes. Fr. Kendrick is a native son of Clarence Town, Long Island, and he celebrated his first Mass at SS. Peter and Paul, followed by a reception at the family “compound”. Both Fr. Kendrick’s ordination and first Mass were wonderful celebrations, and we give special thanks to God for his vocation. In mentioning this, we also recognize the blessing of our new Archbishop Patrick Pinder, who highlights vocations as one of the greatest priorities and challenges that we face as an Archdiocese. We note with joy that Archbishop Pinder received his pallium from Pope John Paul II during our seventy-fifth anniversary year, and was installed just prior to our actual anniversary, taking “the helm” from Archbishop Lawrence Burke, S.J. who has gone on to become the Ordinary of Kingston, Jamaica. Both our past, in Bishops and Archbishops, as well as our present in Archbishop Pinder and Fr. Kendrick, give us great hope and joy as we celebrate the goodness of God to us as a faith community. May we always be of one heart and mind in bearing witness to Him! *Ad Multos Annos!*

**SS. Peter and Paul Church –
Clarence Town, Long Island, Bahamas**

THIS BOOKLET BROUGHT TO YOU IN PART BY:



**Archdiocese
of Nassau**



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**CONGREGATION OF THE SACRED HEARTS
OF JESUS AND MARY**

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**SOME OF THE MANY
WONDERFUL PEOPLE
OF THE PARISH!**

**THANKS BE TO GOD
FOR 75 YEARS AND
MORE!**



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