

## **St. Vincent Ferrer School History**

It has been quite a journey...one faith filled and full of hard work and anticipation. We can only now imagine what the original founders of St. Vincent Ferrer Parish set out to accomplish back in 1945.

They were a group of individuals who had just lived and witnessed the end of World War II and were ready to begin anew life. They were a part of a great boom in expansion of homes and families which materialized in what we now call Kenwood.

These Catholic families in Kenwood, up to 1946, were within the boundaries of three parishes: St. John the Evangelist in Deer Park, St. Gertrude in Maderia, and St. Anthony in Madisonville. With the growing number of families in addition to the distance many traveled to attend Mass, Archbishop John T. McNicholas O.P. appointed the Rev. Norbert J. Miller as administrator of a new parish to accommodate the spiritual need of the Catholic people in Kenwood.

With the generosity of the public school board offering the neighboring Concord School Gymnasium at Montgomery and Keller Roads and the ingenuity of Fr. Miller, the first Mass was celebrated on Sunday, March 17, 1946 at 10:30 A.M..

A second was offered at Noon which became the regular schedule of Sunday Masses and accommodated about 175 families.

What was started now over 57 years ago has become St. Vincent Ferrer Parish; a thriving and still growing parish that serves not only our parish community, but the needs of many in our community as well.

During the first 10 years of the parish's existence, there was a myriad of things to be done and organized. Men's and women's groups were organized and from the very beginning, a vision was clear to serve the outside community.

During those first 10 years, there was a need and push to provide quality education to the children of the parish. After the building of what now is our community building, contact was made with the Dominican

Sisters of Adrian Michigan to send teachers and help staff a school. From the 150 families in 1945, the parish numbered 450 families in 1955. Children in school increased from 51 to 339 with the supervision of five Dominican Sisters and two lay teachers.

After much discernment and careful planning, a building committee was formed and on November 9th, 1958, ground was broken and the "new school" was underway. Due to a very hard winter, construction was delayed but the school was dedicated on June 14th, 1959. Bishop Paul F. Leibold, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, laid the cornerstone for the new St. Vincent Ferrer School.

For these early parishioners, "it was the consummation of many sacrifices and actual physical labor from the souls and bodies of the people of St. Vincent's. One more line was written in its history ...but years of toil and effort gave the community a monument indestructible...to the faith of a parish filled with members who believe and have put in to practice their firm duty...prime to parents and the Catholic ideal...the education, both spiritual and intellectual, of its children."

That was then. And look where we are today. We are still growing and building on those same ideals. We have built a Church and now we enhance our Parish Center and School. Some of the materials are different. Many of the tools are different. And we know the cost is quite different. However, the sacrifice and the commitment has not changed. We are St. Vincent Ferrer Parish...and truly Living Church in our Community.

There are many, many people working together that made this project possible. Since December of 1998, our Faith Community has been involved in developing a long-rang facility plan for St. Vincent Ferrer School and Parish. We all had a chance to participate in a series of "listening sessions" in which we spoke for our strengths, weaknesses and hopes for the future.

In December, 1999, Dick Haglage and the Parish Pastoral Council asked for volunteers to serve on a committee to plan for the future facility needs of our Parish. With that committee of 15 in place and

chaired by Mr. Jack Pflum, a full review of the current facilities began to take place. The purpose of the committee was to ensure that the listening sessions were properly considered and that a reasonable, rational, and implemental program of physical improvements be identified. Secondly, the committee was to set priorities which would be consistent with the intent of the listening sessions, the Pastoral Council, the Pastoral Staff, and financially attainable for the Parish.

Architects were hired, plans developed, contracts were bid, Beischel Construction was hired, and hours and hours of planning took place. The Facility Committee evolved into the bi-monthly owner's meetings led by Ernie Zimmer and Andy Lorenz. Parish staff followed closely to supervise the project with Principal, Blane Collison leading the school efforts and Fr. Terry Hamilton, Jim Dunn following the parish investments as well.

There have been so many gifts and talents bestowed upon this project: Parishioner Dan Frank and the landscaping crew, Pat Connor and his great maintenance staff, Tom Hughes and Parish Pastoral Council, and perhaps most of all, our entire parish community. From the very beginning, the support was great. When we needed volunteers, you were there. When we needed special services, you were there.

Today, we celebrate a great accomplishment. We have continued the tradition started over 57 years ago and have built on their foundation to provide quality education both spiritual and academic to our parish community.