

***Praising and giving honour to God for One Hundred Years
Holy Cross Bridges the Past and Present***

December 10, 2022. After a three-day Centennial Retreat, followed by a week of special centennial Masses, Holy Cross Parish celebrated its 100th anniversary with a Celebratory Mass presided by Archbishop Albert LeGatt, followed by a delicious potluck supper. For parishioners, friends of Holy Cross and indeed, the entire archdiocese of St. Boniface, it was a time to pray, celebrate in each other's company, and most of all, reflect on one hundred years of faith and growth, and just how good it is to gather in such a warm and welcoming community.

Interviews by Daniel Bahuaud, communications coordinator for the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface



It all started in 1918, when Daniel Kehler, Robert Starr and Michael Sweeney approached Archbishop Arthur Béliveau to consider the needs of the roughly 80 English-speaking families living in the Norwood Grove area. Could there not be a Mass where the homily could be spoken in English?



At the time, there were only French-speaking parishes, and although the liturgy was conducted mainly in Latin, homilies and hymns were only spoken and sung in the language of Molière. Archbishop Béliveau at once arranged for a Mass, at 9 am on Christmas Day at the Sacred Heart Chapel at the rear of Saint Boniface Cathedral. A newly ordained priest, Father Rosario Brodeur, presided, which was a taste of things to come, as eight years later, Fr. Brodeur would be parish priest at Holy Cross.

In 1921, on the first day of Lent, Archbishop Béliveau announced the creation of a new English-speaking parish – the diocese's first. Mass began being celebrated in the Cathedral proper, with Father Alex Lambert appointed as parish priest. The new community quickly began to mobilize to have their own church built on the corner of Dubuc and Traverse Streets. It didn't take long; the cornerstone was laid on July 30, 1922, by the archbishop, and the first Mass was celebrated in the new church on Sunday December 10, 1922.

"All of this was born from a deep desire among families to meet and pray, as well as archbishop Béliveau, who warmly welcomed their desire to gather, noted archbishop LeGatt during his homily. Whatever can bring people closer to their God, let it be so. And for one hundred years, God has been given glory in this space, but most importantly, this community of families.

"There have been so many wonderful accomplishments since 1922. So many that it would be difficult to list them all in a homily. Starting with the building such a beautiful church. But also, the founding of so many groups such as the



CWL and the K of C. The Holy Cross choir has been noted at various times for its almost professional level performances.

“Since 1922, this parish has had sixteen pastors. Three of them have even gone on to be bishops: Rosario Brodeur, Remi de Roo and Raymond Roy. Some have also died while serving Holy Cross. And in their very devout ways of engaging in the faith, the parishioners, with their pastors, have found so many ways to give praise, honour and glory to God. To pray, to intercede, to know God more fully is a hallmark of Holy Cross. And we have only to think about the establishment of the perpetual adoration chapel – the only one in the city – and a magnet for people across the city to be with the Lord Jesus, opening their hearts in prayer.



“This love of God has gone beyond the walls of the parish. One only has to think of Holy Cross School, which has played an important part in bringing Jesus to young hearts and minds. Devoted parishioners have contributed to the school’s development, yes, but I must mention the work of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary at the school.

“There have been other signs of reaching out for people who need support. The residence for seniors that was built very early on in the life of the parish. The food bank is another way that Holy Cross has embraced that mission. And it’s not often that we can say that the food bank has a waiting list of volunteers wanting to work there. Outstanding, even more because everyone who comes to the food bank is welcomed as a person, indeed as Christ.”

A Second Home

Cécile Myslicki has been at Holy Cross for close to 45 years. “It’s like my second home, ever since our family arrived when the kids were still quite little. There are so many family ties here. After my father’s passing, my mother Antoinette Fraser and my sister Évangéline lived in the old rectory, cooking and cleaning for the pastors. They served for many years, until Fr. Gray’s arrival. Fr. Gray had his mother with him, so they vacated the premises, moving to Holy Cross Manor. Today, the old rectory is the Adoration chapel. When I go there to pray, I often think of my mother and sister.

“But there are other memories here. The Holy Cross parishioners are like family to me. There’s a real sense of belonging at Holy Cross.”



For Sheila Cornick, the parish centenary celebrations were an opportunity to reflect on how important Holy Cross Parish is to her. “I’m a third-generation parishioner. Both my grandfathers were very involved in the parish, and my grandfather Leo Soenen Sr. played a role in the creation of Holy Cross School and

the Holy Cross Seniors’ Residence. My grandparents, Frank and Agnes Kennedy, were heavily involved with the St. Thomas Moore Chapel, when it was linked to the parish. “Needless to say, my parents, Patricia and Leo Soennen Jr. were baptized and married at Holy Cross. Later, my five siblings were also baptized and married here. Mom was on the Holy Cross School board, and later, so was I. Myself, my three brothers and my sister all attended the school. All of this explains why I was parish life director for four years and am the PPC chair. My family history is so inextricably tied to the parish that it makes me feel more invested to Holy Cross. Holy Cross is a constant for me in a crazy and chaotic world. And not just in terms of my faith, but in terms of the people. There’s a comfort in community. At Holy Cross, I meet people who remember when my children were young, reading at Mass.

“The beauty of Holy Cross is that there’s something there for everybody. We’re all on different faith journeys. Whether your faith is just taking root, or you’re a cradle Catholic, or whether you’re charismatic, traditional or more progressive, there’s a welcoming atmosphere here. There’s no pressure of being part of a particular group in order to belong.”

“So many beautiful ways to worship”



John Scatliff agrees. “I’ve been at Holy Cross for at least 25 years. My wife Suzie’s parents were parishioners, and we used to attend Mass from time to time with them. I arrived when Fr. Jim Gray was pastor; he was wonderful and helped convinced me to stay. I love the beauty of the church, which has a very traditional look. What’s also beautiful is that there’s a wide variety of being Catholic here. Charismatics attend the 12 o’clock Mass, and more traditional parishioners go earlier. There’s a strong Marian devotion in the parish, with the recitation of the Rosary. There’s also the Adoration chapel. So many beautiful ways to worship!

“Initially, I wasn’t very involved at Holy Cross. Then, I joined the building committee when we redid the rectory to accommodate Fr. Martin Bradbury’s illness. Around 2010, I started attending Mass more often, then all during the week. The Lord kept drawing me closer to him. I became an altar server and eventually a sacristan, with Marie Gamache and later, Rita Tan. It’s a joy to serve here.”

“And it’s a joy to sing here, adds Joanne Mercier. I’ve been involved in music ministry since my husband and I came in 1984. My kids Jean-Guy and Jocelyne sang with me, when my future son-in-law Mark Baribeau was altar server. Music is such a vital part of our parish. It’s not surprising that in the nineties, our choir was well-known.



We all pray through song, and our musicians use their instruments to praise God. In the Verrelli family, everyone is musical and pitches in. Daniel, Davide, Gio and their sisters Julia and Elena are very active musicians. And the Poklar brothers, Emil and Mario, who have amazing voices. There are others too, like Caroline and Aurèle

Brémault, and the Rivard family. So many fine musicians and singers! As well, different groups sing at our different Masses, each with their style of music, which reflects our diverse parish. All of this, because our pastors greatly understood music’s contribution to worship and to the liturgy.”



A place for youth

Youth at Holy Cross also contribute actively. Dominique Gougeon-Gagnon is responsible for the parish youth group, as well as youth catechesis and sacramental preparation.

“The youth group is one of my favorite ministries. Our youth are very faith-filled, and love God. Which gives me great hope for our parish’s future. In early October, during our veneration of the relic of the Holy Cross, they showed so much devotion. It’s beautiful to see teens genuinely love God and be active in the parish.

“The group has so much more than a “Jesus loves you” outlook. When we meet, we go deeper into our faith, with prayer, reflections on Scripture and many aspects of our faith and Church history. We also help with the soup kitchen and other charities.”

Father Anthony Anixavier, OFM Cap. is Holy Cross’ newest pastor. For him, “it’s a blessing to be in a centennial year”. “The faith journey of the parish simply *had* to be celebrated. Hence the retreat, prayer and adoration and so many Masses. Our December 10 celebration was a culmination that bridged past and present. We are so thankful to God!”



To view a photo gallery of the December 10 celebration, [click here](#).

For a complete timeline of Holy Cross Parish’s history, [click here](#).

For Holy Cross – Did You Know facts, [click here](#).

For Liz Van De Keere’s poem ***One Hundred Years And We Give Thanks***, [click here](#).