Parish History Records
LaSalette Stamina

First diocesan priest to come to the need of Catholics in the DeRidder area was Father Hubert Cramers, then pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, Lake Charles. Transportation in the early 1900's was a major problem and the trip was made only a few times a year.

Sometimes a Father Vincent Ciolfino was sent from New Orleans to tend to the needs of the Albanian and Italian Catholics. He arranged the ministries of a Father Joseph, for the Lebanese and Syrian Catholics of the community.

Deprived most of the time of a Sunday Mass, they would gather in homes for the recitation of the rosary and the reading of the catechism.

The visit of Extension Society's "Chapel Car," in 1917 led to the establishment of a building fund committee. When a priest was occasionally available for Mass, it was offered to homes, then in theaters, sometimes in the Episcopal Church which was rented for the occasion.

A plot of land was purchased on South Royal Street, later to be exchanged in a business-like way, for a better location, two lots on North Pine Street. Here in 1922, the LaSalette Fathers built the "old" St. Joseph church with funds provided by the building committee and the Extension Society.

In November, 1921, the late Bishop Jules B. Jeannard, first Bishop of Lafayette, gave to the care of the LaSalette Fathers, Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish, Sulphur. These two pioneer missionaries were Father John Ramel, M.S., who died 10 years later as pastor of St. Joseph's, Loreauville, and Father Eugene Veillard, M.S., who lived to see four decades of priestly work in the south. At Father Cramers request, DeRidder and DeQuincy were attached to the LaSalette parish at Sulphur.

Formal blessing of the church in November, 1926, saw also the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation by Bishop Jeannard.

The parish was formally erected as a separate church parish in June, 1938 with Father James Shahrigian, M.S., who had succeeded Father Louis Riche, M.S., as assistant in Sulphur, as first resident pastor. A site for a rectory had been purchased in 1930, a frame house erected, and through benefits conducted by the altar society, and rent from the house, it was possible to turn the keys of a completely furnished house over to the new pastor in July, 1938.

Pastors and assistants who served through the years include Father George Hoylen, M.S., who succeeded Father Shahrigian in 1941 with Father Joseph B. Boutin, M.S., as assistant. Fathers Joseph Burnor, M.S., and Edward Crowley, M.S., had assisted Father Shahrigian prior to his new assignment as pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Houston.

During Father Hoylen's pastorate a chapel for Negro parishioners was built at DeQuincy and it was blessed in 1942 under the title Blessed Martin de Porres.

Father Bernard Reilly, M.S., was named pastor in July, 1943 with Father James O'Connell, M.S., assistant. A shrine to Our Lady of LaSallette was erected at this time, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pallotta and Philip. The priests were pressed into service as auxiliary chaplains for the army stationed at nearby Camp Polk (now Fort Polk). During the pastorate of Father Leo March, M.S., appointed in 1944 with Father John McNamara, M.S., assistant, the sanctuary was enlarged and the original belfry was replaced with a spire. Father Thomas Nolan, M.S., succeeded Father McNamara.

In 1946, Father Thomas Riche, M.S., was named pastor succeeding Father March who had become ill. Father John McDonald, M.S., was named assistant.

A shrine to the Sacred Heart was created in 1946, after the war, as a memorial to servicemen of the community, living and dead. The shrine was made possible through donations of Catholics and non-Catholics and the statue was donated by the Bautendella family.

Father Eugene Lynch, M.S., was appointed pastor in April, 1947, with Father Francis Lundgren, M.S., assistant. A six acre tract of land was purchased on the Merryville highway as a proposed school site. Through the generosity of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Stewart, the purchase was arranged for only $3,000.

Father Shahrigian returned as pastor in 1949 with Fathers Henry Sampson, M.S., and Joseph Proulx, M.S., as assistant. A monthly collection for the school fund was established. Through Mrs. C. C. Kern, a new brick building on North Stewart was secured as a parochial hall. It was the former Oddfellows of the World hall. The building was given to the parish in memory of her husband, a DeRidder businessman who had died of injuries received in an auto accident. Mrs. Kern received the papal medal "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifici" in 1953 in recognition of her benefactions to the Church.

Also among benefactors of (Turn to Page 9)
Parish History Records
Lasaelite Stamina

(Continued From Page 8)

the parish are Mr. and Mrs. John Pheian of Beaumont, Tex., who donated the new main altar of St. Joseph's church. At this altar, Father Anthony Genna, a native of the parish, offered his first Mass in May, 1952.

Bishop Maurice Schexnayder who succeeded Bishop Jeanmarc as Bishop of Lafayette, was quick to discern the need for a new rectory and church and suggested a building fund be started. He directed that the money from the now discontinued school fund be applied toward the building of a complete modern parish plant on the Merryville highway property.

Father Shahrigian held groundbreaking in February, 1957, assisted by Father William Hanafin, who had been assistant there since 1953. The new rectory was completed by July, 1957, and formal blessing was reserved to June, 1959, the 30th anniversary of Father Shahrigian's ordination.

On this occasion, Bishop Schexnayder also blessed a statue of St. Joseph, standing protectively at the entrance to the property, and the new shrine of the Sacred Heart moved from the former location on North Pine, to the new property. The new statue was a gift of the Pernici and Lamp families in memory of Mrs. Victoria Pernici, a pioneer parishioner.

In 1959, Father William O'Brien, M.S., was named chaplain of Louisiana Correctional and Industrial Schools of DeQuincy, with residence at St. Joseph's, DeRidder.

In 1960, work was begun on a building to serve as a temporary church, with the first Mass offered in May, 1960. DeQuincy had been established as a mission in 1955, with missions at Fields, Longville, Ragley and Singer.

Father Voilard, who had been first pastor of the first Lasaelite parish at Sulphur, was named first pastor of DeQuincy in 1956, just after the 50th anniversary of his ordination. After his death in 1960, Father Shahrigian was appointed to DeQuincy, and Father Hanafin became pastor in DeRidder.

The former Ferris Funeral Home property was purchased and renovated to serve as a C.Y.O. center, and a mission site has been established at Merryville, some 20 miles from DeRidder.