

SOME MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE PARISH

1947: The very first Mass of what was to become the parish of St Charles Borromeo was celebrated at Northcliff High School on 13 April 1947, by Fr George O'Callaghan, parish priest at Rosebank. This venue was used for over two years.

1949: On 11 September 1949, the first Mass was celebrated in what was the diningroom of the Oblate Provincial House, a property which had recently been acquired by Fr Tom McGrath O.M.I, Provincial Superior. In October, Fr Terence Kelly O.M.I came to Victory Park as priest-in-charge.

1950: The hall was completed and served as parish church on Sundays and as a school during the week.

1951: The first official parish priest was Fr William Nolan O.M.I. At this stage, there were about 150 Catholic families in the parish.

1954: In January, the Holy Cross Sisters opened the convent school, and later in that year Fr Phillip Erasmé became parish priest.

1956: The Parish of St Charles Borromeo was entrusted in perpetuity to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.).

1957: In January, the De La Salle brothers opened their college for boys.

1964: The foundation stone for the present church was laid on 18 October 1964 – it can be seen under the altar.

1965: The Parish continued to grow and by now there were close on 3 000 parishioners.

1966: On 31 May, the new church of St Charles was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Hugh Boyle, Bishop of Johannesburg. On 10 July, Father Tony Bailey O.M.I. was ordained to the priesthood in the Parish Church.

1967: The first meeting of the new Parish Pastoral Council was on 18 June. During the year, there were 61 marriages, 197 baptisms and 12 new members received into full communion with the church.

1971: November of this year saw the formation of a committee of three Anglicans and three Catholics to develop the North Riding community church project.

1972: On 14 January, Fr Ronnie Cairns was ordained priest at Victory Park by Bishop Boyle. The last Sunday Mass at the Chapel of Ease at Northcliff Nursery School was celebrated on 28 January.

1973: Brother Joe Carr O.M.I., by special indult, was appointed Special Minister of the Eucharist.

1974: The construction of a Cry Chapel was first discussed, and later built.

1975: Father Jack Brady and Father James Towell were present in Rome for the beatification of Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

1976: The number of parishioners had now grown to 6 349, there were 88 marriages, 263 baptisms, 47 funerals, and 14 new members received into full communion with the Church. The first Annual Paschal Supper was held during Holy Week this year. In May, the brothers of the College were appointed Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist.

1978: Father Michael Fish CSsR, a De La Salle old boy, and son of parishioners Len and Barbara Fish, was ordained at Victory Park on 25 June by Redemptorist Archbishop Stephen Naidoo of Cape Town. The first lay people appointed as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, in November 1978, were: Len Fish, Tom Robinson, Willie Penkler, Terry Duggan, Sr Perpetua and Sr Beata Maria of the Holy Cross Sisters, and Sr Agatha of the Holy Family Sisters. 2 June was a unique occasion: the joint consecration of the altar at St. John's North Riding, by Catholic Archbishop Fitzgerald and Anglican Bishop Baven.

1986: The parish obtained its first computer in November 1986.

1988: In September, Fr Joseph Gerard O.M.I. was beatified by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Lesotho.

1990: There were now about 9 335 parishioners, with 46 marriages, 177 baptisms, and 23 received into full communion with the Church. On 23 June, St John's in North Riding became a parish in its own right, with Fr James Towell as parish priest.

1991: The parish celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the building of the church and a special commemorative booklet was compiled. On 16 December, Fr Brendan Proctor O.M.I was ordained in our parish church, and joined the parish team as assistant pastor in 1993.

1994: Painting and renovation was required for the church roof and fundraising for this included the raffle of a car. On 20 December 1994 Fr Fidgeon celebrated the 30th anniversary of his ordination, and Fr Brady his 65th anniversary.

1995: On 3 February, Fr Ronald Rehbock was ordained at Victory Park. On 17 September, some 1 400 parishioners were transported by buses to join Pope John Paul II in celebrating Mass at Gosforth Park in Germiston. Fr Brady was awarded an honorary degree of Master of Arts by Wits University in recognition of his many years of work on the history of the Catholic Church in South Africa. On 3 December, St Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was canonized in Rome.

1997: On 5 April, Fr James Ralston O.M.I. was ordained at Victory Park.

1998: In November, Fr Tony Daniels O.M.I. led a parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

1999: This year was the Golden Jubilee Year of the parish, and as part of the celebrations, the parish undertook to build a church in Freedom Park, Eldorado Park. During Advent, Communion under both species was introduced at all Parish Masses.

2000: The number of parishioners had now grown to 9 771, with 143 Baptisms, 102 first Communions, 102 Confirmations, 23 Marriages, 80 funerals, and 22 people newly received into the Church. More than 2 000 penitents took advantage of a special penitential experience at three April Lenten Penitential Services. A number of priests were available at the morning and evening Masses; penitents wrote their sins on paper and presented them to their confessor. After absolution, they then burnt their sins on the Christ candle.