

Saint John Nepomucene

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of the early pioneers who founded and helped build St. John Nepomucene Church and School.

"ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS"

FORWARD

"Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom."
(St. Luke 12:32)

The stalwart pioneers met on November 5th, 1873 and unanimously agreed to build shelters for themselves and a tabernacle for their God. The mustard seed planted in the hearts of the early settlers was cultivated by the early missionary priests and bishops and has since grown into a spreading and fruitful tree. God's blessing has been on this parish from the beginning.

Hundreds of God's children have been baptized, hundreds have received the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. Scores upon scores have been married and many have been laid to rest in our cemetery, awaiting the trumpet call of St. Gabriel the Archangel alerting them to final resurrection and eternal life in heaven.

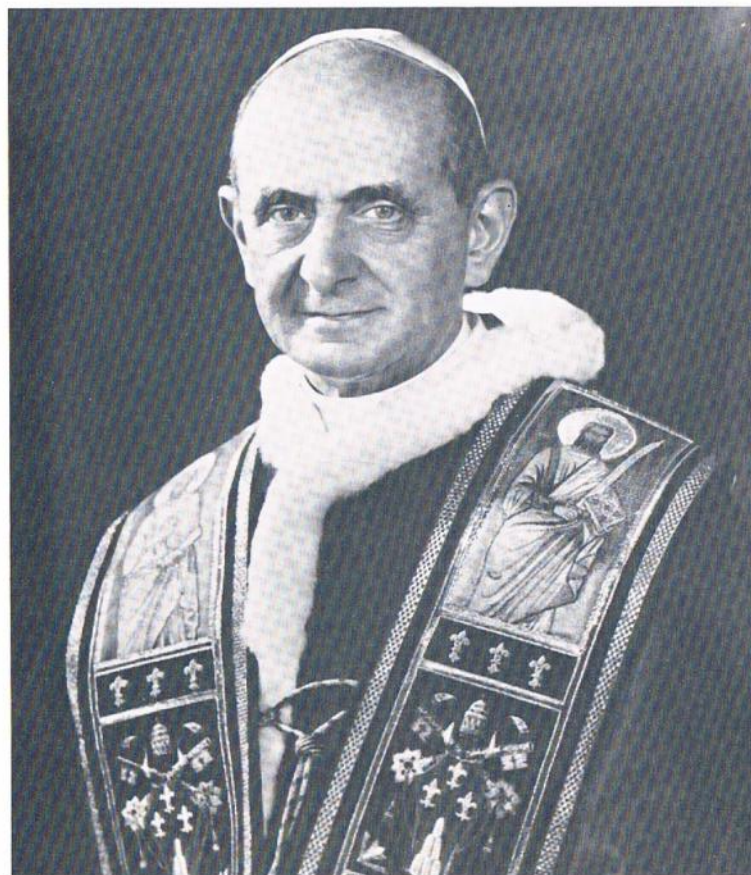
In accordance with Vatican II many changes have been introduced into the liturgy. The much-longed-for-Mass in English has become a reality. Men have been appointed by the archbishop to read the epistle at Mass and help distribute Holy Communion when another priest is not present. Abstinence before Holy Communion has been reduced to one hour. Friday abstinence has been substituted by corporal works of mercy, except Fridays in Lent. Saturday evening Mass may be attended in lieu of the Mass on Sunday. Amidst all these changes, the Gospel, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles Creed have remained the same. *"Jesus Christ yesterday, and today and the same forever."* (Heb. 13:8)

We who come to worship in this centennial year of St. John Nepomucene Church should be mindful that the accomplishments achieved by our forebearers during the past 100 years, lie at the end of a pathway strewn with heroic deeds of Christian faith and self-sacrifice. Pioneers are always held in high esteem. Were we to remain silent, the very stones in these walls, now a hundred years old, would cry out in their praise.

While we give thanks to God for all the blessings of mind and body, showered on the members of St. John's Church in the past, we should add a petition to Almighty God that in the next hundred years, St. John Nepomucene would continue to have a resident priest to celebrate Holy Mass and administer the Sacraments. *"Fear not little flock; it has pleased God to give you a kingdom."* (St. Luke 12:32)

Feast of Corpus Christi, June 1, 1975
Rev. Stephen J. Kucera

Our Holy Father Pope Paul VI



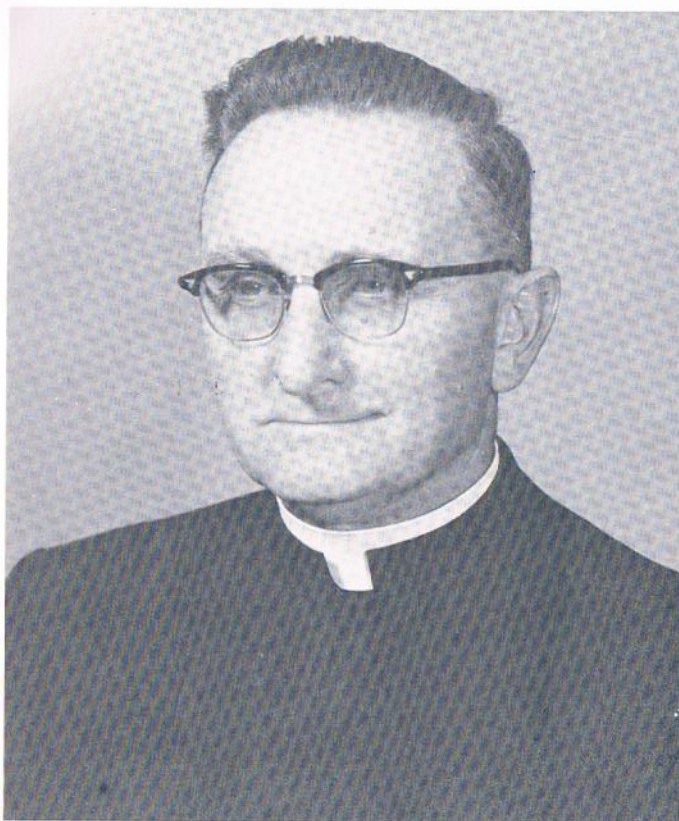
Long May He Reign



Archbishop James J. Byrne S.T.D.
Archbishop of Dubuque



Bishop Francis J. Dunn
Auxiliary Bishop of Dubuque



Rev. Stephen J. Kucera
Pastor



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

3339 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

July 15, 1975

Reverend and dear Father Kucera:

On the joyous occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of the founding of Saint John Nepomucene Parish, in Fort Atkinson, Iowa, it gives me great pleasure to inform you that our Most Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, graciously bestows his Apostolic Benediction upon you, the clergy and religious associated with you, the parishioners, and all who will join in observing this happy event.

Much has been accomplished for the honor and glory of God during these past one hundred years; for this reason, there is joy and deep gratitude in the hearts of all who have been associated with Saint John Nepomucene's Parish.

In the years to come, may the priests, the religious and the people of the parish continue to grow as a faith community, centered in Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To this Blessing of the Holy Father, I wish to add my personal greetings and prayerful good wishes.

With sentiments of esteem and renewed felicitations,
I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

L. Sean Tudek

Apostolic Delegate



P O BOX 479
DUBUQUE, IOWA 52001

July 10, 1975

Rev. Stephen J. Kucera
St. John Nepomucene Church
Fort Atkinson, Iowa

Dear Father Kucera and Parishioners of St. John Nepomucene Parish:

On August 31 you will be celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of your parish. It is a distinct grace of God that any parish celebrates one hundred years of faithful worship to God and service to the parishioners of it. Consequently, the Centennial jubilee is a time for all to turn to God in praise and gratitude.

I want to join you in thanking God for the graces of the past one hundred years. I want to join you in thanking God for the courage, fidelity and witness that the priests, religious and laity of St. John's Parish have given during the past century. Only God knows the complete results of that kind of Catholic living in your parish during the last one hundred years.

May Our Blessed Lady obtain for each one of you an abundance of her Son's blessings so that you may continue the wonderful traditions of your parish during the years ahead.

Your Brother in Christ,

Archb. Byrne

Most Rev. James J. Byrne
Archbishop of Dubuque

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 5, 1975

TO THE CONGREGATION OF
ST. JOHN NEPOMUCENE CHURCH

It is a special privilege for me to send greetings to you on the joyous occasion of your one hundredth anniversary.

This celebration is one of deep pride for you as well as for all Americans. Our Nation is built upon a belief in a Creator who has endowed all men with inalienable rights, and faith in that Creator touches our lives in every way. Your dedication to these ideals strengthens the spiritual fiber of America, and I trust this heritage will continue to be a source of strength as you carry on with your important work.

The warmest of congratulations to you and may God bless you in the years ahead.

Herold R. Ford

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, FORT ATKINSON, IOWA

Rev. Stephen J. Kucera

Catholic history in northeast Iowa began in Winneshiek County, Washington township concurrently with the erection of the government fort, named Fort Atkinson, after General Atkinson in Wisconsin. This government project had for its objective, to keep peace between the Winnebago and Sioux Indians. Among the Winnebago Indians were several Catholics, converts of Father Mazzuchelli whom he had instructed north of Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin. Fort Atkinson thus became the birthplace of civilization in Winneshiek County.

Father Remegius Petiot of Dubuque arrived among the Winnebagoes in the spring of 1842 at Fort Atkinson and found among them a number of Catholics, converts of some eight or nine years before. A few of the white settlers attached to the Indian agency were also Catholics. Records of these facts are at the Cathedral in Dubuque. During the first half of the year 1842, Father Petiot baptized nineteen infants and children, most of them Indians. But Father Petiot's success in the Catholic mission drew such bitter ire from the Reverend Mr. Lowry, a Presbyterian minister from Princeton, Kentucky, that the priest was compelled to leave the mission work at the Fort.

Another Dubuque priest who was later to become famous with the Indian mission, was Father Joseph Cretin. He took charge of the mission the next year, 1843. With the help of the Indians and white settlers he built a log chapel about a mile East of our present St. John's cemetery and called it "Our Lady of the Wilderness." Near this log chapel was an Indian cemetery in the horse-shoe bend of the Turkey River. Some of the early members of St. John's Church remember several crosses that marked these graves. Since they were crosses of wood, in time they deteriorated. Today, there is nothing to mark these graves, although the location of the log chapel was discernible years ago. A prairie fire destroyed the log chapel in 1853. (Bailey, History of Winneshiek County) Today this land is part of Philip Huber's farm.

The next venture of Father Cretin was a private school for the Indians which was located five and a half miles Southeast of Fort Atkinson. This school existed about three years, from 1845 to 1848. Here Father Cretin built another log chapel and because of the many hardships he suffered at Fort Atkinson, he named this chapel, "Our Lady of Seven Sorrows." Years later this log chapel burned from an incendiary origin. There were white settlers at St. Lucas, and they built their own chapel. Those west of Waucoma built St. Rose Church, those near Spillville built St. Clements, and those near Festina took the original name, "Our Lady of Seven Dolors," and built their own church. Today St. Anthony's Chapel marks the location of the original log chapel. Father Cretin later became the first Bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota in 1851.

From the above story of the early settlers near the "Old Mission" and the old Fort, it is easy to see that the immigrants clustered around the "Old Mission" and the town of Fort Atkinson. For many years these pioneers attended Mass

at Spillville, at St. Clement's Church south of Spillville, and Festina, which has the honor of being the oldest parish in the state of Iowa that originated as an Indian mission and has had a continuous parochial existence since 1848, more than a hundred years ago.

THE BEGINNING OF ST. JOHN'S PARISH

It was on November 5th, 1873, while the Most Rev. John Hennessy was bishop of Dubuque, that a meeting was called by the early settlers and presided over by John Votava as Chairman. It was the unanimous decision of this group of Catholics to build a church in Fort Atkinson in honor of St. John Nepomucene. Other officers of the group were: Joseph Sluka, secretary; John Votava, treasurer; and trustees were: John Macal, Jacob Kubik, Frank Hrubetz and Joseph Budke. The records at the Decorah court house show that the ground on which the church was built belonged to John Votava. He acquired it from J.F. Clark on May 14, 1874. Presumably he donated the lots to St. John's Church in 1875 as he also donated the land that is used since that time as St. John's Cemetery. St. John's Centennial is unique since not only the parish but the building is also a hundred years old.

CHURCH IS BUILT

The officers elected and entrusted with this work made immediate preparation to begin building operations the following spring. The building materials were prepared, and work on the new church was begun in May, 1874. It was a hard undertaking in those early days and beset with many difficulties, for the people were very poor. But they possessed the strength and the courage and the Christian zeal and the determination to build a house consecrated to the worship of God, and they labored with all their hearts and prospered. They sacrificed much — much more than the present generation is able to realize. The masons boarded at the home of Jos. Budke, Ed. Budke's parents, while the church was being built.

There was no architect to form plans and designs and draw specifications, and there was no contractor to erect the building. It was, therefore, designed

and erected by the people themselves, who did practically all the work and generously donated their labor in support of the cause they espoused. It was a stone structure, 48 x 70 feet, with walls 24 feet high, and cost \$5,367.32. The corner stone was blessed by Father Francis Mikota of Spillville assisted by two neighboring priests, one of whom was Father Urban. In the beginning St. John's



Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Budke

congregation was occasionally attended by a missionary, Rev. Father Sulak, S.J. Father Sulak had built a church several miles from Monona in 1883. It was from this place that Father Sulak occasionally came to Fort Atkinson.

FIRST RESIDENT PRIEST

Rev. Francis Ehrenberger was appointed by Bishop Hennessy as the first resident pastor of Fort Atkinson. He came to Fort Atkinson from St. Mary's Church of Dubuque. He was born in Plicka, Austria in 1828. He came to the U.S. in 1868 and located at Rock Creek, Mo., where he remained until 1875, then came to Fort Atkinson. He had charge of the church for sixteen months, after which he went to Dubuque and officiated at St. Mary's for two years; then returned to Fort Atkinson until 1879, when he was appointed pastor of St. Wenceslaus at Spillville. Father Francis Boeding of St. Lucas, Iowa was given charge of St. John's as a mission from 1879 until 1885.



Rev. Francis X.
Boeding

During the construction of St. John's stone church, the money ran out when only the four walls were up and the roof could not be put on. Mr. Joseph Sluka mortgaged his farm and borrowed money to put a roof on the church. The next year or so, there was a crop failure in and around Fort Atkinson. The insurance company which had loaned the money to Joseph Sluka was going to foreclose the loan and there was danger that Mr. Sluka would lose his farm and the congregation would lose its church. It was at this crucial moment that Father Francis X. Boeding came over from St. Lucas with horse and buggy and went from farm to farm collecting money to pay the in-

FAMILY PICTURE OF JOSEPH SLUKA



Back row: John Sluka, Mrs. Frank Huber, Miss Mary Sluka, Mrs. A. J. Schreiber, and Mrs. Leo Huber
Front row: Mrs. Joseph Sluka with Catherine Sluka on her lap. Mr. Joseph and son, William.

terest. In some instances he got as little as 50 cents to a few dollars. Father Boeding persevered and collected enough money to pay interest on the loan, thereby saving the Sluka farm and the newly built church. God blessed their heroic efforts. Today the sole survivor of the Sluka family is Miss Kate Sluka who lives in retirement in her home here. Miss Sluka served as housekeeper for Father Charles Dragoun from 1912-1930.

CHURCH IS ENLARGED

The next pastor of St. John's was the newly ordained Rev. Bohumil Kramolis, 1885 to 1895. St. Aloysius Church of Calmar was also a mission church of Father Kramolis from 1889 to 1895. The influx of settlers so increased the membership of St. John's that in 1886 Father Kramolis found it necessary to enlarge the church. Accordingly, the sanctuary and two sacristies were added, which, when completed, gave the parish a spacious building; the dimensions being 48 x 90 feet. A church tower was built in 1899. The chief stone mason was the late John Neuzil, father of W.J. Neuzil, Frank Neuzil and Louis Neuzil. W.J. (Jim) Neuzil recalls that as a teenager he led the horse that pulled the rock and mortar up for the erection of the church tower. The two bells which were installed were donated by Joseph Spillman and John and Mary Votava. The beautiful oil-painting of St. John Nepomucene on the high altar is a gift of John and Veronica Sluka.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE

The first marriage ceremony in church was that of Frank P. Chizek and Mary Macal, which was solemnized on the feast of St. John, May 16, 1876. It is interesting to note that this marriage resulted in four generations of marriages at St. John's. Their daughter, Ida Chizek, was united to Joe A. Huber, on May 16, 1905. In 1940, the third generation, Art Huber and Vivian Moser, were married at St. John's and then their daughter Catherine Huber and Duane Keunnen solemnized their vows at the same altar in 1967. Frank Chekal was the first child to receive the sacrament of baptism in January, 1876. Rev. Father John P. Broz, late pastor of Spillville, celebrated his first Holy Mass in St. John's church November 17, 1889. The late George Schreiber used to point with pride to the fact that he was privileged to serve at Father Broz's First Mass. The present pastor of St. John's, Father Kucera, has a souvenir card of the First Holy Mass of Rev. John P. Broz celebrated at Fort Atkinson.

PARISH RECORDS DESTROYED

Father Francis Vrba succeeded Father Kramolis in 1895. During his administration Father Vrba found it necessary to enlarge the church again to accommodate the growth of the parish. This time a belfry was added and the entire church was remodeled and replastered in 1899. In September 1899, a great misfortune visited the parish when the priest's house was destroyed by fire and all parish records were destroyed. Sisters from LaCrosse, Wisconsin directed and taught the parochial school during Father Vrba's time, but after the destruction of the rectory the priest took up his residence in the school and the teaching of school was discontinued for one year.

A NEW RECTORY

The old rectory stood on the same place where today stands the house of Arthur Rausch. In January 1900 Rev. Father Francis Kopecky came, and the following spring he set about to erect a new rectory and it was completed for occupancy by September, 1900. This new rectory was built on the corner north of the church. The court-house records show that the property was acquired from John Votava. Father Kopecky now engaged the school Sisters of St. Francis of Milwaukee, Wis. to teach at St. John's. Since then the Sisters of St. Francis have continued their labor of love and sacrifice for St. John's parish.



Rev. Francis Kopecky



Rectory

In 1904, during Father Kopecky's pastorate, a Redemptorist missionary, Father Lefsa, conducted a week's mission. The large crucifix in the back of the church near the confessional was donated to the parish in thanksgiving for all the graces and blessings of the mission.

NEW SCHOOL

Rev. Father John Marsalek succeeded Rev. Kopecky, taking charge of the parish December 9, 1907. During his administration a new brick school was built with the dimensions of 36 x 56 feet, two stories high. Under its roof were three classrooms, an apartment for the Sisters, and a chapel. That same year Peter and Catherine Leibold donated to the church in remembrance of their Golden Jubilee, an ornate communion railing with two adoring angels holding chandeliers.



Rev. John Marsalek

Up to this time all church property was in the name of the archbishop of Dubuque. In November 1911, all parishes were incorporated with the archbishop as president, the pastor as vice-president, and the vicar general as a member of the board. Two lay men from the parish, Charles Pavlovec and Adolph Hlubek Sr., served as secretary and treasurer. The instrument was notarized by Frank J. Pouska. By incorporation, the parishes became an artificial person, endowed by law with many of the rights

of a natural person; such as owning property and the right to sue and of being sued. The act of incorporation was valid for a period of fifty years in the State of Iowa. The articles of reincorporation were renewed in Oct. 1961, with Rev. Stephen J. Kucera, pastor and Edward A. Kuhn and Frank A. Neuzil as Directors, and notarized by the late Adolph Novak.

FATHER DRAGOUN COMES TO PARISH

Father Charles Dragoun came to Fort Atkinson in May 1912 from Chelsea where he had been pastor since June 1907. Being very versatile Father



Rev. Charles Dragoun

Dragoun was invited by Archbishop John J. Keane of Dubuque to come to Iowa because he could preach and hear confessions in Czech, German and English. On his arrival the congregation was about \$2,500.00 in debt but through his efforts it was cancelled in 1913. Among the many improvements made in the church were the stained glass windows ordered from Munich, Bavaria, in 1915 costing \$2,336.00. Father Dragoun himself donated the first window of St. Charles. The rest of the windows were donated by generous parishioners and their names are inscribed on each as a fond memory. The pipe organ was bought in 1921 for \$2,700.00. It is in service to this day. In January 1922, one of the church bells cracked, and it was sent to the foundry and two new bells were placed in the belfry at a cost of \$554.50. In 1924 the church was newly frescoed, the altars painted and an oak floor laid in the sanctuary, all at a cost of \$2,197.00. The Young Ladies Sodality in 1925 donated a beautiful brass missal stand which is in use to this day. The Altar Society put a rubber flooring in the center and side aisles at a cost of \$516.38. Later in 1950 these rubber floorings were replaced by tile and the rubber flooring was fitted into the first grade room of our school.

New Stations of the Cross were presented by fourteen families of the parish whose names are engraved on the brass tablet at the entrance of the church. These stations, costing \$817, are handpainted on copper in oil colors. They are very beautiful and represent a work of real art.

Another work for which Father Dragoun deserves credit was the legal vacating of the alley running between the church and the rectory, and between the school and Mrs. Schleier's house. Later on in Father Dostal's time this house was purchased for the Sisters' Convent. The vacated alley gave the school children more playground.

THE CEMETERY

St. John's cemetery, the land which was donated by John and Mary Votava, is situated about a quarter of a mile east of the church, on a beautiful hill overlooking the little town. The first to be buried in the new cemetery were Mr. Kroupa, Mrs. Victoria Sykora, and Anton Schreiber.

In 1908 a committee of ladies of the parish organized for the purpose of caring for and beautifying of the holy acre. Members of the committee were: Mrs. F. A. Schreiber, Mrs. G. H. Huber, Mrs. J. J. Sluka, Mrs. John Doubek Sr., and Mrs. Henry Riehle.



The contract for the construction of the chapel was let May 1, 1913, at a cost of \$524.35. A wide cement walk leading from the entrance of the cemetery to the chapel was also built, the cost of which was \$391.25. The stained glass windows in the chapel were donated by those whose names are engraved on the windows. The bell in the belfry was a gift of Mrs. Theodore Schmitt, Mrs. Mary Gaertner, and Miss Anna Matula. Mrs. Theodore Schmitt also donated two marble statues to the cemetery, namely: a statue of the Mother of Sorrows and one of St. John the Beloved.

A Cemetery Endowment Fund for perpetual upkeep was formed in 1925. In 1940 St. John's Cemetery was made a separate corporation apart from Church property. The articles of incorporation are similar to those of St. John's Church corporation. The present cemetery directors are John W. Tekippe and Frank X. Schmitt. The cemetery today is a beauty spot resembling a well kept park, under the supervision of Mr. Alois Tekippe.

ST. JOHN'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

Monday, September 7, 1925, Fort Atkinson was in festive array on the anniversary of the Golden Jubilee of the completion of St. John's church. A solemn High Mass was celebrated by Father Dragoun, the pastor, assisted by Father H.P. Rohlman, of Loras College as Deacon of the Mass, later the Arch-

bishop of Dubuque; and Father Stephen Kucera of Cedar Rapids as sub-deacon of the Mass, now present pastor of St. John's. Rev. Louis B. Kucera who is pastor of Protivin, Iowa, delivered the festive sermon. Father Louis B. Kucera was appointed by Pope Pius XI as Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, on June 24, 1930.

The historical parade, which took place immediately after mass, was a feature of the day. There were various floats in the parade. Five autos carried the twenty clergymen who participated in the Jubilee. A concert by the Fort Atkinson's splendid thirty-piece band followed. St. John's choir also rendered several selections.

At noon, a dinner was served to twelve hundred people under a canopy of canvas. A huge cake was prepared by Mrs. J.J. Kubish.



Rev. Louis Gerlemann



Rev. Henry A. Henrich

In 1927 Father Dragoun was given Rev. L. H. Gerlemann as assistant. He stayed until January 1928. Rev. Henry A. Henrich succeeded Father Gerlemann in February, 1928 and remained until March 25, 1930, when Father Dragoun died. Following the death of Father Dragoun, Father Henrich was



Rev. W. A. Dostal

appointed administrator until October 1930, when he was succeeded by Rev. W. A. Dostal as pastor who came here from Chelsea, Iowa. Father Henry Henrich lives in retirement in Clinton, Iowa. Father Dragoun served St. John's from May 24, 1912, to March 25, 1930. He died at the local rectory and was buried in St. John's Cemetery. Rev. August Vojacek of Cedar Rapids conducted the services at the cemetery.

REVEREND W. A. DOSTAL

Father Dostal came to America with his parents from Moravia, Czechoslovakia and settled on a farm near Little Turkey. He attended the local public school. Later he went to Loras College and upon graduation attended St. Paul Seminary. He was or-

dained June 12, 1917. Father Dostal came to Fort Atkinson from Chelsea, Iowa, on October 1, 1930. He put in many improvements in the church including the five chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. He added more property by annexing the two lots adjoining the church property. The John Schlier residence was remodeled into a Sister's Convent.

Father Dostal was highly gifted as a public speaker. He had a pleasant tenor voice that inspired the people who heard him sing Mass. During his pastorate, Rev. Valentine Hlubek, son of Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Hlubek, Sr. was ordained May, 1932 and celebrated his first Mass in our parish May 24, 1932.

In St. John's Cemetery, Father Dostal had John Neuzil and his sons, Jim and Frank erect a crucifix from cement at the head of the priest's lot and Jim sculptured, in marble, the donor's name, Jacob F. Busta Family, 1932. It was also during Father Dostal's pastorate that Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Neuzil donated the needle-work garments for the Infant of Prague statue in the corner near the confessional. The needle work came from Czechoslovakia. The tabernacle on the main altar was donated in memory of John and Anna Vandas by their daughters: Sr. Procopia, Mrs. Agnes Doubek, Stephana Vandas, Mrs. Julia Neuzil, and Mrs. Mary Neuzil. Both of these donations were given in and about 1932 and 1942. Sister Procopia painted the curtains inside the tabernacle. The artistic representation of wheat and grapes symbolize the Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.



The artistic representation of wheat and grapes symbolize the Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

We have in our church on St. Joseph's altar, another exquisite piece of needle work: the patron of Czechoslovakia, St. Wenceslaus. This St. Wenceslaus needle-work was brought from Europe by my brother, the bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska.

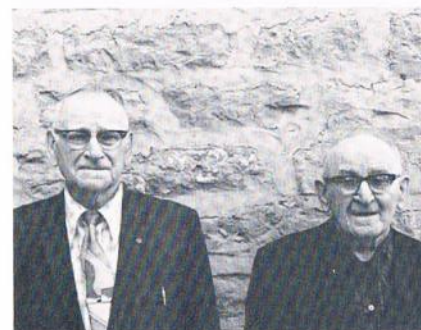
On his visit to Rome in 1929, Father Dostal received from Pope Pius XI three relics, a corporal, pall, and purificator used by St. Pius X while celebrating Holy Mass. Father Dostal died at the rectory June 3, 1944 and was laid to rest in St. John's Cemetery.

FATHER STEPHEN KUCERA

Father Stephen Kucera came here on July 14, 1944. It was the last appointment made by the late Archbishop Beckman of Dubuque. Father Kucera was born in 1895, in Montgomery, Minnesota on a farm. He received his elementary and high school education in Montgomery, then entered the college of St. Thomas in St. Paul. After two years of college study, he entered St. Paul's Seminary for his course in Philosophy and Theology. He was ordained on June 10, 1922. His first assignment was at St. Wenceslaus Parish, Cedar Rapids, as an assistant, where he served for five years.

He became pastor of St. Joseph's at Prairieburg, in 1927. While at Prairieburg he built an elementary school with eight grades. In 1932, he purchased a Protestant church in Central City, nine miles distant from Prairieburg, and converted the church into a Catholic place of worship. He named the missionary venture St. Stephen's, in honor of his own patron saint. God had prospered the humble beginnings of this little church which, in the beginning, consisted of three families. Today St. Stephen's Church has a resident pastor in a new parochial residence.

Since coming to Fort Atkinson Father Kucera has built a new sacristy (30 ft. by 33 ft.), in 1948 for \$5389.74 from the F. A. Schreiber estate, and he installed a forced air furnace with stoker in the church for the price of \$5528.15. Our church was redecorated in 1948. The entire cost of \$3,446.00 was paid by the



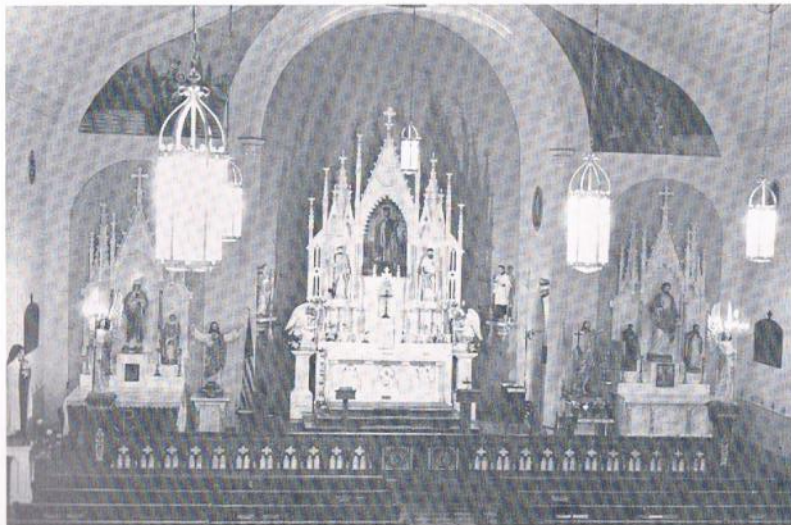
Frank and Jim Neuzil

late Mrs. Jacob Busta and her three sons: Jacob, Alois and Peter. Frank Zbornik donated \$300.00 toward a new vestment case in the sacristy. May God reward them for their generosity and good example. In 1949, a side entrance to the church was built for \$719.69. Work on this side entrance as well as the sacristy was done by the two master stone masons, W. J. Neuzil and his brother Frank Neuzil. In 1950, the parish

celebrated its diamond jubilee, with Archbishop Binz celebrating a Pontifical High Mass. In 1951, the Sisters' chapel was built for \$2,680.01. The vacated Sisters' quarters in the school were converted into the school lunch room. The church was tuck-pointed in 1955, by Steigauf of Faribault, Minnesota for \$3,584.79. The front doors of our church — Windsor Castle model — were donated by Myers Bros. (Andrew H. and Raymond J.) in 1957, at the cost of \$532.05, plus installation. Father Kucera obtained three first class relics: St. John Nepomucene from the Church of St. John Nep. in St. Louis, Mo., one of St. Stephen, proto-martyr, and one of St. Pius X from Rome. They are on display on the main altar in our church.

In 1959, a new addition to the school was built costing \$65,280.14. The church steeple was repainted in 1962, and a new roof put on the church and school. The Verdine chimes were donated by Mr. & Mrs. Edward Budke, on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee, for the sum of \$1700.00 in 1963.

Joe A. Huber donated \$1,000.00 to the parish for school ground equipment in his last will. He died in 1964. The nursery room, in the same dimensions as the sacristy, including restrooms for men and women, was built in 1964 for \$12,863.92. Paul Kuhn donated a memorial window of Blessed John Neumann, the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia, and Father Kucera gave one of St. Stephen, the first martyr. Each window cost \$500.00. When one looks at the church building today he hardly realizes that any additions have been made to its original structure. Yet the sanctuary, the tower, the steeple, the sacristy, the side entrance and the nursery room have all been added. All these improvements did not spoil the architectural lines of the original church; if anything they have added to its beauty and completeness.



Church Interior

Our St. John's adult choir has become a tradition with the growing years. The pipe organ was installed by Father Dragoun in 1921. It was given a complete overhauling in 1955, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Tekippe, at a cost of \$500.00. In 1968, it was given a complete overhauling for \$3,813.94 by Norbert Bereschorf. Norbert Bereschorf of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the organ tuner, was a refugee from one of Hitler's concentration camps, and the irony of it all is that before his incarceration he had built a pipe organ for Adolf Hitler himself.

The highlights of Father Kucera's 30 years as pastor of St. John's Church were the Silver Jubilee of his priesthood in 1947, with Archbishop Rohlman and Bishop Fitzgerald in attendance. The Silver Jubilee banquet was held in the old town hall, now used as a fire station. Sister Stephen, O.S.F. prepared a special program of musical numbers, instrumental and vocal, with our St. John's choir. Archbishop Rohlman in a letter written on June 28, 1947 after the Jubilee wrote to Father Kucera: "I cannot recall any other Jubilee which thrilled me as much as yours. Gratias agamus Domino Deo Nostro."

The Golden Jubilee of his priesthood was celebrated in 1972 with Archbishop Bryne, of Dubuque, in the sanctuary. His address was given at the banquet hall filled to overflowing. Father Russell Bleich, Archdiocesan Superintendent of Schools, preached the homily at Father's Jubilee Mass. Felicitations were received from Pope Paul VI.

Of the ten pastors that have served St. John's Parish, Father Kucera has served the longest: over 31 years. The people of St. John's church fittingly observed the 30 years that Father has been pastor of St. John's on July 14, 1974, the exact anniversary of coming to Fort Atkinson. "Whatever success attended my efforts was due to the prayers and cooperation of the people of St. John's Parish," were Father Kucera's words of appreciation. Father Kucera is the first American born pastor of St. John's.

In preparation for the big year 1975, which included the Sisters' Centennial, Confirmation, Ordination, and First Mass, and finally the Parish Centennial

celebration, many plans were made to make this a memorable year. Among these plans was the redecorating of the church interior and the church steeple, and repair the outside of the church wherever needed. Fred Riehle and sons of Cresco were contracted for the job. The cost of the entire project amounted to over \$9000.



Darryl and Gerald Riehle

Among the most recent additions to our sanctuary have been the portable altar, hymnal chart in the sanctuary and the mothers' room, two lecterns, a Papal flag and a United States flag and two large fans for hot weather comfort.

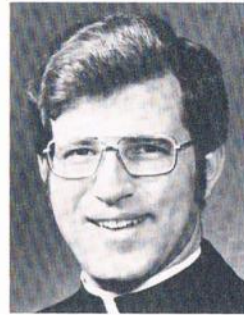
THE RELIGIOUS FROM ST. JOHN'S



Rev. Valentine Hlubek
Ordained 1932
Died 1966



Rev. George Karnik
Ordained 1958



Rev. James Secora
Ordained 1975

VOCATIONS — NATIVE PRIESTS

God has blessed St. John's Parish with priestly vocations, for which we should be most grateful. The following priests have been called from among us:

Rev. Valentine Hlubek, ordained in 1932 and died in 1966. Rev. George Karnik, ordained in 1958, now at St. Paul's School of Religion, Manchester. Rev. James Secora, ordained May 31, 1975, now at St. Joseph in Dubuque.

Two other priests, baptized in our church who in their early years moved away were Father Charles Stammeyer, born in 1900, died in South Dakota. Father John Hemesath, born April 12, 1913 and baptized at St. John's, moved away to Ossian in his early years and was ordained priest for our archdiocese June 3, 1939. At present he is pastor of Holy Cross parish, Holy Cross, Iowa.

Two other priests, Rev. Monsignor Philip Cassidy and his brother Walter went to school here in their childhood and then moved to New Mexico with their parents where they were ordained and both of them are still living.



Sr. M. Norbert Karnik,
R.S.M.

Sister Norbert was the first to enter the convent from this parish. The deceased Sisters from our parish are: Sister M. Barbarina Houdek, O.S.F.; Sister M. Leonilla Schreiber O.S.F.; Sister M. Procopia Vandas, O.S.F.; Sister M. Climata Mosovsky, O.S.F.; Sister M. Waldemar Tekippe, O.S.F.



Sr. M. Deicola Blong,
O.S.F.



Sr. Marie Philip
Huber, O.P.



Sr. Bonita Ann Kuhn,
O.S.F.



Sr. Arlene Einwalter,
O.S.F.



Sr. M. Alberta Zbornik,
O.S.F.



Sr. M. Clareen Schmitt,
O.S.F.



Sr. Marianne Kuhn,
O.S.F.



Sr. Jean Ann Rausch,
F.S.P.A.



Sr. M. Mercedes
Hlubek, O.S.F.



Sr. Gertrude Smith,
O.S.F.



Sr. Dorothy Ann
Barloon, O.S.F.



Sr. M. Patricia Tekippe,
F.S.P.A.

ORDINATION AT ST. JOHN'S

May 31 The Holy Year and Centennial Year 1975

James L. Secora was ordained at St. John's by the Most Rev. Archbishop James J. Byrne. This was the first ordination to take place in this church.



The Archbishop and people implore God's help for Jim by praying the Litany of the Saints over him as he prostrates as a sign of humility.



The Archbishop lays hands on Jim in silence. By this gesture the Holy Spirit is conferred upon Jim. This was the moment of ordination.



Rev. Eugene C. Kutsch, Rev. James L. Secora, Archbishop James J. Byrne, Rev. Stephen J. Kucera.

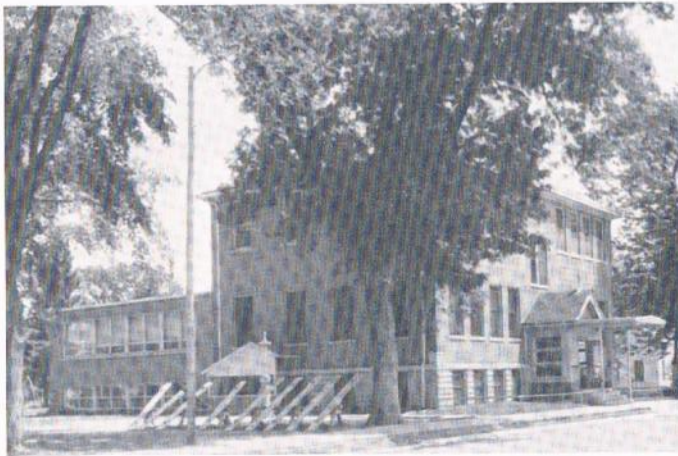


Father Secora and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bernell Secora

ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL

Sister Andrea, O.S.F.

The zealous pioneers of St. John's made plans to erect their own school as early as 1890. The school ground was donated by Mrs. Gertrude Giesen. The first school was a frame structure of two classrooms and a living apartment for the Sisters.



St. John School

The first enrollment was about 60 pupils. Franciscan Sisters from Silver Lake, Minnesota staffed the school until 1895. The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of LaCrosse, Wisconsin directed classes at St. John's for the next five years. In 1900, Father Francis Kopecky, the resident pastor, engaged the School Sisters of St. Francis of Milwaukee, Wisconsin as teachers. Three Sisters, Sister Petra, Sister Pelagia, and Sister Heinricha opened this new apostolate, and since that time for a period of 75 years the School Sisters of St. Francis have carried on the education of St. John's youth.

In 1908, Father Marsalek directed the building of a new three-room brick school, which also included a chapel and an apartment for the Sisters.

In 1937, during the pastorate of Father Dostal, the parish purchased the present Sisters' convent from Mrs. John Schleier. The purchase of this property also increased the playground space for the students at St. John's. At this time, St. John's School had an enrollment of 120 students in Grades 1-8. Now, the faculty was increased to four Sisters as teachers and a full-time music teacher.

Since July 14, 1944, Father Kucera has done much to improve conditions in the school and convent. In 1950, inside restrooms for boys and girls were added to the school building. In 1951, a chapel was erected for the Sisters. This

made it possible to close the school chapel and use these quarters for a hot lunch cafeteria. Mass is celebrated weekly in this chapel.



St. John's Faculty

St. John's enrollment continued to increase so it was found necessary to erect a new addition in 1959. This provided two more classrooms, a multi-purpose room, two lavatories, and a storage space for the lunch commodities. St. John's reached its peak of enrollment in 1963, with a count of 181 students. An additional teacher, a Lay Teacher, was added to the then present faculty. Today the enrollment has dropped to less than half that number.



School Students

In 1969, in cooperation with an Archdiocesan directive, St. John's students of grades 7 and 8 were enrolled at Turkey Valley and South Winneshiek Community Public Schools. The students at St. John's in grades 1-6, were now taught in individual grade classrooms.