

History of St. Joseph Parish continued.

1925 – 2003

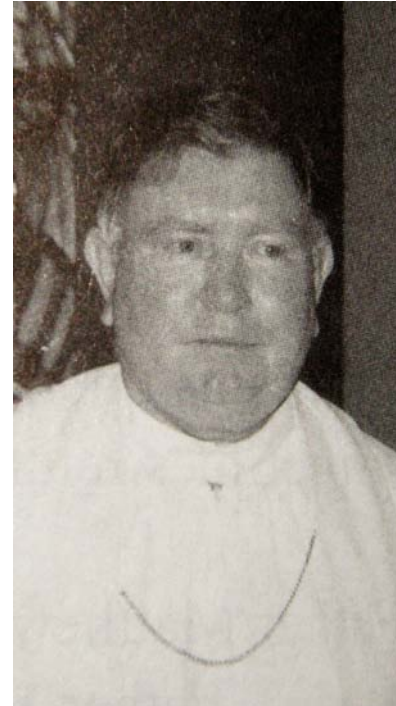
Father Anthony Bluett 1991- to present, 2003



Fr. **Bluett** followed Father Heslin in shepherding St. Joseph. He quickly decided that the third rectory built in the “20s, which had originally served as a kind of stable, needed to be demolished. He found residence north of Lake Alfred and moved there. Soon he decided that the rectory, convent, and house behind the convent should be torn down, and the land behind these buildings purchased so that, ultimately, a beautiful chapel could be built.

But first, Father turned his attention to the school because of burgeoning enrollment. The school, which now enrolls almost 500, was increased in three phases. The first phase was in 1994, the second in 1996, and the last in 2001. In 1998, a much-needed gymnasium was completed. All of these additions cost \$1,334,646. In 1997, Father launched a fund drive that generated \$1,173,456. Now, it was possible to begin construction of the new chapel designed by Figbar Architects and completed by Crossroads Construction in 1999.

At the top of the entrance to the chapel is an unusual cross donated by St. Joseph’s Guild. According to José E/ Barbosa, the architect, the cross is a Latin cross with a superimposed image of a four-leaf clover. (The Latin cross was in use before Charlemagne.) Vertically, the cross



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represents the division between heaven and earth and horizontally the division of good and evil. The clover represents the four Evangelists and the four cardinal points where the Gospel has been preached. Certainly, also this cross honors the thirteen Irish priests who have served St. Joseph so well for so many years.

The chapel, its furnishings, comfortable seating, and striking stained glass windows cost almost \$511,338. The property purchased and houses demolished, for the chapel and the enlarged paved parking lots, cost even more. Property along Spring Lake Court was purchased to enlarge and pave the new church parking area. Meanwhile, Father has also improved the existing buildings with paint and refurbishing. A total of \$4 million was spent on all these improvements. With all of this, the parish carries no debt, a truly remarkable achievement.

Father Bluett celebrated his 25th jubilee as a priest with the parish in June 1994. His four brothers who are priests were here to celebrate with him as well as other members of his family. (One of Father's brothers serves in Scotland, another in England, and one in Florida.) Mass was concelebrated, and at the reception following, Father was given tickets to the World Soccer games in California among other gifts from the parishioners.

With the major building projects completed, Father turned his attention to charitable projects. First, in 2000, he involved parishioners in building a house for Habitat for Humanity. The house, built with the help of the Haitian family who now live there, is located on Ave. K NE and cost \$32,000. College students with Father Paul from Loyola University also assisted with the building for one week. The students were housed in the school and the gym. Parishioners, organized by Jackie and Ray O'Connell, provided food and recreation for the hungry workers. Work continued on weekends for three months. Next, Father saw the need for a house for a

large family who could not afford housing. Asking for and receiving parishioner's approval, Father purchased a house and the family is settled with affordable mortgage payments.

Father, who returns for a vacation with his family in Ireland each year, invites a priest from Ireland to assist in his absence. Father Liam Walsh was the first. In the past three years, Father Barry Horan has assisted during Father's absence. For the past five years, Father Bluett has been devoting a week of his vacation to assisting with a large pilgrimage to Lourdes from England. He has shared his inspirational experiences at Lourdes with several parish organizations.

One of Father's delightful gifts to the parish is his traditional singing of "Mary's Boy Child" at all Christmas Masses. For variety, one Christmas, he sang another hymn, which was appreciated, but requests can in for him to return to his first choice. One parishioner who had moved came back at Christmas expressly to hear him sing this hymn.

In the past two years, there have been 118 baptisms in the church, 60 Confirmations, 109 First Communions, 19 participating in the RCIA program, and 34 weddings. As the parishioners have aged there have been 168 funerals and 814 anointed. With all this, Father still finds some time for golf occasionally.