

## **St. Nicholas of Tolentine Parish**

St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church at 62nd and Lawndale was established as a mission by the Augustinians in 1909 for the Chicago Lawn, Ashburn and Clearing districts.

In July 1916, Archbishop George W. Mundelein reorganized this mission as a parish and he appointed a diocesan priest, Rev. Daniel O'Brien as pastor. The new pastor took up residence at 3718 W. 62nd Street and under his direction; a brick convent at 3731 West 62nd Street was built in 1919. By 1920, 200 students were enrolled in the parish school. To meet the needs of the growing congregation, Father O'Brien started plans for a church to be located at the southwest corner of 62nd and Lawndale Avenue.

Following Father O'Brien's death on June 26, 1925, Rev. Michael J. Fennessy was named pastor. In 1926, the present rectory at 3721 West 62nd Street was completed.

In 1937, work on the church was completed and Mass was celebrated for the first time in the present structure. Cardinal Mundelein dedicated the edifice on May 7, 1939.

In 1949, Father Fennessy was invested as a Domestic Prelate with the title Right Reverend Monsignor. On October 18, 1950, he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination and his 25th anniversary as pastor of St. Nicholas parish. To meet the needs of the rapidly growing Catholic population on the South-west Side of Chicago after World War II, several new parishes were formed and the boundaries of St. Nicholas parish were reduced.

Msgr. Fennessy died on October 21, 1959. His successor was Rt. Rev. Msgr. James C. Hardiman, Vice Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Under Msgr. Hardiman, the school building was replaced in 1960 with a modern school. The church was redecorated and renovated in 1965 to reflect the spirit of the new liturgy of Vatican II.

On September 11, 1966, Archbishop John P. Cody presided at a special Mass commemorating the golden Jubilee of the organization of St. Nicholas of Tolentine.

In June 1972, Msgr. Hardiman resigned the pastorate. St. Nicholas parish stayed involved in the life of the community and supported the formation of the Council of Lawn Neighbors, Southwest Community Congress, Southwest Federation and other community organizations. In July 1972, Rev. Edward Brzozowski, former pastor of Ascension of Our Lord Church in Evanston, Illinois was named pastor.

On November 4, 1978, Father Brzozowski was named Urban Vicar of Region IX, a vicariate of 51 city parishes. These parishes are located in the Back of the Yards, Brighton Park, Gage Park and the Marquette Park neighborhoods, as well as two suburban parishes in Argo and Summit.

For health reasons, Father Brzozowski had to resign as vicar and as pastor in August of 1982. He was succeeded by Father Michael Goergen, who came from Queen of the Universe, in September of 1982. Fr. Mike continued the fine tradition of excellent leadership to which the people of St. Nick's had become accustomed, and the parish flourished under his direction.

In 1994, after serving as pastor for 12 years, Fr. Mike moved on to become the pastor of St. Robert Bellarmine Parish on the north side. Fr. Stanley Rataj, who had served at St. Nicholas of Tolentine as an associate pastor from 1984-92, was selected to be the new pastor, and assumed his responsibilities on August 1, 1994. He was assisted by two able associates, Fr. Frank Cassidy, who was part of the St. Nicholas of Tolentine family since 1986, and Rev. Miguel Martinez, a newly ordained priest who began his ministry here on July 1, 2001. Fr. Roger Diaz-Corrales arrived when Fr. Miguel left on July 1, 2005. Fr. Frank Cassidy left St. Nick's in May 2007 after 21 years. Fr. Stanley Rataj went on sabbatical in July 2009 after serving as pastor for 15 years; in 2009 we welcomed Rev. José A. Sequeira whom has served the Parishes of St. Pancratius and Our Lady of Charity and his associates during that time were, Associate Pastors- Rev. Luis F. Escalante, Rev. Francisco Ortega-Muñoz and Rev. George Gonzalez, in 2015 we then welcomed Rev. Salvador Den Hallegado (Pastor) whom has served parishes St. Genevieve and St. Bede the Venerable.

In 2020 we welcomed the new Pastor Rev. Miguel Angel Flores Andrade, at St. Nicholas of Tolentine he served the parish of St. Michael Church in Orland Park, IL. and the parish of Our Lady of the Mount in Cicero, IL. They were complemented by a very capable and supportive staff, and countless Lay Ministers and volunteer leaders, who continue to enable the St. Nicholas of Tolentine Spirit to flourish!

The parish presently includes about 1200 registered families, and we promise that we will continue to do our best to minister to the needs of all who choose to live and worship here.