Early Hamtramck Lore

The history of St. Ladislaus Parish is closely linked to the history of the City of Hamtramck. Indeed, it wouldn’t make sense to discuss one without the other.

At the turn of the century, Hamtramck was much different from the city that now exists. It was a huge township that extended from the Detroit River to the east, running across Base Line Road (now Eight Mile Road), westward to Woodward Avenue, and then running south toward its current borders.

Hamtramck Township dwarfed the City of Detroit, which had its northern border near Grand Boulevard. Only in 1924 did Hamtramck reach its current boundaries. At the time, Hamtramck was an important garden community that supplied fresh food to the City of Detroit.

Hamtramck was initially attractive to immigrants because it was relatively rural and, therefore, housing was cheap. It remained attractive because several industrial plants had located near the city. These plants, which provided well-paying jobs to relatively unskilled labor, included the Dodge Brothers automobile plant, Briggs Manufacturing, Acme White Lead, American Radiator, Russell Wheel and Foundry, and Chrysler Motor Corporation. The plants and the area were easily accessible by means of the Baker Streetcar Line, which ran along Joseph Campau. As such, the areas near the streetcar line became more densely populated.

Moreover, the housing in the city was primarily built to adapt to multiple families. This resulted in a still more dense population, and the need for a central and profitable retail business district along the main street, Joseph Campau.

Polish immigrants had begun to move to the Detroit area before the turn of the 20th Century. They found Hamtramck convenient and able to meet their needs. Living in Hamtramck gave them the opportunity to earn a very good wage.

Hamtramck also allowed the Polish immigrants a chance to exercise political power over an area of their own. Earlier concentrations of Polish immigrants had been centered in the predominantly German areas of southern Detroit; however, as their numbers increased, their growth justified the creation of their own distinctly Polish social and religious centers and activities.
Polish churches

Polish Roman Catholic parishes began to spring up near the northernmost boundaries of Detroit, tracking the northward movement of the Polish people. St. Albertus was founded in 1872.

Later, Sweetest Heart of Mary, on Russell Street, was formed in the wake of a bitter schism among parishioners of St. Albertus, who feuded over who should be their church’s pastor. This schism had erupted into violent attacks in the streets near Canfield and St. Aubin, a sad testament to the strong opinions and possessiveness that the immigrants bore toward their church.

The influx of Polish immigrants to Hamtramck was tremendous. Hamtramck's population increased from approximately 20,000 in 1914, to 48,614 at the time of the 1920 census, largely due to the flow of Polish people. In 1920, the total population of Detroit and surrounding areas was 1,127,450; the Polish population in the area was in excess of 150,000.

Thus, as these Polish people continued their migration northward toward Hamtramck, the need for additional Polish parishes in the city became accentuated. The Archdiocese of Detroit had formed a new parish in the southern area of Hamtramck, St. Florian Parish, in 1908. Several years later, in 1917, with immigration continuing unabated, it was necessary to form an additional parish, Our Lady Queen of Apostles.

However, the influx of Polish people to the area was too much for even these two relatively new parishes to handle. As a result, the Archdiocese ordered the creation of a new, third parish in Hamtramck. Like the other two parishes, the new parish would be designated as a national parish (as opposed to a territorial parish). This designation meant that the parish mission was to minister to a particular nationality in a general area, as opposed to being assigned an exclusive geographical territory.

This new Polish parish turned out to be St. Ladislaus Parish. Initially, Father Boleslaus Gdaniec was assigned to be the first pastor of this new unnamed parish.

Fr. Gdaniec's personal background is somewhat unclear, although it is known that he did attend SS Cyril and Methodius Seminary from 1905 to 1910, having graduated from its classical program in 1910. His mother did live on the near west side of Detroit on 23rd Street.

According to a letter from his sister, Fr. Gdaniec was ordained on May 29, 1916, and celebrated his first mass at St. Casimir's Church in Detroit in late June of that year. Later that month, he performed the wedding of his brother Edward. In June 1916, he was assigned to be an assistant to Father Joseph Plagens at St. Florian's in Hamtramck. In May 1919, he was appointed as an assistant to Father Plagens, who had been made administrator at Sweetest Heart of Mary.

Fr. Gdaniec was instructed to take up residency at Sweetest Heart of Mary, although he was also to continue his work as an assistant at St. Florian's. Fr. Gdaniec also had briefly been the administrator of St. Michael's Church in Port Austin, Mich., immediately before being assigned to found the new parish in Hamtramck.
New church born

Fr. Gdaniec was instructed to take up residence at St. Florian's Parish and assist in the work there while, at the same time, starting up the new Polish parish. His assignment at the new Hamtramck parish took effect on September 26, 1920, creating the thusfar unnamed parish as of that day.

Fr. Gdaniec was a friendly man. He was well-liked while at St. Florian, and his good reputation in the area soon helped him to attract members to his new parish. His initial priority was to form a faith community. To this end, he needed to begin celebrating the liturgy distinct from the other parishes. This he accomplished by holding masses at a hall located near the southeast corner of Joseph Campau and Caniff.

The hall at which the masses were first held was known as Eckert's Hall. The altar boys were Frank and Robert Wujek; Robert later became a priest. Among those who attended the first masses was Bishop Arthur Krawczak, who was then just a young boy.

The physical configuration and dimensions of Eckert's Hall are now unknown. It was located on the east side of Joseph Campau Street, south of Caniff; it now bears the address of 10334 Joseph Campau. Eckert's Hall was then owned by Mr. Otto Eckert, a carpenter, who apparently lived on the premises with his brothers. The second floor of the hall was large enough to accommodate the approximately 300 St. Ladislaus families that first attended services there.

In 1921, the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, Ohio came to Hamtramck to staff the first St. Ladislaus school, also set up at Eckert's Hall. Sr. Bernadette was the first principal. Three hundred students were initially enrolled, and the enrollment began to grow.

Fr. Gdaniec continued his efforts to secure a more permanent site for the new parish. On December 11, 1920, Bishop Michael Gallagher gave Fr. Gdaniec permission to borrow $58,000 from the First State Bank of Hamtramck to secure a site for the new parish. Inexplicably, this permission was cancelled by the Bishop on May 27, 1921. Masses continued to be celebrated at Eckert's Hall throughout Fr. Gdaniec' tenure.

On June 1, 1921, Fr. Gdaniec was notified by the Archdiocese that it had determined that the new parish would officially be named for, and placed under the patronage of, St. Ladislaus, King of Hungary. No records survive to document the other names for the parish. However, Polk's Directory of Detroit for the years 1922-23 lists the address of 2700 Caniff as being owned by St Sebastian Roman Catholic Church.

On March 14, 1922, Fr. Gdaniec was removed as pastor of St. Ladislaus and reassigned by the diocese to St. Joseph's in Jackson, Michigan. Little is known of the reasons for this transfer after such a short tenure, although his health was stated as the reason.

There is no written record of the diocese expressing dissatisfaction with the job done by Fr. Gdaniec, and it is believed that Fr. Gdaniec did suffer from some unknown health problems.

At the time that Fr. Gdaniec was reassigned, no permanent or temporary church had been built, although construction had probably begun on a temporary wooden church on Caniff Avenue. How-
ever, years afterward, Fr. Gdaniec's sister wrote a letter to the diocese about her brother, stating that her brother's assignment to St. Ladislaus did not work out very well, and that his assignment to Jackson was "his last try."

Moreover, Fr. Gdaniec was not sent away on medical leave, but was assigned to be the pastor of another parish.

On January 6, 1925, Fr. Gdaniec left Detroit by train to Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the stated purpose of regaining his health. Before leaving, he asked his 15-year-old sister if she would be housekeeper in Jackson when he returned. However, later that month, he sent a letter of resignation to the diocese, leaving no forwarding address.

He had no contact with his family during the remainder of his life. He died in Seattle, Washington during the summer of 1953. He had been living there under an assumed name. Only upon his deathbed did he reveal that he was a former priest. He was reconciled to the Church on his deathbed and died after receiving last rites. His final request was that the Archdiocese of Detroit be notified that he had been reconciled.

Fr. Gdaniec was replaced as pastor by Father Majewski, who was appointed pastor pro tern on March 30, 1922.

New pastor, new buildings

Anthony A. Majewski was born on October 5, 1884 to Albert and Marian Sobilarska Majewski in Toledo, Ohio. He was educated in the parochial school system, attending St. Mary's parish school and St. John's High School. He performed his collegiate and theological studies at St. Mary's College and at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary at Orchard Lake, where he was ordained as a priest on June 7, 1913.

After being initially assigned to Depew, Illinois, he became an assistant at Sweetest Heart of Mary in 1920. It was not until 1923, after coming to St. Ladislaus, that Fr. Majewski was formally released from the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois and incardinated into the Diocese of Detroit.

Within a few months of the new assignment, St. Ladislaus' first church was built — a modest, single-story wooden church. It was built on Caniff Avenue, roughly where the current church parking lot is located. (Caniff Avenue had been relatively rural until only a few years before the parish purchased the lot.) The cost was approximately $11,000, and it was understood that this church would be a temporary structure.

Construction was completed in June 1922; the church was consecrated on September 27, 1922. A bronze bell, which cost $400, was donated to the parish at that time by C. Mihalski, A.S. Opoka, M. Bienko, P. Bukowski, F. Kimecki, and F. Merecki.

In 1922, the diocese was booming in construction of churches and schools. Sacred Heart Seminary was in the process of being built, as was Blessed Sacrament Cathedral and the accompanying episcopal residence. St. Hyacinth's church and rectory were under construction. Holy Redeemer in Detroit was putting up new buildings and adding to its current ones.
Soon after it was built, St. Lad's wooden church was put to use to help with the elementary school. However, attendance at the school had grown to 700 students within only a few years of opening.

Bishop Gallagher congratulated Fr. Majewski and praised the parishioners for undertaking the sacrifices necessary to build this structure. He urged the parishioners to continue their cooperation with their pastor, so that the parish would continue to prosper.

As a result, construction of the school building began as soon as the wooden church was complete. The school building was erected by John Finn & Sons at a cost of approximately $58,000. It was completed in 1924. Once the building was finished, the school's enrollment jumped to 1,500 students. The basement of the school building also served as living quarters for the Sisters of St. Francis. This living arrangement continued until 1926, when the parish purchased a two-family flat located at the site of the present convent.

The expanding parish soon needed yet another expansion of its buildings. During the remaining years of the 1920s, the parish acquired land along Caniff on either side of the church and school.

In 1928, Fr. Majewski obtained permission of the Archdiocese to purchase the two lots at the corner of Caniff and Brombach Avenues. A few months later, in April 1929, he obtained permission to build a second temporary church at that corner.

The new temporary church building was two stories high and was constructed of brick with stone trimmings. The temporary church itself was located on the first floor. Its seating capacity was 1,500. The second floor was to be used as junior high school classrooms, with two social rooms and four bowling alley lanes located along the Brombach side of the building near the alley.

Thereafter, the wooden church on Caniff was used as a parish hall and gymnasium. It became the site of many parish activities, including socials and dances.

The combination of temporary church at the corner of Caniff and Brombach and addition to the school building was blessed on June 1, 1930, by Bishop Michael Gallagher. Father Peter Walkowiak was deacon, and Father Boleslaus Milinkiewicz was sub-deacon.

A Polish sermon was given by Rev. Adalbert Zadala. Bishop Gallagher gave a short speech in English. He congratulated Fr. Majewski and praised the parishioners for undertaking the sacrifices necessary to build this structure. He urged the parishioners to continue their cooperation with their pastor, so that the parish would continue to prosper.

At the time, there were 1,100 families on the parish roster. More than 1,700 children were attending the grade school and high school. In addition, the parish had acquired the residence of Dr. Frank Cyman for use as, and conversion to, a rectory. During reconstruction, the priests lived at a residence on Trowbridge as well as at an address on Caniff. The new complex cost approximately $75,000 to build.

In 1929, St. Ladislaus began a two-year commercial high school program. In 1934, the high school became a three-year program and in 1935, it became a four-year program under the direction of Fr. Majewski and Sr. Aloysius, its principal. It was the city's first four-year high school program.
Depression hardships

At this point, the construction boom ceased for many years. The parish now had a suitably large church, rectory, convent, school, and building for activities. However, it also left the parish with a debt of approximately $240,000. The parish undertook the unenviable task of paying off this large debt in the face of the Depression, which had begun just as the facilities were nearing completion.

The Depression caused economic hardship to the parishioners and resulted in a drop in membership, as parishioners moved on in search of new jobs. Occasionally, payments to parish creditors were delayed because of the enormous debt.

During the Depression, Fr. Majewski found it necessary to cancel First Communion one year, so that families would not feel obligated to incur the expense of buying new clothes and gifts. He also interceded with his contacts at the Dodge Brothers plant to obtain employment for several hundred men.

The 1930s were also a time during which Hamtramck and St. Ladislaus parishioners suffered through not only the Depression, but also through a time of incredible political upheaval at the local level.

During Prohibition, Hamtramck was home to quite a few bootleggers. At one point, a convoy of smuggled alcohol was intercepted by the police; it turned out the convoy was being guarded by a Hamtramck police lieutenant. During that time, two Hamtramck mayors and a chief of police found their way to jail. Lawsuits challenging political offices were filed regularly.

Fr. Majewski knew it was crucial for him to address the issue of citizenship to his predominantly Polish congregation. He felt that the many Polish parishioners were being neglected in their new homeland because they were not citizens. Fr. Majewski felt it was important to emphasize the need to become citizens so that they could exercise their full rights, both for their benefit and for the benefit of the community. So, he arranged citizenship classes in the old and new parish buildings.

He arranged for teachers from the Board of Education to act as additional instructors on the principles of American government. As a result of these classes, several hundred parishioners became citizens during the 1930s and 1940s.

There were 145 cassocks for the 76 altar boys. Altar breads were baked by the sisters. There were six masses celebrated on Sundays and holy days, and three morning masses celebrated each weekday morning.

St. Ladislaus then and now

A survey of the parish, done at the behest of the Archdiocese in 1940, gives a flavor of the similarities and differences between the parish then and now.

At the time, St. Ladislaus had been given rough boundaries extending from the south to Yemans, west to the Grand Trunk Railroad tracks, north to Carpenter, and east to Gallagher; 900 families were then registered. The church at the corner of Brombach and Caniff seated 1,200 people. The church’s organ, a Marr and Colton instrument worth $30,000, had been donated by Max Manteuffel, owner of the Martha Washington Theater.
Statues of St. Ladislaus, the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin, St. Anne, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis, St. Joseph, and St. Theresa were displayed in the church. A picture of Mother of Perpetual Help was displayed. Organizations that had banners in the church were the Children of Mary, the Third Order, the Holy Name Society, St. Ladislaus Society, Holy Rosary Society, Altar Society, St. Barbara Society, St. Adalbert Society, Young Ladies Sodality, and St. Theresa Society.

There were 145 cassocks for the 76 altar boys. Altar breads were backed by the sisters. There were six masses celebrated on Sundays and holy days, and three morning masses celebrated each weekday morning. Weekly Sunday evening vespers services were held. Confessions were heard daily. Weekly religious instruction was provided to public school students.

Retreats were organized for children making their First Communion. The weekly Sunday mass attendance was estimated at 4,000 to 4,500 people, with only 2% of parishioners missing mass each week.

Fr. Majewski was devoted to the youth of the parish and of the school. He was known to occasionally stand outside the entrance to the school and pat the grade school children on the head as they entered the building, as encouragement for the day. However, at the same time, the mere sound of his deep booming voice could strike fear in children with a guilty conscience. (His vocal projection was apparently cultivated by years of delivering sermons without the aid of a microphone and amplifier.)

Consistent with the values of the day, he was a disciplinarian when need be and was known to be quite firm with both children and adults. His appearance in the confessional caused some to delay their confession until another day, for he could sometimes be hard on penitents, in an effort to ensure proper remorse. His premarital counseling was stark in contrast to today's classes. One former parishioner recalls going to Fr. Majewski with her intended:

"Do you love him?" Fr. Majewski asked the young woman.
"Yes," she answered.
"And do you love her?" Fr. Majewski asked her fiance.
"Oh yes," he answered.
"Well then," Fr. Majewski told them, "I don't want to see you back here six months after the wedding, saying that 'She didn't do this,' and 'He said that to me.'" And that was the end of the counseling. (It must have done the trick; this couple has stayed married more than 40 years.)

Fr. Majewski was a stickler for decorum, and was known to ask women in curlers or youngsters who were casually dressed to go home and take their curlers out or change clothes before coming back to church.

However, he was also a kind man and a devoted follower of his schoolchildren. He attended most school athletic functions, and encouraged the children to channel their youthful energy toward productive goals. In his younger days, he was known to play ball! with the children in the yard that separated the wooden activities building from the rectory. He enjoyed gardening and was often seen cutting the grass himself.
Permanent church

By the spring of 1952, the parish had managed to lift itself out of its huge debt. As the economy surged during the New Deal years, the parish had accumulated substantial savings. At this point, Fr. Majewski took action to replace the temporary church with a permanent one.

He obtained and submitted sketches for the permanent church to the Diocesan Building Committee, which approved the sketches on May 6, 1952. He applied for permission to build the church on June 16, 1952, at an estimated cost of $325,000. Of that amount, $150,000 was borrowed from the Archdiocese, while $150,000 was on hand at the parish.

Permission was granted for the groundbreaking to occur on June 29, 1952, the feast day of St. Ladislaus. Before groundbreaking could occur, the wooden activities building, which had served as St. Ladislaus' first church, was demolished.

Construction moved along briskly and on November 30, 1953, the new church was ready for Bishop Allen Babcock to appear to seal the church's relics within its altar after Fr. Majewski had offered the first mass. On December 3, 1953, the new church was ready for dedication.

Cardinal Edward Mooney dedicated the new church on that date with the assistance of four priests who had come from the parish: Fr. Francis Maliszewski, Fr. Edward Obuchowski, Fr. Ladislaus Borowski, and Fr. Joseph Karasiewicz. The church, designed by architect Arthur DesRosiers, seated 1,180 people. The church was designed in modern Romanesque style, with dimensions of 128 by 84 ft. The altars are made of imported Italian marble. The old temporary church at the corner of Caniff and Brombach would be retrofitted as an auditorium and gymnasium.

Into the mid-50s, Fr. Majewski's health had been good. He had always been a robust man who was steady in his physical activities. An avid sportsman, he was devoted to the sports teams of his school. He initiated the all-sports programs at the schools.

In mid 1955, on a fishing trip to Key Marathon, Florida, the then 70-year-old priest landed a 78-lb, 4.5-ft tarpon.

However, shortly thereafter, his health began to fail; he began to suffer from heart problems and disease. In October 1957, he suffered a seizure. In late July of 1958, he took a sick leave and went to the Heart Clinic of Florida in Miami. He was planning to fly back on Thursday, August 29, 1958, and had called his assistants on Monday, August 26, to notify them to pick him up at Willow Run Airport. He was anxious to get back to his parish in time for the opening of the new school year.

He died that evening. Funeral services were offered for Fr. Majewski at St. Ladislaus Church by Fr. Boleslaus Milinkiewicz. Fr. Majewski was buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Detroit.

Enter Fr. Miotke

Father Edward J. Miotke was assigned to succeed Fr. Majewski as pastor of St. Lad's on September 30, 1958. He actually took canonical possession on October 5, 1958.

Fr. Miotke was born on September 11, 1897, on Superior Street between Dubois and Chene in Detroit. He grew up on the near east side of Detroit. He was a parishioner at St. Albertus, where his
parents were married after emigrating from the Polish town of Puc. He was baptized at St. Albertus and received First Communion there. He also attended school there.

On Good Friday 1913, Edward was kneeling in the sanctuary of St. Albertus Church, wearing his altar boy vestments, taking his turn in adoration. As he was doing so, a violent wind storm hit the tower and chimney of St. Albertus, sending bricks crashing through the roof of the sanctuary. Bricks hit all around him, but he was unharmed.

As an altar boy in the middle of the summer of 1913, he led the funeral for Father Mueller, then pastor of St. Albertus, by carrying a cross down St. Aubin, proceeding east to Congress Street and then north on Mt. Elliot Street to Mt. Elliot Cemetery, located across the street from St. Bonaventure's Monastery. Given the summer heat and the length of the route, the young man had to have been in good shape.

Fr. Miotke's father owned a grocery store in Detroit at 631 St. Aubin. The store was known for its meats and especially for its sausages. Edward used to drive one of his father's four delivery trucks. Years later he recalled that customers would pay him with gold coins or occasion.

Fr. Miotke attended University of Detroit. In 1918 he entered SS Cyril and Methodius Seminary. He was ordained December 22, 1923, by Bishop Michael Gallagher. He celebrated his first High Mass on December 23, 1923, at St. Albertus. One week later, on December 30, 1923, he celebrated a Low Mass at Mt. Elliot.

He was assigned to Assumption Church in Detroit for several years. In 1932, he was installed as pastor in Ubly, in the Thumb area of Michigan. When Fr. Miotke learned that the diocese would be split into Detroit and Saginaw, he requested that he be transferred back to the Detroit diocese. He was returned to Assumption in 1938. In 1941, he was installed as pastor at St. Stephen's Church in New Boston, Michigan. He was transferred to Our Lady of Help of Christians in 1950 as pastor. He remained there until his assignment to St. Ladislaus in 1958.

Fr. Miotke was a meek, humble man who appeared somewhat more reserved by comparison to his more outgoing predecessor. He delegated tasks to his assistants and would let them perform their jobs without interference. He enjoyed playing solitaire and watching (as well as playing) baseball. He could be quite fastidious about his appearance and was often seen walking his dog, dressed in biretta and cape.

During the 1950s, the parish engaged in various devotional activities. On May 9, 1954, the parish celebrated a Marian Day, at which more than 6,000 people attended. The largest-known human rosary was formed in celebration of the graces of Mary.

In 1956, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Moskal donated a marble statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the parish. The statue is still positioned on the northwest lawn of the church.

Given the large amount of construction performed during Fr. Majewski's tenure, it was not necessary for Fr. Miotke to undertake a great deal of capital improvements. However, he did find it necessary to build a new cafeteria for the school. It was completed and blessed on October 18, 1964. Also, Fr. Miotke obtained permission to build a new convent for the Sisters of St. Francis, who continued
to work at the schools. Groundbreaking for the new convent occurred in December, 1964. It was blessed on February 23, 1966.

Fr. Miotke enjoyed dogs. He owned a series of four Belgian schipperkes, each of which he named "Skippy." He walked the dog each day. Occasionally, Fr. Miotke’s assistant priests were not dog lovers, and they would insist (in vain) on him sending the dog into the basement during dinner.

One former assistant admitted to putting the dog in the rectory basement when Fr. Miotke went out. (Skippy got his revenge later in the assistant’s closet.)

During the 1960s, a chair was reserved for Fr. Miotke at the school basketball games. The chair was positioned at the Brombach side of the gym, on the floor. Fr. Miotke would often bring Skippy with him; the dog would spend the game yapping at the players.

**First Parish Council**

In the late 1960s, in fulfillment of Vatican II, the parish life and liturgy changed.

In 1969, a Parish Council was elected by the parish members. Bishop Thomas Gumbleton presided over the Installation Mass on November 30, 1969. The members were Sylvester Amejka, Rose Brys, Chester Chadwick, Mary Grzanka, Donald Krot, Frank Lubinski, Anna Mortka, Joseph Sherba, Wanda Sherba, Josephine Shirilla, Marie Traczuk, Chester Wozniak, Sister Ann Francis, Sister Joan Rutz, Sister Maxine, Sister Virgilia, Father Kasprzyk, Father Kotlarz, and Father Miotke.

In addition, lay members of the parish were allowed for the first time to administer the Eucharist, and the proclaim the readings at Mass. In the spring of 1969, the altar was turned around so that the priest could face the congregation. Marble was cut away from the main altar and set away, so that Mass could be celebrated in this manner.

In October of 1969, the first Saturday evening Mass was offered, that was sufficient to fulfill the Sunday obligation.

On September 23, 1969, Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Archbishop of Cracow (now Pope John Paul II), visited St. Ladislaus as part of a 14-city tour of the United States. During the trip, Cardinal Wojtyla thanked American Poles for their generous support for aid and assistance to the Polish people and the Church in Poland during years of Communist occupation.

He arrived at St. Lad's and spoke to the congregation, concluding with a prayer of blessing. Soon thereafter, Fr. Miotke presided over St. Ladislaus' 50th Anniversary.

**The 50th Anniversary**

While gathering data for the 50th Anniversary celebration in 1970, it was learned that the bell which had hung in the original wooden church was now in the possession of Father Joseph Kubik, pastor at St. Florian’s Church. Father Kubik had acquired the bell after the wooden church building had been razed.

A delegation of parishioners reclaimed the bell on July 22, 1970, in exchange for a ransom of a box of cigars paid to Father Kubik.
Subsequently, in 1970, Fr. Miotke donated the bell to the Capuchins, who sent it to a mission in Nicaragua.

The jubilee celebration occurred on September 27, 1970. Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Miotke, his assistants, and men ordained from the parish. Fr. Walter Ziemba from Orchard Lake Schools was the homilist; the congregation was also addressed by John Cardinal Dearden at the conclusion of the Mass. A dinner and dance were held at the Knights of Columbus Hall that evening.

On June 3, 1971, Fr. Miotke retired, although he was asked by the Archdiocese to remain at St. Ladislaus. He was replaced by Father Leo Kulinski.

Fr. Kulinski was born in Detroit on July 21, 1921, the 11th of 13 children. He was baptized at Sweetest Heart of Mary Church in July 1921 by Fr. Majewski during his tenure there as assistant pastor.

Fr. Kulinski's family moved from Detroit to Hamtramck in 1924. He attended grade school at Our Lady Queen of Apostles, and attended Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit for his high school and college training. He graduated in 1944 and enrolled at SS Cyril and Methodius Seminary for his theological studies.

He was installed as pastor on July 18, 1971, before a mass concelebrated by Fr. Miotke and Fr. Kenneth MacKinnon, Vicar of the North Central Vicariate.

Fr. Kulinski was a down-to-earth man who was well-liked. He owned a wooden boat and was avid in going out on the boat often. He enjoyed tinkering with the parish's printing machinery. He would have prepared the entire church paper if he had only known how. He also enjoyed playing cribbage, and would play during his lunch hour several times a week.

More financial burdens

During Fr. Kulinski's tenure, the parish began to experience financial problems. The boilers which provided heat to the buildings seemed to break down with increasing regularity, thereby necessitating repairs.

In addition, school enrollment began to slip as the economy began to worsen and parents found themselves less able to pay tuition. The closing of certain elementary schools which fed students to St. Ladislaus high school lessened the pool of students to draw from. Also, the area surrounding St. Ladislaus began to change, as older and non-Catholic people increasingly inhabited the area.

Fr. Kulinski was always apologetic about asking the parish members for financial assistance, but found it increasingly necessary to do so. He worried a great deal about the parish finances.

On September 7, 1980, Fr. Kulinski suffered a stroke that left him unable to meet the increasing demands of the parish and schools. He remained at the parish, with increasing duties being undertaken by his assistants and by the lay staff. On June 1, 1981, Fr. Kulinski was replaced as pastor by Father Bohdan Kosicki.
Enter Fr. Kosicki

Fr. Kosicki was born in Detroit on Joseph Campau near East Grand Boulevard on July 3, 1925. His parents were married in Kiev in 1915, and they emigrated to America in the following year, during the First World War. His father was a metallurgical engineer and his mother was an artist.

Fr. Kosicki had been ordained for the Archdiocese of Detroit on May 20, 1950. Immediately before coming to St. Ladislaus, he had served for five years at Sweetest Heart of Mary.

He had also served at Queen of Heaven, Star of the Sea, St. Anne's of Warren, St. Christopher, Queen of Apostles, St. Francis Hospital, and St. Hyacinth's. He also held a master’s degree in Pastoral Marriage Counseling.

Fr. Kosicki was installed as pastor in a liturgy that took place in September, 1981. Fr. Miotke, then pastor emeritus, and Fr. Kulinski, by then confined to a wheelchair, were present at the installation mass that was officiated by Father Thaddeus Ozog, pastor at St. Florian.

Fr. Kosicki was assigned to the parish as pastor for five years, with a provision for the appointment to be reviewed after the initial six months.

Soon thereafter, on November 23, 1981, Fr. Miotke died. Funeral services were held at St. Ladislaus Church on November 27, 1981. He was buried at Mt. Olivet.

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton presided at the Resurrection Mass. Fr. Stanley Milewski, Chancellor of Orchard Lake Schools, preached the homily.

Prior to Fr. Kosicki’s installation, Fr. Kulinski notified the parish that the weekday 6:30 a.m. morning mass and the Saturday 7:00 p.m. evening mass would be dropped, at the recommendation of the bishop.

Fr. Kosicki’s hobbies included sculpting in wood and metal. He enjoyed using his sculptures as visual aids during his sermons. He was also known to use hand puppets as a visual aid during his sermons. While at St. Ladislaus, he was frequently seen jogging an early morning mile.

Fr. Kosicki was confronted by many problems with the high school upon his appointment. He was faced with great financial demands in order to keep the school open.

Enrollment had declined to the point that it was not feasible to continue to operate the high school, which was facing an enormous operating deficit.

In the face of this deficit, the parish was facing the need to spend over $80,000 to repair crumbling brick and mortar in the church’s tower, as well as a rotting school roof.

High school closes

Fr. Kosicki contacted the Archdiocese, asking it whether it wanted to continue operations at the high school and, if so, pointing out the need for additional funding from the diocese or from neighboring parishes to subsidize the high school. Neither were forthcoming and, as a result, it was necessary for the parish School Board to seek and obtain permission from the Archdiocese to close the high
school and merge its operations with St. Florian's High School.

The schools had begun to merge some operations in the preceding year. Permission to close the high school was granted. An agreement was entered into by the two parishes.

There had been discussion for many years about the consolidation of the schools. However, no agreement had been reached. St. Florian and St. Ladislaus had been rivals for many years, both in athletics and in trying to attract local students to their respective schools. The rivalry died hard.

Fr. Kosicki was also concerned about the manner in which the parish conducted its fundraising. He felt strongly that the church liturgy should be the primary focus of the church's efforts, and that fundraising should be the result of an inspired and grateful congregation. He felt that it was both unwise and morally questionable for the parish to rely upon income derived from gaming and drinking activities conducted at various festivals and functions.

One year after his initial appointment Fr. Kosicki wrote to Archbishop Szoka and then met with Bishop Gumbleton asking to be transferred. The Archdiocese granted his request and transferred him to St. Lucy's Parish in St. Clair Shores. He remains pastor there to this day.

Enter Fr. Ulman

In October 1982, Father Stanley Ulman was appointed pastor. He was installed as pastor on October 23, 1982, at a liturgy officiated by Rev. Thaddeus Ozog of St. Florian's.

Fr. Ulman grew up in Hamtramck, in the area of what is now the City Hall. His mother, Anna (Borys) Ulman, went to school at St. Ladislaus.

Fr. Ulman is a collector of toy trains. Part of his extensive collection was displayed at the Detroit Historical Museum.

During Fr. Ulman's years at St. Ladislaus, several Detroit churches were closed by Archbishop Szoka, due to dropping numbers of parishioners, baptisms, and marriages; increasing numbers of funerals; and, generally, changing Detroit demographics. To the relief of its parishioners, past and present, St. Ladislaus survived these closings.

Eventually, St. Ladislaus grade school fell victim to the same financial problems that forced the closing of the high school. By 1990-91, the school's enrollment was 220 students. In 1991-92, that number decreased to 145.

This drop alone created a deficit of $60,000. When only 55 students responded to early registration for 1992-93 (of that number, less than one-fourth were children of parish members) the parish School Board voted to close the school.

The parish continued with its Mardi Gras festival the following year. The festival had been originally formed to raise funds for the school. Mardi Gras that year

— which was reduced to a two-day festival instead of its original three-day format
— raised enough money to put a new roof on the church building.
Throughout its history, the parish of St. Ladislaus has continually brought out the best efforts and intentions of its members.

The parish has not always been successful in all its endeavors; few things are. However, by giving their best efforts and intentions toward the work of God, parish members have done what is called upon to meet their responsibilities toward God.

The parish should be proud of its accomplishments in the past, and have faith in the years to come.