

# THE HISTORY OF *St. William the Abbot* Roman Catholic Church



## **1910s**

A Seaford resident, William Morgan, donates use of his former butcher shop at the corner of Washington Avenue and Merrick Road for Sunday mass as an alternative to his neighbors travelling to the nearest Catholic church in Bellmore.

In Mr. Morgan's honor, St. William the Abbot is born as a mission church under St. Barnabas in 1913.

## **1920s**

By 1922, mass attendance regularly spills out onto the sidewalk of the converted shop, and a group from the St. William Mission Church visits the Diocese of Brooklyn to request consent to begin the process of building a permanent worship space. With Bishop Molloy's approval, the group acquires a piece of land on Jackson Avenue and begins construction of their church.

Even though religious fixtures were not yet obtained, the first mass was celebrated at the newly built St. William the Abbot on Christmas Eve, 1926 with 150 people in attendance.

The church was officially dedicated in August of 1927. At that time, there were 38 registered families within the new parish.



## **1940s**

As WWII rages on, St. William the Abbot continues to grow and meet the needs of its parishioners and the community as a whole.

In 1944, after the completion of the Rectory, St. William's is assigned its first curate. His addition means that the number of Sunday masses can double from two to four.

## **1950s**

As plans for a parish school take shape, the convent is built and the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk arrive to begin Religious Education classes and prepare for the school's opening in 1954.

Through returning soldiers bringing their families to the suburbs, St. William the Abbot sees the number of registered families grow to 8,500.

Masses are held concurrently in the church and the school auditorium. During this time, the parish acquires more land to ensure the room to grow for the future.



St. William the Abbot School is an immediate success and enrollment grows so quickly that soon additional classes are being held in the church basement, convent basement, and Knights of Columbus meeting hall as the school building is expanded twice.

The Diocese of Rockville Centre is created in 1957 as the number of Catholics on Long Island grows quickly. It is instantly one of the largest Dioceses in the country.



### 1960s - 1970s

The St. William the Abbot community continues to grow and strive. Following the Second Vatican Council, the church sees physical changes as well as a cultural shift.

In 1977, two lay parishioners were invited to participate in the Diocese's new diaconate program. They were ordained as Permanent Deacons in 1981.



### 1980s

In need of repair, a plan to renovate the church was created and construction began to enlarge and refurbish the church's interior.

By adding the transepts in 1983, St. William's was now able to accommodate 860 congregants.



### 1990s - 2000s

In September of 2001, the community came together like never before to collectively mourn and celebrate the lives of those lost on September 11th.

Another renovation and expansion occurred in 2008. These reconditions included a renovated sanctuary, pews, and stained glass window restorations, and the creation of an indoor narthex and front plaza, among other things.

At this time parishioners had the opportunity to write prayers and petitions to be sealed under the new altar.



### PRESENT

As we emerge from the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic, we look forward to an even stronger faith-based community at St. William the Abbot with a renewed purpose for the future and sense of gratitude for the past that has shaped us.

