



FATHER JOSEPH WAMALA

2010 - 2011

Father Joseph Wamala was ordained a priest on August 7, 2004 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Lubaga, Kampala, Africa by his Eminence Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala. His home diocese is the Kampala Archdiocese in central Uganda. He came to the Diocese of Richmond in 2009. His first appointment was as Parochial Vicar to St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Farmville. He served as administrator of the parish for three months in 2010 until the arrival of Father Anthony Morris in September 2010. In July 2011 Father Wamala was appointed pastor at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Staunton, Virginia.





Hey Sharon and Jim,
 Allow me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for facilitating my travel to Boston for the Uganda Martyrs' day celebrations. The ceremony was good and inspiring. May God reward you abundantly.
 Greetings from my Bishop.

Fr. Joseph Wamala.

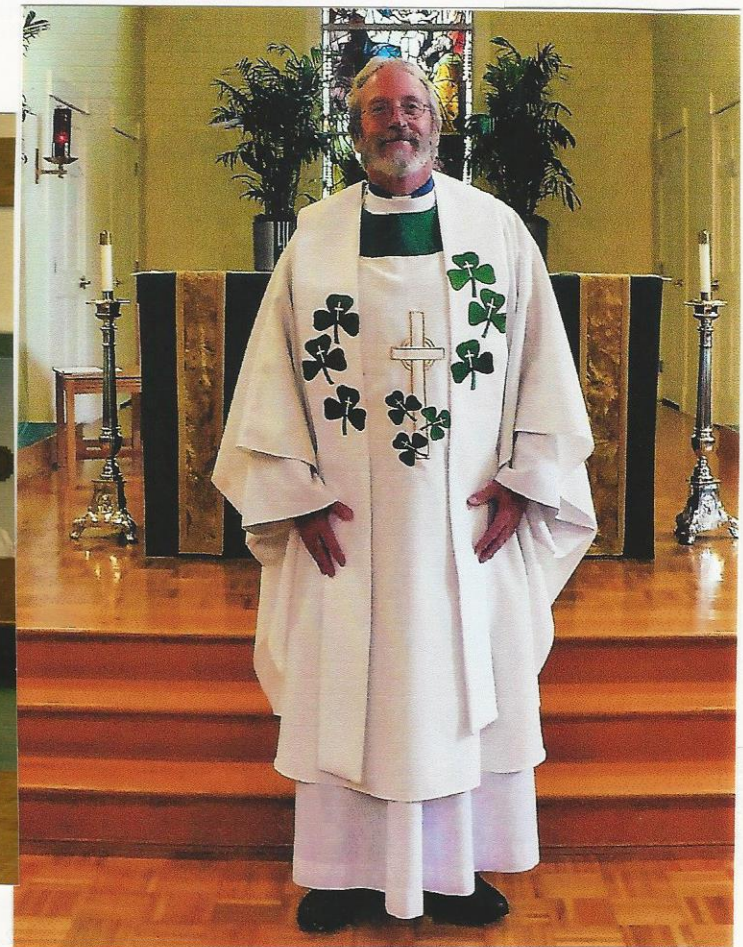
FATHER JOSEPH WAMALA AT THE UGANDAN MARTYRS DAY CELEBRATION, AT ST. MARY'S PARISH, WALTHAM, MA., JUNE 20, 2010.

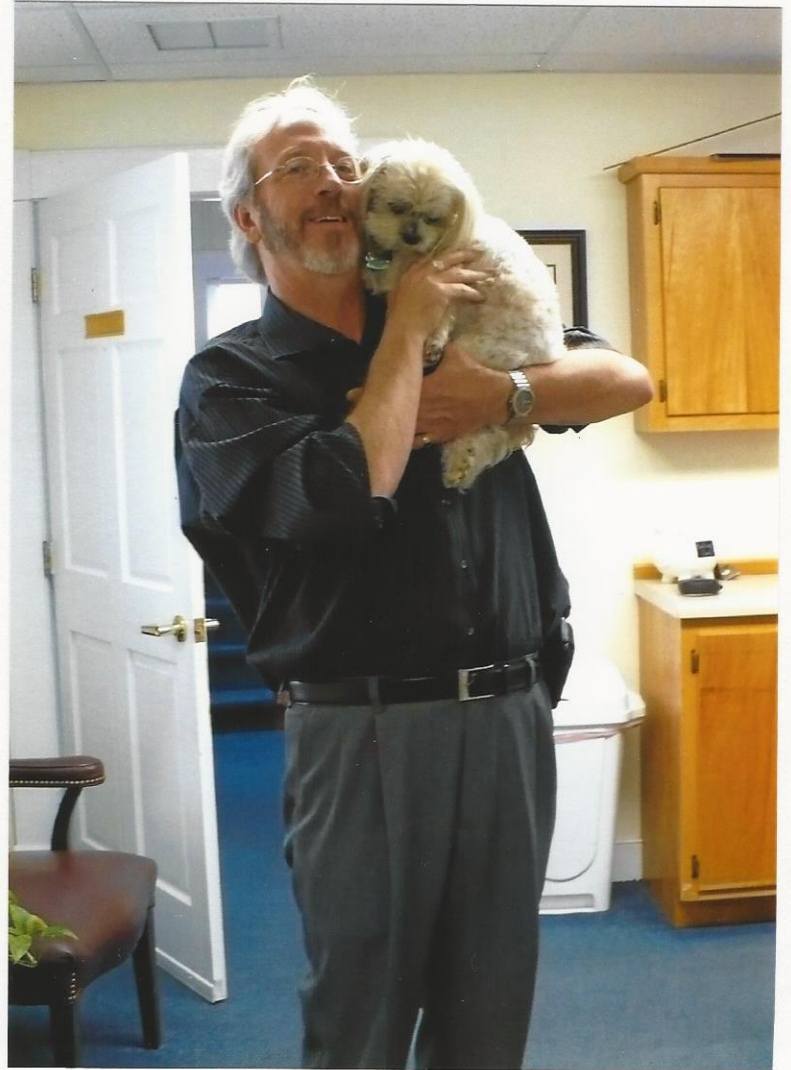


FATHER ANTHONY WILLIAM MORRIS

2010 – 2015

Father Anthony William Morris, the second youngest of eight children, was born and raised in Virginia Beach. At the age of eighteen and a half, upon graduating from high school, Father Tony entered the seminary. After a short stay he decided to leave and see the world, joining the Army. Upon his discharge from the Armed Services, Father Tony returned to Virginia Beach and started his own home renovation business. The death of his older brother profoundly affected him and sometime later Father Tony reentered the seminary. He studied at St. Alphonsus College in Suffield, CT along with graduate studies at Washington Theological Union in Silver Springs, MD. Father Tony was ordained to the Redemptorist Order on May 7, 1994. His first assignment was in New Smyrna Beach, FL., and in 1997 he was transferred to St. Joseph Church in Hampton, VA, initially serving as associate pastor. While in Hampton, Father Tony returned to VCU in Richmond, VA and earned a Master's degree in Social Work with a certificate in Psychology. During his six years in Hampton, he was vocation director for the South East U.S. Redemptorists. During his final two years in Hampton, Father Tony was also pastor of St. Mary's Star of the Sea, Fort Monroe. After completing 11-1/2 years in Hampton, Father Tony took a sabbatical after which he began his clinical hours as a licensed clinical social worker. Father Tony was reassigned to St. Theresa in September 2010 and was pastor of the Central Virginia Catholic Cluster Parishes of St. Theresa, Farmville; Nativity, Buckingham; Sacred Heart, Meherrin; and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Blackstone.



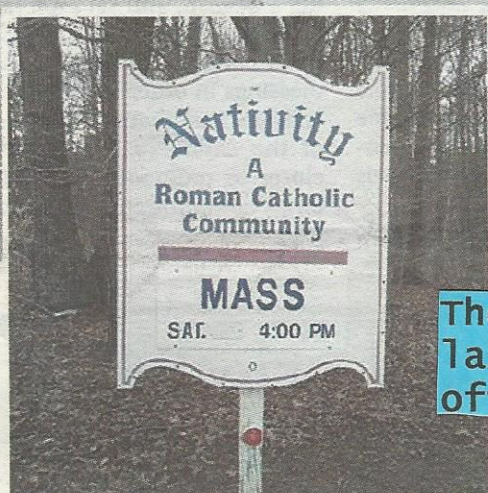


Church of the Nativity, Buckingham:



The congregation of Church of the Nativity gathers outside the church after Mass on Feb. 11.

The Church of the Nativity in Buckingham celebrated the last Mass on November 24, 2013. The church was officially closed on December 1, 2013.



By STEVE NEILL
Of The Catholic Virginian

Attendance at Church of the Nativity in Buckingham is steady with a congregation of 25 to 30 each Saturday at 4 p.m. in the rural church on Route 60, 70 miles west of Richmond.

While the congregation is one of the smallest in the Diocese of Richmond, parishioners are rejoicing as they realize the parish could have been closed at an earlier time when attendance had dwindled down to fewer than 10 for Mass and

the church building was in need of many repairs.

Now that parishioners who once had left are starting to return and a few new people are worshipping at Nativity, parish leaders see it as important that the mission stay open.

"One is the value within the local community that this is a viable parish and this is a sign to people of other religions that the Catholic Church is succeeding in its mission," said Ruth Anderson, who chairs the parish finance council and has been a parishioner since 2003.

Another reason it should remain open, she feels, is to continue the spiritual care of the families who live nearby.

"Many are older and can't drive the 30 to 40 miles to get to adjacent parishes," Mrs. Anderson said, pointing out that she and her husband, Richard, drive for half an hour to get to church.

Once a month a potluck supper is held when Mass normally ends at 5 on Saturday afternoon. Parishioners arrive with a variety of home-cooked meals including desserts and share their food at long tables pushed together in a long hallway.

"We're all staying together because we need the Eucharist and the spiritual comfort we receive from attending Mass," Mrs. Anderson explained.

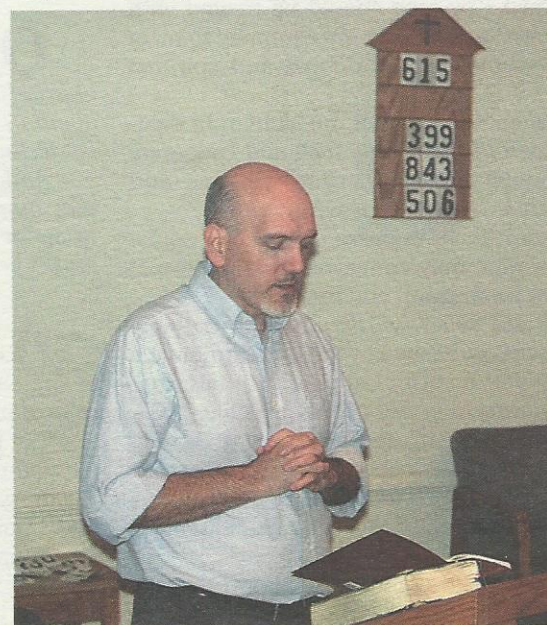
Marie Bates, a member of Nativity since its beginning in 1981, recalls that the first Catholic presence in rural Buckingham County started when Mass was celebrated in private homes with Father Richard Aylward, a Maryknoll priest who was then at St. Joseph's Church in Columbia (now the Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel), as presider.

Numbers of Catholics grew and the local Catholics approached the Bank of Buckingham to ask if they could use the facility for Mass on the

weekend. The bank officials readily agreed.

"We met in a room in the bank for three or four years and they never charged us anything," Mrs. Bates said.

The Diocese of Richmond, through Bishop Walter F. Sullivan, eventually purchased a six-acre site on Route 60 and a new parish church was dedicated by Bishop Sullivan in December 1981. The late Father Charles Fisher is fondly remembered as the first pastor, Mrs. Bates said. Parishioners also credit Father Joseph Metzger and Father Ronald Naylor for their ministry when they served the parish.



Luigi D'Elicio, cantor for the parish.

But over the 30 years since it was established there were probably up to 25 priests assigned to the parish. "We had already had 18 priests when Father Metzger came to us in 1996," Mrs. Bates said.

Over the years various priests, some of whom have since died, came to celebrate Mass on Saturdays. For a while, the parish was debt-free and there was money in the bank for future needs, Mrs. Bates says.

But things changed in the mid-1990s. The church building became rundown, repairs were neglected and fewer people were coming to Mass. When Father Alan Lipscomb was assigned in 2000 while also serving as pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul in Palmyra and St. Joseph's, Columbia, he organized parishioners to tackle some of the repairs.

"Everybody pitched in and helped," Mrs. Bates said. "The number of parishioners had dwindled, but under Father Alan, people started to come back."

Father Anthony Morris, current pastor, says the small numbers at Nativity reflect the small population of Buckingham County in general.

"As time has gone by, there's not a large community of people in Buckingham County and there hasn't been an influx of people who are Catholic," he said.

"There's no real industry except the two prisons and no young people at all are moving to Buckingham."

All of those currently registered in the parish are 60 and older, most of whom are retired and living on a fixed income. As a result, the weekly collections are small and are not enough to pay the operating expenses.

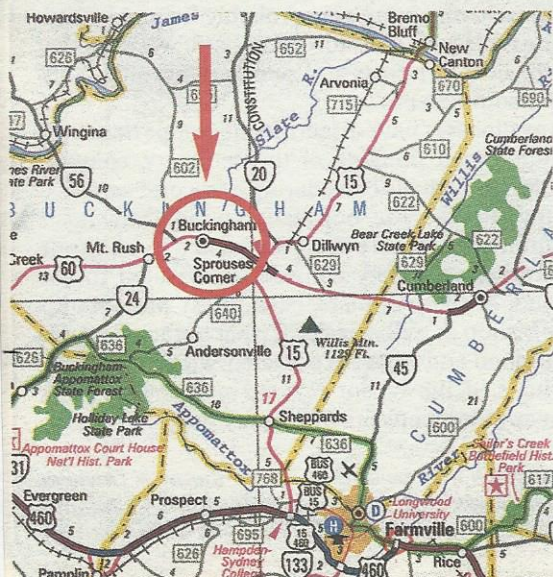
"Unfortunately because of the small number of parishioners, the parish is unable to sustain itself independently," Father Morris said.

"Thanks to the generosity of the diocese, we are able to cover the operating costs of the parish," he added.

Parishioners have organized some small fundraisers, but it is difficult to stir up interest in the events outside the small Catholic community.

Father Morris alternates with Father Emmanuel De Leon, parochial vicar of the Central Virginia Parish Cluster, in celebrating Mass at Nativity. The priests are based at St. Theresa's in Farmville, 24 miles from the church in Buckingham.

Mrs. Anderson is typical of most of the



Rural parish starting to rebuild

parishioners who came to rural Buckingham County from the Northeast. When she and her husband decided to move south from Naugatuck, Conn., they had actually placed a deposit on a house in Georgia. A friend who lived in Buckingham suggested that she stop there for a look.

"We came and looked at Buckingham and fell in love with it," Mrs. Anderson said.

Soon after she moved there, she became active in Buckingham's Meals on Wheels program and now has five other parishioners from Nativity involved in the charitable effort.

Mrs. Bates, however, has been in Buckingham far longer. She and her late husband, William, arrived in 1971. They had seven children.

"We were living in Vienna, Va., when my husband retired in 1969," said Mrs. Bates, now 85. "We wanted to get away from northern Virginia and move to a more rural area. Four of our seven children were still with us at home and going to school."

Her husband, a retired Army colonel, established the electronics program at Buckingham High School, across the road from the church, and taught there 23 years until 1993.

Nativity in Buckingham does not have a religious education program as there are no children. Adult education is offered at St. Theresa's in Farmville, not only for their own parishioners but also members of the other cluster parishes which include Sacred Heart, Meherrin, and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Blackstone.

After her husband died suddenly Dec. 13, 1995, Mrs. Bates and her youngest son, Brian, established a parish food pantry which they named "Caring Friends" to serve needy residents of Buckingham County. Operating it from their home, they received referrals from various churches, Department of Social Services and "word of mouth."

"We operated that in Bill's memory for about 13 years," Mrs. Bates said. "The local schools and Boy

Scouts were very generous to us and Brian had a barbecue at the farm in October and people brought canned goods.

"After 13 years I couldn't do it anymore and the Maysville Presbyterian Church graciously offered to take it over."

Bob and Sandy Pfole, original parishioners of Nativity, were involved in the annual Christmas



Father Morris presides at Mass in the small church which normally has a congregation of about 25. Here he is assisted by altar server Theresa Miller.

giving program which was linked with St. Bridget Parish in Richmond.

"We got the names of needy families from Social Services in Buckingham and sometimes we'd have as many as 30 families," Mrs. Pfole said. "Each family designation would have a list with specific items the families requested and that list was given to St. Bridget's which asked parish-

ioners to obtain the items and wrap them as Christmas gifts.

"We had a big truck go down to Richmond early on a Saturday morning before Christmas and bring them back to the church," Mrs. Pfole said. "The people of St. Bridget's were very generous."

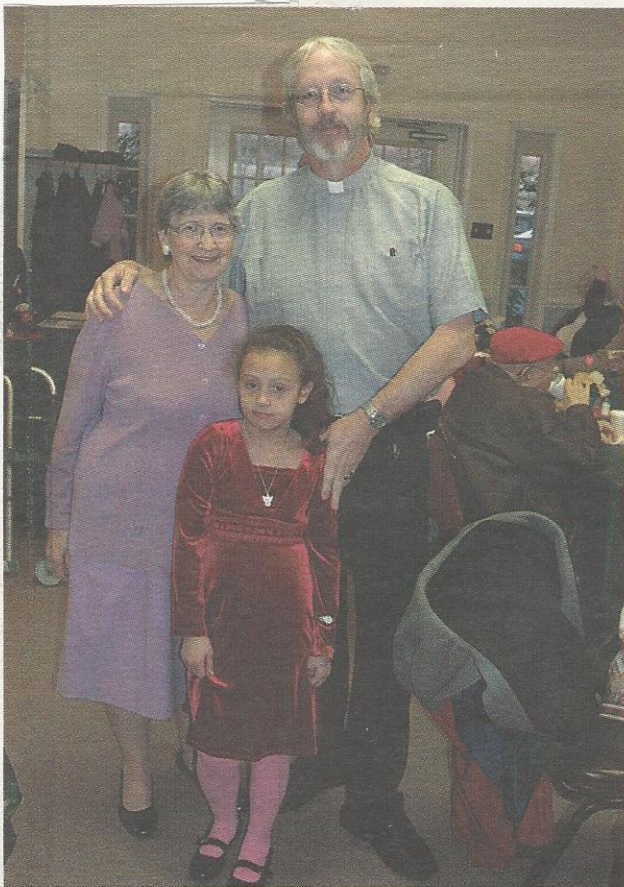
"The families were notified and came to the church later that same day to pick up their gifts," she added, pointing out that Nativity parishioners delivered some gifts to those who were unable to come get them.

Nativity parishioners hope the parish will continue signs of new growth. A number of Catholics who live in Buckingham County attend Mass in the Farmville, Scottsville or Columbia Catholic parishes because those parishes offer religious education for children.

"Hopefully we can have a Homecoming and invite our former parishioners," Mrs. Bates said.

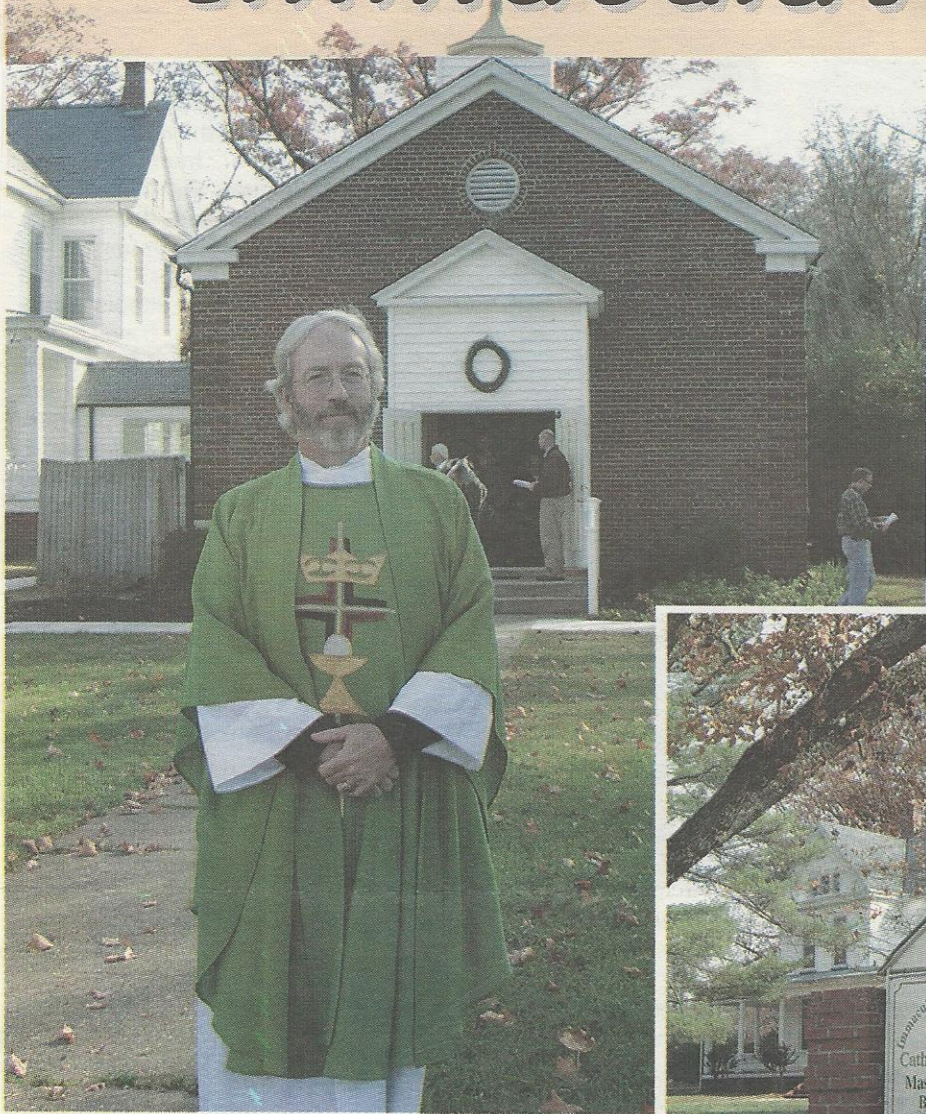


Harold Niehouse stands by the gravesite of his first wife, Margaret, in the parish cemetery with the church in the background. At right is Brian Bates, whose father, William Bates, is also buried there.



Father Morris stands with Darlene Webben and her great-granddaughter, Aliyah Fitzgerald, who is preparing to receive her first Communion.

Immaculate Heart of Mary



Father Morris stands before the small brick church.



Students of various grades in the parish Christian education program are in one of the upstairs classrooms at Bethany House. Among the volunteer catechists in the back are Tommy Smith, Patty York and Lisa York.

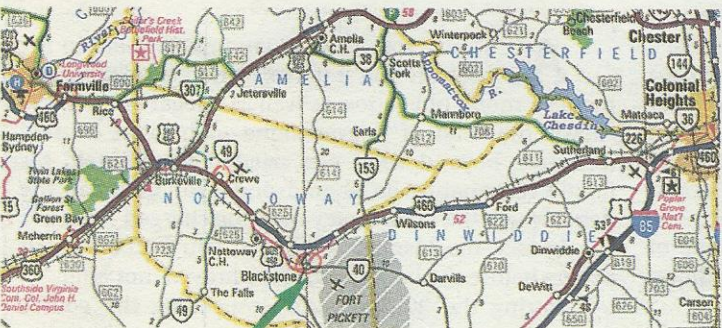


BY STEVE NEILL
Of The Catholic Virginian

While most Catholic parishes in southside Virginia have mainly “transplants” from the Middle Atlantic and New England states, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Blackstone has at least two older

members who have been members since the parish was first established in 1947 and are life-long Catholics.

One of them is George Jones, 80, director of the Jones Funeral Home in nearby Kenbridge. He recalls that there seemed to be a delay in getting a Catholic church built in Blackstone because of anti-Catholic bias.



The congregation of Immaculate Heart of Mary gather with Father Anthony Morris, pastor, on the steps of Bethany House after Sunday Mass Nov. 20.



Blackstone



Betty Branum, right, gives Holy Communion to Sally Moorman, a nursing home resident.

"We went to church in Crewe (at St. John the Baptist, now closed) for years and years," Mr. Jones told The Catholic Virginian. "Father Mack (Father Ronald J. McCarthy) wanted to build a church, but the community didn't want a Catholic church community. That was told to me."

Betty Branum, 79, another charter parishioner, also recalled some of the parish's early history. She pointed out that in the early days "there were only two or three Catholics then."

"Father McCarthy would come to Blackstone and have Mass at Mrs. McDonald's house on Church Street," she said, adding that later the Catholic chaplain from nearby Fort Pickett came to celebrate Mass.

In the 1950s the Precious Blood Fathers from Ohio were assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary and also to the parish in Crewe, St. Theresa's in Farmville and Sacred Heart in Meherrin.

Today the parish has approximately 60 to 65 families. Mass is celebrated each Sunday at 9 a.m. in the small brick church built in 1954 at 903 S. Main Street, five blocks from Blackstone's business district.

Father Anthony Morris, a Redemptorist priest on loan to the Diocese of Richmond, is pastor and Father Emmanuel DeLeon, known as "Father Manny," is parochial vicar. They alternate every other Sunday presiding at Sunday Mass.

Deacon Peter Menting, a parishioner who lives in Blackstone, and Deacon Emmett McLane, who has a dental practice in Farmville, are part of the clergy staff.

With a population of 3,600, Blackstone is part of rural Nottoway County and is located 60 miles south-

west of Richmond. It is home to Fort Pickett, which previously served as an Army post and was established during World War II. Its 46,000 acres are now used for training by the Virginia National Guard.

The building on the church property which is bigger than the church is a large white frame structure known as Bethany House, given that name when it served as the home for the former diocesan Volunteer Ministries Community. The program, which included a similar community in Harrisonburg, provided a residence for recent Catholic college graduates to live in community while serving as volunteers in a variety of ministries which helped the local community and parish. Xaverian Brother Harry Eccles, now living and working in Haiti, was director of the program which lasted 10 years.

Bethany House, believed to be over 100 years old, was built originally as a private home for a Dr. Irby, a physician, and his family. The house was purchased by the Diocese of Richmond in 1947 and is now used for religious education, parish meetings and for rehearsal by the music ministry.

Like most Immaculate Heart of Mary parishioners, Paul Semtner, president of the parish pastoral council, came to Virginia from elsewhere. He has been a member of the parish since 1974 when he came from Oklahoma to work for the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center of Virginia Tech. The agency develops programs for the sustainable production of tobacco, forage crops, small fruits and grains.

Patty York, volunteer with CCD

and/or Christian education and secretary of the parish pastoral council, is originally from Los Gatos, Calif. She married a Virginia man and has now been in Virginia for 41 years. The CCD program is headed by Mary Frances Coon.

"We have people from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Michigan," Mrs. York said. "People retire to this area.

"It's been the same size of 60 to 65 families for the last few years."

There are approximately 25 children in Christian education classes held in Bethany House the second and fourth Sundays after the 9 a.m. Mass. There are three teenagers preparing for Confirmation and eight children are preparing for first Communion in the spring.

Continuing education for adults meets the second and fourth Wednesday at St. Theresa's in Farmville and includes the entire four-parish cluster which encompasses Sacred Heart in Meherrin and Nativity in Buckingham.

Parishioners take charge of all maintenance on the property which is close to two acres.

"We maintain both buildings and the yard," Mrs. York said. "We have maintenance schedules for cleaning the house and church and people are good at signing up."

Deacon Peter Menting, who was ordained for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., regularly visits four nursing homes, two of which are in Blackstone, and the other two in Crewe and Burkeville.

"If I get a group of three or four, I'll lead a Communion service," he said. "Otherwise, it's basically the Our Father, holy Communion and a blessing for the individual."

Betty Branum takes Communion each Sunday to Catholic residents at Heritage Hall, a nursing home across the street from the church.

"We now have six Catholics and one Catholic who is a nurse there and I bring Communion to her when she is on duty."

Either Father Morris or Father DeLeon go to the nursing home once

a month to anoint Catholic residents.

The Catholic parish is affiliated with an ecumenical group known as CLIMB, Christian Laity in Ministry Blackstone. The group maintains a food pantry, gives fuel assistance to needy families and helps create a Nativity scene at the town park each year.

CLIMB also supports a prayer service led by students of Nottoway High School by the flagpole each Wednesday before classes begin. Various churches send representatives to support the students as they lead the prayer service. Immaculate Heart of Mary takes its place in October.

"As a sign of our community, a family from our parish which was undergoing extreme hardship got help from St. Luke Episcopal Church which had a potato bar dinner to raise funds to help this family," Mrs. York said. "It wasn't one of their families, it was one of ours."

Margaret Brooks, a retired schoolteacher who is on the parish pastoral council and in charge of liturgy planning, spoke of how the parish helped her during her late husband's illness and after he died.

"It's a small community," she said. "I was just overwhelmed with the outpouring of love when Al passed away last February.

"While he was ill, people came and brought food and did what they could to support me," she continued. "We need to support each other. God didn't put us here to be alone. Support is just a phone call away."

The strong volunteer spirit and faith of the Blackstone parishioners inspires Deacon Menting.

"They're a good group of people," he said. "They do their job and they keep everything up to snuff.

"It's a hard job when you think about it. They've got that large house and they work hard at keeping it up and serving the community around it.

"They don't have the resources, but they make it look like they have the resources."

