



A Popular History of SSCC in the Bahamas

(Popular Because We as SSCC Were Popular)

Reflections by Fr. Michael Kelly, ss.cc.

In Ministry in the Bahamas from 1971 to 2010

SSCC Community in Ministry in the Bahamas from 1961-2011

Part Two

In 1971 the influence of the Sacred Hearts Community was extended to Nassau on the Island of New Providence. Part of earlier discussions, and the comments by Bishop Hagarty, OSB led to our accepting Abaco as our area of ministry, “with a future parish in Nassau and a central house there”. Our arrival on Abaco was in 1961. Our ministry on Abaco came to a close when Fr. Stan Kolasa ended his time of service there in 2002. The first decade of SSCC ministry in the Bahamas (1961-1971) witnessed 14 of our members active in the Diocese: Francis Larkin, Damien Veary, Marion Mangin, Benedict Horrell, Ronald Nutterville, John Shanley, Patrick Argue, Peter Kelleher, Liam Crowley, Jeremiah Casey, Andrew Jahn, Daniel McCarthy, John F. Sullivan, and Michael Kelly, with the central focus on the Island of Abaco. They laid the foundation for Church and School at St. Francis de Sales, Marsh Harbour and built upon it with building blocks, people, teachers and students, assisted by the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, New Jersey who arrived in 1969 along with their volunteer teachers.



DEACON PATRICK & LAGLORIA DARVILLE

Arrival in Nassau was in 1971, ten years after our beginnings in 1961. Offered to us were: St. Joseph’s Parish or St. Bede’s Parish, and the choice then was for St. Joseph’s. In time, we did occupy both parishes. Later in 1996, we would assume responsibility for St. Bede’s Parish until Fr. Chris Santangelo completed his ministry there in 2005. Now we focus on other endings, as Fr. Patrick Joseph Fanning, who had served on Long Island since 2000, completed his interesting time there in May 2011. He had been ably assisted by Deacon Patrick Darville and his wife, LaGloria. Deacon Darville, who was ordained a Deacon in June 1993, continues to serve his home Island and his home church on Long Island. Fr. Pat, was often seen carrying groceries or bottles of water to people in need, visiting with and praying for the sick.

A benefactor, with many years of connection to our SSCC Congregation is Jeanie McLean, who has visited the Bahamas often, and assisted as a volunteer on Long Island, Bahamas. *(The Internet gives much more expanded details, information, history and photographs, in an article by Fr. Pat "The Catholic Community of Long Island Bahamas). Try it ... you'll like it.*



JEANIE MCLEAN AND "FRIENDS"

Fr. Martin Gomes, who has been at St. Joseph's since 1983, completes his great ministry in October 2011. He was a builder of people involvement, and a builder of structures: the rectory; the old St. Joseph's, church which became a Day Care Center, directed by Sr. Cecilia Albury, OSB, and a new St. Joseph's Church and new parish hall. Islands that have been touched by our presence include: Abaco, (St. Francis de Sales & Sts. Mary & Andrew); Bimini, (Holy Name Church), the home parish of Msgr. Simeon Roberts, a local Bahamian, with Rene Gaudin, and later with Chris Grannell; New Providence, St. Joseph's Church, with John F. Sullivan, Michael Kelly, Benedict Folger, Martin Gomes, Stan Kolasa; Bro. Ignatius McGraw and Bro Danny Halloman. St. Bede's Church with Mike Kelly, and later Chris Santangelo; Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church with Chris Grannell, John Leahy, Michael Kelly; Eleuthera, Gregory Town, home of Msgr. John Johnson, (St. Gregory's Church) with Patrick Joseph Fanning, and later Patrick Killilea; At Harbour Island, (Blessed Sacrament Church) it was Patrick Killilea, and later Brian Marggraf; and later on Long Island, (home island of Fr. Kendrick Forbes) ...with Patrick Fanning at Sts. Peter & Paul Church and its missions, ... St. George's, (Buckley's), St. Pius X, (The Bight), Holy Trinity, (Taits), Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Hamiltons), Assumption, (Dunmore), Immaculate Conception (Mortimers).



FR. JOHN SULLIVAN

Back in 1971 it was John F. Sullivan and Mike Kelly who began the new phase of ministry in Nassau. Fr. Fintan Sheeran was Provincial at the time. Dan McCarthy gave his report in preparation for the possible ministry on New Providence Island. He focused on it being a one priest situation, a small rectory, a well-run parish, but with a deficit as the parish assumed a large portion of teacher salaries for the Catholic School. Other reports were from Jeremiah Casey and Maurice "Mo" Pepin. In his first year Fr. Sullivan had to take out a bank loan for \$10,000.00 to help with the above expense. In time, with development and progress, the parish was able to let go of that financial albatross, and to the delight of the people who saw and witnessed the progress, improvements to the parish itself could be attended to, like new church pews. By 1975, on the Silver Jubilee of Bishop Hagarty, 25 years as Bishop and 38 years of service to the Bahamian people, St. Joseph's presented a bound book with 2,435 names of parishioners. That same year the Junior



MARTIN GOMES, JEREMIAH, CASEY, IGNATIUS MCGRAW

Religious Education Group presented checks for the Care of the Needy and Mary's Coffee House. The vibrant Youth Mass, established during the time of Fr. Preston A. Moss, still continued to influence with its once a month youth participation in church worship. Later it would become a weekly observance. A very dedicated and devoted member of the Parish was "Mother" Lillian Taylor, active in ushering, the Legion of Mary, the Church Bazaar Committee, the Women's Group, etc. On Fridays helped by Louise Cox, she assisted with the distribution of sardines and grits for the needy, and was "like everybody's mother", beloved by all. She was honored in a banquet style luncheon, given gifts and a standing ovation. Her son, Gregory, is Deacon Gregory Taylor now in ministry in his mother's home parish of St. Joseph's.



CELEBRATING MASS AT ST. JOSEPH'S—1970S

Another stalwart in parish and church life was the parish secretary Mrs. Carmetta Basden, hired by Fr. (now Msgr.) Preston A. Moss in the late 60s and who continued in her office until around 2006, for almost 40 years. She went to her heavenly reward in March 2011 after a life devoted to her church, her family and her Bahamas community. In a way she was "Mrs. St. Joseph's". The church has a long memory as the new St. Joseph's was filled to overflowing for her funeral. She is at peace.

The long, great line of dedicated women can go on and on ... but we mention just some as representatives of many: Adele Thompson, Constance Joseph, Nathalie Higgs, Alzona Taylor, and many members from The Ladies Guild. Very dedicated men were also in the parish: Mr. Joseph Symonette (lovingly called "Mr. St. Joseph's"), and Mr. Lawrence Ferguson. Back in 1971, I met them there, and still in 2011 they are active with Fr. Martin Gomes. That is a span of over 40 years of dedication. Fortunately each parish has its good men and women who excel in service.



ANDREW CURRY, ERIC, CASH,
FRANCIS RICHARDSON

At Our Lady of the Holy Souls, during my decade plus one year, (1999-2010) as pastor, Mr. Reuben Stuart was the chairperson connected with the Annual Parish Fair, Bazaar and Raffle. He was most organized, and the event was highly successful each year. At Our Lady of the Holy Souls women like Vernita Johnson, Beverley Nairn, Lillian Jones, Valderine Williams, Brenda Berry (housekeep and cook), Sonia Rose, Florinda Bastian, Virginia Pinder, Doreen Fernander, Advilda Grant, Margaret Hield, Hilda Mae Peterson, Terecine Minnis, and Youth Members, like Valerez Miller, excelled in leadership positions and the church was blessed through them and members of Our Lady's Women's Group, and many more women and men of excellence.

Music, Melody, Musicians, Ministry of Choirs and Song blessed churches with their shared musical talents and skills. Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish had the longest serving Organist and Choir Director, Mr. Eric Cash, and later Mr. Francis Richardson. The Cathedral Parish, St. Francis had its long, long time Organist and Director, in Mr. Andrew Curry. Mr. Cyril Baker is a fixture at St. Joseph's during our SSCC years. We met him there back in 1971 and he is still in the Seat of Music in 2011. Mr. Keith Thompson is active at St. Bede's Church Choir. Each of these, continues to help choirs with music, melody, and ministry of hymns and songs of praise to the Glory of God. Many funerals (and there are many) and weddings benefit from their talents. The Annual Nassau Wide Missions have seen many, mighty missions and speakers presenting over the years. Stan Kolasa was such a presenter back in 1993 at the Island Wide Mission.



The Parish Annual Bazaar, at St. Joseph's, was a regular event yearly through which wide participation of parishioners and friends helped with fund raising. Such Annual Bazaars continue to this day. A dignitary, like The Honorable Clement Maynard, Representative for the Constituency, or Lady Marguerite Pindling (wife of the Prime Minister, Sir. Lynden O. Pindling) was always selected to open the Bazaar. At Christmas time 1977, Christmas and Calvary were intermingled as St. Joseph's Church was broken into, and the Tabernacle, the home of the Blessed Sacrament, was removed and later recovered in the nearby St. Joseph's church graveyard. At a later church service the broken tabernacle was displayed as a reminder of "God's Thoughtfulness" and "Man's Thoughtlessness", Christmas and Calvary side by side. Many years later, at another Christmas, the Rectory was entered at gunpoint and the Christmas collections were taken, leaving bad memories with Martin, ss.cc. and Brian, ss.cc.



BRIAN MARGGRAF



BEN FOLGER

To the question "Does it snow in the Bahamas?" the answer was given on January 19th, 1977 as "Historical weather brings snow to the Bahamas" was the headline in The Tribune newspaper the following day. March 1977 brought an ending as Fr. John F. Sullivan returned to the USA, and Fr. Michael Kelly was named pastor of St. Joseph's, joined by Fr. Ben Folger. Even though the Bahamas had been independent since 1973, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited in October 1977, and her "walkabout" on

Thursday, October 20th, generated much excitement. Billed as an International preacher, Fr. Francis Larkin, ss.cc. (remember, he was our “first” SSCC priest on Abaco in 1961), was the guest speaker for the Parish Lenten Mission in March 1978. Other SSCC members assisted with missions or other speaking engagements – David Reid, Stan Kolasa, Dave Lupo, Patrick Joseph Fanning, Richard McNally, Bob Charlton, Thomas McElroy, and Bill Petrie. The Anniversary of St. Joseph’s Church is observed on January 28th each year, and in 1979 it was their Jubilee Year (1934-1979). Days later the Bahamas welcomed the Papal Visit by Pope John Paul II on January 31st (into February 1st), another “first” for the Bahamas, and for the Catholic Church. In March 1981 the special Lenten Program “*God Bless Your Family*” was launched as an attempt to visit 5,000 homes. Homes of active and inactive church people were to be visited by twelve teams of helpers, along with visits to Christian families and friends. The parish area was divided into 11 districts, and those “outside” these areas formed Area 12. Designated captains and helpers were commissioned in a special church service.

That was the year, 1979, when the two parish schools, St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier, merged to become one larger school, Sts. Francis & Joseph School. (In 2011 two provinces – East Coast United States and Hawaii would join to form a new Province). The cartoon, captured by Eddie Minnis, expressed it well with its image of the “Cat-Lick Chief” (Bishop Paul Leonard Hagarty) squashing squeezing, crunching, the two schools together (236 students in St. Francis Primary and 215 at St. Joseph’s) with additional words “*An’ we gotta raise skool fees from \$30.00 to \$80.00 a term*” ... “*Tings tough ‘cause of risin’ cost an’ cut in Gov’ment aid*” ... and ... “*One Better dan None!!*” ...

During the second decade (1971-1981) our Congregation sustained ministry on the Island of Abaco and the Island of New Providence, with the following members: Daniel J. McCarthy, John F. Sullivan, Michael Kelly, Rene Gaudin, Michael Shanahan, Benedict Folger, James Nickel, Daniel Halloman.



MICHAEL SHANAHAN

On the school grounds, behind a row of classrooms, on July 6th, 1979, close to the 6th Anniversary of Independence, a young boy, Lynden Ferguson, was found stabbed and left close to death. He was 9 years old. Other young people discovered him, under some plywood, and came to his assistance. One of those who assisted was Ted Capron, a motor cycle police officer with the Traffic Division, and pastor, Fr. Michael Kelly, ss.cc. The young boy, Lynden, recovered, thank God, and later came back to say thank you.



ST. JOSEPH WORKERS

In 1981 Bishop Lawrence A. Burke, filled the vacancy left by Bishop Hagarty, and soon steps to enlarge St. Joseph’s rectory were placed before him. The idea in seed form was placed on his table. In 1983 Fr. Kelly, after 12 years at St. Joseph’s, moved to the mission island ministry on Abaco. When Fr. Martin Gomes came as pastor in 1983, the rectory renovation work had already begun, but he supervised it’s completion, and saw the work finished with the addition of a second floor, an extended first floor and more adequate office space. As mentioned above, Martin would be a builder of people and a builder of buildings over his years, and much progress, organization and growth, were added to St. Joseph’s during his years in ministry. Joining him in Ministry at St. Joseph’s was Fr. (later Msgr) Simeon Roberts, now pastor at St. Cecilia’s Church in New Providence.

Two of our ss.cc. brothers died during their term of ministry in the Bahamas. They rest in peace at the Community Cemetery in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. By coincidence both had been missioned to Japan, but circumstances brought them to the Bahamas. Simon Pease, ss.cc., died in 1984, and Chris Grannell, ss.cc. died in 1990. Their contributions and memories live on. They rest in peace.

Following in the footsteps of previous SSCC members, Mike Kelly arrived on Abaco in August 1983. Members who had gone there prior to 1983 were: Francis Larkin, Damien Veary, Marion Mangin, Benedict Horrell, Ronald Nutterville, John Shanley, Patrick Argue, Peter Kellagher, Liam Crowley, Jeremiah Casey, Andrew Jahn, Rene Gaudin, Mike Shanahan, Jim Nickel. Still others would follow: Simon Pease, Ignatius McGraw, and Stan Kolasa. Almost twenty in number have served on the Island of Abaco, part of the Archdiocese of Nassau (established July 5th, 1999). The Dominican Sisters from Caldwell, New Jersey made their contribution through education at the St. Francis de Sales Catholic School on Abaco Island. They arrived in 1969. Our SSCC commitment began in 1961, close to the beginning of the establishment of the Diocese of Nassau. The years of ministry by our SSCC members varied. Some served less than one year while others served two or three years. Five, six or seven year marks were reached by three or four. A high of 13 years was remarkable, and achieved. I was privileged to serve 39 years. I am grateful to God, to the Archdiocese of Nassau and to our SSCC Community. Each in his own way carried the mission deeper into the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. To those who gave themselves and sacrificed themselves, we address words of thanks and appreciation.

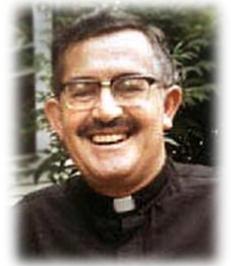


ANDREW JAHN



SSCC MEMBERS GATHER—1980s

The third decade, 1981-1991, continued to experience good growth and expansion. The Congregation was generous in continuing to provide members for the Bahamas Missions with Rene Gaudin, Benedict Folger, James Nickel, Simon Pease, Martin Gomes, Ignatius McGraw, Mike Kelly, Christopher Grannell, Stan Kolasa, David Lupo, and John Leahy. Mike Kelly returned to Nassau in 1990, and revisited St. Joseph's as pastor. That was the year of the unexpected and startling death of Chris Grannell, in June 1990, at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church, prior to his planned departure to attend the ordination of Fr. John Leahy in Ireland. He suffered a heart attack as he prepared for Mass and prepared to go to Ireland. One of the Married Permanent Deacons, Deacon Peter Rahming, attended that ordination and viewed the "empty chair" left vacant honoring Fr. Chris Grannell.



CHRIS GRANNELL



A year later tragedy struck at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish as Sr. Clare Hass, a Grey Sister of the Immaculate Conception (G.S.I.C.) tragically and violently had her life taken at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Rectory in 1991. Fr. (later Msgr.) John Johnson was Pastor there at this unfortunate time. Her family, her Religious Family, and the Diocese, all requested that her assailant not receive the punishment of the death penalty and she, a woman and a secretary at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church, is still in Her Majesty's Prison in Fox Hill in New Providence. Fr. Chris and Sr. Clare were great servants of the poor and needy, and are still remembered with love and respect.

The parish of St. Bede's, once offered to us back in 1971, was occupied by SSCC in 1996. This parish was attended to by Mike Kelly, Chris Santangelo, and Martin Gomes over the years. There was a partnership in ministry between St. Joseph's and St. Bede's, especially in the time of Chris and Martin. St. Bede's was established in 1945 with Benedictine Priests in ministry, to be followed by Diocesan Clergy and members of Religious Communities. There was a school attached, having been built in an area that much needed it. From there I would move to Our Lady of the Holy Souls Catholic Church in 1999, also in Nassau, and in 2005 our SSCC ministry ended at St. Bede's as Fr. Chris Santangelo returned to the USA.