



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 Four

The Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan, who served at Aquinas College, made a remarkable contribution to the career growth opportunities for thousands of students. Aquinas College, in which the Adrian Dominicans ministered to students, was part and parcel of the educational framework which provided a great contribution to the Bahamas in the field of education. Imagine the joy of the first Bahamian Archbishop, Patrick Pinder, to be the native son who dedicates the new Aquinas College on October 9th, 2009. The "Bahama Catholic" for December 2009, in an article by Ms. Shona Knowles, Principal of the new Aquinas indicates: ... *"From January 1957 to the present, Aquinas College has experienced a total metamorphosis. It has been transformed from a teacher training school for the nuns of St. Martin's Monastery in its caterpillar stage to a secondary school for the local Bahamians in its cocoon stage. Fifty two years later, the beautiful butterfly has emerged, spread its wings and has taken flight as a full-fledged academic, vocational and technical institute at its new fully computerized state of the art sprawling campus on Gladstone Road. Today, with a teaching staff of 35, Aquinas College can truly boast of exposing its 500 students to a very diverse curriculum"* ... It is of interest for us as SSCC to note that for some years, Ben Folger, ss.cc. served as Chaplain at the old Aquinas back in the 1980's. In the midst of many departures a great foundation for the future has been laid.

The growth and achievements continue. Of interest is the fact that most of the parishes in which we SSCC ministered had a school attached ... St. Francis de Sales (Abaco) ... St. Joseph's (Nassau), Our Lady of the Holy Souls (Nassau), St. Bede (Nassau).

(For more information the Internet Site for Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Eastern United States Province, home page, under Missions, under The Bahamas, gives great and additional information and brief histories of our places of ministry there. Try it, you'll like it.)

Our ministry and lives in the Diocese/Archdiocese of Nassau were mingled with the lives and ministries of other Religious Communities, especially the Benedictine Sisters and Monks. We appreciated their prayers and presence, and many meal gatherings at their tables of friendship and fellowship. Over the years we were linked in ministry, in the chain of service and friendship, to Religious Families and Diocesan Clergy, including Permanent Deacons, among them ... The Order of St. Benedict, Monks and Sisters, The Religious Sisters of Mercy, the Scarborough Foreign Missions, (with Msgr. Ambrose MacKinnon the last one) the Montfort Communities, priests, brothers and sisters, serving the Haitian Communities, with Fr. Roland Vilfort, S.M.M; Jesuits, Passionists, (Tom Brislin being their last member), Salesians, Josephites, The Grey Sisters from Canada, Sisters of St. Joseph, from Canada; the Sisters of St. Ursula, and the Sisters of Mercy. Priests of the Diocese / Archdiocese still to be mentioned are ... Fr. David Cooper (on Grand Bahama Island), Fr. Remy David from Haiti, (now on Grand Bahama), who attends to the needs of the Haitian Community there and on other Islands; Fr. Glen Nixon, Rector of the Cathedral , St. Francis Xavier in Nassau, who was always outstanding in hospitality and welcome... and cooks a good meal as well! His father, Paul Nixon, cleared the land to build the new church of St. Francis de Sales, at Marsh Harbour, Abaco in 1992 during the time of Fr. Stan Kolasa, ss.cc. Many years later, in hurricane and flooding Paul and his family lost their home on Grand Bahama. His son, Fr. Glen helped them to rebuild. In 1992, on the Island of Eleuthera, the Hurricane damaged different buildings and the Catholic Rectory on the island, among them were: St. Gregory's Rectory, St. John the Baptist Church, Lower Bogue, and St. Catherine, Alice Town. Our SSCC men would arrive there in 1995. The St. Francis de Sales Church would be rededicated by Archbishop Burke on February 21st, 1993. Another priest, Fr. Alain Laverne, born in Haiti, now serves at Our Lady of the Holy Souls in Nassau, and twice he succeeded SSCC men in ministry – followed Fr. Chris Santangelo at St. Bede's, and Fr. Michael Kelly, at Our Lady of the Holy Souls. Succeeding us on Abaco was Fr. Roger Madrazo from the Philippines. *"The Junkanoo Priest"* is Fr. Reggie Demeritte, of Fox Hill, Nassau and Grand Bahama. He supports the Junkanoo Festival Celebrations wherever he goes. Another "final" is Fr. Mel Taylor, OSB representing the last of the long line of Benedictines. All are part of the fabric of friendship we have benefitted from over the years, and all have our SSCC gratitude.



RENEE KNOWLES, DIOCESAN FINANCIAL OFFICER,
SR. MAEDENE RUSSELL, OSB SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC
EDUCATION ; PATRICIA COAKLEY, EDUCATION SECRETARY

Twelve "men of faith" were honored by Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church on July 3rd, 2005. The Parish Council President, Ms. Vernita Johnson, indicated that the luncheon was *"their way of recognizing and applauding these sons of God who have rendered faithful and committed service"*. Fr. Mike Kelly presented the special plaques for the occasion. Ending ministry time in the Bahamas in 2006 were Fr. Chris Santangelo, ss.cc. who indicated *"I felt owned by the people of the Bahamas"*, and Fr. George Wolf, OSB, leaving after *"62 good years"*, the longest serving Benedictine priest, having arrived in August 1944. Sr. David Mary Duncan, RSM, arrived in the Bahamas in September 1968, and completed her ministry in 2008 after 40 years. Sr. Joan Anderson, S,C, the last

Sister of Charity, left the Bahamas on November 14th, 2007, after 42 years in education and ministry, over 20 of which were at Our Lady of the Holy Souls School. She arrived in 1965. On July 25th 2006, Noel Clarke was the newest Bahamian to be ordained to the Catholic Priesthood indicating *“I am dedicated to the ministry I am called to”*.



DIocese OF NASSAU CLERGY RETREAT WITH BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN 1973

The anniversary of Our Lady of the Holy Souls (1926-2006) was highlighted in November. As part of the 80th Anniversary celebrations, 80 parishioners were honored and recognized. Each received a decorated plaque. The pastor at the time, Fr. Michael Kelly, ss.cc. indicated: *“those people have also reached a most significant milestone and he congratulated them for the many years of service, dedication, work and worship”... “When we stand on the shoulders of people of faith from the past, our vision of the future increases and improves”*.

Over the years St. Joseph’s has celebrated many anniversaries since its first Mass celebrated by the Benedictine priest, Fr. Bonaventure Hansen, OSB on January 28th, 1934. We draw attention to the 75th Anniversary celebrated observed during the time of Fr. Martin Gomes, ss.cc. Its theme was: *“Looking Back, Moving Forward, as a Family in Faith”*. That was in 2009. Martin pointed out *“Today we still have many ministries and each ministry is a tool by which we are in service in the community, such as: the Adult Day Care Centre, Men’s Ministry, the Ladies Auxiliary, Total Parish Faith Formation,” The Band”, Home Visitation and Welcoming Home Ministry, and Life Teen Youth ministry, and also Sts. Francis/Joseph School”* (Bahama Catholic January/February 2009). Touching the past three members who were alive and present for the first Mass celebrated in 1934 were honored: Arthur Neely, Sylvia Arnett & Frances Clarke. Looking forward, the focus was on the Youth, who hold the whole parish in their hands. Dividing the Timeline for the parish into segments according to years 1930’s, 1940’s, 1950’s, 1960’s, 1970’s, 1980’s, 1990’s, 2000’s, various accomplishments were the focus of attention. The New Parish Center was later completed in 2009. The parish is now one of the most vibrant in the Archdiocese. Much thanks to Martin and his parishioners. To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary be honor and glory.

In the month of May 1961, President John F. Kennedy vowed that the United States would put a man on the moon in that decade. It was done. Many “*firsts*” followed that announcement. This year, 2011, the space shuttle “Atlantis” landed at John F. Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on Thursday, July 21st, 2011. It was the final flight of the Shuttle Program. From 1961 to 2011 much space was covered. Those space achievements covered 50 years.

Our SSCC History in the Bahamas is bookended by two presidents, John F. Kennedy (1961) and Barack Obama, who significantly became 50 years old in 2011, and by two Popes, John XXIII and Benedict XV1 (84 years old in 2011). That is the same number of years, beginning in 1961 and ending in 2011, that our Sacred Hearts Community has been active in ministry in the Bahamas. Born in 1953 the current Archbishop Patrick Christopher Pinder is now 58 years old. His life to date is “*inside the envelope time span*” of our SSCC years in ministry in the Bahamas. While others were covering outer space ... we were covering the inner space of the Bahama Islands.

The fifth and final decade (2001-2011) of ministry and witnessing to our charism brought to a conclusion individual ministries and our Community commitment. Ministry ended for Stan Kolasa in 2002; for Chris Santangelo in 2005; for Mike Kelly in 2010; for Patrick Fanning in 2011 and for Martin Gomes in 2011. On October 30, 2011, The Sacred Hearts Community ends its commitment, but not its love for the Bahamas and its peoples, as a half a century of service is concluded. A Plaque, blessed and unveiled by Archbishop Patrick Pinder, will recall with gratitude and pride our SSCC contributions to the Diocese and Archdiocese. It will have 30 names inscribed on it.



STAN KOLASA



CHRIS SANTANGELO



MARTIN GOMES



MICHAEL KELLY



PAT FANNING

*“Nine Eleven” (9/11) ... (September 2001), was a time of sadness for the USA and now
“Ten-Eleven” (10/11) ... (October 2011) is our time of sadness as we leave the
Beautiful Bahamas and its Beautiful Peoples.*

*There is a saying in the Bahamas ... Bahamians say
“If you get sand in your toes / shoes you’ll return again” ...*

*Dare we hope that in some future, over some distant horizon of hope,
at the end of some multi-colored remarkable rainbow,
the SSCC will return, not just as individuals, but as a Community.
Our shoes are filled with Bahamian Sand.*

*The SSCC members were indeed blessed to cross paths
with so many great people of faith over the years.
The good friendship and warm hospitality is remembered.
We thank them. We thank the Archdiocese.
We thank Archbishop Patrick Pinder,
the Clergy and Religious, past and present.
We thank God.*

*We thank God’s people for cooperating in ministry
to parish, church and community.*

*As a phase of ministry in the Bahamas
comes to a close for us as Sacred Hearts Community,
the words of the poet come to mind:*

*“Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time”.*

*These words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow certainly apply
to the Bahamas and our Sacred Hearts Community connections.
We are departing, but the footprints remain in Bahamian sands.
The memories are great. To God be the glory, great things He has done.
To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary honor and glory.*