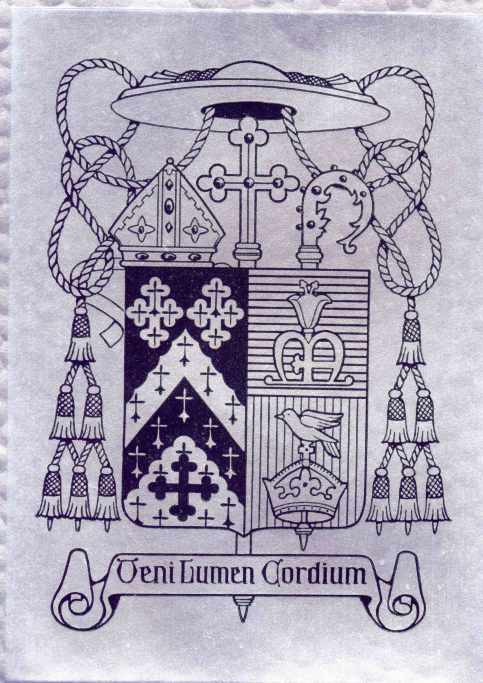


SOUVENIR



DEDICATED

To Our Most Rev. Bishop Edw. F. Hoban, S. T. D., LL. D.

Pontificating for the

SILVER JUBILEE

of St. Clement's Parish :: Lakewood, Ohio

NOVEMBER 23, 1947

The Centenary Year of the Diocese of Cleveland

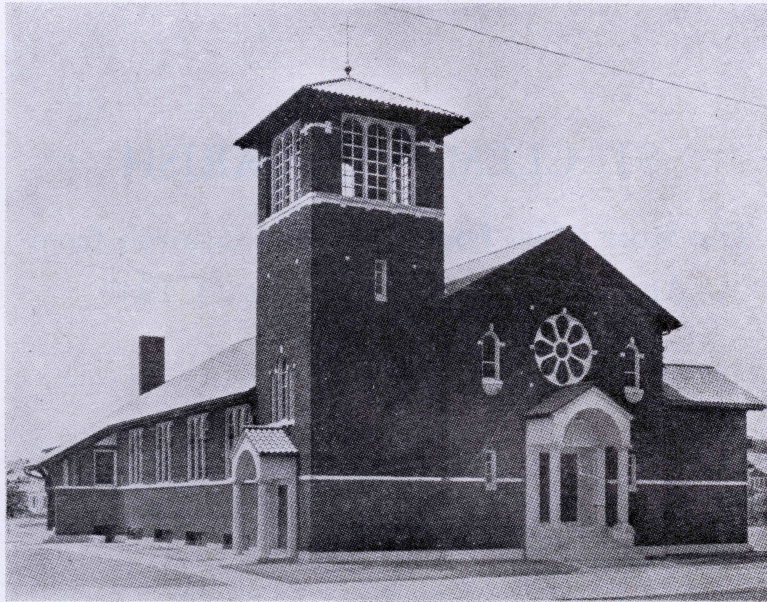
ST. CLEMENT'S PARISH

The Story of its Foundation and Growth from
April 27, 1922 to November 23, 1947

I

Twenty-five years are but a moment in time, hardly more than half the span of a generation, and not a long time in the history of a parish, but they lend enough perspective to tell an interesting story of a parish-centre that was built and paid for, and gave uninterrupted service in the work of saving souls and spreading the Kingdom of Christ during these first twenty-five years. So here is the story.

The rapid growth in population of Cleveland's westerly neighbor, Lakewood made it necessary to establish new parishes to serve the spiritual needs of the Catholics located there. The crowded condition of the most westerly parishes, St. Rose and St. James, hastened the decision of the Bishop and so there were actually five new parishes started on the West Side, St. Vincent de Paul's on Lorain Avenue, St. Christopher's in Rocky River, Our Lady of the Angels on Rocky River Drive, St. Luke's and St. Clement's in Lakewood. Fortunately, St. James parish when organized began its building program far enough away from St. Rose, so that at this time there was room between them for the new parishes. The official announcement of the foundation of St. Clement's parish was made April 27, 1922 by the appointment of a pastor, the Rev. Jos. J. Schmit, and the fixing of definite parish lines with Detroit Avenue as boundary line on the North, Lakewood Heights Boulevard on the South, Clarence Avenue on the East, and Lakeland Avenue on the West. The territory South of Madison Avenue, however, extended on the West to Riverside Drive and this was done for the convenience of the scattered families living there whose only means of transportation was the Madison Avenue carline to the Church.



Exterior original Church



Interior original Church

Some may ask: How did the church receive its name? The name was chosen by Bishop Schrembs who during the first years of his Episcopal labors in the diocese established seventeen new parishes, and not wishing to duplicate names of churches suggested to the pastor to present a list of the early martyrs of the Church and from this list he chose that of St. Clement, the third Pope after the Blessed Peter and a Martyr, whose feast is celebrated on November 23.

Nothing had been done in preparation for the establishment of the new parish, but through the courtesy of Father Stewart of St. Rose and Father Leahy of St. James a partial list of the Catholic families living within the newly-established limits was obtained. As many of the men as could be reached were notified and the first informal meeting was held at the home of Mr. John Hahn on Detroit Avenue on the eleventh day of May, 1922. At this meeting the following councilmen were appointed and approved: Messrs. Frank Smith, John Hahn, Frank Butler and John T. Creahan. It was further decided to hold a mass-meeting at the Homestead Theater Building on Detroit Avenue on May 17th, 1922. This was really the first Red-letter Day of the newly-organized parish. About 100 interested families were represented at the meeting, and after an address by the pastor a subscription was asked and about \$4,000 was promised. The announcement was made that St. Rose parish had donated the handsome sum of \$2,500. A beginning had been made, and the good work of the pioneers was taken up by the rapidly increasing number of those who were moving into the parish as soon as the news was broadcast that at last the much needed church would be built in the heart of Lakewood on Madison Avenue.

Through the courtesy of Mr. John Feighan the pastor established a temporary residence at 1510 Elmwood Avenue and began a systematic visitation of the families within the parish limits. Every month, beginning in June, he sent a letter to every family with the usual monthly-collection envelope enclosed, and by special arrangement with the respective pastors of St. Rose and St. James the members of the new parish were able to give their contribution to the new parish by dropping it into the collection basket wherever they attended services. This arrangement lasted until the new church was ready for services.

On June 30th, 1922 property was purchased at the corner of Madison Avenue and Lincoln with a frontage of 202 feet on Madison Avenue, about 250 feet on Lincoln Avenue and 80 feet on Marlowe Avenue. In the purchase was included a six-room brick residence on Lincoln Avenue which was at once remodelled and enlarged to serve as pastoral headquarters. The purchase price of the entire property including the residence was \$40,000.

It was the original plan of the pastor to build a temporary frame

church and at the same time a permanent school, but this plan had to be abandoned because the fire regulations in Lakewood forbid the erection of a frame building on Madison Avenue. It was therefore decided to build a permanent church, and Mr. Wm. Koehl was engaged as the architect to draw the plans.

In designing and planning the new church, the pastor, the councilmen and the architect felt that it was "better to have ruder work that tells a story or records a fact than the richer without meaning," so they planned a simple, humble parish church good architecturally and in harmony with the regulations and spirit of the Church, in preference to a building of Cathedral design and proportions that owing to the cost could not be built without violating the laws of the art of architecture. Linking the new St. Clement's with the old St. Clement's Church in Rome, they chose the Basilican type of the Italian Romanesque style of architecture and began construction at once breaking ground on August 17, 1922. The general contract exclusive of plumbing, heating and lighting was given to the lowest bidder, the Schrader Construction Company for \$68,000. One month later, September 17, 1922 the Rt. Rev. Joseph Schrembs, Bishop of Cleveland, assisted by three monsignors and fifty priests laid the cornerstone and preached the sermon from the front porch of the rectory.

The work progressed rapidly and with the growth of the building the enthusiasm of the people grew day by day. To create a proper parish spirit it is necessary that the members of the parish have an opportunity to meet at play as well as at prayer. With so many crowded masses in our large city parishes people come and go and hardly see each other, and so it is necessary to have parties, bazaars, dinners or any other form of social gatherings where members might share and propagate their enthusiasm, and both give and receive encouragement from the force of numbers. A well-ordered parish, aflame with the spirit of parish loyalty cannot honestly be called the "dry-rot of parochialism", for under proper direction such a parish will do more for the church universal than any other parish without it. The parish spirit at St. Clement's began when the women inaugurated a series of house-parties and the men came after working hours to clean out the rubbish and put down a temporary floor in preparation for a Grand Opening Bazaar. It seems that in those pioneer days everyone constituted a committee to work, and so without a trained parish organization, that first Bazaar netted \$8,250. It was held December 4th to 9th, 1922.

Two weeks remained till Christmas and they were spent in preparing the basement for the opening service on Christmas Day. The December letter of the pastor to the people contained the following announcement: "There is a special reason for the pastor and the people of St. Clement's to give expression to the joy that fills their hearts during this hallowed

season, for like the Shepherds of old they have received tidings of great joy. In the basement of the new church, which will very soon be dedicated to the exclusive service of God and the welfare of souls there will be offered up for the first time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Christmas Day. The Babe of Bethlehem has not knocked at the doors of St. Clement's Church in vain. The work of the last few days has transformed an ordinary basement into an inviting chapel, and the loving hands and hearts of all the Clementines will offer the new-born Babe of Bethlehem a royal welcome."

Christmas Day 1922, will therefore always be remembered as the day of the First Holy Mass offered in St. Clement's Church even though it was in an unfinished basement which loving hands and hearts had transformed to make it look like a Sisters' Chapel at Christmastide. A portable organ was brought from the home of L. P. Maguy on Olivewood; an improvised choir under the direction of the present organist Carl Kleinschnitz sang the mass; an altar was erected on the stage and prepared for service by the housekeepers, Miss Elizabeth Stockley and Miss Gertrude Weiss; a crib in the traditional setting so familiar in our churches stood at the base of the stage; the aisles were indicated with black tar-paper flanked by rows of portable rented chairs; and we believe that everyone of the 314 families then listed was represented at one of the three masses offered by the Pastor at 6, 8 and 10 on that Blessed Christmas Day. After that regular services at 8 and 10 were held every Sunday, the men coming on Thursday and Friday night to lend a personal hand in cleaning and arranging our improvised chapel for confessions on Saturday and masses on Sunday. No week-day services were held, so that the work of construction could go on without interruption.

While the work was going on at the church, the parish-house, originally a six-room house, was remodelled and enlarged by the building-contractor, A. R. Ruppelt at the cost of \$10,000 and was ready for occupancy in January of 1923.

St. Clement's really began to function after the impressive solemnity of the First Mass and as a matter of historical interest we record:

- January 21, 1923—Children invited to register for Sunday School Classes.
- January 28 —First Friday Devotions introduced.
- January 29 —Special meeting for the women of the parish to establish an Altar and Rosary Society. The Altar and Rosary Society which has for the past twenty-five years been the greatest help in all of the social and financial activities of the parish, was there-