

**The Pastors of St. Joseph Parish**  
**Strongsville, Ohio**  
**July 2022**



In October 2011, **Fr. Joseph Mamich**, a native of Strongsville, became the sixth pastor. At the time of his appointment, he was the youngest pastor in the Diocese of Cleveland, a distinction that he kept for almost three years. Fr. Joe quickly embraced the return to his hometown, became involved in many aspects of the parish, and then in 2015, as the Chaplain of Strongsville's Safety Forces. Building upon the strengths of the parish and its past, he sought to involve parishioners of all ages in opportunities to be part of our parish community and to offer their gifts to one another. Because of parishioner support and planning, all long-term capital needs of the parish were completed while becoming debt-free. Having achieved these goals, the Parish Endowment Fund was begun to provide for the future ministries and needs of our parish.

One unique thing during Fr. Joe's tenure was that about age five, he was diagnosed with kidney problems. As he got older he faced health complications as predicted, and by 34, he began to experience pain, tests, dialysis and visits to the hospital. He made the parish aware of his need for a kidney transplant and his prayers were answered by one of our parishioners, Jim Lechko, in 2014.



In 1991, **Fr. Robert Sanson**, who had been a professor at The Catholic University of America was named our fifth pastor. During his time here, the parish saw tremendous physical growth in the number of parishioners and the buildings themselves. In 1993, a Campaign was started to raise monies for three new entities. The school would build a gym, kindergarten classrooms and an administration wing. The church would build a gathering room, now known as the Holy Family Center, and also an administration wing that included meeting rooms. In 2006 a renovation to update the altar and move the baptismal font from the back of the church up to the sanctuary was completed.

In 2003, the idea of creating a relationship between a parish in El Salvador and St. Joseph began. Fr. Bob was involved with an orphanage in Zaragoza called the Community of Oscar Romero (COAR). In 2004, he suggested some of the parishioners accompany him on a mission trip to El Salvador. At the time, a local priest from the nearby village of San José Villanueva, Fr. Mario Adin Cruz Zaldivar, celebrated Mass in the *cantones* (local villages) using small chapels. Touched by the devotion and the obvious needs, a partnership was created between our parish and the Catholic community of San José Villanueva. As a result, the parishioners of St. Joseph have provided that community with several concrete chapels and gifts, including items from closed churches within our Diocese, to furnish these chapels. Today, our El Salvador Committee and the support from so many, continues to support our sister parish in both spiritual and financial ways. We pray regularly for them during our Weekend Masses. Since the inception of our Education Partnership, we have provided over \$160,000 in scholarships to El Salvador.



**Fr. Anthony Dodd** was named the fourth pastor in 1981. He had an aptitude for carpentry and “fixing things”. He initiated many spiritual programs. In February 1984, the parish was brought into the computer age when a computer was provided for the office by the bulletin company and work began on a new census of parishioners. He served as pastor until 1991. At that time, he felt he was being called to do God’s work in other areas. After a short sabbatical, he was reassigned in the Diocese.

**Fr. Robert Donahoe** was our third pastor from 1972-1981. He had been the Director of Elyria Catholic High School. While prior to that being a professor at Borromeo College of Ohio. During his time, many things happened including the development of the Parish Pastoral Council and the creation of St. John Neumann Parish. This would re-draw the boundaries of the parish to be all areas north of Lunn Road and Shurmer Road within the City of Strongsville. It was decided at this time, that the two parishes would share the school, and St. Joseph School was renamed Sts. Joseph and John Interparochial School. In 1981, Fr. Donahoe was appointed to Mother of Sorrows Parish in Peninsula to serve as their pastor.



In 1962, **Fr. James McDonough** became the second pastor. Fr. McDonough formerly was an English professor at St. John’s College. His major task was the planning and construction of a new church. Father McGraw had consulted two young architects, Richard Rauschenbach and Norman Casini, who had recently organized their own firm. Plans for the new church were already in place to begin the construction of a new church and rectory and were realized under Fr. McDonough’s leadership. May 1, 1965, he celebrated the first Mass in the new church, fulfilling the highest expectations. Fr. McDonough died suddenly in the rectory on March 17, 1972.

**Fr. Joseph McGraw**, St. Joseph’s founding pastor, received a letter of appointment on June 10, 1946, as printed on the next page. Fr. McGraw oversaw the building of the Quonset Hut and St. Joseph School, which consisted of 8 classrooms and a social hall. In 1950, Fr. McGraw launched a campaign for \$50,000 to provide a parish hall and four classrooms. In September of that year the school opened with an enrollment of 160 children. The Sisters of St. Joseph (Rocky River Drive) taught under the principal, Sister Marguerite, and for a time they lived in an apartment on the second floor of the school building. In 1952, the school was enlarged by the addition of four classrooms and the first rectory was built, which the later served as the convent prior to Mary House.



Meanwhile, the parish continued to grow and in the first ten years the number of families had more than doubled. As a matter of fact, new parishes were started in Brunswick and Middleburg Heights to accommodate the great number of people. On October 13, 1962, Fr. McGraw died in the rectory of a heart attack.