



# THE CONNECTOR

## Southbridge Catholic Schools

SOUTHBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
No. 1 - September 2017

### Welcome

**Mrs. Josie Citta**  
Principal of Trinity Catholic Academy



It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the first issue of *The Connector*, a newsletter dedicated to alumni of Southbridge Catholic Schools. Trinity Catholic Academy, the present Catholic school in Southbridge, is in its 26<sup>th</sup> year as an elementary school and looks forward to many more years at the corner of Hamilton and Pine Streets.

2016 was an eventful year. As we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an elementary school, we participated in Southbridge's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary parade in May of 2016. Thank you to the many hands that made it possible; it was an extraordinary event. In November, 2016 we welcomed a number of alumni of the Catholic schools of the past—St. Jeanne d'Arc, Notre Dame, St. Mary's, and Marian Hill. Alumni shared stories about their days in the various Southbridge Catholic schools as they toured the school. Graduates of Marian Hill reminisced about their classmates, teachers, and were even able to remember which of the original lockers students still used today was theirs! We all shared food and drink and became reacquainted.

As we went through the holiday season, our TCA choir visited Boston and sang Christmas carols on the steps of the State House. Our choir, directed by Mr. Brandon Vennink, is well known for its talent in our community. Their dulcet voices are welcomed and enjoyed in places such as the Southbridge Rehabilitation Center for its Anointing Mass and at St. Paul's Cathedral for the Mass for Life, adding to the joy of the Liturgy.

Our basketball teams and cheerleading squad enjoyed great success during the winter sports season. The girls' junior varsity team took first place in the yearly basketball tournament, and our cheerleading squad enjoyed three first place wins. Their success is the result of focus and resilience, important life skills expertly taught to them by their coaches.

There is much talk in education these days about STEM curriculum—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. As a Catholic school, TCA strives to address these four areas, but also to include the arts and religion. Therefore, we consistently move toward STREAM education—Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, and Math. Our teachers are currently co-writing a grant proposal that will enable them to incorporate even more into their classroom curriculum, all in the effort to keep pace in a modern world. Thanks to the support from some very generous benefactors, we have been able to install modern technology throughout the building that has already proved to be of immense value to our teachers and students and that will be of added value in bringing STREAM into our school.

With the new school year underway, we kindly ask you to keep us in your prayers. We start each school day in prayer and we will keep you in ours, as well.

We look forward to sharing more with you in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of *The Connector* which will be published over the winter.

Blessings for a great school year.

### Staying Connected

**Al Menard**  
Trinity Catholic Academy Advancement Officer



As I begin to put to paper, the intent and reasons we believe it is important to stay connected with you, the many alumni of Catholic Schools in Southbridge, current and former religious, faculty, staff, families and friends of Trinity Catholic Academy, I was made aware of a change coming that I personally was not prepared for. Fr. Peter Joyce will be leaving Southbridge and has been assigned to be the Pastor of St. Mary's of the Assumption in Milford, MA. Coincidentally, St. Mary's is the Parish I was baptized in, received my sacraments growing up, and was a member of the Parish for much of my life. My mother, Diane, is still to this day a Parish member. I recently told her our loss is her gain. In praying about what I should say to you, I think the message is best left short—that Fr. Peter Joyce's influence on Catholic School education has been a significant gift to all of us who have been part of Trinity Catholic Academy or any one of the Catholic Schools that have existed in Southbridge. Our focus is to build on the rich history that Fr. Peter graciously outlined in this newsletter by continuing to share all the positive impacts a Catholic

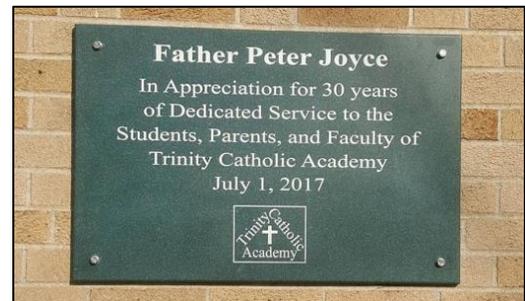
School education means for the children. We launched a "Pay it Forward" campaign to provide for the future of the school and build on the legacy of the Trinity Catholic Academy Endowment Fund. We have raised close to \$16,000 since November, 2016. The goal is to reach \$50,000 by the end of October and to annually build for the future as we "Pay it Forward".

I will close by saying that I am honored that Fr. Peter has granted me permission to launch a Scholarship Fund in his honor to be used for students attending Trinity Catholic Academy. Over the coming weeks, he and I will be meeting to work out the details of the

scholarship. Once the details have been finalized, we will share them with you. If you are interested in making a donation, please send a check payable to TCA with instructions stating your intent for the money to be used for the scholarship fund. Alternatively, you may donate online at [www.trinitycatholicacademy.org/donations](http://www.trinitycatholicacademy.org/donations) and specifically leave instructions for your donation.

I hope you enjoy *The Connector*, and would love to hear from you about topics you would like us to cover in future editions.

May God bless you!





**New Beginnings**  
**Father Kenneth Cardinale**

Dear Friends,

As the saying goes, allow me to introduce myself. I am Fr. Ken Cardinale, the new Pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Southbridge. That also means that I am the new Headmaster of the parish's beautiful gem of a school, Trinity Catholic Academy. I know that I have big shoes to fill, succeeding Fr. Peter Joyce in both of those roles. I know this personally because, you see, I was Fr. Peter's Associate Pastor for three years from 1998 to 2001 at St. Mary Parish in Southbridge. Trinity became the parish school again right before I was transferred, so I've known for many years exactly what a gem it is.

Fr. Peter was Pastor in Southbridge for 25 years, and an Associate Pastor here 5 years before that. He has lived so much of the history and tradition of the Catholic Community in Southbridge, including Trinity's. Plus, he is a good historian in general. Therefore, it is altogether fitting that we make good use of a parting gift he created before he knew he was moving on to St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Milford. It is a history of Trinity Catholic Academy which brings us up to the present.

So we thank Fr. Peter for all he has done for the parish and the school, and for this excellent history. We pray for him in the new chapter of his priestly ministry, and we pray for a bright future for us together here in Southbridge and for Trinity Catholic Academy, which we love so much.

**The History of Catholic Schools in Southbridge**  
**Part 1 of a 4 Part Series**  
**by Father Peter Joyce**



**I. The First Catholic School:**  
***L'Ecole de Madame Kasky (1871-1879)***

While the origins of Catholic faith and sacramental life trace their roots to the first known Mass one day in September of 1840 by Father James Fitton, the origins of Catholic education begin under the vision and effort of Father Michel LeBreton. Pere LeBreton arrived in Southbridge to celebrate the first Mass specifically for the French-Canadian community on November 29, 1869. Just a year later at Midnight Mass for Christmas of 1870 he had built the first Notre Dame Church on Pine Street to hold 1,200 people at a cost of \$17,000.



With the church built, and a steady influx of French-Canadian arrivals to work in local mills, he turned his attention to the need for a parochial school. Most likely he was strongly influenced by the then recent Council of Baltimore and as a man ahead of his

time, set about to construct a two story building next to the church on Pine Street to serve as a school. This would be the first French speaking parish in the Diocese of Boston to have a parochial school since the Diocese of Springfield would not be created until the following year.

To operate the school, he hired Madame Louis (Elise) Kasky, a former teacher in Canada, to be the headmaster and teacher of the new school. It was called *L'Ecole de Memere Kasky*. Mme. Kasky had a strong interest in drama and often organized and directed several plays with her students for the inspiration and edification of the parish faithful. In 1873, Pere LeBreton was allowed to return to France and Pere Georges Elzeur Brochu was named the new pastor of Notre Dame Parish. In 1879, Mme. Kasky and her family moved to Spencer and the school was now without a teacher. Her departure left Pere Brochu without a leader for his school and he was determined to locate a religious community of sisters who would run the school. To bring them to Southbridge, he would need a residence for the sisters and so a parish-wide meeting was held that turned contentious and even violent. Many were satisfied with the public school system, others who were only seasonal workers intending to return to Canada objected to financing buildings they would not benefit from, and still others felt it more important that their children work rather than study. The authoritarian manner of Pere Brochu didn't sit well with many parishioners; they stoned his house and even petitioned the new Bishop of Springfield for his transfer.

**Notre Dame School: *The Sisters of Saint Anne***  
**(1881-1890)**

In 1879, when Mme.Kasky, the former headmistress of the parish school for Notre Dame Parish, moved with her family to Spencer, the pastor Pere Brochu needed to find new leadership for the school. With an eye to the future of the growing parish, Pere Brochu was determined to secure an order of religious sisters to organize and run the school so that it would support the expanding parish. Holding a parish wide meeting to discuss a need to raise funds for a convent for the sisters, who were not yet invited, but who he knew would only come with the security of appropriate accommodations, tempers flared. The meeting grew contentious and then violent. The pastor's desire for a school was not matched by all of his parishioners who strongly objected to paying for it. But, Pere Brochu was undaunted.

On August 3, 1881, seven Sisters of Sainte Anne arrived in Southbridge to work with Pere Brochu and direct the new Notre Dame School, a tuition free school for over 600 pupils. However, the firm direction of Pere Brochu who was subsequently named a Monsignor in 1887, caused tension and conflicts with the sisters that required the intervention of their Mother General on countless occasions. So, in 1890, when the sisters made their annual retreat in Canada they received permission from both bishops of Springfield and of Montreal and thereby sent Msgr. Brochu a letter that as of June 30 they would no longer staff Notre Dame School. By the time the notice arrived, it was too late for Pere Brochu to make the necessary changes to staff the school for the opening day of classes that September.

This situation presented a real hardship for the public schools in Southbridge, highlighting an issue that continues to be overlooked in modern times. The public school system did not have adequate facilities to receive the influx of students from a closed Notre Dame School and so Pere Brochu needed to lease his school building to the town to accommodate the increased students that now attended public schools since there was no parochial school in place. While this brought revenue to the parish, it alienated many parishioners who had fought against the school, been public reprimanded and even denied the sacraments, when now their pastor was patronizing the public school system.

**Notre Dame School: *The Sisters of the Assumption***  
**Arrive (1891-1971)**

With the abrupt departure of the Sisters of Saint Anne a month before school would have opened in 1890, Pere Brochu was determined to find another group of religious before school would open for the following year. Over the next year, he worked tirelessly to

bring another community of religious sisters to teach in Southbridge. His zeal for the welfare of the young souls in his care touched the hearts of the leadership of the Sisters of the Assumption in Nicolet, Canada. Several calls from various cities throughout the United States had been received looking for their teaching sisters, but it was the request of Pere Brochu that received 'privileged consideration.' When told that he needed to wait two years, he rushed to Canada to meet with the Mother General. At their General Council on January 25, 1891, it was decided to establish a mission on American soil for the first time, and to do so in Southbridge. When he received the news, Pere Brochu returned in a hurry to Nicolet in order to sign a contract with the Sisters.

On August 22, 1891, seven sisters with their Superior, Sr. Ste. Anne, arrived in Southbridge. Serving the needs of 650 students enrolled in Notre Dame School presented challenges that first year. All of the sisters had come from Canada and spoke French exclusively when school opened on September 8, 1891. The challenge of French speaking nuns with young boys and girls who spoke predominantly English presented its own challenges. One of the sisters recounted, 'The little boys have yet to learn how to hold their book, to open them at the right page; while four or five are attentive to the lesson, forty-five play or fight, break inkwells, dirty everything around them. Never in our lives have we ever seen anything like this!'

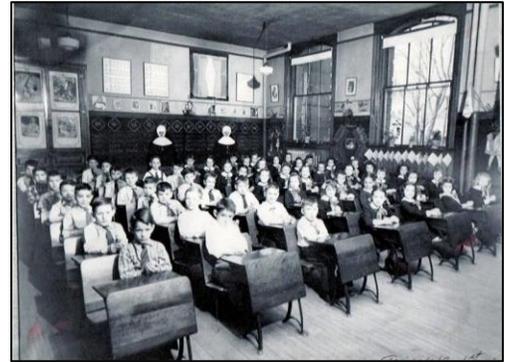
Nonetheless, the school flourished, the Sisters were well received, enjoying the support and affection of their host parish. History details that big changes came to their convent in 1917 when electricity was installed in the convent and the sisters received an electric iron and an automatic washing machine! They stayed for four score in Southbridge teaching young people, eventually adding to their numbers when Sainte Jeanne d'Arc School opened at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish. This was the beginning of a long and proud legacy of Notre Dame School shaping young minds and hearts as Catholics and citizens of our community.



#### IV. Saint Mary School: *The Sisters of Saint Joseph Arrive (1889-1988)*

When Father James Kremmin, the pastor of Saint Mary Church died in 1886, he was buried to the right of the main entrance of the church and Father James Donahoe was named pastor at Saint Mary Church on Hamilton Street. With the reduction of the parish debt from the building of the new church at the corner of Hamilton and Marcy Streets, he set about to convert the former Saint Peter Church, the original Catholic church in Southbridge into a fitting place for education. With that completed, he contracted with the Sisters of Saint Joseph from Holyoke, MA. They arrived in 1889 with seven sisters, Sister Hilary as their superior, to teach one hundred fifty students in the newly opened Saint Peter's Institute which in time became known as Saint Mary's School. When it opened it housed grades one through twelve. In 1894, the school had its first graduating class, Miss Catherine Veronica Whalen and Miss Martha Agnes Hafner. Fr. Donahoe purchased the Bullfinch property on Marcy Street and converted it into a rectory so that the Sisters could live in the former rectory adjacent to the school on Hamilton Street. Between Saint

Mary's School which had been fashioned out of the converted Saint Peter Church and Pine Street, there was a vacant plot of land. For a thousand dollars, Fr. Donahoe purchased it from its owners, the Hamilton Woolen Mills. For the next sixty years, it was enjoyed as playground and makeshift ballfield for the students of Saint Mary School. In 1959, ground would be broken on this site for the future Saint Mary High School, then merged to become Marianhill High School, and today is where Trinity Catholic Academy stands.



Part 2 of *The History of Catholic Schools in Southbridge* coming soon in the next edition of *The Connector*.



#### CATCHING UP WITH ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Lori (Obuchowski) Primavera

My name is Lori (Obuchowski) Primavera. I grew up in Charlton, Massachusetts. My three brothers and I attended St. Mary's Elementary and Marianhill Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School. I started at St. Mary's Elementary School in 1975 and continued my Catholic education through Grade 12 at Marianhill Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School. In 1988, I graduated as the last class of Marianhill as St. Mary's Elementary and Marianhill merged under the new name Trinity Catholic Academy.



I attended Worcester State College and earned a degree in Biology and Education. I am married to my amazing husband, Michael, and we have two wonderful children, Michael and Nicole who are both graduates of Trinity Catholic Academy. Each of them has gone on to successful careers. My daughter graduated from Anna Maria with her RN BSN and is a nurse at UMass Memorial in Worcester. My son is a sergeant in the US Army who recently returned from Afghanistan and is currently stationed in Fort Riley, Kansas.

I began teaching at Trinity Catholic Academy in 1998 as the Physical Education teacher. I enjoyed being active with all grade levels, but I was given the opportunity to teach Grade 4 in 2005. It did not take long for me to realize how much I loved being a teacher in the classroom and have been doing so for 11 years. Along with being a classroom teacher, I am the coach of the girls' basketball teams and a student council advisor.

I have many wonderful memories of my Catholic education. There were small classes and everyone seemed to know each other. I loved playing sports in middle and high school, especially softball and basketball. I can recall most of the teachers I had in elementary and junior and senior high school. A few of my teachers have taught or are still teaching in the Worcester diocese. It always brought a smile to

my face when I would see Sr. Linda Fallon and Sr. Roberta Salah, my Kindergarten and third grade teachers respectively, at the diocesan professional development meetings. One memory I have is being in fifth or sixth grade with Mr. Baglio who would quiz us on the states and capitals. I am proud to say that I knew them by heart and always got a 100 on my quizzes.

Many of my teachers were influential in my life but in particular, Miss Bartolomei, or Miss B. as we called her in school. She taught math and science in the middle/high school. She was strict and expected the best from her students and had her own unique style of teaching. She made class a challenge, but we had fun as well. One "technique" she used to keep our math facts sharp is she would have one student stand, and she would rattle off a math sentence that included all operations and expected you to have an answer. I was not always successful but felt pretty good when I was! I feel that much of what I learned from her has remained with me and has become a part of who I am as a teacher.

Catholic education has always been important to me, and I feel that many of the teachers I had in Catholic school inspired me to be the teacher I am today. I feel blessed to be part of the Trinity Catholic Academy family.

## IT'S JUST NUNSENSE

By Cindy Capillo



We have a doll. I say we because my sister and I do not really agree on who the doll actually belongs to. I say she is mine. Maybe that is because time and memory have made it so. No matter, though, this doll's story is still the same.

Back when we were little girls, our father covered the news of the day in Southbridge while working as a reporter and photographer for the Worcester Telegram & Gazette. His daily beat included all of the activities in the catholic community and, back in those days, there were plenty. It was often part of our life

to accompany him to certain places while he gathered facts for his next story. And so it was on this day that my sister and I, and MY doll, passed the time in the back seat of Father Killion's huge Buick while my father interviewed him outside the rectory at St Mary's church. After a bit, they finished and we hopped out and headed home with Dad. It wasn't long after that I realized that I had left MY doll in the back seat of the priest's car. I cried and maybe my sister cried a little, too, I don't know, but my father assured me that we would pick her up on the next trip to the church.

It seemed like forever but we finally made it back to the rectory at St Mary's and I was so anxious to get MY doll back. Whenever Father Killion turned around with her in his hands, I couldn't believe my eyes! The Sisters of St. Joseph, who were in residence at the time, had transformed her into one of their own. She was in a full, handmade nun's habit.

I, or, okay, we, loved her even more and from that day forward and we called her Sister St. Joseph.

Sister St. Joseph is getting on in years. Well, she's practically as old as me, but there is no doubt that she was and is one of a kind. The Sisters of St. Joseph did not miss a loving detail.

Her habit consists of a slip and over the slip is a full tunic dress with attached plate or apron-like front panel and beautiful full sleeves. Around her waist is a cinch of two ropes, one having three knots and

the other, two. These knots represent the five wounds of Jesus. Also attached is a set of rosary beads. Around her neck is a large white collar.

Sister St. Joseph's headwear begins with a wimple, a fabric piece that goes around her face and covers her hair (which was cut short by the nuns). Over that is the tall white band and an under veil fitted over that to create the triangle in the front to represent the Holy Trinity. And, of course, on top of that, the veil.

Sister St. Joseph is one of the very few still wearing the habit these days. She is a bit of an endangered species of sorts. She is a time capsule, really, and represents a tiny bit of the deep history of this order of nuns who served Southbridge so passionately for many years. The Sisters of St. Joseph were a very important part of Catholic education for many children in Southbridge. So, with all this talk of sisters, it is only right that I do the sisterly thing and call a truce on the disagreement concerning the ownership of Sister St Joseph, our Sister St. Joseph. Yes, I said it, OUR Sister St. Joseph. Love you, Sis!



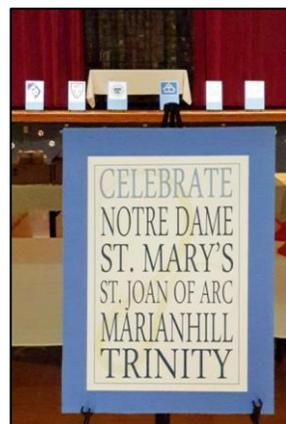
## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS REUNION NEWS



On Saturday, November 12, 2016, old friends met to celebrate the history of Catholic Schools in Southbridge.



It began with a Mass at Notre Dame Church, followed by a festive gathering for refreshments, drinks and reminiscing at Trinity Catholic Academy and ended with an Alumni Basketball Game on Sunday. A good time had by all and plans are already underway for the next one. We will keep you posted in future editions of *The Connector*.



### CONTACT US

## The Connector

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