

FATHER XAVIER BUTLER - St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Steveston

INTERVIEWED:

April 15, 1975

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Father Butler came to the Parish in September, 1968, when the Parish numbered about 350 families. Presently, it composes about 700 families. Parish boundaries were established in 1966 to extend two miles from the ocean to No. 2 Road, stretching north and south of the Island.

The present Rectory is located at 1181 - 2nd Avenue, Steveston, while the church is 471 Williams Rd., Richmond, B. C.

Origin of the Parish

The Community of the Franciscan Brothers of the Atonement came to Vancouver to the church on Cordova Street in the 1920's. They travelled out to Steveston to give Mass in 1929 to the large community of Japanese fishermen in the area, holding Mass in homes in the area.

1932 - Built a church on Second Avenue, Steveston.

It is a wood building, two stories high. Upper floor was used as a church and the lower floor as a Convent for the Sisters - its front part as a classroom for the kindergarten and nursery during the day, and a Study Club during the evening. The Sisters have left since 1968.

Parishioners

As this was the first Catholic Church on the Island, the congregation expanded from Japanese to include many other nationalities.

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Priests

1932 - 1934	Father Quigley
1934 - 1938	Father Dominic Kenny
1938 - 1940	Father Hoban
1940 - 1942	Father O'Farrell
1942 - 1945	Father Craven
1945 - 1949	Father Kenny returned
1949 - 1958	Father Foley
1958 - 1968	Father Pickelle
1968 -	Father Butler

New Church

Construction started 1966. Dedication service was held April 30, 1967. The Archbishop of Vancouver, the Most Reverend Martin Johnson, officiated at the service.

Lot

Approximately 14 acres purchased - was a farm - now holding 8.2 acres by a Parish group. The building committee recommended re-locating more centrally and building a larger church for the growing Parish.

Architect

Mr. Frank Roy.

Contractor

M & C Contractors.

Sub-Contractors

Art work, Stations of the Cross & Crucifix, etc., by a local sculptor, Mr. Imredy.

The new church is linked to the old by the Altar Stone which was moved over and which had been consecrated in 1929.

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There is a Parish Council of 12 members - 6 men and 4 women with priests; meet to discuss needs of parishioners.

Father Butler has an associate, Father David Fitzgerald, and a religious Brother, Father Kieran Cullen who attends to the youth work - a very viable group started in 1958 - 1959 and taking the name of the Antonians.

New Building

Very large building. Entrance right off Williams. Seats about 750. Parking lot at side - where they hope to erect a Rectory and Parish Hall. Church built on concrete slab with radiant heating in the floor. Has sacristy and toilet rooms and nursery.

The Order

Founded by an Anglican Minister in 1898, interested in Union. Established this north of New York City. In 1904 Father Paul, the founder, edited a magazine called 'The Lamp', and in 1908 established a week of Prayer for Christian Unity and found a great acceptance between Catholics and non-Catholics. He entered the Catholic Church in 1909. There are many missions throughout the world.

All the properties of the churches are in the title of the Archbishop of Vancouver, but the funds for building this church were raised within the Parish.

Cost

Approximately \$200,000., with furnishings over that amount.

Special Events

Father Butler has celebrated his 25th Anniversary in the Priesthood in 1972. One big event will be the burning of the mortgage.

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Holy Year

As 1975 is declared a Holy Year in the Catholic Church, this year's theme is one of Reconciliation between God & Man. There is an extra incentive to perform this. There have been various liturgical celebrations and a Parish Mission. This year too, the Conferral of Confirmation will be conferred by the Archbishop of Vancouver. There will be some special liturgical observances in the Fall.

Plans for the Future

Embodied in building a Rectory at the site of the new church.

Upkeep

Encouraged to donate generously and of one hour's salary per week.

Disposal of the Old Church

Buildings are not of much commercial value, but the land will be sold.

MURIEL NOBLE.