Introduction & Report of the Executive Director

A warm welcome to all readers of our newly christened newsletter! As the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission (NJCHC) enters its fourth decade of existence and enterprise in the field of religious-oriented research and preservation initiatives, our membership past and present has built a strong foundation upon which we hope to encourage even greater awareness in the days ahead. Our perpetual goal is to maintain a strong connection between the historical legacy of the earliest pioneering missionaries and laity of the 17th century who settled within the borders of what would become the Garden State. Established traditions along with those in the making are all part of our service and research oriented mission.

Therefore, this Web-based reincarnation of our newsletter (the original was published by the late Dr. Joseph Mahoney, our first executive director) is just one prime example of how the past and present have merged as part of the collective record. Along with exploring bygone eras, we hope to provide the most recent information of note that reflects upon our dedicated mission of promoting historical enlightenment in its many and varied forms.

The value of Catholic traditions as representative of the universal Church are not only international in scope, but the local and diverse nature of the diocesan, parish, institutional and clergy-centered chapters combined with the contributions of the faithful make this unfolding story a memorable one in so many ways. The Commission has embraced this sense of historical discovery in various ways from detailed publications to symposia to research projects galore.

I am proud to be associated with the Commission in tandem with my work at Seton Hall University, which houses the archival records for the Archdiocese of Newark. Our research center combined with other repositories, societies and libraries, provide an invaluable basis for the pursuit of further study in the field at large. From an organizational standpoint, the value of preserving tradition has resulted in various updates in the form of revised bylaws, new membership developments and even a new title. Each of these measures is designed to solidify outreach efforts to those with a connection to the Commission, but friends in the religious community and the secular world from High Point to Cape May and all parts of the nation and across the globe alike.

(Continued on Page 8)

Message from the Commission Chairman

Since 1992 I have had the honor to chair the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission (most of that time with the word “Records” in the organization’s title), having succeeded Archbishop Peter Leo Gerety in this role, at his request. Archbishop Gerety, our retired metropolitan ordinary, along with the bishops of New Jersey and Seton Hall University, founded the Commission in 1976.

It is typical of his historical vision, especially as regards the Church of Newark and throughout New Jersey, that Archbishop Gerety should set up an organization dedicated to preserving the records and spreading the “good news” about Catholic people and institutions in a professional and scholarly way.

The late Bishop John J. Dougherty, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark and past president of Seton Hall, was the Commission’s first chair. The late Dr. Joseph Mahoney, professor of history, was the founding executive director, from 1976 through 2005. Thus the Commission itself has a history—and is a part of history.

It has been one of the joys of my own episcopal ministry to be involved with the Commission, which is enthusiastically supported by my brother bishops of New Jersey in all the dioceses that comprise our ecclesiastical province. The current Archbishop of Newark, the Most Reverend John J. Myers, and the ordinaries of the dioceses of Trenton, Paterson, Camden and Metuchen, as well as the Eastern Rite Dioceses of Passaic and Our Lady of Deliverance, support our work through annual funding and prayer. I share with them regular updates on the activities and the progress of the Commission, which they review with great interest.

So, I am happy to welcome you to this issue of our newsletter, an inaugural issue of a kind: The first since the Commission’s reorganization in fall 2007. May the good Lord continue to bless the work of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission and all of his disciples who are dedicated to the advancement of the Catholic faith in our state.

• Most Rev. Dominic A. Marconi, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of Newark
Necrology

Joseph F. Mahoney, Ph.D.
Dr. Joseph Francis Mahoney, retired professor of history at Seton Hall University and founding executive director of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission, died on Oct. 11, 2006. He was 78 years old.

Barbara Bari, Ph.D.
Dr. Barbara Bari, a professor of history at the College of Saint Elizabeth and a longtime member of the Commission, died on Dec. 20, 2006.

Rev. Daniel A. Degnan, S.J.
Father Daniel A. Degnan, the 20th president of Saint Peter’s College and former dean of the School of Law at Seton Hall University, died on March 16, 2007. He was 80 years old.

Rev. Msgr. Robert G. Moneta
Msgr. Robert G. Moneta, pastor of St. George Byzantine Catholic Church in Newark and member of the NJCHRC, died on April 29, 2007. He was 80 years old.

Meet the Commission

Most Rev. Dominic A. Marconi, D.D. — Chairman & Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of Newark
Mr. Alan De Lozier — NJCHC Executive Director & Director of Seton Hall University Archives

Rev. James F. Betz — Diocese of Camden
Rev. Robert Carbonneau, C.P. — Passionist Historical Studies Director
Rev. Augustine Curley, O.S.B. — Archivist/Teacher - Newark Abbey & St. Benedict’s Prep
Rev. Michael Knoll — Diocese of Metuchen
Rev. Msgr. Raymond J. Kupke — Archivist of the Diocese of Paterson
Sr. Margherita Marchione, M.P.F. — Villa Walsh Academy
Dr. James P. McCartin — Department of History, Seton Hall University
Dr. Howard McGinn — Director of University Libraries, Seton Hall University
Dr. Fernanda Perrone — Special Collections & University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries
Rev. Msgr. Francis R. Seymour — Archivist of the Archdiocese of Newark
Very Rev. Marcel Szabo — Eparchy of Passaic
Mr. Gregory Tobin — Senior Adviser for Communications, Seton Hall University
Dr. Peter J. Wosh — Director of Archives Program, New York University

(Continued on Page 3)
It was April Fool’s Day, Monday, April 1, 1974. I was an assistant chancellor of the archdiocese at that time, and three priests called me that day to verify a news report they had heard. The report was that Bishop Peter L. Gerety of Portland, Maine, had been named Archbishop of Newark. I told all of them I was certain there was no truth to the report, and since it was April Fool’s Day, that’s probably what prompted such news. With the greatest of confidence I assured them it could not be true because Archbishop Thomas A. Boland, then Archbishop of Newark, had not retired yet and gave no indication of doing so anytime soon, even though he was 78 years old. Need I tell you how greatly surprised I was the next day to learn that the news report was indeed true. Somehow the news service carrying that report released it a day ahead of time by mistake, and so the news spread rapidly.

He was astounded when Archbishop Gerety suggested the very next day for their meeting. He gulped and said, “Sure, come on down.” That day Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Costello and Monsignor J. Ambrosio, our vicar general went to Newark Airport to bring Archbishop Gerety to the chancery office, which at the time was located on Mulberry Street in Newark.

When he got off the elevator on the second floor, I was standing there with Msgr. Joseph A. Beggans and Father (later Bishop) Robert F. Garner. Archbishop Boland stood outside his office down the hall and someone motioned to Archbishop Gerety that Archbishop Boland was waiting for him.

He replied that he had wanted to say hello to these monsignors standing nearby. Father Garner spoke up and said that Msgr. Beggans was the only monsignor here and that he and I were not monsignors. Very quickly, our new archbishop said to us: “Well you are both monsignors in pectore.” (In pectore is a Latin term for appointments that are kept secret for a time.) That was the first time I met the man for whom I had been working on and off for the past 33 years.

That initial visit set the pattern for almost weekly visits for the next three months until his solemn installation on June 28. A few days after his first visit, his priest secretary in Portland, Rev. Stephen Concannon, called our chancery. Since I was the only priest at his desk at that particular moment I took the call. Father Concannon wanted us to know of the new archbishop’s plans to come to Newark the next week. From then on I became his interim secretary, I met him at the airport each week and set up appointments with the people he wanted to meet.

From the very beginning I saw a man who had an agenda for action. Archbishop Boland was much more passive and made no demands on his staff. When he gave us work to do, he left it up to us to get it done in our own good time. Archbishop Gerety made it clear he wanted everything done immediately. One of the reasons was his reputation for efficiency. He also wanted time to relax and enjoy his deep passion for sail boating.

Archbishop Boland was in the office virtually every day even Saturdays when the office was closed. He rarely took vacations. In fact in the first summer after his installation, he came to the office only one or two days a week. Let us know that even that was by exception since he wanted to get acquainted with his new diocese. However, while he was away he would call each day and we would go over the mail with him. This was in the days before cell phones and email. He authorized us to give appropriate responses to requests that were made of him, and the business of the office went on as smoothly as if he were there.

Once that first summer of his acquaintance with the archdiocese was over, Archbishop Gerety moved full speed ahead. He had several meetings of the priests in different areas of the archdiocese to present a general outline of his plans and to answer their questions. He went to meetings of virtually all the archdiocesan agencies and institutions and commissions.

He made it quite clear that he was attending these meetings only so he could introduce himself to those working in these groups. He told them he would not be a working member of any committee because his role was to receive their recommendations.

When Archbishop Gerety arrived in Newark, he faced a diocese with an enormous debt that was growing steadily. Very quickly he put together the Archbishop’s Committee of the Laity. This group was composed of business and financial leaders in the community. By and large he followed the advice they offered, and within nine years the entire debt was paid off. Of course, to reach that stage he had to cut back several programs and freeze hiring of employees and other distasteful but necessary steps.

However, he always had a vision of what he wanted to accomplish. He was not one simply to solve an immediate crisis and then move on to the next one. He wanted to know what all the implications were of the problem at hand. He further wanted to know how possible solutions would affect the future. Putting it all together with the recommendations he received, he moved forward with his decision.

(Continued on Page 4)
His attitude of consultation and seeking advice from experts in certain fields was one he followed all his life. When he was only ordained a priest for three years, his bishop in Hartford gave him the responsibility of founding the first African-American parish in the state of Connecticut. He immediately started searching for people to help him in this endeavor. Before long, he put together a group of business leaders to help him raise money for the parish. The parish is St. Martin de Porres in New Haven, and it is still in operation.

A few years after getting the New Haven parish started, he decided to open a grammar school. He went to the bishop and asked permission to build a convent. The bishop told him he didn't have any religious sisters yet, so why would he build a convent?

Father Gerety said he would not be able to get a group of sisters to come there unless he had a convent for them. This convinced the bishop, and the convent was built.

During his years at St. Martin's Parish, he traveled all over the state of Connecticut to speak at Sunday Masses about his work in New Haven. He was thus able to receive financial support from those parishes to enable him to carry on his mission. He truly enjoyed his ministry there, but after 24 years he thought he was getting stale. So he went to his bishop—Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien of Hartford—and told him he thought it was time to hand over this work to a younger priest who would have some new ideas. However, Archbishop O'Brien asked him to stay on for a while.

Little did Father Gerety know that plans were being made to appoint him a bishop. So, he was greatly surprised to receive a letter in 1966 informing him that he was being appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Portland, Maine. On many of his subsequent visits to St. Martin de Porres Parish, I heard him say that only the Holy Father could take him out of that parish. He relishes every opportunity he gets to go back there. Surprisingly, there are still a large number of people there who remember him with the greatest affection, even though he left there more than 41 years ago.

Incidentally, this parish has a statistic that very few if any other parishes in the country can claim. Since its foundation with Archbishop Gerety as its first pastor, there have been a total of five pastors. All five are still alive!

The Second Vatican Council had closed its final session some six months before Father Gerety became Bishop Gerety. Although he was not at the council, it pretty much fell to him to implement all its decrees in Maine. A few years ago, I was with him at the episcopal ordination of an auxiliary bishop of Portland. After the Mass, a Portland priest came up to him and said: "Archbishop, I want to thank you for bringing the Second Vatican Council to the state of Maine. Oh, we were kicking and screaming at the time, but we sure are grateful now."

His 12 years as Archbishop of Newark were also marked by much "kicking and screaming." Through it all, he stuck to his vision of the Church and was not deterred by the least. The passage of time has shown us the wisdom of his actions. In his many public appearances these days he is treated like a folk hero. By the grace of God, he has now lived long enough to receive the loving gratitude of the people he served so faithfully, a gratitude that was not so apparent when he was serving as the third Archbishop of Newark.

[Editor's note: Archbishop Peter Leo Gerety celebrated his 95th birthday on July 19, 2007. He is the oldest living Catholic bishop in the United States. This article by Msgr. Seymour was originally published in The Catholic Advocate, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Newark. Reprinted here with permission.]
History of the Commission
(1976-Present)

Compiled By Alan De Lozier

Introduction

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission was established in 1976 by the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey and Seton Hall University. Its purpose is to gather and preserve the print and photographic history of Catholics and Catholicism in New Jersey, to supplement these records through oral history interviews, and to make these resources available to all. The first Chairman of the Commission was the Most Rev. John J. Dougherty; he was succeeded by the Most Rev. Peter Leo Gerety, Archbishop Emeritus of Newark. Upon his resignation in 1992, Most Rev. Dominick A. Marconi assumed direction of the Commission. The founding Executive Director, Dr. Joseph Mahoney, who served in this capacity from 1976-2005, provided crucial leadership in regard to the program overall. In furtherance of its goals, the Commission has undertaken projects in several different preservation areas. With regard to collecting materials, it has aided in the transfer and organization of the Archdiocese of Newark Archives now housed at Seton Hall University. The Commission has also held several public programs relating to New Jersey Catholic History; two of these have been aimed at helping the authors of parish and other institutional histories improve their works, others have examined Catholic education in the state and the relation of the Church to various immigrant groups. Other activities will be undertaken as the NJCHC enters its fourth decade of service to New Jersey and beyond.

Membership

Members of the Commission include individuals with an interest (professional, scholarly, or personal) in the history of local Catholicism. Additional members are or have been professional historians, diocesan and institutional archivists, along with clergy and laity with expertise in the study of religious history.

Mission & Focus

The principal purpose of the Commission is to produce scholarly histories of the Catholic Church and of Catholics in the State of New Jersey. Ancillary to this, and requisite to its accomplishments are the following measures: maintaining an established research facility at Seton Hall University for the study of Catholics and Catholicism in the Garden State; identifying, increasing access to, and encouraging the preservation of the records of dioceses, religious orders, parishes, and other institutions throughout the nation; developing a publications program for works which explore the New Jersey Catholic experience; bibliographic, and historical materials to increase awareness of Catholic source materials among with targeting and making readily available significant primary sources to the community at large.

Activities & Support

Continued work in such areas as manuscript preservation and Collection in the area of New Jersey Catholic History located at Seton Hall University. An oral history program with Catholic figures and themes designed to supplement the written record of our documentation and publication of a Commission Newsletter and our own Internet Webpage to provide updated information regarding group activities on a regular basis, public programs in such areas as historical and educational. How to Write Parish Histories and Catholic higher education are just a few of the scheduled outreach initiatives. General support for the work of the Commission comes from two principal sources: Seton Hall University which provides office space and archival storage and gifts to benefactors. The most substantial contributions have come from the Bishops of New Jersey along with the State Council of the Knights of Columbus. Specific support for individual projects in the past have been received from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the New Jersey Committee for the Humanities and from individual donors.
News from the Seton Hall University Archives & Special Collections Center

Various collections continue to be acquired on a regular basis as part of an ongoing mission to enhance our resource focus in the area of Catholic New Jersey in particular and expand even further into the realm of American Catholicism at large. Within the past month three important groupings of historical material have been received. The Father Walter DeBold (1816-1906) library of books and related texts in the study of ritualism and cults across the world will enliven our growing Rare Book Collection. Former University President Msgr. Edward Fleming has donated a number of newspaper clippings, photographs, letters and associated materials related to his life in academic and administrative circles that chronicle his activities as Chief Executive of Seton in 1969-70 in particular. Area teacher and historian, Thomas "TC" Murray, who worked on the 1964 Tercentenary of New Jersey, and is widely regarded as the foremost expert on the now defunct Essex Catholic High School, is entrusting his papers and copies of publications which range from the 1960s-2000s to our repository.

Business papers, monographs and related objects from the former Seton Hall University Press were recently acquired. During its prime operational years, the Press specialized in Chinese language materials and related volumes. Finished texts were published not only through their South Orange headquarters, but the Press also had a satellite office in Taiwan during the late 1960s mid-1970s. The University has long had strong ties to Asia with the introduction of a Far Eastern Studies Institute in 1951 that still functions today and from which materials are continually produced and added to our collection as well.

The first major grouping of Irish-American papers obtained by our repository were donated by former New Jersey State Ancient Order of Hibernians Chair James McFarland. This documentation centers upon varying issues that range from AOH activities within the Garden State to the peace process in Northern Ireland. A majority of these papers, reports and related items were produced during the 1980s-90s.

A special window exhibit entitled: "Essex Catholic High School on Broadway: 1957-2003" celebrating this defunct preparatory school was on display from October 2007 - January of 2008 at Walsh Library on the campus of Seton Hall University. The showcase featured various yearbooks, prints, trophies and other memorabilia from and about this particular institution. A number of former ECHS Eagles provided items with a large concentration coming from Tom Murray, former history teacher and show co-curator who donated many of his own professional effects to Seton in conjunction with this event.

Counted among the most important additions to the Homepage have been processed detailed finding aids for the Papers of Seton Hall University Presidents - Bernard J. McQuaid (1856-57, 1859-67), Michael A. Corrigan (1867-76), James H. Corrigan (1876-88), Joseph F. Synott (1897-99), John A. Stafford (1899-1907), James F. Mooney (1907-22) and Thomas H. McLaughlin (1922-33). Various manuscript collections have also been detailed in full including - Marcus Daly (former New Jersey Congressman), Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton (a collection relating to the first American born Saint and namesake of the University), W. Paul Stillman (prominent local banker and benefactor to the school), William T. & Marie J. Henderson Family (local civic leaders and benefactors) and Father Edward H. Flannery (a leading scholar in the world of Jewish-Christian Studies) with others collections poised for addition in the near future.

The Msgr. William Noe Field Archives & Special Collections Center Annual Report for 2006-2007 has been posted on the repository Homepage. A full transcribed version can be found via the following Internet URL - http://library.shu.edu/sc-AnnualReport2007.pdf

Various updates to our Homepage have been made over the past few months including a new site that links various visual and digital-centered projects that our repository is involved with at the present time. This particular page includes on-campus, local South Orange community preservation events and different ecumenical-based affiliations. The whole Homepage can be viewed via the following link - http://library.shu.edu/sc-homepage.htm The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission Homepage is also part of this site and the organizational link can be found via the following link - http://library.shu.edu/cc-NJCHRC.htm

Editor’s note: News from other New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission members, institutions and related enterprises will be featured in forthcoming editions of The Recorder. If any of our readership has news of note to report please feel free to forward to us by e-mail at: delozie@shu.edu or via postal mail at: New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission; Msgr. William Noe Field Archives & Special Collections Center; Seton Hall University; Walsh Library-First Floor; 400 South Orange Avenue; South Orange, NJ 07079
The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission cordially invites the members of the local Catholic community to attend a

Workshop on **Writing Parish History**

Saturday, April 12, 2008
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
(Registration and refreshments starting at 9:30 a.m.)

*Walsh Library, Beck Rooms (First Floor)*
*Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ*
*http://www.shu.edu/visiting/directions.cfm*

Presenters will provide participants with guidance on how to frame and conceptualize the history of their parishes, speak about the resources available to researchers, offer advice about publishing options, share practical experience about successful strategies, and be available to answer questions.

The fee for registration and lunch is $25.00.
Please make checks payable to the New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission.

For more information, contact Thomas Rzeznik at (973) 275-2204 or rzeznith@shu.edu.

Please return the following information along with your registration fee by March 28, 2008:

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________________
City/State: ____________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ______________________________ Email: ______________________________
Parish: ____________________________________________________________________________

Send To:

Thomas Rzeznik, History Department,
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079
Introduction & Report of the Executive Director

(Continued From Page 1)

Among our most recent initiatives in bridging the gap between the Commission: the importance of documentation created through the efforts of hard-working faithful have added much depth and breadth of the historical source we possess and conserve. Although we are an appointed body the value of each individual contribution is equally important among commissioners, advisors, alumni and friends of the organization. Each member has also provided a fine example from which I have learned valuable lessons about the diverse nature and passion generated in line with their respective research endeavors over the years.

I find that many others share the joys of historical discovery and their enthusiastic results allow for further inquiry and in turn brings about a swell of interest from a host of others who are inspired as a favorable consequence. Therefore, I welcome our readership and those with an interest in the field of New Jersey Catholicism to unite and celebrate its value for the ages!

- Alan De Lozier, Executive Director

Meet the Commission

(Continued From Page 2)

Resource Persons

- Rev. ST Sutton – Syrian Catholic Rite of Antioch
- Rev. Joseph D. Wallace – Diocese of Camden
- Ms. Elizabeth O’Donnell – Recording Secretary

New Commission Members

- Ms. Ruth Bogan - Technical Services Librarian Georgian Court University
- Ms. Maura Kenny – Processing Archivist/Assistant Professor – Seton Hall University
- Mr. Thomas C. Murray – Retired Teacher, Essex Catholic High School
- Dr. Thomas Rzeznik - Department of History, Seton Hall University
- Rev. Raymond Schiro, S.J. - Saint Peter’s College, Professor of Humanities

For more information about the NJCHC Please feel free to contact the Executive Director
E-Mail: delozial@shu.edu  Phone: (973) 275-2378

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400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079