

# A Walk Through Time

## 25 Years of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church

In the summer of 1982, the Very Reverend Albert A. Palermo led a group of parishioners from St. Mary's Church in College Station to look at 10 acres on the east side of State Highway 6 as a potential site for a new church parish. The field trip was a culmination of efforts to relieve crowding at St. Mary's as well as a growing population to the South of College Station. These efforts came to fruition on October 19 of that year when Rev. Patrick J. Zurek was directed to begin a new territorial parish in the area.

From that point, plans moved quickly and within a month, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish was formed on November 11, 1982 with approximately 200 families from existing parishes. Willing parishioners held a planning meeting on November 17 at the KC Hall in Bryan and the first Mass of the parish was celebrated on November 28, in the ballroom of the Aggieland Inn (later re-named Ramada Inn). A few months later, Masses were moved to the College Hills Elementary School gymnasium.

Phase I construction, including the rectory, began in the fall of 1983. The first Mass was celebrated in the multi-purpose facility (later named Zurek Hall) on October 28, 1984. Within two years the parish included 400 families.

Phase II construction began in 1989. Eucharist was celebrated in the new Church on March 25, 1990. A year later a covered entryway and bell tower were completed. At this time the parish had grown to approximately 600 families.

The church facilities grew again in 2004 when the parish activity center with its new religious education wing and the Adoration Chapel were completed in September and November, respectively.

Rev. Michael Mulvey was appointed Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas in July 1992. Rev. Sam Hose, who was also ordained to the priesthood by Bishop McCarthy at St. Thomas Aquinas, was appointed Pastor in 1995 and Rev. Dean Wilhelm was appointed Pastor in June 1997. Our current Pastor, Rev. Michael O'Connor, was appointed in 2005.

Today, St. Thomas Aquinas serves over 1600 families. While the numbers of families and buildings have grown, one tradition has stayed the same. One of the first parish-wide activities was a "Septemberfest" at Central Park in College Station in September of 1984. Since then, the parishioners of St. Thomas Aquinas have gathered each fall to enjoy the blessings of their parish and open its hospitality to the surrounding community.

*Adapted from a brief church history compiled by Jerry Cooper*