



ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL.

Chapter IV

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first Catholics to visit Narragansett Bay, at a time when the Indians were the only other dwellers here, were the Norsemen, in or about the year 1000. They explored the entire area of the bay, and upon their return to Iceland the details of the voyage were reduced to manuscript form. A hundred years later, this manuscript was in possession of one Jonas Torfason, who, in 1184, presented it to Bishop Klaeng of Skalholt, who, in turn, sent it to the Vatican. The manuscript has been lithographed, translated into English, and with certification by the Papal Secretary, has a limited circulation.

Giovanni Verrazano, a Catholic mariner in the service of Francis I, a Catholic King, has left us a written and vivid account of his visit in 1524, including description of the bay and its islands and Indian inhabitants.

Later Miguel Cortereal, also a Catholic, who apparently became shipwrecked in the Bay and permanently stranded, left evidence of his visit which tradition supports, though it is not evidenced by manuscript.

The English settlements, 1637-8-9, on Narragansett Bay, evidence no Catholic priest or laity, and Peleg Sanford, writing about the year 1700, declares "we know none of them among us". Of the many sailors and mariners who came to Newport and Providence in those early times, record exists of only one Catholic, prior to the American Revolution, and he was Stephen Decatur of Newport.

In 1780 came the French fleet with many French and Irish officers and men in the service of a Catholic King, and at the old Colony House, Newport, they set up an altar where the chaplains celebrated Mass and administered the Blessed Sacrament, and in December 1780, Admiral D. Ternay was buried in Trinity Church yard while twelve priests chanted the requiem. He was buried with Catholic rites in the Protestant churchyard. Some few Catholics remained in Newport when the fleet withdrew, but no appreciable number gathered until the revolutionary troubles in the West Indies,

when French refugees of good lineage settled in both Newport and Bristol, Bristol then being the shire town of Bristol County which included Fall River, though at that time there were no Catholic worshippers in Fall River. The first Catholic Church in the Narragansett country seems to have been located in April 1828, when Father Robert Woodley bought an old school house on Barney Street in Newport, repaired it, and placed in it an altar and pews. In the following October, Bishop Fenwick celebrated Mass, confirmed eleven persons, and preached a sermon which is still generally quoted, urging a more commodious church. By August 1837, his successor, Father John Corry, had erected St. Joseph's Church which accommodated 800 worshippers.

John H. Greene, in his article on the Catholics on the Island of Aquidneck, says they thank Dr. John Clarke, the founder of Newport, for that they have never been accounted delinquent on account of doctrine, have grown and prospered with every freedom in their services, and freedom to erect their churches, rectories, schools, and other religious structures.

What he says of Aquidneck applies equally to the other settlements around the bay, including Fall River, a large part of which was, until 1862, in Rhode Island, and just across the river from Aquidneck until that time. The present Cathedral was built on each side of the line which separated the two colonies.

I find no contemporary record of any Catholic church activities in Fall River until the history of Orin Fowler, which was published in 1862.¹ He was an ecclesiastic, and supposedly made careful reference to all clerical subjects. The Roman Catholic Church apparently had few communicants here until that time for he says only the following:

"St. Mary's Church (Roman Catholic) was established in 1836; the first name was St. John Baptist, which was changed upon the occupation of their new cathedral in 1855. The cornerstone of this cathedral was laid by the Right Rev. Fitzpatric, Bishop of Boston, August 8, 1852. The dimensions of the structure were 67 feet by 150. It is built in the Gothic style and of uncut granite. The first pastor of that church was Rev. John Corry; second pastor, Rev. Richard Hardy; third pastor, the present incumbent, Rev. E. Murphy, appointed April 1840. The total number of communicants, connected with the various Catholic churches in Fall River, is 2341, and the total of pupils in the Sabbath schools 2918." This may have been a number of years before 1862.

¹ The Rev. Mr. Fowler died ten years before this publication of his book.

St. Mary's Church was the cradle of catholicism in Fall River. Rev. Edward Murphy was pastor from 1840 to 1887, which is the year I returned from college. During all my boyhood days, he was a familiar sight on the streets and well respected. In 1874, three Sisters of Mercy from Providence began to teach in a parochial school known as the "Academy". In 1873, a convent was purchased on the west side of Second Street (at the top of the hill) from the estate of Alexander Milne, and the teaching Academy was moved there. In 1878, the foundation for the large academy was constructed on the east side of Second Street, opposite the cathedral. St. Mary's parish was divided in 1882 and again in 1885; in the first instance, the Sts. Peter and Paul parish was formed with Father Patrick Doyle as pastor and in the latter year, the parish of St. Louis was inaugurated with Father Louis Deady as pastor.

Late in 1869, St. Anne's parish was founded with a church at the corner of Hunter and Hope Streets; and in 1873, three additional parishes were carved out of St. Mary's parish, viz: the Sacred Heart under the pastorate of Father Francis Quinn, St. Joseph's under the care of Father William Bric and St. Patrick's in charge of Father John Kelly.

In 1874, the Notre Dame parish was ceded from St. Anne's parish with Rev. Pierre Bedard as pastor. The first church, a wooden structure, was destroyed, and in 1902, a beautiful stone edifice replaced it. The powerful compositions reproduced on the ceiling were executed by the Italian painter, Ludovico Cremonini.

In 1840, there was one church and one priest and not over 300 Catholics in town; in 1887, there were nine churches, fifteen priests and 30,000 Catholics. Their religious needs were taken care of in other ways, viz: six schools, six convents and one orphan asylum. Rev. Christopher Hughes succeeded Father Murphy as pastor of St. Mary's, and served from 1887.

The first undertaking of Father Hughes was the beautification of his church; its furnishings were theretofore temporary and the interior had never been finished. Father Hughes installed three new altars, new pews, a heating system, imported new windows from Germany, and made wise purchases of adjoining real estate. He built a rectory on the site of the old St. John's Hall at the corner of Spring and Second Streets. The total cost of his improvements was \$130,000. and the debt was paid within fourteen years. In 1890, he set up a high school, but this was abandoned because of insufficient parish income.

The debt of St. Mary's Church was fully paid and it was consecrated by Bishop Harkins in 1901.

The diocese of Providence was divided in 1904 and a new diocese of Fall River was created. Rev. William Stang was consecrated its first Bishop. Almost simultaneously with the creation of the new diocese, the White Sisters of the Holy Ghost, refugees from religious persecution in France, came to do nursing work in this city. In May 1906, the cornerstone for a new three story school to be modern in every detail was laid by Bishop Stang, and on September 11, 1907, the school was formally opened. Bishop Stang, however, did not live to see this opening; he died in Rochester, Minn. shortly after a serious operation, and Rev. Daniel F. Feehan became his successor as the second Bishop of the Fall River diocese.

Next came the resignation of Father Hughes. For some time he had been in failing health, and he resigned in January 1908, and died the following April. His successor at St. Mary's was Rev. James E. Cassidy. Father Cassidy had studied in Rome and had assisted as Chancellor to Bishop Stang. He at once further renovated the church; installed a new lighting system, a new shrine, and a new Baptistry in the rear of the church, and beautified the sanctuary, installed a new altar rail and two beautiful side altars. On January 1, 1908, Father Cassidy was appointed Vicar General of the diocese. He built a large nursery building on Third Street in the rear of the White Sisters Convent, and this was dedicated to the memory of Bishop Stang. In 1912, at a solemn pontifical mass, Father Cassidy was created a Domestic Prelate, and in 1913, he was appointed pastor of St. Patrick's parish. He was succeeded at St. Mary's by Rev. Francis J. Bradley. Father Bradley served until 1922 when he was in turn succeeded by his assistant, Rev. James M. Quinn.

In 1930, Father Quinn was succeeded by Rev. Charles A. Donovan. In May of that year, Bishop Feehan, who had been in failing health, needed assistance in his work. Then, the duties of Auxiliary Bishop devolved upon Msgr. Cassidy. He was consecrated by the Apostolic Delegate on May 27, 1930. In July 1934, Bishop Feehan deceased. In June 1935, a new building on St. Mary's grounds known as the Bishops' Chapel and Crypt was completed, and the bodies of Bishops Stang and Feehan were removed to the crypt.

Among the outstanding Catholic clergy in Fall River, the names of Bishop Cassidy, Rev. Pierre Bedard, and Rev. Charles A. Donovan are prominent.

In his earlier days as priest and monsignor, Bishop Cassidy carved a niche for himself as a champion of labor and a Temperance Leader. He was a mediator in many labor disputes, and always upheld the cause of

labor. His reputation as a Temperance lecturer went far beyond the city limits. Always a gifted orator, he had the power to sway his audience.

Rev. Pierre Bedard was a real father to the French people of Notre Dame de Lourdes in the Flint district. Through his indefatigable efforts, the church was built. He had a remarkable talent for music and considerable powers as an orator. He guided the members of his flock not only in spiritual but in temporal matters, and gained the recognition of prominent Americans.

Rev. Charles A. Donovan earned a very enviable reputation in the vicinity for his efficient work. He had been a curate at the Sacred Heart Church and later became diocesan director of charities. He had personal charge of the charities at St. Vincent's Home, of which he was supervisor, and his success in this enterprise was very marked. He was very popular not only with the children at the Home, but among men of prominence throughout the city. We are proud of his accomplishments.

Overlooking a wide terrain from the summit of Highland Avenue at No. 2446 is the most elaborate memorial of recent years, viz: the Catholic Memorial Home, which is under the spiritual guidance of Rev. Edward J. Gorman and under the care of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged. Rev. Raymond T. Considine, as director of charities, has supervising charge. It is incorporated and is governed by a Board of Trustees and as established, its policy creates the Home as a haven for aged men and women regardless of creed or race. The capacity of the unit at the present time is approximately one hundred, and living accommodations consist of private rooms and semi-private or two-bed rooms; the aspect of an institution is avoided and every convenience and detail develops the idea of a real home for the individual. Located in the very center of the building is the heart of the unit, a beautiful Colonial chapel exquisitely designed. The common rooms, particularly the auditorium and dining hall, continue the home-like atmosphere and it has all the appointments to bring comfort and peace. The exterior grounds are in keeping with the project. To the south of the main building is a separate unit known as the Priests' Hostel, wherein invalid and retired clergymen may pass their final years. This Home also has its focal point, a chapel, where spiritual and material comfort is available.

Now at the beginning of the fifth decade of the present century, the Roman Catholic church in Fall River enlists in its service one cathedral, twenty-five churches, one bishop and seventy priests. Their religious requirements are met by twenty-eight schools, sixteen convents, two orphan asylums, two hospitals, one home for the aged, and twenty-seven ecclesi-

astical residences. Eighty per cent of the residents of Fall River are Catholics.

This Church and its servants, with powers and efficiency increasing as the years roll by, has during the last decade excelled all other agencies in making the world safe for righteous people, meeting the powerful influence of communism and socialism with an even superior force, without which our civilization and the influences of religious love would be in serious danger of collapse.

The Catholic Churches in Fall River are listed, the date of their founding, the first and last pastors, followed by the Catholic School Statistics.

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Founded</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>First Pastor</i>	<i>Present Pastor</i>
1. St. Mary's	1837	407 Spring St.	John Corry	James J. Gerrard
2. St. Anne's (F)	1869	So. Main St.	Paul de Montaubrieq	Dominique Beaulne
3. Sacred Heart	1873	115 Linden St.	Francis Quinn	James R. Burns
4. St. Joseph's	1873	1355 No. Main St.	William Bric	Joseph P. Lyons
5. St. Patrick's	1873	So. Main Street	John Kelly	Edward J. Moriarty
6. Notre Dame (F)	1874	Notre Dame St.	J. B. Bedard	L. Damase Robert
7. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception...	1882	Thomas St.	Owen J. Kiernan	John L. McNamara
8. Sts. Peter and Paul	1882	Snell St.	Patrick Doyle	George C. Maxwell
9. St. Louis	1885	440 Bradford Ave.	Louis Deady	Thomas Trainor
10. St. Matthew's (F)	1887	St. Mary's St.	J. A. Payan	George F. Cain
11. Santo Christo (P)	1891	240 Columbia	C. A. Martens	Francisco C. Bettencourt
12. Blessed Sacrament (F) formerly St. Dominic's	1892	2470 So. Main	P. Gillant, O.P.	Osius Boucher
13. St. John Baptist (F)	1895	Stafford Rd. and Tucker St.	J. S. Fortin	Philias L. Jalbert
14. St. Stanislaus (Pl)	1898	Rockland St.	P. Guzik	Hugo Dylla
15. St. Roch's (F)	1899	889 Pine St.	J. T. Giguere	J. Adrien Gauthier
16. St. Michael's (P)	1902	205 Essex St.	Francesco Flores	John F. Ferraz
17. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (I)	1903	120 Beattie	R. Parrillo	John A. Chippendale
18. Espirito Santo (P)	1904	295 Alden	George Silveira	Manuel S. Travassos
19. St. William's	1905	690 Stafford Rd.	Patrick J. McGee	Francis J. Maloney
20. St. Anthony of the Desert (S)	1911	Quequechan St.	Gabriel Corkemanz	Dr. Joseph Eid
21. Our Lady of Health (P)	1914	660 Cambridge	Francesco Bettencourt	Antonio L. da Silva
22. St. Elizabeth (P)	1915	500 Tucker St.	John De Valles	Joseph M. Silvia
23. Our Lady of the Angels (P)	1916	Dwelly St.	Joseph Toledo	Dr. Adrian Moniz
24. Holy Cross (Pl)	1917	54 Child St.	Stanislaus Bona	Raphael Marcinik
25. St. Anthony of Padua (P)	1923	Sixteenth St.	Antonio V. Carmo	Arthur C. dos Reis
26. Holy Name	1923	Read St.	George McNamee	James A. Coyle
27. Ukranian Church of John the Baptist		492 Center St.		Rev. Dennis Kulmatytsky

(F) French

(P) Portuguese

(Pl) Polish

(I) Italian

(S) Syrian

The Ukranian Church of St. John the Baptist at 492 Center Street is a Catholic Church in union with the See of Rome. It comes under the jurisdiction not of the Diocese of Fall River but of the Ukranian Greek Catholic Diocese of the United States whose Bishop, the Most Reverend Constantine Bohachevsky, D.C., resides at Philadelphia, Pa.

The founders of this church were fugitives from Ukraine, from which country they fled fifty years ago, in search of freedom of worship and for political freedom which had been denied them in their homeland. Their advanced schools, with a museum, and a college, are located in Stamford, Conn.

Catholic Schools in Fall River

<i>Name</i>	<i>Enrollment (School year 1939-40)</i>	<i>Community</i>
St. Mary's Cathedral School.....	373	Sisters of Mercy
Blessed Sacrament School	404	Sisters of St. Joseph
Espirito Santo School	386	Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
Holy Cross School.....	116	Franciscan Sisters
Notre Dame School.....	956	Religious of Jesus and Mary
Prevost School	226	Brothers of Christian Instruction
St. Joseph's Orphanage.....	352	Sisters of Charity
Sacred Heart School.....	687	Sisters of the Holy Union
St. Anne School.....	1108	Dominican Sisters
St. John Baptist School.....	435	Sisters of St. Joseph
St. Joseph School.....	260	Sisters of Mercy
St. Louis School.....	189	Sisters of Mercy
St. Matthew School.....	403	Sisters of St. Joseph
St. Michael School.....	311	Sisters of the Holy Union
St. Patrick School.....	474	Sisters of Mercy
SS. Peter and Paul School.....	428	Sisters of Mercy
St. Roch School.....	340	Sisters of St. Joseph
St. Stanislaus School.....	184	Felician Sisters
St. Vincent's Home.....	99	Sisters of Mercy
St. John's Day Nursery School.....	63	Daughters of the Holy Ghost
Bishop Stang Day Nursery School.....	37	Daughters of the Holy Ghost
Academy of the Sacred Heart.....	130	Sisters of the Holy Union
Dominican Academy	96	Dominican Sisters
Jesus-Mary Academy	120	Religious of Jesus and Mary
TOTAL.....	8,177	
<i>High Schools</i>		
Academy of the Sacred Hearts.....	224	Sisters of the Holy Union
Dominican Academy	101	Dominican Sisters
Jesus-Mary Academy	118	Religious of Jesus and Mary
Monsignor Prevost	142	Brothers of Christian Instruction
TOTAL.....	585	

