



(Photo of original St. Cyril of Jerusalem Church which was dedicated on December 24, 1950 and is now the Msgr. Cyril Navin Parish Hall)

In the heat of a June afternoon in 1949, seasoned priests and advisors to the Chancery office of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles inspected a T-shaped parcel of property between Firmament and Haskell Avenues, with the base of the T-shaped fronting Ventura Blvd.

The site was tentatively designated to become the plant of the new Encino Parish of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. The name had been chosen, because at the time, Jerusalem was in anguish through war and division and strife. James Francis Cardinal McIntyre wished to signify the concern of the Church for the holy places and for their distressed peoples. This he did by placing the new parish in the Valley under the patronage of St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

The Rev. Michael Lalor had been named pastor-designate of St Cyril's. He was born on May 04, 1904, in Cullohill County, Leix, Ireland, and ordained at St. Kieran's, Kilkenny, for the Diocese of Los Angeles and San Diego on June 08, 1930. He was not only wise in the procedures of development of a parish plant itself but in the ability to guide a new coalition of families from a wide social and economic spectrum into a cohesive unit, capable of working together for the greater good of all.

Father Lalor was name pastor of St. Cyril's on July 07, 1949, and the first nucleus of 300 families began attending Mass in Nazareth House Home for Boys at Magnolia and Sepulveda Boulevards. The boundaries of the new parish were Balboa Boulevard on the West; Van Nuys Blvd. on the East; Mulholland Drive on the South, and Clark Street to the North.

Evidence of Father Lalor's prudence was his first edict once the parish was fact. There would be a club for the men of the parish and an Altar Society for women. No splinter groups would detract from the full membership of each. The wisdom of this decision has been borne through the first half century in the concentration of support by the two groups to every parish endeavor from Scouts and teen clubs for youth to senior citizen activity, Christian Service and the vital fund-raising so necessary for growth.

The Altar Society was established the first week in August of 1950 with Mrs. Delmar Mitchelson as president; Mrs. Henry H. Powell Jr., vice president; Mrs. Frank Ralphs, secretary, and Mrs. J.D. Lydon, treasurer. The first meeting of the unit was held in what is now the Convent, but which first served as rectory of Father Lalor and his assistant pastor, the Rev. William Smith, a former army chaplain. Loren Goodwin served as first president of the Men's Club with William Galbally as vice president, Andy Anderson as secretary and Harold Hourihan, treasurer. They met in classroom bungalows.

Father Lalor and Father Smith moved out of the two-story Spanish residence at 4550 Haskell Ave., in September of 1950 to provide a home for the first cadre of nuns opening the school that month, guided by Sister Francis Joseph Ferguson. Mrs. Kay Hammer was first secretary of the school.

Dedication of the church, now the Parish Hall, was held on the Sunday before Christmas 1950. The building cost \$100,000 and had been designed by George J. Adams. One of his primary features was architecture, which brought those attending Mass in close proximity to the altar. The Crucifix and carved wooden statues of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and St. John the Apostle, which graced the altar background are now included in the magnificent carved triptych reredos of the new church.

Mrs. Jack Vizzard was first organist for the parish and by the 1970's an adult choir was developed by William Cormier.

Community activity by the parish continued to grow. In 1953 a group within the Woman's Club dedicated solely to philanthropic work for those in need was named "The Godmother's." Its first president was Mrs. Lawrence H. Jackson.

Parishioners became active in drives for the American Red Cross, March of Dimes and Community Chest (now United Crusade) and each year citations for these services were bestowed on St. Cyril's, giving it recognition as a needed support for the growing area.

Mindful of the service by so many of its family fathers in World War II, the parish also continued to support United Service Organization with funds as well as volunteers.

A rectory at 4601 Firmament Avenue, to replace the bungalow in which Father Lalor and his assistants had lived for nine years, was completed in 1958 with housing for three priests and space for an office staff.

The newly completed church was opened during Christmastime in 1966. Joseph C. Styskall was the contractor in a contemporary design with warm blue and gold with walnut wood accents, seating. Unfortunately, Father Lalor died on April 09, 1967 at age 62, before the Church could be dedicated.

Following in Father Lalor's stead were Msgr. Christopher J. Bradley, then assistant pastors Rev. Clinton Hagenbach, who established the parish's first teen club. Rev. Clement Connelly who was popular with his parish for his German Shepherd Dog and Irish tenor voice succeeded him. Rev. Paul Kelly served before going to St. Euphrasia's. Finally, in 1970, our dear Msgr. Cyril Navin joined us from his post from Avalon, Santa Catalina Island at St. Catherine's Church.

Msgr. Cyril Navin is from Village of Clare Castle, County Clare, Ireland. He graduated from All Hallows Seminary, Dublin, Ireland, and was ordained in June of 1945, coming directly to California. He was welcomed as an official pastor on December 28, 1971 with appointment by Cardinal Timothy Manning, then Archbishop of Los Angeles and has been here ever since.

Anticipating his 75th birthday, Msgr. Cyril Navin submitted his resignation as pastor of St. Cyril's and retired effective July 01, 1996 and became Pastor Emeritus. Msgr. Carl F. Bell was named the new pastor on July 01, 1996. Msgr. Navin welcomed the surrendering of administrative responsibilities and devoted the rest of his days to the priestly ministry of saying Mass, hearing confessions, visiting the sick, visiting the students in the school and relieving the priest from Avalon on Santa Catalina Island at St. Catherine's Church so that priest could spend a few days on the mainland.

Msgr. Carl F. Bell's appointment to St. Cyril as pastor spanned 15 years until he submitted his resignation effective July 01, 2011, more than a year and a half past the normal retirement age.

On July 01, 2011, St Cyril's welcomed the appointment of the Reverend Larry S. Neumeier as Administrator to the Church.

During this transition, our beloved Msgr. Navin passed away quickly and unexpectedly in his sleep early in the morning of June 24, 2011, on the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the 66th anniversary of his priestly ordination and two weeks shy of turning 90 years old.

Years ago, on a summer trip to Ireland, Msgr. Navin stopped in a church to make a visit to The Blessed Sacrament. Adjacent to the Church was the cemetery and he walked among the graves. Msgr. Navin saw the inscription on a gravestone and mentioned it upon his return to St. Cyril's: