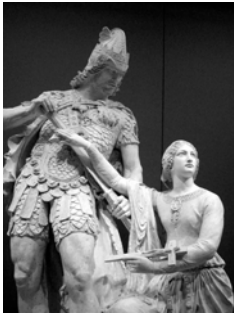


THE ROOTS OF ST. GENEVIEVE



In the sixth century, Clovis I became the first king of the Franks. According to an old legend, his father, Childeric, was greatly influenced by a young French maiden. When she was only seven years old, this maiden was encouraged by St. Germanus, the Bishop of Auxerre, France, to dedicate herself to the religious life. She did and became widely known for her charity and simplicity of life. She predicted the invasion of the French capital, Paris, by the Huns in the fifth century. These barbarians, under the leadership of Attila, arrived at the gates of Paris in 451. Almost singlehandedly, the young maiden persuaded the people to remain on the Île de la Cité in the River Seine. She assured the people that the attack would come to nothing if they would only fast and pray. The Huns changed course, and the city of Paris was saved. Later, she requested that Childeric build a church over the tomb of St. Denis, the first bishop of Paris. This church became the burial place for all the kings of France until the French Revolution of 1789. The heroine of this tale is St. Genevieve. Many people believe this legend to be an exaggeration. However, the young maiden, St. Genevieve, remains the patroness and protector of the city of Paris.

It is especially fitting that the third church of the city of Lafayette took St. Genevieve as its patroness. She is a link to the early days of Christianity, the French nation, and the practice of the Faith in daily life. In a settlement of French descendants, the Church of St. Genevieve rests on a piece of land purchased through the generosity of its first benefactor, Mr. Henry Lastrapes. His mother bore the name of the great saint. This House of God has played no small part in providing the courage and strength of faith for its members and the people of Acadiana that its patroness promoted so many centuries ago. Also of note, the priest-founder of St. Genevieve was a Dutchman whose mother bore the name of Frances, the patroness of automobile drivers. Today, the church faces one of the most traveled thoroughfares in the city. The location of St. Genevieve serves as a reminder to all people of the timeless nature of Christ's Church which knows no barriers of language, place, or social structure.

THE FOUNDING FATHER

On January 27, 1872, in the village of Tilburg, Holland, Cornelius Teurlings and Frances Mulders bore a son who would greatly impact the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Diocese of Lafayette, and St. Genevieve Church. The son's name was William. The family was pious and Catholic. The children were sent to the school run by the Dominican Fathers in Nijmegen, the town to which the family moved after William's birth. At a young age, William felt himself called to serve God and entered the minor seminary. While he was still in his teens, he was sent by his bishop to study philosophy and theology at the American College in Louvain, Belgium. Catholics were among the minority in Protestant Holland. As a minority group, however, their Faith was stronger, and they fostered more vocations than were needed for their particular Church. From among this abundance, young men were encouraged to apply for the foreign missions. William was not slow to volunteer. He chose to serve in a



swampy, semi-tropical area along the Gulf of Mexico which was under the direction of the Archbishop of New Orleans. Many of William's friends went to Belgium with him, but they studied in the European College rather than the American. William went to Louvain at the direction of the Archbishop of Louisiana.

At the age of twenty-two, William Teurlings was ordained a priest by his fellow countryman, Archbishop of New Orleans Francis Janssens. He embarked on a ten day journey by boat to the port of New Orleans. It is difficult to imagine the anticipation and anxiety that Fr. Teurlings felt on this journey. However, thoughts of alligators and yellow fever could not have been very far away.

Father Teurlings was first assigned as an assistant pastor at St. Mary Magdalen Church in Abbeville. However, within one year, because of the shortage of priests and the great needs of the Archdiocese, Fr. Teurlings was appointed pastor over one of the largest territories in the Archdiocese, a strip of land that stretched 120 miles along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico from Cameron to Pecan Island. There were no roads in his new parish, so William had to make his way carefully along the narrow ridges between the swamps and the marshes that passed for roads. He found a small house but could neither afford nor find a cook or housekeeper. His first challenge was his first purchase. He had to travel his territory constantly and a vehicle that could cross the muddy ponds and bogs had not yet been invented. The enterprising young priest bought a horse. Though he had never ridden a horse before, he soon learned to ride after a few dips in the mud. He also owned a camera and a small piano. He spent three years for Christ in this largest parish of Louisiana. He later wrote his nostalgic and sometimes humorous memories of those early years in a small book that he entitled, "Two Miles An Hour".

The Archbishop soon found need for Fr. Teurlings in another area of the Attakapas country. This was a parish on dry land that stretched for 40 miles near the banks of the Atchafalaya River. The parish house was in the village of Washington, a quaint old area of Imperial St. Landry Parish. The young curate soon established chapels in the rural areas of Grand Prairie and Whiteville. He later saw to the needs of Dossman (now St. Landry, a mission of Pine Prairie) and Melville. He was constantly on the better roads, bringing the Mass and the Sacraments to the people of the five areas. He also persuaded the Sisters of Mount Carmel to establish a Convent School in Washington.

THE FOUNDING PARISH



Father Teurlings spent eight years in this rural area. Then, he received the call from the Archbishop to take over pastoral duties at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette, the heart of Acadiana. He succeeded the French pastor, Father E. Forge.

The population of Lafayette was about 8,000 in 1906, a large population for an inland town at the turn of the century. Father Teurlings was thirty-four years old. He had been ordained a priest for twelve years and was certainly one of the most traveled pastors of his day. It would require all his zeal to meet the demands of his new post.

The former pastor had been sickly and had not been able to see to all the needs of the parish in his declining years. The church cemetery required immediate attention. Funds were needed for its repair and upkeep. The church, a rambling wooden structure, had become more than just weather-beaten. Though it was a solid structure of cypress shingles and wide wooden beams, it had not been repaired for many years. It required the immediate attention of the new curate. He moved this building and had it reconstructed on a new location as the Church of St. Paul, the second Church parish of Lafayette. In the 1970s, the Church was replaced by the present brick and metal structure at the corner of Simcoe and St. John Street.

The new pastor solicited and received the help of his parishioners in the task of building up the Body of Christ in Lafayette. He founded an Ushers' Society, a Ladies' Altar Society, sodalities, and an Altar Boys' Society. He later founded a Knights of Columbus Council, the Apostleship of Prayer and a Holy Name Society. Within three years of his arrival, he had begun a healthy campaign to build a new and more solid church building. Before undertaking the construction of the church, he first honored the request of the African American Catholics who desired a separate church parish. In 1911, he founded the Church of St. Paul and served its people until the Archbishop sent a group of Holy Ghost Fathers to permanently staff the parish in 1914.

Father Teurlings worked with a close friend, Mr. Eugene Guillot of New Iberia, on the architecture of the new St. John's Church. After engaging the services of a European architect, Mr. A. Cousin, the two friends decided on a Dutch Romanesque style similar to many churches found in Father Teurlings' native land. The church was completed in 1916 and was dedicated that same year by the Archbishop. At the time, it was the largest and tallest building in Lafayette, a massive but graceful structure of red brick trimmed with white plaster designs that incorporated round arches, colorful stained glass, and a belfry that could be seen throughout the entire town.

Within two years, this church became the cathedral of the newly formed Diocese of Lafayette, and Father Teurlings was appointed rector.



By 1925, Lafayette had dramatically changed from the town of 8,000 to which Father Teurlings arrived nineteen years before. Two railroads established permanent stations in the city, which was a key stop along the New Orleans-Texas line. The local technical college was solidly established, providing higher education to the youth of the area. Oil had been discovered in the outlying areas and would shortly provide an impetus to the growth of the town. Already, its population was swelling due to the availability of jobs. And in 1918, the city of Lafayette had been singled out as the heart of the Faith in Southwest Louisiana when the Holy See chose it as the see city of a new Diocese.

Long before 1925, the attendance at Sunday Mass concerned Fr. Teurlings. A considerable group of the faithful always seemed to get to the church quite late; some arrived near the end of the Holy Mass. Though a gentle soul, Father Teurlings did not tolerate the apathy of some parishioners that caused them to catch only snatches of his homilies or to arrive, on some occasions, at the time for Holy Communion. He was determined to solve this problem. Discrete inquiries

soon revealed that the cause of the problem was not a lack of faith but rather the size of the City of Lafayette. Crossing the city had become increasingly more difficult. The people of the north side of the railroad patiently explained that passing trains often prevented their timely arrival at Holy Mass. Others explained the heroic logistics involved in preparing a family of six or eight for the buggy or the Model A in time for the start of Mass. Father Teurlings realized that the growth of the area and the problems of railroad timetables were not likely to lessen in the future. More likely than not, church attendance would gradually lessen unless a solution was found.

The Cathedral rector began exploring town for an answer to this dilemma. He soon devised a Solomonic answer. A short search revealed the availability of a piece of property owned by Miss Edvigne DeClouet. It was primely located, across the railroad tracks and in the center of the north side of Lafayette. The Cathedral could not afford to purchase the land, but Fr. Teurlings soon received a generous donation from Mr. Henry Lastrapes. This good soul offered Father Teurlings the then princely sum of \$15,000 to help with the plans of the parish priest to found a chapel for his north side congregation. Mr. Lastrapes asked only that the new Church be named after his mother, Genevieve. Armed with a cash offer, the find of some prime land, and a name for a new chapel, Father Teurlings approached Bishop Jeanmard with the plan to get his people to Holy Mass on time. The bishop agreed. In almost record time, the bishop presided over the blessing of the new chapel of St. Genevieve on June 25, 1925. Lafayette had its third church.

Before the first Mass was celebrated in the Chapel, Fr. Teurlings had already organized a Ladies' Altar Society. He loved to say Mass in the new chapel. If he could not be there personally, he sent an assistant or a priest visitor. The people had regular liturgies at the chapel and soon rallied to the religious, organizational and financial tasks at hand.



The new chapel played no small part in the honor that was soon bestowed upon Father Teurlings. He became a Right Reverend Monsignor at about the same time that the chapel opened. By this time, he had been a priest for 31 years. He was certain that he would remain in Lafayette for the remainder of his priesthood. However, he looked toward the future. Years of a damp climate, horseback riding, and mission visits had taken their toll on his health. Also, he felt the pressures of parish life. He had selflessly given himself to the people of the Cathedral. He looked for new worlds to conquer. He knew that he was good for a few more years but not in a place where everything had been well-established. He could not hold the line until sickness forced retirement or the Lord issued the final call.

Monsignor Teurlings was always a smiling, gentle man, though no one would deny that he had been given his own generous share of that famed Dutch trait of stubborn tenacity. In 1925, he had a full head of snow-white hair, a gracefully wrinkled visage, and a vivacious sparkle in his eyes. In 1929, he was an inveterate workaholic who had run out of new projects. As he looked wistfully across town at his north side chapel of St. Genevieve, he realized that there would be no lack of projects to occupy him there. He formulated his words, and then crossed the church green to see the bishop. Bishop Jeanmard, wise beyond his years, understood the inner turmoil of Father Teurlings. He gladly granted his request to become the first pastor of St. Genevieve Church. His resumed his duties on February 1, 1929.

PERMANENT ROOTS

Monsignor Teurlings undertook the work of his new parish with the vigor of his youth. He lost no time in getting his people involved. He established the Ushers' Society and the Holy Name group in 1929. He attacked the church debt at the onset of the Great Depression. The debt was completely paid in nine years. In 1938, he added the eastern and western wings, enlarging the church building to its present size. It was an ambitious project, and many parishioners doubted the need for a building as grand as the Cathedral. Monsignor Teurlings lived long enough to prove them wrong and to divide the parish twice more.

Times were tough, money was short, and people, the nation, and the economy were in a depressed state. But Msgr. William Teurlings proceeded unflappably to the task of the spiritual nourishment of his parish. His Dutch frugality came in very handy to pay off debts and purchase new property. After he enlarged the church building, he purchased a large plot of land on the Breaux Bridge Highway to assure a decent resting place for his parishioners and their loved ones.



In 1939, the world plunged into the catastrophe of World War II. Father Teurlings suffered the pain of watching many of his young parishioners leave for the war front. He spent many evenings with anxious or bereaved parents whose sons were in Europe, defending his beloved Holland.



During the war, he encouraged his parishioners to build a grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes "dedicated to all in the service of the U. S. Army fighting to save democracy." The grotto was the idea of Miss Alida Martin. It was constructed at minimum cost by Mr. Pete Delahoussaye. The memorial tablet of white marble was donated by Mrs. James Whitmeyer. Parishioners rallied to this task with an abundance of prayers, encouragement and funds. The construction of the grotto also provided a means for Msgr. Teurlings' favorite hobby, chapel-founding. With the remaining funds, Msgr. Teurlings founded a new chapel dedicated to St. Patrick on the eastern edge of the parish. An assistant of Msgr. Teurlings, Father Peter Blom, also a native Hollander, became its first resident pastor after the war. In 1951, the chapel of St. Leo the Great was founded on the

western edge of the parish. Only major war delayed the next plan of Monsignor Teurlings: a new Catholic school. He pleaded with the Sisters of Mt. Carmel to send a few nuns to open a new school at St. Genevieve's. He had had the warmest of relations with this order in Washington and again at St. John's; it required little to convince them. The school opened in 1945, a month after the end of World War II. It began in a little ramshackle building and struggled for six years. The war had picked the American economy out of the doldrums, and funding for a new school building did not present a major problem. However, obtaining materials was a problem. Finally, in 1951, a new building greeted the children when the school opened its doors in the fall. Meanwhile, the Mt. Carmel order had found it difficult to spare a sufficient number of nuns to staff the school. They resigned the contract, and the Sisters of Divine

Providence undertook the responsibility of staffing the school in 1950. Drives, bingo, and endless cake and candy sales pumped funds into the school coffers and resulted in the addition of a new cafeteria, dedicated to Msgr. Teurlings, in 1953.



In 1929, St. Genevieve did not have a parish hall. After the war, the parishioners proposed this idea to Monsignor Teurlings. He gladly approved the construction of a hall on the church grounds. The hall became known as THE PAVILION. It was built by the voluntary labor of the men of the parish. They spent many evenings building a structure that played an important part in the daily life of the parish. It provided a place for teenage gatherings, meetings, and suppers. It also provided a convenient location for wedding

receptions.

In 1954, Monsignor Teurlings had spent almost 30 years serving the people of St. Genevieve's—25 of those years as pastor. He celebrated his 60th ordination anniversary that year. At the time, he was a highly revered citizen of Lafayette. The Mayor proclaimed a day in his honor. Mass was celebrated with priest friends. The students of St. Genevieve School presented a pageant dedicated to the Blessed Mother as a token of appreciation to their beloved shepherd. It was a spectacular end to a career that spanned two centuries, an ocean, and six decades. He spent two and a half more years in semi-retirement at St. Genevieve's. The end came the morning of December 28, 1957, the day after the feast of St. John the Evangelist.

IN MEMORIAM

The next thirty years in the life of St. Genevieve bore the unmistakable mark of its founder's influence. A new high school was built and bore his name. The elementary school continued to thrive. The Faith that he instilled in his people lived. His name remains in the memories of the older parishioners to this day.

PRIEST SHEPHERDS

Monsignor Teurlings was succeeded by a Canadian priest, Father Charles B. Fortier. He built Teurlings Catholic High School at its present location on Teurlings Drive. He also replaced the first rectory with the rectory that stands today. Father Fortier was succeeded by Monsignor Rudolph Arlanti, a native of Italy and the former chancellor of the Diocese of Lafayette. He gave firm support to the parish activities and to its two schools. The successor of Monsignor Arlanti, Monsignor Alexander O. Sigur, was the first native-born priest to serve as pastor of St. Genevieve's. However, he was soon called to be rector of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He was replaced by another native of the Diocese, Monsignor Charles Marin. Bishop Jules Jeanmard was succeeded by Bishop Maurice Schexnayder. Bishop Schexnayder was a strong supporter of Catholic schools and a frequent visitor to St. Genevieve's. After his retirement, Bishop Gerard L. Frey was appointed the third Bishop of Lafayette and took office on January 7, 1973.

Bishop Frey appointed Monsignor Marin, pastor of St. Genevieve's, as the Vicar for Clergy. The Bishop's brother, Reverend Jerome Frey of the Society of Mary, became the sixth pastor of St. Genevieve's. He was the first religious priest to assume these duties. He was joined in his ministry by two co-pastors, Father William B. Havenar and Father Rex Broussard. This ministerial team was succeeded by the seventh pastor, Reverend Floyd J. Calais, on February 4, 1977. In 1982 Fr. Joseph F. Brennan took the reigns of the parish for over fourteen years. During this time the Missionaries of Charity joined the parish in service to the less fortunate in the bayou area (Seafood Lane) of the parish where a chapel was established. His pastorate also saw the paving of the church parking lot and the erection of Mystical Rose Hall to replace the now deteriorated Pavilion. In 1996 Fr. Jody Simoneaux succeeded him and undertook a renovation and expansion to the Teurlings High School Campus and the building of the new St. Genevieve Middle School complex. On July 2, 2007 after three years of canon law studies in Rome, Fr. W. Curtis Mallet, JCL, became the tenth and current pastor of St. Genevieve Pastor.

In addition to the pastors who shepherded St. Genevieve, many other priests have served. They served the spiritual needs of the parishioners by strengthening and comforting, teaching and preaching, visiting the sick, burying the deceased, and supervising the many organizations and the general operation of the parish.

Associate Pastors included Frs. Gene Lafleur, Bede Becnel, Leslie Prescott, Guy Lemoine, John Windt, Msgr. Robert Landry, Frs. Fred Swenson, Conley Bertrand, Carey Landry, Robie Robichaux, Steven C. Leblanc, Roger Moag, Louis J. Richard, Allen Breaux, Daniel Picard, Willard Dugas, Thomas Voorhies, Bill Melancon, W. Curtis Mallet, Aaron Melancon, Mitchell Guidry, Mikel Plson, Richard Broussard, James Nguyen, Kenneth Broussard, Kevin Bordelon, and Blair Lope M. Sabaricos. There were many others who, as visitors, deacons, or seminarians, also aided the pastors in their responsibilities.



Priests are not alone in building up the Church for Christ in parishes. There were and are countless numbers of parishioners who have generously given of their time and talents. They have done everything from gardening and sweeping to taking census, teaching catechism, fund raising, housekeeping, secretarial work, bookkeeping, and answering telephones. In a thousand ways, they have promoted the good of the parish and helped to provide for the needs of others. Many have gone to their reward, and their good works are now known only to the Lord. Others have been forced to retire from an active role, but they still retain a deep love for St.

Genevieve's. None of them will ever be forgotten, for their good works have become the inheritance of the present parishioners. A special debt of thanks is due to the many nuns who labored patiently in the parish schools to bring Christ in a special way to the children of the parish. The many lay teachers who collaborated with these nuns are also gratefully remembered. This is to say nothing of the many people who today belong to the parish organizations and participate in the sacred liturgies in song, word, or other special ministries.

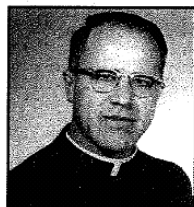
ST. GENEVIEVE'S TODAY

Today, St. Genevieve stands some twenty-odd feet from the multilane Evangeline Thruway. Simcoe Street flanks its eastern side. The architecture of the building is of Dutch origin and is comparable to the numerous village churches that dot the countryside of Holland. The style is Romanesque. This is the style that was made popular by the Emperor Charlemagne and his builders in many European countries at the beginning of the ninth century. It was an adaptation of earlier styles of church buildings. This style is simpler than the later Gothic churches of the Middle Ages with their more complicated and expensive pointed arches and vaulted ceilings. However, it has a depth of special quality which creates an atmosphere of prayerful recollection. The building has a floor plan in the form of a cross with the western and eastern wings of the church, added in 1938, forming the crossbar. The church has been adorned over the years by various gifts of stained glass windows. On sunlit days, the light playing through the colored glass produces a rainbow of warm colors within the building. It is obvious that the thrifty Father Teurlings adapted the plans that he used to build John's Cathedral to the needs of the daughter church of St. Genevieve.

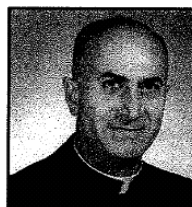
Pastors of St. Genevieve Church



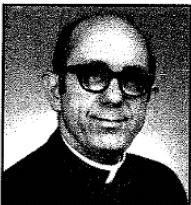
Msgr. W. J. Teurlings
1929 - 1954



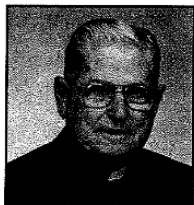
Msgr. Charles B. Fortier
1954 - 1965



Msgr. Rudolph Arlanti
1965 - 1967



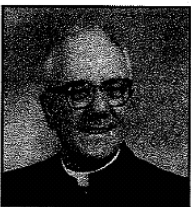
Msgr. Alexander O. Sigur
1967 - 1970



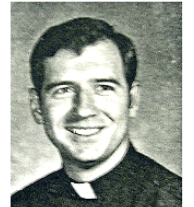
Msgr. Charles Marin
1970 - 1973



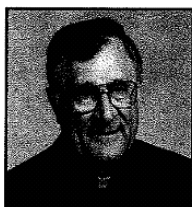
Fr. Jerome Frey
1973 - 1977



Fr. A. Rex Broussard
1973 - 1977



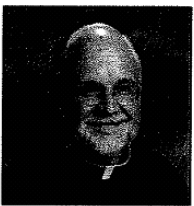
Fr. William Havenar
1975 - 1977



Fr. Floyd Calais
1977 - 1982



Fr. Joseph E. Brennan
1982 - 1996



Fr. Jody Simoneaux
1996 - 2007



Fr. W. Curtis Maller
July 2, 2007

To the north of the church building, a rectory stands complete with parish offices and a home for the priests who serve the church. St. Genevieve Elementary School stands to the west of the square. Teurlings Catholic High School is located on Teurlings Drive. It is now supported by several church parishes with students from a wide area of the city. St. Genevieve Middle School is the latest addition to religious education here in the parish on the corner of Teurlings Drive and Willow Street. Calvary Cemetery is on the Breaux Bridge Highway.

Parish boards advise the pastor on church activities and the two schools, and complete religious education programs are organized. St. Genevieve Church continues to provide a most effective means to channel God's grace to his people in a wide area of north Lafayette.

On February 1, 1979, St. Genevieve observed its Golden Anniversary as an independent church parish in

Lafayette. In this year, it also celebrated the end of all financial obligations on the church plant. On August 6, 1979, the final installment of the last note was paid to the local banks, the Guaranty Bank & Trust Company and the American Bank & Trust Company.

In 2008 St. Genevieve Parish begins its 80th year, this church parish remains a flourishing sign of Christ's Church to all people.

-Rev. Grady J. Estilette

-updated by Rev. W. Curtis Mallet