



---

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

---

1995

## What Parish Are You From?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations

Eileen M. McMahon  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)



Part of the [Nursing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McMahon, Eileen M., "What Parish Are You From?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations" (1995). *Dissertations*. 2761.  
[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2761](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2761)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).  
Copyright © 1995 Eileen M. McMahon

**What Parish Are You From?**  
**A Study of the Chicago Irish Parish Community**  
**and Race Relations**  
**1916-1970**

**by**

**Eileen M. McMahon**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the**  
**Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago**  
**in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the**  
**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**May**

**1989**

**For my Father,  
Joseph A. McMahon  
In Memory**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I am indebted to in helping me formulate and execute this project. First I would like to thank Ellen Skerrett who shared her prodigious knowledge of the Chicago Irish and their parishes and provided me with such a rich subject. Dr. William Galush, my dissertation director, has the rare gift of always being encouraging even when being critical. I am very grateful for his thoroughness, and his suggestions helped make this a better dissertation. I would also like to thank the rest of my committee, Dr. Lewis Erenberg and Dr. Kathleen McCourt, for their help and encouragement.

Several people assisted me in the research phase of this work. Archie Motley and the staff at the Chicago Historical Society and John Treanor and his staff at the Archdiocese of Chicago Archives were very helpful in making their collections available to me. Sister Toman at the Sinsinawa Dominican Archives provided gracious assistance with their records. Special thanks are due to Msgr. John J. Egan for making his personal papers readily available to me. I also wish to thank the staffs at the Chicago Municipal Reference Library, Northwestern University's Deering Library, Mundelein College Resource Learning Center, De Paul University Library, the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, and Loyola University of Chicago's Cudahy Library. Great thanks are reserved for Rev. Michael



Pfleger, pastor of St. Sabina Church, his very gracious assistant, Ann Gaskin, and the rest of the staff for opening their records to me and for their warm hospitality. Without their generosity this project could never have been completed. I am also indebted to all the people whose lives intersected with St. Sabina's and were willing to share that with me.

Projects such as a dissertation are also reliant on financial assistance. The Graduate School of Loyola University facilitated my work through the granting of a University Fellowship for the 1985-1986 academic year.

Finally, I am especially grateful to my husband, Ted Karamanski, for his untiring support and encouragement. His faith in my ability sustained me during the bleaker moments of this undertaking.

## VITA

The author, Eileen M. McMahon, is the daughter of Joseph and Mary Kay McMahon. She was born February 7, 1957 in Chicago, Illinois. She attended grade school at St. Linus Parish School in Oak Lawn, Illinois. In 1971 she entered Mother McAuley High School in Chicago and finished in 1975 at New Berlin High School in Wisconsin.

In September 1975 she entered the University of Wisconsin --Madison. Two and a half years later she enrolled in Loyola University of Chicago and in 1979 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, with a major in sociology. That summer she attended the University College, Cork, Ireland Irish Studies Summer School. The remainder of the year she was a VISTA volunteer with the Illinois Public Action Council.

In September of 1980 she entered graduate school at Loyola University of Chicago in history. She began her services as a research assistant and two years later as a teaching assistant. In 1985 she was awarded a University Fellowship. Currently, she is a lecturer of history at Loyola.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION . . . . .	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
VITA . . . . .	v
CONTENT OF APPENDICES. . . . .	viii
 Chapter	
I. THE IRISH ON CHICAGO'S SOUTHSIDE: AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND . . . . .	1
II. A PARISH FOUNDED ON A PRAIRIE . . . . .	35
III. "I'M FROM SABINA'S" . . . . .	62
Parish Loyalty . . . . .	66
Building St. Sabina's . . . . .	78
St. Sabina's Relations with Local Protestants	81
St. Sabina and the Great Depression. . . . .	83
Parish Loyalty . . . . .	87
Devotions at St. Sabina. . . . .	93
Parish Societies . . . . .	98
St. Sabina Parish School . . . . .	102
The Parish and the Neighborhood. . . . .	109
IV. PARISH IDENTITY AFTER THE WAR: DEVOTIONAL LIFE AND THE SCHOOL . . . . .	125
Parish Identification . . . . .	129
St. Sabina's Relations with Protestants . . . . .	131
Parish Devotions. . . . .	133
Parish Societies. . . . .	140
Catholic Education at St. Sabina. . . . .	151
St. Sabina Catholics and the World. . . . .	157
Conclusion. . . . .	159
V. PARISH IDENTITY: A GREAT DAY FOR THE IRISH, RECREATION, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD . . . . .	168
The Community Center. . . . .	177
The Neighborhood. . . . .	195
Conclusion . . . . .	199
VI. THE TROUBLES . . . . .	209

VII. MAKE NO SMALL PLANS . . . . .	240
The Creation of the Organization for the Southwest Communities. . . . .	256
The Churches and OSC . . . . .	264
Catholics and Protestants Join Forces. . . . .	267
St. Sabina's and OSC . . . . .	273
OSC's Program . . . . .	274
Open Occupancy Crisis in OSC . . . . .	280
VIII. WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED . . . . .	292
IX. CONCLUSION . . . . .	343
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	352
APPENDIX A . . . . .	359
APPENDIX B . . . . .	362

CONTENTS FOR APPENDICES

	Page
APPENDIX A    Maps . . . . .	359
I.    Chicago's Southside . . . . .	360
II.    Auburn-Gresham . . . . .	361
APPENDIX B    Tables . . . . .	362
I.    Top 25 Churches of Baptism of Persons Marries at St. Sabina . . . . .	363
II.    Occupational Profile of Gainful Workers from 10 Years of Age in Auburn-Gresham 1930. . . . .	364
III.    Occupation of St. Sabina Parishioners and Persons of Irish Surnames within the Parish Boundaries. . . . .	366
IV.    Churches in Auburn-Gresham . . . . .	367
V.    1928 Election Returns in St. Sabina Precincts. . . . .	368
VI.    St. Sabina Revenue Collections . . . . .	368
VII.    Catholic and Non-Catholic Marriages in St. Sabina . . . . .	369
VIII.    Number of Children Attending St. Sabina Grade School . . . . .	369
IX.    St. Sabina Parish Census . . . . .	370
X.    School Attendance of Children from St. Sabina 1942-1960. . . . .	370
XI.    Catholic and Non-Catholic Marriages at St. Sabina 1940-1959 . . . . .	371
XII.    Top Twenty-Five Parishes of Baptism of Persons Married at St. Sabina 1942-1951. . . . .	372
XIII.    Top Twenty-Five Parishes of Baptism of Persons Marries at St. Sabina 1952, 1955-1959. . . . .	373

XIV.	Parishes of Baptism of First Communicants in St. Sabina 1950-1959 . . . . .	374
XV.	St. Sabina Contributions of OSC. . . . .	375
XVI.	The Aging of Auburn-Gresham. . . . .	375
XVII.	St. Sabina Parish Enrollment . . . . .	375

## CHAPTER I

### THE IRISH ON CHICAGO'S SOUTHSIDE AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Irish on the Southside of Chicago have traditionally cut a high profile in the city. In Bridgeport they established a political base and network that launched one of the strongest political machines in the country and gave Chicago several of its mayors. Another Southside establishment and tradition is the Chicago White Sox formed by Charles Comiskey, son of an Irish immigrant and city council alderman. In 1910 Comiskey laid a green cornerstone for his new ball park at 35th and Shields for the Irish community he built it in. The Southside Irish are distinguished in having their own literary tradition. Finley Peter Dunne was the first to artistically recreate an urban ethnic neighborhood through the cartoon creation Mr. Dooley, an Irish-American bartender-philosopher on 'Archey' Road in Bridgeport. Mr. Dooley's insights and commentaries on the local Irish working class community were unique manifestations of the realistic American literary tradition of the 1890s. While Dunne focused on the poor and working-class Irish, James T. Farrell, still within the realistic tradition, portrayed

the Southward migration of the Irish and the mixed results of their arrival into the middle class.

In 1836, when work began on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, an endeavor to connect Lake Michigan with the Mississippi River, the first Irish made their way to Chicago and the Southside. They had gained experience on the Erie Canal and followed their national occupation westward when the new canal project began. Once the project was completed in 1848, many Irish stayed on in the area, particularly of the canal's terminus which was rechristened 'Bridgeport' for all the bridges that spanned the South Branch of the Chicago River.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-six percent of the Irish lived in this section, in a section expanding to the southwest as the city. For many decades they made it their chief stronghold.<sup>2</sup>

Just as Chicago was making its bid for economic pre-eminence in the Midwest as the region's transportation center in the 1840s and 1850s, the Great Famine struck Ireland. Many famine refugees escaped to Chicago where they could find jobs. By 1850 the Irish made up twenty percent of the city's population, which made them the largest ethnic group.<sup>3</sup> Employment opportunities in this prairie boom-town matched the Irish need for jobs. The jobs they qualified for were concentrated primarily in the industrial sectors on the Southside. After the completion of the I & M Canal, industries that were no longer desirable in the expanding downtown commercial district moved to the South Branch of the



River and the Canal area. The offensive slaughterhouses were drawn to the abundance of water necessary for the slaughtering of livestock and by the proximity to the cattle routes coming into the city. Beginning in 1851, the construction of railroads enhanced the industrial potential of Bridgeport and the Southside. In the 1860s a large steel mill began operation at Archer and Ashland Avenues and was followed by brickyards and breweries. Various meat packing companies combined their efforts and on Christmas Day 1865 opened the Union Stock Yards which would become the principal industrial employer in the area.<sup>4</sup>

Almost from the beginning of their residence here, the Irish were drawn into politics. As their numbers increased they put their particular skills of political organization to work. By the close of the Civil War the Irish were the dominant ethnic group in Chicago politics. While the mayor's office and control of a political machine eluded them until the twentieth century, in the nineteenth century Irish alderman were a significant block in the city council and influenced the Democratic party as ward committeemen. Material gain rather than civic duty, however, motivated the Irish to pursue political careers. Poor and unskilled, the Irish had few career opportunities that could provide them with a more comfortable and secure life. Politics was a means to supply city patronage jobs and other economic benefits. Irish politicians granted city franchises and contracts to

companies willing to pay kickbacks. They enriched themselves, and secured jobs for the Irish with the companies doing business with the city.<sup>5</sup>

The Great Fire of 1871 that destroyed nearly four square miles of the central part of Chicago opened up more opportunities for the Irish. The need for workers to rebuild the city provided them with steady employment. Besides constructing a new city on the ashes of the old, business and real estate speculators became interested in land in outlying districts. The development of these areas depended upon adequate infrastructure. Often aided by "boodle" alderman, the Irish worked on streetcar lines, and the construction of sidewalks, sewers, gas, electric and telephone lines. Chicago was one of the fastest growing cities in the country. The demand for city workers increased. More police and firemen were needed to monitor this rambunctious town. Because of their political connections, the Irish were able to solidify control over both city departments.<sup>6</sup> The federal census of 1900 shows that forty-eight percent of "watchmen, policemen, firemen, etc." and fifty-eight percent of gas works employees in Chicago were either first or second generation Irish, although the Irish comprised only fourteen percent of the male labor force in the city.<sup>7</sup>

Their political clout, along with the expansion and diversity of the city's economy, helped accelerate Irish mobility by providing a variety of occupations and

opportunities for advancement. By the 1870s there was a recognizable Irish middle class, although most remained within the ranks of the working class into the next century. By 1920 their improved economic situation allowed the majority of the Irish to leave behind inner city industrial areas for greener pastures further south in finer apartment houses and in the new bungalow belt.<sup>8</sup>

The burgeoning economy of Chicago at a time when the Irish began their immigration to the United States provided them with ground floor opportunities. Although the Chicago Irish community continued to grow in numbers, by 1860 German immigrants outdistanced them, and by 1880 German foreign-born out-numbered Irish foreign born five to three.<sup>9</sup> As other ethnic groups arrived in the city, the Irish lost more ground in terms of total percentage of the population.<sup>10</sup> Despite their diminished rank in Chicago's ethnic population, the Irish had gone from being among the poorest citizens in the city to being one of its most powerful political and religious groups.<sup>11</sup>

Their ability to speak English and their knowledge of Anglo-Saxon political institutions and ways, were special skills the Irish used to their advantage. The arrival of new immigrants also contributed to the rise of Irish power in the city. Many were Catholic, and by 1880, Roman Catholicism was the city's largest religious denomination. With a broadened Catholic ethnic constituency, Irish politicians enhanced their

political position by acting as power-brokers among the various national groups. Despite the ethnic diversity of Chicago's Catholic population, the Church was dominated by the Irish. Between 1834 and 1880, five out of six bishops in the city were Irish, and priests of Irish birth or descent held important offices in the archdiocese for over a century. The office of Chancellor was held by the Irish until 1971. As immigration increased, the Church, under Irish leadership, broadened its influence throughout the city.<sup>12</sup>

While politics provided the Irish with power and jobs, the fundamental base of Irish community life was the parish.<sup>13</sup> In their journey to the New World the Irish brought with them a strong commitment to Catholicism and parish-centered communities.<sup>14</sup> The Chicago Irish were no exception in their attachment to the parish. As a familiar institution as well as a tie to Ireland, it formed a bridge between the two countries and provided a supportive base for immigrants trying to cope with American life. Catholic bishops in the city understood its importance to the laity and used the parish as their model in organizing the Catholic community in Chicago. Parishes were traditionally structured along geographic lines. Individuals residing within its boundaries belonged to the centrally located church. While this plan suited the Irish, resentments grew as other Catholic ethnics began pouring into Chicago. The Church was faced with a dilemma. The new groups spoke various languages and practiced different religious and

social customs. Having to conform to an English-speaking, Irish style of Catholicism seemed to them to be an affront and potential challenge to their faith. To placate their strong concerns, a compromise was reached whereby national parishes based on ethnicity were condoned as necessary for first generation immigrants.<sup>15</sup>

In short time, national parishes were formed within many territorial parishes. Although any one could attend the territorial parish in their designated area, each group remained loyal to its national church. Since they were the largest English-speaking Catholic group in Chicago, the Irish were able to transform territorial parishes into a type of 'national' parish for themselves by the default of other groups to join them.<sup>16</sup>

Control over territorial parishes had important consequences for the Irish community in Chicago. Because they could speak English when they came here, the Irish were less restricted to settling in exclusively Irish ghettos. They were found all over the city, although they tended to be concentrated in the West and South side industrial areas. Because they were often a minority in their neighborhoods as well as a minority in the city, their Irish identity could easily have been obliterated. But with the separation of ethnic groups into national parishes, the Irish inheritance of territorial parishes allowed them to create and maintain ethnic communities of their own around their churches. The

parish, then, remained the focal point of their identity and their communities. By 1870 fifteen of twenty-three parishes in the city were Irish dominated. By usurping control of territorial parishes, the Irish were able to continue to establish parish communities as they moved further from the original neighborhoods. Each Irish settlement on the north, west and south sides spawned their own parish networks. Not only did the Irish, then, control the Church from on high, they dominated it in the neighborhoods as well.<sup>17</sup>

Parishes played various roles in the Chicago Irish community. Their political success owed much to the parish. Since they helped shape Irish neighborhoods, territorial parishes provided an automatic constituency for Irish politicians. Contacts in the parish helped form many ward organizations. In ethnically diverse areas such as Bridgeport and Back of the Yards, where loyalties were split among a host of national parishes, Irish politicians used their territorial parishes as a political base. Ethnic factionalism between Central and Eastern Europeans enabled the Irish to win control over these wards. Many politicians came from the territorial parishes of St. Bridget's, Nativity of Our Lord, All Saints and St. David's in Bridgeport. In Back of the Yards, Visitation parish served as power-broker. Perhaps the best example of the importance of the parish for Irish politics occurred in the old nineteenth ward which was dominated by Holy Family parish at 12th and May Streets. In 1890, the ward

boundaries were redrawn and practically matched those of the parish. Because there were up to ten national parishes in its midst, through divide and conquer like tactics, the Irish were able to control the political life of the ward for many years despite the efforts of Jane Addams and the gradual diminishment of the Irish population.<sup>18</sup>

More important than its role in politics, however, was the part the parish played in fulfilling basic religious and social needs of the Irish. Through the works of priests such as Rev. Denis Dunne, the Catholic Church assumed the dominant position in the lives of the Irish. Dunne recognized that the needs of Irish immigrants were best met in the local parish. As vicar general of the diocese and rector at the near westside's St. Patrick's Church from 1854 to 1868, Dunne turned the parish into a model Irish-American community. Here immigrants and the more established parishioners found comfort and support. Dunne helped form a chapter of the St. Vincent De Paul Society to aid destitute parishioners. The Society's success insured its spread in Irish parishes throughout the city. Besides caring for the indigent and dislocated members of his parish, Dunne looked after the future needs of the children. St. Patrick's supported a grammar school, and Dunne organized an industrial school for boys in Bridgeport. At a time when Republicans questioned Irish Catholic loyalty to the United States, Dunne organized the 90th Volunteers to fight for the Union cause in the Civil War. By the end of his

career, Dunne was renown throughout Chicago and respected by both Catholics and Protestants.<sup>19</sup>

At St. Gabriel's church, established in 1880 at 45th and Lowe in Canaryville, the flamboyant Rev. Maurice J. Dorney commanded central place in the lives of his parishioners. He provided food and fuel for the needy and helped immigrants find work in the stock yards. Ever diligent for his parishioners' well-being, Dorney became involved in disputes between the meat packing owners and the workers, and at times arbitrated strikes which earned him the title "King of the Yards." To encourage self-discipline and respectability among his flock, Dorney strove to keep saloons off the residential streets in their neighborhood. He was also a staunch believer in education and encouraged parents to send their children to school. Dorney himself set an example by earning a law degree when he was fifty.<sup>20</sup>

Rev. John Waldron of St. John's parish at 18th and Clark Streets is considered a classic "pioneer of the American urban parish." "Kerry patch," as the neighborhood around the church was known, was an industrial slum. To keep his flock on the straight and narrow, Waldron policed the area with his blackthorn stick to disband gangs. He was hailed by his contemporaries as a peace-keeper and preserver of order. Like many other Irish priests, Waldron was devoted to parochial school education. He refused to construct a permanent Church until a school was established for the children of the parish.



By the time he got to building a church, many of his Irish parishioners were ready to move to better neighborhoods further south.<sup>21</sup>

Of all Irish parishes in nineteenth century Chicago, Holy Family parish, established in 1857 by Arnold Damen, S.J. at Roosevelt Road and May Street, was the largest and most well known. In 1881, its membership, composed of Irish laborers in the lumber districts and railroad yards, totaled more than twenty thousand. As a Jesuit parish, its mission was to establish an educational system. Under Damen's leadership Holy Family boasted not only an impressive Gothic church, but three parochial schools, a convent academy, and St. Ignatius College, the nucleus of Loyola University. The Illinois Catholic Order of Foresters, a mutual aid fraternity, originated in this parish in 1883. It provided assistance to members in need and benefits to widows and orphans, and expanded to parishes throughout the city.<sup>22</sup> Holy Family parish had been hailed by James Sanders "the single great Irish workingman's parish" because of all the services he performed.<sup>23</sup>

While most priests did not cut as high a profile as fathers Damen, Dorney, Dunne, or Waldron, they were as concerned with both the material and spiritual welfare of their parishioners. Their parishes proved to be powerful forces of influence and change in the industrial slums of Chicago.<sup>24</sup> But besides these more grave concerns, Irish

parishes supported various sodalities and youth clubs. The ubiquitous christenings, weddings, and funerals were social occasions as well as religious observances. These events helped soften the harsh realities of urban life in America and reinforced Irish community cohesiveness.<sup>25</sup>

Cohesive Irish communities centered around the parish and school had become fairly standard by the 1870s. As the Irish population grew and expanded, the need for new churches made building them a continual endeavor. While a physical necessity, the process also contributed to the unity and commitment of the Irish to their parish. Churches and schools, built from the small change of Sunday mass goers and the inevitable fund-raising bazaars and raffles, enhanced the commitment of its members. Irish pastors realized that directing their parishioners attention toward church construction cut across class lines and diminished factionalism that continued to exist between the Irish from different counties in Ireland.<sup>26</sup>

The zeal for parish building was also reinforced by the uncertain status of the Catholic Church in nineteenth century America. Generally considered an alien authoritarian institution at odds with American democratic values, the Roman Catholic Church encountered hostile attacks from Protestant America. Chicago newspapers regularly questioned basic Catholic doctrines and the propriety of separate Catholic institutions, particularly schools, which seemed to be an

affront to a fundamental American institution. Church building became a sign of Catholic power, and dedications were major causes for celebration in the Catholic community. People turned out by the thousands to watch the ceremonies and parades and hear the speeches. While they did not directly assuage Protestant fears, some Protestants reluctantly admitted that parish complexes of church and school made the Catholic community more responsible, and improved and stabilized neighborhoods.<sup>27</sup>

Besides being territorially defined, Irish parishes differed from national ones in their aims and goals. National parishes separated themselves not only from the larger society but from other Catholics in order to teach and preserve the languages and customs upon which their faith was dependent for meaning and expression. They were to be a world unto themselves with a complete array of social, ethnic, cultural, political and recreational activities, having little if any need for the host society. Polish clergymen at one point wanted to set up their own diocese along ethnic lines. They felt their large numbers and special cultural needs, which were ignored by the Irish, German and Anglo-American hierarchy, required their own bishops and organization.<sup>28</sup> Irish parishes, on the other hand, were quite content with the existing system. After all, they ran it. But they also wanted to be part of the larger culture. Their parishes were a means toward assimilation. This does not diminish their

centrality in the lives of the Irish, but they used their parishes for different purposes. They were more interested in preserving Catholicity rather than Irishness.<sup>29</sup>

Catholic religious instruction was traditionally regarded as an integral part of a general education. Through the nineteenth century the Catholic hierarchy in the United States encouraged the establishment of Catholic schools. A formal declaration was made in 1884 at the Third Plenary Council in Baltimore when the bishops requested that each Catholic church support a parochial school. Early on in Chicago's history, Catholics began to establish their own schools.<sup>30</sup> This movement culminated in the largest parochial school system in the world. It also got tremendous impetus from the conflict with public school supporters over the Protestant orientation of the schools. Until 1875, all students were required to read from the King James version of the Bible, and standard textbooks often made disparaging comments on the Catholic faith. Most teachers in the school system were Protestants. Irish Catholics stayed away from the public schools in order to preserve their faith rather than their ethnicity. This is particularly apparent from the strong similarity of the curriculums of the public and Irish parochial schools. Helping children enter the larger society while retaining their religion was the main goal of the English-speaking parochial schools of the Irish. Their

schools were designed to make them American Catholics rather than Irish Catholics,<sup>31</sup>

and the school played an essential role in their assimilation and acceptance of the Irish into American society.

Women religious were mainly responsible for transforming the Irish into devout and disciplined Catholic Americans. Through their instruction, children were instilled with the basic doctrines of Catholicism, fundamental educational skills, loyalty to the United States, and with a desire to continue their education beyond elementary schools. In the high schools, boys and girls were trained to be competitive in the work world. This pragmatic approach gained Catholic high school graduates a reputation in the business community for being reliable and efficient workers. The achievements of Catholic students laid to rest the charge that they could not be Catholic and contribute to America. Despite their assimilationist goals, however, parochial schools played a decided role in parish and neighborhood formation in Chicago. Their importance to the Irish Catholic community is underscored by their proliferation.<sup>32</sup>

The emphasis on Catholicity rather than Irishness contributed to the decline in a consciously Irish identity. Catholicism and Irishness, however, have always been confused for the Irish. In Ireland, British oppression left them with little tangible evidence of themselves as a distinct people other than their religion. When they came to America,

nativist attacks reinforced the bond between the Irish and their Catholicism. To an extent Irish involvement in politics created group cohesion and a group identity, but politics, too, was a pragmatic answer to the need for jobs and power. As the Chicago Irish began making headway into the middle class by the end of the nineteenth century, their shady politicians became an embarrassment to the upwardly mobile seeking respectability.<sup>33</sup>

As elsewhere across America, the Irish in Chicago participated in nationalist organizations that aimed to free Ireland from British rule. Irish nationalist causes also provided a degree of identity and cohesion to the Chicago Irish community by providing social occasions and the lure of a job or the enhancement of a political career through the nationalist network. In his classic study of Irish-American nationalism, Thomas Brown argues that besides an intense hatred of Britain, the driving motive behind this crusade was a deep-seated sense of inferiority and a longing of the Irish for respectability. In Ireland the British had shown little regard for the native Irish and their way of life. Many Irish emigrants blamed British misrule for their exile to a foreign land. Once in America, the Irish found the same Anglo disdain for their religion, culture, and poverty. Irish-Americans thought that if Ireland were a free, self-determinating nation, this would elevate the condition of the Irish not only in Ireland but in America as well.<sup>34</sup>

While the motivations behind Irish nationalism were fairly universal in America, the nature of the movement varied from city to city and region to region. Chicago Irish nationalistic expression differed from that in the East, especially in New York and New England. Chicago never fully developed a constitutional nationalist movement. Its energies were channeled into the physical force direction. The reason for the difference lay with the attitude of Catholic churchmen toward nationalist causes. In the East, bishops and clergy generally followed the standard Church position that revolutionary movements were contrary to the Catholic teachings of a just war, and their societies required members to take a secret oath which conflicted with loyalties to God and country. Pressured by the Church, Eastern Irish nationalism split. Some nationalists became even more extreme and adamant on the physical force position, while others supported constitutional means towards Ireland's freedom and the Irish Parliamentary party.<sup>35</sup>

In Chicago, however, Archbishop Patrick A. Feehan sided with the "liberal" elements in the Church that thought it best not to antagonize Catholics who were essentially loyal church members but sympathetic towards nationalism. Having come from a very nationalistic area of Ireland, Feehan shared many of the same feelings towards Britain and even befriended many Clan-ne-Gaelers. Many Irish priests followed his example. The Chicago Irish community, then, never experienced the

pressure to polarize their nationalist aspirations. From the days of the Fenian Brotherhood of the 1860s through those of the Clan-ne-Gael, Chicago had a vital, if at times sordid, nationalist movement. Irish nationalism in Chicago remained active until the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923.<sup>36</sup>

Ellen Skerrett has argued that by the turn of the century, the Chicago Irish began to rely more on their Catholicism, which had sustained them for so many centuries in Ireland, as their main identity. Politics and nationalism were too narrow to serve the Chicago Irish. Catholicism was more flexible and better suited to meet the immediate social, educational, and religious needs of all social and economic classes. It allowed them to develop an American and Catholic identity.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1880 and 1910 many Irish began their southward trek, moving from crowded inner city neighborhoods to areas on the fringes of Chicago. As other ethnic groups settled here in the city, the Irish willingly relinquished older industrial neighborhoods to them. The lure of better flats with steam heat outweighed sentimental attachments to old neighborhoods and parishes. The movement of the Irish population was a significant demographic change. After 1878, seventy-five percent of English-speaking parishes began to be organized in outlying districts. Archbishop Feehan, who presided over the Chicago Archdiocese from 1880 to 1902, a time of tremendous growth for the Church, was aware of the



mobility of the Irish and their need for more parishes. He requested priests from Ireland to minister to his rapidly developing Church. This petition bequeathed to the Chicago diocese for decades an abundant supply of Irish priests. Irish parishes in Chicago also produced a large number of vocations. Many of the sixty-three English-speaking territorial parishes that were established between 1903 and 1939 had Irish or Irish-American pastors and priests. Feehan had the personnel to allow the proliferation and outward expansion of English-speaking parishes. At times, only fifty families were required to start a parish. These parishes were just as well served by the clergy, if not better, than national parishes and ensured a good deal of clerical influence.<sup>38</sup>

Irish Catholics preceded other Catholic ethnics into more prosperous residential neighborhoods, thus ensuring the perpetuation of Irish dominance in these new parishes. In their movement from working class to middle class neighborhoods, the Irish brought with them their concept of parish-centered communities. However, in moving beyond established ethnic working class residential areas, Irish Catholics encroached upon Yankee Protestant territory and excited nativist hostility.

Nativist hostility played a role in reinforcing ethnic identity in the middle class. Chicago never experienced the more debilitating anti-Catholicism that spread through eastern

cities before the Civil War, although Protestants expressed revulsion toward their wretched living conditions, drinking excesses and "anti-American" religion. An organized nativist movement did not emerge in Chicago until the 1880s. It was caused in part by the growth of Irish political power in the city and by the expansion of parochial schools and controversy over public funding for them. Despite its virulence, Chicago nativist sentiments against the Irish were short-lived, generally confined to the years between 1886 and 1896. With the growing influx of southern and eastern European immigrants, the Irish seemed a bit more palatable, and nativists turned their attention to these new arrivals. As immigrants poured into the city, Chicago nativism became hampered by the fact that its adherents were increasingly becoming a minority.<sup>39</sup> Yet for the generation making its way out of Catholic working class ghettos in the 1880s and 1890s, nativist hostility made a deep impression on their parish communities and served to reinforce their Catholic identity.<sup>40</sup>

There are numerous examples of anti-Catholic reaction to the Irish who crept beyond their ghetto confines during this time. In 1880, Holy Angels parish was established at 605 E. Oakwood for Irish residents who began to settle in the vicinity. Anti-Catholic sentiment, however, forced the parish to purchase nearly all of its property through third parties.<sup>41</sup> St. Bernard's parish, established in 1887 at 66th and Steward in Englewood, is an excellent example of hostile Protestant

reaction to Catholics. Englewood was a fashionable residential community south of the city. Most of its settlers were New England Yankee Protestants. As delicately described by a former Englewood resident, "Catholic activities were comparatively unknown to the residents, and like things unknown, were misunderstood, and met with considerable opposition." In a panic to keep Catholics out, a group of businessmen made a generous offer to repurchase the property the church was to be built upon. The pastor, Rev. Bernard P. Murray, refused to sell.<sup>42</sup>

Part of the fear and uncertainty of allowing Irish Catholics to become residents in Englewood was political. By 1880, the Irish had already secured political positions in the Town of Lake which Englewood was in.<sup>43</sup> Considering their influence in Chicago politics residents believed that the Irish and Irish style politics would take over the area. It was also feared that Irish associations with crime and vice would spread to this suburban haven.<sup>44</sup>

In a display of one-up-manship, Father Murray purposely arranged for the laying of St. Bernard's cornerstone to be at the same time as the Presbyterians down the street were laying theirs. Over five-thousand Catholics from all over the Southside responded to Murray's challenge and demonstration of community solidarity. Platoons of Irish-American policemen and Irish military divisions, including the Clan ne Gael Guards, marched through Englewood. Not only did the Catholics

upstage the Presbyterians, their celebration became a demonstration of Irish religious and political power.<sup>45</sup>

Skerrett has argued that "the majority of Irish-American parishes organized after 1890 were shaped more by Protestant-Catholic conflict than by ethnic rivalries."<sup>46</sup> In moving to these middle class Protestant neighborhoods, Catholics were once again reminded of their second-class status in America. Just as they had used their original parishes to aid in their adjustment to America, Irish-Americans used their new parishes and schools to adjust to these Protestant middle class communities.

Parish-centered communities were reinforced in middle class residential communities by the policies of Archbishop James E. Quigley, who headed the Chicago Church for 1903 to 1915, and his successor, Archbishop George W. Mundelein. Quigley established the concept of the 'one-square mile' parish, which allowed the pastor to be familiar with all his parishioners. As Catholics continued to move further from the city's center, parishes were established to "'assure a prosperous parochial community from the start.'"<sup>47</sup> As part of this plan, Quigley advocated the extension of the parochial school system by encouraging pastors to build schools before permanent churches. Mundelein wholeheartedly endorsed this policy and reinforced the Irish-American parish model by halting the establishment of national parishes beyond heavily ethnic neighborhoods. The Chicago Irish also sent many young

men to the seminary, which facilitated this parish expansion. Because of early Irish dominance of territorial parishes and the abundance of Irish and Irish-American priests, they continued to set the tone for these parishes despite an increase in the ethnic mix in the parishes.<sup>48</sup>

By the 1920s, Irish parishes expanded upon their basic church-school programs and began to include more recreational and social activities. This enlargement of parish facilities reaffirmed Irish commitment to the parish community.<sup>49</sup> Visitation parish, established in 1886 at Garfield Boulevard and Peoria Street just south of the Union Stock Yards, stands out as an Irish-American parish that bridged the working and middle classes and developed a distinctive community life. For its first seventy-five years, Visitation enjoyed the distinction of being a predominantly Irish parish. It had the largest physical plant in the Archdiocese with a grade school, high school, and social center. It also ranked among the largest parishes with nearly 15,000 members. In 1925, the pastor Rev. Timothy E. O'Shea initiated a sports program that served as inspiration for the Catholic Youth Organization that was begun five years later under Bishop Bernard Sheil.<sup>50</sup>

Under O'Shea's care, the youth of Visitation were directed toward more positive activities than roaming the streets. His programs made Visitation one of the most active parishes in the Archdiocese. It also was a local and Catholic solution to an urban problem. The interweaving bond between

the church and its various functions and the one-square mile neighborhood it encompassed prompted Irish Catholics who lived in the area to refer to it as just "Vis."<sup>51</sup>

Over time, Catholics began to respond to the question "Where are you from?" with the name of a parish. As Skerrett discovered, Irish attitudes towards the city were deeply affected by their experience in their parishes.<sup>52</sup> As many parish-bred men and women like to point out, living in a large city such as Chicago was not alienating or intimidating. Big-city living, focused around parishes, was actually more of a small town affair. However, while Irish parishes promoted assimilation, they frequently had a constricting effect on the mental outlook of parishioners. Chicago Irish Catholic concerns were often limited to religion, family, and the neighborhood. At times this narrow focus made the Chicago Irish resistant to intruders, particularly blacks, who did not fit into their concept of the parish community.

By the twentieth century, the Chicago Irish community had evolved into a well-organized community based on a parish system. Since their beginning days at the canal terminus in Bridgeport and the founding of St. Bridget's parish in 1848, the Irish gradually expanded their network of parishes through the working class neighborhoods of Bridgeport, Canaryville, and Back of the Yards, and into the middle class neighborhoods of Englewood, Hyde Park, South Shore, and Beverly Hills. The desire for better housing, open spaces, and a respectable

position in the larger community were the primary motives for the Irish southward migration. The parish provided stability and coherence for the Irish, but it was always very fluid place. People moved from one to another but could always stay within a familiar structure.

In the 1890s, even Martin J. Dooley, Finley Peter Dunne's creation, began commenting on the forces of change in Bridgeport. By this time many children of Famine immigrants, those "born away from home" according to Mr. Dooley, were in a position to move beyond their working class roots into better neighborhoods. At the same time, more recent immigrants from other parts of Europe began to move into Bridgeport. Mr. Dooley lamented,

There was a time when Archey Road was purely Irish. But the Huns, turned back from the Adriatic and the stockyards and overrunning Archey Road, have nearly exhausted the original population -- not driven them out as they drove out less vigorous races, with thick clubs and short spears, but edged them out with the biting weapons of modern civilization -- overworked and under-eaten them into more languid surroundings remote from the tanks of the gashouse and the blast furnace of the rolling mill.<sup>53</sup>

The obvious differences and competitiveness between ethnic groups prompted Mr. Dooley to see the changing ethnic make-up of Bridgeport in terms of the Greco-Turkish War of 1897. He said

F'r many years th' tenth precinct was th' banner precinct iv th' Sixth Ward, an' its gallant heroes repelled all attacks by land or Healey's slough. But, as time wint by, changes come over it. Th' Hannigans an' Leonidases an' Caseys moved out, havin' made their pile... Polish Jews an' Swedes an' Germans an' Hollanders swarmed in, settlin' down on th' sacred sites,' I says. 'Wan night

three years ago, a band iv rovin' Bohemians fr'm th' Eight Ward come acrost th' river, kickin' over bar'ls an ash-boxes, an' swooped down on th' tent precinct. Mike Riordan...was th' on'y wan iv th' race iv ancient heroes on earth. He thried to rally th'inglorious discindants iv a proud people. F'r a while they made a stand in Halsted Sthreet, an' threw bricks that laid out their own people. But it was on'y f'r a moment.<sup>54</sup>

Mike Riordan, however, was unable to stop the advance, and Mr. Dooley concluded, "Th' very thing happened to Greece that has happened to th' tenth precinct iv th' Sixth War. Th' Greeks have moved out, an' th' Swedes come in. Ye yet may live to see th' day,' says I, 'whin what is thruе iv Athens an' th' tenth precinct will be thruе iv th' whole Sixth wa-ard.'"<sup>55</sup>

The surest sign of "'Change an' decay'" for Mr. Dooley was the appointment of a "'Polacker on th' r-red bridge,'" a political bridgetending, patronage job traditionally held by an Irishman, and the gateway to the Southside.<sup>56</sup>

Besides ethnic succession to push them from their old neighborhoods, the Irish were hounded by a deep desire for 'respectability.' In Bridgeport, Mr. Dooley noted the exchange of "the old rough-and-tumble in favor of the more insidious scramble for genteel status."<sup>57</sup> Many of his characters, particularly the young, were anxious to take on the trappings of middle class values and mores. The "Come All Yous" of Irish taverns were ridiculed in favor of the more 'cultured' pieces of "Choochooski." Sons educated at Notre Dame, viewed their working class parents with disparagement.



In their quest for respectability, many Irish severed themselves from their past.<sup>58</sup>

James T. Farrell also noted in his works, particularly the Washington Park novels of Studs Lonigan and Danny O'Neill, the Irish pursuit of the middle class dream from 1900 to 1930. This quest demanded a migratory lifestyle of apartment dwelling and frequent moves as the economic standing of the family improved. The attainment of indoor plumbing, "steam heat" and respectability, at times, created antagonisms among groups of Irish at the disparities of their success. The parish, though, remained central in the lives of Farrell's characters. An Irish identity, however, plays little role in their lives.<sup>59</sup>

The flight from old neighborhoods, however, was also prompted by the influx of blacks to the Southside after World War I. War Jobs attracted thousands of Southern blacks anxious to leave behind Jim Crow Laws and a depressed agricultural economy. Many traveled to the Land of Lincoln on the Illinois Central railroad whose south Loop depot deposited them on the Southside. White flight and racial hatred loom in the background of Farrell's novels. Both the O'Neill and Flaherty families moved further and further south to stay ahead of the creeping black belt.<sup>60</sup>

This history and character of the Southside Irish was influenced by the Great Migration. The Irish and blacks both settled largely in this section of the city and have competed

for neighborhoods ever since. Studies that have been done on racism and segregation in Chicago focus primarily on the problems of slum reform and the black community and its dealings with white society in general.

Thomas Lee Philpott's The Slum and the Ghetto Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle Class Reform, Chicago 1880-1930 is an insightful account of middle class reformers' efforts to transform immigrant slum dwellers into Americans who could take part in the larger society. When it came to blacks, however, most reformers hoped only to curb the worst aspects of slum dwelling and contain them in the black ghetto.<sup>61</sup>

Arnold R. Hirsch's authoritative book, Making of the Second Ghetto Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960, demonstrates how Chicago public policy makers, businessmen, and University of Chicago administrators, along with the hostility of white communities, combined to perpetuate the black ghetto after World War II. High-rise housing projects were deliberately built within the black belt to contain blacks and keep them from moving into white neighborhoods.<sup>62</sup>

Philpott and Hirsch provide an overall description and analysis of white resisters to black inroads in Southside neighborhoods. However, neither fully explores the character, values, and nature of these whites "ethnics." What attention that had been given to the resisting white communities on the Southside has resulted in reverse stereotypes. In 1963, Time

magazine referred to this area as "Chicago's seamy South side."<sup>63</sup> White Southsiders have been portrayed as unsophisticated, ill-bred and narrow-minded bigots. More recently, the term "white ethnic" has been used to generally describe the diverse people of the Southwest and northwest sides. It is in many ways a pejorative term and a stereotype suggesting narrow-minded and bigoted people.<sup>64</sup> While racism did and does exist in these communities, the situation is more complex than the stereotypes suggest. A deeper understanding of the values and life-styles of Southside neighborhoods would provide more fruitful insight into race relations on the Southside of Chicago.

To fully understand what a parish community meant to the its members, it is necessary to focus on a particular parish. By focusing on the parish, we can better understand the character, values, mores and dynamics of the Irish-American community. And, in turn, get a better grasp of race relations on the Southside. I have chosen St. Sabina's in the southwest side community of Auburn-Gresham in Chicago. St. Sabina's is an excellent example of the persistence of the parish community through second, third and fourth generation Irish as they entered the middle class. It was one of the largest Irish parishes in the city in the 1950s, boasting nearly 3000 families, and it had an impressive physical plant that acted as magnet for neighborhood life. In the 1960s St. Sabina's, like many parishes before it, began to feel pressure

from the expanding black belt. Its response was a mixture of racial fear, religious questioning and ultimately of flight. In the end, it was difficult for most parishioners to deal with the crisis in ways consistent with their understanding of community.

1. Charles Fanning, Ellen Skerrett, and John Corrigan Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish (Chicago: Center for Urban Policy, Loyola University of Chicago, 1980), 1.

2. Bessie Louise Pierce A History of Chicago The Beginning of a City 1673-1848, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 180.

3. Fanning et al, Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish, 1-2.

4. Glen E. Holt and Dominic A. Pacyga Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods The Loop and Southside (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979) 113; Dominic A. Pacyga and Ellen Skerrett Chicago City of Neighborhoods (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), 453.

5. Michael F. Funchion, "The Political and Nationalist Dimensions," in The Irish in Chicago, Lawrence J. McCaffrey et al (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). In November 1869 the Irish held 15 of 40 seats in the Chicago City Council. By 1890 of 68 aldermen, 23 were Irish, 62, 69-71.

6. Ellen Skerrett, "The Development of Catholic Identity among Irish Americans in Chicago, 1880 to 1920," in From Paddy to Studs Irish-American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880 to 1920, ed. Timothy J. Meagher (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 118-9.

7. Michael F. Funchion, "Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class -- The Shaping of an Ethnic Group, 1870-1900," in Ethnic Chicago ed. by Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 30.

8. Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 119.

9. Fanning et al, Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish, 2.

10. The People of Chicago Who We Are and Who We Have Been Census Data on Foreign Born, Foreign Stock and Race, 1837-1970 (City of Chicago: Department of Development and Planning, 1976).

11. Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 117.

12. Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 135-6; \_\_\_\_\_ "The Catholic Dimension," in The Irish in Chicago McCaffrey et al, 38.

13. Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 19.

14. Jay P. Dolan The Immigrant Church New York's Irish and German Catholics 1815-1865 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 46.

15. Charles Shanabruch, Chicago's Catholics The Evolution on an American Identity (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

16. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 24-5.

17. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 24-5, 33-4; Fanning et al, Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish, 3; Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 17.

18. Fanning et al, Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish, 2-5. Also see Robert Slayton's Back of the Yards The Making of a Local Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

19. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 29-30.

20. Rev. Msgr. Harry C. Koenig, S.T.D., ed., A History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Chicago: The New World Publishing Co., 1980), 302-4.

21. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 35-7.

22. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 34; Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 373.

23. James W. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority Catholics in Chicago 1833-1965 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 91.

24. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 37.

25. Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 21.

26. Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 122-4.

27. Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 123; \_\_\_\_\_ "The Catholic Dimension," 28, 34.

28. Edward R. Kantowicz, "Polish Chicgo: Survival Through Solidarity," in Ethnic Chicago ed. Holli and d'A. Jones, 218, 228.

29. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 43-4, 50-1.

30. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 12-3.

31. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 44-5.

- 32.Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 130-4.
- 33.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 42.
- 34.Thomas N. Brown, Irish-American Nationalism 1870-1890 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1966), 21-4.
- 35.Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 26-7; \_\_\_\_\_ "The Political and Nationalist Dimensions," 73-7.
- 36.Ibid.
- 37.Skerrett, "Catholic Identity," 136.
- 38.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 38-9, 50. Based on a random survey of territorial and national parishes at five year intervals from 1895 to 1925, Parish Annual Reports, Archdiocese of Chicago Archives.
- 39.Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 36-7.
- 40.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 40.
- 41.Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 353.
- 42.Gerald E. Sullivan, The Story of Englewood 1835-1923 (Chicago: Foster and McDonnell, 1924), 112.
- 43.The Town of Lake was incorporated into Chicago in 1889. The boundaries were 39th Street on the north, State Street on the east, 87th Street on the south and on the west by Cicero Avenue.
- 44.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 39-40.
- 45.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 39-40.
- 46.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 39-40.
- 47.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 49.
- 48.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 49.
- 49.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 51.
- 50.Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 968.
- 51.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 52.
- 52.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 23.



53. Charles Fanning, ed. Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish An Anthology (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 167. For a complete discussion and analysis of Mr. Dooley see Charles Fanning Finley Peter Dunne and Mr. Dooley The Chicago Years (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978).
54. Fanning, Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish, 175.
55. Fanning, Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish, 176.
56. Fanning, Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish, 176-7.
57. Charles Fanning, "The Literary Dimension," in The Irish in Chicago, McCaffrey et al, 109.
58. Fanning, "The Literary Dimension," 108-10.
59. Fanning, "The Literary Dimension," 123, 125-6.
60. Fanning, "The Literary Dimension," 127.
61. Thomas Lee Philpott The Slum and the Ghetto Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago 1880-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
62. Arnold R. Hirsch Making the Second Ghetto Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
63. "Same Old Stuff," Southtown Economist 18 August 1963, 4.
64. Anne Keegan, "Has the Term 'White Ethnic' Lost its Value?" Chicago Tribune 13 February 1989, 1.



## CHAPTER II

### ST. SABINA

#### A PARISH FOUNDED ON A PRARIE

On July 3, 1916 George W. Mundelein, recently installed as Archbishop of Chicago, appointed Rev. Thomas Egan, an assistant at St. Mary's in Evanston, to organize the parish of St. Sabina in the southwest community of Chicago known as Auburn-Gresham.<sup>1</sup> St. Sabina's first days were inauspicious. Father Egan recalled that the parish *quicll* began "'on a prairie, with a few families and lots of mud.'"<sup>2</sup> Undaunted, he said his first mass on July 9th in a storefront at 7915 S. Ashland Avenue "on a borrowed table in a rented room" for two-hundred parishioners.<sup>3</sup> The altar made its way by horse and wagon along several unpaved roads from St. Leo's Church just to the east at 78th and Emerald Avenue. Old time residents recalled losing their rubbers in the mud going to the first services.<sup>4</sup> Because this site was not centrally located, services were moved to another temporary location at 7743 S. Racine.<sup>5</sup> With this humble beginning for a parish, Archbishop Mundelein shrewdly prepared for the building boom that followed the First World War which transformed St. Sabina's into a thriving parish and the "beehive of activity" on the southwest side.

The low, flat, swampy land of Auburn-Gresham was located in the southeast section of the Town of Lake which was incorporated into Chicago in 1889. Its first settlers were German and Dutch truck farmers. When the Chicago and Western Indiana and Pacific lines along with the Rock Island were laid in the mid-nineteenth century, Irish railroad workers came to the area.<sup>6</sup> By 1885 the Catholic population had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of St. Leo the Great parish. The Columbian Exposition in 1893 encouraged the extension and improvement of city services on the Southside. In 1890 the horsecar line along Vincennes Avenue was extended to 79th Street and then along 79th to Halsted Street. This improvement in transportation truly began the eastern development of Auburn-Gresham.<sup>7</sup> The population grew, and between 1913 and 1918, the city extended the streetcar lines on Halsted to 119th Street and the cars on Racine and Ashland Avenues to 87th Street. The 79th Street car ran from Lake Michigan to Western Avenue. With the city more accessible, the western section of Auburn-Gresham became more appealing to prospective homesteaders. Catholics, who settled on this western fringe, were forced to travel long distances to attend Sunday mass at St. Leo's. It became clear to the Archdiocese that more parishes were needed to serve the expanding population.<sup>8</sup>

When Mundelein assumed command of the Chicago Archdiocese, he devised a plan to put an end to the haphazard

and poorly managed process of parish establishment and church construction. To improve financial accountability and responsibility and to increase his control of the Archdiocese, Mundelein put all brick-and-mortar decisions in the chancery office in association with a Board of Consultors, composed of prominent pastors. Sensitive to the ethnic issues involved in parish formation, Mundelein gave the board a balanced ticket. Of the five to six consultors, three were "unofficial" ethnic seats. They were generally given to Polish, German, and Bohemian delegates with the latter representing the other Eastern European groups. These consultors tried to plan in a more rational manner where and when new parishes would be established to avoid the premature commitment of funds before there was adequate support for a new building venture. They consulted the records of city utilities to identify growing areas in need of a church.<sup>9</sup>

While St. Sabina's was formed only five months after Mundelein's arrival in Chicago, it seems to have been established according to this type of procedure rather than a formal petition of Catholics in the area. All obvious indicators for population growth, such as the expansion of city services and real estate development were evident, and the distances an increasing number of St. Leo's parishioners had to travel to attend services confirmed the need for new parishes in the area. At the same time he organized St. Sabina's, Mundelein also called for the establishment of St.

Justin Martyr at 71st and Honore Street and St. Dorothy's at 78th and Vernon Avenue.<sup>10</sup>

Through the efforts of real estate developers and because of its accessibility to transportation, Auburn-Gresham became an attractive area for families looking to escape older and more crowded sections of the city.<sup>11</sup> St. Sabina's early parishioners were generally the offspring of the Irish who had settled in working class neighborhoods in Bridgeport, Canaryville, and Back of the Yards. As Table I demonstrates many were baptized in the Irish parishes of St. Gabriel's, Nativity of Our Lord, All Saints, St. Bridget's, St. David's and St. Rose of Lima, among others. Visitation parish also gave many of its progeny to St. Sabina. Positioned on Garfield Boulevard and Peoria, the parish straddled working class Back of the Yards and middle class Englewood and reflected within its borders the mobility of the Irish. Some Sabina parishioners came from churches more solidly within Englewood such as St. Bernard's and St. Brendan's. Some of St. Brendan's parishioners automatically became members of St. Sabina's when its southern section was portioned off to form the new parish. St. Leo's also relinquished part of its western territory to St. Sabina's.<sup>12</sup>

Economic factors helped the Chicago Irish perpetuate and maintain their own community and identity. In "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation," Yancy and his colleagues argue that the development and persistence of a

group's ethnicity depends to a great extent upon the economic and structural conditions of the city they live in and their relationship to other groups. Rather than looking for constant character traits or reasons for their disappearance in an immigrant group, they contend that groups can change and evolve an ethnic identity depending on their response to economic and structural circumstances. Certain industrial technology and transportation can produce ethnic groups with particular traits, which might be different than those they arrived with but are not those of the host society.<sup>13</sup>

St. Sabina's was able to reformulate an Irish character through several favorable circumstances. Transportation improvements on the Southside in the beginning of the century opened up convenient, new housing developments. The ability of large numbers of Irish to move to this new neighborhood in the 1920s enabled them to become the dominant group in the parish. Besides their shared religious experience, they also shared similar and related occupations. This provided them with common ground and shared interests which promoted group solidarity.

Since they were the first major ethnic group to settle in Chicago, by the 1920s Irish-Americans had worked their way up the economic ladder into the ranks of the skilled workers. Their political connections had secured Irish control over many city departments and city-related occupations. Many Irish police and firemen and other city workers were attracted

to the area by the accessibility to the streetcars and trains they needed to get to the types of jobs they held.<sup>14</sup> Many had also moved into the teaching profession. In 1920 Mundelein claimed that seventy percent of teachers in the public schools were Catholic.<sup>15</sup> Many Southside Irish also worked in industrial jobs, particularly in the central manufacturing district and the Union Stockyards, which was the largest employer in the city in 1919.<sup>16</sup> By the time St. Sabina's was formed many Irish had relinquished hard, low-skilled, manual jobs to newer immigrants and taken jobs in the offices of the meat packing companies, or secured more skilled positions. On August 5, 1922 the Chicago Daily News observed that "Hundreds of people employed in the stockyards have bought homes in the Auburn Park district within the last three years. The great bulk of traffic of the region is along Halsted Street to the yards."<sup>17</sup> Tables II and III show the industries Auburn-Gresham residents were employed in and the occupations of residents within St. Sabina's boundaries.

T. O'Rourke's family moved to the area in 1915 because of his father's job and the location. He said, "My father was a streetcarman and worked out of the streetcar barn at 69th and Ashland...[In St. Sabina's] he was only like a mile or mile and a half from work...It was a very convenient neighborhood...A lot were working in the stock yards...They were in the offices, managerial...maybe junior management...The stock yards were convenient...They could go

down Ashland, that'd be to Wilson and Garland's. And the Racine car, it turned at 47th and went down Halsted. So it was a very convenient neighborhood that way...And then there were railroad people. Some of them worked for the Wabash, who were out west on 79th. They had a roundhouse out there. Others worked downtown."<sup>18</sup>

J. Hagerty confirmed these occupations. "The parish in the early days was composed of a lot of people who worked at the stock yards or in the public service somehow. They were policemen, firemen, school teachers."<sup>19</sup> J. Kill remarked that it was not necessarily an easy move for them. "I think that everybody...moved there with a sacrifice. They didn't have a lot. It [the parish] was made up of small town people, small people; streetcarmen, policemen, firemen, city workers, who in those days didn't get much in the way of pay -- people with big families, people who worked together."<sup>20</sup>

Although many parishioners were primarily employed in technically blue collar occupations, they generally seemed to consider themselves middle class. The newness of the area, good homes, and being removed from industrial neighborhoods no doubt contributed to their optimism. Auburn-Gresham was worlds away for many from their grim industrial origins. In August 1922 the Chicago Daily News described Auburn-Gresham as an ideal picture of rural beauty and calm.<sup>21</sup> J. Kill recalled, "St. Sabina's was really out in the sticks...Moving there was like going to the country."<sup>22</sup> "It was a new

developing area," M. Dunne recalled. "[My parents] were looking for a less crowded area. They had lived in a four room apartment on 58th and Peoria and it was too small for two children and parents...They bought a two-flat at 79th and May for \$9000. It was a very well built house even by today's standards. They hoped it would be a good home for us."<sup>23</sup>

H. O'Connor's family was attracted to the neighborhood because "it was a brand new neighborhood...At that time it was very attractive...From our back porch you could see the hill at 87th. There was nothing in between."<sup>24</sup> For many, an important feature in the new housing development was indoor plumbing. E. Clair said, "I doubt if there was more than one or two places [in the old neighborhood] that had the facilities indoors, and that's what young people at that time were trying to get away from."<sup>25</sup>

"You could play ball any place," T. O'Rourke recalled of his childhood experience in St. Sabina's founding years. "There were all kinds of prairies. West of Ashland, there were all these open fields...with beautiful flowers. People would go walking out there...I had a collie. I'd take him out there to exercise him. But he'd pull me all the way up to 87th and Western. They used to have bonfires in the prairies and you would roast potatoes and marshmallows."<sup>26</sup>

To most people the term 'prairie' conjures up the image of the endless, treeless, sea of grass the greeted the first settlers of the Midwest. However, 'prairie' has been passed



on into the urban lexicon of Chicago as any open, grass field, even just an undeveloped, grass-covered city lot. Its continued use by St. Sabina parishioners suggests an affinity with the pioneering spirit of settling a new area.

Between 1920 and 1930 the population of Auburn-Gresham nearly tripled from 19,558 to 57,381.<sup>27</sup> St. Sabina's membership grew just as rapidly. By 1930 it had 1600 families and 6900 'souls,' and by 1936 it reached 2100 families and 7500 'souls.'<sup>28</sup> Throughout the decade the prairies gave up their grass and flowers to support brick bungalows and two- and three-flats. These building styles reflected an architectural philosophy current at the time, and well-suited Irish-American needs and values.

The bungalow was a generally a one-story urban house with perhaps some small bedrooms in an attic-like second floor. It was designed to appeal to an aspiring middle class who needed an inexpensive, efficient single family home. Its popularity in Chicago coincided with the Catholic migration out of the inner-city industrial neighborhoods. Many designers of these homes were influenced by the 'simple-life' philosophy of the Arts and Crafts architectural school and, to a degree, by the Prairie School of architecture which strove to create an environment conducive to a happy, harmonious family life. The bungalow's kitchen was equipped with the latest in modern conveniences, and was advertised to appeal to the modern housewife who wanted a clean and

efficient work-place that the new domestic science associated with the "good life."<sup>29</sup>

Flat apartments which generally comprised one whole floor in a building, were also designed with the same aim as the bungalow -- to nurture middle class domestic life.<sup>30</sup> T. O'Rourke confirmed the appeal of flat buildings for many people. He said, "Many of my friends were tenants all the time....[They] didn't want the responsibility of taking care of a yard and firing up the furnace. Other Irish did that so they could better themselves...Firemen were off every third day or so, and policemen would have different shifts and they'd get off and do a lot of work around the house in the daytime...Streetcarmen in those days...worked what they'd call double shifts. They'd go out in the morning in the rush...from maybe six o'clock until nine, then they'd be off and have to go back to work at 3:30 or so until 6:30. So they'd have several hours where they could take care of the furnace...and I think that encouraged them to buy...The Slavic people wanted their own homes, but for the Irish, it was more important to get the cemetery lot."<sup>31</sup>

The varied choice of housing in Auburn-Gresham -- single family bungalows, flat buildings and some apartment complexes -- appealed to the life style and values of the Irish who settled there. Not everyone, however, was happy with all the new homes going up. "As they kept building up, the kids would be disappointed. Their lot was gone...or

there'd be a big space and then somebody would put a building in the middle and spoil a span of maybe five or six lots." But the new construction provided new recreational activities. "We had one great big place to play with all this construction. We played in the buildings...They mixed all the concrete and plaster right on the job so we had sand hills to play king of the hill and roll in and dig in...And I saw many kids fall from the second floor, but that's where we played...it was dangerous but we loved it."<sup>32</sup>

The Irish predominated in St. Sabina's. Through a combination of economics, geography, transportation, and timing St. Sabina parishioners were provided with a solid base to reestablish a strong ethnic character. Auburn-Gresham had an Irish stock population of twenty-one percent -- most situated in St. Leo's and St. Sabina's.<sup>33</sup> Based on Table I's figures the parish was at least sixty percent American born Irish. Although St. Sabina's was primarily composed of American-born Irish, Irish immigrants added a colorful dimension to the neighborhood. "They used to say that you could stand on 79th Street when the women were out shopping and hear the brogue of every county in Ireland," T. O'Rourke related. His thoughts on why the area was Irish were "There was no place else to move and the Irish were moving. I think that's it. See the Irish have always been moving. They're always going out, out, out. And I think that was the place

F  
|

to go...They thought they were doing very well to come out there. I think it was the place to move."<sup>34</sup>

St. Sabina's did have other ethnic groups in it. After 1916 Mundelein limited the establishment of new national parishes. He believed that perpetuating national enclaves worked against the best interests of ethnic groups. Although he, himself, had grown up in a German national parish on the Lower East Side of New York, Mundelein was convinced that Americanization should be the ultimate goal of Catholic immigrants.<sup>35</sup> It must be remembered that he headed the Archdiocese during World War I and through the 1920s when there was considerable pressure to be one hundred percent American. Early German-American support for the Central Powers and Irish-American insistence on an independent Ireland at the Paris Peace Conference were convincing reasons to fear the divisiveness of hyphenated, Catholic Americans. Fear of foreigners still plagued American society in the 1920s. Immigration restriction laws shut-off the influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans who seemed too foreign and unmeltable.

After 1916 when ethnic groups began moving beyond old immigrant communities, they were forced to either travel long distances back to their national churches or sign-up in the territorial parishes. Like many other new territorial parishes, St. Sabina's had its share of Germans. The vast majority were American born. By the twentieth century many were moving up the economic ladder just slightly ahead of the

Irish.<sup>36</sup> Their ethnic stronghold, however, was on the north and northwest side which kept them from overwhelming Southside Irish communities.<sup>37</sup> The Southside Germans, who settled in St. Sabina's, came from the same neighborhoods as the Irish, but from the national parishes of St. Augustine's, St. George's, St. Martin's, Sacred Heart and St. Anthony of Padua. (See Table I). At a distant third were parishioners of French descent from St. John the Baptist, and behind them were a scattering of other nationalities, such as Italians, Poles and Bohemians.<sup>38</sup> T. O'Rourke commented, "There were always French there and a few Italians...I know of one Polish family. But the Slavic races weren't there at all. They weren't around and I don't know if they ever came in there."<sup>39</sup>

The presence of these other nationalities, however, did not stop the Irish from forming this parish in their own image and extending Irish domination of the territorial parish. "They often said that the parish assumed the nationality of the pastor," T. O'Rourke recalled.<sup>40</sup> The first three pastors of St. Sabina's, whose services spanned the years from 1916 to 1971, and many of the assistant pastors were Irish or of Irish descent.

St. Sabina's identity as an Irish parish no doubt profited from the clerical leadership of sons from the Emerald Isle. They, however, were aided by their "take charge" Irish flock. T. O'Rourke said with a twinkle in his blue Irish eyes, that the Irish acted liked "they kind of owned the

place...and other people seemed to fall in line."<sup>41</sup> Another former parishioner, J. Hagerty, also confirmed this Irish proclivity for "taking over." She said, "They have a certain quality, a kind of spiritual imperialism within themselves. They can't be undercut...And they'll find a way somehow to dominate in any situation."<sup>42</sup>

Since they had virtually controlled the English-speaking parishes in ethnic neighborhoods, it perhaps only seemed natural that their way was the norm all others were to follow. Their larger numbers in the parish no doubt also added to their advantage. However, when in the minority, the Irish had no qualms about setting up their own organizations in national parishes. Our Lady of Sorrows, which was an Italian parish, hosted a chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Ladies' Auxiliary of the Knights of Father Matthew -- an Irish temperance group, and the Daughters of Isabella, which was the women's branch of the Knights of Columbus. St. John the Baptist, a French parish, supported a branch of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic. Of a random sample of parishes from 1895 to 1925, there were never any other ethnic groups who had infiltrated territorial parishes with their own organizations.<sup>43</sup> Even the Illinois Catholic Order of Foresters, which originated in Holy Family parish in 1883, became the chief beneficiary society in the archdiocese.<sup>44</sup> The St. Vincent De Paul Society, a lay charitable group which was

founded in France and came to the United States through St. Louis in 1845, became the chief philanthropic organization in the Archdiocese. It began in Chicago in St. Patrick's parish and was also an Irish dominated society.<sup>45</sup> In the Church hierarchy and in the neighborhood parishes the Irish exerted their influence and pressured others to conform to their style of Catholicism and parish life.

J. Hagerty provided an example of the Irish domineering spirit in St. Sabina's. Her father, she said, was a devoted church-goer and frequented the missions. "He was always gathering other characters in the neighborhood to go with him." One day he decided to proselytize an Italian man to join him. While the Italians were willingly baptized, married and buried in the Church, she related, they were not so consistent with everyday devotions. Her father, however, was eventually able to get them to become "pretty good church members." Her mother, she recalled, "had a fit" when she learned the children of the Italian family were going to the public school. She went to work on them and eventually persuaded the mother of the evils of godless education. The girls went to St. Sabina grade school and then on to Mercy High School.<sup>46</sup> T. O'Rourke thought that because of the more relaxed attitude of the Italians towards the church and their reluctance to establish their own cemeteries, orphanages and churches, they were content to "move in on the Irish...and use the Irish cemeteries...and were satisfied to go along."<sup>47</sup>

In The Education of an Urban Minority, James Sanders substantiates the view that the Italians did not send their children to parochial schools. He argues, though, that despite the reluctance of the Italians to establish their own churches, they did not eagerly join the parishes of other nationalities.<sup>48</sup> But with the restriction Mundelein placed on establishing new national parishes other nationalities were left with little choice other than joining the territorial parishes as they moved away from their old neighborhoods.

J. Hagerty said of these other groups, "They just went along because there wasn't any thought of changing the way the Irish were doing things. They were in charge."<sup>49</sup> B. DesChatelets, who was of French descent, agreed that "Sabina's was an Irish parish. There were a lot in there that weren't Irish...I always say that I'm Irish by association if nothing else."<sup>50</sup>

There is very little evidence to suggest that the German-Americans made much effort to impose a German character on the parish. Sanders has called the Irish and Germans "the two great protagonists of early Catholic Chicago." With each generation, however, they found themselves more and more drawn to each other, cooperating in several political causes. In the 1870s the Irish and Germans joined forces against the Sunday Closing Laws, and in 1889 they came together again to oppose the Edwards Law which threatened parochial schools. In 1904 they had formed a musical and literary society that



met on St. Patrick's Day. As German nationalism began to wane in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Germans and the Irish found more common ground.<sup>51</sup>

When war broke out in 1914, German nationalism once again emerged to support Germany and the Central Powers. In his essay, "The Great War Sinks Chicago's German Kultur," Melvin G. Holli discusses the devastating effect German-American support for the Central Powers had on the Chicago German community. No ethnic group, he argues, was so quickly stripped of their ethnicity as were German-Americans during the war years.<sup>52</sup> German immigrants had been very highly regarded in the nineteenth century because of their many economic and cultural contributions to this country. Yet, by World War I's end, they became America's most hated group. Once the United States had become committed to the Allied cause in 1917, German-Americans were caught in a bind for their support and boasts of the superiority of German Kultur, which included authoritarianism and militarism, now an affront to the democratic cause of the United States; and they were torn by the prospect of fighting their Fatherland. Because of their perceived disloyalty to their host country, German-Americans were subjected to a zealous Americanization campaign. At the vanguard of this movement were the Slavic nationalities. They deeply resented the Germans, who historically thought themselves racially superior to their neighboring Slavs.<sup>53</sup> By the war's end German-American ethnic,

linguistic and cultural institutions were irreparably damaged. Many German national parishes had forsaken the teaching of their language in their schools and began using English for their services. By 1920 many German-Americans stopped claiming German as their nationality. What few remnant of Germanness remained were swept away at the onset of World War II.<sup>54</sup>

Through these trying years, German-Americans may have found the Irish and their parishes more accommodating to them than Slavic-American neighborhoods. Many Irish had no special affection for John Bull either and voiced support for the Central Powers. In August 1914 there was some talk between the two groups of forming an American Gaelic-Germanic alliance, and they held a German-Irish picnic at which England was routinely denounced.<sup>55</sup>

Irish-Americans, however, had a different agenda than German-Americans when war broke out. In 1914 when the British Parliament refused to enact a bill that would grant Home Rule and a degree of independence for Ireland, many Irish and Irish-Americans lost faith in the British Parliamentary system which now seemed duplicitous in its dealings with the Irish. Irish-Americans thought Britain's war aims of protecting the sovereignty of small nations and saving democracy from German autocracy a farce. To them the conflict was nothing more than a contest between militaristic empires. A German victory, though, might release Ireland from John Bull's clutches.

Initially, many Irish and Irish-Americans supported the Central Powers. However, when the United States entered the war on the side of the Allied countries in 1917, few Irish-Americans had personal conflicts with fighting Germany and most were anxious to prove their loyalty to their adopted land. They put aside their Irish nationalism to support the red, white and blue and marched to the tunes of George M. Cohan.<sup>56</sup> The Irish, though, had developed too many ties with German-Americans to begin shunning them now. The Germans, though, became 'silent partners' in their marriage with the Irish and their parishes.

In continuing Yancy's "emergent ethnicity" argument, the relationship of the Irish to other ethnic groups was an important factor in ensuring St. Sabina's Irish identity. Other ethnic groups, which had come to Chicago later than the Irish, were not in a position to take up residence in a middle class neighborhood such as Auburn-Gresham in large numbers when St. Sabina's was established. German-Americans were the only ethnic group that could have challenged Irish hegemony in the parish. However, as Melvin Holli has demonstrated, German-American nationalism was at an all time low point when they settled in St. Sabina's. Irish-Americans, then, were free to set the standard for St. Sabina's.

While the war eradicated German-American nationalism, Irish-Americans, on the other hand, had no qualms about reasserting their Irishness after the war. After the

Armistice on November 11, 1918 Irish-American nationalist activities were re-ignited. They were more committed than ever to the revolutionary movement than the discredited constitutional method of achieving independence for Ireland. Many Irish in St. Sabina's were not immune to the excitement in Ireland with the Anglo-Irish War. When in an election in December 1919, the new Sinn Fein party defeated the Irish Parliamentary party and, instead of taking their seats at Westminster, proclaimed an independent Irish Parliament in Dublin, the Chicago Irish responded to the call and held mass meetings and collected funds for Sinn Fein. Former Governor of Illinois and Mayor of Chicago, Edward F. Dunne, participated in the American Commission on Irish Independence that went to Paris to plead the Irish cause before the peace conference. Although unsuccessful in Paris, Dunne helped launch a bond-certificate campaign for the new Irish state. After two years of bitter fighting, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed in December 1921, granted the twenty-six southern counties dominion status. With the Free State secured, the flurry of nationalist activities in Chicago, as elsewhere, abated although some Chicago Irish would continue support for the anti-treaty Irish force.<sup>57</sup>

In the years after the Great War, many Irish-Americans in St. Sabina's supported the Irish cause. In January 1920, the pastor, Father Egan, appeared as a guest speaker for the Friends of Irish Freedom at St. Anne's Church hall. He,

himself, had recently traveled through Ireland "where he made a thorough study of existing conditions" and tried to clarify misleading and inaccurate accounts of the Anglo-Irish War.<sup>58</sup> Following this speaking engagement, St. Sabina's formed its own branch of the Friends of Irish Freedom and appointed a committee to assist the Irish bond drive.<sup>59</sup> By February 13, 1920 they were holding what was described as "an enthusiastic meeting of the St. Sabina branch of the Friends of Irish Freedom in Auburn Park Hall." Irish music, oratory, and dancing were featured along with solicitation of subscriptions for the Irish loan.<sup>60</sup>

The St. Sabina branch also sponsored a stereo-optican [slide] lecture on the "Rebellion in Ireland" given by Rev. Hugh P. Smyth of Evanston on March 16. The Rev. Smyth had also visited Ireland for ten weeks and brought back a series of pictures of the subject.<sup>61</sup> It was advertized in the New World as an "'Exclusive Showing' A most vivid and moving picture of the most discussed subject in the world."<sup>62</sup> The Rev. Smith's talk was "to settle conclusively the exact nature of the means being used for and against the advancement of the Irish cause."<sup>63</sup>

T. O'Rourke, whose parents were from the Old Country, recalled that during those years his "mother couldn't wait to get the Tribune in the morning...She'd read it and then call somebody else who got the old Examiner and see what they were saying about it [the Irish cause]. If the old Examiner was

more favorable to the Irish, she'd think that maybe we should change papers." He also remembered the bond sales. His mother and father would purchase them at the nearby undertaking establishment. Many of the Dominican Sisters in the parish school were also pro-Irish according to O'Rourke. When, Mary MacSwiney, the sister of Terence MacSwiney, the Irish hunger-striker, came to Chicago for a speaking engagement, many of the nuns went to see her. O'Rourke recalled that on the next day his teacher wore a badge urging the support of MacSwiney.<sup>64</sup>

Irish history had been a part of the curriculum in the early years of St. Sabina school.<sup>65</sup> Irish history courses had been nonexistent in the English-speaking, territorial parishes that the Irish dominated in the nineteenth century. By 1904 the Ancient Order of Hibernians lobbied to have them introduced in Irish schools. These courses, though, tended to emphasize Catholic aspects of Irish history, particularly the medieval Celtic Renaissance, rather than modern Irish history. These courses did little to develop a sense of historical continuity for the diasporic Irish, particularly for those beyond the first generation. American born Irish might have been able to build a stronger sense of identity if they had a better understanding of the forces that brought them to the United States and Chicago than of their misty Celtic past.<sup>66</sup> By the mid-1920s St. Sabina's dropped Irish history from its curriculum. However, their early offering

of Irish history indicates a quest for some sort of Irish identity.

In its early years St. Sabina's Irish character was undisputed. German-Americans remained reticent, and other nationality groups were too few in number to make an impact on the national character of the parish. The Irish, then, were left to create the type of parish community with which they were familiar.

Religion and a Catholic identity, however, was the more important component to the identity of St. Sabina parishioners. They were keenly aware of the strength and support they derived from the parish. Although they talked of their Irish nationality, it was the parish that would forge a more vital identity for Irish-Americans and would create a new ethnicity. The next chapter will explore the reasons for the persistence of a parish-centered community.

1. A Community of God and People St. Sabina Church 1916-1966, Anniversary History (n.p., 1966), 6.
2. "The Southside's Newest Church, St. Sabina's Church Nearing Completion," The New World, 30 August 1933.
3. A Community of God and People, 7.
4. "The Southside's Newest Church," The New World, 16 June 1933.
5. A Community of God and People, 7.
6. "Auburn-Gresham," Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area 1960, 156.
7. Local Community Fact Book, 156.
8. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 543.
9. Edward R. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole Cardinal Mundelein and Chicago Catholicism (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 36-7, 77, 154.
10. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 858; A Community of God and People, 7; and Author interview with Rev. Thomas McMahon.
11. Carrie Mae Barlow, Auburn-Gresham The Survey of a Local Community, Ph.D Diss. University of Chicago, 1934.
12. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 140, 545.
13. William L. Yancy, Eugene P. Ericksen and Richard N. Juliani, "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation" American Sociological Review, 41(3) (June 1976), 391-2.
14. Funchion, "Irish Chicago," 29-30.
15. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 45-6.
16. Slayton, Back of the Yards, 25.
17. Harry M. Beardsley, "Auburn Park's Calm Soothes City-Weary," Chicago Daily News, 5 August 1922, 12.
18. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
19. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
20. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
21. Beardsley, "Auburn Park's Calm," 12.



22. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
23. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
24. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
25. Author interview with Emmett Clair.
26. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke.
27. Philip M. Hauser and Evelyn M. Kitagawa, Local Community Fact Book for Chicago, 1950, Chicago Community Inventory (University of Chicago, 1953), 290-1.
28. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1930 and 1936, Archdiocese of Chicago Archives.
29. Daniel J. Prosser, "Chicago and the Bungalow Boom of the 1920s," Chicago History (Summer 1981), 86-95.
30. Wim de Wit, "Apartment Houses and Bungalows: Building the Flat City" Chicago History (Winter 1983), 23-9.
31. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
32. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
33. Louis Wirth and Margaret Furez, "Auburn-Gresham," Local Community Fact Book 1938, Chicago Recreation Commission, 1938. Foreign stock includes Irish born and their children.
34. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
35. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 72-3.
36. Melvin G. Holli, "The Great War Sinks Chicago's German Kultur," in Holli and Jones, Ethnic Chicago, 473.
37. Historic City The Settlement of Chicago, (Department of Development and Planning, 1976), 66.
38. St. Sabina Marriage Records.
39. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
40. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
41. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
42. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.

43. Our Lady of Sorrow Parish Annual Reports, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1925; St. John Baptist Parish Annual Reports, 1920, ACA.
44. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 373; also based on a random survey of territorial and ethnic parishes at five year intervals from 1895 to 1925, Parish Annual Reports, ACA.
45. Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 323.
46. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
47. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
48. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 70-1.
49. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
50. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets, 3 October 1986.
51. Sanders, 108-10.
52. Holli, "The Great War Sinks Chicago's German Kultur," 510.
53. Holli, "The Great War Sinks Chicago's German Kultur," 508.
54. Ibid., 511.
55. Ibid., 469.
56. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, The Irish Diaspora in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 134-7.
57. Michael Funchion, "The Political and Nationalist Dimension," in McCaffrey et al, The Irish in Chicago, 77.
58. "Parish Activities," The New World, 23 January 1920, 7.
59. "Parish Activities," The New World, 30 January 1920, 5.
60. "Parish Activities," The New World, 13 February 1920, 5.
61. "Parish Activities," The New World, 20 February 1920, 9.
62. The New World, 12 March 1920, 2.
63. "Parish Activities," The New World, 12 March 1920, 7.
64. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
65. A Community of God and People, 19.

66.Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 46-7.

## CHAPTER III

### "I'M FROM SABINA'S"

1916 TO 1941

"'Chicago has the best Catholics,'" Rev. Cornelius Hagerty, a Holy Cross priest from the University of Notre Dame, used to quip on his visits to his family in St. Sabina parish. "'They'll even wave to you from the back of a paddy wagon.'"<sup>1</sup> On another occasion he remarked to Father Egan, the founding pastor, "'I have heard that in country districts in Ireland a priest can hear confession all afternoon and never encounter a mortal sin.'" The native of County Tipperary defended his parishioners saying, "'A priest can hear confession right in Sabina's Church in the midst of all the wickedness of Chicago, and find many people who live innocent, holy lives without coming close to mortal sin.'"<sup>2</sup> Relaxed and secure in post-World War I America, Catholics could now begin to laugh at themselves. Yet, the Catholic community of the local parish remained a central and sheltering feature in their lives.

From its inception St. Sabina's reflected the coming of age of the Catholic Church in America and the Irish in Chicago. By the 1920s the Catholic population in the United States had grown to an estimated twenty million. With

restrictions placed on immigration during this decade, the Catholic Church in America was now able to move beyond its immigrant identity and mission. Its energies could be directed toward the reorganization and consolidation of its internal affairs and it could begin the process of redefining its religious, social, and cultural place in America.

During this period of self-analysis, Catholic intellectuals strove to demonstrate the compatibility of American and Catholic traditions. Compared to mainstream intellectuals suffering from post-war disillusionment, Catholic thinkers began to see Catholicism, with its humanistic and "totality" view of man, as the true inheritor and champion of American values and ideals of optimism, pragmatism, progress, democracy, and man's reasoning powers. Catholic isolation in the previous century proved to be a blessing in disguise, for now American Catholicism remained untainted by the moral miasma afflicting the new age. Catholicism would be the savior of America.<sup>3</sup>

At this juncture in time Catholic bishops sought to make Catholicism a force to be reckoned with in American society and confidently asserted themselves into the local and national political scene. They reorganized and centralized church administration and solidified their episcopal authority and control over the clergy and laity. They built on a grand scale more churches, schools, hospitals, and convents to boldly proclaim their presence in American cities. These new

style bishops also assumed an aristocratic or "triumphal" style of leadership as a way to demonstrate the stateliness and grandeur of Roman Catholicism.<sup>4</sup>

George W. Mundelein, who assumed command of the Chicago Archdiocese in February 1916, became a leader of this new breed of bishops. He modernized the business administration of the Chicago Archdiocese, expanded its physical plant, and provided ostentatious displays of ceremony. In 1926 he hosted the International Eucharistic Congress, which held an open-air mass in Soldiers Field for 150,000 faithful. He cultivated a close relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt during the New Deal years. During his reign, Mundelein was considered to be the most liberal and influential bishop in the American Catholic hierarchy. His high profile and grand leadership injected self-confidence and pride in Catholics in Chicago and across the country.<sup>5</sup>

In bringing Catholicism into the forefront of American society, Mundelein and his ecclesiastical colleagues were supported by a growing American-born, Catholic middle class. By the 1920s these children of immigrants, led by the Irish and Germans, began migrating out of central city and ethnic neighborhoods into new middle class communities. In Chicago this near mass movement prompted many real estate developers to advertize for the first time in the diocesan paper The New World.<sup>6</sup> These American Catholics looked to their leaders to

carve out a new and respected identity that suited their new economic status.<sup>7</sup>

St. Sabina's first parishioners were among this new generation of American-born Catholics who left working class ethnic communities for greener pastures. They exuded the growing confidence of Catholic Americans. Yet, they carefully nurtured their identity in a parish community setting. The following discussion will explore the character of American Catholicism and Irish-America at the parish level by focusing on St. Sabina's.

The people who moved into St. Sabina's recreated a parish-centered community which they had known in their old neighbor-hoods. Several factors contributed to the reinforcement of parish identity. In her seminal work on parishes in Chicago, Ellen Skerrett has argued that anti-Catholicism in Protestant middle class residential areas forced newly arrived Irish-Americans to retreat once again into the supportive environment of the parish. Since they were the first Catholic ethnic group to intrude onto Yankee Protestant turf in the 1880s and 1890s, the Irish absorbed the initial hostile blows directed toward Catholic intruders.<sup>8</sup> No doubt during these years when the Catholic nativist movement was at its height, Catholics in these areas found comfort in the confines of their local parish. However, was Protestant antipathy an important ingredient in why the Irish

continued to identify themselves by parish in the twentieth century?

### PARISH LOYALTY

The identification parishioners had with St. Sabina's was influenced by many interweaving factors. Protestant aversion to Catholicism, which had had such a profound influence on shaping a separate Catholic institutional world in the nineteenth century, still subtly attached people to the parish, but not in the same way it shaped parish building in the 1880s and 1890s. St. Sabina's was established in a new real estate development that had previously been farmland. There was no well-established Anglo-Protestant community in this area as there had been in Englewood. Table IV provides a breakdown of Auburn-Gresham by religious affiliation.

The five Catholic parishes counted 25,800 members or forty-four percent of the population of Auburn-Gresham which was 58,546 persons.<sup>9</sup> Although numerically a minority in the area, Catholics were the largest single religious group in the neighborhood. The number of churches that could definitely be identified as Anglo-Protestant congregations was quite small. The Protestant congregations mostly represent the churches of other non-Anglo immigrant groups. Church of Peace, which was the largest Protestant assembly, was Swedish. In addition, most people who settled in St. Sabina's came from working class districts that had large numbers of Catholics.



Many would not have had the same immediate historical experience of opposition to their presence in a middle class neighborhood as the Irish who settled in Englewood in the previous century. T. O'Rourke claimed part of the reason Catholics were accepted in the area without opposition was because "they came so fast."<sup>10</sup>

Although not a majority in Auburn-Gresham, the large Catholic 'block,' made them seem to be larger than they were.

"The area was heavily Catholic," claimed J. Hagerty. "When we moved there, the only Protestant lived next door to us. There weren't too many of them. There were three boys in that family, and they went to the public school. It was a long time before I figured out why they went there when everybody else went to the Catholic school. There were only a few Jews, who were the storekeepers along 79th Street."<sup>11</sup>

Residents of St. Sabina's reported friendly relations between themselves and members of other religions many of whom were Swedish Lutherans. J. Hagerty said, "I came in the house one day and I said to my mother. 'These boys say they're Lutheran. What is a Lutheran?' And she said, 'Oh, that only means that they go to a different church than we do.' But she said, they were nice boys and I could play with them. She said, 'You know, this is a great big world and there's room enough for everybody in it.' I never forgot that. We got along fine."<sup>12</sup>

Next to the Irish and the Germans, the Swedes composed the next largest immigrant group in the area.<sup>13</sup> St. Sabina

residents remembered them well. "There were a lot of Swedish people in the neighborhood," said T. O'Rourke. "Of course, they weren't Catholics. They weren't in the parish. The Swedes did a lot of the building...They were small contractors...A Swede built the house we bought and then he moved next door. He built the one next door, and then he'd go in until he'd sell it and then move on to another one. Then he went across the street and built some two-flats...They moved on."<sup>14</sup> M. Dunne corroborated this observation. She related, "They use to say the Swedish people had built the houses and the Irish bought them."<sup>15</sup> Others reported the same congenial relations and an absence of tension. "Although we lived at 79th and Aberdeen," said H. O'Connor, "80th and Aberdeen was Swedish turf. Quite a few Swedish people lived on our block. There was never animosity or anything between the Swedish people and the Irish."<sup>16</sup>

Although there seemed to be an absence of ethnic or religious hostility, residents of Auburn-Gresham still segregated themselves from each other to a certain degree. In Auburn-Gresham Carrie Barlow noted a tendency for different religious and nationality groups to cluster together in certain sectors of the neighborhood. The census tract areas of 903 and 908 (See Map II), which St. Leo's and St. Sabina's were in, had the highest concentration of immigrants from the Irish Free State. The highest proportion of Swedes were found in area 904, 907 and 906 and the lowest in 908 and 909.

Germans were greatest in 909 and 910 near many of their churches and least in 905 and 908.<sup>17</sup>

"The Irish liked to live close to the church," L. Cavanaugh explained.<sup>18</sup> The nearer to the church one lived, the fewer Protestants people claimed they knew. J. Kill facetiously said, "We lived directly across from the main church so that on Sunday, we didn't have to go to church. We just opened our windows and heard mass...It [the neighborhood] was so Catholic that on our block, on Throop Street, there were no Protestants. I do not honestly know a Protestant from the area. That's how Catholic it was."<sup>19</sup> M. Dunne could not recall any Protestants on her block.<sup>20</sup> T. O'Rourke, who lived three blocks west of St. Sabina's reported that his street was approximately ninety percent Catholic.<sup>21</sup>

Although they did not come into direct conflict with Protestant nativists, hostility and resentment towards them still haunted Catholics in the parish. "There were a lot of tentacles of [discrimination] that reached everywhere," J. Hagerty recalled. "A lot of people in the parish used to say that you had to be a Mason to get ahead and they were accusing the Swift people at the stock yards of being Masons. You couldn't get promoted unless you were a Mason. My brother-in-law ran into that at the Edison Company."<sup>22</sup>

The 1920s were especially difficult for Protestant-Catholic relations in Chicago and across the country. The Ku Klux Klan had revitalized its attacks on the church nationwide

and anti-Catholic sentiment helped derail Al Smith's presidential campaign of 1928. These events had an important impact on American Catholicism.

Although traditionally associated with Southern white supremacy, after World War I the Ku Klux Klan emerged as a national movement to champion 'Americanism' and preserve Protestant Christian values. The new Ku Klux Klan was more in keeping with the nativist tradition of the Know Nothing Party of the 1850s and the American Protective Association of the 1890s. Its enemies were Catholicism, integration, Judaism, immigration and internationalism.<sup>23</sup> Between 1920 and 1926 the Klan accumulated over two million members, one-third of whom came from the Midwest. Thirteen of the country's fifty largest cities were in this region. Many of them teemed with immigrant groups, which made Anglo residents with nativist sentiments easy prey for Klan recruiters.<sup>24</sup> Chicago seemed an unlikely place for the Klan to make much headway considering its large ethnic population. Chicagoans who fit the description of adult, white, native-born, Protestant male made up only two percent of the city's population in 1923. Yet there were as many as 40,000 to 80,000 Klansmen in the city. The first chapters to organize in Illinois were on the Southside of Chicago in Englewood, Woodlawn, and Kenwood. The city itself hosted more than twenty neighborhood Klan chapters. Klan recruits were generally low-level, white-collar workers, small businessmen,

and semi-skilled laborers. It was this class that feared the increasing competition of the emerging Catholic middle class and the growing black ghetto.<sup>25</sup> Those who had not yet reconciled themselves to Chicago's diversity turned to the Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan's rise in Chicago was more an indication of an insecure and defensive Anglo-Protestant community on the retreat in the city.<sup>26</sup> The Catholic population in Chicago had grown dramatically in the beginning of the twentieth century to an estimated forty percent of the total city population. Through sheer numbers, assimilation, and their movement into the middle class, Catholics were now able to challenge Protestant hegemony in the city.<sup>27</sup> Numbers and aggressive leadership made Roman Catholicism the most visible and, to a large extent, the most dominant religious tradition in post-World War I Chicago.<sup>28</sup>

When the Klan decided to infiltrate Chicago, they failed to anticipate the determined effort of its adversaries to challenge it. In 1922 Catholic priests and laymen formed the American Unity League to destroy the Klan in the city and across the nation. Their weapon was a weekly newspaper called Tolerance. The strength of the Klan had depended on maintaining the secrecy of its members. Through various means, Tolerance, obtained the names and places of business of Klansmen and published them -- a unique tactic. The paper was an immediate success and its circulation quickly reached

150,000. As new names were exposed week after week, fear spread throughout the Chicago order and sapped its vitality. After 1924 Klan membership rapidly declined due to Tolerance's exposes. In the process of vanquishing its enemies, however, Tolerance was subjected to numerous lawsuits filed against it for libel. By mid-1924 the AUL was bankrupt and ceased to publish its paper. However, it had done its job and by 1928 the Ku Klux Klan was defunct in the city.<sup>29</sup>

Former St. Sabina parishioners recalled the Ku Klux Klan campaign in Chicago. "I remember there was a paper, Tolerance," said T. O'Rourke. "That was an anti-Ku Klux Klan paper...And they sold these outside St. Sabina's of Sundays. I remember one Sunday it came out and whose name was listed there but William Wrigley, the chewing gum family. He was a member. Well, we boycotted Wrigley Gum from then on. People were all excited about it. He had his factory at 35th and Ashland. It was upsetting for the people who worked there."<sup>30</sup>

William Wrigley, Jr., however, publicly denied that he belonged to the Klan and filed a \$50,000 law suit against the AUL, and offered the same amount of money to any charitable organization that could prove he had signed an application with the Ku Klux Klan. Within a month a Klansmen came forward and admitted that Wrigley's application to the Klan was a forgery.<sup>31</sup>

Although Wrigley eventually cleared his name, his experience demonstrates the effectiveness of AUL's tactics.

Membership in the Ku Klux Klan was not worth the risk to one's reputation or livelihood. The interest of St. Sabina parishioners in Tolerance and the Klan's activities and the distress they felt by the appearance of Wrigley's name in the paper, reveals that the question of their religion in American society was still a touchy issue.

Once the Klan was defeated another blow struck Catholics across the nation. In 1928 the Democratic nominee, Alfred E. Smith, lost the race for the presidency by a large margin to Herbert Hoover. Smith's Catholicism, along with other contro-versial issues he supported, offended Anglo Americans who feared the immigrant hordes in the dirty, corrupt cities of the north that made up the Democratic candidate's constituency. Catholics across the nation were stunned and hurt by the anti-Catholic insults hurled at Smith.

St. Sabina parishioners were no exception. [See Table V] Smith carried sixty-three percent of the votes in nineteenth ward precincts within St. Sabina parish. While it is difficult to precisely determine the percent of the Catholic population in these precincts, it seems likely that Smith captured at least eighty to ninety percent of the Catholic vote. Of the precincts of the parish that were in the eigtheenth ward, Smith won by fifty-six percent. However, the thirty-fourth and the thirty-fifth precincts extended westward from St. Sabina's to nearly Western Avenue. These Precincts would have a sizable Swedish population, which may

account for the lower returns compared to those in the nineteenth ward which were smaller.<sup>32</sup>

The majority vote in favor of Smith in St. Sabina's precincts is even more significant when compared to the overall vote of the wards. Smith only carried fifty-three percent of the eighteenth ward, whereas he lost the nineteenth by a margin of seventeen percent. The nineteenth ward included Beverly Hills and Morgan Park -- exclusive Protestant neighborhoods. Clearly, voting patterns in the area, at least for Catholics, indicates heightened religious sentiments.<sup>33</sup>

T. O'Rourke recounted the feelings of the parish. "We were all for him and were all disappointed...I was in my second year of high school [St. Leo]. The next day after the election I over slept and was late for school. My mother had to write a note. She said I was all tired out from the night before. So I gave it to the brother and he looked at it and said, 'Oh, I know how you people feel, and how we all feel.' So it was alright to be late." Smith's defeat left us feeling that "we couldn't be president; that we were just dealt out."<sup>34</sup> J. Hagerty recalled those years saying, people at St. Sabina's "were one hundred percent for Al Smith...and were of course opposed to the bigotry...So you would certainly not be for Herbert Hoover. You'd be for Al Smith!"<sup>35</sup>

How did members of St. Sabina deal with these outburst of prejudice? Many thought the parish and banding together gave them confidence. J. Hagerty believed that the parish



church and school played an important role in building self-confidence to withstand the onslaught of prejudice and discrimination. "You were brought up with the idea that you were as good as anybody else and these Protestant people were trying to control things and you were just not going to go along with it.....That was the mind set...You would never think of denying it or betraying it...You always took that into the same context as Christ saying that you would be persecuted if you were in the Church...So if you were a Church member, you really had to stand up and be counted...I think that's built into their background...an innate resistance, a kind of 'I'll show you' attitude that prevailed in the long run."<sup>36</sup>

T. O'Rourke confirmed the protective and supportive function of the parish. "I think they [Catholics] were on the defensive, and I think it brought them closer together. They were raised in a kind of enclave, maybe you should call it a ghetto, but we didn't feel persecuted in it. We thought we were on top of the world. But I think we did close ourselves in."<sup>37</sup>

While not threatened or mistreated in their immediate neighborhood, antiCatholicism reinforced the need for a Catholic community. During these years Catholics continued to use their parish as their home-base for support against the hostile attitudes of Anglo-Protestant America. Parishioners were defensive and recognized the need to turn to their

religious community or parish for support. Within this community they found reinforcement for their faith, camaraderie and mutual support.

The Chicago Irish, like other Catholics, resisted the ultimate expression of Yankee America -- the Eighteenth Amendment, which sought to restrict America's drinking habits from 1919 to 1933. Protestants, particularly the more religious, traditionally scorned drinking as an evil that led to only more moral lapses. These Prohibitionists sincerely believed that if the consumption of alcohol were curtailed, American life would soon reflect the Anglo-Protestant ideals of thrift, industry and piety, and destroy the evils and corruption that hard-drinking immigrants brought to urban life.

Like other ethnic groups across the country and in Chicago, those who resided in the confines of St. Sabina's resented Prohibition. "They didn't like it," recalled T. O'Rourke. "They thought a right was being taken away from them." Prohibitionists "thought it was saving the country, but my people didn't like it. My father thought a working man had a right to have a drink if he wanted it...So the saloons closed up, then the speakeasies came along...Some of those were in houses in the area. My father had a place where he could go. It was a corner bungalow, an Irish family operated it and he could get some thing to drink. They sprang up in

apartments, too, particularly on 79th Street up above the stores."<sup>38</sup>

The Irish not only considered a drink social, but they also used it for medicinal purposes. Its unavailability proved frustrating. "They used whiskey as medicine," explained T. O'Rourke. "They thought during the flu epidemic of 1919 that the doctors who prescribed whiskey saved more of their patients than those that didn't. They thought that...That was just some of their methods of taking care of themselves when they were sick."<sup>39</sup>

T. O'Rourke also recalled before Prohibition that "There was one [saloon] at 79th and Racine, called Hickey's. They were prominent members of the parish and they were very generous to the Church." Engaging in the liquor trade did not negatively affect one's standing in the parish, and depending on what one did with the proceeds, it could enhance one's reputation. The desire to attain American Protestant respectability and compromise one's own beliefs, values, and lifestyles clearly had its limits. After the Eighteenth Amendment had been repealed, saloons once again popped up along the main commercial strips of 79th Street and Ashland and Racine Avenues. "There were all kinds of them after a while. I think there were probably too many."<sup>40</sup>

St. Sabina's experience makes it clear that these parishioners were not complete imitators of Protestant America. What they could use and adapt to American society,

they kept -- steering a middle course between the culture and expectations of Protestant America and what remained meaningful in their lives.

Chicago's Irish seemed to steer a middle course between assuming American Protestant respectability and assimilating into American society and maintaining their own community life. The parish, like other Catholic institutions, had been transplanted to America because of immigrant needs and the hostile reception of their host society. But by World War I it had won the loyalty of Catholics as a way of life unto itself. Protestant bigotry was certainly still a consideration for Catholics during this time period. However, in Chicago, at least, the tables were beginning to turn against the Protestant establishment in Chicago.

While still aware of prejudice in certain sectors of the city, and the country, St. Sabina parishioners did not find it particularly disabling, and, although still defensive, they were beginning to reflect a more self-assured Catholic community, but were still committed to a parish-centered community. They showed tremendous zeal and dedication to building new parish institutions.

#### BUILDING ST. SABINA'S

To start a new parish was no small undertaking, but the members of St. Sabina's enthusiastically embraced the challenge. Father Egan wasted no time in acquiring property

at 78th and Throop Street. On December 8, 1916, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, ground was broken to begin the construction of Sabina's first permanent parish structure, a combination school and church. According to the Archdiocese requirements, the school received top priority. A severe winter, however, delayed the blessing of the cornerstone until May 13, 1917. On September 10, 1917 St. Sabina parochial school opened. It was staffed by the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. In October the first mass was said in the auditorium. By May of the following year Archbishop Mundelein was called to officiate at the dedication of the building. In 1922 two more floors were added to the school to accommodate the growing number of pupils and the third floor was used as a temporary rectory. In 1924 a new convent was built at 1207 W. 78th Street for the sisters, who previously lived at St. Brendan's convent and then in a house at 79th and Elizabeth. In 1925 the foundation was laid for a permanent church and its basement was completed and used for services. By 1928 all of the \$540,000 debt for these buildings was paid.<sup>41</sup>

The main source of revenue came from Sunday and holy day collections with a considerable share coming from pew collections at the entrance of the church. The pew money at St. Sabina's was actually a seat collection in which parishioners were expected to drop a nickel in a box upon entering the church. Pew rental, on the other hand, which was

somewhat common in the nineteenth century, allowed families to rent and occupy specific pews, usually at the front of the church. Only the wealthier members of the congregation could afford rented seats. Poor Catholics often felt that this practice was undemocratic.<sup>42</sup> Many of the parishes St. Sabina parishioners came from had a pew rental system. From 1900 to 1920, however, many began to adopt seat money. The amount of money collected for seat money in comparison to pew rental varied from parish to parish. Some moved more eagerly toward the more equitable arrangement, while others still drew a good deal from rentals.<sup>43</sup>

As Table VI shows during St. Sabina's early years seat money equaled the basket collection. Towards the end of the 1920s seat money, while increasing as the parish did, began to fall more and more behind the general collection. By 1953 it was discontinued. The shift from pew rental to seat money can perhaps be seen as an egalitarian move, while the discontinuance of seat money can be seen as a move toward genteel standards.

Carnivals were an important source of income for the building fund. They were held annually from 1916 to 1928. They proved to be very lucrative operations. In one year the festival grossed \$26,700.<sup>44</sup> M. Dunne recalled, "The carnivals were outstanding... People worked very hard for those. That was one of the big sources of revenue for the building fund...The community came together to enjoy...It was a fun

time that young people looked forward to, old people, too. An awful lot of people did pitch in to provide the wherewithal for them to do the building and maintain it."<sup>45</sup>

A carnival was often a means for Catholics to boldly announce their arrival in a new neighborhood, if for any reason their presence would be questioned. The week-long event was opened by a parade. In September 1920 The New World reported:

With an opening night that was a record breaker, St. Sabina's Carnival welcomed throngs every evening during the past week. Sixteen booths and concessions, decorated in an elaborate manner operated to capacity for the record number of visitors, were provided. The mammoth parade held on last Friday evening was the biggest featured in Auburn Park and Englewood. 186 decorated machines and floats passed before the reviewing stand in keen competition for the first honors of the evening. Since the opening feature, each night surpassed the preceding in successful achievement.<sup>46</sup>

#### ST SABINA'S RELATIONS WITH LOCAL PROTESTANTS

The parade and carnival even seemed to interest local Protestants. T. O'Rourke told of how some reacted to all this fanfare. "Next door to us, in bungalow, there was an Erikson. And Sabina's use to have these carnivals; and to open a carnival, they'd have a parade. Well, we didn't have a car in those days. But Erikson would drive us in his touring car with the top down and he'd be yelling 'St. Sabina always on the top!' in his Swedish accent. He got a big kick out of it...They couldn't beat us so they joined us."<sup>47</sup>

In the early years of the parish St. Sabina's Social Club, held Friday night parties sponsored by a different street in the parish each week. In April 1920, after the Lenten season, The New Word reported:

The Friday night parties are again being held with their usual success. The number and value of the favors each street secures has attracted many outsiders and has given these parties an enviable reputation.<sup>48</sup>

Catholics dominated the social scene in Auburn-Gresham and seemed to think their way of life as the most desirable. T. O'Rourke gestingly said, "We thought we had everything!"<sup>49</sup>

Local Protestants, though, did not seem too threatened by Catholics. Some even sent their children to St. Sabina school before the local public school was completed. T. O'Rourke said that "Cook School [public] was portable...And some fathers and mothers wouldn't send their children to the portables...so some non-Catholics went to St. Sabina's."<sup>50</sup>

However, because of their greater numbers and separate institutional life of church and school, the Catholics in the neighborhood, for the most part, did not associate with others not in their circle. The simple fact that the children in the neighborhood attended different schools largely determined who their playmates were. J. Hagerty stated that, "You just were separate. You didn't go to the public school and your associations with Protestant families were kind of just civil and strange. But they were good neighbors."<sup>51</sup> J. Kill commented, "You did grow up with the idea that mixed marriages



were supposed to be bad. Therefore, you just stayed with Catholics and associated with Catholics. That was it...Protestants were like 'over there.'"<sup>52</sup>

While there was institutional and psychological separation, the relationship between Protestants and Catholics was a bit more complex. Table VII on Marriages reveals an average rate of mixed marriages to be twenty-one percent. Clearly many Catholics and Protestants did more than just tolerate each other's presence.

St. Sabina's parishioners were not outside the trend of other territorial parishes in regard to marriage outside the faith. From a random sample of territorial parishes, Catholics in 1900 were marrying nonCatholics approximately at a rate of sixteen percent. By 1920 it was nineteen percent, and by 1930 the mixed marriage rate was twenty-two percent.<sup>53</sup>

The Catholic community in Auburn-Gresham in the post World War I years was slowly opening itself to the wider society. Yet, their strong numbers, Their perceived marginal status in America, their continued separate institutional life and attitudes towards fraternizing with and marrying people of other religions, basically still helped maintain a Catholic community unto itself.

#### ST. SABINA AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

St. Sabina parishioners remained loyal to their parish even during the Depression. At the onset of the Great

Depression in 1929, Father Egan found himself with only a finished basement for his main house of worship. Despite the financially adverse times, he decided to proceed with the completion of the upper main church. His plan also aimed to provide employment for building-trade workers of the parish and to take advantage of lower-priced materials. He specified to the contractors that parishioners be hired first.<sup>54</sup> His decision proved to be a sound one. By June 18, 1933 Cardinal Mundelein officiated at the dedication of the English Gothic church of "the most complete and vigorous parish in his or any other diocese."<sup>55</sup> The main church, valued at \$600,000, also erased its debts within a few years.<sup>56</sup>

Egan, now a monsignor, could not act independently on any of his building ventures. He proceeded with construction plans only with the approval of Mundelein's Board of Consultors.<sup>57</sup> However, the fact that he was able to erect so many buildings and have them all paid for in such a short amount of time, indicates impressive leadership abilities and enthusiastic support from his parishioners. It also suggests that during this economically trying time, the parish as a whole continued to be financially healthy. Sunday and holy day collections were only down eight percent, while pew collections increased by one percent. However, the total parish membership of 2000 in 1935 had increased by twenty-five percent over the 1929 total of 1600. While individual donations were down, it did not hurt parish finances, as is

demonstrated by the full payment of its debt on the church. St. Sabina grade school also posted an increase in attendance. From 1930 to 1937 the parish set up a \$1000 scholarship fund out of general revenues.<sup>58</sup> Tuition was kept deliberately low to just seventy-five cents.<sup>59</sup> M. Dunne said that during the Depression, "tuition was low...provision was always made for families who had a problem and were out of work or a death, so that if they wanted to go to the Catholic school, they made it possible for them to go."<sup>60</sup>

The continued fiscal strength of the parish during the Depression was due in large measure to the fact that many people in the parish kept their jobs. The Irish proclivity for city employment and politically connected jobs worked in their favor during this troubling time. "I think it [the parish] did pretty well," T. O'Rourke recounted. "I'm sure some people suffered in the Depression...the building trades were hit very hard...But again, there were a lot of people who had steady work because of their job...like the streetcar men kept working...In my father's case, streetcar men didn't make a lot of money, but the salary came in all during the Depression and that made a big difference. Maybe the salaries were down. I'm sure nobody got raises during those years. But those that had steady work did all right. The firemen kept working, and the policemen...Now the policemen, firemen and school teachers had a problem. The city was broke, too, and they were paying them in script...They got that money in

the end, if they could get along...They got it and they were able to redeem the script after a certain time."<sup>61</sup>

M. Dunne confirmed the steady work of parish city workers. She said, "My father was a school engineer, a city employee...He was getting paid in script...Very often he had to discount it in order to buy groceries. We went to the Peoples' Store, which was in Roseland, every Saturday for groceries and for all the things that were necessary to life...because they would take script."<sup>62</sup>

"A lot of stock yards people...all seemed to keep working," T. O'Rourke recalled. "Maybe not the people in the plant--the laborers, but I think they kept their office help going...And then they had the WPA and all kinds of relief...And I know a lot of people who were in those programs...I think during the Depression years they [local politicians] were terrific in what they did. You couldn't get a job in private industry. There were no jobs, and they would get jobs for people...They did a lot of that. And a lot of people, who never were in politics, took political jobs when they lost out. They were glad to get those political jobs. They had steady income...[The parish] didn't have any soup kitchens set up...Some people lost their homes during the Depression...Some banks failed in the parish. One was at 79th and Ashland and one at 79th and Halsted. People lost money in that. My parents lost money. Even the priests at Sabina's, they lost the stipend money there. They had the

sabina's, they lost the stipend money there. They had the rest of the money in the stock yard banks."<sup>63</sup> J. Kill also recalled how the parish got along in the Depression. "All I know is that people got along and helped each other...They had the WPA so a lot of guys got jobs through that. We use to call it 'We Poke Along.' It was a government project. They did a lot of jobs. They went around and did a lot of good things. They weren't paid a lot, but they were paid enough."<sup>64</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners generously supported the building endeavors of their pastor. Through the Depression they were able to continue their financial support of the parish because of their employment preferences.

#### PARISH LOYALTY

What were their attitudes and feelings towards the parish and community that bound members together? E. Clair and T. O'Rourke thought that the clannishness of the Irish played a role in parish community building. "We kept together. I don't know if that was good or bad for us, but we did."<sup>65</sup> Another reason for strong loyalty to the parish according to T. O'Rourke was that "in those days, the nuns and the priests were the leaders and those people followed...There was a great spirit among them and they wanted to get a church and school...And they'd do any kind of work to get it. I mean, like on those carnivals, they worked real hard. That was manual work, and they worked long hours. They wanted to

get their neighborhood built up and to get everything going...In the old days they were willing to build all these things."<sup>66</sup>

M. Dunne thought people turned to the parish out of loyalty and devotion and to support their families. She said, "They were young families and they were working for their own families as well as other young families coming up...It was not an area of wealthy people. The parish plant was built, not by people who were wealthy and giving big donations. It was built and paid for by little hard working people who sacrificed to contribute...They were pretty much family oriented and their goals were to probably see that their children had a better life than they had."<sup>67</sup> St. Sabina's financial reports support her assertion. There were no large donations made to the parish. The major source of money was from the collections and entertainments.<sup>68</sup>

J. Hagerty provided another reason why the parish was still an attraction. It was simply because of the lack of development in the area. She related, "I remember there weren't many places around the area. It was sort of a wasteland...So that it was a gathering place, the church was and the school, for people to congregate and that's how you got to know the neighbors and the people who lived in the area."<sup>69</sup>

The geographically-defined Catholic parishes sometimes created other reasons for where one chose to live. Sometime

people chose a particular parish for political purposes because it might be in a certain ward.<sup>70</sup> At times it also created hard choices. In 1925 St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) parish was established at 80th and Wood Street out of a portion of St. Sabina's western territory. The Dunne family unhappily found themselves automatically assigned to the new parish. "We had moved to 77th and Marshfield in a brand new three-flat," recalled M. Dunne, "and that was a time when Little Flower was created...With the problems of the new parish and a change in schools -- there was no church really -- my father sold the three-flat at a loss and went back to St. Sabina's."<sup>71</sup>

Msgr. Egan, fondly referred to as "God's gift to the Southside,"<sup>72</sup> was another important factor in fostering community solidarity. "I think the pastor was greatly responsible for the cohesiveness," M. Dunne related. "He was a very fatherly kind of man with a soft little Irish brogue and he had wonderful fore-sight in planning those buildings...He really built a beautiful set-up there...He was a peace-maker. He had a way of drawing people together."<sup>73</sup> J. Hagerty confirmed Msgr. Egan's role in building community spirit. She said, "The fondest memories of a priest that you could have would be of the pastor, Father Egan. He was made to be a pastor...He was like everybody's grandfather to the kids in school. I remember him well from the earliest days. Everybody respected him. He was an Irishman by birth and he

had a jovial attitude but he was a wise person, too. He never sounded off at people. He was a very kind and loving person. Everybody loved him, without exception, of every age group. I know my mother was very fond of him. She worked with the Altar and Rosary Society. They really liked him."<sup>74</sup>

"My folks considered moving before the war," said T. Rourke. "They'd always say 'Well, we don't want to go while Father Egan's here,' and I think others had the same feeling...He ran great societies...He had the Holy Name and Altar and Rosary, and he was behind all these. He was a real diplomat. He was well-known among the non-Catholic people in the area, too. They all knew him. He'd take part in different little civic affairs...like the Fourth of July parades in the neighborhood...And if they were trying to get a park in the area, he'd lend his support maybe just by his appearance at a meeting. He was a great man. He could listen to anybody. I think that was his secret. He could listen without saying anything."<sup>75</sup>

J. Hagerty's view corresponded with T. O'Rourke's of Msgr. Egan. She said, "Msgr. Egan was the kind of person -- he made friends with the nearby Lutheran pastor and with this church and that. Whatever churches were in the area. He was that kind of person. He wouldn't be for competition in that area at all."<sup>76</sup>

One of the crucial test for a pastor was how he handled money matters. According to his parishioners Monisignor Egan



passed muster. "He rarely asked for money," recalled M. Dunne. "But he had to have money because he did a lot of building. But people gave willingly...I suppose there were those who didn't. But the people on the whole that I knew were very generous with their means. We were taught that from an early age."<sup>77</sup>

J. Hagerty also confirmed his reticence on money matters. "In all the years he was pastor there, he never spoke of money. He never asked for money. This was the kind of person he was. He drew it from people without asking."<sup>78</sup>

E. Clair revealed Msgr. Egan's understated method of raising money for the building fund. "They tell a story about him and it's connected with the Holy Name Society. The officers in the Holy Name usually were elected for a two year term. And when they built that church, they had an elegant rose window. And every time a new group of officers would come in, Father Egan would let it be known that there still was a debt on that thing, say \$2000. And that's the first thing the president had to do was to go out and do something that would bring in, before the end of the year, \$2000. But that's one of the jokes of the parish. It was true though...All he had to say was anything he wanted done. He didn't say it himself, but he had two or three men that he scooped on the program that he wanted to put over, and then at one of these meetings, someone made a motion to do this or

do that, and the other two fellows of the committee seconded it immediately."<sup>79</sup>

Parishioners also recalled how interested Msgr. Egan was with the personal concerns of his flock. H. O'Connor related this story. She had been married five years and had been waiting and praying for a child. When she finally received the good news from the doctor, she "stopped at the rectory and told Father Egan before I came home and told my husband." Fifty years later she said, "I still pray for him."<sup>80</sup>

Msgr. Egan's death in 1942 saddened the entire community. "I remember when Father Egan died, the night he died, getting on a bike and riding up and down the streets, shouting the news like we were newspaper carriers or Paul Revere," recalled J. Kill. "And the church bells were tolling. When the church bells tolled, everybody came out in front of their houses to find out what's wrong or what's going on...and we yelled, 'Msgr. Egan died! Msgr. Egan died!'"<sup>81</sup> "When he died," J. Hagerty said, "the entire plant of the church, the school, the convent, the rectory and the community center, were paid for one hundred percent. And those were working people. And he had to live through the Depression so it was a great tribute to him."<sup>82</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners also warmly embraced the assistant priests as part of their community. "The other priests were very friendly with everyone." said J. Hagerty.

"There was enough opportunity for people to get to know them...They were all the kind that people took to. Msgr. Egan was such a gracious and generous person that he would be a super pastor to work under."<sup>83</sup> J. Kill said, "I would say the priests had a good image at Sabina's -- well, they did all over."<sup>84</sup>

Father Ashendon, in particular, stood out in their memories for his involvement in parish activities. He was especially devoted to the young people of the parish and stories of his antics were a regular feature of St. Sabina's. On one occasion he flooded the prairie before the main church was built for an ice skating rink. He started the water running on a Saturday evening, went in to hear confessions, and completely forgot to turn it off. Sunday morning the whole block was coated with ice. "Everyone liked him. He and Monsignor Egan...got along like father and son."<sup>85</sup>

#### DEVOTIONS AT ST. SABINA

The devotional style of Catholicism that was observed during this time was also a major factor in reinforcing the parish's centrality in the community. It was a form of religious practice that emphasized the authority of the clergy and hierarchy. Peoples' behavior was regulated by particular rules governing fasts and other duties, and fulfilling various obligations. To ensure compliance to the rules, 'sin' was continually emphasized and guilt loomed large in Catholic

imaginations. Parish missions further reinforced sin and guilt with evangelical fervor, thus creating the need for forgiveness through the sacrament of confession. To fortify oneself against sin prayer, ritual, and devotions became a central feature of Catholic life. Public performance of rituals created bonds and a sense of group consciousness and solidarity. Yet despite the public nature of worship, Catholicism prescribed an individual gospel. Salvation and sin remained the responsibility of the individual.<sup>86</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners were very devoted to communal religious practices and observances. The most important rituals were the mass and the sacraments of baptism, marriage, confession, and Communion. Lenten devotions, Benedictions, processions, a Friday Mother of Sorrows novena (begun in 1937),<sup>87</sup> and a parish mission every two to three years were standard fare.

"People went to church," reported M. Dunne of the religious practices of the parish. "I think they made a very decided effort to do what the Church expected of them. They went to church. They belonged to the societies."<sup>88</sup> From his vantage point across the street J. Kill reported, "I honestly can say that I never knew anybody who didn't go to church...Even during the week, the number of people who went was phenomenal. During Lent, it was almost like Sundays. The church was filled."<sup>89</sup>

T. O'Rourke also recalled the devoutness of the parish.

"When I was young, churches would be crowded. They'd be packed with people...and they'd be pushing them into pews, pushing them in...And they'd stand in line for Confession...You'd get in line and you might be there two hours, just standing...I think they wanted to go to church, and they did feel it was their obligation." He further commented on the strictness of Catholicism at that time. "We followed a lot of rules and our fasting and abstinence was stricter. Fasting before going to communion -- many things would happen between midnight and mass time in the morning, especially on First Communion. Some kids would break their fast and, of course, they wouldn't let them go to communion, even if they drank water at six in the morning."<sup>90</sup>

J. Hagerty agreed that people in St. Sabina's were steadfast in their religious obligations. "They were very devoted to the church, I must say that," she said. "My mother went to mass every morning and to the big devotions, like the First Fridays and...novenas...My father always went to the missions." The reasons, she explained, for this exacting adherence to religious practices was due to early instruction. "You were taught from an early age that this religion thing was not automatic," she said. "You had to do something about it. And it was expected of you and you did it." Upon reflection she added that "the social conditions of the time had a lot to do with a person's...dependence on the

Almighty...During the Depression, everybody was down. Everybody was praying for jobs and for whatever you could do."<sup>91</sup>

"I think we had more religion," reflected M. Dunne "We had processions and we had Forty Hours Devotion and, we had Benediction and we had novenas. The novenas at St. Sabina were so well attended that they had to have Andy Frain ushers out there to keep people in line...People would come from all over. You'd see them getting off the street cars."<sup>92</sup>

"I went there [to novenas]," related B. DesChatelets. "You were praying for things...You asked for favors...It lasted about forty minutes, and it was nice...We were playing baseball at the time and we used to go to the seven o'clock novena or six o'clock, depending on what time our game was. We'd all be in there in our baseball uniforms. I think everybody figured we were praying to win the game. I don't know what it was, but we'd just go."<sup>93</sup>

The emotionalism in the parish novena was observed by J. Kill. "A novena was a funny thing...It was almost some sort of a need in people to go and pray the same prayer over and over with other people. The music was very sentimental...The closing hymn was 'Good Night Sweet Jesus.'" Although he acknowledged the theological inconsistency of singing 'Good Night Sweet Jesus' at nine o'clock in the morning when they were putting the Host back in the tabernacle at the end of the holy hour, he admitted that "there was

something in people at that time that they needed that novena and it fit...This was their means of an outlet. You would pray with other people aloud and loudly."<sup>94</sup>

Other devotional activities were also popular. "One of the big things in those early days were the May altars and the May processions," recalled M. Dunne. "A lot of children would, instead of buying candy on their way back to school in May, they'd be into Farrell's Florist buying, maybe with ten cents, one flower to take to school for the May altar. There was a lot of good spirit. There was religion, but it wasn't made uncomfortable. It was a joyous kind of thing."<sup>95</sup>

In 1920 The New World wrote of St. Sabina's May devotions:

Last Sunday evening the procession and the crowning of the May Queen was held in the church. The long lines of little children marching and chanting the litany and praises of their Blessed Mother was a beautiful sight. The children have entered deeply into the May devotions; each room of the school had its little shrine to the Blessed Virgin.<sup>96</sup>

"We'd never pass a church without tipping our hat," related T. O'Rourke. "We were very careful. We wouldn't eat meat on Friday at all. That would be really terrible. On Holy Thursday, we'd visit churches...We could walk to St. Leo's, and then we'd go down to Sacred Heart. That was a German parish. They'd be saying the prayers in German, and we thought that was very interesting. We'd go to St. Brendan's and then back to St. Sabina's. Sometimes we'd go out to St. Kilian's. And we'd be doing a lot of walking. It

would depend on what kind of day it was, how much we'd do. Then in later years when we had autos, we went by automobiles...and the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in all these churches and that's what we were honoring -- the Blessed Sacrament."<sup>97</sup> In addition to honoring the Blessed Sacrament, a first time visit to a church was believed to grant the visitor three wishes.

The pilgrimages to church and to the novenas were not, however, necessarily somber occasions. J. Kill said, "On Fridays they had seven novenas with 8500 people. It was fun for us as kids because we lived across the street. They used to block the street with horses because some people would wait two and three hours to get into church to go to the novenas, the church was that crowded...You waited until you were able to get in. So then, while it was blocked off, we used to play hockey out there on roller skates. We had an audience. People would be cheering for you...We kind of entertained the people, who were waiting to go to church."<sup>98</sup>

### PARISH SOCIETIES

Another important aspect of parish life in addition to devotional observances, were the various parish associations. The bedrock organizations of St. Sabina's from the beginning were the Altar and Rosary Society for the women and the Holy Name Society for men.<sup>99</sup> Both societies were confraternities, which meant that their intention was to promote public worship



and they had their own rituals and observances. The Altar and Rosary Society required its members to say fifteen mysteries of the rosary once a week. The Holy Name Society purpose was to be a public manifestation of homage for Christ's name. Its members were required to receive Holy Communion together on the second Sunday of each month. In addition to their spiritual aims, the Holy Name and Altar and Rosary Societies aided the pastor in raising money for parish buildings, they engaged in philanthropic activities, the Holy Name had a Big Brother program, and they both included a good deal of socializing in many of their gatherings.

"The Altar and Rosary Society and Holy Name Society were very active," M. Dunne recalled. "The Holy Name Society was outstandingly active in the whole diocese. They were recognized in the whole Chicago area for their turn outs on the Sundays for the Holy Name."<sup>100</sup> In June 1931 the Holy Name Society sent 1000 of its members to receive Holy Communion on the second Sunday of the month.<sup>101</sup> While the Altar and Rosary Society was not required by its definition to receive the Eucharistic sacrament together on Sunday, they imitated the Holy Name Society in this regard. This led to friendly competition at the communion rail. In October 1931 The New World reported

The women of the parish received Holy Communion last Sunday and had over eight hundred in line. This showing was very gratifying to all concerned and proves that the women of St. Sabina's are trying to take the honors from the men. Since the organization of the parish the Holy Name Society has always set the standard of attendance

at Communion leading all other societies by a large margin, but if we wish to keep this leadership we ask every man to talk to his neighbor and his friends and impress upon him that we want every man in the parish to be in line next Sunday.<sup>102</sup>

The following month the men of the parish, not to be outdone by the women, also sent 800 to the Communion rail.

The New World reported:

Last Sunday St. Sabina men turned out with their usual demonstration of loyalty to their Society. With Scout troops 638 and 669 in the lead as they marched into church, the bystander might well remark, 'What's going on?' However, the well informed Southsiders knows that this is just the usual monthly Communion Sunday in St. Sabina parish. Each of the nearly 800 Scouts and men felt that they had a duty to perform and were proud of their task."<sup>103</sup>

"The Holy Name...had social affairs and a regular business meeting and after that they'd play cards and they had beer," E. Clair related. "They enjoyed each others company...Nearly everybody belonged to it."<sup>104</sup> The Holy Name also sponsored athletic events, had a bowling and basketball league, had musical programs, "Ladies' Nights", and held dances.<sup>105</sup>

J. Hagerty recalled her mother's involvement with the Altar and Rosary Society and some of their activities. She said, "She joined the Altar and Rosary Society...During the weeks that the carnival was on, you didn't see much of her at home. And they had bake sales...and there were bingo games and card games that they used to sponsor. And they were of course interested in the school. These women were more or

less the mothers' club then because most everybody had kids in school."<sup>106</sup>

Besides the Altar and Rosary Society the women of the parish also had an organization called the Daughters of Isabella, a beneficiary society, or the St. Sabina Circle, begun in 1920 and its membership reached 150.<sup>107</sup> It held neighborhood meetings and monthly socials. St. Sabina also had a Social Club and a Booster Club. In addition, it sponsored a chapter of the Catholic Order of Foresters, a life insurance beneficiary society. The St. Vincent De Paul Society, a charitable society, formed a chapter here, but was not activated until the Depression. There were several sodalities one could join, such as the Young Ladies' Sodality, the St. Agnes Sodality, a Young Peoples' Club and the Sacred Heart Confraternity. St. Sabina's also briefly sponsored a Dramatic Club and Parents' Band Club. Parishioners, then, had a continuous array of social activities to chose to attend just in the parish. They would all have a priest assigned to them as a spiritual director. All seemed to be very successful.<sup>108</sup>

Although it was not a parish-based organization, many members of St. Sabina's belonged to the Auburn Park Knights of Columbus.<sup>109</sup> The KCs, or "Caseys" as they were known, were very popular with Chicago's second and third generation Irish Catholics. Forty-nine councils had been established in the city between 1886 and 1918 with 25,303 members. Their purpose

was to demonstrate the compatibility of American values and Catholicism. They pledged to uphold the U.S. Constitution, to show respect for law and order, along with practicing their religion "'openly and consistently, but without ostentation,'" while the KCs sponsored social, athletic and charitable causes, the Chicago KCs showed the greatest zeal in their war efforts. Historians have criticized the Knights of Columbus as fostering a Catholic American identity over an Irish-American one.<sup>110</sup> Certainly Catholicism was more central and loomed as a larger issue in the lives of Irish-Americans. The comments former parishioners of St. Sabina's made in regard to the Ku Klux Klan and Al Smith demonstrate the immediacy of the question of their faith in American society. The centrality of the parish in their lives also testifies to the greater importance Catholicism played in their lives over an Irish identity. J. Kill said being Irish was something you just took for granted "because everyone was Irish."<sup>111</sup>

#### ST. SABINA PARISH SCHOOL

St. Sabina parochial school played a crucial role in the community life of the parish. It was staffed by the Sinsinawa Dominican order which was founded in America by Rev. Samuel Mazzuchelli in 1849 in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. The core of the Dominicans' educational mission was religious instruction. Preserving an ethnic culture was not part of their calling.<sup>112</sup>

Parents sent their children to the parochial school for various reasons. T. O'Rourke said, "People were very supportive of the nuns and priests...I think they [parents] wanted to give you that [a religious education]. I think they thought it was their responsibility that we got it. And they thought that the nuns were the ones to give it to us...If the nuns said your daughter ought to take piano lessons, the daughter took piano lessons...and if they thought a boy should take violin lessons, he'd take violin lessons." They thought that the nuns, "would do the right thing...and they felt sure that they were fulfilling their obligations as parents when they had them in the Catholic school. That's what they wanted."<sup>113</sup>

J. Kill said of why people sent their children to the parish school, "It was almost like it was the thing that was expected. There was no comparison made. It was like, you learned God in the Catholic school and you didn't learn God in the public school...I think it was just that everybody did it. You didn't even think about it. You just did it."<sup>114</sup> H. O'Connor said, "I never even considered sending them [her children] to the public school."<sup>115</sup>

Table VIII on school attendance demonstrates that St. Sabina grade school had almost the unanimous support of the parents in the parish. These figures bear out J. Kill's remark, "I didn't know anybody who went to public schools."<sup>116</sup> Although the figures on public school attendance appear to be

estimates, they still reflect the low level of attendance of Catholics children in public schools, even during the Depression.

E. Clair said the primary reason he sent his children to the Catholic school was for them to be taught the Catholic faith. Besides religious instruction, he said, "discipline would be one of the main things in a Catholic school. I know our kids would come home scared to skip almost...Clothing-wise, they controlled the girls, particularly in their dresses."<sup>117</sup> J. Kill confirmed the discipline aspect of Catholic education. "I those days, "he said, "the child didn't go home and say, 'The teacher hit me' because he'd get hit again by his mother...It was always that the teacher was right. She wouldn't hit you unless she was right...Even though we were scared of them, we didn't say they were doing anything wrong. It's just that they were tough. And they had to be tough...because they had fifty kids in a classroom...They had perfect discipline."<sup>118</sup> B. DesChatelets confirmed their toughness. "The nuns told you something, and that was it -- that's the way it was."<sup>119</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners generally thought that they received a good education. J. Hagerty's recalled of the nuns, "They were good teachers. They ran a fine school. You got a very good basic education"<sup>120</sup> J. Kill concurred. "When you went in to class, you expected to learn. You really wanted to learn...There was competition, but there was friendly

competition, a kind of desire to excel...We use to have... competitive scholarship examinations and everybody in the city in eighth grade could take the examination to any school, and, then, if you won, you got free tuition. For our family, that was a lot...One nun helped me and I got a scholarship. I got one to St. Rita and I won one to Quigley [Seminary]...When I was ordained, I remember that nun came to my first mass. And I was still so scared of her that I went and hid in the bathroom, because she used to wallop us all the time. She was a real tyrant. She was a good, teacher, but she was not our friend."<sup>121</sup>

The educational level of the sisters in the school was in a period of flux during the 1920s and 1930s. Throughout the nineteenth century and even into the 1920s most Dominicans, like their other religious counterparts, were not well-educated or prepared to enter the classroom. Since religious instruction was their primary goal, secular subjects were often neglected. They did not have college education and they received their teacher training on the job. However, at the turn of the century teaching orders began to address the shortcomings of their education as diocese and states began to demand teacher certification. Initially, convents and motherhouses offered lectures and summer institutes to prepare their sisters for certification. Female religious order, however, were handicapped in attaining higher education because Catholic Universities refused to admit women. These

institutions gradually began to admit women to summer programs. Some Sinsinawa Dominicans enrolled in the University of Wisconsin. Their course work was usually done on a part-time basis so it often took nearly twenty years for some to obtain a college education.<sup>122</sup>

Despite their struggle to educate themselves, the Dominicans at St. Sabina recognized the value parents placed on education and did their best to provide a solid education for their students. Sister Cecilian, who taught at St. Sabina's in the late 1920s and early 1930s, said children in the school won many scholarships in city-wide competitions.<sup>123</sup>

As part of their religious training, the children of the school received instruction for their First Communion, Confession, and Confirmation -- events that took place under the auspices of the clergy in the church. After their First Communion children were inducted into the parishes junior societies. The girls became members of the Children of Mary and the boys were initiated into the junior Holy Name. Graduation exercises were also held in the church and were closed with Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>124</sup>

"Every day we had religion in the class," recalled J. Hagerty.

"We had catechism and we used to have to recite that...There were quite a few things like processions in the church. I remember the May processions. They would always have the kids marching in the processions. There was a lot of religion."<sup>125</sup>

The major events of a child's early life were church-school



related. There was no escaping the moral authority of parents, nuns in the school and the priests in the church. They were all integrated and mutually supportive.

The parish priests also played an integral role in the lives of the children and the school. As an altar boy, J. Kill related that "you always used to have to learn these long Latin prayers and...a lot of actions...So the priests spent time every week with the boys and they got to know the priests better and to heroize them better than today...At that time [1930s] I think we had five priests at Sabina's. You got to know all of them pretty well. You wanted to be like them. In those days in grammar school, other than the White Sox and Father Damien and the Lepers, parish priests were my heroes. I think because the kids were fairly close to the priests and they were younger priests, too."<sup>126</sup>

Priests were also idols to the girls. M. Dunne recalled, "Father Ashendon was the second priest, the assistant with Monsignor Egan. He was a handsome young man, who was just vibrant and the girls were wild about him. [Handsome priests were often referred to as Father What-a-waste.] I remember on one occasion when I was in first grade, there was a little girl who was in my room, and...she brought a banana and said it was for Father Ashendon. She asked me if I would go with her up to the third floor [the temporary rectory] to give Father Ashendon the banana. Well, my mother

would have scalped me if she knew that I was going on this trip. And I didn't realize until we got there with her banana that she had been digging into the end of the banana and eating it all afternoon. When we got up there, there was about half of the banana with the skin hanging on. I was mortified. But he was gracious and asked us if we wouldn't like a part of it. Well, I wouldn't have any part of that. He was wonderful with young people."<sup>127</sup>

Stories of nuns and priests like these have been indelibly imprinted in the minds of every girl and boy educated in parochial schools and formed an integral part of their parish experience. The authority of the nuns over their children was not restricted to the confines of the parish school. They also, along with the priests, exercised moral leadership throughout the community. J. Hagerty provided some illustrations. "I remember one time at the school. There was a woman on the corner that owned an apartment building and she had a couple of flower beds. Some of the kids going home from school at noontime got into the flower beds and picked the flowers. And she complained to the pastor. So one day, he came over to the school and he made the rounds of the rooms and the way he put it was "You wouldn't want anybody to pick your flowers, would you?" So he said, "We don't want to hurt this lady." And he said the flowers are beautiful to look at. And nobody after that picked the flowers. There was no problem or trouble. Another time I remember, I was in the

sixth grade, and there were two girls in the class...They went home for lunch...and there was a Greek who had a grocery and vegetable store at 79th and Throop. He had apples and oranges and everything on the outside. And these two girls helped themselves to a couple of apples on the way back to school. Well, he had a fit, this Greek did. So he came up to the school and he saw the principal of the school. Boy, she same into our room, which was where these girls were. And Sister Joseph made everybody in the class go over to the church and do penance, and everyone had to write the Act of Contrition one-hundred times to satisfy for this great crime that was committed. And ever after that, I don't think anybody every bothered that Greek's apples. That was a big deal."<sup>128</sup>

The school educated the children in secular and religious subjects. Its primary goal was to reinforce Catholicism as a central feature of the children's lives. It also served as an important support for the family and integrated the children into world of the parish.

#### THE PARISH AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Since the area was largely Catholic, the territorially-defined parish community was almost synonymous with the neighborhood. "The one thing you always noticed about the Southside of Chicago," said J. Kill, "people always talked in terms of what parish do you belong to and not what street are from. Nobody would say 'I live around so and so park,'

or 'I'm a Southsider' even. They would just say, 'I'm from Sabina's'...because they were proud of it. Because it was something special to them." He described the relationship between the parish and the neighborhood, "It was just a friendly parish... Father Tom McMahon had an agreement with [Dressel's Bakery] that he got the stale buns for a penny or two the next day. We had a softball league in the summertime...and he'd come and give us all the free buns. That was just kind of a friendship towards the parish. Everybody was always doing things for the parish. It was just kind of homey...I remember...Foster Park had a rink where you'd go ice-skating...When it got to be somewhere in between thirty and thirty-five degrees, you didn't know if the ice had frozen or not. There was a number that everybody knew they could call to see if the ice was frozen. The number had to get called two-hundred times a day at that time, and never did you get a smart answer or a harsh answer or a quit bothering me. Never knew who the people were. It was a home, though, where they could see across the street...You would call and they would say, "Yes, they're skating over there. Yeah, you can come up." That was just like -- everybody helps each other...You can imagine today if you got two-hundred phone calls of people saying "Is the sun out?" But they were really just nice people and I think it was because there was a humbleness there. There was no big deal.<sup>129</sup>

Those who lived in St. Sabina's parish felt very at ease in their neighborhood. H. O'Connor recalled, "Of course, at that time, people used to sit on their front porches and people would walk by...My mother would sit on the front porch and visit with everybody who came along. When anybody died in a family, they would all rally and do things and bring food an all."<sup>130</sup> "In those early days," recalled T. O'Rourke, "we knew everybody...I liked all that spirit of knowing people and being around them."<sup>131</sup>

"The Irish liked that sociability," T. O'Rourke stated. "My mother would go around visiting with all these women...And they'd do it any time of the day or night. There was no formal invitations... Many of our friends we've known all the time since Sabina's...As neighbors, we were almost as close as relatives. It was very important [to be close family]. And I think they helped one another out in times of sickness.. My mother and father didn't have any brothers or sisters in the parish, but they had very close friends, some of them were from Ireland, the same part of Ireland. They made a big deal of them. And they were real friends. If they needed money, they could borrow without any interest or anything until pay day...They'd even help out in buying things...There was a lot of that going on...Then, of course, there was always the children in the same grade or in the same confirmation class. It was a big event for the

kids...Baptism, of course, they'd have family parties, and I think the Irish kind of liked that."<sup>132</sup>

St. Sabina's parish was supported by a diverse commercial strip. "79th Street was a busy thoroughfare," recalled T. O'Rourke. "It had everything from the obstetrician to the mortician. They didn't have to go any further...All the doctors were there. All kinds of specialty shops, women's clothing, men's clothing...They knew the butchers and the grocers and all...and often they were members of the parish, too...I think they got to know all of them...There were people walking there all the time, in and out of the stores. The people knew one another. They would be talking to their friends, either new friends or old friends that they knew before...They'd stop along the way. We happened to live at 7917 Bishop, so we'd have people walking down Bishop Street all the way from 83rd Street coming down to shop...We got to know them real well. The same was true on all the other streets...And then in the morning, they'd get on the streetcars at 79th and Loomis. There might be twelve people waiting to get on there. So you'd get to know those people. It was a very social place."<sup>133</sup>

"I'd say probably ninety percent of the shopping that the family did was right along 79th Street," said B. DesChatelets. "Back then you lived along 79th Street. All of the stores you needed were there. And with St. Sabina's, this was especially true...You didn't have to go far. We had

street and we went down Racine and named the stores that were there. That's how steady the stores were."<sup>134</sup>

J. Kill remembered the friendliness and the sociability. "When the dedication of the new building in 1933 happened, I was only seven at the time, the crowd was such that it came all the way out the front doors, all the way across the street and overflowed into our house. In those days, you completely trusted people. People came right through our house. I remember when we went to eat dinner, there were strangers there who were eating off our table that had been to mass. We just shared everything with them."<sup>135</sup>

"It was nice to live in St. Sabina's." E. Clair said. "The people were cordial, cooperated with each other, above the normal standard...I don't know why, but facts are facts."<sup>136</sup> "They were outgoing," concurred J. Hagerty of the Irish in St. Sabina's.<sup>137</sup> "I would say it was a unified parish," said M. Dunne. "For a neighbor in trouble or a neighbor with a problem, my mother would be right over there if there was something to be done. Something to help with."<sup>138</sup>

While St. Sabina's was a tight-knit community, it was not necessarily always idyllic. J. Kill remembered the less than neighborly aspects. When St. Sabina held its carnival, "they used our garage as a storage place for carnival equipment. One year one of the top prizes for the carnival was a goat. Well, we had this goat that we'd store at night. So all evening at the carnival, the kids would irritate the

goat. The goat would squawk all through the night in our garage. And the old lady next door would complain all day that the goat had kept her awake all night...So the night of the raffle, at about 1:30 in the morning, my father took great pleasure in knocking on her door saying, 'You won the goat. Now you try and keep it quiet'...She really did win the goat." He also regretfully said, "The only reason we moved out was the lady who lived next door to us was nuts...My mother had a son, a priest...This woman had a son who was studying to be a priest and he was in an accident. One leg became shorter than the other. In those days, they wouldn't let you continue. So he tried a couple of seminaries. He finally went to the Trappists and died at the Trappists. Well, she was mad that we could have a son be a priest and she couldn't. So she did crazy things. For instance, you'd go out to clean your gutters and put up your ladder. She'd come out and say the bottom foot and a half of the ladder was on her property and take an ax and start to chop down the ladder while you were on top...Anyone who came to our house was bad because we were the bad guys. So she would chase them with a broom and crazy things like that. Well, she was so annoying that we finally had to move out...We would have lived there forever. My mother always wanted to go back until she died."<sup>139</sup>

"It was a great parish in many ways, " J. Hagerty asserted. "And anyone who lived through those early years in the parish, I don't think, would ever forget it. Because



there was a camaraderie among the people both with the church and through the neighborhood that was different than what you would find in any big city today. The neighborhood -- we grew up from scratch until the thing matured...It was a good place to grow up in. The values that people had were good...They were devoted to the family, to each other, to their friends, to the church, to the school, and that was the principle idea. This particular thing you were taught. There wasn't any kind of free thinking...You were channeled in a certain way and you grew up to respect those things...It was a great parish and I'm glad that I grew up there."<sup>140</sup>

"It was one of those parishes that was like a gem," J. Kill reminisced, "Everybody loved it...I'm proud of having been a part of it."<sup>141</sup> "It was a kind part of our life," said E. Clair wistfully, "There are still a few people around to meet every once in a while, mostly at wakes."<sup>142</sup>

During this period between the World Wars, the parish continued to be the focal point of the Irish Catholic community on the Southside of Chicago. St. Sabina's was generally composed of people of common national origin bound together by the same religion, who continued to share similar work experiences. St. Sabina parishioners were devoted to their local church and zealously applied themselves to recreating a parish community they had known in their old neighborhoods. They were unremittingly generous with both their money and their time to achieve this goal. The

devotional Catholicism that they followed further reinforced the centrality of the parish. In addition, they supported a rich parish-centered organizational life of devotions, service, and sociability. The parish school reinforced the bonds between children, parents and the parish. Neither the prosperity of the 1920s nor the Great Depression of the 1930s interrupted parish community building. On the contrary, they both seemed to reinforce it. The modest wealth of parishioners ensured their ability to erect a church-school plant and the decision to finish the main church despite economically adverse times, rallied the people once again around a parish goal. J. Kill best summarized the relationship Catholics had with the parish when he said, "The church was like...a part of your family."<sup>143</sup>

Since the parish was geographically defined; the neighborhood population heavily Catholic; and was supported by a diverse commercial strip, St. Sabina's, for all practical considerations, defined a city neighborhood. Many former parishioners claimed that living in a community such as St. Sabina's was similar to living in a small town despite the fact that they lived in a large urban area.

The 'parish' had its cultural precedent in Ireland and was reinforced in the United States by immigrant needs and a hostile host society. Nativist outbursts in the 1920s reminded Catholics of their marginality in American life. However, after World War I American Catholics embarked upon

a period of increasing confidence, and behaved in a manner that historian Ed Kantowicz has called "easy arrogance."<sup>144</sup> From the bishops' office down to the parish level, Catholics began to celebrate their own culture as American Catholics. As a familiar institution the parish was a natural expression of Catholic pride as well as a shelter. In addition to the achievement of the Catholic Church in helping to make America a more pluralistic society, during this period, Chicago Irish Catholics could also look with a sense of pride and accomplishment to their arrival in city hall with the Kelley-Nash regime in 1933. By the end of this period Irish Catholics in the city had their man in the mayor's office and a Cardinal of national stature. Who of them could help but look eagerly to the future? How the parish would fare in the post World War II era will be investigated in the next chapter.

1. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
2. Cornelius J. Hagerty, C.S.C., The Hagerty Family History, private Collection, 2-3.
3. William M. Halsey, The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment 1920-1940 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980) Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism No. 2; 17, 53, 57, 60.
4. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 355.
5. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 1-5.
6. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 97-100.
7. Shanabruch, Chicago's Catholics, 230-1.
8. Skerret, "The Catholic Dimension," 40.
9. Wirth and Furel, ed., Local Community Fact Book 1938, 71.
10. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
11. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
12. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
13. Barlow, Auburn-Gresham, 39-40.
14. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
15. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
16. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
17. Barlow, Auburn-Gresham, 39-41.
18. Author interview with Lucille Cavanaugh.
19. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
20. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
21. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
22. Author interview with Julia Hagerty. The Catholic Church had officially condemned the Masons as a suspect society that threatened or perverted the faith of Catholics who joined it.

23. Kenneth Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), xi-xii.
24. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan, 90.
25. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan, 96, 125-6.
26. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan, 115.
27. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 121-2, 126.
28. John B. Jentz and Irene Hansen, ed., Rethinking the History of Religion in Chicago: A Symposium, The Newberry Papers in Family and Community History, Paper 86-1; 5-7.
29. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan, 102-3, 116, 123-4.
30. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke, 30 September 1986.
31. Jackson, 115.
32. Presidential Election, November 6, 1928. Board of Election Commissioners of the City of Chicago. 18188 and 19199. 18th and 19th Ward Maps, 1921/31. Chicago Municipal Reference Library.
33. Ibid.
34. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
35. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
36. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
37. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
38. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
39. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
40. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
41. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1928, ACA; A Community of God and People St. Sabina Church 1916-1966, 9-11.
42. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 192-3.
43. Parish Annual Reports, ACA.
44. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1916 to 1928, ACA.
45. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

46. "Parish Activities," The New World, 10 September 1920, 8.
47. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
48. "Parish Activities," The New World, 10 September 1920, 8.
49. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
50. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
51. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
52. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

53.	<u>Catholic Marriages</u>	<u>Mixed Marriages</u>	<u>Total</u>
1900	256	52 (.16)	308
1905	385	69 (.15)	454
1910	415	102 (.20)	517
1915	455	96 (.17)	551
1920	439	101 (.19)	540
1925	355	85 (.19)	440
1930	272	80 (.22)	352

Based on a random selection of territorial parishes from Parish Annual Reports, 1900-1930.

54. A Community of God and People, 25; Author interviews with Julia Hagerty, Terence O'Rourke, Mary S. Dunne, James Kill.

55. A Community of God and People, 25.

56. "Dedication of Magnificent St. Sabina Church, Sunday," The New World, 16 June 1933, 1.; John M. Munroe, "Bringing Down to Date the Histories of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago, St. Sabina's -- 1916" The New World, 30 August 1935. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1932-1937, ACA.

57. St. Sabina Parish File, Letters from Chancellor dating 16 April 1917, 10 February 1921, 22 March 1921, 24 October 1923, 31 December 1924, 17 June 1927, ACA.

58. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1930-1937, ACA.

59. Author interview with Sister Cecelian, who taught 7th and 8th grade during the 1930s, 5 January 1989.

60. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

61. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

62. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

63. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
64. Interview with Rev. James Kill.
65. Author interview with Emmett Clair; Terence O'Rourke.
66. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
67. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
68. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1916-1941, ACA.
69. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
70. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
71. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
72. A Community of God and People, 27.
73. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
74. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
75. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
76. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
77. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
78. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
79. Author interview with Emmett Clair.
80. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
81. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
82. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
83. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
84. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
85. A Community of God and People, 13.
86. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 221, 223-31.
87. A novena is nine successive days of prayer to receive special favors or graces. It can be done in private or in public. Novenas can honor certain saints or the Blessed Virgin Mary and the petitioner can request their intercession

on their behalf. The novena grew out of popular piety. In the nineteenth century the Church recommended the practice by granting indulgences.

88. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

89. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

90. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

91. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.

92. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

93. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

94. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

95. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

96. "Parish Activities, St. Sabina" The New World, 14 May, 1920, 7.

97. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

98. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

99. Both the Holy Name and Altar and Rosary Societies are confraternities, which means that their intention is to promote public worship. The Altar and Rosary Society is a spiritual association whose members are to say fifteen mysteries of the Rosary once a week. The confraternity is assigned to the Dominican master general and may be established in any church or public oratory for the faithful. It is open to all Catholics who have reached the age of reason. An altar of the church must be designated as the altar of the confraternity. In the United States membership is restricted to women. The Society raises the rosary from a form of private prayer to that of shared or common prayer. The Holy Name Society's mission is to increase the reverence for the name of the Redeemer and to achieve for members self-sanctification by attending monthly Communion in a corporate body on the second Sunday of each month. It also encourages participation in spiritual exercises such as retreats, holy hours, nocturnal adoration and other special devotions. The Society is a public manifestation of respect for Christ's name.

100. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.

101. "St. Sabina's Men Seek 1,200 at Rail" The New World, 12 June 1931, 16.



102. Harry P. Martin, "St. Sabina Men Out to Surpass Women's Record" The New World, 9 October 1931, 12.

103. "800 Men, Boys at Altar Railing at St. Sabina's" The New World, 13 November 1931, 12.

104. Author interview with Emmett Clair.

105. "St. Sabina's Branch" The New World, 27 January 1933, 10.  
"St. Sabina's Holy Name Society" The New World, 16 January 1920, 7; "St. Sabina's Parish" The New World, 9 January 1920, 7.

106. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.

107. "St. Sabina Church Notes," The New World, 13 February 1920, 7.

108. "St. Sabina Church News," The New World, 19 December 1919, 7; "St. Sabina Church Notes," The New World, 23 March 1920, 7; "St. Sabina Church News," The New World, 5 December 1919, 7.

109. Author interviews with Terence O'Rourke, 30 September 1986; Emmett Clair, 30 September 1986; and "Knights of Columbus," The New World, 20 January 1921, 10.

110. Skerrett, "The Catholic Dimension," 47-8.

111. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

112. Eileen Mary Brewer, Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women 1860-1920 (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987), 31-3.

113. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke.

114. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

115. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.

116. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

117. Author interview with Emmett Clair.

118. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

119. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

120. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.

121. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.

122. Brewer, Nuns and the Education of Catholic Women, 40-2.
123. Author interview with Sister Cecilian.
124. "Parish Activities, St. Sabina: Parish News," The New World, 11 June 1920.
125. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
126. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
127. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
128. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
129. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
130. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
131. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
132. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
133. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
134. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
135. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
136. Author interview with Emmett Clair.
137. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
138. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
139. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
140. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
141. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
142. Author interview with Emmett Clair.
143. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
144. Jentz and Hansen, ed. Rethinking the History of Religion in Chicago, 5-7.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARISH IDENTITY AFTER THE WAR

A parish is not only a mass of people living together, but a group of human hearts united by collective woes and joys.<sup>1</sup>

The pride and confidence that Catholic America acquired after the First World War remained unshaken by the Second and continued to grow in the next decades. The post-war economic boom and the GI Bill of Rights provided greater opportunities for Catholics to move up the economic and social ladder. By the mid-1950s the Catholic Church in America was primarily middle class. Other ethnic groups were now joining the ever increasing Irish and German middle class. Their new economic position created a need to reshape Catholicism to reflect their higher status and greater sophistication. This generation of clergy, intellectuals and laity not only sought to demonstrate the superiority and grandeur of Catholicism, but they also believed American society desperately needed the benefits of Catholic religion and culture in this troubled modern world. Catholicism, they believed, would save American society and the world.<sup>2</sup>

As for their relationship with Protestant America, the Great Depression and the war helped alleviate some tensions between the religious groups through common suffering and a

common cause. Mixing in the military and the work force helped dispel mutual misconceptions.<sup>3</sup> Catholics enjoyed greater acceptance in American society than they ever had before. However, the ecumenism movement had not yet arrived. A theological cold war of hostility and suspicion remained. And Catholics wanted to be separate and distinct from their traditional foes. They preferred their own religious culture and hoped to instruct the rest of America on its merits.

In Chicago, the flowering of Catholic religious pride coincided with political success. A hundred years after their arrival in the city, the Irish finally won control of city hall following the death of Anton Cermak. Edward J. Kelly succeeded Cermak as mayor. The Irish controlled city hall until the death of Richard J. Daley in 1976. Being an Irish Catholic in the city now had some prestige.<sup>4</sup>

The parishioners of St. Sabina's combined elements of old-style American Catholicism with these burgeoning new attitudes of Catholicism's place in America. But the concept of Catholicism and community based upon the parish persisted. The parish continued to foster community solidarity and pride. It, however, also encouraged an exclusive mentality in its relations with others. This chapter will further explore the nature of this Catholic community during the post-World War II decade.

The economic prosperity that followed the Second World War made it possible for more people to settle in Auburn-

Gresham. The population grew by six percent from 1940 to 1950 to a total population of 60,978 which remained steady for the next decade.<sup>5</sup> St. Sabina's family membership increased by fifty-eight percent, growing from two thousand in 1935 to 3478 by 1957.<sup>6</sup> The area remained heavily Catholic.

The post-war generation of St. Sabina's showed some occupational advances. [See Table IX] There were ten percent more low white collar workers than the founding generation of the parish. Skilled blue collar workers increased from twenty-three to twenty-five percent. Semiskilled and service workers made up only one percent of post-war workers in the parish compared to eight percent in the previous generation. Retirees were a considerable group in the parish. They composed the single largest group. [See Table III] Many parishioners continued to share similar job experiences, and the basic character of the parish was not substantially changed.

The wealth of the parish rose drastically. Both the parish as a whole and individual families prospered during this time. From 1930 to 1960 the number of families in the parish increased by forty-six percent growing from 1600 to 2965. The Sunday and Holy Day collections, however, rose by seventy-seven percent.<sup>7</sup>

Compared to their generosity in the Sunday collections, St. Sabina parishioners had lost interest in contributing to the pew collection or seat money. In the preceding period,

collections for pew rental and the regular Sunday collection were fairly equal. However, from 1930 to 1950 seat money collections only rose by thirty-three percent, lagging behind both the membership increase and the Sunday collection. In 1953 this revenue raiser was discontinued.<sup>8</sup> Contributions to the Sunday collection, more than made up the difference. Obviously St. Sabina parishioners preferred a more genteel form of offering than paying for their seat. Contributions, however, were carefully monitored and printed in The Seraph. Parishioners read the report diligently because in the next issue of The Seraph, amendments were always made. Clearly, tastes where money was concerned had changed to reflect growing middle class sensibilities.

The parish was still seen as a vehicle for mutual monetary support. While the parish stopped reporting any beneficiary societies after 1954,<sup>9</sup> St. Sabina's initiated a credit union in January 1953. It had a twelve member board of directors chosen by those present at open meetings. The treasurer drew a salary. By 1958 the union had 732 members and an operating budget of over a quarter million dollars.<sup>10</sup>

The benefits to parishioners were not only low interest loans and a free life insurance policy. The credit union's aim was also to strengthen the parish. In 1952 The Seraph wrote:

It will not only be a means of improving the financial situation of the individual, but it will be a common

bond for strengthening the loyalty of all its members toward all parish activities.<sup>11</sup>

The union also was to serve as a valuable lesson in local democracy. According to The Seraph it made

St. Sabina's more splendid in its achievements of putting democracy to work by reaching down and asking and receiving the help of everyone in various parish endeavors.<sup>12</sup>

Another indication of the upwardly mobile aspirations of parishioners was the holding of an annual Marion Cotillion beginning in 1960. All girls from the parish who were graduating from high school and their families were invited. The event was held at the elegant South Shore Country Club, and the "Daughters of Mary" were presented to the bishop, escorted by a full-dress honor guard of the Knights of Columbus.<sup>13</sup> The event was quite successful, although some parishioners thought a debutante ball was a bit hoity-toity.<sup>14</sup>

#### PARISH IDENTIFICATION

Catholics continued to define their neighborhoods by their local territorial parish in post-World War II Chicago. Parish-centered identity remained strong at St. Sabina's. "I was taught as a youngster growing up that the parish was an identity in itself," related G. Hendry. "In Sabina's...there were so many refugees...people from 'Vis' and Gabriel's who had identified with their parish so...it was an absolute evolution of tradition and heritage ...It was not spoken, but since time in memorium this has happened."<sup>15</sup>

Not only did Catholics refer to their neighborhoods by the Catholic church, but their high profile in this area of Chicago forced others to follow suit. For example, the local newspaper, the Southtown Economist, catered to this penchant by advertizing property in its real estate section by parish. Captions read "St. Sabina Two-Flat" or "Little Flower Bungalow."

Even realtors recognized the importance of knowing what parish a home was in. T. O'Rourke related, "I knew a Jewish man...in real estate. To know what [a piece of property] was like...he would ask 'What parish is it in?'...He said one of the first things that he had to determine when he moved from one neighborhood to another was what parish he was in. And everybody referred to the parishes even if they never went into the churches. So it was used to identify a section of the city."<sup>16</sup>

Even Protestants were impressed by the imposing aspect of the Catholic parishes. J. Nelligan was among the few graduates from St. Sabina grade school who attended the public school, Calumet. [referred to by Catholics as Our Lady of Calumet] He recalled the following incident. At an after school function, one boy asked another where he was from. The young man said he was from St. Ethelreda's. He, however, made the mistake of saying it within earshot of his father, who was a Protestant minister. When his astonished father asked him why he said he was from a Catholic parish, the son replied,



"If I gave them my address, no one would know what I was talking about."<sup>17</sup> It was not an uncommon occurrence for others not affiliated with a Catholic parish to use them for residential identification. It was also an acknowledgement of Catholic dominance in the area.

#### ST. SABINA'S RELATIONS WITH PROTESTANTS

However, Catholics still remained institutionally separate from other religious groups. "Those days were the last vestiges of...the fortress mentality -- 'them against us,'" said G. Hendry, "You didn't know Protestants...It was a self-protective Catholicity. But they certainly dominated the area."<sup>18</sup> "All of my close friends were Catholic," recalled J. Nelligan. "As we got older, we probably did less with [Protestants] because I think their activities were probably with their churches."<sup>19</sup>

As Table X demonstrates most children from St. Sabina attended the parish school, perpetuating the institutional segregation of young people in the neighborhood. As Table XI shows the rate of mixed marriages remained approximately the same as the 1916 to 1941 era. Most Catholics were still marrying other Catholics.

The clergy also encouraged the separation of religious groups. In the parish bulletin, The Seraph, which was begun in 1943 and functioned as a small town newspaper, Catholics were alerted to the activities of Protestant organizations.

In 1959 under the caption "Good Reading," parishioners were encouraged to examine an article in Our Sunday Visitor regarding POAU, Protestants and Other Americans United for separation of church and state. "POAU is one of the largest anti-Catholic organizations in the United States," it warned. "You should be aware of the activities of this organization."<sup>20</sup>

On the local level, Catholic pastors in the area clashed with the Auburn Park Y.M.C.A.. When the 'Y' showed the films "Human Growth" and "Human Reproduction," Catholic pastors protested. The films did not conform to Catholic teachings on sexuality. The Y.M.C.A. board slighted the pastors by refusing to even respond to their letter of complaint. When the 'Y', then embarked on a fund drive in the neighborhood, this affront was not forgotten. The Seraph wrote:

The announcement of this campaign reminded us of the unceremonious fashion in which the management of the local branch dumped into the wastebasket as unworthy of a reply the combined protests of all the Catholic pastors...when the sex films...were shown at the Auburn Park "Y." The contempt shown for the wishes of the twenty-thousand Catholic families which comprise the parishes represented...must not be overlooked.

St. Sabina parishioners were forbidden to contribute to the organization.

It is time to renew our warning that the Y.M.C.A. is a Protestant Church organization and teaches the Protestant religion in its classes. Catholics...may not belong to it nor support it.<sup>21</sup>

Besides avoiding the 'Y,' Catholics were also instructed to stay away from Protestant churches. The Seraph

printed an excerpt from a pastoral letter from Samuel Cardinal Stritch with guidelines for their relationship with protestants and attending their services. The Cardinal wrote of the Catholic Church:

She and she alone is the true Church of Jesus Christ...ACCORDINGLY, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE FAITHFUL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH MAY NOT IN ANY CAPACITY ATTEND THE ASSEMBLIES OF COUNCILS OF NON-CATHOLICS SEEKING TO PROMOTE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. We ask you, however, to pray for our separated brothers and to beg God to give them the gift of Catholic faith.<sup>22</sup>

Catholics and Protestants maintained their social and institutional separation in the neighborhoods they coexisted in.

#### PARISH DEVOTIONS

Devotional activities were an important means to energize and purify the individual and his soul against evils in the world. These practices also continued to play a key role in enhancing the parish's central position in the community as well as shape their view of the world beyond its boundaries.

By 1957 St. Sabina reached its height in membership with 3478 families.<sup>23</sup> They were served by eleven Sunday masses, seven in the upper church and four in the old basement hall. For three of these services, two masses would be said simultaneously. Six choirs sang for the different masses. Five weekday masses shows the continued fidelity of many St. Sabina parishioners to daily devotions. Mass attenders on

Holy Days of Obligation had ten masses to chose from, and seven masses were held on First Fridays of the month.<sup>24</sup>

The Blessed Sacrament was exposed during the afternoons hours on Fridays. The Sorrowful Mother Novenas continued to be popular with five services each Friday. "During Lent [novenas] were the big thing, and my Dad would go quite a bit," G. Hendry recollected. "He would drag me along unwillingly."<sup>25</sup> First Saturdays of the month were 'Our Lady of Fatima Day' with a holy hour in the morning. Before Vatican II Friday was, of course, a day of abstinence from meat. The dominance of Catholic culture in this area of Chicago and the need to find alternatives to tuna casserole prompted the Southtown Economist to solicit and print recipes for non-meat meals. Prizes were often awarded for the most original dish.<sup>26</sup>

The mass, though, was the most important devotional feature of the parish and of Catholicism. "In the Catholic Church," Father Tom McMahon instructed, "the important thing...is the consecration of the mass. That's what brings people to the church. That's the focal point. They wouldn't come to hear just a sermon. That's why you have a thousand...in Catholic Churches for every mass."<sup>27</sup> "In our family," recalled J. Nelligan, "we went to mass even on Saturdays...We went to mass every day during Lent."<sup>28</sup>

The mass made a strong impression on parishioners of all ages and sexes. "You felt the magnificence of the Church," G. Hendry reminisced. "The mass in Latin...the Latin

songs... Catholics bound themselves together by a universal language. It gave you the feeling that it was holy. That it was catholic. It was one...And the beauty of it...Its quietude, the solemnity, the reverence...That's one thing I can't forget."<sup>29</sup>

For the boys in the parish, serving mass provided many opportunities. "Being an altar boy tied you right into [parish activities] because you were very active. The funerals you'd go to get out of school. The weddings which would give you some spending money and you'd go to the candy store right after it."<sup>30</sup> "As an altar boy, we served mass a lot and went to the novenas," said J. Nelligan.<sup>31</sup> Novenas, though, had hazards for altar boys. "It was tedious as an altar boy to do that because you were holding the cross and it would kill you. The candle would be worse. The cross was heavy but you could set it down. The candle you had to hold up all the time."<sup>32</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners were encouraged to attend the various services in The Seraph. Msgr. McMahon wrote his flock:

Ponder often during the month on the justice of God and the evil of sin. Bear those daily crosses that come to us and never let an opportunity go by to attend daily Mass and to receive daily Communion, to say the rosary and do everything to make you soul as perfect as possible, as ready as can be to enter the beautiful presence of our Holy God.<sup>33</sup>

He also encouraged them to go to confession frequently saying,

Like all the Sacraments, its primary purpose is to give us grace. Go to Confession often for the beauty

treatment it gives the soul. It takes away sin and it strengthens the soul with new fresh grace. To gain all the plenary indulgences for ourselves and the Souls in Purgatory, we should go to Confession every two weeks.<sup>34</sup>

"In those days," Father McMahon related, "we emphasized that you're suppose to live a life of grace in favor of God. So keep yourself in a state of grace. Don't have any sin on your soul. You'd go to confession and get the absolution for the sin and an increase in sanctifying graces."<sup>35</sup>

"Part of living [in the parish] was going to confession every Saturday." J. Nelligan said. He, however, would often go to the next parish west. Besides receiving absolution, there were certain considerations to be made when receiving the sacrament, such as which priest to go to. "We use to go to Little Flower and Father Warmser -- better known as 'Hail Mary' Warmser," he said. We'd bring our bats and balls and put them in a pew or we'd carry the bats with us and stick it in the leg of our pants. Every now and then somebody would stand up and it would drop down to the floor and there'd be a big noise...The line for Father Warmser was as you walked in the door. And there might be one or two novices that didn't know any better that were waiting in the short lines...You would...be out of confession before they were, even though there were twenty-five people ahead of you...He use to say 'Come on, move it along.' For the Hail Mary [he'd give] it was probably a shorter walk."<sup>36</sup> St. Sabina also

introduced Block Rosary groups. Parishioners were encouraged to take turns inviting men and women on their block to their homes one evening a week to say the rosary. An advertisement in The Seraph for the gathering proclaimed:

Praying together you will do the world a lot of good and you will become better neighbors. Add yours to the growing number of distinguished blocks in St. Sabina Parish with the Block Rosary.<sup>37</sup>

Another community devotion that began during this time was the Pilgrim Virgin. The devotion began in Portugal in 1946. Since most of the faithful could not make a pilgrimage to Fatima to pray to the Blessed Virgin, a representation of Our Lady of Fatima was designed to bring the benefits of the shrine to Catholics the world over. In 1954 Cardinal Stritch allowed the lay organization, the Ambassador of Mary, to promote the devotion in Chicago.<sup>38</sup>

St. Sabina parish was given the rare opportunity of hosting the Pilgrim Virgin perpetually. The statue was installed in the lower church for one week and then moved each week from one home to the next. Parishioners were required to register with an "ambassador" to have the statue and the devotion come to their home. Names and addresses were printed in the Seraph and nearby neighbors were encouraged to visit the family who was present host.<sup>39</sup>

B. DesChatelets described the practice. "We had a Pilgrim Virgin that just went around St. Sabina parish...It would go from one home to the other...We'd go up to Sabina

and meet on Saturday night. Then we'd go to whatever house it was at. We'd say the rosary. We'd pick it up and we'd carry it to the next house and say the rosary and leave it there for the week...The people that had it in their house, every night at seven o'clock...would have all the neighbors come and say the rosary with them. There were a lot of people in the Pilgrim Virgin."<sup>40</sup> The Seraph reported, "Our people in St. Sabina's are so devoted to Our Blessed Lady that many of them have had the Pilgrim Virgin visit their home with some most pleasing results...Perhaps one of the most pleasing by-products is the spirit of neighborliness and helpfulness which has developed."<sup>41</sup>

Other community devotions, such as Forty Hours Devotion --"the high spot in the calendar of any parish."<sup>42</sup> It began with a solemn high mass, the Blessed sacrament was exposed for forty hours before a continuous succession worshipers, and then closed with another high mass. The benefits of the practice were explained in The Seraph:

A plenary indulgence may be gained once a day by those who receive Confession and Communion either during the Forty Hours, a week before or a week after and recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be to the Father five times and an additional Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be to the Father for the intention of the Pope. A partial indulgence of fifteen years may be granted for each visit.<sup>43</sup>

May Crowning, Lenten observances such as Ash Wednesday, Stations of the Cross and Holy Week observance, continued. Parish missions drew large crowds. In 1954 twelve hundred to



thirteen hundred women and girls attended their portion of the mission, and the men and boys were counted in the hundreds for theirs.<sup>44</sup>

It would be unfair to say Sabinaites were impossibly devout. Periodically, they were reprimanded for either coming late to mass or leaving before the service was over. However, they did come in large numbers -- large enough to be scolded in The Seraph to take the ushers direction for seating.

Each of us should accept the ushers' guidance to a seat and move all the way in so that no one will be denied an opportunity to worship God under the best available conditions.<sup>45</sup>

Pastors warned their parishioners not to become smug about their adherence to the practices of their faith. Msgr. Gorey had cautioned his flock:

Catholics are sometimes befuddled in the matter of their obligations and delude themselves into believing that they are living virtuously if they merely attend mass, novena, Holy Hour, a sodality meeting, use the missal and subscribe to a church publication. They forget that the two great commandments, which contain the whole law and the prophets are, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self.<sup>46</sup>

However, the priest were generally pleased with their charges. In January 1955 on the Feast of the Holy Family Msgr. McMahon praised families in the parish.

Despite the fact that our families are numerous, (over 3,000 units) nevertheless, juvenile delinquency is a negligible factor in our midst. It is rare that a case is sent to us from the courts...A parish that sends every year, at least five to ten young people to the religious life, that has so many Confessions and Communion among young people, that is teeming with activities that occupy their minds and bodies! Such a parish is not on the downgrade!<sup>47</sup>

The ubiquitous devotional activities in the parish had a profound effect on making religion something that had to be reckoned with and making the parish such a strong psychological force for the individual. "The faith foundation was one-thousand percent stronger in the old days," D. Foertsch argued. "At Sabina's the foundation was solid. Yes, there were cracks...If you did order the hamburger and realize it was Friday, you had to send it back...or wear a handkerchief on your head if you forgot your hat...But the solidness and the strictness of what the faith was, has been my main sustenance for life with all the tragedies that have happened since."<sup>48</sup> "There was a big support system," agreed G. Hendry.<sup>49</sup>

"I really got my religion at Sabina's," confided B. DesChatelets. "It was there. You went to church every Sunday. I don't know if it became habit...I can't say that I was ever that wild about going...when I was younger. But, I guess I make up for it a little now."<sup>50</sup>

#### PARISH SOCIETIES

St. Sabina's organizational life of confraternities, sodalities, and social clubs expanded and continued to enjoy great support. They helped maintain the parish's position in the Catholic community during this time. "If there was something worthwhile, Sabina's did have it," related D. Foertsch. "If you wanted an organization...the pastor would

say, 'That's fine, go ahead...and they'd give you a chaplain."<sup>51</sup>

The Holy Name Society of St. Sabina continued to be a vital organization in the parish and was one of the leading chapters in the Archdiocese. The Society proudly proclaimed in The Seraph, that "St. Sabina has enjoyed an enviable reputation amongst other parishes in the archdiocese in almost all its undertakings. One of this parish's strongest pillars has been the Holy Name Society."<sup>52</sup>

In 1951 the men's confraternity claimed twelve hundred members on its rolls. On their Easter Communion mass, seven hundred men received the sacrament together. During the rest of the year the attendance at the Holy Name Communion masses averaged five hundred. The count was obtained by requiring members to submit name cards that had been mailed to them at the mass.<sup>53</sup>

The Society, however, was not always satisfied with this usual turnout. The spiritual director and officers continually admonished the men of the parish to do their duty, suggesting that:

they don't realize they are throwing away an opportunity to gain a plenary indulgence every month, and many other partial indulgences. We can think of nothing more pertinent to a man's business than his salvation. It should be his first order of business. And the Holy Name Society could very easily be the means of saving his soul.<sup>54</sup>

In 1955 the Society began the practice of marching into church together for the Communion Mass. Members were asked

to arrive fifteen minutes before mass so they could "form for the march into Church behind the Holy Name banner." Besides gaining an indulgence for themselves, marching together "is most edifying to others in attendance."<sup>55</sup> Some Sunday masses were reserved for fathers to receive communion with their sons, with their daughters, and with their wives on Mothers' Day. Members were praised for their turnouts on these occasions. "We always have an exceptional turnout when we have a Father-Daughter Communion Sunday," The Seraph boasted.<sup>56</sup> Every January the Holy Names Society held an annual Communion Sunday Breakfast following the 8 o'clock mass.<sup>57</sup>

To attract members to monthly meetings, the Society tried to plan interesting programs to follow the business end of the gathering. On one occasion, the White Sox trainer was the featured speaker. Four box seat tickets were awarded as a door prize -- a real temptation for any true Southsider.<sup>58</sup>

The St. Sabina Holy Name Society worked for various parish concerns. They had a Youth Committee, a Sick and Vigil Committee which remembered ailing members in their prayers and provided transportation for those who could not get to the communion masses; a Literature Committee that recommended "good" Catholic books to the parish; and a Military Committee that encouraged parishioners to write to parish boys in the service and to remember them in their prayers. The Society also sent the servicemen rosaries along with a subscription to The Seraph to keep them abreast of parish news.<sup>59</sup> Every

year the Society participated in a retreat at Mayslake in the western suburbs and "for several years St. Sabina has been the leading parish in attendance" averaging one hundred retreatants.<sup>60</sup>

The Holy Name Society reflected the philosophy that parish devotional and communal practices and organizations were major avenues to salvation for the individual, the preserver of the sanctity of the family, and even a means to save the country. World peace they claimed "depends largely on the power of family participation in Mass attendance, the family Rosary, and other holy endeavors."<sup>61</sup> On another occasion they wrote, "A good Holy Name man is a credit to his church, his community and the nation."<sup>62</sup>

The women's Altar and Rosary Society had even greater success than the Holy Name Society in membership and attendance at their meetings and various functions. In June 1956 the women's society reported an enrollment of 1525 and the officers expressed satisfaction at the turn outs for their events.<sup>63</sup> The Altar and Rosary Society imitated the Holy Name Society by having their own Communion Sunday.

The organization's main purpose was to "Promote the Family Rosary, attend Daily Mass and receive communion more frequently."<sup>64</sup> "The biggest push was for the spiritual life of yourself and the family," stated M. Joyce. "And to do that meant emphasizing daily mass."<sup>65</sup> During Lent the women's confraternity established a Daily Mass Guild for the entire

parish.<sup>66</sup> Even third graders joined, promising to attend the 8:30 a.m. mass.<sup>67</sup> Daily mass was also promoted during the month of May "to show our devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."<sup>68</sup>

Their other devotional endeavors included an annual Half-Day of Recollection. Monthly meetings often featured a guest speaker who usually talked on religious or devotional subjects or they had Benediction.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to its main purpose of public devotion and worship, the Altar and Rosary Society engaged in charitable work. They organized a St. Vincent Orphanage Sewing Unit and a Medical Mission group. "We had a bench where we worked for the Medical Missions. We sewed articles to send overseas to the missions."<sup>70</sup> Members also annually assisted the TB Mobile Unit of the Tuberculosis Institute X-ray Survey. In 1956 the TB Unit presented "an award to the Altar and Rosary for meritorious work."<sup>71</sup> The Society also hosted a monthly Sabina night at the local U.S.O.. They provided food and entertainment. In February 1956, "Turkey dinners were served and thoroughly enjoyed by 500 servicemen. A fine representation from the parish helped to make the men feel at home."<sup>72</sup>

Members of the Altar and Rosary Society acted as ushers at the novenas and at the funerals of their departed members. "When we had a deceased parishioner, as blocks we used to go to the wake and say the rosary...At one time I was promoter

for the Altar and Rosary and on our block I use to call on twenty adult women...We use to wear our badges...for a funeral...And we would all stand the guard of honor [for deceased members] on each side of the pews towards the back and follow after the casket."<sup>73</sup> They also staffed a parish religious goods store located in a room off from the lower church. Missals, bibles, rosaries, medals, books, pictures and statues were for sale on Fridays.

Their gatherings, however, did not always have a religious purpose. Monthly meetings often found members dressed for Halloween, or celebrating Valentine's Day or St. Paddy's Day. They held summer picnic meetings, luncheon fashion show meetings and birthday parties for the pastor and their spiritual director. The biggest yearly event was a card and bunco party. "They were a fun group," recalled D. Foertsch. "And there would always be get-togethers and gatherings and fund raisers."<sup>74</sup>

Unlike the Holy Name Society, which was a centralized diocesan organization, the Altar and Rosary Society was strictly parochial. While Cardinal Mundelein was head of the Chicago Diocese, many Catholic women had written letters to the New World petitioning the Cardinal for their own centralized organization similar to the Holy Name Society. In February 1931 the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women was formed. It, however, never had a clearly defined purpose or function. Initially, Mundelein encouraged the women to

engage in charitable work. His suggestion was coolly received from the women who were looking for a less traditional and a more challenging mission. Their Spiritual Director, Bishop Sheil, who was working to make Catholicism more "muscular," was not of any more help to the women in defining their organization's objectives. The ACCW was left to grope for its own reason for being.<sup>75</sup>

While all women's parish groups, such as the Altar and Rosary Society and the Mothers' Club, were automatically members in the ACCW, St. Sabina's societies did not report themselves to be federated with the new organization until 1943.<sup>76</sup> When Samuel Cardinal Stritch succeeded Mundelein in 1942, he helped give the ACCW new direction. Among his first mandates to the Catholic women of his archdiocese, was to engage them in the Decency Campaign. They were to survey literature in their local newsstands and magazine distributors and compare them to the list of acceptable reading material as established by the Catholic Episcopal Committee of the National Organization for Decent Literature (NODL). The NODL was founded by the U.S. Catholic bishops in 1938 to provide an instrument to protect young people from being exposed to morally, socially, and intellectually harmful publications, such as magazines and pocket-sized books. Objectionable materials glamorized crime; described how to commit criminal acts; advocated disrespect for lawful authority, exploited cruelty and violence; contained sexually offensive materials



and pictures; carried advertising that promoted harmful products; used offensive language; or ridiculed any national, religious, or racial group.

Stritch warned:

'It is not enough for Catholic women today to devote themselves to making their own families Catholic. They have to protect their families against certain influences which prevail in their communities and in society. The real test of our lay women's apostolate is going to be what is this organization doing to Christianize contemporary society.'<sup>77</sup>

He urged the women to approach "the retailers within their parish boundaries and secure their cooperation for the protection of the morality of youth."<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the 1950s St. Sabina's women worked to fulfill this mandate. "We were allocated different areas," said M. Joyce. "I went to 63rd and Halsted with another friend to go and appeal to the different places that sold magazines."<sup>79</sup> The women were able to persuade many shop-owners to conform with the standards set by the National Organization for Decent Literature. In 1959 they had persuaded at least ten merchants, primarily drug store proprietors, to give them their complete cooperation.<sup>80</sup>

St. Sabina women were also encouraged by their pastor, Msgr. McMahon, to monitor their children's reading material particularly during the summer. He cautioned parents

During the school year, their consciences are guided and protected by salutary instruction and their imaginations are occupied by their studies, but during the summer vacation time can make for the devil's workshop...Many

of our drug stores carry literature which is good for neither man nor beast.<sup>81</sup>

He praised the women's committee for their work, but encouraged all parishioners to be more observant of reading material sold in local stores.

Merchants want the good will of customers and they certainly will not sell dirty literature if enough customers protest...It is shameful that so much concentration put in by a Sister during the school year, so much planning, so much prayer, so much effort on the part of the children, all come to waste because of careless planning during the summer.<sup>82</sup>

The willingness of women to join the crusade and their success demonstrates the confidence Catholics had in their ability to contribute, as Catholics, to American society and the imposing stature of the parish in the neighborhood.

Other organizations in the parish were the St. Vincent DePaul Society, which engaged in charitable work; Third Order of St. Dominic; Mother Most Pure Sodality for high school girls, whose aim was the spiritual enhancement of the girls as well as social in intent. Father Robert McClory was their chaplain and was amazed at their interest in the sodality. Before coming to St. Sabina's he had been assigned to a parish in the exclusive northshore suburb of Winnetka where he felt lucky to interest ten to twelve teenagers in a discussion group. He found the exact opposite situation in St. Sabina's. He said, "They had the high school girls sodality. [They] would have a communion mass and communion breakfast...once a month. And there would be 180 girls there. And you're stupified!

you'd say 'How did they get them? How did they get all these girls to come to mass and communion and come over and have talks...The girls organized this themselves. You didn't have to do anything."<sup>83</sup>

St. Sabina's also hosted the Sacred Heart League.<sup>84</sup> The League was also called the Apostleship of Prayer. Members were to remember the intentions of all the members in their prayers and "to channel through the League the prayers and spiritual activities of all members."<sup>85</sup> These intentions were sometimes tallied in The Seraph. For example, for the month of February in 1960 260 acts of charity were performed along with fifty hours of silence. 425 masses were heard and one hundred 'Way of the Cross' were performed. Three hundred prayers for the sick, 250 for the dead, 125 for reconciliations and 325 for families were said.<sup>86</sup>

St. Sabina also staged an annual passion play as part of its Lenten devotions. Father William Quinlan and the parish organist, Frances Phillipps, produced and wrote it. The Passion Play drew large crowds.<sup>87</sup>

Some boys of the parish were selected by Msgr. Gorey to join the St. Sabina Junior Conference of the St. Vincent De Paul Society which he began in 1943. Msgr. Gorey selected ten eighth grade boys and "invited them to begin a serious study of the great virtue of Charity in its nature and its practical application to the poor."<sup>88</sup> These young men assisted the priest in visiting the aged and sick of the parish and ran

errands for them. Every week two members visited a local hospital to distribute the Sunday Visitor and help patients to mass.<sup>89</sup>

Msgr. Gorey's requirements for membership for his junior group were not boys studying for the priesthood, athletes or scholars. To him, the ideal Vincentian was "the humble, simple lad who will obey, who will learn, who will be where he is suppose to be and do what he is supposed to do."<sup>90</sup> The boys were encouraged to visit the St. Joseph's Home for the Friendless and the Little Sisters of the Poor Home where they watched "the great heroes and heroines of the Church at work in the service of God's blessed unfortunate."<sup>91</sup>

The Junior group looked after the orphanage in St. Sabina tradition. When the Junior Vincentians learned that St. Joseph's Home needed new flooring in the boys' dormitory, they staged "Memories," a variety program. To raise money "all local talent was assembled, arranged into acts, perfected, and then displayed in the production." The successful show not only covered the cost of new flooring but also repaired, redecorated, and refurnished the entire dormitory. Memories became an annual production.<sup>92</sup> Those who attended also benefited.

By paying for your admission ticket to Memories, you may have bought your ticket to heaven because you performed a corporal work of Mercy.<sup>93</sup>

CATHOLIC EDUCATION AT ST. SABINA

The school dominated the experiences of children in the parish. The strength of its religious mission remained in tact. For many it was the cornerstone of their experience in the parish. "The center of growing up [was] the parish and the school," said J. Nelligan.<sup>94</sup> As Table X demonstrates, the vast majority attended St. Sabina school. The pastors discouraged parents from sending their children to the public schools because "the amount of time available to them for [religious] instruction is very limited and it is certainly not to be considered equal to Catholic school instruction."<sup>95</sup>

A good education was highly prized, and parishioners took pride in the instruction provided. "They taught us to love to read, to love to write," recalled G. Hendry. The push for good education also came from the parents. The message parents gave was "You're going to be better than me !"<sup>96</sup> "Our parents stressed education," concurred J. Nelligan. [You were taught] you had work to achieve anything in this world...I think most parents made the opportunity for [their children] to go to college."<sup>97</sup>

Tuition at St. Sabina was deliberately kept low so all could afford to send their children to the parish school. Even by the early 1960s tuition was only one dollar. This fee was the lowest charged by any Catholic school in the Archdiocese. The Archdiocesan Superintendent of Schools set the maximum tuition rate at sixty dollars per child or a

hundred dollars per family. The median rate charge in the archdiocese was thirty per child and sixty per family. St. Sabina's school costs were supplemented by the parish treasury.<sup>98</sup> For parents who could not afford a Catholic high school education or to send their children on to college, the credit union provided low interest loans for that purpose.<sup>99</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners were in step with the national trends of their ethnic counterparts in terms of educational aspirations. By the First World War one in five Americans attended college. However, one in four Irish Catholics did. During the Great Depression the number of Irish seeking higher education continued to rise. Outside of the east coast forty-three percent went to college. By the mid-1970s Irish-Americans continued to enjoy educational levels above the national average.<sup>100</sup> They were the most highly educated Gentile group in the nation. They also had the highest income levels.<sup>101</sup> These statistics demonstrate the upwardly mobile aspirations of Irish-Americans.

The moral authority of the church continued to be reinforced in the classroom. Priests conducted religious instruction, and often disciplined the children.<sup>102</sup> J. Nelligan recalled his school days during the war when he was sent to Msgr. Gorey. In a class full of Marys and Josephs, he often had a hard time finding his name in the corrected piles of papers the nun would hand back. To make it easier for him to spot his work and having a boy's romantic notions

of war, he began putting swastikas at the top of his page. He was promptly sent to the pastor, who kindly suggested that there were more appropriate symbols for a Catholic school boy to use to distinguish his work from others.<sup>103</sup> With the backing of the entire Roman Catholic Church, the moral superiority of the nuns and priests could be quite intimidating to young children. "It was monolithic," recalled G. Hendry. Authority "was coming from the on high down...School was strict. We knew our place...There may have been [some problem kids], but I didn't see many."<sup>104</sup>

The sisters were also aided by the Mothers' Club, which began in 1942 and generally enjoyed a one hundred percent membership.<sup>105</sup> Mothers watched children during lunchtime and recess, provided an annual Christmas party and end of school picnic among other social activities. They also conferred with the nuns on their children's progress and how they could help them with their studies. Mothers were to encourage them to read, receive the sacraments regularly and make sure altar boys lived up to their duties, among a wide variety of activities.<sup>106</sup> This watchful and intimate atmosphere created some problems for the children. "You could hardly go any place and do anything wrong because you were known," complained G. Hendry. "'Who is that boy? You better tell me who he is or I'll find out. I have ways!'"<sup>107</sup>

Children also participated in many devotional activities that helped solidify in their minds the bond

between their parish and their school experiences. For example:

The third grade formed the Living Rosary for an assembly program. The girls wore white blouses and the boys wore white shirts. We sang a short song for each mystery of the Rosary.<sup>108</sup>

With the aid of the Mothers' Club, the school children staged an annual May Crowning of the Blessed Mother.<sup>109</sup> All school children were required to attend the nine o'clock Sunday mass. The service was designed for their active participation and the sermon was adapted for their level of understanding. Children were only allowed to go to mass with their parents with written permission.<sup>110</sup>

Unity and commonality among the pupils was also created in parish schools by wearing a distinctive uniform. "Everybody wore the same thing," J. Nelligan said. "You didn't buy too many clothes. You wore your school uniform." Uniforms disciplined children and helped instill pride in their school. J. Nelligan recalled being taught that "when you were outside walking around with the uniform, you represented your school and you ought to behave yourself."<sup>111</sup> Children in the Catholic school system also had readers entitled, This is My Parish. Young minds were continually channeled in a Catholic parish direction.

Like their counterparts throughout the city, the vast majority of children from St. Sabina's parochial school went on to Catholic high schools. This experience tended to



reinforce parish values and maintain a fairly Catholic experience even within eclectic Chicago. Catholic high schools did not receive much attention in the Catholic community until the twentieth century. By the turn of the century Catholic educators, like their public school counterparts, were beginning to recognize the importance of secondary education in an increasingly economically complex world. In 1904 the National Catholic Education Association was formed to address the growing need for Catholic higher education. However, they had difficulty agreeing on the purpose of secondary education -- whether it should be college preparatory for the elite or whether it should serve those who needed further training but would not go on to college. How they were to be organized and under whose auspices they would be directed raised additional questions. The debate continued for a decade without much progress.<sup>112</sup>

George Mundelein gave the Catholic high school movement the impetus it needed. By the mid-1920s the Archbishop devised a master plan for central high schools. They were strategically located so as to be easily accessible for all Catholics, and religious orders owned and operated them. By 1940 fifty-three percent of Catholics who graduated from parochial schools attended Catholic high schools. And by 1945 the number had reached seventy-two percent.<sup>113</sup>

St. Sabina graduates generally followed in this pattern. The girls attended Visitation, Longwood (Academy of

Our Lady) and Mercy High Schools. The boys went to St. Rita and St. Leo High Schools.<sup>114</sup> St. Leo's was technically a central high school, but it was owned by St. Leo parish and operated by the Irish Christian Brothers. As St. Sabina's neighbor, St. Leo's High School was a virtual institutional extension of St. Sabina's grade school.

Interest in learning was not confined to the school.

In 1949 St. Sabina's created a parish library.

After taking good care of the teenagers the community center, the needs of the adults were surveyed...It seemed evident there was an adult group whose interests lay in informal Catholic literature. These people would welcome a parish library.<sup>115</sup>

The library aimed to provide the latest books on Catholic subjects appropriate for Catholic readers. By 1957 St. Sabina had seven hundred holdings and led other parish libraries in circulation with 350 card holders and 250 books circulated each month.<sup>116</sup> By 1959 the parish owned fifteen hundred publications, many financed by the pastor, Msgr. John A. McMahon with parish funds.<sup>117</sup>

Besides the parish library for guidance on "good" Catholic books, a parishioner, who was a librarian at the Auburn Park branch of the Chicago Public Library, periodically reviewed books in The Seraph that had come into the library that were acceptable to Catholics.

St. Sabina parishioners reading was also automatically supplemented by the Archdiocesan newspaper The New World. The parish was on the 100% Plan. Every family recorded in the

Sunday envelop book was provided with a subscription to the paper. The subscription costs were met from the parish treasury. The reason for this method is explained below:

Every decent person views with abhorrence the degraded character of countless modern publications and the failure of the secular press to champion truth and virtue...Our Holy Father and Our Cardinal Archbishop have repeatedly emphasized the importance of Catholic papers and Catholic literature in the fight against falsehood and sin.<sup>118</sup>

In addition, every issue of The Seraph included a "Pastors Page," in which the pastor was given the opportunity to teach, admonish, enlighten, or praise his flock. The 'family' was frequently discussed and Catholicism and the parish were believed to be its chief source of inspiration and protection. Msgr. John McMahon, who became pastor on St. Sabina's in 1952 following the death of Msgr. Gorey, wrote, "We find, as other priests find in other parishes, that there is very little delinquency among the children whose parents cooperate in Church activities."<sup>119</sup> On another occasion he wrote, "I think there would never be a greater blessing on our wonderful parish than that which would come from a steady increase in the number of families reciting the rosary."<sup>120</sup> "The rosary," he said, "is the groundwork for Catholic Action and Catholic perfection."<sup>121</sup>

#### ST. SABINA CATHOLICS AND THE WORLD

Besides the insidious creep of secularism to be on guard against, "enemies" of the Church and parish took on a

distant and impersonal visage. The most frequently mentioned "enemies" were "not only Communism but Worldliness and Secularism."<sup>122</sup> St. Sabina parishioners were warned to be ever diligent in fending off these insidious intruders into their country, their parish, and their family.

Communism was feared because a communist was "not interested in morality. He esteems as good that which brings him material happiness and as evil that which stands in the way of his physical desires."<sup>123</sup> Parishioners, though, were still encouraged to take a Christian attitude toward their "wayward" brethren. "Love all people," wrote Father William J. Quinlan in The Seraph. "We tend to hate the A.P.A. [American Protective Association], the Communists and the like, but Christ died for all."<sup>124</sup>

While American Catholics were not unlike their fellow compatriots after World War II in their fear and loathing of Communism, St. Sabina parishioners saw Catholicism as the best champion of the anticommunist cause.

Every thoughtful person realizes that American citizenship under the present system of government is a precious privilege...Ours is rapidly becoming the one great country which, like the church, will be able to champion the cause of the individual.<sup>125</sup>

For a religious group that was accused of foreign allegiance to the pope in the nineteenth century and, therefore, ill-equipped to be a full-fledged member in a democratic American society, Catholics, who had never really doubted their ability to be good citizens, resolved this seeming dilemma by

identifying common values of the Church and America. If anything, in their minds Catholicism could edify American society.

Catholics even possessed unique weapons to fight communism. In The Seraph St. Sabina parishioners were instructed that:

Daily Mass is the most powerful weapon we Catholics have. The Rosary, another very important means the Blessed Mother gave us to save the world must be said daily. When the world turns to Her, there will be everlasting peace. Do your part and help convert Russia.<sup>126</sup>

The role of the clergy and the function of the parish, as seen at this time, was to protect its members from the evils of the secular world beyond its borders. The host of confraternities and sodalities spiritually nurtured parishioners. The ACCW protected young readers from indecent literature in the neighborhood. The parish library and the New World gave direction to their reading. Protestant organizations were to be avoided. Antagonists of Catholicism and America were distant and impersonal and could be vanquished by parishioners through prayer.

#### CONCLUSION

"It was a faith parish," Father Tom McMahon related. "It was a parish where people loved their families and they centered all their activities around the church...And the church was the home for the family where they had their baptisms and their confirmations and first communions and

baptisms and their confirmations and first communions and weddings and funerals. It was the center of Catholic life."<sup>127</sup>

D. Foertsch confirmed this. "My wedding was there. All my kids were baptized there. Half of them were confirmed and half of them graduated from there. My dad was buried there. So a lot of the emotional things happened there."<sup>128</sup>

H. O'Connor said, "I never moved out of Sabina's...I graduated from there. Both of my daughters graduated from St. Sabina's. I was married there and they were married there."<sup>129</sup>

The longevity of Mrs. Foertsch's and Mrs. O'Connor's residences in St. Sabina's was not unique. Many people who grew up as children there stayed as adults. M. Dunne started grade school in St. Sabina and did not leave until the late 1970s. T. O'Rourke also began school there in the early 1920s and remained there long enough to see his children graduate from St. Sabina's. Parish statistics bear out this residential stability. Based on the figures from Tables XII and XIII twenty-six percent of those married in St. Sabina's were baptized here as infants. By looking at the places of baptism of First Communicants, Table XIV, the percent of those who were baptized at St. Sabina's as infants rises to forty-five. While not a majority, there was a solid core of long-term parishioners at St. Sabina's to give continuity to parish traditions. T. O'Rourke said, "St. Sabina...held the neighborhood."<sup>130</sup>

For those who did move, other parishes could fulfill the same needs. "You could move west of Ashland or east of Morgan and be almost in the same identical situation," said G. Hendry.<sup>131</sup> "I haven't moved that far since I've been born," D. Foertsch remarked. "I've been in my own little ghetto because of the philosophy of Sabina's."<sup>132</sup>

The parish of St. Sabina's remained a vital center of community life for Catholics in the two decades from the start of the Second World War. "It was a community. It was very good spirited," said Father McMahon. "I think because of the priests and the sisters and the school. Everything was centered around the parish."<sup>133</sup> St. Sabina's also sought to fill the recreational needs of its members, thereby, incorporating another dimension to the community under its auspices. The next chapter will explore this aspect of St. Sabina parish.

1. "Dedication of Memorial Books," The Seraph, 12(3) (May 1954), 17.
2. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 352, 356.
3. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, "The Irish-American Dimension," in The Irish in Chicago, McCaffrey et al, 16.
4. Funchion, "The Political and Nationalist Dimensions," 83.
5. Hauser and Kitagawa, ed. Local Community Fact Book for Chicago, 1950, 290.
6. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1935 and 1957, ACA.
7. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1930 to 1960, ACA. Figures not adjusted for inflation.
8. St. Sabina Annual Report, 1953, ACA.
9. St. Sabina Annual Report, 1955, ACA.
10. "Six Years," The Seraph 16(1) (January 1959), 11.
11. "St. Sabina Credit Union," The Seraph 10(10) (November 1952), 17.
12. "Six Years," The Seraph, 1.
13. "A First for St. Sabina," The Seraph, 17(14) (February 1960), 17; "Marion Cotillion," The Seraph, (January 1963), 27.
14. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets and Terrence O'Rourke.
15. Author interview with George Hendry.
16. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke, 20 September 1986.
17. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan, 14 January 1987.
18. Author interview with George Hendry.
19. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
20. "Good Reading," The Seraph, 16(5) (May 1959), 11.
21. "The Y.M.C.A. -- Remember?" The Seraph, 9(1) (February 1951), 21.



22. "Excerpts from Pastoral Letter of His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago," The Seraph, 12(7) (August 1954), 19.
23. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1957, ACA.
24. The Seraph.
25. Author interview with George Hendry.
26. The Seraph; the Southtown Economist.
27. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
28. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
29. Author interview with George Hendry.
30. Author interview with George Hendry.
31. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
32. Author interview with George Hendry.
33. "Do Yourself a Favor," The Seraph, 14(10) (October 1956), 3.
34. "Confession," The Seraph, 13(1) (January 1955), 5.
35. Author interview with Father Thomas S. McMahon.
36. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
37. The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 5.
38. "The Pilgrim Virgin," The Seraph, 16(7) (September 1959), 3, 9.
39. Ibid.
40. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
41. "The Pilgrim Virgin," The Seraph, (September 1959), 3.
42. The Seraph, 9(12) (January 1952), 5.
43. "Forty Hours Devotion," The Seraph, 15(19) (October 1958), 7.
44. "Mission," The Seraph, 12(3) (March 1954), 3.
45. "In Defense of Order," The Seraph, 13(2) (March 1955), 3.

46. "The Pastor's Page," The Seraph, 9(7) (August 1951), 3.
47. "To Your Credit," The Seraph, 13(1) (January 1955), 1.
48. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
49. Author interview with George Hendry.
50. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
51. Author interview with Dee Foertsch, 21 November 1986.
52. The Seraph, 10(9) (October 1952), 9.
53. The Seraph, 1951.
54. The Seraph, 9(1) (January 1951), 11.
55. S.C. Brophy, "Holy Name News," The Seraph, 13(7) (August 1955), 11.
56. "Holy Name News," The Seraph, 15(9) (September 1958), 11.
57. The Seraph, 8(1) (January 1951), 11.
58. The Seraph, 10(5) (June 1952), 3.
59. The Seraph, 10(7) (August 1952); 10(9) (October 1952).
60. The Seraph, 10(9) (October 1952), 9.
61. The Seraph, 9(10) (November 1951), 47.
62. The Seraph, 12(4) (April-May 1954), 11.
63. The Seraph, 14(6) (June 1956), 7.
64. The Seraph, 12(2) (February 1954), 5.
65. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
66. The Seraph, 10(2) (March 1952), 9.
67. "Look at Your School," The Seraph, 2(1) (February 1944), 7.
68. The Seraph, 12(4) (April-May 1954), 11.
69. The Seraph, 13(8) (September 1955), 11; 14(2) (February 1956), 21.
70. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.

71. The Seraph, 14(2) (February 1956), 21.
72. The Seraph, 14(3) (March 1956), 5
73. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
74. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
75. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 185-8.
76. St. Sabina Annual Report 1943, Archdiocese of Chicago Archives.
77. The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 39.
78. The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 39.
79. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
80. "Legion of Decency Crusade," The Seraph, 16(1) (January 1959), 29; "The Legion of Decency," The Seraph 16(9) (November 1959), 3.
81. "Protect Our Children," The Seraph, 14(6) (June 1956), 1.
82. Ibid., 5.
83. Author interview with Robert McClory.
84. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1941-1959.
85. "Sacred Heart League," The Seraph, 16(12) (December 1959), 25.
86. "The Sacred Heart League," The Seraph, (17) (14) (February 1960), 23.
87. The Seraph.
88. The Seraph, 9(4) (May 1951), 6-7.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid, 9.
91. Ibid.
92. The Seraph, 10(12) (December 1950), 31.
93. "Memories Number Three," The Seraph, 10(5) (June 1952), 21.
94. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.

95. "Public School Children," The Seraph, 15(9) (September 1958), 7.
96. Author interview with George Hendry.
97. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
98. "Pastor Reports on Your School," The Seraph 19(5) (May 1962), 17.
99. E.C. Tocci, "Finance Your Children's Education Through Your Credit Union," The Seraph 19(6) (June 1962), 11.
100. Andrew M. Greeley, The Irish-Americans The Rise to Money and Power, (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 111, 112, 117.
101. Andrew M. Greeley, The American Catholic A Social Portrait (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 58-9, 62.
102. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
103. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
104. Author interview with George Hendry.
105. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1942, ACA.
106. "Mothers' Club," The Seraph 12(7) (July 1954), 15.
107. Author interview with George Hendry.
108. "The Younger Set Speaks," The Seraph, 12(3) (March 1954), 3.
109. "The Mothers' Club," The Seraph 13(5) (May 1955),
110. "The Pastor Reports on Your School," The Seraph 19(1) (January 1962), 11.
111. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
112. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 165.
113. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 167, 192.
114. "The Younger Set Speaks," The Seraph, 9(3) (April 1951), 29.
115. "Parish Library," The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 41.
116. "Library Notes," 15(5) (May 1957), 11; 13(4) (April 1955), 13; 14(9) (September 1956), 29.

117. "Parish Library," The Seraph, 16(9) (September 1959), 31.
118. "New World 100% Plan," The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 35.
119. "Let's Face It," The Seraph, 14(8) (August 1956), 1.
120. "Family Rosary," The Seraph, 13(10) (October 1955), 3.
121. "The Rosary," The Seraph, 15(8) (September 1957), 3.
122. Msgr. John A. McMahon, "Infiltration," The Seraph, 12(4) (April-May 1954), 1,3.
123. "The Pastor's Page," The Seraph, 9(6) (July 1951), 1.
124. Father Quinlan, "Souls at Stake," The Seraph 6(2) (February 1948), 37.
125. "The Pastor's Page," The Seraph 9(4) (May 1951), 1.
126. "The Younger Set Speaks Out," The Seraph 7(10) (November 1949), 23, 25.
127. Author interview with Father Thomas S. McMahon.
128. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
129. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
130. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke.
131. Author interview with George Hendry.
132. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
133. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

## CHAPTER V

### PARISH IDENTITY: 'A GREAT DAY FOR THE IRISH,' RECREATION, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

St. Sabina's Irish identity remained intact after the Second World War. Tables XII and XII of parishes of baptism based on marriage records show that most people in St. Sabina still came from Irish parishes that were primarily in working class districts. Table XIV perhaps provides a more exact profile of the parishes new settlers to St. Sabina's came from by showing the churches of baptism of First Communicants, who were seven years old when they received the sacrament. Obviously they would be recent arrivals in the neighborhood and a more exact indication of post-war mobility. They, too, were primarily from Irish or German parishes, although some parishes in middle class areas could no longer be classified as having a particular ethnic identity, but they probably had a large number of Irish.

Certainly, one would expect to find an increase in ethnic mixing after the war. Yet, even in 1959, 138 of 279 parishes in Chicago still reflected the national origins of their members.<sup>1</sup> Many others were not designated as national parish, yet they enjoyed an ethnic identity. Chicago Catholics had not lost the habit of labeling a parish by

nationality. The Irish in St. Sabina's continued to dominate the parish and maintained its identity as sons and daughters of Erin's Isle during this period. "The majority were Irish," recalled D. Foertsch. "I suppose I'd have to say it was an Irish parish, but there certainly was a good mix there."<sup>2</sup>

However, Catholicism had superseded "Irishness" as the conscious self-image of the parish by World War II. "At Sabina's," said G. Hendry, "it was Catholicity. Nothing ethnic really. You were definitely Catholic. And Sabina's and the neighbors on each side, [St.] Leo and Little Flower certainly reinforced that."<sup>3</sup> "I never thought about [my Irishness]," said D. Foertsch. "I don't know that it was that big a deal then, or maybe I was just too busy raising kids to notice...There was never any reason to even bring it up because so many around us were."<sup>4</sup> Speculating on why their Irish identity was down-played, G. Hendry said, "What was gone at my generation was ethnic discrimination. Because, heck, we owned the city! You couldn't be discriminated against."<sup>5</sup>

While many people did not cultivate an Irish identity, it still served to tie the parish together. Although he did not necessarily think it was a fully conscious decision, J. Nelligan thought the Irish flavor of St. Sabina influenced peoples' decision to move there. He said of people in the parish, "Basically, people moved from Bridgeport to Canaryville to Sabina's...You wouldn't move to St. John of God [a Polish parish at 52nd and Throop St.]. You would move to

a neighborhood which was probably Irish."<sup>6</sup> G. Hendry's parents were from East St. Louis. His father had come to Chicago to work in the stock yards. Being of Irish extraction eased their transition to St. Sabina's and Chicago. He said, "When they moved there, the Irishness of [the parish] helped my mother...There were people out [saying] 'Your name is Nelly Burns...Well, we've got a lot of Irish here! Sabina's is full of them!' Right away she made a connection."<sup>7</sup>

But by this time, however, many of those who were of Irish descent were third or fourth generation or beyond Irish-American. Their connection with the Emerald Isle was tenuous at best. "You didn't see anyone saying 'I'm Southside Irish' back then," claimed G. Hendry.<sup>8</sup> Those Irish-Americans who did proclaim themselves to be Irish were pejoratively referred to by some as 'professional' Irish.

However, Irish consciousness did not die easily in St. Sabina's. St. Patrick's Day celebrations had always been a feature of the parish as it was in many cities across the country. This wide celebration of the Irish saint's feast day led The Seraph in 1952 to boast that "St. Patrick has become almost the patron saint of America, as well as Ireland, so well known has he become."<sup>9</sup> The local record store, the Music Box, claimed to have the most complete set of Irish music available in the city. Irish step dancing lessons were also popular, and local establishments suggested Irish associations, such as the Shamrock Corner for hamburgers.<sup>10</sup>



These things, however, do not necessarily suggest a well-developed consciousness of an ethnic identity.

What seemed to play a key role in heightening the waning ethnic identity of the parish was the increased immigration of men and women from Ireland into the neighborhood. Thirty-one percent of the foreign born population of Auburn Park were Irish.<sup>11</sup> "Around World War II," T. O'Rourke recalled, "there were more foreign-born Irish than there were in the early days. There seemed to be a lot of native Irish coming over here and they settled in the parish in large numbers. They kept it Irish."<sup>12</sup>

Irish immigrants were quite visible in the community. "You'd see them walking down 79th Street in the dead of winter," related B. DesChatelets. "Colder than the hinter of hell, and they'd have a suit coat on and a sweater...Everything they had on was wool from Ireland...And the suit coat would be wide open and they would be walking along...and you could spot them a mile away."<sup>13</sup>

G. Hendry concurred with this observation. He said, "After the War to '55 a lot of Irish immigrants settled in the area. So I think the people saw that there was a need for bringing out their ethnicity."<sup>14</sup> T. O'Rourke thought World War II, in which he served in Europe, played a role in reviving interest in Ireland because it enabled him and others to visit the homeland of their parents and grandparents. "The first time I went to Ireland was in 1945 after VE day," he

said. "I was in Dublin the first week the Americans were allowed down in uniform. So many fellows got to see Ireland and liked it."<sup>15</sup> [Ireland had taken a neutral stance during the war, which prohibited servicemen in the country for the duration.]

What added to some people's heightened awareness of an Irish identity was the start of a St. Patrick's Day parade for the Southside which originated in St. Sabina's in 1953. The parade was the inspiration of Father Thomas J. McMahon and a St. Sabina parishioner, Jack Allen. Father McMahon said of his reason for starting the parade, "I was watching the one in New York on t.v. every year...Allen was with me in the gym one day...The two of us were talking about it. Why didn't we have one?...[so] we decided we would run a St. Patrick's Day parade."<sup>16</sup>

Initially the parade was loosely structured. "Anybody could get in it," related Father McMahon. "They could push a buggy or ride a bike or skip a rope or anything...We got a few school bands in there."<sup>17</sup> "They got all the little leaguers out, all the cub scouts, all the girl scouts, all the brownies, and they marched them in different areas of the parade. It was very child oriented...They had tremendous support from parents," recalled G. Hendry.<sup>18</sup> The parade was held on the Sunday nearest St. Patrick's Day so Cardinal Stritch could offer benediction at St. Sabina's at the close of

the parade. On March 17, St. Sabina's held dances or plays complete with Irish music and dancing.<sup>19</sup>

The parade proved to be a real crowd-attractor. Over ten-thousand spectators turned out that first year to watch the four-mile long parade. Among the fourteen floats in the parade was one dedicated to the founding pastor, Msgr. Egan, "an enthusiast of Irish music and culture." Parishioners were aboard singing Irish music accompanied by an organ.<sup>20</sup> B. DesChatelets, whose father was the parade marshal and one of its principal organizers, said of that first year, "In order to finance it, they went up and down 79th Street and got some donations from some of the businessmen. They were a little reluctant to give...But the parade was a big thing...The second year they really didn't even have to go around. The bar owners came and said, 'Here's money.' They couldn't believe how much business they had! People just packed the sidewalks all the way."<sup>21</sup>

The parade's success prompted its organizers to expand the parade to encompass the Southside and they devised rules for a more sophisticated procession. "You had to be really organized," Father McMahon related. "You could not march in it unless you were with a marching unit...or you had to have a float."<sup>22</sup> The organizers went for the big time by bringing in the Notre Dame football team and marching band for the event. "Well, that was like bringing the saints marching in!"

B. DesChatelets explained.<sup>23</sup> Father McMahon lured them up from south Bend by paying their way and giving them a meal.<sup>24</sup> ✶

In 1954, despite freezing temperatures and snow flurries, between 80,000 to 100,000 spectators turned out to watch the new Southside parade composed of 1300 marchers, twenty-three bands, and forty floats. Besides Notre Dame's 125 piece marching ensemble, there were the bands of the Great Lakes Naval Base and the 5th Army. And a Chinese and a German band "added an inter-racial touch." Army, Navy, and Marine units marched along with police and firemen, American Legionnaires, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Knights of Columbus, and Catholic War Veterans. The reviewing stand at 79th and Loomis held state, county and city politicians, prominent industrialists, businessmen and church dignitaries.<sup>25</sup>

In 1955, Ed Sullivan, the television personality, led the parade. Sullivan, whose parents were born in County Cork, Ireland, claimed that it was the happiest day of his life. The only thing that detracted from it, he said, was that his parents were not there "to see their little Eddie leading a real Irish parade."<sup>26</sup>

By 1958 the parade, which had grown to eighty colorful floats, sixty marching units and forty-two bands showered by fireworks, paraded north on Ashland Avenue from 84th to 79th Street, and east on 79th to Halsted. They then turned north to 78th Street and then west on Racine to St. Sabina's for the

traditional closing of benediction by Cardinal Stritch. A crowd of over 250,000 lined the parade route.<sup>27</sup>

The parade was a major social event in St. Sabina's. Parties were held all over the parish, and it revived flagging interest in the parish's Irish identity. N. Farrell, whose florist shop decorated St. Sabina's, had the school's nuns up to the apartment above her store on 79th Street to view the parade.<sup>28</sup> "We'd usually have a little party the day of the parade," recalled T. O'Rourke. "As we were sitting around [we found out that] the kids had to go to school -- the next day was actually St. Patrick's Day. Well, myself and some of the other fathers...couldn't understand it. And we bombarded them [the rectory] with calls to find out what was going on. Some of us wrote letters...And they told us at the time, 'Well, we have a lot of other nationalities here now.' That was their excuse...But after that they'd always have St. Patrick's Day a holiday."<sup>29</sup>

The success of the Southside parade inspired the Westside Irish to resume their parade. "There were some Westside Irish parades up until two years before we started ours," related Father McMahon. "They had disbanded because they were fighting like the Irish sometimes do...We started our parade and it was so successful, they inaugurated theirs again...We would have ours on Sunday, then on St. Patrick's Day they would have our floats in their parade on the Westside...It got so big, once Daley was mayor, he wanted it

downtown. So that's the parade you see downtown every year."<sup>30</sup>

By 1960 political pressure ended the Southside parade. The Irish were powerful enough to enhance their profile in the city by staging their parade in the focal point of the city.

The St. Patrick's parade celebration, however, also reinforced the Catholic identity of the parish. The Seraph, wrote that the St. Patrick's Day parade "is part of the Catholic Action program, therefore, worthy of our support."<sup>31</sup>

On Trinity Sunday of the Catholic liturgical calendar, the shamrock was used to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

In The Seraph was written:

When we think of shamrocks, we think of St. Patrick too, not so much because both are Irish, but because St. Patrick used the little shamrock to explain to his Irish converts the most profound truth of our faith, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.<sup>32</sup>

At this time, it was still difficult for St. Sabina parishioners to separate an Irish identity from their religion. Their every day activities revolved around the church which kept the parish central in their lives and hearts rather than their more intangible Irishness. Since the school was staffed by an American religious order, its curriculum did not have an ethnic content. The main goal of the Dominicans was to keep religion the core subject.<sup>33</sup> Since there were other nationalities in the parish some priests felt that stressing an Irish identity over a Catholic one was divisive so they discouraged excessive ethnicity.<sup>34</sup>

## THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Perhaps the biggest and most memorable attraction at St. Sabina's was the erection of a community center. This recreational facility played a key role in reinforcing the parish as a focal point of the community. On November 5, 1937, Bishop Sheil dedicated the St. Sabina community center at 78th and Racine.<sup>35</sup> The CYO was a product of the "muscular Christianity" movement of the 1930s. Its aim was to direct the energies of youths towards more constructive activities, particularly sports. Sheil, however, was not the founder of the CYO. He was, instead, its chief organizer and promoter. It remains unclear who exactly started the organization. Many of the ideas and programs the CYO encompassed had been around and tried by various people many years before its formal organization.<sup>36</sup>

St. Sabina parishioners credited their former assistant priest, Father Raphael Ashenden, who served at St. Sabina's from 1919 to 1926, as the founder of the organization, but whose untimely death on February 11, 1931 in an automobile accident robbed him of the honor of founder. This belief was not without some foundation. Father Ashenden had been involved in some of the early activities of the CYO and was a leading figure in the Catholic Boy Scout organization. In an announcement of his death The New World described Ashenden as the founder and first director of the youth organization.<sup>37</sup> In June 1930 Sheil did appoint Ashenden as the first executive

director of the CYO, which is probably the reason he was considered by some as the founder of the organization. Who was in fact the CYO's founder is still debatable, but it is certain that Ashenden was an important element in getting the CYO started.<sup>38</sup>

While there is no direct evidence as to why Msgr. Egan decided to build the center, it seems quite likely that his close relationship with Ashenden influenced his decision. Throughout the thirties Bishop Sheil encouraged pastors to establish social and athletic centers in their parishes, which he believed were crucial to the success of CYO sports leagues. Msgr. Egan was one of the few pastors to respond to Sheil's call.<sup>39</sup>

The two-story building housed a college-sized basketball court, which could also be split into two smaller courts. Its folding bleachers sat 1800 people. In the basement were locker-rooms, showers, handball courts, a kitchen and dining room and meeting rooms for the various parish societies. The cavernous building was valued at \$150,000. Through the fund-raising efforts of the Holy Name Society and proceeds taken in from the community center's activities, the center was paid in full by 1940.<sup>40</sup>

Under Msgr. Egan and his successor, Msgr. William Gorey, the St. Sabina community center grew to be a major attraction at St. Sabina's and throughout the Southside. Like Egan, Gorey was concerned for



the right recreational environment for his young people, because he knew full well the dangers which lurk in the commercialized recreational center in our community.<sup>41</sup>

In July 1939 Father Thomas S. McMahon was assigned to St. Sabina's. He had previously been posted at Bishop Sheil's parish, St. Andrew's, on the north side of Chicago. His experience under Sheil helped make him an ideal candidate for director of St. Sabina's new center. Father Tom, as he was fondly called, proved to be a virtual Bing Crosby style priest. Under his tutelage the center became an expression of CYO philosophy.

Father McMahon thought his mission to the young people of the parish was quite simple. The pastors "gave me carte blanche permission...I could do what I wanted...I always kind of tended towards athletics. I played all the sports and I liked priests who played sports. Priests used to coach teams when I was a kid...I'm a priest because of some others that I wanted to emulate. I wanted to be like they were." In addition, the center was to be an instrument "to save souls and...to keep those kids in the formative years out of trouble...Get them right after school. Have something for them and keep them nice...athletics or dancing...that's what I thought I should do as a priest."<sup>42</sup>

Irish-Americans had a close association with sports in this country in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It provided heroes and an avenue for upward mobility for a

group with often limmited opportunities. But this affinity for sport was in good part a product of Irish culture. After the Great Famine of the 1840s a bachelor subculture developed. Delayed marriages and strict sexual morals led a large number of men to find release in drinking and sport. The all-male group became especially important for married men as well as well as unattached men. It eased loneliness and provided camaraderie. These bachelor groups prized politics, violence, and sports, which evolved into sporting fraternities.<sup>43</sup> This sporting tradition was co-opted by the parish. In St. Sabina's it was harnessed by Father McMahon and the community center.

Father McMahon was aided by a dedicated parishioner, Merlin X. Mungovan, a juvenile officer. Mungovan had been volunteering his services to the community center since it opened. He had already begun a St. Sabina tradition of hosting an Amateur Athletic Union basketball tournament and coached the CYO and grade school teams. His talent for directing young people helped the St. Sabina grade school team bring home the City Champion-ship in 1938. Recognizing a great asset, Father McMahon encour-aged Msgr. Egan to hire him as fulltime athletic instructor during and after school hours. The pair expanded the community center activities to include such events as a preseason grade school basketball tournament and a house league for high school teens who could not make either their school or the CYO team. St. Sabina also

staged CYO boxing bouts. These various events drew capacity crowds.<sup>44</sup> J. Nelligan remembered the excitement of the A.A.U. tournaments. "Even if you were small and you had to be in bed at eight o'clock," he said, "that was a special occasion. And you'd be allowed to go and...stay out until it was over."<sup>45</sup>

Among the most popular and enduring programs that started during these early years of the community center were weekend roller skating. Father Tom had been unhappy with the lack of decorum at the local roller skating rink. The low lights and song selections, he felt, were not suitable for young Catholic children. He thought it was quite likely that the community center floor could take the quick stops of skates. To test this theory Father McMahon with some friends donned roller skates and took to the gym floor. They found it was quite capable of withstanding the abuse and silenced critics in the parish who feared the destruction of their new floor. Within the first year of operation the receipts from roller skating more than covered the cost of the floor. Twelve hundred skates were available for rent in sizes ranging from one to twelve. The more dedicated skaters eventually bought their own.<sup>46</sup>

Boys with shoe skates hanging around their necks and girls with their skates in multicolored cases became a frequent sight on the streets of the neighborhood as they walked to the center. Friday evenings from five until seven was Twilight Skating for seventh and eighth graders. From

7:30 until 10:30 was reserved for high school students. On Saturday afternoons the community center opened its doors for the younger children, who participated in games and races. The winners received free bottles of pop. Special skating parties for high school were held on Saturday night. Nearly every high school on the Southside held a skating party regularly. One evening, 728 teenagers paid their way into St. Ignatius High School's party.<sup>47</sup>

The children of the parish were not the only ones to enjoy roller skating. After the community center's doors were closed for the night, Father Tom and his staff took their turn at skating across the floor. "We'd go skating around there and play crack the whip. We didn't allow the kids to do it, but we were racing and jumping over chairs." He also bought skates for all the nuns, who used them during their free time.<sup>48</sup>

Among the most notable events Father McMahon helped orchestrate during his tenure at St. Sabina's were the annual St. Sabina Roller Varieties. He received the inspiration from watching the young people skating. "Once I opened up the gym for skating, they began doing things that they saw in shows - - at the Stadium, the Sonia Henie show or the Ice Capades. And they were doing little twists and jumps and spins, and before long, we'd play a waltz number and they were waltzing. And they would learn how to eagle to the right and the

left...And we thought, 'Golly, we could put on a show because they're so good.'"<sup>49</sup>

To put this idea into action, Father McMahon took a group to the Arcadia on the north side of Chicago to learn dance steps on skates. They, in turn, taught the youngsters at St. Sabina's the waltz, fox trot, the fourteen step and other skating numbers. During the summer, then, the children were told to think of an act they would like to do based on a theme Father Tom had given them. Through the fall up to thirty acts and over five hundred participants worked on their various numbers and the myriad tasks. Well over a hundred parishioners joined the production staff. "We had everybody doing something," Father McMahon proclaimed. "It was a community event."<sup>50</sup>

The boys and girls skated to songs such as 'Swinging on a Star' or to fairy tales such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. No roller variety, however, was complete without an Irish number with a "song dear to the hearts of Erin's sons and daughters." Some brave and talented skaters did the Irish jig on skates.<sup>51</sup> Roller varieties sometimes had a religious theme. In 1950, a Holy Year, the subject was a pilgrimage to Rome. The Holy Name Society hoped it would "convey a lesson to each of us in our pilgrimage though life."<sup>52</sup>

When the roller varieties first started, the performances were scheduled for just a few evenings. As their popularity grew, St. Sabina's began staging them for a week

and advertising them on billboards throughout the city and had colorful programs printed. Approximately forty billboards around the city heralded the coming of St. Sabina's Roller Varieties. In 1948 over ten thousand people came to watch the show.<sup>53</sup>

Next to roller skating, St. Sabina dances were the most memorable feature of the parish and community center. St. Sabina's Young Peoples Club had already been holding occasional dances when Father Tom arrived. Since he had run dances at St. Andrew's and realized their popularity at St. Sabina's, Father Tom decided to hold them on a regular basis. "They were teenage dances to keep those kids in the formative years out of trouble."<sup>54</sup>

To get in to the dances, certain rules had to be complied with. "All you had to do was dress decently," Father Tom explained. "The boys had to have a jacket and tie on. The girls had to have a decent dress. And that was it -- decency...And the orchestra could not play certain numbers. One of the big things in those days was "Because" and we ruled that out. They couldn't play that at our dances."<sup>55</sup>

To enforce the rules, the community center hired two policemen and several Andy Frain ushers and enlisted the assistance of parish chaperons. "If they would smell anything on their breath -- out! They'd never get in again. We had a woman in the girls' room and a man in the boys' washroom. And if they noticed anything, a drink or anything -- out!...We

were strict, and that's what the kids liked...They like to be gentlemen and ladies, and they wanted to be treated as such."<sup>56</sup>

Father McMahon's strictness did not subdue the popularity of these dances. On an average Sunday the dances drew 1200 teenagers with a record attendance set at 1600. The dances were held forty-six weeks a year and discontinued only during Lent, with the exception of a St. Patrick's Day dance. Teens from as many as ninety-one other parishes came to St. Sabina's on Sunday over the forty years the dances were held.<sup>57</sup>

"It was really well organized," Father McMahon recounted of their popularity. Each Sunday a different crew of the Holy Name Society manned the cashier's cage and took tickets at the stairs.<sup>58</sup> A staff of kids worked the soft drink stand and the cloak room. They each earned a dollar and free admission to the dance, and they could keep any tips they managed to wrangle from their customers. "They had a box for the tips. And they'd make well on the tips. They were all friends, so they'd say. 'Come on now, give us a good tip!' So they would. They'd spell each other and they'd go up for the dances."<sup>59</sup>

The selection of the band was also carefully considered. "We'd give the orchestra what they called a one night stand. You could play this night...We'd have the kids vote on them. If they liked them, we'd give them four Sundays in a row...We had union organists. All union bands." Dance

numbers were worked out in advance. There were twelve sets of dances with three songs for each dance. Girls had dance cards that they filled out all week. Ballroom dancing was taught during intermissions. "We had people come in from the Aragon Ballroom and teach these young people how to dance at the intermission, and our organist would play for them...The priests would walk around the hall encouraging the bashful ones to take those free lessons."<sup>60</sup>

The Sunday night dances were primarily for teenagers. High school freshmen were not allowed in until the end of the school year when they were almost sophomores. "They were just aching to get there," related Father Tom. When many people returned from World War II, the Sunday dances were too young for them so Father McMahon began a Wednesday night dance for the more matured crowd. These dances were just as popular. One evening it drew 1700.<sup>61</sup> On Thursday evening Father Tom occasionally hosted a dance for adults.<sup>62</sup>

How did the young people of the parish feel about the dances? "It was the thing to be at," recalled G. Hendry.<sup>63</sup> "Probably my best memory of Sabina's after school," B. DesChatelets recounted, "was when I started to go to the dances. And the dances were great." He recalled Father McMahon's rules. "They had Andy Frain ushers. There'd be three of them and I don't know how many hundreds of people would be at the dances. You probably had an area about as big as a table to dance in...It was in the days of



jitterbugging. They'd say no breaking, because then you use to throw them out pretty far. These three would walk around and if they came up and tapped you on the shoulder and said 'Go sit down.' You'd go sit down; or they'd say 'Go on outside you've had it for the night.' You might put up and say 'Give us a break,' but that's the way it was...If you were holding a girl too close, the nuns would come and walk between you."<sup>64</sup>

G. Hendry agreed. "It was very, very, strictly run." Although he admitted to testing the limits of the rules by smuggling in some liquor, he also said, "There was a sense that you didn't want to defile it -- especially coming from the parish."<sup>65</sup>

B. Deschatelets also remembered the inflexible dress code. "You had to wear in those days a suit coat -- no air conditioning. And I can remember the gyrations that we went through. You worked up a good sweat. I remember this one used to go between dances and wring his coat out. And you'd ask if you could take the coat off. They'd say 'No, no, no!'"<sup>66</sup>

The uncompromising regulations, however, did not hinder the dance's popularity or amorous feelings. "You'd make dates there...You'd get a date and then you'd go to the Highland Theater which was at one end of Sabina's, or we'd go to the Capitol Theater...Those were the theaters that we'd go to...all the kids from Sabina's." This use as a young people's meeting place made St. Sabina's community center the

premier Catholic match-maker on the Southside. "I met my wife there," related B. DesChatelets. "I asked her to dance. We were dancing around and I said 'Some day I'm going to marry you.'"<sup>67</sup> Mr. DesChatelets romantic hopes were not unique. G. Hendry said, "My marriage came out of there."<sup>68</sup> T. O'Rourke, who is retired and winters in the sunbelt, said, "I meet people down in Florida who say 'I met my husband dancing at Sabina's.'"<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the most famous story of St. Sabina's matchmaking came from a WGN radio broadcast in June 1939. A local milk company sponsored a special show with Quin Ryan of WGN for interviewing young couples applying for marriage licenses at City Hall. Ryan interviewed three couples a day. One afternoon in conversation with a couple, he found out that they had met at the St. Sabina dances. In turn, the second couple revealed that they had met at the St. Sabina activity. Ryan, then, turned to the third couple and said, "'I suppose you met at St. Sabina's also,'" and they replied, "'Yes, we did.'"<sup>70</sup>

"No doubt having the three couples on the program was a coincidence," Merlin Mungovan wrote, "but practically every Catholic young person on the Far South Side has at some time or other attended the St. Sabina Sunday Evening Dance. It is hard to say just how much this event has contributed to Catholic Action."<sup>71</sup>

Father McMahon confirmed these results of his activities. "Every place I go, I meet people -- yes, every place -- no matter where I go on the Southside of Chicago, I'll meet them. 'You married me.' or 'I met my husband or wife at St. Sabina's skating or at the dance.' This thing happens so often. It makes you feel good that you had a part in it."<sup>72</sup>

Father McMahon did not limit his supervision of the young people to the community center. "We use to police the neighborhood," he said. "Mungovan and I would get in the car after the doors were closed and we'd go around and see what was going on in the neighborhood...If we saw anything going on in a car or anything, we'd just pull up and give them a dirty look and away they went and that was it. But there wasn't much of it to tell the truth. We caught them spiking a coke one time in an ice cream parlor, and we did something about that. They never did it again...Sure some of the kids got into trouble...they'd be out with a group in a car or something somewhere; and they'd be drinking beer and they'd get caught doing it...If there were any fights going on we'd stop them. And pretty soon we'd have them straightened out. But once we got things going there, there was never any trouble."<sup>73</sup> During his years at St. Sabina, Father McMahon claimed that there was never a boy or girl sent to juvenile court.<sup>74</sup> "I think we gave a good example," he said. "A lot of kids became priests because they wanted to be like the

priests of our vintage."<sup>75</sup> J. Kill confirmed this as part of his inspiration for becoming a priest.<sup>76</sup>

The parents of St. Sabina's enthusiastically supported the supervised activities at the community center. Father Tom was never in short supply of volunteers to assist in his endeavors. "They knew where their kids were on a Sunday night and for the roller skating on Friday nights," Father Tom asserted. "The people love what you're doing when you're interested in their children and keeping them out of trouble."<sup>77</sup>

In 1956 The Seraph reminded the parish of the importance of the center to their particular community.

The St. Sabina Sunday Night Dance has been conducted for 30 successful years as a service to the Catholic families of the neighborhood...No other Sunday dance for the high school crowd has such a big band, big hall, or big crowd of fellow Catholics.<sup>78</sup>

The community center and Father McMahon's priestly philosophy reinforced the parish as a central feature of life for Catholics on Chicago's Southside. "I enjoyed being right with the people," he said. "We seemed to have numbers and enthusiastic people. And it seemed that everything went well."<sup>79</sup> Parishioners believed it played a key role in their identification with St. Sabina's. The dances "were very well supervised," recalled H. O'Connor. "There was no trouble...I think that kind of endeared people to the parish."<sup>80</sup> "Everything was there for you," G. Hendry related.<sup>81</sup> "The gymnasium had a good influence on it, because we centered at

the gymnasium," said J. Kill. "You didn't center at the local park...You just went over to the gymnasium."<sup>82</sup> K. Clair said, "That's how we identified with the parish as St. Sabina's, because we felt it was the best around because we had the dances."<sup>83</sup>

St. Sabina's community center was not just a magnet for the parish, but for Catholics throughout the Southside. Frequently the parish was asked to lend its facilities to charities and other Catholic churches and schools. Its popularity created too great of a demand on its booking schedule. St. Sabina parish meetings had trouble reserving time in their own center. In November 1949, St. Sabina's regretfully announced that the use of the parish center would be restricted to parochial activities.<sup>84</sup>

The center, however, did not have a monopoly on all recreational activities in the parish. Some of these other events were still under Father Tom's auspices. The priest persuaded Msgr. Egan to purchase a corner lot just to the north of the center to be used as a baseball field. Preparing the lot for use turned into a community event. Father Tom enlisted the help of "hundreds of teens, pre-teens, and young adults" to cut down the weeds and even the ground. He enticed them to do this back-breaking work by treating them to pop and ice cream. To fill in the deep holes and level the ground, a parishioner who worked in the steel mills delivered loads of slag to the new field. To keep the dust from the slag

blowing into the nearby stores of irate shop-owners, Father Tom covered the slag with black dirt excavated by a contractor who was installing a new sidewalk around the church for the pastor. Glad to assist, the contractor hauled the dirt over and rolled the whole field and donated additional dirt. "'I got kids of my own, Father,'" he explained, "'and I like the way you are trying to provide a place for them to play and stay out of trouble.'" The Holy Name Society donated seed and within a few weeks the new baseball field had a blanket of green grass.<sup>85</sup>

Two baseball diamonds were formed at opposite ends of the lot. All that was needed now was a fence to protect spectators from foul balls and stray bats. Father Tom purchased posts and cable-wire fencing from a local dealer and hired a digging device to install them. The priest and his young crew installed them "cheered on by the priests, sisters, and parishioners."<sup>86</sup>

With the field completed, Father McMahon organized softball leagues. They used sixteen inch 'Chicago style' balls and adhered to slow pitch rules. Children's games were scheduled in the mornings and afternoons, and evenings were reserved for the teens and young adults. The two diamonds were in constant use throughout the summer months. "We took it for granted that everybody played softball," related J. Nelligan.<sup>87</sup> On some occasions four games were played simultaneously out of the four corners of the lot. Local

merchants sponsored and outfitted the teams, and proudly displayed trophies in their store windows if their team won.<sup>88</sup>

The children of the parish were not the only ones to take an interest in sporting and social events. Some of the other assistant priests organized an annual St. Sabina Golf Tournament. In its first year, 1942, the outing attracted eighty-nine men and eventually grew to 237 annual participants. More came to the dinner that followed the event to socialize with their fellow parishioners. This brought the annual total number of participants to four hundred.<sup>89</sup>

Adults also socialized in the "Mr. & Mrs. Club" at their monthly dances or get-togethers. In 1949 they had a membership of 311.<sup>90</sup> Single adults could join the Catholic Adult Social Club. And those out of high school had the Young People's Club, whose aim was "to foster Catholic fellowship among its members."<sup>91</sup>

"One of the biggest and best social events of the year" at St. Sabina's, though, was an annual parish picnic. In 1941 over ten thousand people made their way to a nearby forest preserve for the bucolic celebration of their parish's twenty-fifth anniversary. Games, rides, contests, ballgames and horse shoes supplied the entertainment along with dancing under the stars. Planning the event was a joint effort of the Holy Name Society, the Altar and Rosary Society, and various other parish organizations. Picnics in subsequent years were also successful. Bus loads of people had to be shuttled back

and forth between St. Sabina's and the picnic groves. "The pastor and priests think this is a marvelous way to bring our people together and to solidify the parish spirit," The Seraph reported.<sup>92</sup>

Children of the parish also could join the active Scouting program. St. Sabina Scouting dated back to the founding of the Catholic Boy Scout organization in 1930. Father Raphael Ashenden, along with a lawyer from his new parish of Our Lady Help of Christians, laid the foundation for a Catholic Scouting league. In keeping with their tradition in America, Chicago Catholics developed a "'separate but equal'" Scouting program as they did with their schools and charities. Bishops Sheil's enthusiastic promotion of Catholic Scouting engendered 243 parish-affiliated Scout troops in Chicago by 1934. Sheil had hoped to nationalize the Catholic Scout program. He, however, never had the same success elsewhere. Although Ashenden obtained permission to use the Boy Scout name and followed their rules, Catholic Scouts were affiliated with a parish and had a priest serve as their spiritual director. Scout leaders were obligated to join the parish Holy Name Society and the Scouts were initiated into the junior branch.<sup>93</sup>

Besides Boy Scouts, St. Sabina's scouting program came to include the Cub Scouts, the Brownies, and the Girl Scouts. Each pack had up to 150 kids.<sup>94</sup> Because of their parish affiliation, scouting focused impressionable minds toward a



Catholic-centered world. Scout rituals usually included some religious component. The following description of the closing ritual from the Seraph illustrates this aspect to Catholic scouting.

The entire St. Sabina Scout Organization consisting of Cubs, Brownies, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, leaders, officers, parents and friends...convened at our Scout Hall and bearing our national colors and the various Scout flags marched in orderly uniformed ranks to St. Sabina Church for the religious services that bring each year of scouting to a close.<sup>95</sup>

Scouts were led in prayer by their Spiritual Director, Father William J. Quinlan, and Msgr. Gorey offered benediction. Girl Scouts also attended mass with their parents and leaders on First Saturdays of the month, Our Lady of Fatima Day.<sup>96</sup>

#### THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The neighborhood also continued to be intertwined with the parish. "It was home," D. Foertsch said of the neighborhood. "I was comfortable."<sup>97</sup> In an area of two- and three-flats and small bungalows populated by large families and most belonging to St. Sabina's, socializing was quite easy. "At night there were a lot of children out," J. Nelligan recalled, "So if you wanted a bottle of pop, you could walk up to the corner, get a drink of pop, and talk to twenty kids on your way over...It was very safe. Everybody knew everybody. It was very friendly."<sup>98</sup>

An integral part of neighborhood social life were the local taverns. In traditional, peasant Ireland the sharing

of 'drink' was a courtesy and symbolized the bonds of friendship.<sup>99</sup> Its associations with hospitality and sociability persisted in the Irish subculture in Chicago and St. Sabina's.<sup>100</sup> The Irish showed a great deal of interest in the saloon business since they arrived in the city. Unlike other ethnic groups who showed decreasing interest in the enterprise in succeeding generations, the Irish tended to increase their involvement in the liquor trade.<sup>101</sup> "There were tons of taverns on 79th Street," recalled D. Foertsch. "Different groups would go to different ones...I'd say almost all men [went]. Sometimes in the evening, some of the women would go with their men as kind of a social place to go."<sup>102</sup>

"There were taverns on every block," B. DesChatelets recalled. "There was a place at 79th and Ada...They'd have spontaneous entertainment, singing, dancing...There was a place at 79th and Bishop that all the "greenies" went... They're Irish wetbacks -- a bucket of blood, a fight a minute in there! The Irish love to fight. They just do...It's just a fight to see who wins."<sup>103</sup> The association between fighting and drinking in Irish culture dates back to pre-famine Ireland and faction fights between extended clans. Gradually, fights evolved among men into a form of "popular recreation...that were held so dear and enjoyed so much."<sup>104</sup> On the corner of 79th and Laflin outside a tavern some of the more "notable" characters of the neighborhood used to sit on chairs and play cards. Among them were Edward 'Spike' O'Donnell, of the

southside O'Donnell family bootleggers, who had tangled with and had been subdued by Al Capone.<sup>105</sup> "We'd call him 'Mister' O'Donnell," J. Nelligan recalled.<sup>106</sup> Next to him sat Buck Weaver, the White Sox third baseman who, along with seven others, had been blacklisted for throwing the 1919 World Series. The only evidence against Weaver was that he had heard of the conspiracy, but did not report it. He spent the rest of his life a defeated man trying to clear his name, and playing cards on 79th Street still sporting a White Sox jacket. Although he was not a Catholic, when Weaver died and was laid out in a chapel at 79th and Emerald Avenue seldom used by Catholics, kneelers were placed before his coffin so his Catholic friends in the area could pay tribute to him.<sup>107</sup>

Along with O'Donnell and Weaver "was a card dealer," related J. Nelligan. "He wore a summer straw and he use to have a long-sleeve shirt with the garter belts so he could deal. And there was a guy named John Duffy -- that was the hierarchy. And they use to bring these kitchen chairs out on the corner. These gentlemen were 'retired.'" They made sitting on chairs on the street corner such a distinguished affair that Mr. Nelligan looked forward to the day when he grew up and retired so he could finally sit on the chairs.<sup>108</sup>

Seventy-ninth Street continued to be a lively thoroughfare. Neighborhood businesses continued to prosper. "The stores in the area were great." recalled D. Foertsch.<sup>109</sup> Since most needs were met in the neighborhood, venturing

beyond it was a special occasion. J. Nelligan reminisced, "Going around the other half of the world would be going to 63rd and Halsted where they had a big dime store." A big excursion for kids would be to take the 79th streetcar to Rainbow Beach on the shores of Lake Michigan. "The only problem," he said, "was we were all fair. We'd go...once a month and we'd get burned. Then we couldn't go back."<sup>110</sup>

The abundance of shops gave kids the opportunity for local jobs. "Your jobs were...in the parish," said G. Hendry. "I got to know the neighborhood because I worked for a supermarket...two blocks away [from home]. I was a delivery boy."<sup>111</sup> As the parish kids got older, their jobs may have extended beyond the neighborhood, but they often fit a similar pattern. "In high school, you got to be an Andy Frain at White Sox park," said J. Nelligan. "This was basically what everybody did."<sup>112</sup>

Besides job opportunities within the parish, the parish network also gave individuals access to jobs. St. Sabina's "was in the eighteenth ward and getting a job [was through] who you knew and who you were related to...[I got a job with Streets and Sanitation] through my wife's aunt. She said, 'George, would you like a job to make money to go back to school?' And through her intercession, she got the job for me."<sup>113</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In all respects, the parish of St. Sabina's remained a vital center of community life for Catholics in the two decades from the start of the Second World War. "It was a community. It was very good spirited," said Father McMahon. "I think because of the priests and the sisters and the school. Everything was centered around the parish."<sup>114</sup> St. Sabina's varied activities, led The Seraph to boast that "this spirit of cooperation is the earmark that has made Saint Sabina the parish everyone wants to live in."<sup>115</sup>

Although the parish created a community, a sense of solidarity and common purpose and a system of support, it also insulated its members in a 'Catholic' world. "There was no reason to stretch out to any other place," said Mildred Joyce, "because you had that wide territory of your own people. And naturally, you feel towards your own kind."<sup>116</sup> It also at times created jealousies in people from parishes that were not as dynamic. H. O'Connor said a woman once remarked to her of people from Visitation and St. Sabina's, "'They were exclusive.'" But she thought people "were proud of that when they were living there."<sup>117</sup> Some people from other parishes saw things a bit differently. They admired the pride people from Sabina's had in their parish with the community center, but felt every parish had something unique to offer. Those from St. Leo's took pride in the high school. Visitation parish not only had a high school but a May Crowning

procession that was a community event. The parish as a way of life was not unique to St. Sabina's, but extended through many Chicago neighborhoods. The 'City of Neighborhoods' was in certain areas more a 'City of Parishes.'

The parish community as lived by St. Sabina parishioners was defined by locality and mutual devotions, values and sentiments. Sociologists, in particular, and historians and have defined community in this way. Some sociologists have emphasized territorial aspects to community, while other scholars have thought it more profitable to think of community as an experience, a sense of "we-ness," rather than merely people living in the same locality.<sup>118</sup> Whatever their emphasis, historians and sociologist have often decried the urban, industrial world as an enemy of community. This talk of the demise of community has perplexed old parishioners of St. Sabina's. "They keep talking about community and how there isn't any," complained T. O'Rourke. "Well, we had it back then!"<sup>119</sup>

Sociologists and ethnic historians have come to better understand the regeneration of community in immigrant America. Thomas Bender argues that scholars must look to the historical record to reformulate models of 'community,' and reject theories that argue for static or debilitated communities. Recent works have demonstrated that individuals are continually adapting and readapting themselves to the various changes in the modern world to meet their personal needs for

intimacy and a sense of belonging.<sup>120</sup> In his major work of synthesizing the vast proliferation of scholarship on immigration and ethnic history of the last few years, John Bodnar argues that immigrants successfully adapted traditional building blocks of community, such as the family and churches, to the modern world as a means to better cope with the vast changes confronting the individual.<sup>121</sup>

St. Sabina's was a re-creation of the Old World parish community adapted to urban America. It was a vital and dynamic parish that provided a positive experience of living in a large city. For the individual, life in St. Sabina's was more of a small-town affair than that of the impersonal, detached urban man so often believed to inhabit our great cities. Catholicism provided the meaningful beliefs, values, institutions and rituals necessary to bind members of a community. The devotional style of Catholicism that persisted during this time in St. Sabina's continually called people over to the church. The school centralized children's experiences toward a parish world. The belief that children and adults needed wholesome social activities and recreation further extended and enhanced the parish's function in the community. In many respects, the parish nurtured and strengthened the individual and the family spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. It was a place where people looked out for each other and supported one another.

While the need for community is commonly accepted and often reiterated, it can have a paradoxical effect from its original intent. Communities can become exclusive and defensive if interlopers threaten to change its nature. While St. Sabina's sought to create a positive Christian environment for its parishioners and basically did, it, however, also created a protected and defensive world. It could accept the presence of others not of their community up to a certain point. Although largely in a Catholic dominated area, the parish could live with others not of their kind, as long as their community was not interfered with. But it could also become defensive toward any threats that might pollute it or destroy it, whether it was the YMCA, too many non-Catholics, dimly lit roller rinks, or people they were too unfamiliar with.

The next chapter will look at tensions and changes taking place within Catholicism and within St. Sabina parish that would try to enrich and broaden the religious and social vision of the parish community. It will also examine the 'encroachment' of Black Chicagoans into the neighborhood that would ultimately challenge the parish definition of community.



1.1. Edward Wakin and Father Joseph F. Scheuer, The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church (New York: New American Library, 1966), 114.

2. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.

3. Author interview with George Hendry.

4. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.

5. Author interview with George Hendry.

6. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.

7. Author interview with George Hendry.

8. Author interview with George Hendry.

9. "March Festivals," The Seraph, 10(2) (March 1952), 47.

10. Advertisements in The Seraph.

11. Evelyn Kitagawa and Karl E. Taeuber, ed. Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area 1960 (University of Chicago Press, 1963), 156.

12. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

13. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

14. Author interview with George Hendry.

15. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

16. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

17. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

18. Author interview with George Hendry.

19. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

20. "Thousands View St. Pat's Parade," Southtown Economist, 18 March 1953, 2.

21. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

22. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

23. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

24. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

25. "St. Patrick's Day Observed," Southtown Economist, 17 March 1954, 2.
26. Edward Gilbreth, "It Was a Great Day for All," Southtown Economist, 16 March 1955, 1.
27. Dorothy Davenport, "St. Pat Parade Today," Southtown Economist, 16 March 1958, 1.
28. Author interview with Nathalie Hagerty.
29. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
30. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
31. "St. Patrick's Day Parade," The Seraph, 13(2) (March 1955), 5.
32. "Shamrocks on Trinity Sunday," The Seraph, 14(5) (May 1956), 5.
33. Sister M. Dorine, O.P., "Chicago-Cincinnati-Layfayette-Rockford Unit," The Sinsinawa Dominican Education Conference Proceedings and Addresses, Third Triennial Meeting, 14 July 1955, Vol. 9, No. 1, 67. Sinsinawa Dominican Archives.
34. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
35. A Community of God and People, 29.
36. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 173-83.
37. The New World
38. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 180.
39. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 180.
40. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1940, ACA.
41. The Seraph, 9(12) (January 1952), 45.
42. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
43. Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports From the Age of Fold Game to the Age of Spectators (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 97-98.
44. Rev. Thomas S. McMahon, Father Tom Associate Priest (Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 81-2.
45. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.

46. McMahon Father Tom, 85, 102; Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon; St. Sabina Annual Report, 1939.
47. McMahon Father Tom, 85, 162; Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
48. McMahon, Father Tom, 139; Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
49. Author interview with Rev. Thomas McMahon.
50. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
51. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon; McMahon, Father Tom, 139; The Seraph, 7(11) (November 1949), 11; The Seraph, 8(12) (December 1950), 41.
52. The Seraph, 8(11) (December 1950), 39, 41.
53. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon; McMahon, Father Tom, 137-48; The Seraph, 7(11) (November 1949), 11.
54. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
55. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
56. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
57. McMahon, Father Tom, 121-2.
58. McMahon Father Tom, 87.
59. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
60. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
61. McMahon, Father Tom, 121.
62. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
63. Author interview with George Hendry.
64. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets, 6 October 1986.
65. Author interview with George Hendry.
66. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
67. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
68. Author interview with George Hendry.

69. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
70. McMahon, Father Tom, 121-2.
71. Merlin X. Mungovan, The Seraph, 9(10) (November 1951), 37.
72. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
73. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
74. McMahon, Father Tom, 162.
75. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
76. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
77. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
78. "Where Are They Dancing?" The Seraph, 14(2) (February 1956), 23.
79. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.
80. Author interview with Helen O'Connor.
81. Author interview with George Hendry.
82. Author interview with Rev. James Kill.
83. Author interview with Kate Clair.
84. The Seraph, 7(11) (November 1949) 39.
85. McMahon, Father Tom, 96-7.
86. McMahon, Father Tom, 97.
87. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
88. McMahon, Father Tom, 97-8.
89. McMahon, Father Tom, 102-3.
90. "Mr. & Mrs. Club," The Seraph, 7(10) (November 1949), 31.
91. "Young People's Club," The Seraph, 10(4) (May 1952), 3.
92. McMahon, Father Tom, 112-3; The Seraph, 12(5) (September 1954), 5-6; 10(6) (July 1952), 5-7; 9(8) (September 1951), 5-7.
93. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 178-9.

94. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
95. Marguerite Kane, "Scouting at St. Sabina," The Seraph, 9(12) (January 1952), 49.
96. "Girl Scouts, Brownie and Intermediate Scouts," The Seraph, 17(14) (March 1960), 11.
97. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
98. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
99. James R. Barrett, "Why Paddy Drank: The Social Importance of Whiskey in Pre-Famine Ireland," Journal of Popular Culture 11(1) (Summer 1977), 161/23.
100. Author interview with John O'Leary, 18 October 1987; also see Perry R. Duis, The Saloon Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston 1880-1920 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 152-3, 165, 168-9.
101. Duis, The Saloon, 153.
102. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
103. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
104. Barrett, "Why Paddy Drank," 162/24.
105. Kenneth Allsop, The Bootleggers The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1968), 45, 50-2, 55-6, 66, 77, 100, 145.
106. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
107. James T. Farrell, My Baseball Diary (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1957), 187-93; Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
108. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
109. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
110. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
111. Author interview with George Hendry.
112. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
113. Author interview with George Hendry.
114. Author interview with Rev. Thomas S. McMahon.

115. The Seraph, 9(11) (December 1951), 5.
116. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
117. Author interview with Helen O'connor.
118. Thomas Bender, Community and Social Change in America (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 5-10.
119. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke.
120. Bender, Community and Social Change in America, 43.
121. John Bodnar, The Transplanted A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Indiana University Press, 1985), xv-xxi.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TROUBLES

While the parish continued to be a vital force within the Irish-American community after World War II, external forces were at work to challenge it physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Due to the Great Migration, Chicago's black belt began to explode in population during these years. Many blacks began seeking homes in many traditionally all white neighborhoods and parishes. In addition, new ideas, partly brought on by this crisis and partly by American Catholicism's maturation, would challenge popular notions of Catholicism's role in parish communities. Some clergy and laity made tremendous efforts to broaden its vision beyond its traditional parameters while others clung to the old ways.

The black community in Chicago dates back to the city's earliest days. By the late 1840s fugitive slaves and freed blacks settled in the area. Like the Irish, they tended to live for the most part on the Southside and to a certain extent west of the downtown business district. However, during the nineteenth century their numbers remained small in comparison with the growing immigrant population. In 1860 blacks numbered only a thousand. By 1890 their numbers had

increased to fifteen thousand, which was only 1.3 percent of the total population.<sup>1</sup>

By the 1870s Illinois law guaranteed blacks certain basic civil rights such as the right to vote and the right to attend any school. By the 1880s public places were legally forbidden to discriminate against them. Initially, blacks were not residentially segregated. Like other ethnic groups, they tended to group themselves, but most lived in mixed neighborhoods. Black businessmen and professionals enjoyed social and economic good will in their relations with whites. Black leaders championed integration in all civic institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, the historical experience of blacks in Chicago would differ from other ethnic groups in several respects. Despite legal rights, blacks still faced greater discrimination in housing and employment than immigrants, although they had their problems, too. Public places were not always open to them regardless of the law. In a city that was growing so rapidly with scores of new industrial jobs, blacks were often barred from these new opportunities. While the Irish and other immigrants were able to take advantage of opportunities in the new growth enterprises of construction, transportation and industry, blacks had a much harder time getting these jobs. As long as there was a continuous supply of white immigrants, employers were reluctant to create strife in the workplace by hiring blacks. If they did employ them,



they were usually the last hired and the first fired; or blacks were hired as scabs, which further aggravated the antipathy of white workers. Many unions refused to admit blacks, while others segregated them in separate and subordinate locals and seldom took their needs seriously. Blacks did not fare much better in the civil service, an Irish preserve, although it was theoretically open to all. Where blacks did find employment was in domestic and personal service. There they were separated from the growing opportunities of the burgeoning metropolis.<sup>3</sup>

Another important factor that distinguished black experience from white ethnic experience in Chicago was that the black community became increasingly segregated from other groups while whites moved increasingly towards accommodation with one another. All newcomers to the city tended to live near their own kind, although some were more concentrated than others. However, no group was entirely isolated, including blacks. Within these mixed neighborhoods, though, were definite invisible lines drawn between groups. Hostility, tension, and suspicion characterized relations between the Irish, the Germans, the various east and south European groups.

Even within Catholic ranks were sharp and bitter divisions. Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley was not the only one to regard the influx of other immigrants into their domain like the barbarians descending on Ancient Rome. St. Gregory,

a German parish on Chicago's north side, described the arrival of the Irish after World War I thusly: "'The great influx of our Celtic parishioners was the finishing blow, of course, and the old ways were swept away by the new as St. Gregory grew and grew and grew.'"<sup>4</sup>

The demand for national parishes demonstrates the deep cleavages even between Catholics. Just within the neighborhood of Bridgeport, for example, which was only two miles long and a half a mile wide, were four territorial parishes (read Irish) and nine national churches.<sup>5</sup> The Chicago Tribune commented upon the relations between the Irish and the Germans, its original settlers.

Their characteristics are totally antagonistic, as much so as oil and water, and with a still further difference, that no agent is known which will cause their bases to coalesce and form a new substance.<sup>6</sup>

Even as late as the 1930s priests from different national parishes would cross the street rather than be forced to acknowledge each other.<sup>7</sup> Parents and priests often pressured their children to marry within their nationality group. One woman whose Irish mother grew up in a predominantly Italian neighborhood said she never forgot the intense loneliness and isolation of her childhood. She swore all Italians were connected to the mafia and continually warned her daughters never to marry one.<sup>8</sup>

In Cicero Roman Catholic Poles and Czechs were the dominant group. The first efforts of Protestants,

particularly not of these two groups, to reside in this suburb were greeted with suspicion. for years they were considered an "out group." There was not, however, any reported violence and their presence was tolerated if not welcomed.<sup>9</sup> In Berwyn where Bohemians predominated, resentment was directed against Irish and Italians. In 1927 Cardinal Mundelein established the parish of St. Odilo. In the 1950s an increasing number of Irish, Italians, Poles and Germans moved into the area. When Irish priests "took over" St. Odilo's, there were many protests, which led to some Irish families being forced to leave because of "unfriendly attitudes."<sup>10</sup>

The fiery crosses of the Ku Klux Klan greeted the establishment of a Catholic church in the posh, WASP community of Beverly Hills in the 1920s. Yet, although anti-Catholic sentiment remained strong for many years, it did not prevent the growth of St. Barnabas or any other Catholic parish in the community.<sup>11</sup> Priests in Back of the Yards eventually learned to work with each other in the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council and "mixed" marriages between other ethnic and religious groups became more and more common.<sup>12</sup> Even in middle class communities such as Auburn-Gresham institutional separation of religious groups persisted to a degree, but the boundaries could be quite porous as the intermarriage rate at St. Sabina's indicates.

While they did not always seek each other out nor were their relations always harmonious, ethnic groups gradually

grew more accommodating to each other, and they were able to take advantage of improved housing opportunities in new real estate developments. As the black population grew, on the other hand, white hostility mounted. On the eve of the First World War a black ghetto was taking definite shape. White hostility and clashes between the races made separate spheres appear to be the only peaceable solution to race relations. Even before the Great Migration, the color line had already been drawn in Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

World War I opened up new economic opportunities for blacks. Immigration was drastically reduced due the conflict, and American businesses faced labor shortages at a time when demand for productivity reached its height. Employers had no choice but to depend upon the home labor supply. Race and sex were no longer obstacles to employment. Labor agents began combing the South for job recruits for the steel mills, railroads, and stock yards. These new openings arose at the same time Southern agriculture collapsed. The lure of greater opportunities and the possibility of making a new life enticed many Southern blacks to the north. Northern fever rather than American fever met the manpower for America's industrial needs during the war.<sup>14</sup>

Blacks migrated to the industrial states of Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Michigan. Chicago, however, was the mecca for many black migrants. The Illinois Central

Railroad provided easy access to the city for blacks from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The terminus of the Illinois Central was on Chicago's Southside on 12th Street. There they found homes nearby in the increasingly congested black belt. Chicago was also renowned among blacks as the home of the Defender -- the most popular and outspoken champion of black America. Between 1916 and 1919 over 50,000 blacks came to Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

As time went on white resentment of blacks in Chicago did not diminish. It, in fact, increased as the migration of blacks from the south gained momentum during the years of the First World War. Whites responded by trying to impose upon them legal restrictions in housing, schools, and public accommodations. When unsuccessful at that, some resorted to violence. During these years a kind of guerilla warfare was waged against blacks. They were assaulted on the streets, playgrounds, and beaches and their homes were bombed. When servicemen returned from the war, the situation was aggravated by a shortage in housing and jobs in a recessionary economy.<sup>16</sup>

A full-scale riot occurred in the summer of 1919 when a black youth was stoned by whites and subsequently drowned on a beach for failing to respect the "imaginary" line whites had drawn to divide the races. When the police failed to make any arrests, some blacks attacked several white men. That night whites retaliated by beating, stabbing, or wounding any black they found in their districts. The rioting continued

throughout the Southside for the next week. While both sides committed the atrocities, it was the black community that suffered the most casualties. And the end result was to harden the lines of segregation in Chicago.<sup>17</sup>

Any chance for peaceful integration in Chicago was destroyed in 1919. The riot also confirmed for the black community of the importance of self-reliance and developing its own internal resources. After the Great Migration abated at the onset of the Great Depression, the black belt had very specific boundaries ranging from 22nd to 55th Streets and Wentworth Avenue to Cottage Grove. This area was more and more exclusively black where it once had enjoyed at least a modicum of racial mixture. Within this enclosed community blacks strove to reinforce their institutional bases and practically created a city within a city. Yet, poverty, inexperience and lack of financial resources hampered black establishments and economic bases for their community. It was a community thrust together by discrimination not choice, and remained dependent on the white world beyond its borders for services and goods.<sup>18</sup>

No other ethnic group was as restricted in their place in the city as blacks. Those who had achieved success were unable to move beyond the boundaries established for their race. Few housing agencies on the local and national level and slum reformers were interested in altering the status quo between the races. While demand for housing eased during

these decades, there was no marked difference in the housing situation in the black belt. However, with the slow-down of migration in the 1930s, while not content with the situation, blacks could at the very least make due with their circumscribed district.<sup>19</sup>

As there was very little pressure on the black belt's perimeters during the decades between the two World Wars, clashes between whites and blacks temporarily abated. By the Second World War, however, black migration resumed as wartime jobs once again lured black southerners to the north. By 1950 the black population reached 13.6 percent of Chicago's residents, and by 1960 it had grown to 22.9 percent. The black belt, with its aging and deteriorating housing, could no longer contain all the blacks who were forced to seek housing in it. In addition, many blacks were making more money. Poverty was no longer an obstacle to better housing. As middle class whites moved to the suburbs with the post-war housing boom, the black middle class was able to move into the areas they vacated. However, as the boundaries of the black belt expanded block by block, fear spread through many nearby white neighborhoods. In addition, in 1948 the Supreme Court had struck down the legality of restrictive covenants which were used by whites to protect their neighborhoods from "undesirable" residents. Racial hostility was once again being refueled.<sup>20</sup>

Previous practices and conventions that created the black belt in the first place only ensured that any realignment in its boundaries or efforts to break it up would be met with the same resentment and hostility. Compared with the racial explosions in the 1960s, race relations in the 1940s and 1950s seem to have been rather peaceful. However, Chicago was undergoing major population shifts that elicited racial conflict. Besides blacks Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Asians migrated to the city and joined veterans and their new families in searching for housing in a limited market. This volatile situation renewed guerilla warfare against blacks who tried to move behind their customary confines. Arnold Hirsch has called this period "an era of hidden violence." Violent acts against blacks by whites were widespread, yet hidden from the public eye by a conscious policy of the city.<sup>21</sup>

Racial succession from the black belt into contiguous areas rather than integration came to be the standard form of population transfer within Chicago. This practice was abetted by lending institutions and the real estate industry. Banks were loath to invest in mortgages in "threatened" neighborhoods to whites. It was difficult, then, for them to buy in the area. To attract whites, landlords and realtors lowered costs. Because their expectations for the neighborhood were also low, they were reluctant to invest in maintenance. These areas, then, began showing signs of deterioration before blacks even reached the area.<sup>22</sup>



Real estate speculators or "block busters" played a crucial role in this change over process. Some "panic peddlers" had no qualms about spreading rumors, fear, or harassing white homeowners about the prospect of having black neighbors. Other realtors tried to maintain some degree of "respectability" by not selling to blacks until the area was at least fifty percent black. Others used lower percentages. These brokers, though, stood to gain by the activities of less scrupulous realtors. Whites, though, who were too ashamed to sell to blacks and thereby "breaking" their neighborhood, were easy prey for these speculators. For fear of losing all the value of their home if blacks moved in, they would sell to a speculator at reduced market value, but higher than if they sold to blacks directly. Blacks, then, who were unable to obtain financing through conventional methods, went through these speculators to get money needed to purchase a home. They were generally forced to pay a much higher price than the speculator paid for the property. Although they only needed a small downpayment, monthly payments were very high. This left little money for maintenance and forced some to "double up" -- taking in more people to help meet the payments. Those blacks who rented in these newer areas also faced deteriorating buildings. Many apartments were converted into "kitchenettes" which overloaded the facilities or they were forced to pay higher rents which was not always put back into the building. The temptation to make money in changing

neighborhoods was great without having to be concerned for preserving the infrastructure. As these areas deteriorated, white fear of black property destruction was reinforced.<sup>23</sup>

This process of neighborhood succession seemed inevitable. However, after the war the federal government began to exert some pressure on cities to end segregated ghettos, and Mayor Edward Kelly tried to alleviate pressure in the black belt. The Chicago Housing Authority, under the direction of Elizabeth Wood, changed its housing program to provide scattered site housing for blacks as well as veterans. However, whites in outlying districts responded with violence, and white politicians brought the agency under the jurisdiction of the city council, thereby ending any integration hopes. By 1947 Kelly was gone and succeeded by Martin H. Kennelly as mayor. By 1954 Wood was fired for her liberal policies. The CHA stopped experimenting with progressive policies, and once again the status quo was not to be tampered with. Highrise public housing went up to keep the growing black population within its traditional confines. By 1960 Chicago had its second black ghetto. Although much larger than in 1919, the black belt was still solidly entrenched in the city's landscape.<sup>24</sup>

Blacks from the South, however, were not just moving into urban America, they were moving into the heartland of Catholic America. Catholics were not alone in their fear and resentment of blacks. Only wide-spread resentment of blacks

could have corralled them into such a compromised and subordinate position in the city's social, economic, and political structure. But they, at times, stood out as a major protagonist in the conflict over neighborhoods. Among Catholics the Irish often stood out as one of their worst tormentors.

In nineteenth century Chicago the Irish also were not highly regarded. They had arrived in America with the least amount of skills to offer an employer or apply to urban living of all immigrants in that time. Their lowly status and dependence on unskilled work made them more suspicious and resentful of black competition. As one former Chicagoan noted, "Nine-tenths of all immigrants from the Green Isle were at best adapted only to the commonest labor, and so came often not only in close contact, but even in direct competition with blacks, both bond and free."<sup>25</sup> Although, in 1864 the Chicago Tribune noted the same propensity among the Irish to resent blacks, saying "It is a little singular that no class of people in Chicago fear the competition of the handful of blacks here except the Irish,"<sup>26</sup> it had no understanding for trying circumstances the Irish were in. The paper, which had no love for the Irish, chastised the them by arguing that their experience should have made them sympathetic to the black plight saying:

The Irish are the most illogical people on the face of the earth. Of all nationalities they should be the strongest abolitionists. Possessing but little property, depending on their hands for support, having

but few skilled workmen among them, most of them being "raw laborers" they above all men have the deepest interest in making labor free and thereby honorable.<sup>27</sup>

But the Irish had little sympathy for the blacks. Although many thousands of Irishmen fought and died for the Union cause in the Civil War, some Irish had difficulty arousing enthusiasm for a war to free slaves when they considered themselves "wage slaves" in northern factories and had not won much empathy from social reformers to alleviate their plight. The class problem in Civil War Chicago is illustrated in the following account.

Whenever there was a notable Union victory, the North Side would burst spontaneously into a furor of enthusiasm, while matters down in the densely populated southwest region would be reduced to a mere simmer. But no sooner was there a Rebel victory than it was the turn of Bridgeport and its appanages to celebrate; and these demonstrations generally took the form of hunting down any poor colored brother who might have strayed inadvertently within those delectable precincts.<sup>28</sup>

The Chicago Irish were not unique in their mixed feelings about blacks and the war. Rioting broke out in New York in the summer of 1863 when a new wave of drafts was announced that would draw heavily from the Irish community there. Thousands of working men, already angered by blacks brought to the city as strikebreakers, took to the streets for four days. Several blacks were hung and a black orphanage was burned.<sup>29</sup>

It was estimated by the Illinois Commission of Human Relations that investigated the race riots of 1919, that

forty-one percent of the conflicts between whites and blacks occurred in the white neighborhoods around the stock yards. Athletic clubs from Bridgeport, including Richard J. Daley's club the Hamburgs, roamed streets looking for blacks to beat. They often formed the core of mob scenes.<sup>30</sup>

As the black belt expanded in the years after the Second World War, it moved west of State Street and then pushed south. By 1950 it had reached 71st Street. Halsted Street, which was now just blocks from the ghetto, had been the thoroughfare that the Irish had taken in their climb to the middle class. For blacks to move into neighborhoods west of Halsted meant confronting traditional foes.

During the week of November 7, 1949 a riot broke out at 56th and Peoria Street in Visitation parish. The American Civil Liberties Union of Chicago called this area "one of the most dangerous spots, potentially, in the human relations field in this city."<sup>31</sup> This traditionally Irish neighborhood was reputed to have been growing increasingly apprehensive as the black belt crept closer to its borders. Just a week before the riot a black family purchased a home in the area. When rumors of the sale reached the community, a meeting was held in the parish hall. A block organization was formed to try to "maintain the standards" of the community. Its activities were sanctioned by Visitation's pastor, Msgr. Daniel Byrnes, who had promised to buy property before blacks would have a chance to move in. The block organization

distributed signs for all to place in their windows which said, 'This property not for sale.' "This was to discourage letters coming into the parish offering to 'buy your property at any price.'"<sup>32</sup> The organizational network of this group made the spread of rumors quite easy.<sup>33</sup>

On October 15, 1949 a Jewish man by the name of Aaron Bindman moved into a house at 56th and Peoria Street which was in the boundaries of Visitation parish. He was the secretary-treasurer of a CIO local. On Tuesday November 8 he held a reception for his local which included some blacks. When ten to twelve blacks were seen entering the home, people immediately assumed the property was being shown to potential black buyers. "From this simple and harmless occasion," wrote the ACLU, "developed the most violent outbreak of anti-Negro, anti-Semitic feeling in the recent history of Chicago."<sup>34</sup>

As the rumor network went into action on Peoria Street, people began coming out onto their porches and front steps. At 10:30 pm the block captain was urged to knock on the door to find out what the situation was. Although Bindman explained the nature of the meeting, the block captain insisted that the blacks leave. Bindman refused and the police were called in. By that time a groups of fifty or sixty people were assembled outside the home hurling taunts and threats to the people inside. Although the priests at Visitation were alerted to the gathering, they made no attempt to quell the crowd. The police also made no effort to

disperse the crowd, many of which were their neighbors, but they did escort the blacks out of the building and neighborhood. That night there was no violence.<sup>35</sup>

On the next evening, however, a crowd nearing two hundred gathered outside Bindman's home. Again no attempt was made to disperse them by the fifteen policemen present as the mob shouted out abuses at the man inside. Some began to throw bricks, but no arrests were made. But besides racial fears, anti-Semitism began to pervade the throng. People began shouting insults such as "Let's have a neck tie party. Kill the sheenies. Lynch the Jews. Hitler didn't burn enough Jews -- let's finish the job."<sup>36</sup>

Many outsiders, particularly students from the University of Chicago, were drawn to the vicinity as news of the conflict spread throughout the Southside. Their presence only exacerbated the situation by encouraging locals to interpret the incident as part of a "communist plot" directed against their community.<sup>37</sup> A policeman explained to a reporter that "one batch were properly beaten because they were communists." When asked how he knew they were, he replied "Because they are Jews."<sup>38</sup>

Despite efforts by the ACLU and the Commission on Human Relations, Mayor Kennelly and the police commissioner took no action to reduce the tension. By Friday night the crowd numbered nearly four hundred and turned violent, not only against the Bindman home, but towards all "outsiders." Gangs

of youths began roaming through the streets looking for these "trouble makers." To identify them the youths asked "What parish are you from?" Not being from a parish, many University of Chicago students became victims. Since few blacks lived on this side of Halsted Street, gangs moved to the thoroughfare, pulled blacks off the streetcars and beat them and turned over any cars that blacks were driving. The police, many of whom lived in the neighborhood, were sympathetic to the mob. Violence continued on Saturday night. However, the police officer who had quelled a racial incident in Park Manor was assigned to Peoria Street. This action could not have come sooner as more militant members of the black community set out for Peoria Street to retaliate. Arrests were made and the crowd disbanded. By Monday morning fifty-four persons appeared in court to answer for their actions. Most of the case were eventually dropped because police practices in making arrests were less than exemplary, making prosecutions impossible.<sup>39</sup>

In the weeks after the Mayor and the police department were subject to increasing criticism by the human relations groups and the press. Their behavior in Englewood was more perplexing in light of another racial incident which received prompt police action. On the same night that the trouble started on Peoria Street, another crowd assembled at 74th and South Park (now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive) to demonstrate against a black family that was moving into a home in that



neighborhood. The police at the Grand Crossing station took immediate action and protected the black family.<sup>40</sup> Kennelly, considered a reformer, began to lose his prestige in liberal and black communities.

With these incidences and outbreaks of racial violence in Cicero, which was heavily Catholic, Catholics became increasingly notorious for the racial violence in Chicago during these years. An article in the Congress Weekly stated, "The Catholic Church, itself, appear to be continuing to foster the belief that a man has a right to determine who his neighbors will be."<sup>41</sup> In the South Deering Methodist Church's newsletter, which described the formation of a Ministerial Alliance of four Protestant ministers and a Jewish rabbi, their minister stated "We also continue to look to the day when the Roman Catholic church will take action locally toward ending the community tension, as the bulk of the problem lies with their constituency."<sup>42</sup>

However, many clergy and laity in the Catholic Church were very concerned with interracial justice and were not idly sitting by while these outbreaks occurred. In 1945 the first Catholic Interracial Council (CIC) was founded in Chicago. It was a lay organization not affiliated with the Archdiocese but recognized by it. The Council also had the invaluable assistance of Rev. Daniel Cantwell. Cantwell had been on the faculty of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary during the years Hillenbrand was there. He, too, became very dedicated to

social issues in race relations and labor issues and was a strong advocate of lay participation in the Church.<sup>43</sup>

"The biggest single social phenomenon and social crisis in Chicago," said John McDermott, a former director of CIC, "was the changing neighborhood...The process was chaotic and violent and disastrous...everyone went away feeling they had lost something of value...It was devastating many parishes...Blacks were embittered...It was not a pleasant experience to have people walk away from you as if you were a leper"<sup>44</sup>

Within this troubled situation the primary goal of the CIC was "to educate and mold public opinion, particularly the opinion of Catholics in matters calling for the application of the Catholic principles of interracial justice."<sup>45</sup> The CIC took as its mandate a statement by Pope Pius XII on "Human Solidarity" in which he said that racism was the outstanding heresy of the age. "Our motivation in the CIC must be directed by both natural and supernatural objectives in restoring the oneness of the human family."<sup>46</sup> Their aim to help end discrimination against minorities included employment, housing, education, schools, and hospitals. Their methods were to work through existing church organizations and create 'cells' in parishes, and to work with civic organizations and official agencies whenever they could provide assistance.<sup>47</sup> By 1949 CIC's meetings were attended by one hundred to 250 people of both races.<sup>48</sup>

When the riots broke out in Visitation at 56th and Peoria, at 71st and St. Lawrence and at 74th and South Park, which were both in St. Columbanus parish, along with riots at the Airport Homes and Fernwood, the CIC, much to their consternation, recognized that many of the rioters were Catholic. In February 1950 a CIC member wrote, "It is certainly true that the pastor in the Englewood area where the Peoria Street Riot occurred is not friendly to Negroes and is outspokenly on the side of racial segregation. Even the Cardinal hasn't been able to do anything about him."<sup>49</sup>

What was particularly troubling was that they found that most pastors were one with their people in their feelings about blacks. Priest schooled in the "brick and mortar" era of American Catholicism, naturally ended up putting undue emphasis on the buildings and community they had helped build. CIC sadly noted that pastors often took an economic view of the situation. They believed that if blacks moved into the parish, it would be "ruined." They "seem to base the success of the parish upon the bank balance," wrote a CIC member.<sup>50</sup> In Berwyn Father P.J. Buckley, pastor of St. Odilo's parish claimed that nine out of ten pastors there were more concerned with their property than with human values.<sup>51</sup> Many did not want to lose their fiefdoms.

The beliefs of the pastors and their people fed on each other. Pastors justified their positions by saying "My people hate the niggers," while parishioners were given the message

that it was alright to do so. "The official teaching of the Church was clear," said McDermott, "Pastors and priests, many of them knew better, but they also didn't like to see their parish falling apart. They hoped they wouldn't have to go somewhere else...And people were coming to them about heart-rending tales about what was happening and expecting the Church to be sympathetic."<sup>52</sup> The CIC sadly surmised that:

It seems that it has come to the point where Catholics believe our Church condones and approves segregation... Our people seem to think there is nothing wrong in hating, as such, and its outward expression -- mob violence. In fact, they seem to act as though it is a holy crusade, and their hate and spleen is not entirely against the Negro but is often anti-semitic.<sup>53</sup>

McDermott also pointed out that the process became associated not only with racial change but decline in physical and social standards. "This led a lot of white people to think it is perfectly reasonable to resist. They were resisting people who were going to tear down the neighborhood." For over twenty years the CIC tried to convince people that part of the reason for the problem was due to their panicking. "But when your sitting in a changing neighborhood, you don't want to hear about the whole picture. It sounds academic."<sup>54</sup>

Black Catholics were not any more warmly received in these parishes or in other Catholic institutions such as schools and hospitals than nonCatholic blacks. In fact, blacks were often outright barred admittance to churches, schools, and hospitals. White Protestants were permitted in

Catholic establishments. They too, however, at times felt unwelcomed. Some thought it necessary to lie about their religion to get better care in Catholic hospitals.<sup>55</sup>

The Chicago black Catholic population was quite small, but also unique in its experiences in the Church compared to other ethnic Catholics. In 1889 Rev. John Augustine Tolton, the American Catholic Church's first black priest, was appointed to organize St. Monica's parish at 36th and Dearborn as the first black Catholic church in Chicago. The small black Catholic community had previously been worshipping in the basement of Old St. Mary's at their own mass. They had asked to have their own parish even though they could attend other masses and churches. When the small congregation could not meet its expenses, the Catholic women of St. James and St. Elizabeth parishes held a fund raising bazaar for them. In 1924 St. Monica's was consolidated with St. Elizabeth's and became the center for black Catholic Chicago.<sup>56</sup>

When Archbishop Mundelein came to Chicago on the eve of the Great Migration, he designated St. Monica's as reserved exclusively for the black Catholic community. They were not, though, to be excluded from attending other parishes. St. Monica's appeared to be simply another 'national' parish. However, white territorial parish often exercised their prerogative to exclude blacks or treat them as second class citizens. If blacks wanted to be full-fledged members of a parish, they had to go to St. Monica's or St. Elizabeth's.<sup>57</sup>

Cardinal Stritch had also not made black Catholics a priority, let alone nonCatholic blacks. However, when racial conflict began brewing in his parishes after the second wave of black migration, he was called upon to declare the Church's position on the race issue. In 1946 he declared unequivocally to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations "that the Catholic Churches of this city are open to Catholics from all minority groups and that this held for the parochial schools attached to the parishes." He was also concerned that whites would not run from their neighborhoods "but instead would remain there and welcome these new community residents."<sup>58</sup> When Cicero exploded with riots, Stritch instructed all the pastors of that suburb to deliver sermons on the equality of all men and property rights.<sup>59</sup>

Not all parishes were as reactionary and hostile as Visitation. Old St. John's Church, where Father Waldron used to chase Irish ruffians with a blackthorn stick in the last century, turned its mission to serving the local black community. The pastor, Father William D. O'Brien, wrote the CIC of the positive things Old St. John's was doing for interracial justice. He said,

St. John's congregation consists of about twenty Negro families and not one White family within its borders, although there are perhaps a few score of White people who, in the good weather, come to Mass on Sunday...Cardinal Stritch, said that St. John's branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was the best in Chicago because your humble servant is personally taking care of its local needs.<sup>60</sup>

At St. Joachim's in Chatham Msgr. William H. Byron insisted his parishioners welcome blacks as their equals. In 1951 the parish school had eighty black pupils out of four hundred enrolled.<sup>61</sup> In 1950 the CIC claimed that at least fifty parishes were interracial on all levels.<sup>62</sup>

The Catholic Interracial Council was not the only organized Catholic effort to combat racism in Chicago. Friendship House also played a key role in helping the Catholic Church combat racism on the Southside. Friendship House was founded by the Baroness Catherine de Hueck, who was born in to the Russian aristocracy and plunged into poverty after the Bolshevik Revolution. After the war she and her husband found employment in Toronto where she began her first Friendship House. It was originally inspired by her experience with communism. If she could help the poor and unemployed, they would be less attracted to communism.<sup>63</sup>

Friendship House evolved into a Catholic Community Center similar to settlement houses except it was less bureaucratic and strongly religious. In the late 1930s de Hueck opened a Friendship House in Harlem, New York. While there, she saw not only the material deprivation of black people, but also their denial of basic human justice and love. From that time Friendship House's mission was to work for the advancement of blacks. Martin de Porres, a black saint, became the patron saint of the movement.<sup>64</sup>

De Hueck worked to get the Catholic hierarchy to make some statement on the question of racial justice. To this end she frequently corresponded with Bishop Sheil in Chicago. Sheil invited her to open a Friendship House in Chicago in St. Elizabeth's parish. By 1942 Chicago opened its House with seven staff workers and twenty volunteers. It later evolved to several hundred volunteers. Father Daniel Cantwell served as their chaplain. The people who made up the movement were convinced that ordinary people could improve society in small but profound ways. Their work involved direct assistance to the needy in the neighborhood; they tried to educate people both at the local level and the national on racial justice; and to engage in social action. They were interested in housing, political rights, employment, education, health care, recreation, and worship.<sup>65</sup>

With all a the effort being put forth by members of the Catholic community to deal with racial problems in Chicago, charges against the Church's failure to do so was a real affront to those involved. In 1953 the CIC wrote a letter to the Council Against Discrimination saying that they were "greatly disturbed by what appears to be a failure on the part of some CAD leadership to admit that Catholics have done anything positive."<sup>66</sup>

Changing attitudes in the chaotic and fear-ridden neighborhoods and parishes that were one by one being enveloped by the black belt was not an easy task. The pastor



of St. Sabina parish would give it a valiant try. The next chapter will explore St. Sabina's preparation for racial inroads.

1. Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago The Making of a Negro Ghetto 1890-1920 (University of Chicago Press, 1967), 5-6, 11; Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto, 116.
2. Spear, Black Chicago, 6-7.
3. Spear, Black Chicago, 29-38.
4. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 330.
5. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 65.
6. "Bridgeport," Chicago Tribune, 18 January 1864, 1.
7. Slayton, Back of the Yards, 146, 148.
8. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
9. William Gremley, "Social Control in Cicero," Catholic Interracial Council Papers, Box 2, File July-Sept. 1951, 38, 40, Chicago Historical Society.
10. Confidential Memorandum to the File Regarding Rev. P.J. Buckley, Pastor of St. Odilo, CIC Papers, 25 September 1951, CHS;  
Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 1027-8.
11. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 100.
12. Slayton, Back of the Yards.
13. Spear, Black Chicago, 91, 130.
14. Spear, Black Chicago, 131-3.
15. Spear, Black Chicago, 129, 139-40.
16. Spears, Black Chicago, 201-8.
17. Spear, Black Chicago, 214-7.
18. Spear, Black Chicago, 223-229.
19. Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto.
20. Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto, 4-29.
- ✓ 21. Hirsch, The Making of the Second Ghetto, 40-2; Historic City The Settlement of Chicago, (Dept. of Development and Planning, Chicago, 1976), 86-9.
- ✓ 22. Hirsch, The Making of the Second Ghetto, 31.

23.Hirsch, The Making of the Second Ghetto, 32-3, 34-5.

24.Hirsch, The Making of the Second Ghetto, 106-7, 213, 219, 229, 241-5, 253.

25.Frederick Francis Cook, Bygone Days in Chicago Recollections of the "Garden City" of the Sixties (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 7-8.

26."Mobbing Negroes," Chicago Tribune, 13 July 1864, 1.

27.Ibid.

28.Cook, Bygone Days in Chicago, 10.

29.John Cogley, Catholic America (Garden City: NY, Image Book, 1973), 51.

30.Mike Royko, Boss Richard J. Daley of Chicago (New York: New American Library, 1971), 36-7.

31.Report, American Civil Liberties Union -- Chicago Division, 25 November 1949, CIC Papers, CHS, 1.

32.Thomas E. Rook, Report, 17 November 1949, CIC Papers, 3.

33.Hirsch, The Second Ghetto, 7, 85.

34.Report, ACLU -- Chicago Division, CIC Papers.

35.Report, ACLU; Thomas E. Rook, Report, 1; CIC Papers.

36."Reveal 'Lily-White' Landlords Spurred Chicago Hate Riots," The Daily Compass, 21 November 1949, 4, in CIC Newsclipping File.

37.Report, ACLU, CIC Papers, 2.

38."Reveal 'Lily' White' Landlords Spurred Chicago Hate Riots," Daily Compass, 21 November 1949, 4.

39.Report, ACLU, 4; Thomas E. Rook, Report, 3; Byron S. Miller, "Chicago Jewry Learns a Lesson," Congress Weekly, 2 January 1950, 5, CIC Papers.

40.Report, ACLU, CIC Papers, 4.

41.Miller, "Chicago Jewry Learns a Lesson," 7.

42.South Deering Methodist Church Newsletter, Thanksgiving 1957, Box #20, CIC Papers.

43. Author interview with Msgr. Daniel Cantwell.
44. Author interview with John McDermott, Director of CIC from 1960 to 1968.
45. Report of the Organizational Committee, File 1932-45, Box #1, CIC Papers.
46. Minutes, CIC Board Meeting, 21 March 1945, Box #1, CIC Papers.
47. "The Sane and Decent Solution," Newsletter, March 1953, Box #4, CIC Papers.
48. "A Brief Report on Our Activities for the Year Past," Box #1, File April-Dec. 1949, CIC Papers.
49. Letter from Edward Marciniak, 4 February 1950, Box #1, Folder Jan.-July 1950, CIC Papers.
50. "A Brief Report on Our Activities for the Year Past," Box #1, File April-Dec. 1949, CIC Papers.
51. Confidential Memorandum to the File Regarding Rev. P.J. Buckley, Pastor, St. Odilo, 25 September 1951, CIC Papers, Box #2, File July-Sept. 1951.
52. Author interview with John McDermott.
53. "A Brief Report on Our Activities for the Year Past," CIC Papers, Box #1.
54. Author interview with John McDermott.
55. Author interview with Mary Kay McMahon, R.N.
56. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 245-9.
57. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 212-3.
58. "Commission Confers with Cardinal," Excerpts from Monthly Bulletin on Chicago Commission on Human Relations, CIC Papers, Box #1, File 1946-1947.
59. Confidential Memorandum from Rev. George Beemsterboer of St. Frances of Rome, CIC Papers, 13 September 1951, Box #2,
60. Letter to CIC from William D. O'Brien, Pastor, Old St. John's Church, CIC Papers, Box #20.
61. "Story of a Colorful Parish," CIC Papers, Box #2, File, undated items 1951.

62. Letter from Ed Marciniak, 4 February 1950, CIC Papers, Box #1, Folder Jan.-July 1950.

63. Elizabeth Louise Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning: A History of the Friendship House Movement, Ph.D. Dissert. Texas Tech University, 1977, 6,7, 42-6, 61.

64. Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning, 65, 121, 124.

65. Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning, 151, 292.

66. Letter to Thomas E. Colgan, Exec. Dir., Council Against Discrimination, From Lloyd Davis, Exec. Sec., CIC Papers, 2 November 1953, Box #4.

## CHAPTER VII

### MAKE NO SMALL PLANS

As the blackbelt moved further south and west after World War II, neighborhood after neighborhood succumbed to fear, hostility, panic peddling, varied amounts of violence, and ultimately to white flight. Confusion, division, bitterness, and resentment worked their way through succeeding neighborhoods and parishes. Religious groups often fought each other as they groped to find solutions for their disintegrating communities. It appeared as though nothing could halt the destructive process that physically and psychologically wounded people and communities.

However, Msgr. John McMahon who became pastor of St. Sabina in 1952 refused to submit to the idea that the presence of blacks led the death knell for a neighborhood. Msgr. McMahon represented a shift in the traditional view of the function of the parish. According to his vision the parish should aim to be more than a place to fill the complete needs of the individual. He hoped to offer a wider vision of the Church's role in society. He knew he needed to prepare his people for the inevitable day when Chicago's growing black population would begin looking for homes in St. Sabina's.<sup>1</sup>

Father McMahon had come from St. Charles Borromeo parish on 12th Street just west of Holy Family parish. During the late 1940s, blacks began moving into the area and their children began attending the parish school. However, compared to other parishes on the south and west sides, St. Charles managed to remain integrated for nearly twenty years.<sup>2</sup> When he was transferred to St. Sabina's, John McMahon was told that it, too, could expect to change racially, given the migrations that were taking place on the Southside. His theory was to prepare his people to deal with it and to slowly integrate so that the benefits of the community would not be destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

John McMahon was a tall, slim man graced with a gentle, spiritual nature and no athletic ability. His recreational pursuits were gardening and watching the young children romp on the playground he had installed outside the rectory dining room windows (except when they got into his periwinkles) than being part of the "jock" culture in the community center. Although he most likely did not understand "jock" Catholicism, he had no desire to disturb the popular activities taking place at the center. He could see that it was fulfilling a very important function by generating community spirit which could provide fertile ground for the direction he wanted to take his parishioners in. Msgr. McMahon regarded the St. Patrick's Day parade as good for civic pride rather than a celebration of being Irish.<sup>4</sup>

When he arrived in St. Sabina's, Father McMahon was impressed by the frenetic activities and devotions in his new parish. In July 1952 he wrote to his parishioners in The Seraph of his observations and impressions:

Foremost, he [the pastor] recognized immediately the amazing faith of his people. It shows itself in the vast numbers who attend Mass on Sunday and during the week, your frequenting the Confessional and Communion rail. It is so evident in the deep respect shown by the people one meets in the neighborhood.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, he also hinted that he would like to take the parish further.

With people so loyal can there be any limit in parish activity, in individual and community spiritual growth? What can stop us from making St. Sabina great in every way and most especially as a school for Catholic leadership?<sup>6</sup>

He immediately began to organize new parish groups, such as the Christian Family Movement, the Legion of Mary and Young Catholic Workers to begin laying the groundwork for his mission.

The introduction of these organizations brought St. Sabina's into a different current of Catholic social and spiritual thought. Since the nineteenth century Midwestern Catholicism established a more liberal reputation than its eastern variety. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Bishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota; John L. Spaulding, Bishop of Peoria, Illinois; and Archbishop John Keane of Dubuque, Iowa were staunch allies of James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore and spokesman for the Catholic hierarchy.



They recognized the unique opportunities for the Catholic Church in American society. They whole-heartedly endorsed the American system of separation of church and state -- an anathema to European Catholicism -- as the most conducive environment for religions to flourish. They were advocates of rapid Americanization of immigrants, and they did not view the modern world as hostilely as many of their counterparts. Catholicism, they believed, should be actively engaged in the social and economic problems of society. They also had a much more relaxed attitude towards Protestantism. In 1899, however, Pope Leo XIII condemned these "modernists" for the belief that the Catholic Church should adapt its teachings to the modern world.<sup>7</sup>

Although this generation of American Catholic leaders and their budding ideas of a new Catholic Church were silenced, the American Catholic experience that was so intimately tied with the immigrant experience and the urban lower and middle classes -- unlike their European counterparts -- and the American milieu of freedom and voluntarism would continually challenge Catholic leadership and throughout the twentieth century to reshape their Church's role in that society.

Cardinal Mundelein was considered the most liberal leader in the American Church of his day. In many respects, however, it was Mundelein's friendship with FDR and his subordinates Bishop Sheil, Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand and

others, who experimented with liberal programs, that gave the Chicago Archdiocese its reputation. Mundelein was always a sincere humanitarian who never lost his sympathy for the poor or the downtrodden. His approach to the social and economic concerns of his people was entirely pragmatic and non-ideological. Practicality, flexibility and common sense characterized his liberalism. The atmosphere he created within his archdiocese allowed the liberal inclinations of others to flourish.<sup>8</sup>

Sheil's social action, or Catholic Action, was not solely limited to CYO recreational programs. It also included shelter for the homeless and other social services. In 1943 he established the Sheil School of Social Studies to enlighten Catholics of the plight of the poor and persecuted and to provide adult education. However, Sheil's most notable and crucial involvement with social concerns came in 1939 when Back of the Yards neighborhood Council formed to create a liveable environment in "The Jungle."

The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council was organized by Saul Alinsky, a self-styled radical, and Joseph Meegan, an Irish Catholic school teacher. While not an official Catholic organization, the neighborhood it represented was nearly ninety percent Catholic. To be effective, the Back of the yards Council needed the Church's support. Bishop Sheil played an important behind-the-scenes role.

The neighborhood council could not effect substantial change in the neighborhood without improving working conditions and wages for the laborers in the meatpacking plants. It was here that Bishop Sheil played a key role by lending his and the Church's prestige to John L. Lewis's CIO. Workers and labor union organizers could not now be branded communists, and the Roosevelt administration was then able to keep negotiations going. Through Sheil's intervention labor unions and community organizing were given more respectability, and he acquired a national reputation as a Catholic liberal leader.<sup>9</sup>

Through all of Bishop Sheil's social activism ran a deep commitment to interracial justice. His commitment to blacks was not just theoretical. CYO activities welcomed all people, regardless of race or religion. And he opened a social center in St. Elizabeth's old high school to serve the Southside black community.<sup>10</sup>

Msgr. Hillenbrand, rector of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary and a contemporary of Bishop Sheil, developed a more intellectual type of Catholic social action than his more flamboyant colleague. Hillenbrand was inspired by papal encyclicals on the Christian response to modern economic and social problems, and by Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement, which sought to transform the world through the application of Christian values to modern society. It was introduced to Chicago in 1933.<sup>11</sup>

The technique that Hillenbrand and his followers adopted to achieve this were from the Jocist movement in Belgium, developed by Father Joseph Cardijn. The basic idea was to organize individuals of similar background into groups or cells to discuss social and economic problems that they encountered in their daily lives, interpret them in light of Christian values, and then try to find a way to correct it. This formula was called the inquiry method, which was simply to 'observe-judge-act.' While many people understood this method in theory, it came to the United States through a man experienced with its application. Louis Putz was a German Holy Cross priest who worked for four years with French youths in an industrial belt of Paris. The Second World War forced him to leave. His order gave him a post at the University of Notre Dame where he continued his work with students.<sup>12</sup>

In 1941, Msgr. Hillenbrand invited him to the seminary to speak to a group of deacons. He helped Hillenbrand teach his method to the Chicago Archdiocese through seminars, training sessions and a summer school program for seminarians, clergy, and laity. A whole generation of seminarians and laity were excited by this innovative approach. New organizations sprang up in areas ranging from liturgical reform to interracial justice. Father Daniel Cantwell and others formed the Catholic Interracial Council and the Catholic Labor Alliance. And various laity organized the Christian Family Movement (CFM), the Young Christian Workers

(YCW), and the Young Christian Students. the Chicago Archdiocese program had come to preview the spirit and teaching of Vatican II.<sup>13</sup>

Father McMahon had a rich base to call upon to help him begin his work in St. Sabina's. In 1945 St. Sabina parish had purchased some storefront properties on Racine Avenue across the street from the rectory and community center.<sup>14</sup> Father McMahon planned to use this separate facility for the new groups he introduced into the parish. He was assisted by two of Msgr. Hillenbrand's proteges, Rev. Jerome Riordan and Rev. James Mollohan. Although he was taught the traditional path to spirituality, John McMahon, much like Cardinal Mundelein, was very permissive towards his subordinates' experiments with new ways to serve and enrich his people.

Father Riordan had first been introduced to John McMahon at the summer school program at the seminary's summer villa in Clearwater Lake, Wisconsin. Father McMahon was the spiritual director the summer he was there. Although many of the young seminarians thought he was "a bit of an old lady," Jerome Riordan could see that Father McMahon was an "intensely spiritual person." In 1953 Father Riordan was transferred from St. Mel's on the west side to St. Sabina's. He recalled his first impressions of the parish. "It was the grandest example of [the old Church]. This was it in its acme of perfection," he explained. Yet, he was aware, like Father McMahon, that "A new day was coming." And John McMahon was

the type of pastor he had hoped to work for so he could implement his Hillenbrand-style of seminary instruction. He said of his new pastor, "He displayed a universal church mission, the one that I thought I was a part of, having come out of the seminary that Hillenbrand ran...We thought we were out to change the world."<sup>15</sup>

However, convincing his new parish of the importance of a new outlook was not easy. In some eyes, Father McMahon got off to a bad start. John McMahon had not received the title 'monsignor' until 1953. With Father Thomas McMahon still in residence, there were now two Father McMahons. Father Tom was, of course, the personification of St. Sabina parish and much loved. This situation caused some confusion at the rectory. Visitors would often ask to see Father McMahon. When asked "which one?" the reply would be "Our Father McMahon," meaning Father Tom. John McMahon, in some respects, "was going up hill against a legend."<sup>16</sup>

When Father Tom was suddenly transferred in August 1953 -- June was the usual month for priests to be moved -- to St. Mel's and Father Riordan was to move from there to St. Sabina's, people began speculating of "who did what to whom to cause this to happen." John McMahon seemed to be the likely villain, jealous of the other Father McMahon's popularity. The reason for the switch, however, was that the pastor at St. Mel's needed a first assistant and was told that Tom McMahon would be a good one. However, some people

continued to harbor suspicions of ulterior motives, which clouded John McMahon's beginning days. Resentment against him was compounded because he brought in his own secretary and let go the very well-liked woman in the parish who previously held the job.<sup>17</sup>

Although he was trained in the traditional model for parish priests, John McMahon's ideas and approach were a bit different from the more simple "people" philosophy and devotional Catholicism of parish life. Different enough to make some of the parishioners a bit wary of what he was trying to do. "He seemed to be kind of socially active," recalled J. Hagerty. "Trying to steer peoples' minds into some other area of thinking than what they had been used to."<sup>18</sup>

With Father Riordan's coming in 1953, Father McMahon transferred the duty of chaplain of the CFM chapter that he had started to him. Father Riordan actually began his work with St. Sabina's CFM group before he formally arrived in the parish. The morning he received the letter informing him of his transfer he received a call from Father McMahon. John McMahon wanted to welcome him to the parish and said he remembered him well from the seminary. He then explained that he was looking for a chaplain for the CFM chapter and had heard he was an expert on the subject. Father Riordan replied that he was "a theoretical expert on the subject." He had not done it yet. Father McMahon did not hesitate. He told him that the group was already formed and that they were having

a picnic at Palos Woods and it would be great if he went out to meet them. "That was the beginning of a very wonderful relationship," Father Riordan recalled. "We had thirty to forty families influenced by that."<sup>19</sup>

The Christian Family Movement was quite different in organization, membership, and format from traditional parish confraternities or sodalities. Men and women met together not only for spiritual enhancement or charitable work, but also to discuss social conditions and problems that impinged upon the family. Like the modernists of the last century, CFM did not reject the modern world, but sought to influence it and shape it in a way that was more in keeping with Christian values. It was also very much a lay directed organization. It began in Chicago in 1949 by couples influenced by Hillenbrand and Putz. They formed a national organization with Chicago serving as its headquarters. A coordinating committee was established to provide direction and cohesion to the various cells. By 1958, 30,000 couples in over two hundred cities and seven foreign countries had CFM cells.<sup>20</sup> Chicago, itself, had nearly three thousand couples.<sup>21</sup>

The introduction of CFM into American Catholicism marked a significant shift in its character. No longer was it predominantly a working class, urban, ethnic church dominated by the clergy. The new urban and suburban middle class laity independent of ethnic bonds was beginning to



acquire greater prominence in the Church.<sup>22</sup> CFM interpreted their work to be a part of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which the Church was a living body. Christ was the head and his followers were the members. Viewed in this manner, the laity had a great sense of responsibility. No longer could the individual relinquish their duties to the hierarchy, but must take action themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the 1950s CFM's focus was to encourage Christian values in the family, neighboring families, and on institutions affecting these. Although it was a family organization, a husband and wife's concerns were not to be limited just to each other and their family, and not even just to their parish, but also to their community and even their national and international communities. A family could not be well ordered if the world in which they had to engage in was not just and humane.<sup>24</sup>

CFM sections comprised six couples and a chaplain who met every two weeks. The first fifteen minutes of their gathering was spent on the gospel and the next fifteen on examining the liturgy or Mystical Body. This exercise prepared them for the remaining forty-five minutes which were spent on social inquiry. The topic for the section meeting was established by the national coordination committee. CFM prided itself on action not ideology. These sections were supposed to think up an action that could be done before they next met. Originally, they were supposed to be small actions

that could be accomplished within that time frame. For instance, how might they follow Jesus's teachings to clothe the naked within their own parish or neighborhood, which might result in a clothing drive. Baby-sitting services were established to help struggling young couples.<sup>25</sup>

CFM's very nature of looking to change the external world, however, inevitably led to broader social concerns. By 1960, the national goals had changed direction. Strictly family concerns were subordinated to broader social concerns. This philosophy forced CFMers to look beyond the confines of Catholic ghetto life.<sup>26</sup>

Besides several active CFM sections, St. Sabina's also started a YCW chapter in 1956 that was modeled according to the same basic idea as CFM. Its purpose was to bring young men and women together to talk about friendship, work, leisure, preparation for marriage, parish life, and neighborhood problems. They, too, searched for small, practical ways to become active for Christ in their parish and at their places of employment.<sup>27</sup> "Talk is converted into action. Practical projects are planned."<sup>28</sup>

Msgr. McMahon established his own spiritual development group, the Legion of Mary, which was more in keeping with his own style of spiritual enhancement. The Legion of Mary was an Irish spiritual movement. Members had a program to promote their own spiritual growth. Their meetings were intended to energize them to go out in an organized manner to perform

spiritual works of mercy. St. Sabina's came to have five groups of the Legion for different age groups and sexes. Their actions, though, mostly involved visiting people. Father Riordan also was chaplain for the young ladies' Legion group.<sup>29</sup>

As the black belt crept closer to 79th and Halsted through the 1950s, Msgr. McMahon realized that more practical and pragmatic things needed to be done to deal with the great challenge that his parish faced. In 1952 he encouraged the Holy Name Society to establish a neighborhood stabilizing committee.<sup>30</sup> The St. Sabina Credit Union was in large part of product of the Holy Name Society's stabilization committee. Through the next decade parishioners were encouraged to use credit funds to make improvements on the interior and exterior of their homes. These renovations were intended to maintain the appearance of the community so it would not look like it was declining.<sup>31</sup> In 1958 the Credit Union announced:

Parishioners of St. Sabina have always felt, and with pride, that they belong to the best parish in a neighborhood that is most desirable and appealing in the pursuit of happiness and spiritual development. Our pastor has worked hard and diligently to maintain the high caliber and correct standards of our community and parish, and we feel that this work should continue unabated for the good of all concerned...Attend to those nicks and dents before they turn into major repair jobs.<sup>32</sup>

By 1958 the women's Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women had added a civic committee to their organization. It followed the Christian Family Movement method. Among its

duties were to welcome new neighbors whether they were Catholic or non-Catholic, reporting need of physical improvement in the neighborhood, and to teach by work, example, and literature, the basic Christian principles of neighborliness.<sup>33</sup>

Msgr. McMahon became a frequent sight walking through the neighborhood with his dog checking for signs of neglect, deterioration or illegal use of buildings in his parish. And he cautioned his parish:

In our own neighborhood, there have been many "sneak" illegal conversions. The people who paid for the construction work, the construction company, and the neglectful neighbors -- all have a share in the wrongdoing. Illegal conversions in a fine neighborhood do not produce bad fruit immediately but what will happen in the future cannot be laid only at the doorstep of judges or future owners. Keeping up a neighborhood is everyone's responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

He also warned his people of being susceptible to gossip about what direction the neighborhood was going in.

Neighborhoods have been wrecked because of idle conversations in supermarkets, beauty parlors, taverns, or street corners...To start a rumor is criminal, to pass it on is no less so. To make a false judgement is wrong, to make it a part of conversatio is diabolic.<sup>35</sup>

On another occasion he wrote:

A wise person will not accept the opinion of a salesman or idle gossip particularly in regard to problems or a neighborhood. A charitable person will not spread rumors because he knows the great harm they cause... An interested person will consult with those who are responsible, those who are interested not in making "the easy buck" but in preserving the rights and good of a community.<sup>36</sup>

Yet all these attempts, he knew, would not adequately deal with the burgeoning black population on Chicago's southside. Their vast numbers and pressing need for good housing could easily destabilize the best of neighborhoods with the best of intentions. Msgr. McMahon was determined to maintain the integrity of his own parish, while graciously welcoming newcomers. To do this he realized he would need more help and great organization to combat real estate panic peddlers as well as fear and prejudice.

McMahon had been a member of the Archdiocesan Conservation Council since 1953. It was established by Samuel Cardinal Stritch to study the relationship between the Church and urban renewal and neighborhood preservation. Through his involvement in the Council, McMahon met Msgr. John J. Egan. Egan had been a student of Rev. Reynold Hillenbrand and a follower of Saul Alinsky, whom he met in 1954. In 1956 and 1957 Egan was trained by him at the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a school for community organizers. During these years, Egan studied the black housing situation in Southside neighborhoods. The deplorable conditions he found prompted him to write a report to Samuel Cardinal Stritch, who in turn asked him to be on the Archdiocesan Conservation Council that dealt with city and neighborhood problems. It was through the Conservation Council that Egan came to know Msgr. McMahon and his efforts to prepare his parish for integration. In 1959 he helped bring together Alinsky and

people from the southwest community to discuss the problems facing that area and to help them form a community organization.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE CREATION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SOUTHWEST COMMUNITIES

Many people in the Catholic Church did work hard to dispel the racist image it had acquired during the previous fifteen years, and played a prominent role in OSC's formation -- most notably Msgr. Egan. Peter Martinez said of Egan's role in OSC's birth, "He was the one doing all the talking between Alinsky and all the pastors...Jack had a lot of contacts with Protestants and a very ecumenical relationship. So he was instrumental in bringing in the Protestant and Catholic Churches together at the local level and was instrumental in the dialogue between Alinsky and those pastors."<sup>38</sup> When Albert Meyer became Archbishop of the Chicago Archdiocese in 1960 after Stritch's death, he lent his prestige to OSC by unequivocally endorsing the organization.<sup>39</sup> Meyer also censured white communities for failing to accept blacks of equal social and economic backgrounds.<sup>40</sup>

From the beginning Alinsky made it clear that he would have nothing to do with the Provisional Organization of the Southwest Community (POSC) unless it stood on the side of integration. Organizers were realistic enough to know that an effective community organization needed a wide base of support. Racists and moderates, as well as liberals, had to

be included. Yet, if they were going to include these people and stand for integration, leading activists knew they would have to be handle the situation with great delicacy if their organization was to get off the ground. Their strategy, therefore, was geared toward a pragmatic approach. Organizers were under no illusions that they could inspire anyone with talk of brotherly love. "The approach was hard-nosed," Peter Martinez explained. "The idea was to get everybody involved and to pull known racists into the organization...You had to keep all these people in the same arena...That way you'd get a very realistic perspective... [otherwise] the solutions that would come out of this would have a narrow basis of support. They would loose their credibility."<sup>41</sup>

Pragmatism played a major role in POSC's movement toward an integrationist position because "there was no power on earth that could prevent blacks from moving into those neighborhoods." Yet, he, like many others, hoped it would be able "to create a favorable climate" for discussion to educate and persuade people to accept blacks as equals.<sup>42</sup> POSC aimed to attract a variety of people into the organization by appealing to their self-interest rather than their idealism. Many in the community worried about the aging and obsolescence of neighborhood facilities and sought to keep the community viable. It was on this basis that Alinsky, IAF organizers, and local leaders were able to pull together an interim association. By May 25, 1959 three hundred leaders,

representing eighty community groups, established the Provisional Organization of the Southwest Community. Donald O'Toole, president of the Standard State Bank and chairman of POSC said:

We got together first because we were alarmed at the decline of city communities near us, and we had become aware of some disturbing evidences of decline in some parts of our community. So a few of us began to talk to each other. The original small handful grew into a large group that decided there'd been enough talk -- it was time for action--and the Provisional Organization for the Southwest Community was born.<sup>43</sup>

O'Toole also pointed out that the group aimed to maintain the high standards of the community, and not "try to stop the unstoppable." As the Chicago Daily News described their Solomon-like policy, "On that somewhat slippery rock, OSC stands."<sup>44</sup>

By the fall of 1959 POSC organizers were ready to present their program to the whole community. On a chilly, blustery Saturday afternoon in October they welcomed over 1000 people to Calumet High School. Among the assembled were church, civic and business organizations from the southwest side whose endorsement and support was crucial for the Organization of the Southwest Communities (OSC).<sup>45</sup>

From the beginning racists, liberals, and moderates vied for control of the fledgling organization. For ten hours delegates discussed and argued over the objectives of the new group. Egan estimated that this area supported at least twenty neighborhood protective associations. "They called



themselves conservation groups. They called themselves a development group. They called themselves neighborhood block clubs of one kind or another," explained Msgr. Egan. "But they had no other function in life except to keep black people out of the community."<sup>46</sup> Some people hoped to turn OSC into a full-scale protective association. Others felt they could not make a stand against integration but were fearful of the consequences to their community from racial change. Blacks had become associated in their minds with crime, slums, and declining property values. These people were interested in finding ways to maintain the quality of the area and keep neighborhoods stable.<sup>47</sup> Basic issues, such as boundaries for OSC, were hotly contested. The segregationists wanted the border to be gerrymandered to keep blacks out of the organization and, they hoped, out of the southwest community. Integrationists, notably the clergy, pressed for straight lines in defining the OSC area, this would lead to the inclusion of some black communities. To keep the organization from disintegrating before it even got off the ground, the Boundary Committee simply decided to just name communities rather than streets when determining OSC's area of operation.<sup>48</sup> Morgan Park, with its sizable black population, was thereby included. As a result, one observer optimistically commented that this was "the day the racists lost."<sup>49</sup>

Because of the sensitive nature of the issues, the diverse groups they had to organize, and the radical character

of their organizer, OSC was born and lived in controversy. "Back at this time," related Peter Martinez, a staff organizer for OSC, "anybody who even thought about creating a relationship between black and white came at it from a very liberal perspective."<sup>50</sup> Just bringing in Alinsky created a stir. "The mere mention of that name out there would be enough to excite [people]," Father Riordan, formerly of St. Sabina's explained. "That would be like putting a hand grenade in the parking lot and pulling the pin. Everyone would run for shelter."<sup>51</sup>

Alinsky's association with POSC created some image problems for the new organization among many Southwest siders.<sup>52</sup> In May 1959 Alinsky testified before the Chicago session of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and advocated a voluntary block quota for blacks moving into white areas. While he admitted that it was ironic for a Jew to favor quotas, he thought it was the only way to solve the racial stalemate in Southside neighborhoods.<sup>53</sup> Many people in the southwest community, who would rather see blacks remain together, thought a quota system was practically an open invitation to blacks to move in with them.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, blacks expressed no interest in any plan that limited their movement. As a consequence, they did not trust Alinsky either. The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, which he had helped organize in the late 1930s, had virtually become a

neighborhood protective association when blacks tried moving into the area in subsequent years.<sup>55</sup>

Because OSC tried to be open and pragmatic in its goals and methods, it invited open discussion in the organization. This made OSC's objectives appeared confusing to many outsiders. The Christian Century claimed that OSC was in reality a segregationist plot, and that racists were trying to manipulate and hoodwink the churches into supporting it. Some Lutheran pastors felt that Alinsky's method of appealing to self-interest was contrary to Christian tenets. They, too, were afraid that its true purpose was to maintain segregation, and they tried to curtail the involvement of other Protestant churches. While they could not do this, Lutherans did not participate in the organization.<sup>56</sup>

A Methodist congregation was also leery of OSC's purpose and goals. Rev. James M. Reed, associate pastor of Trinity Methodist Church, had been elected one of eleven vice presidents for OSC that fall. The pastoral committee of his church, however, felt his affiliation with OSC was embarrassing because it was not clear where the organization stood on integration. They asked Rev. Reed to resign or request a transfer to another church. He replied that he could not in good conscience do either. OSC president Donald O'Toole stepped in to clarify for the church members that OSC was against segregation. Sixteen local ministers issued a statement supporting Rev. Reed's position. However, the

Bishop of the Rock River Methodist Conference removed Reed from his post and sent him to a new church on Chicago's north side. While it initially seemed a major blow to the organization, Rev. Reed's courageous stand inspired other local churchmen to be even more adamant that OSC be on the side of integration.<sup>57</sup>

Right-wing groups also attacked OSC. In March 1960 Harry T. Everingham, a local resident and editor and publisher of the Free Enterprise and vice president of 'We, the People,' made charges at a meeting of the Civic Council of the Eighteenth Ward that the OSC was a tool of the Communist Party.<sup>58</sup> He had also distributed pamphlets before the first congress making the same accusations. He claimed that the "super civic organization, which seeks to impose its will over all neighborhood improvement organizations and other civic groups, was organized with the help of radicals and members of communist fronts," and that the clergymen in OSC were at best dupes and at worst "pinks" and left wingers. Everingham also believed that OSC favored forced integration. While he claimed not to be a bigot, Everingham maintained that mixing the races would only be possible after an extensive period of education and "moral training for the newcomers to the neighborhood."<sup>59</sup>

Msgr. McMahon of St. Sabina's and Msgr. Patrick J. Molloy of St. Leo's were both members of the 18th Ward Civic Council and present at the meeting when Everingham made his

offensive remarks. The two pastors immediately demanded a public apology from the council's president, John Owl, since Everingham's views of OSC had been no secret. The pastors felt Everingham had insulted them and their work. In a letter of protest to Mr. Owl, they wrote:

We condemn segregation, bigotry, and racism, disguised or undisguised, as being against the basic principles of religion and American democracy. As far as we are concerned, the major responsibility of the OSC is to safeguard the rights of all people regardless of race, creed or color. As Catholic priests, we are forbidden by the teachings of the Church, by the Holy Father himself, and by the Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago to take any other position than that of complete uncompromising and relentless opposition to men such as Mr. Everingham.<sup>60</sup>

Owl made a weak reply saying that the council had passed a motion to have speakers present various opinions of the new group. As far as McMahon and Molloy were concerned, however, Everingham had completely distorted the nature of the organization. They found Owl's response evasive and unsatisfactory and promptly resigned from the ward council.<sup>61</sup>

Two Protestant ministers rallied to McMahon's and Molloy's defense. Rev. Robert Christ, pastor of the Seventh Presbyterian church, and Rev. William Roberts, pastor of Calvary Methodist church, were also key leaders in OSC. They supported the monsignors' action, saying they were courageous and exposed Everingham's true objections to OSC -- that it was not a segregationist outfit.

With our Roman Catholic brethren we make common cause against every expression of racism, and we vow that the

Everinghams of the community shall neither intimidate nor silence the Christian church.<sup>62</sup>

McMahon agreed that Everingham was a racist "hiding under the robes of a crusader against communism." And he reaffirmed the common cause of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in the fight against racism and the lies spread against their work in OSC.<sup>63</sup> By April 20, the two monsignors received a formal apology from the 18th Ward Civic Council for their slanderous speaker.<sup>64</sup>

Alinsky did claim to be a reformed communist. However, his past or present political affiliations were of little interest to many involved in OSC's formation. As far as Cardinal Meyer and Msgr. Egan and others were concerned, Alinsky's style of organizing adhered to democratic principles and Christian morality.<sup>65</sup> However, in anticipating controversy, OSC officially terminated its relationship with Alinsky in August 1959 well before the first congress.<sup>66</sup> To show the absurdity of Alinsky's communism, some delegates wore signs at the congress labeling themselves "Reds."<sup>67</sup>

#### THE CHURCHES AND OSC

From its inception the local Protestant and Catholic churches played a key role in the founding of OSC and the shaping of its policy. The moral aspects of the race issue prompted most, but not necessarily all, of the clergy to be integrationists. "With few notable exceptions," Rev. Christ wrote, "the firm stands on integration have been taken by the

clergy rather than by business, social, political or traditional community leaders."<sup>68</sup> Joseph Chamberlain, an IAF organizer and the first staff director of OSC, claimed OSC would never have existed as a liberal organization without the churches, and perhaps might have turned into just another anti-black group.<sup>69</sup>

Churchmen, however, were not always satisfied with the responses of some of their colleagues. Protestant ministers complained that some of their co-religionists were myopic in their vision of the churches' challenge in the city, or that they were afraid of controversy and divisiveness in their congregation if they took a position on race.<sup>70</sup>

Not all Catholic priests were ardent integrationists either. "There were some Catholic priests who were notorious racists," P. Martinez said.<sup>71</sup> "St. Leo's went along," related Father Riordan, "but didn't know why. Msgr. Molloy...was just philosophically and internally incapable of dealing with the situation himself. When a black moved into part of St. Leo's, he [transferred] that block over to St. Carthage to the north. He just kept chopping off parts of his parish."<sup>72</sup> His advice to his parishioners was "If you don't move out, they can't get in."<sup>73</sup> However, Msgr. Molloy did play a prominent role in OSC. His main objective, though, was to keep the area stable and appealing to whites so they would stay in his parish. Msgr. Stephen McMahon, pastor of Little Flower parish, was very negative, too, in his approach to the issue. The extent of

his involvement was to advise his parishioners to keep up their houses and yards as a way to maintain the status quo. St. Brendan's had little interest in OSC, and the pastor of St. Justin Martyr's repeatedly put their OSC delegation in racist hands.<sup>74</sup>

The most notable racist Catholic priest was Father Francis X. Lawlor, an Augustinian who taught at St. Rita High School. Father Lawlor had formed his own civic group called the Better Communities Organization, which protested the proposed extension of the Englewood elevated train line west of Ashland for fear blacks would migrate along this line. He also organized block clubs along the periphery of the black belt and proposed an imaginary wall down Ashland to contain the black community to the east. He was quoted as saying, "'If the line can't be held at Ashland, Chicago is doomed.'" John Cardinal Cody finally ousted Lawlor from the Chicago Archdiocese in 1968 for his negative activities.<sup>75</sup>

Despite these problems, this religious alliance outmatched any other group or combination of groups. While only approximately fifteen churches provided significant leadership, those that were involved shaped OSC policy. They already had well-established congregations of people from which to draw workers and leaders, and they had existing networks for disseminating information. The churches were also able to supply most of the financial backing to adequately staff OSC.<sup>76</sup>



The churches' involvement in OSC often provoked hostility and resentment in the community. Many residents felt abandoned when their church took a stand on integration, seemingly to forsake its own people and their interests. A local political leader charged that the churches were undermining a community that took a life-time to build. The coalition of the religious faiths and their liberal stand brought charges of there being a "clerical steamroller." However, for others the churches' brave stand also led to admiration and a deepening of faith."<sup>77</sup>

#### CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS JOIN FORCES

Despite the necessity for interfaith cooperation, Protestants and Catholics did not have a history of working together. Peter Martinez explained that, "This was the first time that all these different churches worked together on a day to day basis on real problems, pooled money, talked about what was happening in their congregations...To be in this situation where all these people were talking together and actually treating each other as equal human beings was a remarkable situation."<sup>78</sup>

The seriousness and importance of this very basic human rights question was enough to encourage the two religious branches to close their distance. Rev. Robert Christ of the Seventh Presbyterian Church wrote, "We have seen the churches coming together -- rather driven together -- by the pressures

from the world...[This contact] was substantially the first relationship between clergy of the two faiths in Southwest Chicago."<sup>79</sup> It was important to clergymen on both sides to meet often in private to establish a working relationship so they could present a united front and provide strong leadership for OSC. Bickering and tension between the two religious groups could easily sabotage OSC's hopes for a stable community.<sup>80</sup> The Everingham affair illustrates the good will Protestants extended to their Catholic brethren to work toward this end. This move towards cooperation between religious groups was not unique to the local area. The national scope of the race problem the country faced during these years prompted Protestants, Catholics and Jews to meet formally on this issue. In January 1963, Chicago hosted the first National Conference on Religion and Race. The purpose was to discuss how the religions organizations could provide greater leadership in solving this national crisis. Race, then, not theology, was the issue which brought the major religions together at the discussion table for the first time in American history.<sup>81</sup> This historic gathering added to the optimism and excitement of those on the Southwest side working for neighborhood stability and good race relations.

The new working relationship between Catholics and Protestants, however, was not without its problems. Rev. Christ wrote that cooperation "developed with restraint and caution exercised by both parties."<sup>82</sup> In addition to the

strong leadership role they played in OSC, Catholics exceeded protestant congregations in contributions, prompting some protestants to suspiciously view OSC as a "Roman Catholic plot."<sup>83</sup> "There were Protestants who were worried that it would be a Catholic controlled organization," P. Martinez explained. Catholics "had all the big churches...They had major dollars that they were putting in...[and Protestants wondered] 'were they just being used as a front for a Catholic controlled organization?'"<sup>84</sup> OSC organizers initially played on this fear to get more Protestants in the organization. Organizers and Protestant leaders "worked for weeks on end to form an effective Protestant voice."<sup>85</sup>

Sensitive to this tension, OSC designed its constitution so as to balance these two power blocs. In the monthly council meetings each congregation was awarded one vote. Since Protestant churches outnumbered Catholic houses of worship two to one and a half, they could easily dominate these meetings. At the Annual Congress, however, delegates were allotted on the basis of how large a member group was. Catholic parishes were much larger than Protestant congregations and Catholics, therefore, outnumbered them there. It was also agreed that the Executive Committee would have a balanced ticket.<sup>86</sup>

However, even in 1963 after Catholics and Protestants were working together for four years, Protestant fears still persisted. Rev. Gordon Irvine of the Seventh Presbyterian

Church prepared a paper analyzing the OSC roll-call vote of the 1961 Congress "to discount the argument in some Protestant circles that the Catholic Church in the community organization is a monolithic, cohesive voting bloc." Because of the sensitive nature of the issue, the Catholic Archdiocesan Conservation Council was informed that this study was intended for very limited circulation so as not to reflect negatively on the Catholic churches involved, but more to dispel false notions among Protestants.<sup>87</sup> The evidence was conclusive that

In the three years of the OSC, the Catholics have shown neither the inclination nor the ability to do this. If the Catholics were to assume control of the OSC, it would result from Protestant default, apathy, and irresponsibility.<sup>88</sup>

Catholics and Protestants also had cultural differences, which made gathering together often tense. "Catholics were big and gregarious," related P. Martinez. "You could hustle-up large numbers of people...They were pragmatic, and they didn't have too much standing in their way about going after anything. The Protestants were much more scrupulous in their approach to any strategy, and always very wary about being overwhelmed by this large Catholic number." For instance, Catholics wanted to hold raffles to raise money for OSC. To many Protestants, raffles were a form of gambling, and this became a significant bone of contention in the organization. Catholics were successful at making raffles one method of fundraising. Protestant clergymen, however, talked extensively among themselves about what to do

about it. They, finally, decided to either buy a block of tickets or to make a contribution, but refused to sell the chances to their members.<sup>89</sup>

OSC meetings at various church halls also produced tension between Catholics and Protestants. The emotional nature of the issues under discussion often made meetings quite heated. At one of the Catholic 'smoke-filled' halls, if the meeting became heated, "that was no big deal. And if somebody got up and said 'You're a son of a bitch' or 'shit,' that was not outside of anybody's experience." And, of course, beer was also served along with coffee afterwards. "So you got the language, the liquor, the smoke when you went to the Catholic church. Now when you went to the Protestant churches -- whoa -- entirely different! Everybody's coming in uptight. There can't be any smoking in the basement of this church. If somebody let's out with one of those exclamations, the Protestants would tighten up and the pastor would have to say something about decorum. There was not going to be any beer served after the meeting."<sup>90</sup>

These minor irritations were for the most part overcome when people's focus was directed towards achieving similar ends. However, OSC not only had the black/white issue to tackle, but also the religious and subsequent social and cultural gulfs that had historically separated whites in the city.

Overall, it was an illuminating experience to work with members of the other faith. Rev. Christ wrote:

For Protestants it has opened cracks in our image of a monolithic Roman Church. We have seen first-hand that Roman parishes share many of the same problems of our congregations; we have been able to realistically evaluate the Catholic clergy and laymen. We have seen the potential strength in the city of a large denomination with a strategy and the staff and resources to implement that strategy.<sup>91</sup>

The two religious groups did not completely let down their guard or lose their competitiveness with each other though. Rev. Christ noticed that the churches began to compete in doing good. "Neither Protestant nor Catholic can permit the image to be created that the other group is the more concerned about the plight of the Negro."<sup>92</sup>

Getting black churches to participate in OSC was also a bit of a problem. Most did not come into the organization until 1961 and 1962. They faced many disadvantages in an organization so heavily influenced by major religious denominations. Generally speaking, most black congregations were Baptist and not very wealthy. Most could not afford to put in more than two to three hundred dollars per year towards OSC's operation, whereas some Catholic churches were giving five thousand dollars.<sup>93</sup> In 1960 St. Sabina's donated ten thousand dollars.<sup>94</sup> It was easy for small black congregations to feel overwhelmed. Yet, their involvement was important to OSC which wanted all parties working together towards common neighborhood concerns.

ST. SABINA'S AND OSC

Msgr. McMahon of St. Sabina's played a major role in forming OSC and pushing its constituents toward a liberal policy. According to many, Sabina's was the "heart of the Catholic communities' involvement and participation" in OSC.<sup>95</sup>

"Msgr. McMahon worked night and day with us to develop the OSC," Msgr. Egan recalled. "He was a very spiritual man and he detested evil. He felt that the gospel, the teaching of the Church, and also the best traditions of our land taught that every person has a dignity which comes from the fact that we are created. And, therefore, they are to be treated like every other person, like every other American, like every other Catholic. And I think this was the very simple philosophy and theology that motivated him week after week...In season and out of season."<sup>96</sup> McMahon was more modest

in stating his philosophy: "'Our goal is not to induce Negroes to move in or to force integration. But if they do move in, it is their right and they should be treated like anyone else.'"<sup>97</sup> McMahon also gave generously to OSC from the parish treasury. Between 1960 and 1965, he donated over \$91,000 to the neighborhood group for its operating costs. [See Table xv]<sup>98</sup>

Parishioners of St. Sabina were quite aware of the fact that a portion of their contributions were being diverted towards OSC but there does not seem to have been any resistance to this in the parish by withholding contributions.

Between 1958 and 1965 the number of families in St. Sabina's declined by thirty-six percent, [See Table XVII] yet the contributions during this period declined by twenty-two percent. Clearly the pastor continued to have the general support of his parishioners despite his somewhat unpopular stand.<sup>99</sup>

Many Catholic pastors in the area were also receptive to the effort towards stabilizing their parish neighborhoods.<sup>100</sup> Part of their concern stemmed from self-interest. "Some of them had as their idea to sort of 'build up the neighborhood,' clean up, paint up...and also keep the white people in the neighborhoods where they had their parishes."<sup>101</sup> If they left, Catholic churches would be left with large physical plants with no means for support or upkeep.

#### OSC'S PROGRAM

OSC's first years were filled with enthusiasm and optimism. People felt relieved that something was finally being done to constructively deal with neighborhood stability. "Lots and lots of people would tell you those were days when they were happy," related J. McDermott of CIC. "They were learning about issues. They were organizing. Meeting their neighbors. Protestant and Catholic churches were talking to each other, communicating...There was a euphoria in the neighborhood -- that it might be possible that we can stay!"<sup>102</sup>



The organizers of OSC were ambitious in constructing a battle plan for a stable neighborhood open to all races. By bringing in bankers, leading merchants, realtors and churches, OSC was able to marshall talent and resources. Three full-time staff employees handled the day to day business. OSC committees were intentionally mixed with blacks and whites, Protestants and Catholics, racists and integrationists. They were to keep their focus on community maintenance and improvement than talk of lofty ideals. Getting disparate people to work on particular issues, would, it was hoped, teach them that it was possible for different groups to work and even live together peaceably.<sup>103</sup> Some people who began as confirmed racists changed their views and even became good friends with members of the other race because of this strategy.<sup>104</sup>

OSC had its work cut out for it. Nearly eighty-five percent of the homes in the OSC area had been built before World War II. The population was aging, and because of redlining practices, few young, white families were moving in to the neighborhood. Young people were needed for the future; in St. Sabina's, however, "retiree" was the most frequently cited occupation.<sup>105</sup>

Father Riordan was keenly aware of the need to establish a new generation in the parish. When counseling young couples for marriage, he found that many wanted to stay in St. Sabina's, but these young people simply could not

afford to buy a home in the parish. "We were in a district that had a red line put around it," he explained. "That meant no mortgages longer than fifteen to twenty years because the real estate people thought that neighborhood wasn't going to be there in thirty years...That's how these people got out to Oak Lawn, because they'd give them the long-term mortgages out there."<sup>106</sup>

To combat this problem, OSC began its own home loan program. Since their area was considered risky, few mortgage lenders were willing to advance generous credit. New home buyers had to put forty to fifty percent cash down payment on a small home. This made new suburban homes, which required only ten percent down, more affordable. To keep the area vital and attractive to young married couples, three banks, the Standard State Bank, the Mutual National Bank, and the Amity Federal Savings and Loan, worked with OSC to devise a ten percent down home loan program. With the three banks pooling their assets, they created a two million dollar fund to provide low down payments on homes in the southwest community.<sup>107</sup> By January 1960, fifteen loans totaling \$102,000 were under contract.<sup>108</sup> At the same time the following year 127 mortgages had been obtained, mostly by newlyweds.<sup>109</sup> By the end of 1963, 457 loans had been made.<sup>110</sup>

Besides luring young couples back to the city, the low down-payment program had an unexpected effect of calming panic in the area. Donald O'Toole, president of the Standard State

Bank and OSC's first president, claimed that since they began their program, a large number of homes had been taken off the market. When owners realized that they had options to selling, they no longer felt compelled to sell.<sup>111</sup> O'Toole also maintained that people in the area no longer felt "abandoned" and were, therefore, more willing to "stick it out."<sup>112</sup>

Besides the initial success OSC had in stabilizing the housing market, the organization, according to staff organizer --Edward Chambers, also helped curb violence in the north section of their targeted area near the St. Leo area. Residents learned from OSC how to talk the issues over with their neighbors to help stop wholesale panic.<sup>113</sup>

At the forefront of its programs to stabilize the real estate market, OSC tried to normalize the supply and demand of housing by launching an "anti-blockbusting" campaign. The goals were to expose and prosecute real estate speculators who peddled fear, generated panic, and manipulated homeowners into selling at a loss.<sup>114</sup> OSC's real estate practices committee's first line of action was to distribute 25,000 copies of a 1959 Daily News series on the methods used by real estate speculators and panic peddlers. With the community educated, the real estate committee made itself available for complaints.<sup>115</sup>

The real estate committee helped facilitate the indictment and prosecution of two Southside real estate

salesmen by the States Attorney's Office. In November 1961 the Criminal Court sentenced them to prison for conspiring to cheat and defraud two families in a house deal in a changing neighborhood.<sup>116</sup> Their diligence also led to a real estate salesman receiving a thirty dollar fine for harassing two white homeowners who refused to sell their homes. OSC president Peter Fitzpatrick said that this was the first time a realtor had been convicted for such an offense in the city.<sup>117</sup>

OSC's committee also drew up a fair play code which set up guidelines to prevent pressured sales. Their chief object of attack were rumor-mongering speculators whose phone solicitations, at times in the middle of the night, frightened and manipulated homeowners into a panic sell. Their real estate code condemned solicitations on the basis of race, or advertising areas with the implication that there was a mass turn-over of real estate there. Repeated mass mailings, door-to-door canvassing, and the use of 'sold by' or 'serviced by' signs on front lawns were condemned. OSC invited all the local real estate agencies to join the group and adhere to these basic principles of real estate transaction.<sup>118</sup> They were able to get over thirty signatures of local real estate agents.<sup>119</sup>

OSC's get tough policies continued to embroil the group in controversy. Some Southsiders continued to complain about "radicalism and dictatorship."<sup>120</sup> In August 1960 Richard F.

Bukacek, chairman of the real estate committee was awakened in the early morning by a phone call. The voice at the other end threatened to put a bullet through his head if he and OSC continued their work. Bukacek bravely asserted that he was "not going to be frightened out of the neighborhood or out of OSC," and he was going to continue as chairman. He believed that the call came from local real estate operators.<sup>121</sup>

Another component of OSC's neighborhood maintenance program was the establishment of a housing and zoning committee that carefully monitored the condition of buildings in the neighborhoods. Illegal conversions, zoning variations and violations of the housing, fire, and health codes were to be reported to the organization which would then investigate the complaint. By the fall of 1960, O'Toole claimed that "hundreds of illegal conversions have been stopped -- the respect for code compliance and the law has been elevated, and hundreds of homes have been modernized."<sup>122</sup>

OSC also had a home remodeling program, offering low-interest loans, and sponsored panel discussions at various churches and civic institutions to encourage Southsiders to protect their neighborhoods from blight before it even arrived.<sup>123</sup> They offered helpful suggestions on the most attractive and economical ways to improve a home, and they encouraged the proper maintenance of property.<sup>124</sup> Local banks and savings and loan institutions claimed to be eager to make these loans because they would be lending to old, established

customers. Home improvements increased property values, which made the loan a sound investment for the bank and the community. In 1962, OSC claimed that through their assistance in obtaining financing, permits and designs, an average of thirty-seven remodeling jobs were started per month.<sup>125</sup> OSC also had a welfare and safety committee that looked into the problems of law enforcement, juvenile delinquency, public places and community safety.

#### OPEN OCCUPANCY CRISIS IN OSC

By the spring of 1961, OSC had progressed beyond its stated policies on integration to support open occupancy legislation that was pending in the Illinois General Assembly. In October 1960, the OSC congress in October 1960 directed the community relations committee that they were to communicate to city and state legislative bodies that OSC advocated the elimination of discriminatory housing practices. The committee took them at their word, and in the spring of 1961 sent letters to state legislators representing the Southwest area voicing their support for the open occupancy act. However, at the March council meeting a violent debate erupted over this action. Opponents of this initiative claimed that the committee did not have the authorization to speak for them. They claimed the act would entail a loss of individual constitutional rights of property owners. One opposing member warned, "'This could result in a split in OSC that will hurt

it severely. There is growing objection to the unethical tactics of the hard core group of integrationists.'" Several groups quit OSC when the committee refused to retract the letters of opinion. Msgr. McMahon visited each of the bolting groups to entreat them to return to the ranks but was unsuccessful.<sup>126</sup>

The open occupancy issue split the remaining members into two "parties" -- the moderate liberals and the medium forum as they called themselves -- a conservative faction. While the medium forum praised OSC's efforts on such things as blockbusting, they claimed OSC needed a more diverse voice on more delicate matters affecting the community.<sup>127</sup> Throughout the summer Msgr. McMahon worried that the medium forum would persuade other member groups to withdraw support from the liberals and put it out of business. He had little help from his fellow priests in dealing with this problem.<sup>128</sup>

By the fall of 1961, a floor fight was expected at the annual congress in November. For that day the Gresham police station assigned a detail of uniformed patrolmen. Male ushers were appointed, and a "fully equipped" first aid station was provided. On that day, delegates arrived early to caucus incoming uncommitted or opposing delegates on the issue. Conservative delegates, sporting Uncle Sam Hats, used "walkie talkies" to lobby representatives during the convention, and handed out mimeographed voting instructions.<sup>129</sup>

While open occupancy and integration were the immediate issues and threats to the organization, they were not the issues openly argued. Instead, members fought over a constitutional amendment that would favor a more liberal position. The original constitution stated that no officer could succeed himself in the same office for a third consecutive term. The proposed change sought to limit this restriction to the president, executive vice president, secretary and treasurer. The eleven vice presidents, who also made up the executive board, could remain in office indefinitely.<sup>130</sup> It was apparent to all involved that unless the rules were changed Msgr. McMahon, Msgr. Molloy and Rev. Christ, who had all served two terms already, would be ineligible for office. As founding members of OSC, they were key leaders in shaping the organization's liberal position on the race issue. While the conservatives claimed their opposition to the amendment change was based on "the principle of succession," they were really opposed to the continued leadership of these three men.<sup>131</sup>

To change the constitution the liberals needed a two thirds majority vote. The conservative effort kept the vote tally to only sixty-two percent, four percent short of the required majority. The liberal members of the congress, realizing what had happened, outmaneuvered the conservatives by electing Msgr. McMahon as executive vice president, Rev. Robert Christ as Secretary, and Msgr. Molloy as treasurer for



the ensuing year. They were later elected back to the vice presidency.<sup>132</sup>

Once the issue of officers was settled, the congress adopted an amendment to the 'freedom of residents resolution' from the previous congress. While the first amendment put OSC "four-square behind all the legislative efforts for freedom of residence for all people in our community, city, state and nation, regardless of race, creed, color and national origin," the amendment advised the OSC committee to study any bills and report their findings to the OSC council.<sup>133</sup> In the following year, some of the defecting neighborhood affiliates had a change of heart, while a few conservative groups pulled out of OSC because of their defeat.<sup>134</sup>

Msgr. McMahon had taken a strong leadership role in the Southwest side community on race and integration by playing a key role in the formation of OSC and in influencing its liberal course. OSC scored great success in its early years with its innovative programs. This gave the community a feeling of optimism and hope that they could stay in their neighborhoods and parishes, maintain the standards of the community, and live harmoniously with blacks who moved in.

The next chapter will explore how successful McMahon was at convincing his parishioners to support his efforts in OSC and in the parish.

1. John Fish, Gordon Nelson, Walter Stuhr, and Lawrence Witmer, The Edge of the Ghetto A Study of the Church Involvement in Community Organization (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966) 41; Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
2. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 1643.
3. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
4. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
5. "The Pastor's Page," The Seraph 10(6) (July 1952), 1.
6. Ibid.
7. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 308-15; Cogley, Catholic America, 174-8, 191-3.
8. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 203-8.
9. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 194-6.
10. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 191.
11. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 197-201; John Kotre, Simple Gifts The Lives of Pat and Patty Crowley (New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1979), 41-2.
12. Kotre, Simple Gifts, 39-41.
13. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 201; Kotre, Simple Gifts, 41-8.
14. St. Sabina Annual Report, 1945, ACA.
15. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
16. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
17. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
18. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
19. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
20. Jeffrey M. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," Working Paper Series, 11(2) (Spring 1982), Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, University of Notre Dame, 1-4, 6.
21. "Christian Family Movement," The Seraph (May 1956), 11.
22. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," 3-4.

23. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," 10.
24. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," 11-2.
25. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," 6-7, 10-1.
26. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," 9, 17, 31.
27. "Young Men Wanted," The Seraph (July 1956), 19.
28. "Opportunity," The Seraph 15(4) (April 1958), 17.
29. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
30. "The Holy Name Society," The Seraph 10(9) (October 1952), 21.
31. "St. Sabina Credit Union," The Seraph 10(10) (November 1952), 17.
32. "Credit Union and Parish Conservation," The Seraph 15(15) (May 1958), 17.
33. "St. Sabina Altar and Rosary Society," The Seraph 15(8) (August 1957), 21.
34. "Illegal Conversion," The Seraph 15(12) (February 1958), 23.
35. "Talk," The Seraph 15(5) (May 1957), 3.
36. "Truth," The Seraph 13(8) (September 1955), 3.
37. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan; The New World 6 September 1961, Sec. 2, 15.
38. Author interview with Peter Martinez, volunteer with OSC 1960-2, became staff organizer in 1962.
39. Harold Cross, "Cardinal Indorses Organization of Southwest Community," Southtown Economist, 17 January 1960, 1.
40. "Planned Dispersion' of Negroes," Chicago Daily News 6 May 1959.
41. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
42. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.
43. Donald O'Toole, "Why New Civic Group Was Formed," Southtown Economist 21 October 1959, 1.

44. M. W. Newman, "S.W. Side Neighborhood Works for Racial Peace," Chicago Daily News 1 September 1960.
45. "Southwest Community Congress Meets Saturday," Southtown Economist 21 October 1959, 1.
46. Author interview with Msgr. John Egan.
47. Fish et al The Edge of the Ghetto, 9.
48. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 11.
49. Stanley A. Koven, "The Day the Chicago Racists Lost," The Catholic World. Msgr. John J. Egan Papers, University of Notre Dame, Box 38, n.d., 313.
50. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
51. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
52. Letter to Edward Chambers, OSC, from Donald O'Toole, Egan Papers, Box 38.
53. Eric Lund, "Urges Negro Quota in White Areas Here," Chicago Daily News, 6 May 1959, 1.
54. M.W. Newman, "S.W. Side Neighborhood Works for Racial Peace," Chicago Daily News 1 September 1960, 1.
55. Author interview with John McDermott; A quota system was implemented in the western suburb of Oak Park. By the late 1960s and early seventies blacks from the Chicago neighborhood of Austin began moving into Oak Park. While fearful of what integration might bring, residents did not want their village to follow the Chicago pattern of white flight and decay. In 1968 the suburb adopted a fair-housing ordinance. However, its liberal impulses were curbed later by adopting a block exemption plan, whereby each block within the suburb was allowed a thirty percent ceiling on its black population. If any property owners who rented or sold to blacks once the thirty percent ceiling was attained, risked being fined up to \$1000. Blacks who were refused access to housing in an exempted area were referred to the Oak Park Housing Center to find accommodations elsewhere in the community. This practice has been repeatedly criticized for being discriminatory towards blacks by curtailing their right to freedom of movement. While a questionable practice, the exemption program has kept Oak Park a racially stable and integrated community. Chicago Historical Society Oak Park Neighborhood Clipping File, Wesley Hartzell, "Focus on Our Suburbs," Chicago Today, 4 January 1974; J. Madeleine Nash, Tribune Magazine 17 February 1974.

56. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 17.
57. Harold Cross, "Fate of Rev. Reed to Be Told Sunday," Southtown Economist, 6 January 1960, 1; Robert Christ, "The Local Church in a Community Organization," Egan Papers, 8.
58. "2 Priests Get Apology Over 'Pink' Charges," Chicago's American 19 April 1960.
59. "Everingham Tells His Side of Story," Southtown Economist 24 April 1960.
60. Harold Cross, "Msgrs. Quit Council," Southtown Economist 17 April 1960, 1.
61. "Msgrs. Quit Council," Southtown Economist 17 April 1960, 2.
62. Harold Cross, "Ministers Back Msgrs. in Dispute Over Speaker," Southtown Economist 27 April 1960, 1.
63. Ibid.
64. Harold Cross, "Monsignors Get Apology for Slur by Speaker," Southtown Economist 20 April 1960, 1.
65. "Msgrs. Blast Critic," Southtown Economist 8 May 1960, 1.
66. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 16.
67. Stanley A. Koven, "The Day the Chicago Racists Lost," The Catholic World, n.d. Egan Papers, 313.
68. Christ, "The Local Church," 11.
69. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 13.
70. Robert Christ, "The Local Church."
71. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
72. Interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
73. Author interview with Grace Benzig and Terrence O'Rourke.
74. Letter to Rt. Rev. Msgr. John Egan from Edward T. Chambers, Egan Papers, 18 October 1962.
75. Louise Ryan, "Father Lawlor Exiled," Southtown Economist 7 February 1968, 1; Bonnie Vinaccia and Louise Ryan, "'Fugitive' -- Fr. Lawlor," Southtown Economist 27 March 1968, 1.

76. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 13-4.
77. Christ, "The Local Church," 4, 17.
78. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
79. Robert Christ, "The Local Church," 9.
80. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 14.
81. "Religious Groups Plan Meet on Racial Problems," The New World 22 June 1962, 20; Interview with Msgr. Daniel Cantwell, August 1985.
82. Christ, "The Local Church," 10.
83. Christ, "The Local Church," 11.
84. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
85. Christ, "The Local Church," 9.
86. Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 14-5.
87. Letter from Rev. Robert Christ to Msgr. John Egan. 21 March 1963. Egan Papers. Box 38.
88. Christ, "The Local Church," 13.
89. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
90. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
91. Christ, "The Local Church," 12.
92. Christ, "The Local Church," 13.
93. Author interview with Peter Martinez.
94. St. Sabina Annual Report, 1960, ACA.
95. Author interview with John McDermott.
96. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.
97. M. W. Newman, "S.W. Side Neighborhood Works for Racial Peace," Chicago Daily News 1 September 1960.\_
98. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1960-1965, ACA.
99. Author interview with Robert McClory; St. Sabina Annual Reports 1958 to 1965, ACA.

100. Harold Cross, "Cardinal Indorses Organization for the Southwest Community," Southtown Economist, 17 January 1960, 1.

101. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.

102. Author interview with John McDermott.

103. Author interview with Peter Martinez.

104. Author interview with Irvin and Eileen Schultz.

67 St. Sabina Parish Census, 1957-1963; John Fish et al, The Edge of the Ghetto, 3, 12.

106. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.

107. Donald O'Toole, "Remarks on the Organization for the Southwest Community," 4 February 1960, Egan Papers.

108. Harold Cross, "Panic Sales of Homes at End Here," Southtown Economist 27 January 1960, 1.

109. "Flight to Suburbs Slowed, Says OSC," Southtown Economist 8 January 1961, 1.

110. "OSC Home Loans Mark Fourth Year," Southtown Economist 25 December 1963, 1.

111. "Panic Sales of Homes at End Here," Southtown Economist 27 January 1960, 1.

112. "Experiment, O'Toole Tells OSC," Southtown Economist 30 October 1960, 1.

113. M. W. Newman, "What Happens When White Neighbors Refuse to Panic," Chicago Daily News 3 September 1960.

114. "Panic Sales of Homes End Here," Southtown Economist 27 January 1960, 1.

115. M. W. Newman, "S.W. Side Gets Tough in War on Panic Peddlers," Chicago Daily News 2 September 1960; "OSC Will Continue 'War' on Blockbuster Tactics," Southtown Economist 13 July 1960, 1.

116. Harold Cross, "2 Get Fraud Sentences," Southtown Economist 12 November 1961, 1.

117. Harold Cross, "Blockbuster Fined," Southtown Economist 29 July 1962, 1.

118. "Blockbusting is Prime Target of OSC Committee," Southtown Economist 20 March 1960, 1; "OSC Spring Goal: End Blockbusting," Southtown Economist 3 April 1963, 1.

119. Newman, "S.W. Side Gets Tough in War on Panic Peddlers," Chicago Daily News 2 September 1960, 1.

120. Newman, "S.W. Side Gets Tough," 1.

121. Harold Cross, "Threaten Civic Leader," Southtown Economist 7 August 1960, 1.

122. "Experiment, O'Toole Tells OSC," Southtown Economist 30 October 1960, 1.

123. Wm. Arthur Rogers, "Home Funds Available," Southtown Economist, 25 May 1960, 1.

124. Donald O'Toole, "Remarks on the Organization for the Southwest Community," 4 February 1960, Egan Papers.

125. "OSC Reports Rise in Remodeling," Southtown Economist, 15 August 1962, 1.

126. Harold Cross, "OSC Rows Over Issue," Southtown Economist 19 March 1961, 1; "Quit S.W. Side Group in Open Occupancy Row," Southtown Economist 3 March 1961, 1; "Monsignor: 'Come Back Highland,'" 30 March 1961, 1.

127. Harold Cross, "See OSC Floor Fight," Southtown Economist 5 November 1961, 1.

128. "Memorandum for File," Egan Papers, 25 August 1962.

129. Harold Cross, "Congress 'Duel' Looms," Southtown Economist 1 November 1961, 1; Rev. Gordon Irvine, "Analysis of the Roll Call Vote on a Constitutional Change at the Third Annual Congress of the Organization for the Southwest Community," Egan Papers, May 1963.

130. Harold Cross, "OSC Election Upset," Southtown Economist 8 November 1961, 1, 6; Irvine, "Analysis of the Roll Call Vote," 2-4.

131. Irvine, "Analysis of the Roll Call Vote, 3.

132. Cross, "OSC Election Upset, 6; Irvine, "An Analysis of the Roll Call Vote, 3.

133. Cross, "OSC Election Upset," 6.



134. Irvine, "An Analysis of the Roll Call Vote," 4; Harold Cross, "Threaten Bolt From OSC Ranks," Southtown Economist, 24 June 1962, 1; "Highland C.C. Rejoins OSC," Southtown Economist 29 October 1962, 1.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

Besides trying to maintain the physical standards and integrity of the community through OSC, Msgr. McMahon sought to instill in his parishioners attitudes of respect toward and acceptance of black neighbors. Persuading them of his philosophy of openness and tolerance proved no easy task. R. McClory, who served as an assistant priest at St. Sabina's in the 1960s, recalled his impressions of the parish as it faced racial inroads. "It was a classic Irish ghetto which saw itself as under threat," he said. "When I got there in 1963, the black movement was right at the border. There was one black family that lived in the parish at that time. So it was like the barbarians are at our border! The Huns are at the wall! -- kind of experience. The sense of wondering what is going to happen...The fundamental attitude was one of fear, mixed with some degree of racism, but not vehemently. They were afraid that they were going to lose the value of their house, and they're going to have to move."<sup>1</sup>

Negative attitudes towards blacks had been passed on from one generation to the next, from neighborhood to neighborhood, and parish to parish. "I remember as a kid [1920s]," said T. O'Rourke, "I'd get in the car with my mother

and we'd drive down to St. Elizabeth's -- that was all black. And she'd always shake her head and say about her old neighborhood, 'Look at it now.' And, of course, that was probably making a big impression on me. They didn't like what they saw. And they'd read about all these things that go on...Even now when you read about crime, it's always happening at 7917 Bishop or 8000 Bishop -- houses that we were in and out of, friends and neighbors, and we can't image what's going on in there...And that's what they were reading about the old neighborhoods."<sup>2</sup>

City jobs often took parishioners into black neighborhoods. From their casual viewpoint, they gathered unflattering opinions of blacks. Father Daniel Sullivan, who came to St. Sabina's in 1965, had heard many stories from parishioners of the problems firemen and policemen had in performing their jobs in the black belt. "So many of the ordinary parishioners were policemen and firemen and utility men, street car people," he related. "And [they] had injurious associations with some blacks, the personal experiences, the caricatures. The baggage all of us were carrying was so different."<sup>3</sup>

T. O'Rourke remembered the race riot in 1919 and the effect it had on city employees in the parish. "I remember the policemen in the neighborhood getting upset. My father...was a motorman in a streetcar...on the 59th Street line and he told about a black man that got in at his feet to

be protected to get through a white couple of blocks. If the white lads saw him sitting in the street car, they'd throw rocks at him. So we knew about a lot of that and I think that's another reason that we didn't want them around, was that there'd be trouble."<sup>4</sup> Some policemen believed that the blacks that initially moved into white neighborhoods were often all right, but claimed it was the relatives and friends who visited that caused problems.<sup>5</sup>

Another complaint Catholics voiced against blacks was that they did not keep up their parishes. Most blacks who moved into white neighborhoods were not Catholic. This left the burden of supporting the parish on the few blacks that were. Their modest resources could not always adequately support the monstrous physical plant white Catholics left behind.<sup>6</sup> In addition, "People said that the blacks don't get involved in [parish] organizations," D. Foertsch. "We stereotyped them."<sup>7</sup>

Some people recognized that part of their resistance to blacks was rooted in their own clannishness and isolation. "I never had to think about a black person," D. Foertsch explained. "I knew they were around. I knew they shoveled the coal in right under my dining room window...So I was in my own ghetto and very protected."<sup>8</sup>

Resentment of blacks was compounded by those who had uprooted themselves before. "There are plenty of people who are bitter years later because...they have been uprooted two

or three times," explained M. Dunne. "They've been burned some place else."<sup>9</sup>

Migration patterns on Chicago's Southside reveal the reluctance of many Irish and Catholics to completely abandon a parish-based neighborhood. By examining the parishes of baptism of children making their First Communion in St. Sabina's, a profile of Catholic migration in the Southwest area of Chicago can be obtained. [See Table XIV] Since the children were baptized seven years earlier, their families would have recently moved from their old parishes to St. Sabina's. The number of families who left changing neighborhoods can be ascertained by comparing the locations of their former parishes to the advancement of the black belt. Twenty-three percent of these families in St. Sabina's had left a transitional neighborhood.<sup>10</sup>

"I used to think," M. Joyce said, "If they really want to get away, why don't they really make a big jump...Why didn't they go far out? But that just seemed to be the tendency...They came from St. Carthage to Leo, then from Leo to St. Sabina, then from St. Sabina to Little Flower. That's the way they'd jump, saying they were chased out!"<sup>11</sup>

Part of Southside Irish parish-hopping was based on the mistaken assumption that the black population would not increase nor would blacks want to move outside their 'own' area. "They thought it would stop at their borders," explained R. McClory. "It was a most unrealistic kind of

thinking."<sup>12</sup> "We thought...that Sabina's would never go black," said T. O'Rourke. "We thought that the blacks had always moved to State Street, Michigan Avenue, South Park [King Drive]. And they always said they wanted to be near the elevated and buses. We said that about them. And we thought they'd never come west of State Street...We thought we were safe."<sup>13</sup> The 'no man's land' between the black belt and the white Southside, however, kept creeping further and further west. For a time State Street was the demarcation line, later it became Halsted Street, then Ashland Avenue to where now it rests tenuously on Western Avenue.

The experiences and attitudes his parishioners inherited and acquired made it difficult for Msgr. McMahon and others to persuade St. Sabina parishioners to adopt a more generous and tolerant attitude towards blacks. "They would have thought letting the 'Eyetalians' in was the height of integration," related Father Riordan.<sup>14</sup> Many were dubious of the arguments that blacks, like the Irish, were simply trying to better their lives for themselves and their families. "I don't think they bought that," said T. O'Rourke. "They didn't like what they saw...These stories about the blacks don't keep up their property and all that. We'd see that going down on the el...When whites were there, it was an old neighborhood, but a good neighborhood. And then [blacks] took it over and it was burned out...They were ghettos right away."<sup>15</sup>

"The general notion was that they were not up to snuff," explained J. Hagerty. "It was a general fear of them...something you were raised up with some how. It was never any big issue in our house, but it was something that you just sort of knew -- Well, blacks are fine but they should stay by themselves."<sup>16</sup>

To combat these attitudes, Msgr. McMahon's strategy was to help whites maintain level heads in the midst of panic peddling by continually reminding them of the strengths and benefits of their present community. He wrote:

You have one of the best neighborhoods in Chicago and never question that. You have facilities for your spiritual development for the education of your children, for their physical development and your own recreation which are equalled by few parishes in the Archdiocese. The tuition in your school is by far the lowest in the Diocese, the teaching staff, the buildings, etc., are the best. There are no double shifts, no huge building programs, no call for extra ordinary sacrifice to put up new buildings.<sup>17</sup> Count your blessings and realize that many neighborhoods have bigger problems and the newer parishes and suburban areas do have, and will have, the same problems.<sup>18</sup>

Msgr. McMahon's approach was generally low-keyed. While he wrote of OSC in The Seraph and spoke on it occasionally from the pulpit, it was mostly through conversation and by example that he sought to influence his flock. His role, as he saw it, and that of the other priests, was to be of personal service in dealing with problems arising in the neighborhood. He said:

The priests are at your beck and call to help you squash any rumors and to advise you on any changes which might take place in your particular neighborhood.<sup>19</sup> Remember that it is to the advantage of certain

salesmen to spread rumors, to scare you, to make you emotionally upset. They feel that the lie that they tell you will be spread by you and others to their financial advantage. You owe it to yourself and to your neighbors to demand proof from everyone for any statement affecting the neighborhood.<sup>20</sup>

For the most part, McMahon kept the issue on a very simple, spiritual plain. "He was low-keyed about everything," explained M. Dunne. "He was a very mild mannered man. You would not think from his personality that he would have been into this...he tried to keep it on a spiritual level." She could not even recall him speaking about the racial situation from the pulpit.<sup>21</sup>

While they were a bit skeptical of OSC's policies and ability to maintain the community, parishioners did not try to interfere or stop the involvement of the parish in the organization. "People would say antagonistic things," recalled R. McClory. "But on the whole people would just sit there [in church] and they would contribute...They knew their contributions were going to OSC. There was no boycott of collections. And a lot of people would say, 'I don't like it, but I suppose that's the way we ought to be.'"<sup>22</sup>

Many people, though, had conflicting views of what exactly were Msgr. McMahon's goals and motives were. "I think he was trying to preserve his parish," T. O'Rourke argued. "He would like it not to turn over night."<sup>23</sup> Others were a bit more cynical, believing egoism played a role. "In the back



of his mind, he thought he was going to have the first parish that was integrated," B. DesChatelets reflected.<sup>24</sup>

Many parishioners resented his efforts to welcome blacks. "When a black family would move in, he would make a special point to go visit them and welcome them...but he wouldn't even say 'hi' to the white family next door," complained B. DesChatelets.<sup>25</sup> When the first blacks came to the school, the pastor...would take them up into the classroom for the first time and welcome them into the neighborhood," concurred T. O'Rourke. "A lot of Irish resented that. They said 'nobody welcomed my child when they came here.' Well, of course, they didn't have to be, but they were very critical of the pastor for that."<sup>26</sup>

R. McClory recalled an incident in which Msgr. McMahon did more than say 'hello.' He showed his irritation at the reluctance of whites to follow his example. "When the first black people moved into the block on Carpenter Street...McMahon went down to welcome them," he said. "It was a summer day and people were out on their porches looking to see what was going on. And McMahon shouted 'Come on out everybody. Welcome your new neighbors!'" McClory said he often heard complaints that McMahon was nicer to blacks than whites. But McMahon realized he needed to put out the extra effort for blacks, whereas whites were already Catholics -- "paying parishioners."<sup>27</sup>

Others, though, were very moved by the examples this frail, sometimes cantankerous, old priest set for them. "It was because of Monsignor's teaching rather than his preaching," D. Foertsch claimed that inspired her. She had to admit that part of this was due to his unintelligible sermons. "You knew if he was going to say mass that the homily would drag on and as hard as you tried you would not get a thing out of it...It would always start out and end up with the Legion of Mary. But that was okay, [it was] his example...Whenever I think of him, I think of the word 'humility'. He was like Jesus."<sup>28</sup> "I can't recall him making any grandiose statement of any kind about it," reflected M. Joyce. "He was just being a pastor for his flock."<sup>29</sup> Because of his example, G. Benzig attended mass at St. Sabina's and sent her children to the school although she lived in St. Leo's parish. She often thought, like many people, as she watched him walk through the streets with Champ his dog, that he was a saintly man.<sup>30</sup>

However, many resisted hearing his message. "Many people never forgave Monsignor because he taught us," said Dee Foertsch. "I say taught because I never had to use tolerance. I learned from Monsignor...through conversations with him or going to organizations, to accept people and judge them for themselves...I was learning...and other people were putting a wall up, saying 'Don't penetrate that. I do not want to be tolerant. I don't want to live with them. I want

things to always be the way they are'...The first ones to move were the first ones that didn't want to hear it at all."<sup>31</sup>

Msgr. McMahon's and OSC's efforts did have a stabilizing effect on the parish. Although people were leery about the prospects of sharing a neighborhood with blacks, most people in St. Sabina's did not begin a wholesale panic when the first black families began to move in to the parish. In 1963 and 1964 "the real estate men were making their rounds through the parish, panic peddling," explained R. McClory. "They were moving through the parish ringing doorbells and leafletting. There was a great sense of unease...Life went on anyhow...There was no sense that things were different."<sup>32</sup> The nuns in the school reported the same cool attitude towards integration. They wrote to their mother house:

Our school was integrated racially with the coming of the king family of 4 children in December. Three other families came soon after. On the whole the children were accepted very well.<sup>33</sup>

Msgr. McMahon recruited many volunteers for OSC from the various parish organizations he helped establish at St. Sabina's in the previous decade. "There were a large number, maybe twenty-five or thirty people in the parish," said R. McClory, who thought "there was no reason why this [parish] should not be an integrated community. A lot of these people worked with OSC."<sup>34</sup>

St. Sabina's Christian Family Movement chapter stood out in its willingness to face the racial question head on.<sup>35</sup>

Its approach to religious and social concerns was, in many respects, designed to encourage a more expansive spiritual view of world problems. In 1964-65 it received added impetus from the national organization when it recommended the race issue for its Social Inquiry.<sup>36</sup>

Besides participating in OSC, St. Sabina's CFM chapter initiated its own activities, turning to Friendship House for more guidance on the race issue. In 1955 Friendship House had begun a home visit program between whites and blacks. Its staff arranged for a small group of whites to meet in the home of a black middle class family, or at least one that was financially secure, to discuss racial issues and prejudices. The black host family would relate their experiences with and consequences of prejudice and discrimination in their lives. Friendship House firmly believed that positive personal contact was crucial to dispelling racial stereotypes. Intellectual arguments, they thought, were generally ineffective because racism was more a product of irrational fears. It was more important to influence the emotions, and this could be best done on a personal basis. By meeting face to face, problems in race relations became less abstract and more human.<sup>37</sup>

Initially, many blacks were dubious that these visits would accomplish anything. Yet, after their first session, they realized that many whites were not so much prejudiced as extremely ignorant of the black experience and needed to be

educated. Friendship House's paper Community described their simple belief:

Visits to Negro homes awaken whites to the simple fact that "Negro" family life is as normal as their own, and that at least this Negro's home and property are well kept. This chips away at the mental block of prejudice...As the facts speak for themselves some progress is made toward the ultimate goal of integration: to see everyone as individuals, not as a race.<sup>38</sup>

Friendship House staff also arranged for visits of blacks to white homes. Whites, who were unwilling to go to black homes, could be reached this way, and blacks would be given the opportunity to meet whites, who would welcome them, if they decided to move into the neighborhood. In this situation white hosts invited friends and neighbors. They and their black guests, then, acted as team educators.<sup>39</sup>

Each year the home visit program became more popular throughout Chicago. In 1963 Friendship House sponsored a city-wide, one-day home visit program in conjunction with the National Conference on Religion and Race that was held in Chicago on January 14th through 18th. The home visits were a common effort on the part of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. On January 6 five hundred black host families welcomed three thousand visitors. The success of these visits prompted the various religious denominations to establish the Greater Chicago Interracial Home Visitation Committee. They helped organize a national home visit day on October 27, 1963. Project Friendship won the praise of President John F. Kennedy

and received national media coverage. On that day 119 cities and 115,000 people participated in the home visits.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the home visit program, Friendship House was also interested in making use of the structure of the Catholic church in their war on racism by developing a parish-to-parish program. White parishes visited black parishes and celebrated the Eucharistic Liturgy together. The staff thought that having whites watch blacks receive communion would be a powerful image of their common bond in Christ. After mass, participants gathered for luncheon and a panel discussion by both participating parishes. Later black parishes returned the compliment by inviting the white parish to their church.<sup>41</sup>

In January 1965 St. Sabina's CFM chapter visited Friendship House to obtain materials on the home visit program. The parish branch of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic women also participated in Friendship House programs. Msgr. McMahon gave them his full support. They began home visits starting with black Catholic families in the parish and then expanded beyond that.<sup>42</sup>

"It was kind of a trial period," said M. Joyce. "We would go to families from St. Columbanus, which was black, and we had several come over to our house...It certainly broke the ice...It didn't take as long to perhaps make a breakthrough as it would if we had still just stayed in our little areas...It was just another outlet for us to express

ourselves that we were willing to let others come into our lives or communities."<sup>43</sup> D. Foertsch described the growth of vision of St. Sabina's CFM chapter. "We broke from being just a nucleus of Sabina's to the Sabina's community which encompassed other faiths...We had a feeling of ecumenism, and we had religious services that we shared...It was getting to know black people socially, and I kind of liked it. It was exciting times."<sup>44</sup>

Those involved in the exchanges claimed that many people's attitudes had been softened by the experience. Most agreed, though, in retrospect that the visits were awkward and stilted and their influence limited. Most people who participated in the exchanges were generally more favorably disposed towards blacks to begin with.<sup>45</sup>

However, not everyone in the parish was enthusiastic about the visits. "I don't know how some of our neighbors felt about us," M. Joyce commented. "They probably thought we were out on a limb at times."<sup>46</sup> B. DesChatelets recalled the sentiments of many. McMahon, he said, "wanted the whites to have [blacks] for Sunday dinner even...before they moved in...The parish and the people resented that."<sup>47</sup>

Attitudes towards crime became the real test for parish resolve. During the decade, increases in crime in the Gresham police district were frequently reported in the local newspaper. This put a strain on the credulity of the integrationists. Initially, the crimes which generated the

most concern were located on OSC's eastern boundary where teenagers engaged in racial harassment. In the first six months of 1961 there were approximately ten attempts to destroy black-owned property through window breaking and fire bombing. Anti-black demonstrations were also staged at the newly purchased homes of black families. White youths beat black teenagers who retaliated. The tense situation was made even more frightening when four black families in the area armed themselves with guns for protection. OSC helped defuse this explosive situation by promising the black family full protection if they gave up their weapons. Since publicity proved to be the bane of the perpetrators of these crimes, OSC distributed information on these occurrences and increased police vigilance.<sup>48</sup> By August 1961 racial disturbances were considerably reduced.<sup>49</sup>

However, as the decade progressed so did fear of crime. Juvenile offenses such as bicycle thefts and purse-snatchings along with auto and auto accessory theft became increasingly common. Gradually, house burglaries became more frequent and the greatest concern in the OSC area. During many periods, crime in the Gresham police district rose at a faster rate than the city as a whole. By 1963 OSC and other community leaders were petitioning the police department for more patrolmen.<sup>50</sup>

"The crime was high enough that we had to nail all the windows shut," explained J. Nelligan. "The house was broken



into a couple of times. My father was beaten up a couple of times."<sup>51</sup> Women had their purses snatched at the bank.<sup>52</sup> Just the fear of crime became a problem for people doing business in the community. "The doctors would leave because their other patients would be afraid to come in," related T. O'Rourke. "They'd have trouble with their cars. The blacks would steal their cars or take things."<sup>53</sup>

R. McClory thought that it was the talk of crime itself more than its actuality that heightened peoples' anxiety. "Everyone talked about it...There were occasional houses broken into...You would hear about burglaries and purse-snatchings...It did go up, but what went up more was the perception of crime...but it would often be black on black."<sup>54</sup>

Besides the growing fear of crime, Auburn-Gresham's population increased dramatically, making the area less hospitable. For the previous twenty years it had remained relatively stable, but the population grew from 59,484 to 68,846 between 1960 and 1970. The swell of cars and noise made the area less appealing, and the congestion made safety even more of a problem. "It became more difficult to find a place to park," related M. Dunne. "You couldn't come home late and find a place to park."<sup>55</sup>

Many people, though, simply could not easily move even if they wanted to. Auburn-Gresham's and St. Sabina's populations were aging. Table XVI reveals this age shift. In 1930 the largest age cohort was that between twenty and

forty-four years of age. By 1960 it had shifted to the forty-five to sixty-four years group. Those sixty-five and older increased from four percent of the population to fourteen percent.<sup>56</sup>

Retirees living on a fixed income and those in their middle years could not risk losses from their investments in their homes. "Many could not afford to [leave]," related M. Dunne. "They thought they were going to live there for the rest of their lives."<sup>57</sup> Many felt it was either now or never for them to leave. "The kids were pretty well grown and a lot of them figured it was about the last chance that they'd get to move," explained B. DesChatelets. "They moved out. They could sell their homes and get a pretty good price...Basically, it was a fear of what it would be like. This was a big thing."<sup>58</sup> After years of living in a familiar parish setting, it would be difficult for many to adjust to a new environment.

But through all these trials the majority of parishioners in St. Sabina held tight to their homes. "I was amazed at how calm everybody was," R. McClory reflected. "In '64 and '65 people were talking...saying 'I don't know whether it will work.' 'There's so much violence around.' 'We're going to lose a lot of money from selling our house if we don't go.' [But] 'don't worry, father, we're going to stay if it's at all possible.' Then, just all of sudden...Everybody was saying they were going to stay and then they all left."<sup>59</sup>

The decisive event that tipped the racial scale in the neighborhood was the fatal shooting of a seventeen year old St. Sabina boy by a black teenager. On August 16, 1965 Frank Kelly and some friends stood talking at the St. Sabina church lot at 78th and Racine Avenue across from the community center. Around the corner appeared three young blacks. As the newcomers walked by each group taunted the other. Two of the blacks drew guns and fired at the crowd. A sixteen year old girl was shot in the leg, but Frank was fatally wounded in the chest. He died minutes later as Father Thomas White gave him the last rites of the Church.<sup>60</sup> Father Daniel Sullivan was assigned to St. Sabina that summer. Although he, himself, was not at the scene of the shooting, he remembered the talk and turmoil in the rectory over the murder. "It was just kids yelling at each other, taunting each other," he said. "It just happened that at least one of the black kids had a gun. It wouldn't have been common that any of those...Sabina's guys to have any weapons like that...[But] they used to swagger around."<sup>61</sup> Frank Kelly was not well known in the parish, but after his death his name became a household word. "Instantly, instantly, everybody knew that name -- Frank Kelly. The horror that spread! The fear that it engendered! Up to that time people had been figuring they were going to buck it out."<sup>62</sup> The shocked parish rallied behind the Kelly family. Frank's friends collected nearly

\$3000, a considerable sum then, for his widowed mother. Hundreds of people turned out for the wake and funeral.<sup>63</sup>

Despite this showing of community solidarity, many people who had taken pride in their parish began to pull up stakes. "It was that incident, probably more than anything else, that convinced hundreds of people to leave," explained R. McClory. "That event had kind of a symbolic significance...The church was packed [for] the funeral for Kelly."<sup>64</sup>

Tension permeated the neighborhood for the next several weeks. Father White, who had been director of the youth programs, found himself in the position of calming the young people of the parish. "It was the most excruciating time of his life," related Father Sullivan. "These guys saw their friend killed in front of them and they were ordinary people...Everything in their lives was at that moment being threatened...He was trying to prevent a blood bath." Father White was afraid the community center might serve as a staging ground for a reprisal. On the advice of the police, he closed the center for the rest of the summer. No one wanted to go there any way. Parents were now afraid to let their kids go to a place that now seemed dangerous. The once lively center had become an empty shell. Father White, however, succeeded in defusing this tense situation.<sup>65</sup>

After the shooting, the parish rolls drastically declined. At the end of 1965 the parish reported a drop of

one thousand families, and in 1966 St. Sabina lost another thousand. [See Table XVII]

For Father Sullivan, who had just arrived in the parish, the mass exodus proved a depressing and disconcerting experience. "It was sort of a despairing time for me personally...Instead of people saying 'hello,' they were saying 'good-bye'" Parishioners, he recalled, said, "'Well, I don't know if I should even bother meeting you because I'm going to move.'" He often made sick calls and communion visits to the elderly and home-bound in the parish. They would say to him "Ah, Father! You seem to a lovely priest, but this is the last time that you'll be comin' over to us because after Frank Kelly, we couldn't be safe around here." Father Sullivan realized that he was witnessing the end of an era, and he tried to "savor a bit of the huge double massing - - a mass in the upper church and a mass in the lower church simultaneously. The huge numbers!"<sup>66</sup>

In this fear-ridden situation it would have been difficult for anyone to have stopped the wholesale abandonment of the parish. The Irish proclivity for apartment dwellings proved to be the bane of a stable community. Many people said that the apartment buildings in the neighborhood were the first to let blacks in. "There were so many apartment buildings there," explained B. DesChatelets. "The people just pick up and leave."<sup>67</sup>

"You did see for sale signs all over," said Ann Gaskin.

"Every week someone was moving out. It was constant. It would go from block to block."<sup>68</sup> Rumors and gossip spread through the streets of the parish like fire. "A lot of [fear and panic] was created by people talking on the corners," said M. Dunne. "It was just whispering...They were talking about the movement of the new people coming in."<sup>69</sup> D. Foertsch drily remarked, "Wherever two or three are gathered, they were talking about who moved out and who was going to move in."<sup>70</sup>

The fear, the doubts, and the anxieties of whether to move or stay, along with old friends and neighbors leaving at a rapid rate confused, disappointed, and hurt many people. In this situation parishioners could sell their homes only to blacks. "The real estate people wouldn't direct any white people toward a home in that neighborhood," explained Msgr. J. Egan. "Then the people got blamed for that."<sup>71</sup> In this situation many people adopted a different mentality than the more philosophic one Msgr. McMahon advocated. "When you talk about blockbusting," explained G. Hendry, "you're talking about economic hardship, not racial or social justice."<sup>72</sup> Block-busters made their way through the parish. "The real estate people would send people to your door saying, 'Did you know a black family moved onto your block?'" said M. Dunne. "We'd say 'Yes, we do' even if we didn't know."<sup>73</sup>

"John McMahon reserved his greatest anger for the panic-peddlers," related Msgr. Egan.<sup>74</sup> He personally asked a

parishioner in real estate not to come into the area. However, he was disappointed.<sup>75</sup> "I don't have any idea what anybody could have done to change that situation to really make it work," R. McClory said dejectedly. "The pressure was there. There was such ingrained fear mixed with prejudice that just fed on itself...Homes were broken in. Real estate people were...spreading rumors. And there were enough real things to hear about, shootings and robberies and muggings."<sup>76</sup>

Although the parish collectively voiced its support of integration under Msgr. McMahon's leadership, the decision to leave or go was a painfully lonely and isolating one. People were reluctant to discuss their plans. "People were ashamed to tell you they were selling their house," B. DesChatelets said. "[Sometimes] you never saw signs for sale. They just sold and that was it...It made for a lot of hard feelings."<sup>77</sup> This happened with a neighbor who owned a two-flat. When Mr. DesChatelets asked the neighbor what he was planning to do, the man said he was going to stay. But in fact he had already sold the building and moved out at the end of the week.<sup>78</sup>

"They would often keep quiet about [moving]," concurred T. O'Rourke. He had a similar experience with a family friend and neighbor of thirty-five years. "She sold her house. She didn't say good-bye, like she was ashamed to leave...We never heard from her again." He said they did not hold it against her because "everybody did it."<sup>79</sup> M. Dunne claimed some people moved out in the middle of the night without telling any one.

"They actually did that...because they were ashamed to admit that they...were deceiving people...They were going to stay and they didn't."<sup>80</sup>

Those who resisted the initial impulse to leave St. Sabina's after the Kelly shooting, found it hard to maintain their resolve when the racial situation in Chicago began to explode at the same time. St. Sabina's could not remain isolated from national events. By 1963, Chicago blacks inspired by the Civil Rights Movement began to agitate to change their second-class citizenship. Even usually obsequious black politicians began to stir up Chicago politics. In late spring, six black aldermen, generally known as the Silent Six because of their fealty to the mayor, arranged a private meeting with Richard J. Daley. They warned him of the inroads the civil rights movement was making in their wards and advised him to make some showing of support for black issues. They needed to prove to their constituents that they were working on their behalf. In order to not upset his coalition, Daley made what seemed to be a bold move towards racial equality, but would, in fact, not alter the status quo. He asked James C. Murray, alderman of the 18th ward, which covered much of OSC's territory including St. Sabina's, to draft a fair housing ordinance. Murray was aghast at the idea. He told the mayor his constituents would destroy him for sponsoring such an ordinance. Daley told him the the city needed it and that was that. Murray did sponsor



a bill in the city council which prohibited discrimination in real estate listings and sales. It passed into law September 11 over the opposition of sixteen 'loyal' aldermen.<sup>81</sup>

Murray tried to explain to his constituents that the new ordinance simply protected homeowners against blockbusters and called for the revocation of city and state brokers licenses of realtors engaging in unfair practices. It did not usurp property owners' rights to sell or rent to whom ever they pleased. Murray did not feel he was very convincing, and therefore, did not run for re-election in 1967. He had hoped other Southwest side aldermen would stand united with him on this issue, but they did not. Several of these colleagues actually used their opposition to the ordinance in their re-election campaign. The bill, however, was largely symbolic. Implementing it entailed long, involved hearings with the city's Commission on Human Relations.<sup>82</sup>

In January 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King brought the civil rights movement to the north and made Chicago his headquarters. His goal was slum reform. Mayor Daley was careful not to make himself appear to be an oppressor and thus creating conflict and turmoil in his city. He heaped praise on King and his work and expounded on the things that the city was doing to address black concerns. Unable to attack the reigning powers, King decided to launch a campaign to integrate Chicago neighborhoods. The movement, then, planned

to stage nonviolent marches into white neighborhoods to champion open occupancy.<sup>83</sup>

King chose the Southwest side as the place for his first march. On July 24, 1966, three-hundred black and white marchers, holding hands and singing hymns, headed west along 71st Street, then they turned north to 67th Street. They crossed Halsted, Ashland and finally reached Western Avenue. An angry crowd greeted them with bricks, bottles, rocks and cherry bombs. The violence created sympathy for the movement. New recruits poured in and inspired King to try again five days later. This second march also took place in the Southwest area in Marquette Park and met the same virulent hatred. There was one more march that September in the suburb of Cicero with the same results.<sup>84</sup>

The violent conflict the marches provoked frightened many residents on the Southwest side and seemed to confirm the opinion that "there would be trouble" if blacks and whites tried to mix. However, it was King's assassination in Memphis on April 4, 1968 that proved the final blow to St. Sabina's hope for peaceful integration. The shooting unleashed a torrent of black anger throughout the nation. Over one hundred cities, including Chicago, erupted in riots. While most of the rioting and destruction took place on the West Side, the apparent message was not lost on Southsiders.

J. McDermott of the Catholic Interracial Council said, "The growing voices of anger and black power, 'we want ours

coming,' all chilled hope that we could have peaceful community relations." At that time a small, but growing number of white Catholic community saw themselves "offering the hand of cooperation in the hope that we can work this out together, [but] they were looking at television and hearing these voices [which] didn't sound very promising. That was another nail in OSC's coffin."<sup>85</sup> It was also the final nail for St. Sabina's. By 1970, St. Sabina's was primarily black. Auburn-Gresham was sixty-nine percent black, most being in its eastern section where St. Leo's and St. Sabina's were located.<sup>86</sup>

Some whites did stay, partly out of loyalty to Msgr. McMahon, partly because of their own convictions that whites and blacks could live together, and partly because of their lack of alternatives. Many who stayed often developed good relations with their black neighbors, and had many of their remaining stereotypes challenged. "They always got along with the one next door," T. O'Rourke recollected. "I've heard that from many who stayed a few years. And the old ones that stayed say they looked out for them."<sup>87</sup> J. Nelligan said his parents's neighbors "were very good and looked after them and helped out a lot when they couldn't shovel the snow."<sup>88</sup> "When that huge snow storm occurred, [1967]" said M. Dunne, "those black men on our block got out and shoveled the street from curb to curb. We made huge pots of coffee and took them out. They were wonderful. I would have no complaints about our

neighbors."<sup>89</sup> "All of our neighbors were colored," M. Joyce said. "They were just as kindly as they could be...We had a nice block club...In fact, when I left, they presented me with a plaque for our cooperation."<sup>90</sup> "They're the same," D. Foertsch discovered. "They go to work. They're struggling to meet their mortgage payments like I was, and they wanted the same thing for their kids."<sup>91</sup>

Those who took the time to get to know the newcomers learned about the insults and the feelings of rejection that blacks felt when whites fled from them. "I remember one woman saying to me," recalled M. Joyce. "'You can't imagine, Mrs. Joyce, how it feels to be ignored and disliked just because of your color.' Her white neighbors were moving. She said, 'If we had done anything to them. If we had been dirty, or we had been wrecking anything, doing anything that would be a bad neighbor, but just because my color is black. It hurts.' I'll always remember that."<sup>92</sup> D. Foertsch had the same experience. "Their experiences of injustices that I could not believe. I had never heard that before!"<sup>93</sup>

However, black-white relations were not always that easy in the parish during the period of transition and when it was primarily black. There were conflicts and cultural differences that often made life tense. "The cultural differences were very great," said R. McClory. He noted a gulf between the young people of the parish. "The symbolic thing for me was at the girls' sodality mass. On the left

side of the church was all black, the other white...Nobody told them to sit that way. It was the cultural differences. They had nothing to share. While there were white girls that would go out of their way to have black friends, for the most part they found mixing difficult.<sup>94</sup>

Once the Sunday night dances resumed, only whites attended even though the neighborhood was getting to be more and more black. "There was no possibility of integrating [them]," said R. McClory. "Nobody even gave it a moments thought...First of all, they didn't dance to the same music."<sup>95</sup> After the Kelly shooting just a few feet away, it would have been unlikely that blacks would have been wanted. It was also essentially a Catholic dance, advertised primarily at Catholic high schools, although Protestants were admitted.

K. Kopcinski, who attended the dances in 1967 and 1968, said it was her impression that blacks did not feel welcome. But, she also thought the music separated them. Whites listened to the Beatles, the Beach Boys and even the Supremes and Smokey Robinson, where as, blacks listened to music she could only describe as 'funky' and unfamiliar to whites. Although she had never witnessed any confrontations between whites and blacks, problems existed with this dual youth culture.<sup>96</sup> "Black people would be hanging around outside on the street...Whites would be coming out of the dance...The cops would come...Everybody would be nervous."<sup>97</sup>

R. McClory recalled other incidents in the neighborhood that made whites a bit leery of the presence of these 'interlopers' in their neighborhood. "Black people would be out fighting in the alley amongst themselves...Not even fighting, cussing at each other...Is that a violent crime? No, but it did have an effect. And loud music playing next door, this goofy music. Folk'd think it was jungle music...And people would see blacks walking around with big dobermans. They're not crimes...They're part of a cultural difference."<sup>98</sup>

By 1968 many residents considered voting five precincts of Auburn Park dry -- an ironic turn for a neighborhood in which the saloon was so important to its social life. Taverns and liquor stores had proliferated to the point where residents felt the area had more than it could support. They also worried that the atmosphere would promote "all types of illegal activity." The move, however, was unsuccessful.<sup>99</sup>

Tavern life and etiquette had changed. While the area was Irish, the common practice was to order a drink at the bar and talk to the other patrons. A folk tradition among the Irish maintained that an Irishman could drink more whiskey from a standing position. When blacks started coming in, they tended to order a pint of whiskey and then sit at a table by themselves or with friends. "They're as clannish as the Irish," B. DesChatelets said of the blacks. He did not find

their attempts at social interaction very genuine. "They put on an artificial veneer to get by."<sup>100</sup>

The religious life of the parish had also begun to change. The more pietistic and devotional practices did not appeal to some black Catholics. "People resisted the loss of the old structures," said R. McClory. Blacks "did not feel obligated by the same rules. Didn't have the Janesenistic understanding of Catholicism that we had. They didn't quite get the idea that you had to go to mass every Sunday...There was the feeling that these things weren't important."<sup>101</sup>

Blacks also did not see the parish as a universe like Irish-American Catholics. "People identified with the block club. You could tell the black community by block clubs." Although the neighborhood was predominantly black in 1971, the ushers at St. Sabina's were entirely white. "These guys were coming from their new parishes," said R. McClory. "They felt a kind of ownership...Well, the church wasn't full of blacks...And they hated blacks. They'd be sneering at them as they walked in."<sup>102</sup> This situation put the pastor in a difficult position. He needed the money from the collections, but to not have black ushers was clearly unjust. All he could do was to let time take its course.

St. Sabina school experienced many strains during the transition as well. While it was losing its Catholic children, the public schools in the area, which were once the domain of Protestants, were not equipped to handle full

community enrollment. They quickly became overcrowded. This had a major impact on St. Sabina's school. "Maybe the most important thing was the school," R. McClory asserted. "The public schools in the area had been empty...because it was the Protestants who went there. [They] were suddenly jammed with black kids. So these factors made the Catholic schools more desirable [to black parents]...I remember around '68...people were lined up on Throop Street all around the corner to register for our school."<sup>103</sup>

Since many of the new black pupils were not Catholic, this created a whole set of issues to deal with. In 1967 the Dominicans reported to the mother house:

School opened on Sept. 6 with an enrollment of 930, the beginning of a significant time change. The lowered enrollment was caused by about 200 transfers of white children and about 100 admission of Negroes. The great majority of the latter were not Catholic. This marked the beginning of a radical change in the nature of the school. Intensive group processes and extensive departmentalization were some of the measures adopted to meet the problems.<sup>104</sup>

The curriculum also needed to be adjusted "to meet the needs and interests of culturally deprived children."<sup>105</sup> This created anxiety and frustration for nuns in the classroom who did not think standards ought to be compromised and whose white, Catholic, middle class values made it difficult for them to relate to the children. One nun said it was difficult for her to cope with the fact that many of the students had been raped, and the open talk of sex among grade school children.<sup>106</sup>



What to do about religious instruction and whether blacks should even be obligated to become Catholics were bitterly fought over. The mothers' club became a staging ground for the conflict. "There was a whole system being dumped on black parishioners -- making converts."<sup>107</sup> Eventually, the policy for admitting non-Catholic black children into St. Sabina school was resolved by having the parents take instruction in Catholicism so they would know what their children were learning, but they had no obligation to become Catholics. Parents were expected to be church-goers and were required to present a letter from their pastor confirming their attendance at a congregation of their choosing. Children were not allowed to continue in the school if parents did not cooperate.<sup>108</sup>

The whites that did stay on gradually began to miss the familiar ebbs and flows of traditional parish life. "Perhaps living among our Irish ghetto was a little more comfortable than having people who were nice to each other but yet we had nothing in common," reflected M. Joyce. "The way they've had to live was so much different than we white middle class...So we would have block meetings...We participated in that way, but it wasn't the same feeling of camaraderie as it is if it's one of your own kind."<sup>109</sup> Some simply felt cut-off from their own culture. B. DesChatelets recalled his mother's reaction to the area becoming predominantly black. "My mother said, 'You know it

didn't bother me when they were moving this way...It didn't bother me when they were on the block...But now that they're at the other end --now we're surrounded!' And that's just about the way you felt."<sup>110</sup>

Although she liked her black neighbors, G. Benzig decided to leave St. Sabina's because the area no longer seemed like it was her neighborhood.<sup>111</sup> "The new breed was taking over," said M. Joyce wistfully. "It just wouldn't be the same."<sup>112</sup> Many old-timers felt the question of turf deeply. B. DesChatelets recalled an incident when walking with his wife in the parish. They heard a young black man say about them, "'What are those honkies doing in my neighborhood?' My wife got so mad!...She said, 'What does he mean our neighborhood? This is our neighborhood!' I never saw her get so upset."<sup>113</sup>

Living in an area that was predominantly black was problematic for the remaining whites. Even blacks sadly realized this. D. Foertsch stayed on in St. Sabina's for many years. She moved when her children grew older and she felt they needed white friends, too. "Everybody understood why we were moving. It wasn't because I didn't like them or the area, but I felt it had served its purpose...I felt we had stayed long enough to teach them [her children] what I wanted to teach them, to see other kinds of people in a normal home life situation."<sup>114</sup> Others left for security reasons. M. Dunne was the last white on her block to move. "We thought we could

stay," she said. "But it got to the point where our new neighbors were telling us we better go. There was no problem as far as we were concerned with getting along with them. That was not it, but it was not safe."<sup>115</sup>

Even those who were willing to stay in the parish when it was black eventually retired and moved to a smaller place or in with their children. With their family and friends gone, there was no point in staying.<sup>116</sup>

The feeling that they had 'lost' their parish, a place that had been so dear to them, many people resented blacks all the more. "There were a lot who left and blamed the blacks for giving up everything they had paid for and built up."<sup>117</sup> Many former Sabinaites moved to new suburban developments like Oak Lawn and helped establish new parishes like St. Linus, St. Catherine's, and St. Germaine's. There they tried to create what they had left behind. "Oak Lawn is loaded with them!"<sup>118</sup> "When these guys got out there, they wanted to make Linus the new Sabinas, because they felt cheated," explained Father Riordan. "They had built and ran that other thing, and they were out in the desert with nothing."<sup>119</sup> Those who stayed on in St. Sabina's blamed those who left. "I have no resentment in my heart for [blacks] at all," said M. Joyce. "I had more resentment for the whites that ran...I really did."<sup>120</sup>

Msgr. McMahon also took the brunt of the blame for the parish changing hands. "Msgr. McMahon was blamed...A lot of people felt that he encouraged the change," said M. Dunne. "He

was a victim of the times...But I know he would never change his mind. He was committed to social justice...He would go down fighting."<sup>121</sup> D. Foertsch said many people claim they would still be in St. Sabina's if it were not for Msgr. McMahon. "In 1986, there's still some who blame monsignor because he had the audacity to welcome them in."<sup>122</sup> "You'd have thought he'd gone out and dragged them in," said M. Joyce of some people's feelings towards Msgr. McMahon. "He was being accused of bringing them in...because he welcomed them...He didn't say 'you can't come to my parish'...He went through a great deal. I don't know how it affected him."<sup>123</sup>

It had a devastating effect on him. "One of the last conversations I had with him," recalled Msgr. Egan. "He said, 'You know, Jack, the thing that hurts me the most was when some of our parishioners, who had been loyal parishioners, friends of mine, moved out in the middle of the night without ever saying 'good-bye.'...They sold their house to a black family and they were going to get out.' But he said 'I understood that. I understood there were many, many reasons'...He had married them, baptized their kids. Their kids went through the school...and he never heard from them again. Maybe they were ashamed. Maybe they thought they were letting him down...But all through it, Msgr. McMahon...was a tower of strength."<sup>124</sup> Some parishioners did not have any qualms about letting him know their negative feelings, and wrote him bitter letters. "It hurt him deeply," said A.

Gaskin, his administrative aid.<sup>125</sup> Part of the reason Msgr. McMahon became the scapegoat was because of his awkward personality. To a young and energetic priest like Father Sullivan, working for the elderly McMahon was at times frustrating and fraught with misunderstandings. "He was very much an old style priest," he said. "More interested in saving souls...He was sort of 'spacey'...He wanted to do good...and he believed that God made all people, blacks and whites, equal...That's what Jesus was saying...He knew what a Catholic should experience...But he could never translate it into the common terms, to the common person. He'd say 'You've got to welcome the black people' without examples or encouragement... People would tell him that he would ruin the parish that way. Well, he didn't quite understand what they meant...He was partly trying to dictate how things should be, and everybody should do it this way...It was his age, too...He [was] a very old sixty five. And he had this terrible deafness which would hamper anyone, and it certainly hampered him."<sup>126</sup>

Msgr. McMahon also offended some of his parishioners through his own clumsiness. "Monsignor had a lot of idiosyncracies," admitted D. Foertsch. "He could be clutzy about things. Kind of blurt things out that would have been more discreet not to."<sup>127</sup> Father Sullivan said that at funeral masses when old friends and neighbors returned to St. Sabina, while trying to praise the deceased, McMahon would say things

like "'John was so good. He stayed here with me. You people ran!'"<sup>128</sup>

While Msgr. McMahon and OSC were not able to stop panic peddling completely or to create an integrated community, they did create a more positive experience of racial change for many people. They helped preserve the physical integrity of the community. And by creating a pause in the transition period, many whites were able to learn more about their black neighbors and their experiences with racial injustice. "It took ten years," said D. Foertsch of the span of time it took for the first black family to move into St. Sabina's and for whites to leave. "That's not over night. And yet it took maybe a year and a half to go through Little Flower because [Father Stephen McMahon] preached as negatively as Msgr. Wolfe did down at Visitation."<sup>129</sup>

Overall, the racial transition in Auburn-Gresham and the OSC area was marked by a great deal of stability. Although a product of block-busting and a forced marketing process, it went from a solidly white middle class area to one that was predominantly black middle class. Twenty-five percent of the new homeowners had previous ownership experience. Fifty-one percent were able to obtain conventional loans. This was an important fact. In many other neighborhoods, especially Englewood, many FHA and VA loan programs were used by unscrupulous brokers to sell homes to families who did not have adequate incomes. With so much

of their salaries going towards their mortgage payments, little went towards upkeep. Foreclosures and neighborhood deterioration were common there.<sup>130</sup>

While whites felt they were witnessing a breakdown of their community, the majority of blacks who moved into Auburn-Gresham in the early to mid 1970s were very optimistic about their new neighborhood. Ninety-two percent of black residents rated the quality of the area 'good' or 'excellent' in terms of housing quality, upkeep and appearance, and crime rate. Few had any anxiety or apprehension about living in an integrated neighborhood. Forty-one percent of blacks actually preferred to live with people of a different race. Fifty-two percent had no preference. Many blacks believed that white neighborhoods had better access to public and private services and goods. Except for shopping, black residents felt the quality of the neighborhood remained the same.<sup>131</sup> "They didn't want to be in a totally black community," explained Father Sullivan. "They loved it when it was an integrated community."<sup>132</sup> While racial disturbances loomed large in the minds of whites, most blacks did not expect to encounter racial trouble when they moved into the area and eighty-nine percent did not have any problems.<sup>133</sup>

"There are some exceptions on the Southside," admitted T. O'Rourke. "Some of them have gone into neighborhoods and they've kept them up very well -- over there in Chatham and places like that. And I do say that about Sabina's, the

sidestreets look pretty good. 79th Street though is a disaster."<sup>134</sup> "79th got to be the gosh awfulest looking place," Father Sullivan conceded. "There'd be a liquor store and then a record store and then another liquor store...But then you'd get off 79th Street and the people were keeping up the homes so nicely."<sup>135</sup>

The work of Msgr. McMahon and the other priests and sisters attracted many blacks to the church, and made St. Sabina's one of the premier black Catholic parishes in Chicago and the country. The parish was also left financially well-off with \$800,000 in its treasury.<sup>136</sup> "Black people never got the impression" that the Church was prejudiced, said R. McClory. They "had the impression that McMahon was pro-black...And the OSC was an organization that was trying to integrate and that made an impression. Therefore, the parish was not looked upon as an institution as being anti-black although the parishioners were. So because of McMahon, Sabina's is a fairly flourishing black parish."<sup>137</sup> "The people who moved into the parish...all came to love monsignor," said A. Gaskin. "They considered him their friend."<sup>138</sup>

Msgr. McMahon was aided by a cadre of dedicated and able priests and nuns. "Fumbling though we were, we gave it every moment of every day," said Father Sullivan. "There was such a good group of people, women and men, black and white, sisters and priests...It was a hard time, but it was a good time."<sup>139</sup> "Half our nights in the summer [we spent] going



around ringing doorbells at random in black areas, saying 'We have a great school over here, a great church to worship at on Sunday. Come on over!'" recalled R. McClory. The blacks that were attracted to Catholicism, he thought, were more "upper crust" and sophisticated. To them, becoming Catholic meant "rising above their humble black origins." Others were drawn to the richness and complexity of the religion. "I think Southern Baptists tend to be weak on substance and so many were very curious. You'd get a real dialogue at times with people who were hungering." To attract other blacks meant adapting some basics in worship, such as using the organ during the sermon to add drama.<sup>140</sup>

Father Sullivan took charge of the community center, which had stood empty and lifeless after the Kelly shooting and the exodus of white parishioners. He developed a plan to utilize the building for the benefit of the new community by creating a neighborhood youth employment corps. They had hundreds of teenagers employed as recreational counselors and tutors for younger children. They had day camp and leagues. With the help of a young white couple who had grown up in the parish, they reestablished Saturday roller skating. The couple said they had gotten so much from the center when they were children that they wanted to give something in return. The most amazing act of Christian love that Father Sullivan witnessed, though, was when Pat Kelly, the sister of Frank, volunteered to man the cashier's station to sell tickets for

the roller skating. "One of the most magnificent things I could ever recount about anyone was Pat Kelly," said Father Sullivan. "She was selling tickets...inches from where her brother died...She couldn't forget what happened, but she helped the black little kids."<sup>141</sup> In all, Father Sullivan felt the youth program "generated a whole lot of intangible good will. That Church gives a darn!"<sup>142</sup>

While St. Sabina's priests were ministering to their new community, former residents searched for new parishes to replace what they had left behind. Many settled in Beverly Hills and Morgan Park. "It was real important to me the philosophy of a parish before I would move," said D. Foertsch. "We found that St. Barnabas was more like what we had thought Sabina's was. We looked at every house that was for sale in Barnabas. If it was across the border, even though we liked the house, we decided on Barnabas. This is definitely family."<sup>143</sup> Today St. Barnabas is heavily Irish-American.<sup>144</sup> It has an Irish family mass and recently it began a Mother of Sorrows Novena. "I nearly fell on the floor when I heard that!" exclaimed D. Foertsch.<sup>145</sup> Its parishioners support the resurrected Southside Irish parade, which now marches down Western Avenue. G. Hendry also moved to this area into St. Cajetan's parish because he wanted to raise his children within the same kind of environment and values as he grew up in. "This area was appealing because...there were so many people that we knew...Transplants from Sabina's, Little

Flower, Leo, Ethelreda...We felt comfortable coming in here the same way I felt comfortable at St. Sabina's as a kid growing up."<sup>146</sup>

Others tried to recreate St. Sabina's in the suburbs, such as St. Linus in Oak Lawn. It resulted in tension between those wanting to rebuild what they had lost and those who realized its impossibility. "It wasn't quite possible. You couldn't rebuild a place like that," said Father Riordan.<sup>147</sup>

Most remembered their days at St. Sabina's with great fondness. Although they may have settled in other parishes, many former parishioners still consider themselves to be 'from Sabina's.' And to a certain extent they feel very possessive of their old parish. Since St. Sabina's has become such a prominent black parish, it is often featured in the news but mispronounced. "It really tees me off," said B. DesChatelets, "when I hear them talking on TV about St. Sabeena's."<sup>148</sup> J. Hagerty is irritated when she hears St. Sabina's referred to as "the black cathedral, as if they built it!"<sup>149</sup>

Over twenty years after the parish changed hands, J. Nelligan still occasionally responds to the question 'where is he from?' with 'Sabina's'. Once when he was on a business trip on a small airplane in Florida, the plane hit a rain storm and some turbulence. To calm the passengers, the stewardess tried to make conversation and asked him where he was from. Smiling to himself, he answered 'Sabina's.' While

he confused the flight attendant, a man in the seat in front of him turned and said "I'm from Little Flower!"<sup>150</sup>

Many still think nostalgically about their old parish and lament their loss. "When we go to wakes or weddings...I hear people say, 'Oh, the good old days! Isn't it too bad what happened to Sabina's?'" said D. Foertsch with exasperation. "That just offends me so much because they don't know what they're talking about. Sabina's is, if not more so, as alive as in its biggest day. It's a wonderful community. It's different, and some people just don't want to accept that things can be different and still be good."<sup>151</sup>

Things were different. St. Sabina was no longer even called St. Sabina parish. Instead, it is called St. Sabina community because it accepts membership from people who do not live within the traditional boundaries. Its new members have draped the black national colors down the nave of the church, and a bust of Martin Luther King rests on St. Joseph's altar. Even those who accepted blacks into the parish had a difficult time accepting these additions. To traditional Catholics, Martin Luther King may have been a good man, but he is not a canonized saint and was not even Catholic. Therefore, being placed on an altar seemed very inappropriate to them.<sup>152</sup> "I know people who would die if they knew that," said D. Foertsch. However, she often goes back to St. Sabina's for services. Rather than dwell on the new, she says she sees "the communion rail that I received my first

communion at, the aisle I got married at, the aisle I buried my father at. My first love will always be there. Always."<sup>153</sup>

Mrs. Foertsch is not the only white person who goes back to the parish for services. Those who do are continually struck by the warmth and vitality of the community and the innovative liturgies. "I'm so well received when I do go," said D. Foertsch. "They go out of their way to extend themselves to you at the sign of peace. I wonder if the situation were reversed in some of the all white parishes if they would even turn around."<sup>154</sup>

St. Sabina's present pastor, Father Michael Pflieger, received a letter from an old parishioner who received the same welcome.

On Sunday we returned with two of our daughters who had never been to Saint Sabina before. We attended the sung Mass celebration by Father Tom Walsh and assisted in so many ways by capable, enthusiastic, parishioners. The ceremony was uplifting, the homily stimulating, the music magnificent, the congregation warm, genuine, and friendly -- truly a spiritual and emotional experience for all of us. We found the essence of Saint Sabina as we knew it is very much alive, active, and throbbing. We thank the Lord for what Saint Sabina has given us, and for what she continues to give to her people.<sup>155</sup>

"Well, we turned it over to people who can use it," said J. Hagerty, reflecting on the situation. "I think all the old timers would be happy with that"<sup>156</sup>

1. Author interview with Robert McClory.
2. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
3. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
4. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
5. Author interview with Nathalie Hagerty.
6. "An Informal Analysis of Changing Parishes," Community (July-August 1956), 1, 5; Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
7. Agnes Podolinsky, "Blueprint for Changing Neighborhood," The New World, 3 August 1962, 12; Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
8. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
9. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
10. St. Sabina Communion Register 1950-1960; Hirsch, The Making of the Second Ghetto, 6-8.
11. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
12. Author interview with Robert McClory.
13. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
14. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordon.
15. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
16. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
17. "Count Your Blessings," The Seraph 19(8) (August 1962), 5.
18. "Count Your Blessings," The Seraph 19(8) (August 1962), 5.
19. "Count Your Blessings," The Seraph 19(8) (August 1962), 5.
20. "Slander," The Seraph 18(8) (August 1961), 5.
21. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
22. Author interview with Robert McClory.
23. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
24. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.

25. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
26. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
27. Author interview with Robert McClory.
28. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
29. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
30. Author interview with Grace Benzing.
31. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
32. Author interview with Robert McClory.
33. Annals of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic Forming the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary, Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin, Sinsinawa Dominican Archives, St. Sabina, 1963, 59.
34. Author interview with Robert McClory.
35. Author interview with Irvin and Eileen Schultz, Dee Foertsch, Mildred Joyce.
36. Jeffrey M. Burns, "The Christian Family Movement," Working Paper Series, Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, 11(2) (Spring 1982), 30.
37. Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning, 493.
38. "Whites Meet Negroes at Home, Change Attitudes," Community (December 1960), 3.
39. Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning, 494-5.
40. Ibid., 501-8.
41. Sharum, A Strange Fire Burning, 514-5; Friendship House, Minutes of Meeting, 1 February 1965, Friendship House Papers, CHS.
42. "Report to Staff," 7 January 1965, Friendship House Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Box 37.
43. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
44. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
45. Author interview with Irvin and Eileen Schultz.

46. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
47. Author interview with Terrence O'Rourke.
48. Memorandum to Msgr. John J. Egan from Edward Chambers and Nick von Hoffman, "Police activity in connection with race violence on the Southwest Side," Egan Papers, Box 35.
49. "OSC Says Crime Down," Southtown Economist 30 August 1961, 1.
50. "Crime Rate Increases in August," Southtown Economist 27 September 1961, 1; "Crime Up in Gresham," Southtown Economist 20 May 1962, 1; "Crime Up in Gresham," Southtown Economist 22 April 1962, 1; "Gresham Crime is Up," Southtown Economist 22 August 1962, 1; "Gresham Crime is Up" Southtown Economist 28 November 1962, 1; "Demand More Police," Southtown Economist 12 June 1963, 1; "Gresham Police Back," Southtown Economist 16 June 1963, 1; "Gresham Crime Up," Southtown Economist 18 August 1963; 1.
51. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
52. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
53. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
54. Author interview with Robert McClory.
55. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
56. Kitagawa and Taeuber, "Auburn Gresham," Local Community Fact Book, 157.
57. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
58. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
59. Author interview with Robert McClory.
60. "Three Youths Admit Killing Youth, Wounding Girl," Southtown Economist 18 August 1965, 3.
61. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
62. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
63. "Slain Youths Pals Give Mom, \$2,780," Southtown Economist 25 August 1965, 1.
64. Author interview with Robert McClory.



65. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
66. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
67. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
68. Author interview with Ann Gaskin.
69. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
70. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
71. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.
72. Author interview with George Hendry.
73. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
74. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.
75. Author interview with Ann Gaskin.
76. Author interview with Robert McClory.
77. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
78. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
79. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.
80. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
81. Ben Joravsky, "A Moment of Truth," Chicago (August 1986), 99; "Murray Defends Law," Southtown Economist 15 September 1963, 1.
82. Joravsky, "A Moment of Truth," 99; "Murray Defends Law," 1.
83. Joravsky, "A Moment of Truth," 100.
84. Joravsky, "A Moment of Truth," 101.
85. Author interview with John McDermott.
86. Community Area Data Book, 1970 Census Data by Seventy-Five Community Areas, Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, Research and Statistics Division and OSLA Financial Services Corp.
87. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

88. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
89. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
90. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
91. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
92. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
93. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
94. Author interview with Robert McClory.
95. Author interview with Robert McClory.
96. Author interview with Kris Kopcinski.
97. Author interview with Robert McClory.
98. Author interview with Robert McClory.
99. "Ban Liquor: Auburn," Southtown Economist, 31 March 1968, 1; "Auburn Dry Vote Considered," Southtown Economist 3 March 1968, 12.
100. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets; Duis, The Saloon, 153.
101. Author interview with Robert McClory.
102. Author interview with Robert McClory.
103. Author interview with Robert McClory; "See High School Jam," Southtown Economist 21 August 1963, 1; Vic Watia, "Cook School Jammed," Southtown Economist 24 March 1968, 1; "Demand More Room," Southtown Economist 17 March 1968, 1.
104. Annals, 1966-1967, 65.
105. Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, 1965, St. Sabina (Catholic University Press, 1965), 39. Sinsinawa Dominican Archives.
106. Author interview with Margaret Ortman.
107. Author interview with Robert McClory.
108. Author interview with Ann Gaskin.
109. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.

110. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
111. Author interview with Grace Benzing.
112. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
113. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
114. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
115. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
116. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
117. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
118. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke; Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
119. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
120. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
121. Author interview with Mary S. Dunne.
122. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
123. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
124. Author interview with Msgr. John J. Egan.
125. Author interview with Ann Gaskin.
126. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
127. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
128. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
129. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
130. Roger Fox and Deborah Haines, Black Homeowners in Transition Areas (Chicago Urban League, 1981), 18, 29, 31-2, 167.
131. Fox and Haines, Black Homeowners, 57, 66-7, 117-9.
132. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
133. Fox and Haines, Black Homeowners, 61-3.
134. Author interview with Terence O'Rourke.

135. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
136. St. Sabina Annual Reports, 1968.
137. Author interview with Robert McClory.
138. Author interview with Ann Gaskin.
139. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
140. Author interview with Robert McClory.
141. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
142. Author interview with Rev. Daniel Sullivan.
143. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
144. Koenig, A History of the Parishes, 100.
145. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
146. Author interview with George Hendry.
147. Author interview with Rev. Jerome Riordan.
148. Author interview with Bernard DesChatelets.
149. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.
150. Author interview with Joseph Nelligan.
151. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
152. Author interview with Mildred Joyce.
153. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
154. Author interview with Dee Foertsch.
155. Letter to Rev. Michael Pflieger from James N. Trant, The Seraph, Summer 1986.
156. Author interview with Julia Hagerty.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

The parish was one of the most important institutions in the Irish-American community. For the immigrant generation it gave them a sense of continuity to their past life in Ireland. In America it not only had a religious function, but served as a center for their community. Since other immigrant groups built their own national parishes, this gave the Irish the opportunity to turn territorial parishes into their own ethnic enclaves. This ensured the further cohesion of the American Irish community in Chicago despite their increasing minority position in the city.

As the Irish began their ascent into skilled employment and into the middle class, they sought better housing in outlying areas of the city. Their second class position in American society as Catholics was made readily apparent in Anglo-Protestant communities as the welcome mat was quickly withdrawn. Rather than shed such an integral part of their identity to meld into the dominant host culture, the Irish hung on to their strong affiliation with the Church and clung to the parish for support.

The continued identification with the parish by St. Sabina members was reinforced by many mutually supporting factors. The Irish were among the first ethnic groups to

arrive in Auburn-Gresham. The transportation system supported the gradual expansion of their community beyond its original area of settlement, and many St. Sabina parishioners shared similar job experiences. These factors helped reconstitute a large Irish population. Most importantly St. Sabina's Irish parishioners brought their strong tradition of a vital parish-centered life.

While they did not encounter the hostility of Anglo-Protestants in their neighborhood, St. Sabina's Catholics were reminded of their minority status in America with the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and the 1920s and Al Smith's failed presidential bid. Some defensiveness can be detected in St. Sabina's former parishioners of that period. Yet, they clearly cherished their community life. Within this community, they nourished Catholic pride.

After World War II anti-Catholicism diminished to some extent. At the same time Catholics had grown secure enough to see their separation from Protestant America as a positive thing. St. Sabina parishioners saw the parish as a place to foster religious devotion, to shelter their families from secular society, and a means by which to Christianize the rest of the world. Its devotional life, the school, its recreational activities all combined to reinforce the parish community.

Although St. Sabina's considered itself an Irish parish, its Catholic identity predominated. While St.

Patrick's Day celebrations had wide appeal, Irish-Americans could not separate their national and religious identities any more than their Irish counterparts. Most took the Irish heritage for granted, but cultivated their Catholicism.

With their conception of themselves so inextricably entwined with the parish, perceived threats to its integrity naturally provoked fear and resentment. While most parishioners clung to the old parish philosophy of separation, the Church was embarking upon a new era. Chicago became a major center of liberal Catholicism. Many clergy and laity hoped to create a more expansive view of Catholicism role in society. Msgr. McMahon, with the help of others, tried to introduce a new parish philosophy of openness and toleration towards others in St. Sabina's. The results were mixed. Despite their skepticism, most parishioners went along with his new ventures in community organizing. They hoped OSC would keep their neighborhood stable. McMahon's early success could also be attributed to the considerable power priests still enjoyed at that time. Yet, in the end St. Sabina's could not achieve integration any more than other less socially dedicated parishes. Love for the old ways and fear of the new sent many looking to repeat their Sabina's experience further south and west. Some found a similar parish environment, but, generally, the nature of parishes would never be quite the same.

By the 1960s, American society had changed. Being Catholic was no longer the handicap it once was. Even the highest office in the nation was held by Catholic John F. Kennedy. There was no longer the need to take refuge in the parish or a Catholic ghetto against Protestant society.<sup>1</sup> As the Irish moved geographically outward and economically upward, the areas they settled in were more diverse. While some pockets of Irish continued to exist, for the most part the Irish no longer live or work in religious and ethnic ghettos. The Second Vatican Council also changed the character and outlook of parishes. The parish was no longer a haven from the secular world or Protestant bigotry. Instead it was to be a home base for Catholics to experience the faith, and also to inspire and energize them to deal with broader community and social concerns in the light of Gospel values. Vatican II also encouraged greater lay participation and leadership in various church activities and programs, such as parish councils, liturgy committees, and peace and justice groups. While still a central figure, the pastor is now often assisted by a pastoral team of lay men and women. People participate out of choice, not duty.<sup>2</sup>

However, the University of Notre Dame parish study found that just half of practicing Catholics studied thought the parish provided a real sense of community. Suburban Catholics were the least attached to their parishes. They



had fewer close friends within the parish borders and fewer contacts with fellow parishioners.<sup>3</sup>

Parishes would no longer have any national identification. While St. Sabina's did not have a strong conscious sense of their Irishness, they engaged in some traditional group behavior patterns. The ease and familiar social interaction made the parish and the neighborhood seem like home. While most would go on to successful lives elsewhere after the racial transition of the parish, the feelings of loss and dislocation were profound.

In his Studs Lonigan trilogy, James T. Farrell explores the emotional cost of uprooting oneself and family from the old parish and neighborhood. As blacks begin moving into St. Patrick's [St. Anselm's] in the late 1920s, Patrick Lonigan sold his building to a black man and bought a new home for his family in South Shore. On moving day Patrick confides to his son, Studs:

You know, Bill, your mother and I are gettin' old now, and well, we sort of got used to this neighborhood...The old people...they were all nearby, and they all knew us, and we knew them, and you see, well, this neighborhood was kind of like home. We sort of felt about it the same way I feel about Ireland, where I was born.<sup>4</sup>

Turning to his wife, Mary, Patrick says, "No home will be like this one has been to us. We made our home here, raised our children, and spent the best years of our lives here." Mary, in turn, thinks about their pastor, Father Gilhooley. "He's heartbroken, poor man. Here he built his

beautiful church, and two years after it's built, all his parishioners are gone." Lonigan replies, "Goddamn those niggers!"<sup>5</sup>

From this point in the novel Patrick Lonigan and his son are forever displaced persons. Patrick looks for explanations for these forces beyond his control that disrupted his life in anti-Semitism. Without a home in a familiar neighborhood, the move to South Shore for Studs contributes to his failure in life and early death.<sup>6</sup>

While Studs's demise may be an extreme version of dislocation, the feelings and sentiments his family experienced on moving day were as true in the late 1960s as they were in 1928. Racial animosity on the Southwest side has been fueled by these types of experiences. Ethnic parishes were slowly becoming watered-down versions of what they once were and would eventually die a slow, natural death. But the sudden shock brought on by the Great Migration accelerated this process before the generations caught in between had psychologically removed themselves from a parish-centered life. Many blamed the blacks, and the neighborhoods they now occupy, for better or worse, are sore reminders of a much loved, lost life.

Msgr. McMahon's efforts helped mitigate some of those bitter feelings for many whites as well as his new black parishioners by attempting to turn the process into a forward looking, growing experience. When Mayor Daley clamped down

on the exodus of city workers out of Chicago by requiring them to reside in the city, many refugees from Sabina's and elsewhere have had to accommodate to integrated neighborhoods, particularly in Beverly Hills and Morgan Park. They could not run any further. Racial tensions still exist in these neighborhoods, but some progress is being made.

The Southside black community also has its own literary heritage, offering a flip-side view of race relations here. In 1940 Richard Wright published Native Son, a shocking story of the plight of a disadvantaged black youth, Bigger Thomas, who kills two white women. Bigger's actions and lack of remorse make for a very harsh and unsentimental view of the effects of racism. Lorraine Hansberry's Raison in the Sun, is also set on Chicago's Southside nearly two decades later. It portrays the difficulties of one family, consisting of an elderly mother with her spirited daughter, and her son with his wife and son, living in a cramped two bedroom apartment. When the mother is to receive a sizable life insurance settlement from her deceased husband's policy, the family is torn by what to do with the windfall. The mother wants to buy a decent home for her family. She finds a nice affordable house in a white neighborhood which brings her into conflict with the white neighbors. Despite this slap in the face, the family refuses to be intimidated and moves into their new home. It is a move filled with hope and optimism.

Because America is composed of so many different ethnic, religious, and racial groups and is such a mobile society, conflict and strife seem to be inevitable. Accommodation and compromise are something everyone is, sooner or later, forced to deal with. In the past twenty years, we have seen a revival in interest in one's ethnic heritage. Many new immigrant groups no longer feel as compelled as earlier arrivals to assimilate into mainstream American society. These sentiments, no doubt in part, arise from feelings of loss and dislocation. Farrell's novels chronicle the material success of the Irish and their movement into the mainstream, but the long struggle he claims leaves them spiritually impoverished. But which is the greater right -- to hang on to one's traditions, like the parish, or allow others freedom of movement and residence? For Americans the choice is clear, but the price can be high.

1. Joseph Gremillion and Jim Castelli, The Emerging Parish The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987), 194.
2. Gremillion and Castelli, The Emerging Parish, 196-8.
3. Gremillion and Castelli, The Emerging Parish, 200-2.
4. James T. Farrell, Studs Lonigan (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), 373.
5. Farrell, Studs Lonigan, 374.
6. Fanning, "The Literary Dimension," 131-2.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Archival Sources

- Archdiocese of Chicago Archives and Records Center,  
Northwest Highway, Chicago, Illinois; Parish Annual  
Reports; St. Sabina Parish File.
- Archives of the Sinsinawa Dominicans, Sinsinawa, Wisconsin;  
Sinsinawa Dominican Education Conference  
Proceedings and Addresses; Annals; Criteria for  
Evaluating Catholic Elementary Schools 1965, St.  
Sabina.
- Chicago Historical Society, Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois;  
Catholic Interracial Council Papers; Friendship  
House Papers;
- Chicago Municipal Reference Library, LaSalle Street, Chicago  
Illinois; Board of Election Returns.
- University of Notre Dame, Southbend, Indiana; Msgr. John J.  
Egan Papers.

### Other Primary Sources

- A Community of God and People St. Sabina Church 1916-1966,  
Anniversary History, Private Printing, 1966.
- Chicago City Directory. 1916-1927.
- Hagerty, Cornelius J., C.S.C.. The Hagerty Family History,  
Private Collection.
- McMahon, Rev. Thomas S. McMahon. Father Tom Associate  
Priest. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press,  
1973.
- St. Sabina Parish Census. 1957-1963.
- St. Sabina Parish Sacramental Records. 78th Street, Chicago,  
Illinois; Marriage, Baptism, First Communion, and  
Funeral Registers.
- The Seraph, St. Sabina Parish Bulletin.

Periodical Sources

American Sociological Review

Chicago

Chicago Daily News

Chicago History

Chicago Today

Chicago Tribune

Chicago's American

Community

Daily Compass

Journal of Popular Culture

The New World

Southtown Economist

Interviews

Benzig, Grace. Lockport, IL. 22 October 1986.

Cantwell, Msgr. Daniel. Chicago, IL. 18 August 1985.

Cavanaugh, Lucille. Chicago, IL. 9 September 1985.

Cecilian, Sister. Sinsinawa, WI. 5 January 1989.

Clair, Emmett. Crestwood, IL. 30 September 1986.

Clair, Kate. Crestwood, IL. 30 September 1986.

DesChatelets, Bernard. Hometown, IL. 3 October 1986.

Dunne, Mary S. Oak Lawn, IL. 12 November 1986.

Egan, Msgr. John J. Chicago, IL. 29 July 1985.

Foertsch, Dee. Chicago, IL. 21 Novemeber 1986.

Gaskin, Ann. Chicago, IL. 5 November 1986.

Hagerty, Julia. Chicago, IL. 7 November 1986.

- Hagerty, Nathalie. Hometown, IL. 15 September 1985.
- Hendry, George. Chicago, IL. 11 February 1987.
- Joyce, Mildred. Wilmington, IL. 15 November 1986.
- Kill, Rev. James. LaGrange Park, IL. 21 October 1986.
- Kopcinski, Kris. Chicago, IL. 1 September 1986.
- Martinez, Peter. Chicago, IL. 4 February 1986.
- McClory, Robert. Evanston, IL. 6 January 1986.
- McDermott, John. Chicago, IL. 11 September 1985.
- McMahon, Mary Kay. Oak Lawn, IL. 5 Novemeber 1987.
- McMahon, Rev. Thomas S. Oak Lawn, IL. 10 November 1986.
- Nelligan, Joseph. Chicago, IL. 14 January 1987.
- O'Connor, Helen. Chicago, IL. 6 January 1986.
- O'Rourke, Terence. Chicago, IL. 29 August 1985 and 30 September 1986.
- Ortman, Sister Margaret. Sinsinawa, WI. 5 January 1989.
- Riordan, Rev. Jerome. Hanover Park, IL. 10 August 1987.
- Schultz, Eileen. Chicago, IL. 8 February 1986.
- Schultz, Irvin. Chicago, IL. 8 February 1986.
- Sullivan, Rev. Daniel. 12 December 1986.

### Secondary Sources

- Allsop, Kenneth. The Bootleggers The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era. New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1968.
- Barlow, Carrie Mae. Auburn-Gresham The Survey of a Local Community. Ph.D. Dissert.. University of Chicago, 1934.
- Bender, Thomas. Community and Social Change in America. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.



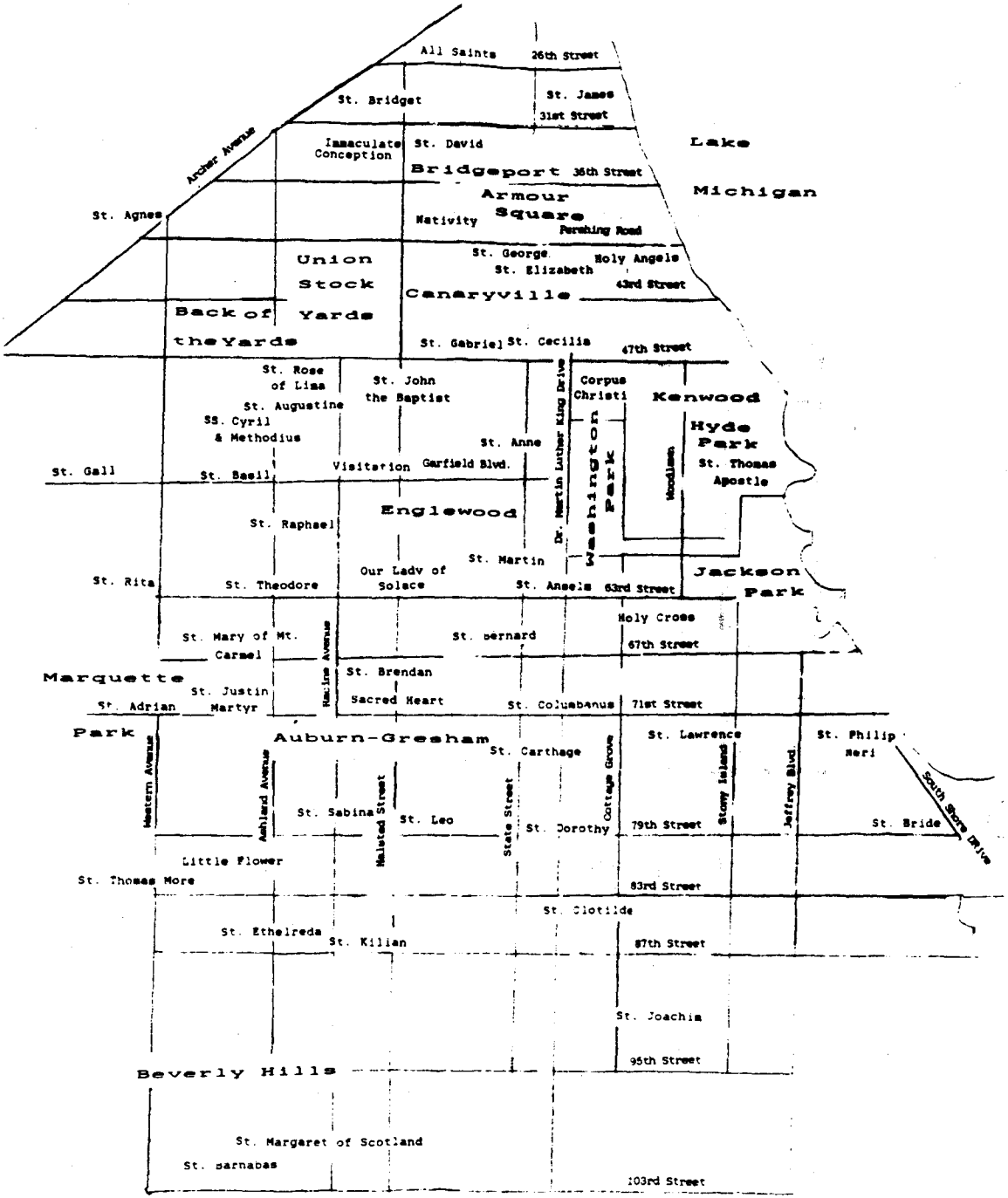
- Bodnar, John. The Transplanted A History of Immigrants in Urban America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Brewer, Eileen Mary. Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women 1860-1920. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987.
- Brown, Thomas N.. Irish-American Nationalism 1870-1890. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1966.
- Burns, Jeffrey M. "The Christian Family Movement," Working Paper Series. Spring 1982. Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. University of Notre Dame.
- Cook, Frederick Francis. Bygone Days in Chicago Recollections of the "Garden City" of the Sixties. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1910.
- Cogley, John. Catholic America. Garden City, NY: Image Book, 1973.
- Community Area Data Book. Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, 1970.
- Dolan, Jay P. The American Catholic Experience A History from Colonial Times to the Present. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Immigrant Church New York's Irish and German Catholics 1815-1865. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
- Duis, Perry R. The Saloon Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston 1880-1920. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Fanning, Charles, ed. Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish An Anthology. New York: Arno Press, 1976.
- Fanning, Charles, Ellen Skerrett, and John Corrigan. Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish. Chicago: Center for Urban Policy, Loyola University, 1980.
- Farrell, James T. My Baseball Diary. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Studs Lonigan. New York: The Modern Library, 1938.

- Fish, John, Gordon Nelson, Walter Stuhr, and Lawrence Witmer. The Edge of the Ghetto A Study of the Church Involvement in Community Organization. New York: The Seabury Press, 1966.
- Fox, Roger and Deborah Haines. Black Homeowners in Transition Areas. Chicago Urban League, 1981.
- Greeley, Andrew M. The American Catholic A Social Portrait. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Irish-Americans The Rise to Money and Power. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.
- Gremillion, Joseph and Jim Castelli. The Emerging Parish The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Halsey, William M. The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment 1920-1940. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.
- Hauser, Philip and Evelyn M. Kitagawa. Local Community Fact Book for Chicago, 1950. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Hirsch, Arnold R. Making the Second Ghetto Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Historic City The Settlement of Chicago. Chicago: Department of Development and Planning, 1976.
- Holli, Melvin and Peter D'A. Jones, ed. Ethnic Chicago. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- Holt, Glen E. and Dominic A. Pacyga. Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods The Loop and Southside. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society Press, 1979.
- Jackson, Kenneth. The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Jentz, John B. and Irene Hansen, ed. Rethinking the History of Religion in Chicago: A Symposium. The Newberry Papers in Family and Community History. Paper 86-1.
- Kantowicz, Edward R. Corporation Sole Cardinal Mundelein and Chicago Catholicism. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

- Kitagawa, Evelyn M. and Karl E. Taeber, ed. Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area 1960. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Koenig, Rev. Harry C., S.T.D., ed. A History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Chicago: The New World Publishing Co., 1980.
- Kotre, John. Simple Gifts The Lives of Pat and Patty Crowley. New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1979.
- McCaffrey, Lawrence J. The Irish Diaspora in America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.
- McCaffrey, Lawrence J., Ellen Skerrett, Michael F. Funchion, and Charles Fanning. The Irish in Chicago. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1987.
- Meagher, Timothy J., ed.. From Paddy to Studs Irish-American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880 to 1920. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Pacyga, Dominic A. and Ellen Skerrett. Chicago City of Neighborhoods. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986.
- The People of Chicago Who We Are and Who We Have Been Census Data on Foreign Born, Foreign Stock and Race, 1837-1970. City of Chicago: Department of Development and Planning, 1976.
- Pierce, Bessie Louise. A History of Chicago The Beginning of a City 1673-1848. Vol. I. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.
- Philpott, Thomas Lee. The Slum and the Ghetto Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago 1880-1930. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Rader, Benjamin G. American Sports From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983.
- Royko, Mike. Boss Richard J. Daley of Chicago. New York: New American Library, 1971.
- Sanders, James W.. The Education of an Urban Minority Catholics in Chicago 1833-1965. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

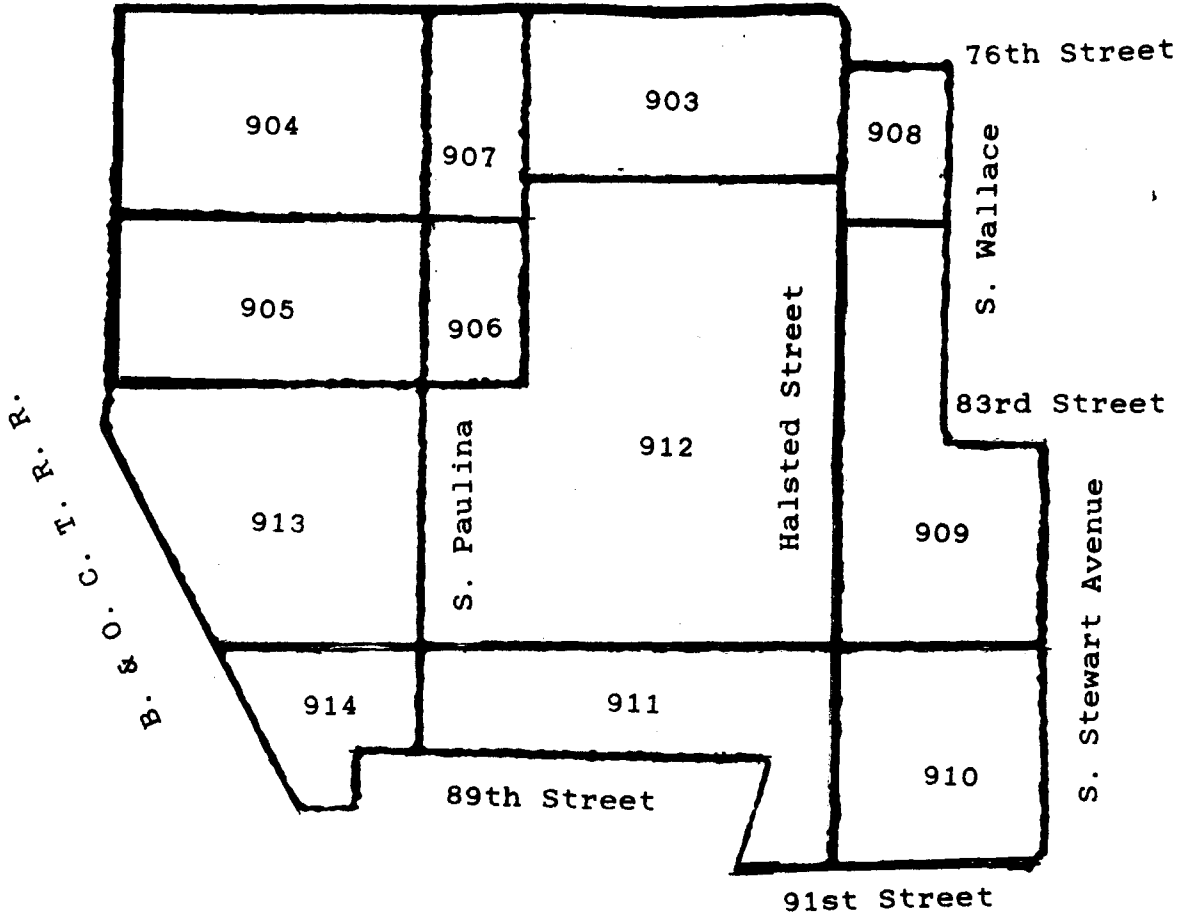
- Shanabruch, Charles. Chicago's Catholics The Evolution of an American Identity. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- Sharum, Elizabeth Louise. A Strange Fire Burning: A History of the Friendship House Movement. Ph.D. Dissert.. Texas Tech University, 1977.
- Slayton, Robert. Back of the Yards The Making of a Local Democracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Spear, Allan H. Black Chicago The Making of a Negro Ghetto 1890-1920. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Sullivan, Gerald E.. The Story of Englewood 1835-1923. Chicago: Foster and McDonnell, 1924.
- Thernstrom, Stephen. The Other Bostonians Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Wirth, Louis and Margaret Furez. Local Community Fact Book 1938. Chicago: Chicago Recreational Commission, 1938.
- Wakin, Edward and Father Joseph F. Scheuer. The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church. New York: New American Library, 1966.

**APPENDIX A**



Chicago's Southside

C. & W. I. R. R.



Auburn-Gresham

**APPENDIX B**



TABLE I

## TOP 25 CHURCHES OF BAPTISM OF PERSONS MARRIED AT ST. SABINA

Parish	Nationality	Date Est.	# Baptized	%
1. Visitation	Irish	1886	140	.10
2. St. Gabriel	Irish	1880	121	.08
3. Nativity of Our Lord	Irish	1868	85	.06
4. Ireland	--	--	85	.06
5. St. Brendan	Irish	1904	79	.05
6. St. Leo	Irish	1885	65	.04
7. St. Cecilia	Irish	1885	65	.04
8. All Saints	Irish	1875	51	.03
9. St. Anne	Irish	1865	40	.03
10. St. Rose of Lima	Irish	1881	35	.02
11. St. Basil	Irish-German	1904	34	.02
12. St. Bridget	Irish	1850	33	.02
13. St. Augustine	German	1879	28	.02
14. St. Anthony of Padua	German	1873	25	.02
15. St. George	German	1892	24	.02
16. St. Martin	German	1886	24	.02
17. St. John the Baptist	French	1892	24	.02
18. St. David	Irish	1905	21	.01
19. St. Bernard	Irish	1887	18	.01
20. Sacred Heart	German	1894	17	.01
21. St. Elizabeth	Irish	1881	14	.01
22. St. Patrick	Irish	1846	12	.01
23. St. John	Irish	1859	12	.01
24. Holy Angels	Irish	1880	12	.01
25. St. Agnes	Irish	1878	10	.01
Total			1074	.74
Total Marriages			1464	

Based on St. Sabina Marriage Records, 1916-1941. For the history and nationality of these parishes see Rev. Msgr. Harry Koenig, S.T.D. ed., The History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese (Chicago: The New World Publishing Co., 1980).

Since Roman Catholics practice infant baptism, those baptized in these parishes would have been recently born -- establishing them as American born Irish.

TABLE II

OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE OF GAINFUL WORKERS  
FROM 10 YEARS OF AGE IN AUBURN-GRESHAM 1930

<u>Industry Group</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<b>CONSTRUCTION</b>		
-- Building industry	2236	70
-- Independent hand trades	39	74
-- Other trade industries	458	98
<b>MINERAL EXTRACTION</b>		
-- Clay, glass, and stone industries	121	16
-- Chemical and allied industries	306	104
<b>LIGHT MANUFACTURING</b>		
-- Textile industries	19	25
-- Electrical machinery and supply	269	64
-- Lumber and furniture industry	143	26
-- Shoe factory	11	2
<b>HEAVY MANUFACTURING</b>		
-- Auto factories	164	27
-- Blast furnace & steel mills	258	45
-- Rubber factory	24	7
-- Other iron and steel industries	107	27
-- Other manufacturing industries	637	169
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>		
-- Banking and brokerage	609	300
-- Insurance and real estate	559	261
-- Other professional and semi-prof.	676	871
<b>PRINTING</b>		
-- Printing, publishing, engraving	518	160
<b>PUBLIC SERVICE</b>		
-- Postal service	210	12
-- Construction and street maint.	90	1
<b>MEAT INDUSTRY</b>		
-- Slaughter and packing houses	909	203
-- Other food and allied industries	173	53
<b>SERVICE</b>		
-- Laundries, cleaning and pressing shops	178	48
-- Domestic and personal services	334	410
-- Recreation and amusement	133	77
-- Garages, greasing stations	122	5
-- Auto repair shops	172	7

TRANSPORTATION		
-- Steam railroads	1490	238
-- Street railroads	710	25
-- Other transportation and communication	344	30
UTILITIES		
-- Telegraph and telephone	325	605
WHOLESALE-RETAIL		
-- Bakeries	164	17
-- Clothing industries	111	86
-- other	3026	1015
Total	18,562	5669

From: Carrie Mae Barlow, Auburn-Gresham A Survey of a Local Community, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1934), 45.

TABLE III  
 OCCUPATION OF ST. SABINA PARISHIONERS AND PERSONS  
 OF IRISH SURNAMES WITHIN THE PARISH BOUNDARIES

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>%</u>
I. High White Collar	16	.09
II. Low White Collar	51	.27
III. Blue Collar Skilled	43	.23
IV. Blue Collar Semiskilled	64	.34
V. Unskilled	16	.08
<hr/>		
TOTAL	190	

Based on names derived from St. Sabina Marriage Records and Chicago City Directory, 1916-1927. Occupational categories are based on those devised by Stephen Thernstrom in The Other Bostonians Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970, Appendix B. On the Socio-Economic Ranking of Occupations.

TABLE IV  
CHURCHES IN AUBURN-GRESHAM

Name of Church	Organized	Membership 1934
CATHOLIC CHURCHES		
St. Leo	1886	8600 persons
St. Sabina	1916	7000 "
Little Flower	1925	5000 "
St. Ethelreda	1926	1600 "
St. Kilian	1905	3600 "
		25,800
LUTHERAN CHURCHES		
Trinity Evang. Lutheran	1934	330 persons
German Lutheran	1887	400 "
Faith Evang. Lutheran	1914	450 "
Mt. Zion Lutheran	1914	318 "
St. Matthew Lutheran	1911	?
Church of Peace	1886	1400 families
		1498 persons
		1400 families
METHODIST CHURCHES		
Gresham Methodist	1882	350 persons
Calvary M.E.	1915	1000 "
Swedish Methodist	1914	350 "
		1700 "
EPISCOPAL CHURCHES		
Bethany Meth. Episc.	1927	75 persons
Annunciation	1889	218 "
		293
OTHER CHURCHES		
Brainerd Community	1893	230 persons
Seventh Presbyterian	1884	350 "
Foster Park Baptist	1928	450 "
Hope Reformed	*	*
		1030

\*Roman Catholic parishes count all baptized persons which would include infants. Protestant congregations generally count adults.

From: Barlow, Auburn-Gresham, 28; Parish Annual Reports, Archdiocese of Chicago Archives, 1934.

TABLE V  
1928 ELECTION RETURNS IN ST. SABINA PRECINCTS

<u>18th Ward Precinct</u>	<u>Al Smith %</u>	<u>Herbert Hoover %</u>	<u>Total</u>
33	263 .59	183 .41	449
34	288 .56	219 .43	512
35	265 .52	239 .47	505
Total Precincts	816 .56	641 .44	1457
TOTAL WARD	18,358 .53	16,330 .47	34,688
<u>19th Ward Precincts</u>			
22	318 .68	152 .32	499
23	214 .64	122 .36	377
24	281 .57	212 .43	494
25	266 .66	139 .34	406
Total Precincts	1079 .63	625 .37	1704
TOTAL WARD	19,318 .41	27,548 .58	46,866

From: Board of Elections, Presidential Election November 6, 1928, Chicago Municipal Reference Library.

TABLE VI  
ST. SABINA REVENUE COLLECTIONS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Seat Money</u>	<u>Sunday &amp; Holyday</u>	<u>Carnival/Bazaar</u>
1916	873	600	2055
1920	6727	6169	15,000
1924	11,906	11,234	26,770
1928	19,766	51,884	--
1932	17,772	43,722	--
1936	20,428	45,185	11,231
1940	19,689	42,248	14,327
1944	22,283	58,919	--
1948	28,589	77,879	--
1952	25,009	105,807	--
1956	--	179,178	--
1960	--	239,842	--

Based on St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE VII

## CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC MARRIAGES IN ST. SABINA

<u>Year</u>	<u>Catholic Marriages</u>	<u>Mixed Marriages</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
1921	13	7	.35	20
1925	46	12	.21	58
1929	45	18	.29	63
1933	47	7	.13	54
1937	53	20	.27	73
1940	104	17	.14	121
Total (Complete)	811	216	.21	1027

From St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE VIII

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING ST. SABINA GRADE SCHOOL

<u>Year</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Children in Public Schools</u>		
				<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
1917	116	124	240			
1918	137	128	265	8	10	18
1919	200	189	389	5	7	12
1920	221	220	441	6	5	11
1921	249	251	500	5	8	13
1922	290	260	550	16	19	35
1923	290	310	600	-	-	30
1924	431	419	850	18	11	29
1925	512	464	976	-	-	-
1926	452	449	901	12	12	24
1927	530	485	1015	24	16	40
1928	544	489	1033	-	-	40
1929	602	533	1135	-	-	100
1930	595	555	1150	Including H.S.		190
1931	576	568	1144	-	-	80
1932	592	548	1140	-	-	80
1933	669	572	1241	-	-	50
1934	664	568	1232	-	-	50
1935	665	575	1240	-	-	50
1936	651	569	1220	-	-	50
1937	645	589	1234	-	-	50
1938	642	588	1230	-	-	45
1939	617	571	1188	-	-	40
1940	593	584	1177	-	-	60

From St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE IX  
ST. SABINA PARISH CENSUS  
OCCUPATIONS 1957-1963

Occupation

I. High White Collar	211	(.08)
II. Low White Collar	930	(.37)
III. Blue Collar Skilled	642	(.25)
IV. Blue Collar Semiskilled	731	(.29)
V. Unskilled	18	(.01)
Total	2532	

TABLE X  
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF CHILDREN FROM ST. SABINA  
1942-1960

<u>Year</u>	<u>St. Sabina</u>	<u>Public School</u>
1942	1155	75
1943	1102	120
1944	1125	116
1945	1080	104
1946	1095	144
1947	1048	100
1948	1080	108
1949	1074	99
1950	1086	90
1951	1070	67
1952	1075	71
1953	1103	55
1954	1090	60
1955	1083	58
1956	1083	46
1957	1033	65
1958	1027	62
1959	1024	68
1960	1015	46

Based on St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.



TABLE XI  
CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC MARRIAGES AT ST. SABINA  
1940-1959

<u>Year</u>	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>%</u>
1940	104	17	.16
1941	79	31	.39
1942	67	13	.19
1943	46	11	.24
1944	45	14	.31
1945	47	13	.28
1946	85	23	.27
1947	110	16	.15
1948	84	21	.25
1949	<u>69</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>.23</u>
	736	175	.24
1950	95	12	.13
1951	105	9	.09
1952	65	21	.32
1953	95	18	.19
1954	76	9	.12
1955	84	13	.15
1956	83	20	.24
1957	81	9	.11
1958	66	14	.21
1959	<u>78</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>.12</u>
	828	134	.17

Based on St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE XII  
TOP TWENTY-FIVE PARISHES OF BAPTISM OF  
PERSONS MARRIED AT ST. SABINA  
1942 TO 1951

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Number %</u>	
1. St. Sabina	--	238	.26
2. Visitation	Irish	83	.09
3. St. Leo	Irish	76	.08
4. Out of Town	--	70	.08
5. St. Brendan	Irish	53	.06
6. St. Basil	Irish-German	33	.04
7. St. Gabriel	Irish	31	.03
8. Nativity of Our Lord	Irish	19	.02
9. St. Theodore	Irish	19	.02
10. Sacred Heart	German	18	.02
11. St. Bernard	Irish	17	.02
12. St. Anne	Irish	16	.02
13. St. Kilian	Irish-German	15	.02
14. All Saints	Irish	15	.02
15. St. Rita	Mixed	15	.02
16. St. John the Baptist	French	14	.02
17. St. George	German	13	.01
18. St. Raphael	German	12	.01
19. St. Augustine	German	12	.01
20. St. Agnes	Irish	11	.01
21. St. David	Irish	10	.01
22. St. Anselm	Irish	10	.01
23. St. Thomas Apostle	Irish +	9	.01
24. Little Flower	Irish +	8	.01
25. St. Justin Martyr	Irish	8	.01
<b>TOTAL MARRIAGES</b>		<b>908</b>	

The remaining parishes were primarily Irish as well. However other national parishes became increasingly represented over the years.

Based on St. Sabina Marriage Records.

TABLE XIII  
TOP TWENTY-FIVE PARISHES OF BAPTISM OF  
PERSONS MARRIED AT ST. SABINA  
1952, 1955-1959

Parish	Nationality	Number	%
1. St. Sabina	--	141	.26
2. Ireland	--	37	.07
3. St. Leo	Irish	34	.06
4. Visitation	Irish	23	.04
5. Little Flower	Irish +	20	.04
6. St. Rita	Mixed	18	.03
7. Sacred Heart	German	17	.03
8. Holy Cross	Irish	16	.03
9. St. Brendan	Irish	15	.03
10. Out of Town	--	15	.03
11. St. Kilian	Irish-German	14	.03
12. St. Bernard	Irish	13	.02
13. St. Columbanus	Irish	13	.02
14. St. Basil	Irish-German	10	.02
15. St. Theodore	Irish	10	.02
16. St. Gabriel	Irish	8	.01
17. Nativity of Our Lord	Irish	8	.01
18. St. Anne	Irish	8	.01
19. Mercy Hospital	--	8	.01
20. Santa Maria Incoronata	Italian	7	.01
21. St. Margaret of Scotland	Irish-German	7	.01
22. St. Dorothy	Mixed	7	.01
23. St. Carthage	Irish	7	.01
24. St. John the Baptist	French	6	.01
25. St. Martin	German	6	.01
Total		<u>468</u>	<u>.86</u>
Totam Marriages		547	

Based on St. Sabina Marriage Records.

TABLE XIV  
 PARISHES OF BAPTISM OF FIRST COMMUNICANTS IN ST. SABINA  
 1950-1959

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
1. St. Sabina	--	735	.56
2. St. Leo	--	93	.07
3. St. Columbanus	Irish	44	.03
4. St. Bernard	Irish	37	.03
5. St. Brendan	Irish	33	.03
6. Sacred Heart	German	33	.03
7. Little Flower	Irish +	32	.02
8. Visitation	Irish	26	.02
9. St. Carthage	Irish	24	.02
10. Out of Town	--	19	.01
11. St. Dorothy	Mixed	18	.01
12. St. Rita	Mixed	16	.01
13. St. Ethelreda	Irish	15	.01
14. St. Kilian	Irish-German	15	.01
15. St. Adrian	Mixed	15	.01
16. Nativity of Our Lord	Irish	13	.01
17. St. Justin Martyr	Irish	13	.01
18. St. Theodore	Irish	13	.01
19. Holy Name	Mixed	10	.01
20. St. Margaret of Scotland	Irish-German	10	.01
21. St. Gregory	German +	9	.01
22. All Saints	Irish	9	.01
23. St. Thomas the Apostle	Irish +	9	.01
24. St. Clara	German	9	.01
25. St. Cecilia	Irish	8	.01
Total		1258	.96
			1313

Communicants

Based on St. Sabina's First Communion Register.

TABLE XV  
ST. SABINA CONTRIBUTIONS TO OSC

<u>Year</u>	<u>OSC Contribution</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>IAF</u>	<u>Total Parish Expenditures</u>
1960	10,000	.02	7530	400,586
1961	19,000	.05	--	371,524
1962	17,799	.06	--	321,735
1963	16,713	.05	--	339,845
1964	12,700	.04	--	357,956
1965	<u>15,315</u>	.05	--	313,529
Total	91,713			

From St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE XVI  
THE AGING OF AUBURN-GRESHAM

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>
5 -	.09	.06	.09	.08
5-19	.24	.22	.20	.21
20-44	.46	.42	.36	.27
45-64	.17	.23	.28	.31
65 +	.04	.07	.08	.14

From U.S. Census Reports for those years.

TABLE XVII  
ST. SABINA PARISH ENROLLMENT

<u>Year</u>	<u>Families</u>	<u>Persons</u>
1958	2965	10,400
1964	2930	8,932
1965	1908	6,525
1966	900	2,970
1967	530	1,560
1968 estimated	400	--

Based on St. Sabina Annual Reports for those years.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Eileen M. McMahon has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. William Galush, Director  
Associate Professor, History, Loyola

Dr. Lewis Erenberg  
Associate Professor, History, Loyola

Dr. Kathleen McCourt  
Associate Professor, Sociology, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 19, 1989  
Date

William Galush  
Director's Signature