

## **The History of St. Eulalia**

Born in Merida Spain, Eulalia was a thirteen-year-old maiden who was martyred for her faith. During the persecution of Christians by Emperor Diocletian, she heroically denounced Judge Dacian for attempting to destroy souls by compelling them to renounce the only true God. Despite threats and torture, she refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods. For this, her body was torn apart and burned; yet, she held steadfast in her faith. Her Feast Day is December 10. She is the Patron Saint of sailors, safe sailing and against drought.

## **The History of St. Eulalia's Church**

The first Catholic Church in Elmhurst, PA began as a small mission church associated with St. Catherine's Parish and tended to the spiritual needs of the approximately 20 year-round residents living in the area. The cornerstone of the first small stone church, located along the then Drinker Turnpike, was placed on June 27, 1927 on land that was gifted to the diocese by the Vogelbocker family. The original structure was built using funds donated by Doctor Sullivan with the request that the church be named after his daughter, Eulalia. It continued serving as a mission church for St. Catherine's Parish until it was established as a separate parish in 1950 by his Excellency the Most Rev. Bishop William J. Hafey. Monsignor Michael C. Polcha was named as pastor.

At that time, 75 to 80 families made up the parish family and Jacob Polcha, Monsignor Polcha's brother served as organist and choirmaster. The Christian Mothers Confraternity was established in 1951 and local children of the parish attended school at Our Lady of Fatima Institute. Monsignor Polcha served as pastor of St. Eulalia's Parish until October 17, 1958 when Father John J. Gorman became pastor. Father Gorman received the title of Monsignor in 1960.

Seeing the great influx of families to the area, Monsignor Gorman knew that someday the humble stone church would not meet the needs of the parish and was often heard saying "Someday the Bishop is going to send some strong, young buck out here to build a bigger church." In 1966, Monsignor spearheaded the purchase of approximately 68 acres of land located on Blue Shutters Road in Roaring Brook Township where the current St. Eulalia's church stands. He also established a building fund which grew to approximately \$500,000 under his care.

In the fall of 1980 Monsignor Gorman fell ill and died on February 20, 1981. During Monsignor's illness, Father Peter Crynes served as substitute until a new pastor was appointed. On June 30, 1981 Father John J. Kilpatrick, the "young strong buck," became the third pastor of St. Eulalia's Parish and would serve in that role for 15 years. During the first few years of Father Kilpatrick's leadership, it became painfully apparent that the small stone church on the Drinker Turnpike would no longer satisfy the growing needs of the 550 or so families of the parish. The young active parish began to expand its committee structure and participation within the parish. A new parish choir formed in October 1981 with Anthony DeScipio as choir director and Dottie Magnotta as organist. The formation of the Men and Women society occurred during May of 1982 to coordinate the many committees and events in the parish and spearhead the building process of a new church. On August 15, 1982, Architect David Hemmler, of Hemmler-Burns Architects / Engineers presented concept sketches for a new parish church, hall and rectory and a building fund drive began in the spring of 1983 with a goal of \$300,000. Appreciating the charm and artistic character of the original church, parishioners asked the architect to incorporate as many of these items as was possible into the new design. As a result, items such as the stained glass windows, marble altar; tabernacle and Stations of the Cross were refurbished and relocated to the new church.

On August 28, 1983 a groundbreaking ceremony was held and work continued throughout the winter with contractors completing the three-building complex in the summer of 1984. The final price tag for the three buildings and grounds was \$1.3 million. A solemn dedication mass was held on July 15, 1984, with principal celebrant his Excellency The Most Rev. James C. Timlin and concelebrants Reverend John J. Kilpatrick, Monsignor Michael C. Polcha, Reverend William D. Campbell, Reverend J. Pete Crynes and other invited clergy.

In the fall of 1984, Frank and Mary August organized the first church breakfast to be held in the recently completed parish hall. Not many could have imagined at that time of the first parish breakfast held with the help of 25 volunteers and serving more than 200 people that more than 35 years later the parish breakfast would continue to this day and still be a major fundraiser for the church.

During his 15 years as our pastor, Father John Kilpatrick guided St Eulalia's Parish in many ways: teaching us God's way as a disciple of Christ, inspiring us to pay off the debt for the new complex in record time, welcoming the RCIA movement and forming the Parish Council in September 1992. His good humor and kind ways made him a close friend to so many as head of St. Eulalia's parish until his sabbatical in 1996.

In June 1996, the Bishop sent Monsignor F. Allen Conlan to be the next pastor of St. Eulalia's Church. Warm and funny and full of the Holy Spirit, Monsignor Conlan brought joy and comfort with his colorful homilies, the creation of the children's choir and the creation of a scholarship fund for graduating seniors of the parish, as well as the tradition of giving out packs of Oreos to children on backpack Sunday to start the new school year.

To share the blessings of the parish and its facilities, Monsignor opened the door to his house and the hall to many community organizations, making the hall, classrooms and rectory a hive of activity, including the start of the American Red Cross Halloween Blood Drive in 2004. Monsignor's last bit of advice during those late-night meetings in the rectory dining room were to "just make sure you turn off the lights and close the doors when you are leaving" and off he'd go to bed.

In June 2004 Father John Polednak was named the new pastor of St. Eulalia's Church. Under Father John's scholarly and spiritual leadership, St. Eulalia's church worked through a very difficult time of diocesan review and consolidation and survived and thrived, including building up the Summer Festival from a small farmer's market into the annual three-day event it is today. During this period, Father Peter Menghini came to live in residence at the rectory while serving as the principal spiritual leader at St. Mary's Villa and serving as a great asset to the parish of St. Eulalia. The sixth pastor of St. Eulalia's Church was Father Richard Fox, who served from June 2009 until 2010.

In 2010, St. Eulalia's was blessed to welcome its seventh pastor Monsignor John W. Jordan. From the very beginning, Monsignor Jordan challenged his flock to think big and to be inclusive. His strong background in education and fundraising made Monsignor Jordan uniquely qualified and the right person to lead our parish through its next transformative period.

Throughout the years Monsignor Jordan molded St. Eulalia's Church into the thriving parish we are today. In 2014 Monsignor Jordan and the Parish Council launched the 3rd Cornerstone Capital Campaign to expand our facility to meet the needs of our growing parish community.

Project highlights included a new education wing to accommodate the growing number of students in the youth programs, expansion of the lobby and gathering area of the parish and new multi-purpose meeting rooms. Other additions include new restrooms downstairs for teachers and students, expanded restrooms in the Parish Center, storage areas and general renovations to the Parish Center.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 24, 2017 at 4pm with Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton presiding.

Through the amazing generosity of many families throughout our community, funds were raised for the project to move forward. Completed in early 2019, the new Monsignor F. Allan Conlan Religious Education Center added nine new classrooms and remodeled the eight existing classrooms. A new entrance lobby adjoins the new Saint Therese Chapel where parishioners and visitors have a spacious gathering environment as well as adjoining areas for the Youth Group, Music Ministry, meetings and celebrations. In addition, a newly remodeled Parish Center with large banquet and meeting facilities will be served by an updated kitchen and is poised to serve our growing community for years to come.

In July 2019, St. Eulalia Parish welcomed Reverend Jeffrey Tudgay as pastor, and were thrilled to know Monsignor Jordan would continue to serve the parish as *Pastor Emeritus*. Father Tudgay's first priority was learning the needs of our current parish family. To do so, he turned to the new Parish Council members and asked them to create a comprehensive Parish Life Survey. The Council was all set to launch the survey in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States. Father Tudgay's leadership got our parish through the ups and downs of

the Pandemic thru embracing technology to stream masses and Stations of the Cross. As restrictions eased, Father Tudgay welcomed parishioners safely back to the parish campus. And the Parish Life Survey was finally released in November 2021.

In June 2022, Father Tudgay was informed that he was being reassigned to St. Peter's Cathedral in Scranton. And in August of 2022 we welcomed Reverend David Cramer as our ninth (and current) pastor.

Father Dave stresses the importance of welcoming the stranger, serving others, and spreading the Good News. Under his leadership, our parish has partnered with St. Francis of Assisi kitchen to provide a free, hot community meal every Tuesday in our parish hall.

Priests who have served the St Eulalia community are:

Monsignor Michael C. Polcha

Monsignor John J. Gorman

The Reverend Peter Crynes

The Reverend John. J. Kilpatrick

Monsignor F. Allan Conlan

The Reverend John V. Polednak

The Reverend Gerard F. Lupa

The Reverend Richard E. Fox

The Reverend Peter D. Menghini

Monsignor John W. Jordan

The Reverend Jeffrey D. Tudgay

The Reverend David W. Cramer

