Wayman Johnson
16h ·

Throwback Thursday: A little Church History being brief!!!

When we first moved to Aiken SC fifty years ago, we joined St Gerard Catholic Church. It was a mission parish at that time supported by the Diocese of Charleston and St Mary Help of Christian Church. Father Clark said Mass but also was assigned to Our Lady of Peace church where he spent most of his time. There were eight active families; the Paige's, Robinsons , Barnwell, Keys, and my family. There were a few other individuals. We had no instruments but Sean Barnwell as a young youth lead the singing with his strong and pleasant voice until the Barnwells no longer attended. Note that Sean became a dentist and the girl he married became principal of Schofield Middle school.

Mr Key, husband of Ann Marie Paige Key, a daughter of one of the original members, brought in his " keyboard " and provided music until he died. At that time some growth but not a lot of growth in the parish.

A new priest. Father Brown, who spent more time with the the parish than the previous priest met with what was called the church council now called the Parish Pastoral council made up with the men who regularly attended Mass to discuss ideas to gain new members, get name recognition and possibly a musician. We decided on forming a basketball team from boys in the community. I was coach and Mr PW Robinson assistance coach. We joined the Aiken Church League and was very successful winning our division title but losing to Second Baptist in the City Championship game. Father attended many of the games and was full of joy when we defeated St Mary's team. Two of our players went on and started with the St Angela Academy high school basketball team. We did accomplish name recognition since we had people saying they didn't know there was another Catholic Church in Aiken and membership increased somewhat but I don't remember getting a sustained musician.

It was during the time of Father Dillon that we saw considerable growth. He came to St Gerard from an assignment in the Holy Land and was a member of the charismatic movement and many involved in that movement became members. A lot of praise singing, raising holy hands and speaking in tongues help to define this community. Plenty of singing and visiting musicians but I don't remember one person in charge. St Gerard became an independent parish during this time to my recollection.

Sometime near the end of Father Dillon first assignment and the beginnings of Father Gillian assignment to St Gerard, I did not attend St Gerard due to circumstances, but returning in time to hear Father Gillian request we form a choir and asked for a piano to be donated. My mom recently passed and left me her piano. When a child she wanted me to learn to play but I wasn't interested but made it though I guess was the third grade of piano lessons. I was never going to learn to play the piano and she being a religious person I knew she would be please that her piano will be used for worshiping God. It was tuned and then donated and used for many years providing music in the church sanctuary. Father Gillian also was instrumental in getting our iconic cross showing Christ superimposed from a cross reaching out to all ethnicities. It captured the essence of St Gerard!

St Gerard is now very vibrant and with our present priest. Father Emmanuel, had upgraded the grounds, and all the buildings and sanctuary to include a new piano. So my mother's piano is now retired and located in the fellowship hall. It was used in the past for choir practice and is available for the youth to play during events. It may be old being used when I was child at family gatherings at Christmas with family singing Christmas carols, my sister and one of my nieces practicing on it; but it will always sound good to my ears!

Enjoy the
Little Things
PIC•COLLAGE