

# Our Lady of Fatima

## Dedication



Our Lady of Fatima Parish is 25 years old. Realizing that the Roman Catholic Church is almost 2,000, that our country recently celebrated its 200th anniversary, and that Wilton was incorporated 176 years ago, it doesn't seem like such a feat. But it is!

Twenty-five years ago Wilton was only a mission of St. Mary's Parish in Norwalk. Its sixty Catholic families attended one Sunday Mass at American Legion Hall in the Center.

Now the parish is our own, and its rolls exceed 900 families. Consider this. In 1953 out of Wilton's less than 7,000 citizens, only 3% were Catholic. Since the census count today is 17,100, the proportionate growth to an 18% Catholic population is immense! Exciting?

Even more exciting is the realization that Our Lady of Fatima was in fact established by the people, for the people.

Delving through yellowed newspaper clippings, dated letters, and brittle photographs, it was interesting to note that Legion Hall's location was then called Cottage Row; the land selected for our future church was depicted "rolling hills." Town Hall across the street had a large central room used for town meetings, theatrical productions, major social events and even basketball games. Four-digit phone numbers were preceded by "Wilton," meetings were conducted at afternoon "teas," and The Wilton Bulletin was a tabloid.

The eight parishioners who met one evening not too long ago, designing the format of our 25th anniversary publication, wanted to

capture the overriding spirit of our founders. Two were present. Both had been part of the original contingent who sought permission from the bishop to build a church in Wilton.

It was Larry Graham who recalled how it all began. Each Catholic family had been asked to contribute an equal share of \$19.83 toward the purchase of land. The mold had been cast. So 25 years later each parish family was asked for an \$8.47 share to enable the editors to estimate production.

And Margaret Ryan was there. She has become an invaluable historian who has generously shared her experiences with each of our history writers. So have countless other parishioners. Like the Degelmans, both George and Eileen, on whom we could always depend, not only to write, but to fulfill our endless requests.

Our celebration has been magnificent! The school children kicked it off with "The Sound of Music." Then the parish produced "Another Celebration — Onstage" and Memorabilia Day, when we were able to see and touch mementos of our growth. A family picnic followed by a gala dinner-dance are culminated by the solemnity of today's celebrated Mass.

"Our Lady of Fatima: The First 25 Years" is dedicated to the parishioners of tomorrow. May the faith of our founders, which gave strength to our achievement, help perpetuate your dreams, in the name of our Lord.

May God bless us all!

October 15, 1978