

Dear Parishioners,

Perhaps you are aware of the fact that the Rockford Diocese is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary. There will be a year-long celebration that will include diocesan-wide liturgies, the publication of a new history, regional celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation and many other wonderful activities and events. One hundred years is an incredible milestone and I am honored to be a priest of the Rockford Diocese at this time.

However, were you aware of the fact that St. Catherine of Genoa Parish is the first one to be established after Rockford became a diocese? It is true. "It was on September 1, 1912, that the first Catholic church in Genoa was dedicated by Bishop Peter J. Muldoon." ¹ Fr. Thomas O'Brien was sent to Genoa after a series of meetings in our city to conduct a census of the city and to begin raising funds. A large donation of \$1,000 was given by Miss Elizabeth Finkler in memory of her mother Catherine. Our parish is named St. Catherine in her honor.

In five short years our parish is going to be 100 years old. This is something we should celebrate – and in a very large, meaningful way. The significance of this event is huge. One of the most difficult challenges we face as a parish, and as a Church, is the fact that so many people, over the last twenty or thirty years, have lost that commitment to the sacred act of communal worship. There are lots of reasons for this, and assigning blame to answer the question "Why?" is not necessary for us now. But, this is a wonderful time for us to consider how integral our parish is to the life of our community. Those of you who read the bulletin, those of you who read this letter care deeply for our parish.

Beginning this summer, when those who are the leaders of our parish meet, we are going to start talking about what we can do to celebrate a profound milestone in the life of our faith community. One hundred years is a great achievement and we need to start planning now for the celebration that will take place in just five short years. Are you interested...?

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel

¹ That All May Be One: A History of the Rockford Diocese by Robert R. Miller page 151