

Good News

Praise Jesus!

Did you know that a saint in the making was at one time a priest assigned to St. Mary's Church?

Msgr. Nelson Baker was born on February 16, 1842 and after several years in successful business ventures, was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Buffalo on March 19, 1876. He was assigned to Limestone Hill (now Lackawanna) which consisted of the parish, St. Patrick's Church, St. Joseph Orphanage and St. Joseph Protectory (home for young children and teens). He remained in that assignment until 1881, when he was assigned to our very own St. Mary's Church. He remained here for one year before being transferred back to Limestone Hill.

What happened during that year Fr. Baker was in Corning? I would like to know myself. The record books show that he was clearly active in the sacramental life of the parish. We know there was an orphanage at the top of the hill on First Street. St. Mary's school was active by the time he arrived, so there was plenty of work to be done. I find it astounding that I have stood in the very same spot at the very same altar to say the very same Mass that Msgr. Baker said in this church a few hundred times. I find it also amazing that very few parishioners are aware that Fr. Nelson Baker was assigned to St. Mary's Church let alone the fact that most have never heard of him. He is already regarded as a saint by the people of Buffalo and his is one of the most famous names in that area. Everyone knows who this holy and humble priest is. I wish to get to know him a little better as his cause of canonization is proceeding and he lived and ministered right here in our parish. He was named a Servant of God in 1987 and made Venerable by Pope Benedict XVI on January 14, 2011. You may recall a few bulletin articles ago where I explained the process of canonization of saints. He has two more stages to go before achieving sainthood. On March 11, 1999, Fr. Baker's remains were transferred from Holy Cross Cemetery and reinterred in the Basilica. Fr. Baker's business skills made the construction of the Basilica of Our Lady of Victory in Lackawanna seem easy. It was built in 1925 after St. Patrick's Church was damaged by far. The church was made into a minor basilica just two months after it was consecrated.

Despite his savvy business and finance skills, Fr. Baker was referred to as the Padre for the Poor. He worked tirelessly to make sure young children and teens were cared for and found a sense of love and belonging. More so, he was most concerned that these young people came to know God through the Catholic faith.

Perhaps our parish can take a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Victory Basilica sometime in the near future. In fact, there are so many Catholic sights and shrines around upstate New York, that it seems a shame to neglect exploring some of the riches of Catholic history that have occurred on local or regional ground.

To help us become more acquainted with Msgr. Baker, a parishioner has purchased prayer cards for parishioners to take and use in their private prayer. The cards will be located at the entrances/exits of the doors of the Church and will be available until they are gone.

We might want to include Msgr. Baker as a patron for the upcoming Advent season. We need all the help we can get and the prayers and intercessions of the saints in heaven, as well as the saints in the making, will help us find holiness and peace with God.

November is the month of remembrance where we continue to remember in prayer those who have died before us. It is also a time to remember and pray to those saints in heaven who are assembled to intercede for us.

To the right (top) is a photo of the second grade class at ASA, who research and present themselves as saints before the congregation at the school Mass. Not only are the learning about the saints, they are learning to become a saint.

In addition, I want to share a photo (right bottom) of Bishop Clark, Fr. Brown and myself from last month's McCauley awards dinner. Bishop Clark presented the award to two people: our own Fr. Brown and posthumously to Bob Edger. You might recall the name "Edger" in a bulletin article last year. Bob Edger was the owner of Edger Construction, the company that spearhead the construction of the new parking lot. His family was on hand to receive the award, including his son Jodi who spoke on behalf of everyone. I found it no coincidence that we were assembled for the dinner and ceremony together. Please pray for Bob, his family that mourns his death, as well as all of the faithful departed.

Venerable Nelson Henry Baker, pray for us.
Fr. Jones

