

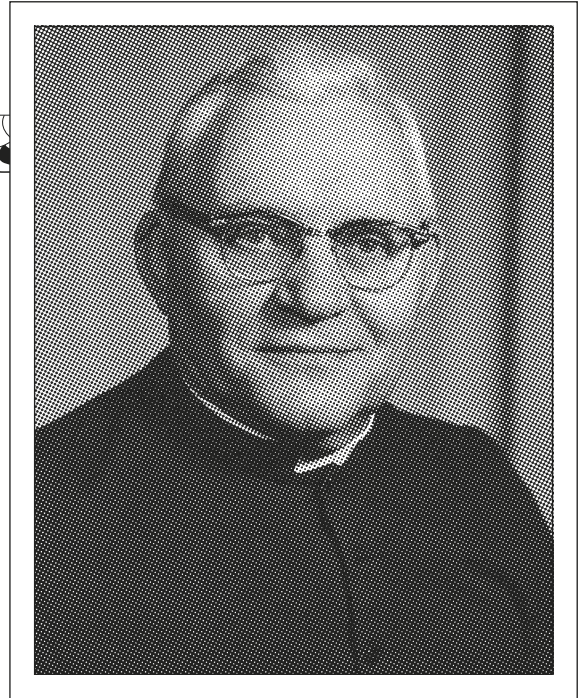


2007

Father

Joseph E. Kohler

1900-1968



Father Joseph Kohler will always be cherished as the builder priest. His zeal to promote Christian education is comparable to the spirit which inspired the early pioneer pastors and sisters.

Born in Suttons Bay, he attended St. Michael School, St. Joseph Seminary, and major seminary in Montreal. He studied in Regensburg, Germany where he was ordained in 1925. Father taught at St. Joseph seminary before he began parish work.

Father Kohler became pastor at St. Francis in November 1945. He served with exceptional vigor and unselfishness until his death in 1968.

With realization that the 1893 school building could no longer accommodate the flourishing student population the parish began a building program. Under Father Kohler's leadership, the 1950's and 1960's saw construction of a new St. Francis high school, elementary school, gymnasium, cafeteria and theatre. Their precision and perfection of structure was a joy to Father.

He did a great deal to promote cooperative education in the area by working with the superintendent of public schools for the betterment of all students.

Father Kohler had great confidence that Catholic parents would continue to sacrifice to maintain the schools. In January 1966, he assembled an interim school board. Under the guidance of attorney Stuart D. Hubbell, it developed a constitution that later served as a model across the United States.

With the first parish election in June 1966, St. Francis schools operated under a board of education that represented the parents.

In November 1966, Monsignor Passeno and his parishioners elected the Immaculate Conception school board. The two good pastors began the debate on uniting the schools into one school system. However, Father Kohler did not live to witness the final result of the April 1969 parish schools consolidation.

He loved his people and had a warm understanding of their problems. He often said, "I have the responsibility of preparing this soul to meet his God."

Father Kohler was a good man whose moral excellence and strength have been built into the church and the community he served so long and well.