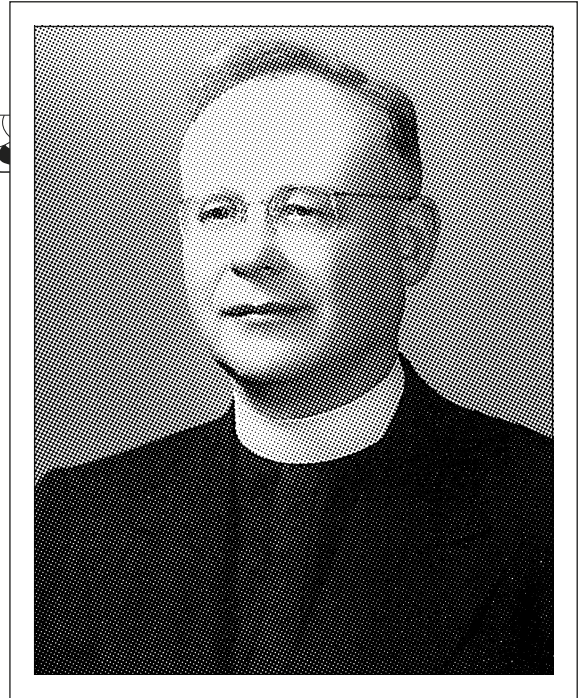




2007

Monsignor Russell W. Passeno

1901-1976



Monsignor Russell Passeno loved being a parish priest. His belief that the future of the church rested on its young people found him working tirelessly to educate them.

Father Passeno was a native of Cheboygan and attended St. Charles School. He studied at St. Joseph Seminary and St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore. He was ordained in 1926 at St. Andrew Cathedral in Grand Rapids. He became pastor of Immaculate Conception in 1948 and served until July 1969.

The parish exhibited phenomenal growth. With construction of a new church in 1953, the second story of the church/school building was converted into classrooms for an ever increasing enrollment.

Father Passeno was elevated by Pope Pius XII to the rank of domestic prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor in June 1956.

Monsignor appealed to his parishioners in 1960, "Let us unite so our precious young people will have a school capacious enough to educate each of them in the fundamentals of secular knowledge and the glories of our Catholic faith."

The school addition was blessed May 21, 1961. The

modern two-story building had eight classrooms and a combination gymnasium and auditorium.

As a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, he was a driving force behind drama and music at Immaculate Conception School. He organized, directed and played the music for a yearly operetta presented by the seventh grade.

In 1966, Monsignor and members of the Immaculate Conception parish observed the creation of the St. Francis school board. In November 1966, under Monsignor's leadership, they elected their own board of education.

Monsignor, Father Kohler, and the two parish school boards began discussions of consolidation. In time, the parish schools agreed to unite under one jurisdiction. On April 15, 1969 they became Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools.

Throughout his pastorate, Monsignor Passeno counseled his flock countless times to "invoke Divine Providence through the intercession of Mary Immaculate and obstacles will vanish."