



REV. WALTER M. GONTER
Founder and Pastor, St. Aloysius Church

“In His Footsteps”

*A Tribute, in Part Biographical,
to our beloved Father Gonter*

IN HIS footsteps — how truly this simple phrase symbolizes the life-long aspirations of our Pastor, the Reverend Walter M. Gonter!

From the day of his birth, December 10, 1891, in Wellsville, New York, Father Gonter's life has been guided by the ideal of the Good Shepherd, Christ—and ever have his ways faithfully followed in the footsteps of Him Who went before.

But let's turn back to Wellsville and to Father Gonter's boyhood. In preparation for a significant career ahead, Father Gonter—at that time known simply as Walter Gonter — attended and was graduated from Wellsville's Immaculate Conception School. From there his educational and religious yearning carried him to St. Michael's College in Toronto.

It was at this period of his life when Father Gonter's deep humanitarian interests and sincere sportsmanship came into glowing prominence. He played energetic and skillful football on the college team—won respected renown. Popularly known as “Dutch” Gonter, he was a great kicking halfback and captain of his eleven in 1911. With the boys he was a favorite—a tribute to his characteristic kindness and fairness in human relations.

Later to St. Basil's College in Waco, Texas, he engaged in instructorship duties. Leaving Waco after a period of highly creditable service, he prepared diligently and piously for the priesthood at St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto, and subsequently at St. Bonaventure's Seminary in Allegany, New York. On November 15, 1917, Father Gonter was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by his Eminence, Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, at St. Joseph's New Cathedral in Buffalo, New York. Returning to the fond scenes of his boyhood, he celebrated, on November 25, 1917, his first Solemn High Mass in the Immaculate Conception Church of Wellsville, New York.

Father Gonter was first assigned to St. Stephen's Church of Buffalo, as Assistant Pastor. From there, after serving successively at St. Joseph's Old Cathedral and St. Joseph's New Cathedral, he was appointed Administrator at St. Peter's Church, LeRoy, New York. His next duty, entered upon in March, 1925, was that of Pastor at St. Joseph's Church of Fredonia, New York. From there, in March, 1940, he came to St. Aloysius Church.

Thus, does the calendar record the career of Father Gonter—a career which in years is just beginning!

Yet, so deep and so reverent have been the preceding years of Father Gonter's devotion to the ideals of true Christianity — it could be said that, by ordinary standards, he has already culminated a complete and fully rounded career.

But on his Silver Anniversary, Father Gonter's vision is more crystal-clear than ever. With Christlike simplicity—with soul-searching sincerity—he brings to his daily tasks a sympathetic understanding of the individual interests and problems of each parishioner of his flock.

He shares the joys of our success and our accomplishments—he commiserates with us in our failures and shortcomings. Like his Model, the Good Shepherd, Christ, our Pastor has made himself "all to all" of us—knowing well his Master's secret of drawing all to himself by love and unrelenting kindness.

Father Gonter's innate refinement symbolizes a truly aristocratic character, tempered by a keen and democratic understanding of the humanity of which we all are a part. His compassion for the sick and suffering is exemplified by his urgent desire for the establishment of the Sunshine Club—a desire with which the Altar and Rosary Society enthusiastically complied.

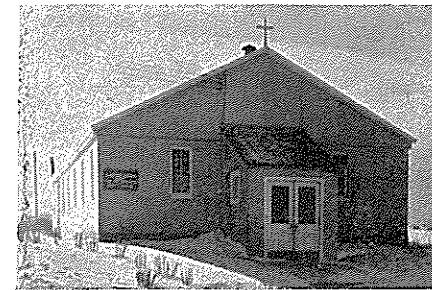
Knowing well the influence of ardent devotion to God on human righteousness, he encourages frequent Holy Communion and Catholic training in the home—and, above all, entreats parents in their daily life to exemplify a true Catholic ideal for their children.

Significant of Father Gonter's greatness of soul, is the respect and honor in which he is held, not only by those of his own Faith, but by Protestants and Jews alike. *He is a Man of God*—loved and honored by ALL!

In closing, this cordial wish:

*"Reviewing five-and-twenty years,
Your memories must be
Like softly shining silver beads
That form a Rosary.
May many blessings wait for you
As future years unfold,
Till you shall count your memories
On shining beads of gold."*

St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish History



THE TEMPORARY CHURCH

IN THE short span of a little over two years, memorable parish history has been written. For, until April, 1940, St. Aloysius Gonzaga Church was still a vision — yet one which was destined soon to become a living reality of spiritual guidance.

On April 3, 1940, a new parish was established by his Excellency, the Most Reverend John A. Duffy, D.D. This parish was designated by the corporate title, "St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Roman Catholic Church Society." Land was graciously donated to the Buffalo Diocese by the Hoffeld Estates, through the kindness of Mr. Lynn Bame.

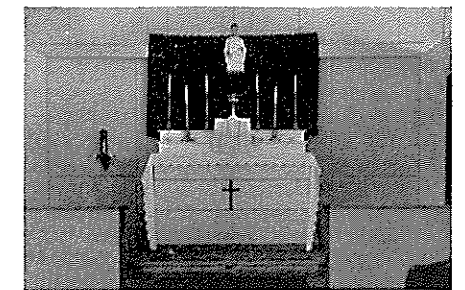
Parish boundaries, as established by the Chancery Office were—and continue to be—the area enclosed by the following limits:

NORTH: Buffalo City Line and City Line of Cheektowaga; **EAST:** Woodridge (Walton Crest), Cleveland, Homeswood, Huth; **SOUTH:** Southern Boundary of Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Estelle, Eggert and Davidson; **WEST:** Leonard, Kensington, Orleans, Shirley, Suffolk to Buffalo City Line. Both sides of the street at the limits belong to the new parish.

Father Gonter was appointed Pastor of the new church on March 28, 1940, a new mission which called him from St. Joseph's Church, Fredonia, New York, where for fifteen years, he had faithfully and ardently ministered spiritually and temporally to the needs of his fold. It is needless to say that his departure from St. Joseph's was deeply felt by those parishioners, but he accepted his new duties with characteristic zeal and cheerful devotion, swiftly inaugurating steps to bring into being the progressive parish of which we are so proud today. In this new work, his excellent background of training and experience stood him in good stead. We rejoice in his being chosen for our leader in which he is so truly one of us.

The first meeting of St. Aloysius Gonzaga parishioners was held in St. Benedict's Hall, Eggertsville, N. Y., in the middle of April, 1940. At this initial gathering it was unanimously decided to construct a temporary church. The first Holy Mass was offered in this structure on Mother's Day, May 12, 1940.

With speed and thoroughness, arrangements were instituted to build a permanent edifice. Indeed, early in July of 1940, the duly appointed trustees—Mr. F. Leo Clark and Mr.



THE FIRST ALTAR



ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH

William E. O'Brien, accepted plans submitted by Mr. Mortimer J. Murphy, the architect, and the new church was on its way. Balling Bros. and Holler Bros. were selected as the contractors.

No time was lost! Ground was broken on July 9, and on Sunday, September 22, the corner-stone was laid by his Excellency, the Bishop.

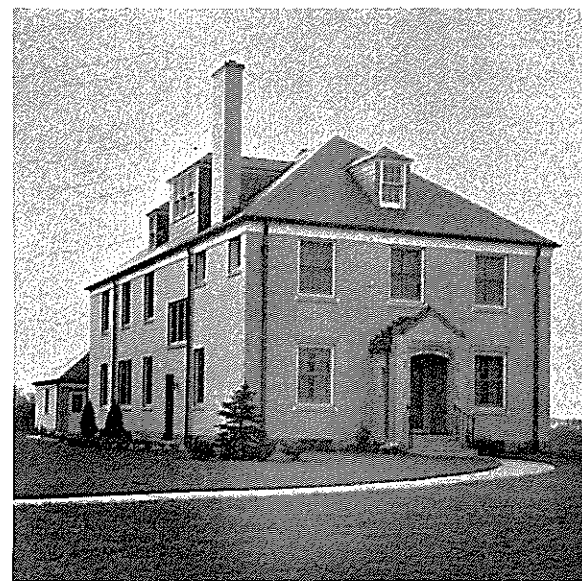
Christmas of that year will always stand out as a memorable date. Thanks to the efficiency and tireless efforts of the contractors, coupled with enthusiastic cooperation of parishioners, it was possible to offer Christmas Masses in the permanent, though unfinished, church.

Three months later on Laetare Sunday, March 23, the Dedication

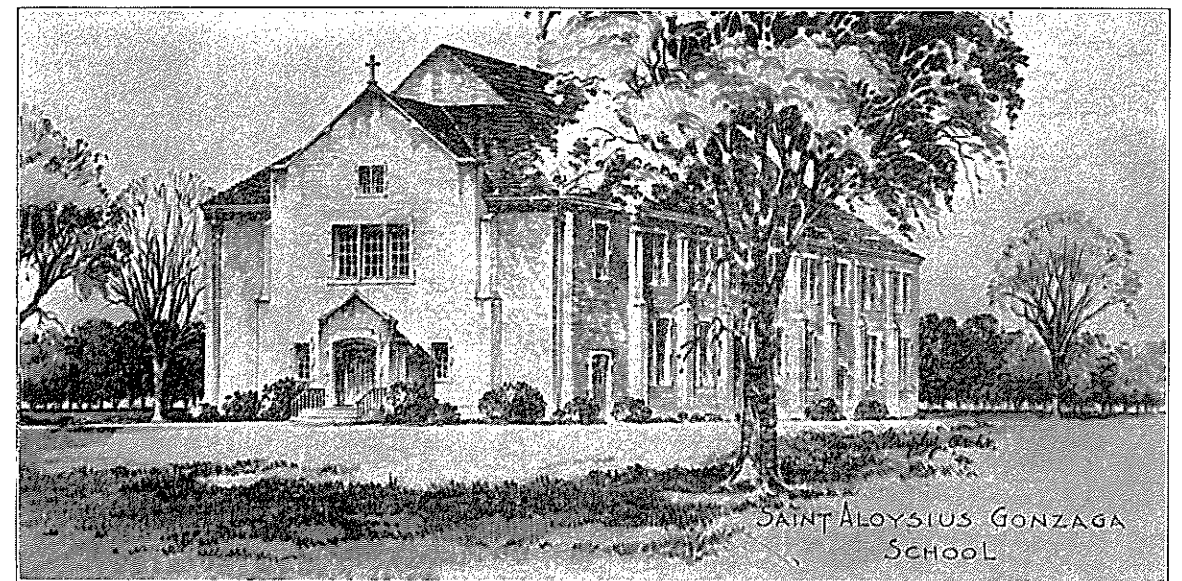
Ceremony was held, with his Excellency, the Bishop, officiating. On that auspicious occasion, officers of the Mass were: Right Reverend Monsignor Richard O'Brien, Deacon; Reverend Mr. George M. Herbach, Reverend Mr. Henry Wick, Sub-Deacons; Richard Gonter, Master of Ceremonies. The Dedication Sermon was delivered by the Rev. Joseph Andres, C. SS. R. Father Gonter modestly remained in the background while the church representative of his enterprise and energy was formally dedicated.

Church progress continued. In June of 1941, the Trustees reviewed and accepted plans for a new Rectory, conforming in architectural design to the impressive simplicity of the Church itself. The Parish House was designed to accommodate three priests, two guests, two domestics and a meeting room for parishioners. This structure was ready for occupancy in November, 1941.

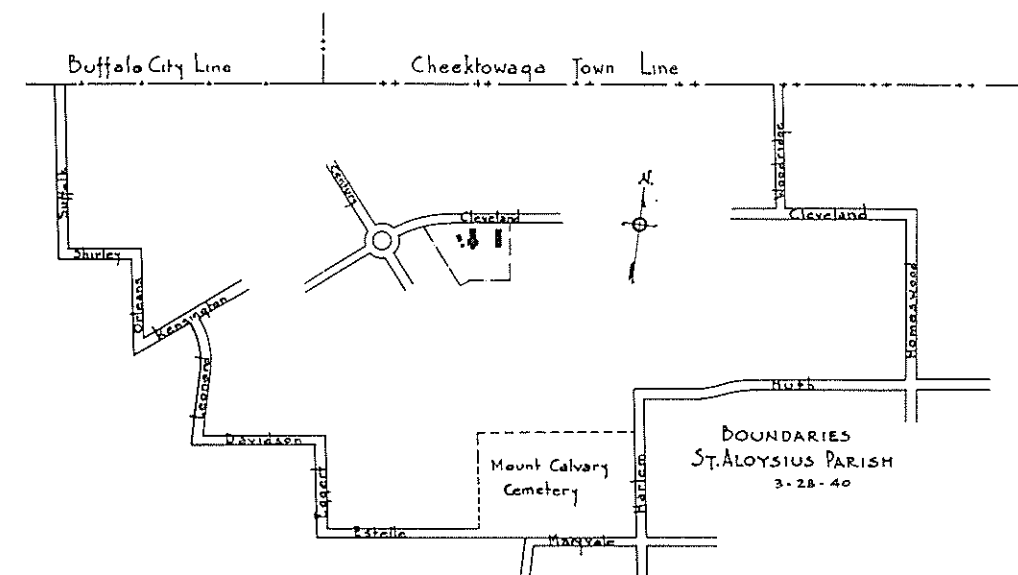
On June 13, 1942, Father Gonter was joined by an able and zealous First Assistant, Father Alton J. LaRusch, who at once endeared himself to the parish.



THE RECTORY



ARCHITECT'S SKETCH OF PROPOSED SCHOOL



BOUNDARIES OF ST. ALOYSIUS PARISH