



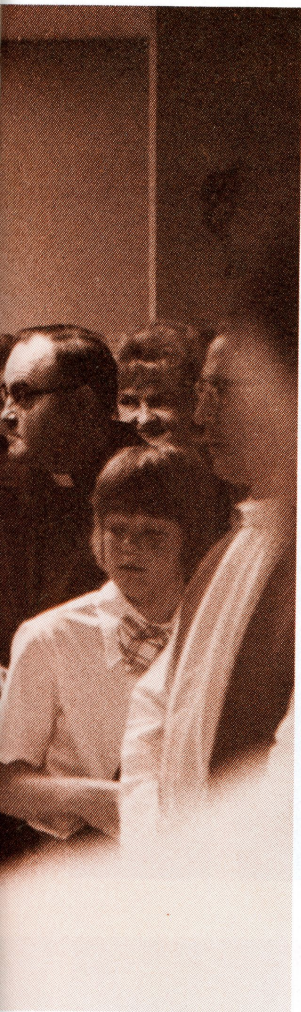
Bishop Vath, along with St. Cecilia's pastor, Fr. Michael MacMahon who is on the bishop's left, leads prayers in the hall of the CCD center built with a grant from EXTENSION.

### At St. Cecilia

# The

Just a few weeks ago on Thursday, March 17, I was driving northwest out of Birmingham on Route 78 to the city of Jasper, Alabama, forty miles away. I was heading toward St. Cecilia's Church in Jasper to meet Fr. Michael MacMahon, who is pastor there. Although it was during the Lenten season, I was going to St. Cecilia to participate in a joyous celebration.

It would be natural to assume, since it was March 17 and the pastor was Fr. MacMahon, that I had been invited to a St. Patrick's day celebration. But there were



Left, the Most Reverend Joseph G. Vath, bishop of the Birmingham diocese, blesses the interior of the CCD center during its dedication at St. Cecilia in Jasper, Alabama. Below, parishioners, visiting priests and candidates for Confirmation respond to prayers during the ceremony.



After the dedication Fr. Patrick O'Donaghue, former pastor of St. Cecilia, talks with one of the young parishioners before going to the church for the Confirmation.

# Spirit comes

by Larry Kaminski

two events taking place at St. Cecilia that day that would far outshine St. Patrick's feast day.

First, the Most Rev. Joseph G. Vath, bishop of the Birmingham diocese, would dedicate the CCD center which EXTENSION helped build. Second, Bishop Vath would confirm 25 parishioners.

I followed Route 78 through the city of Jasper and found St. Cecilia's Church on top of a hill two miles outside of town. I met Fr. MacMahon in his living quarters which are attached to the rear of the church. He was in the

midst of final preparations for the two ceremonies, but he took time to show me around.

As we watched a few of the parishioners doing some last minute cleaning and maintenance, Fr. MacMahon noted that the present church was actually the second St. Cecilia. The first church was located within the city limits of Jasper. It was built in 1923 when the congregation consisted of only five families.

At that time, St. Cecilia was assigned to the care of the North Alabama Mission Band. Forty

## The Spirit comes

Right, candidates for Confirmation begin their procession into the church. Below, the visiting priests concelebrate Mass led by Bishop Vath.



years later Fr. Edward L. Foster, the Mission Director and Fr. Michael Dyer, the mission's pastor, made plans to build the new St. Cecilia on its present site. The new church was built to accommodate the 35 families that were in the congregation in 1963, and to allow for future growth.

It is fortunate that the two priests had the foresight to allow for a growing congregation. A few years later, St. Cecilia was large enough to give up its mission status and become a parish when Fr. Patrick O'Donaghue was appointed its first resident pastor in 1967.

The parish has continued its growth under Fr. MacMahon who was assigned as pastor after serving seven years at other churches



Above, Bishop Vath makes a point to emphasize the importance of Confirmation. Right, Fr. MacMahon smiles approval as one of his students receives Confirmation.



Two of the candidates for Confirmation offer the gifts to Bishop Vath.

## The Spirit comes

Two ways EXTENSION has helped establish the Church in Alabama. Below, the CCD center at St. Cecilia. Right, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Haleyville was given a building grant after a fire ended the first attempt to build a Catholic church in Haleyville.



CCD classes, like the one above, are much more fruitful now that the CCD center is a reality.

in the Birmingham diocese. Fr. MacMahon came to the United States in 1966; the same year he was ordained at St. Peter's College in Wexford, Ireland. His first assignment was at Sacred Heart Church in Grove Hill, Alabama. After that he served at parishes in both Huntsville and Decatur, Alabama. In 1973 he became pastor of St. Cecilia, and his congregation has now increased to 110 families.

As the parish grew, so did parish activities. The Ladies' Sodality and the Men's Club increased their efforts to maintain and improve St. Cecilia's Church. The Legion of Mary became a more active force, bringing Catholics who had drifted away back into the Church. A youth program for high school students developed. And the CCD enrollment reached sixty for the current school year.

This kind of growth is vital to the survival of a parish in the missions, but it does present a prob-



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lem — crowded space. St. Cecilia did not have a parish hall or CCD classrooms. Meetings were being held in homes, the church or in the storage area attached to the church. CCD classes were taught in Fr. MacMahon's small living quarters or in the church. It was confusing in church because the classes disrupted one another.

Fr. MacMahon realized that it was especially important to provide usable space for gatherings in a parish where people come 40 miles to participate in parish activities. He applied to EXTENSION for help in building a CCD center which would also serve as a parish hall. As a result of EXTENSION's grant and pledges and work from the parishioners, the CCD center became a reality. And the dedication was an important event for everyone concerned.

Fr. MacMahon showed me the new CCD classrooms and the hall which can be divided, by sliding partitions, into smaller rooms. He



A few decorations mark St. Patrick's feast day as Bishop Vath and Fr. MacMahon chat during the dinner given by the pastor for clergy attending the dedication and Confirmation.



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### The Spirit comes

then pointed out that this was not the first time EXTENSION had helped St. Cecilia's parish. St. Cecilia has a mission church forty miles away in Haleyville, Alabama. The Catholics in Haleyville had to rent a house in which to say Mass until plans were made to build a church in 1971. The new church was to be constructed out of two modular schoolrooms which had been donated. Unfortunately, the structure was totally destroyed in a fire during final assembly.

Having no means to replace the lost church, Fr. O'Donaghue, still pastor at St. Cecilia at that time, asked EXTENSION for aid. EXTENSION responded with a grant to build a simple church consisting of steel walls and a "false" brick front. The church was dedicated Our Lady of Guadalupe in October, 1972, and the mission congregation thanked the benefactors of EXTENSION for making it possible to build the first Catholic church in Winston County, Alabama.

Before the dedication ceremony taking place this evening, the gratitude expressed by all those concerned was overwhelming. People from both St. Cecilia and Our Lady of Guadalupe, priests attending the ceremonies, and most of all Bishop Vath, asked me to express their thanks to EXTENSION and its benefactors for their support.

During the dedication of the CCD center and during the Confirmation, the joy in all these people was obvious. It was also obvious that the congregations of St. Cecilia and Our Lady of Guadalupe had already received the Spirit of the Lord, just as those being confirmed were receiving the Holy Spirit that evening. ●