

*Dear Friends and Parishioners,*

*As we reflect on the cherished history of Our Lady of Victory in Frewsburg, we are reminded of the journey and milestones that have shaped our beloved chapel since its inception in 1940.*

*Our story began with three families who generously opened their homes for Sunday Mass. The building, once the Swedish Evangelical Church, was purchased in 1940 and became known as Our Lady of Victory Chapel, Buffalo Missionary Apostolate. We held Mass at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., with confessions on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and rectory consultations from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.*

*By 1948, our congregation grew to 70 families, and the Altar & Rosary Society was established. The chapel building served public dinners, and we celebrated baptisms and confirmations. In 1957, we organized the CYO, offered a six-week religious summer school, held weekly Novenas to OLV, and had seminarians and nuns teaching classes.*

*A significant moment in 1958 was the blessing of the outdoor statue of Mary by Father David Rouche on August 8. Though the statue was later moved inside, she continues to watch over us. In 1959, we built the Our Lady of Victory Church, accommodating 145 people. The beautiful ceramic crucifix adorning the OLV altar is one of a kind, created by Jamie Andrews of New York a classmate of Father Roche's brother.*

*From 1959 to 1975, we saw continuous improvements, activities, and festivities. In 1970, Sister Diane Swanson joined the Sisters of Mercy and dedicated 36 years to elementary education and later as Principal at St. Bernadette in Orchard Park. Rev. Michael Barone, who grew up at Our Lady of Victory, celebrated his first Mass here on June 8, 1975, after being ordained at Mt. Carmel Church. His 25th Ordination was also celebrated at OLV.*

*In 1976, our religious education program was conducted on Sunday mornings between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Mass, with Felician sisters directing volunteers. This schedule continued for many years until the twinning of OLV and OLL. The HOO BA DEE A YAH summer lawn fete, introduced in 1978, became a beloved annual event, was huge undertaking with parishioners helping bbq chickens, other foods, activities, and music. This continued until the late 1990's. funding many projects over the years.*

*Father Joseph Carlo arrived in 1980, overseeing numerous improvements, including a new roof, storm windows, siding, and more. The CYO was re-established, a parish census conducted with Seminarian Joseph Gullo's help, and the Altar & Rosary Society reorganized.*

*In 1982, our parishioners achieved one of their greatest accomplishments, the construction of the OLV Hall. Built entirely by the hands and hearts of our dedicated parishioners, this hall features a basement, six classrooms, and a large main floor for events. The entire addition was completed and PAID FOR BY OUR PARISHIONERS in only a year, by 1983. This shows their incredible dedication and pride in their community. This achievement stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit and commitment of our congregation.*

*Our Social Club gatherings brought adults together monthly to celebrate friendship, fun, and welcome newcomers to OLV. Events included yearly St. Patrick's dinner, Christmas parties, Valentine's party, and cookouts. Crazy fun football parties, an indoor golf course created in the hall, game nights, dances, and wine tastings. Outings included train rides, picnics, and boating. Proceeds provided extra monies for specific OLV needs. Friendships lasting lifetimes were formed.*

*In 1987, OLV Altar & Rosary Society created a cookbook. Fund raisers also included style shows, 300 club drawings, and more. OLV Altar & Rosary Society purchased all the banners for church, held breakfasts for OLV volunteers, and OLV religious education teachers. Visiting the ill and elderly regularly was an important part also.*

*In 1992, the twinning of Our Lady of Victory and Our Lady of Loretto (OLL) began, sharing a priest. That same year, Father Westfield installed stained windows, including a beautiful large stained-glass window of Our Lady of Victory in the front of the church.*

*In 1999, Father Gullo was appointed pastor of OLV and OLL. He introduced children's Masses at 9 a.m. before their religious instruction. Father Gullo also began planning for the 50th anniversary of OLV, celebrated in 2000. That year, the Secret Sisters started a women's card exchange with an annual luncheon. Everyone looked forward to sharing their secret sister's identity with stories, laughs, and fun.*

*The Journey of Faith and Grace, initiated by the diocese of Buffalo, led to the merger of Our Lady of Victory with St. James in 2003. Michael Lennon, parishioner, was ordained as a Deacon in June 11, 2005. Monsignor Antoine P. Attea became our Pastor and was the Vicar Forane for the area. Despite a reduced Mass schedule, Monsignor Attea continued to support OLV, keeping it open for weekly Masses until his passing on January 8, 2007, in his plane, flying out of Jamestown airport. He is greatly missed.*

*The following year, Our Lady of Victory becomes an Oratory by the Buffalo Diocese promising Oratories will never close. This is a good thing! A unity mass celebrating 100 new and younger families from OLV joining St. James. Our Lady of Victory celebrates being an Oratory.*

*In December 2009, Father Darrell Duffy was assigned to St. James and OLV Oratory. Father Darrell introduced a weekly weekday Mass at OLV, and parishioners began a monthly potluck dinner the first week of the month immediately after mass. It was great and continued until January 9, 2025, the last week before closure.*

*Our Lady of Victory Hall has served the Frewsburg community as a food pantry since 2013. Deacon Michael Lennon, who retired on April 28, 2023, He was the glue that helped keep the parishes together during the hard times of losing priests. A celebration party at St. James following mass was held.*

*The Family of Parishes developed Catholic Neighbors in Faith in July 2023, and the Buffalo Diocese announced the closing of OLV with a decree written by Bishop Michael Fisher dated November 18, 2024. This decision deeply affects the devoted parishioners who have faithfully supported OLV through the years. Many have cherished memories of twinning with OLL and merging with St James, holding onto the hope that as an Oratory it would never close. While closure brings a profound sense of loss, it also marks a new beginning. Together, we look forward to embracing the spirit of unity and faith, continuing to build a strong, vibrant community. The legacy of Our Lady of Victory will live on in our hearts and actions.*

*Rev. Paul Cygan, Administrator, scheduled a final Christmas Mass held at OLV on Christmas morning at 9am, 2024. The presider was Rev. Donald Watkins Jr, one of the parochial vicars.*

*January 12, Our Lady of Victory Oratory is closing on this day. The last mass for Our Lady of Victory church, 75 years of service, will turn out the lights. We are hopeful a buyer will allow continuation of Frewsburg Food Pantry in the hall. Prayers please for a community center.*

*With heartfelt gratitude and prayers*