

Holy Trinity School nears 100

By Russell Blair

Record-Journal staff

WALLINGFORD — Holy Trinity School has computer labs, Smart Boards and other new technology, but Principal Kathleen Kelly says the school's mission hasn't changed since it was founded in 1913.

"Our mission is still alive from 100 years ago," she said. "The principals of Catholic education and Catholic faith are still being taught."

The North Whittlesey Avenue school turns 100 next year, and Kelly, her staff and a committee of alumni are working hard to prepare for an 18-month-long celebration. Holy Trinity School was started by the Rev. John Carroll, who led the congregation in constructing a schoolhouse up the street from the Holy Trinity parish.

"Catholics were moving into the middle class and felt having a Catholic education system available was something they should do," said Jerry Farrell Jr., a member of Holy Trinity School's centennial committee.

And while other Catholic schools have closed their doors due to declining enrollment, Holy Trinity has remained.

Farrell, who attended the school from 1979 to 1982, said his daughter, Amelia, will be beginning first grade there in the fall. He thinks a strong educational system and support from parents and Holy Trinity Church parishioners has enabled the school to stick around.

"When the school needs money, parents step up to the plate," he said. "The parents are very involved and you have active alumni who are financially committed. That keeps you around."

Farrell said another contributing factor to Holy Trinity School's success is that it's been the only parochial school in town since its founding. In Meriden, nearly every parish had its own school, but as a result of declining enrollment, the city saw three Catholic schools close in the past 20 years. Today, about 220 children attend Holy Trinity School, which has pupils in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Multiple generations of the same families have been attending Holy Trinity School for decades. Kim Pisani, chairwoman of the centennial committee, said her mother and grandmother attended the school, and her five children have all gone there.

"It's a real community," she said.

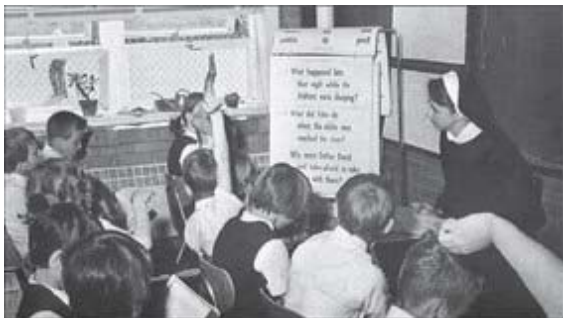
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Photos courtesy of Holy Trinity School

Holy Trinity School's first graduating class, the class of 1917, is seen above. **Front row, l-r** : the Rev. Alexander Mitchell, principal; the Rev. John Henry Carroll, pastor; and the Rev. Charles Kane. **Second row, l-r** : Mary Griffin, Anna McKenna, Peggy McKenna, Margaret Cass, Margaret McLaughlin, William Cassin, Marguerite Chappo, Elizabeth Fahey, May Barry, Hattie Karolshak and Margaret O'Neil. **Third row, l-r** : Francis Gralton, Benjamin Massaro, Joseph Whelan, Anna Hickey, Mary Dsupin, Theresa Leveille, Harry Mason, Ewald Schipke and Martin Whelan. **Fourth row** , l-r: Roy Schomburg, Charles Hayden, Robert Boyle and William Nolan.

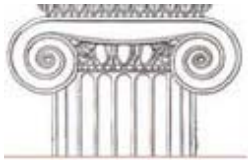
Fifth row , l-r: Eddie Ollayos, Charles Barry, Joseph Brooks and Thomas Layden. **Top** : Edward Daly.



Sister Eileen Hogan, right, teaches a class at Holy Trinity School in 1965 in this photo from "Holy Trinity Church Centennial Book 1868-1968."

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“You’re not a number; everyone knows everyone.”

Pisani credits her children’s successes to the foundation they received at Holy Trinity School, and said her and her children still see many of their old classmates.

“I’ve made some long-lasting friends there,” she said. “I feel fortunate to be able to celebrate the centennial.”

And many of the alumni stay local. Kelly said that, of a database of 2,400 former students, about two-thirds still live in town. Most of the teachers are also former students, she said. Though the school has ramped up its marketing and outreach efforts over the last decade, “word of mouth is our best advertising,” Kelly said.

The school underwent an extensive renovation project in the late 1960s that added two cafeterias and replaced all of the building’s exterior windows. While the three-story building has been remodeled, Kelly said the footprint is the same as when it was first constructed.

The students who walk the hallways today are walking in the footsteps of those who came 100 years before.

But one major change at Holy Trinity School has been in the teaching staff. While nuns used to instruct the students, today the teachers are laypeople. But Kelly said the teachers are just as dedicated as ever, and most have been at the school for more than two decades, including an eighthgrade teacher beginning his 44th year.

Holy Trinity School Board President Christine Mansfield said the centennial will also be included in curriculum for the upcoming year.

“They’re going to learn about what happened 100 years ago and throughout the decades,” she said. “They’ll be doing some fun things, too — like time capsules.”

Mansfield credited Holy Trinity School’s success to the fact that it stays current with new technology and modern curriculum.

Kelly has been principal at Holy Trinity School for 28 years and is excited to be at the helm for the centennial celebration.

“I stand on the shoulders of women who gave their all to Catholic education,” she said.

A Mass honoring the school’s centennial, with Archbishop Henry J. Mansell of the Archdiocese of Hartford, is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. on Nov. 18 at Holy Trinity Church. And a 100th anniversary celebration is set for April 27 at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington.

Alumni, faculty, families and friends of Holy Trinity School are encouraged to contact the centennial committee

with updated contact information or any questions at hts100@htswallingford.org.

rblair@record-journal.com (203) 317-2225 [Twitter: @RussellBlairRJ](https://twitter.com/RussellBlairRJ)

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