

When Holy Spirit Catholic School in Stittsville opened in 1989, it marked the coming together of the past, present and future of the Catholic presence in the community. It represented in its name respect for Stittsville's Catholic heritage; it represented in its creation the work and activity of the Catholic community of the village to bring Catholic education to Stittsville; and it contained within its formation the seeds of the future second Catholic Parish and of a future second Catholic elementary school in the neighbourhood. Yes, all of this because of one school!

During the municipal election campaign of 1985, the subject of a new Catholic elementary school in Stittsville arose and started the stream of events that culminated in the opening of Holy Spirit Catholic School on Tuesday, May 23, 1989, less than four years later. The impetus for all of this was a November 6, 1985 editorial in *The Stittsville News* pointing out that a Catholic school was needed in Stittsville because of the population growth in the community and because such a school would be important for the local Catholic community. At an ensuing all-candidates' meeting, Goulbourn Township's trustee on the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board, Hugh Connelly, stated that he saw "eye to eye" with *The Stittsville News* editorial. He said at the meeting that if Catholic parents in the community expressed some interest, a new school in Stittsville could be a reality "within the next three years." How prophetic he turned out to be!

The Carleton Roman Catholic School Board already owned a site on Main Street in Stittsville, having purchased it in the late 1970s when there had been some talk of establishing a portable complex in the village, an idea that fell through when Munster Hamlet parents vocally insisted that their children continue to attend their

HOLY SPIRIT

CATHOLIC SCHOOL



1383 Stittsville Main Street
Stittsville K2S 1A6
613-831-1853
www.occsb.on.ca/spi

parish school, St. Philip in Richmond, rather than transfer to the proposed Stittsville facility. Later, in November 1985, Trustee Connelly, who was acclaimed in the election, wrote an article in *The Stittsville News*, which began by stating, "Stittsville should have a Catholic elementary school." He pointed out that a new Stittsville school was not a high priority in the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board's 1986 capital expenditure forecast (it was number 18 on the list), but he also pointed out that number five was an eight-unit semi-permanent portable addition at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School in Glen Cairn, which Stittsville students attended at that

time. In his article, Trustee Connelly made a strong case for the community school concept and suggested that it would make more sense to establish a portable complex at Stittsville than to put the temporary addition at St. Martin. He advocated the formation of a Catholic school ratepayers group to work for a community school in Stittsville. On December 5, 1985, a meeting was held to form such a group. At this meeting, Trustee Connelly said that it was up to Catholic parents and ratepayers in Stittsville to determine whether a Catholic elementary school would or would not become a reality in the village in the near future. While indicating his full support for a Stittsville Catholic school, he said that the Catholic parents and ratepayers would have to "lead the charge."

A follow-up meeting in January 1986, saw the formation of the Stittsville Catholic Parents' Association, with the goal of working towards the establishment of a Catholic elementary school in the area. A draft constitution was approved and an executive was elected, consisting of Linda Gilmour as President, Bob Davis as Vice-President and Louise Gallagher as Secretary and Treasurer. It was made clear at this meeting that the group would be approaching the school board for a permanent school in the village and not a port-a-pak complex on the site. Following the meeting, a petition signed by virtually all of the Catholic ratepayers in Stittsville and area was gathered and a brief outlining the need for a Catholic community school was drawn up for presentation to the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board.

In the fall of 1986, the Stittsville Catholic elementary school moved closer to reality as the 1987 capital expenditure forecast of the school board listed the Stittsville school as third on its priority list. This improvement, along with the elimination of the planned addition to

St. Martin de Porres Catholic School in Glen Cairn, could be attributed to the work and lobbying of the Stittsville Catholic Parents' Association whose members helped the school board and its administration come to realize that there was a desire by Catholic ratepayers in the community to have a school. A sign identifying a Main Street location as the site of the future English Catholic elementary school in Stittsville was erected on the property. In March 1987, following a motion initiated by Trustees Hugh Connelly and Arthur J.M. Lamarche, the school board agreed to list the Stittsville elementary school as the number one priority in its 1988 capital expenditure forecast. In the late spring of 1987, the Stittsville Catholic Parents' Association organized a letter-writing campaign to the Ontario Minister of Education, outlining the need for improved capital funding from the province for new schools within the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board. Pursuant to the March 1987 motion, the Board, on October 13, 1987, placed the Stittsville school once again as its number one priority in the capital expenditure forecast which would be submitted to the Ministry of Education. Mr. Connelly had resigned from the Board because of a new job commitment, but his efforts at facilitating the new Stittsville school were carried on by his replacement, Mrs. Mary Curry of Stittsville.

In November 1987, the school board appointed the firm of Griffiths, Rankin, Cook, Architects, to develop sketch plans for the school, pending funding approval from the Ministry of Education. The size of the school was increased from its originally proposed capacity of 411 students to one that would accommodate 516. The Stittsville Catholic Parents' Association remained active. In the fall of 1987, it organized an outdoor Mass on the school site.

Tuesday, April 26, 1988 proved to be the day of destiny for the new Stittsville Catholic School as the Provincial Government announced that it had approved capital funding of \$3.4 million for its construction. This accelerated the completion of the working drawings, receipt of additional Ministry approvals and the calling of tenders for the new school. It was decided that, in the fall of 1988, students of the new Stittsville Catholic School would be housed at St. Martin de Porres School in Glen Cairn as a temporary measure until the new building was ready in the spring of 1989.

The Stittsville Catholic Parents' Association disbanded, its work completed, and the Parent-Teacher Association for the new school was elected consisting of Lorne McConnery, President, Joan Kinnie, Vice-President, Cathy White, Secretary, Jan Haubrich, Treasurer, Stephen Grant and Sue MacDonald, Parent Representatives, Louise Turcotte, Teacher Representative and Robert Slack, Principal. In addition, the name "Holy Spirit" was selected as the name for the new Stittsville Catholic School. This name tied the school to Stittsville's Catholic heritage because the name was shared by the Catholic community, which had flourished briefly in the community two decades previously.

By agreeing with the recommendation of Stittsville parents to name the school "Holy Spirit Catholic School," the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board recognized the efforts of those who had put their Catholic faith into action in the late 1960s and early 1970s by establishing a Catholic church in Stittsville.

Naming the school "Holy Spirit" brought home the fact that the Catholic heritage of Stittsville did not begin with the establishment of the new school but rather had begun more than 20 years previously

with the establishment of the Catholic Church of the Holy Spirit on Flewellyn Road just west of Stanley's Corners, south of Stittsville. Masses were celebrated there from July 30, 1967 until 1974 when it was closed by the pastor of St. Philip Church and the Archbishop.

Catholic Masses were held in Stittsville as early as 1963 in the gymnasium of the Stittsville Public School. This led to the purchase of a former red brick school building on Flewellyn Road, which was converted into a church. Rev. Thomas Farrell, parish priest at St. Philip Catholic Church in Richmond, also served in the new church from its inception. Formally, it was a mission church of St. Philip's, but, for all intents and purposes, it operated as a parish community in its own right. The parishioners themselves selected the name "Holy Spirit" for the church. Regular Sunday Masses were held at the Church of the Holy Spirit, and the parish flourished to the point where an addition was built on the rear of the old school building to enlarge the church premises. But 1974 brought an end to this church in the community, as a change of parish priests at St. Philip and other factors combined to bring about its closure. However, the tradition of the name "Holy Spirit" in Stittsville had been established, and it would emerge again and be embraced when the new school was named in 1988. The new Catholic community in Stittsville would also be called "Holy Spirit Parish" when it was revitalized after the establishment of the school.

On August 22, 1988, the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board awarded the contract for the construction of the new school to Mueller-Hein Corporation of Nepean at a tendered price of \$3,396,000. This new 40,000 square foot school, accommodating up to 532 students and including a child care facility, would be built on the 4.5 acre site that the Board had owned since the late 1970s.

Holy Spirit Catholic School opened on September 6, 1988, housed in temporary quarters at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School. Principal Bob Slack, Office Administrator Debby Moore and the 12-member teaching staff began with a student enrolment of 238 students. Finally, on May 23, 1989, the students and staff moved into the new building in Stittsville. Almost immediately, Father Corbin Eddy of Holy Redeemer Parish in Kanata, which included Stittsville within its boundaries, started holding a Sunday Mass in the Holy Spirit School gymnasium. This led to the establishment of Holy Spirit Mission, which grew to become Holy Spirit Catholic Parish.

Masses were celebrated in the Holy Spirit gymnasium until 2001 when the growing congregation was forced to relocate to a larger venue, the gymnasium at the new Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Stittsville. The parish now has plans to build its church, with an expected opening in December 2007. Holy Spirit Catholic School was not only the impetus for re-establishment of a Catholic community in Stittsville, but also became the leading force, which eventually led to the construction of a second Catholic elementary school, Guardian Angels.

Enrolment at Holy Spirit grew in the 1990s due to continued residential growth in Stittsville. Portable classrooms became a fact of life, with as many as 15 jamming the schoolyard. By the late 1990s, the population of Holy Spirit had mushroomed to about 850 students, in a school built for only 532.

Catholic parents in Stittsville once again came to the fore and, working with school and Board staff and trustees, they fought to make the provincial government, then the funding agency for new schools, aware of the need for another new school in the area. There were public meetings, and

letter-writing campaigns and a demonstration at the office of MPP Norm Sterling.

In the summer of 1998, the overcrowding situation at Holy Spirit Catholic School led to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board building an extension at the rear of the school to house additional washroom facilities to serve the overcrowded student population. Enrolment at Holy Spirit had reached 785 students by December 1997, with another increase expected in September 1998. Finally, a second Catholic elementary school was approved for Stittsville. The school year 1999-2000 saw the Holy Spirit School community sharing their facility with the students and staff of Guardian Angels Catholic School, which was under construction. There were 17 portable classrooms in use on the Holy Spirit site that fall, and close to 1,000 students. Deborah Robinson, the Principal of Guardian Angels Catholic School, led her students and staff into the new school in April 2000.

Ongoing residential growth in the Stittsville community has meant that Holy Spirit School continues to enjoy an enrolment of about 500 students. The school board's latest capital plan includes construction of a new elementary school in Stittsville with a scheduled opening of September 2008.

Present Principal

Kevin Mullins

Past Principals

Robert Slack
Bev Murphy
Lyle Bergeron
Bert O'Connor

First Teaching and Support Staff

Robert Slack, Principal
Gloria Sterling
Phyllis O'Neill
Louise Turcotte
Brenda MacDonald
Grace Anderson
Robert Santos
Valerie Tierney
Pat Campbell
Linda Scrivens
Tamara Connors
Marilyn O'Connor, Music Teacher
Rita Ovington, Librarian
Line Picard, French Teacher
Carole Conway, French Teacher
Tilly O'Connor, Teacher Assistant for Kindergarten
Mary Locke, Special Education Resource Teacher
Debby Moore, Secretary
Claude Fedorchuk, Head Custodian
Michael Poole, Custodian

School Colours

The school colours are royal blue and white.

Motto

"Friends Sharing God's Spirit"

Logo

The school's logo portrays the flame of the Holy Spirit surrounding a cross superimposed on the stylized letters "H.S."

Mascot

A bear is the school's mascot.

Bears are not unfamiliar to students and staff at Holy Spirit. There have been sightings of real bears in Stittsville. This has resulted in parents being called to pick up their children after school so that walking students have a safe way home.

Song

Holy Spirit Catholic School has a school song.

The lyrics and music for the song were composed by Tim Mouchet, the brother of Louise Turcotte, the first grade three teacher at Holy Spirit.

Mr. Mouchet took the school's motto, "Friends Sharing God's Spirit" and, combining it with themes such as family and teachers, composed the lyrics and then developed the music to go with the song during the school's inaugural year of 1988-1989.

The words of the Holy Spirit Catholic School's song are as follows:

Chorus:

Holy Spirit Catholic School is the beginning of a dream
That will sail us far beyond the stars
A life yet to be seen.
Filled with faith and hope and love
And everything between.
Holy Spirit Catholic School is the beginning of a dream. (twice)

Each morning I find myself
Wondering what the day will bring
Books in hand, away I go...
And my heart begins to sing.

All my friends are standing tall
with me
Asking all we wish to know
Teachers guiding us throughout
the years
As our minds and bodies grow.

It's great to know that Mom and
Dad
Are there to see me through and
through
To give the best in life a child can
have
To be a part of such a school.

The Spirit touches all our lives
In a very special way
In the Spirit we will be as one
As we live to love each day.

