

REV. THOMAS JOSEPH BROWN

SACRED HEART'S 12th PASTOR

2007-2012



Thomas Joseph Brown was born on April 22, 1955 to Vernon Brown and Mildred Dietrich in Grand Rapids, MI (Comstock Park). He came from a family of 11 children: 3 brothers (Kevin, Mike, and Daniel) and 7 sisters (Barb, Diane, Katy, Terri, Mary, Ruth, and Janet). While serving in the National Guard he also worked in plant maintenance at a plastics company for 18 years prior to entering the seminary.

On May 1, 1955 he was baptized at Holy Trinity in Comstock Park and confirmed on March 14, 1965.

He was educated at Christopher House and Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, MI. He entered St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, MD. His internship began in May 1996 to August 1997 at St. Michael, Remus, MI. On June 5, 1999 he was ordained into the priesthood by Bishop Robert J. Rose at St. Andrew Cathedral, Grand Rapids, MI.

On July 22, 2007 there was a welcoming party in the gym after the 11:00 a.m. Mass for Fr. Tom, our new pastor. On July 29 he was installed by Bishop Walter A. Hurley of the Diocese of Grand Rapids at the 11:00 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Church.

During his tenure at Sacred Heart Parish, the following changes took place:

- Fr. Tom began having a Mass on the first Friday of each month in the chapel.
- Lighthouse Catholic Media CDs were displayed in the back of the church offering an alternate method for those who wanted to learn and enhance their faith. The CD rack is still in place.
- On Saturday, November 3, 2007, there was a dinner/dance in the gym after the 6:00 p.m. Mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of the new church.
- In 2008 Fr. Tom asked Deb Chmelar to paint and restore the original crucifix taken from the old church and had it and the tabernacle returned to their places at the altar.
- On June 29, 2008, Velma Williams-Shea opened the Sacred Heart Nursery for infants to 5-year old in the new school library during the 11:00 a.m. Mass.
- On December 7, 2008, a blessing after the 11:00 a.m. Mass took place at the Nursery Open House.
- The Autumn Dinners began.

2009:

- Sacred Heart began emailing the monthly newsletters.
- Fr. Tom introduced *Umbert the Unborn* comic strip to the weekly bulletin.
- On June 5, Fr. Tom celebrated his 10th anniversary in the priesthood.
- The annual Sacred Heart Parish/Neighborhood Block Party still existed.
- The Food Pantry was relocated from the church to the new school building. The classroom next to the nursery became the new location with the Hoyt Street entrance being used for food pantry clients.
- The 1939 Sacred Heart School on Leahy Street was demolished.

2010:

- On January 18, the first adult get-together, *Stump Fr. Tom*, was started. Parishioners talked about the Catholic faith and if possible attempted to present Fr. Tom with a question he might not be able to answer at that particular social gathering.

2010 continued:

- Bob La Cross made a new prayer box located next to the candles on the south wall of the church. He also made a new stand for the St. Joseph statue.
- A new pictorial directory of our parish family was taken by Olan Mills Photographers.
- Bernadette Glover and Liz Barnes began creating Sacred Heart's monthly Newsletter in August 2010. Until then, Janet Valliere first created the newsletters in January 2004 with Volume I, Issue I up to Volume VII, Issue VII, equaling 79 newsletters!
- November 1, 2010 was the first annual All Saints/All Souls Dinner initiated by Mark Glover. This event continues.

2011:

- Electronic giving was started to automate regular weekly offerings.
- On Sunday, July 31, 2011, a farewell party was given for Deacon Chuck Schwartz, Sacred Heart's intern for one year.

Additional Information about Fr. Tom:

He would hear confessions at any time and place when requested.

He encouraged his fellow priests and nuns to wear their traditional religious clothing as recognition.

He was instrumental in bringing the Divine Mercy devotion to Sacred Heart.

He was chaplain for the Knights of Columbus at Sacred Heart.

He celebrated Mass at nursing homes to serve those who could not attend Mass at church.

He was the official priest for God's Embrace Retreats and Events. God's Embrace is a ministry to motivate parishioners into becoming ardent disciples of Jesus Christ by learning God's will in their spiritual journey.

Priesthood Assignments:

December 29, 1998	Deacon at St. Andrew Cathedral, Grand Rapids
July 1999-2002	Associate pastor at St. Francis de Sales Parish, Norton Shores
September 2001-2002	Administrator at St. Michael Parish, Muskegon
July 2002-2003	Pastor at St. Ann Parish, Baldwin
July 2003-June 2007	Pastor at St. Ignatious Parish, Luther
July 2007-June 2012	Pastor at Sacred Heart Parish, Muskegon Heights and St. Michael Parish, Muskegon

Effective May 31, 2010 he was appointed as temporary administrator at St. Francis de Sales Parish, Norton Shores, in addition to his pastoral duties at St. Michael and Sacred Heart. An extension after Fr. Tom's title-- Vicar forane (V.F.)--was added, and represents a parish priest appointed by a bishop to exercise a limited jurisdiction in a particular town or district of a diocese.

July 2, 2012	Pastor at St. Stephen Parish, East Grand Rapids
April 29, 2016-Present	Pastor at SS. Peter and Paul, Ionia, and St. Edward Parish, Lake Odessa, (clustered parishes)