

# EXTENSION

SEPTEMBER, 1976



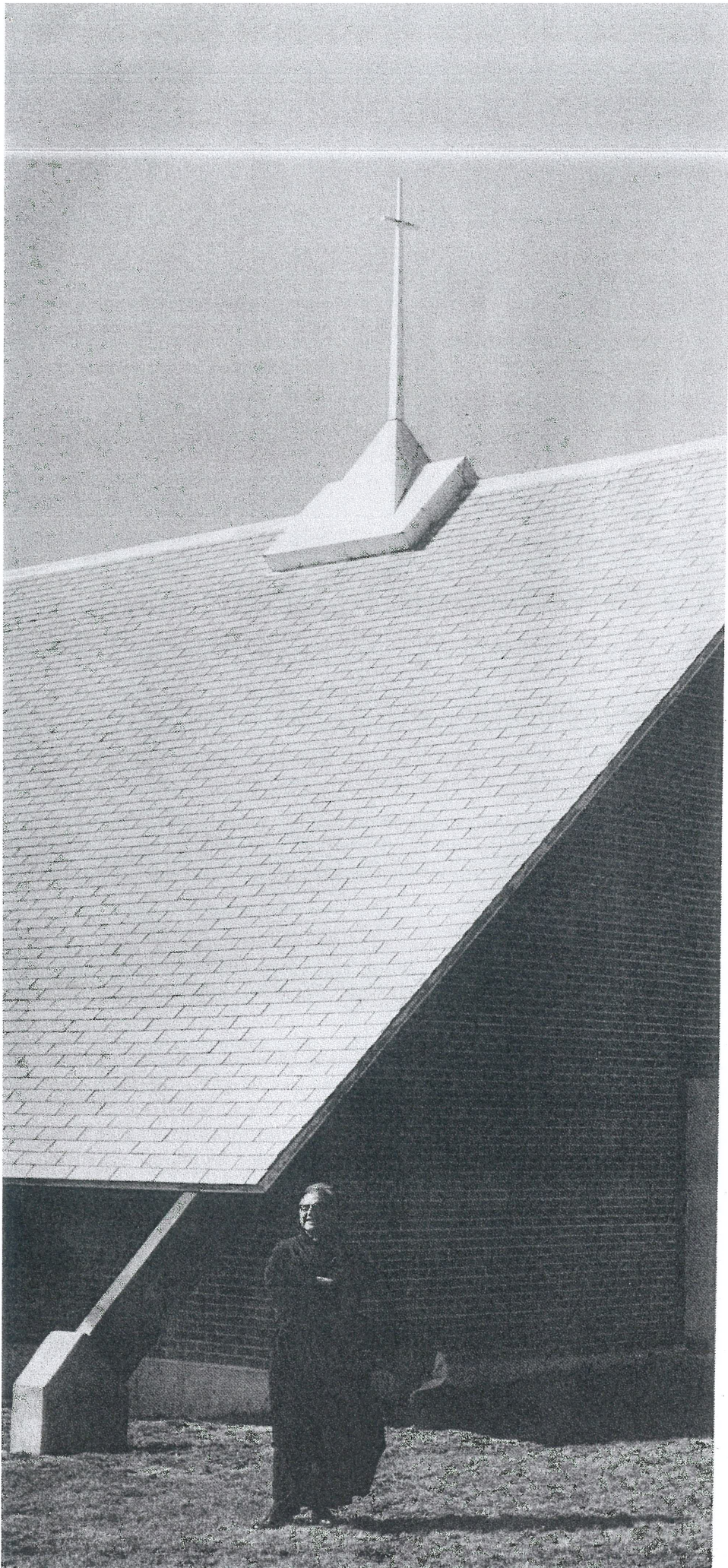
Fr. Peter Rookey, OSM, is

- **AN OLD PRO NAMED ROOKEY** . . . pg. 5
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Extension's special

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# An old pro named Rookey

by Larry Kaminski

St. Phillip Benizi Church sits quietly on a small slope between Highways 49 and Y in Viburnum, Missouri. Only four years old, the building is an A-Frame design that is both modern and functional, with the chapel on the first floor and the parish hall downstairs.

To a visitor the church is warm and pleasing to the eye. To the parishioners of St. Phillip the church is not only beautiful but one of the best things that ever happened to them. St. Phillip's Church means something very special because it is the first Catholic church built in Viburnum.

The original Catholics, who moved into the area in 1961, waited ten years before realizing their hopes for a church of their own. From 1961 to 1965 they had to travel up to 50 miles to the "neighboring" towns of Salem, Ironton and Lesterville in order to go to Mass.

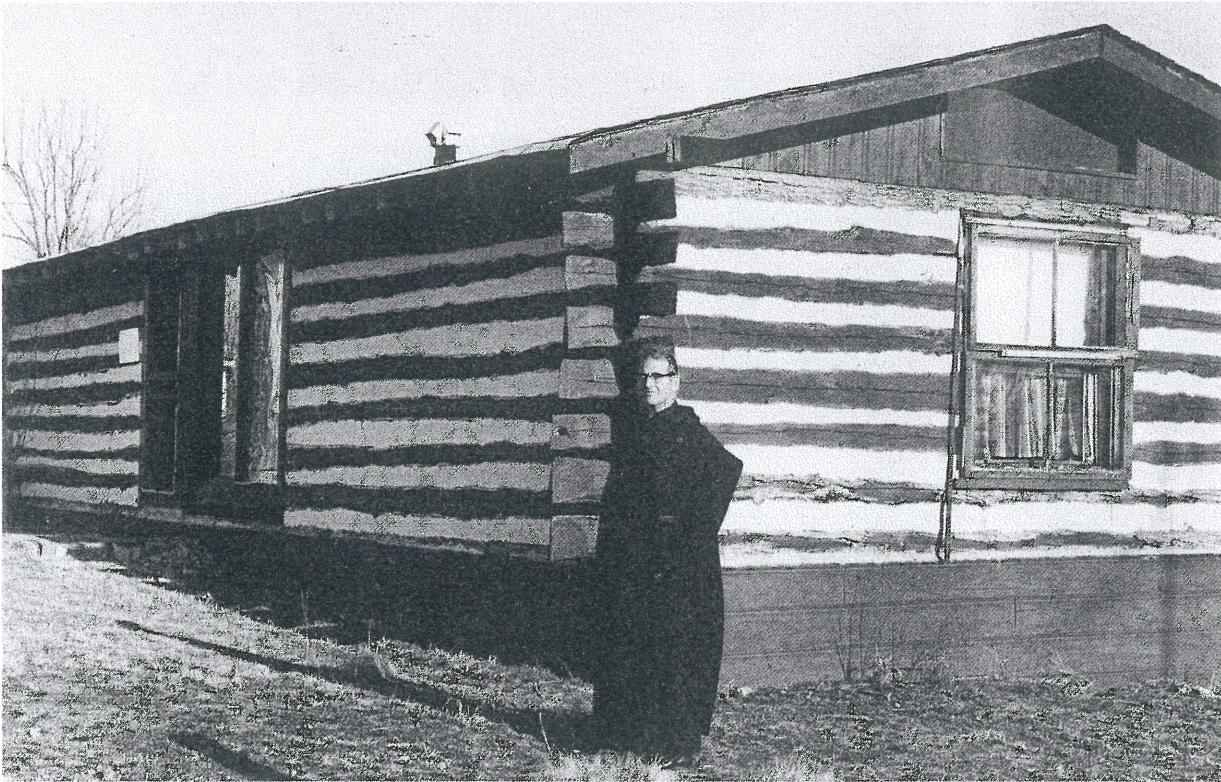
Viburnum's first priest, Fr.

Fr. Rookey poses outside St. Phillip Benizi, Viburnum's first Catholic Church.



## An old pro

Less than four years ago the small log cabin pictured below served as Viburnum's Catholic Church. Below right, Fr. Rookey gives the homily during Mass in the new church Extension helped to build.



Santos, did not arrive until 1965. At that time he started a mission using a vacant building that was formerly a combination restaurant and filling station. Two years later, the congregation moved to a primitive log cabin to celebrate Mass and hold parish meetings.

In 1968 Fr. Peter Rookey, a Servite priest, volunteered to work in Missouri and was assigned to the missions of Viburnum, Ironton, Ellington and Lesterville. Fr. Rookey held services for Viburnum's parishioners in the log cabin while the parish sought diocesan aid in

building a church.

In December, 1970, Fr. Rookey and two members of the parish council, Charles Anderson and Clement Fox, brought their case to Bishop Baum who headed the diocese at that time. The bishop's approval of the building plans was given in June of 1971.

With cash and pledges from the parish, help of the diocese and a chapel grant from EXTENSION the church was completed in November, 1971. It was subsequently dedicated in March, 1972. St. Phillip Benizi the patron of Viburnum's new church, was a 13th century Servite priest who

is considered as important to the order as were its founders. He built up the Servites by recruiting for the order in a large part of Europe including France, Germany and Poland.

Fr. Rookey was also a much-travelled priest before coming to Missouri. Ordained in Chicago thirty-three years ago by Archbishop William O'Brien, the late president of the Extension Society, Fr. Rookey has learned to speak seven languages while serving his order in Ireland, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Lapland, Africa and Turkey. He ran a college in Benburb, Ireland; a university



Right, Fr. Rookey enjoys one of his favorite pastimes, playing a few songs on the organ before Mass. The picture is a mosaic of St. Phillip Benizi.



in Laurine, Belgium; was assistant general of the Servite order in Rome for 6 years; and spent four and a half years in Germany before coming back to America to serve the Missouri missions seven years ago.

As a mission priest, Fr. Rookey still does a lot of travelling, but in a more limited area. He travels 225 miles at least twice a week making trips to serve the four mission churches in his care. From November through March he put 18,000 miles on his car, which means he averages over 800 miles a week.

Celebrating the Saturday and



## An old pro

Below, Sr. Mercedes Sarich teaches the older CCD students in the parish hall, located in the church basement. Right, St. Phillip's parish council meets with Fr. Rookey after Mass.



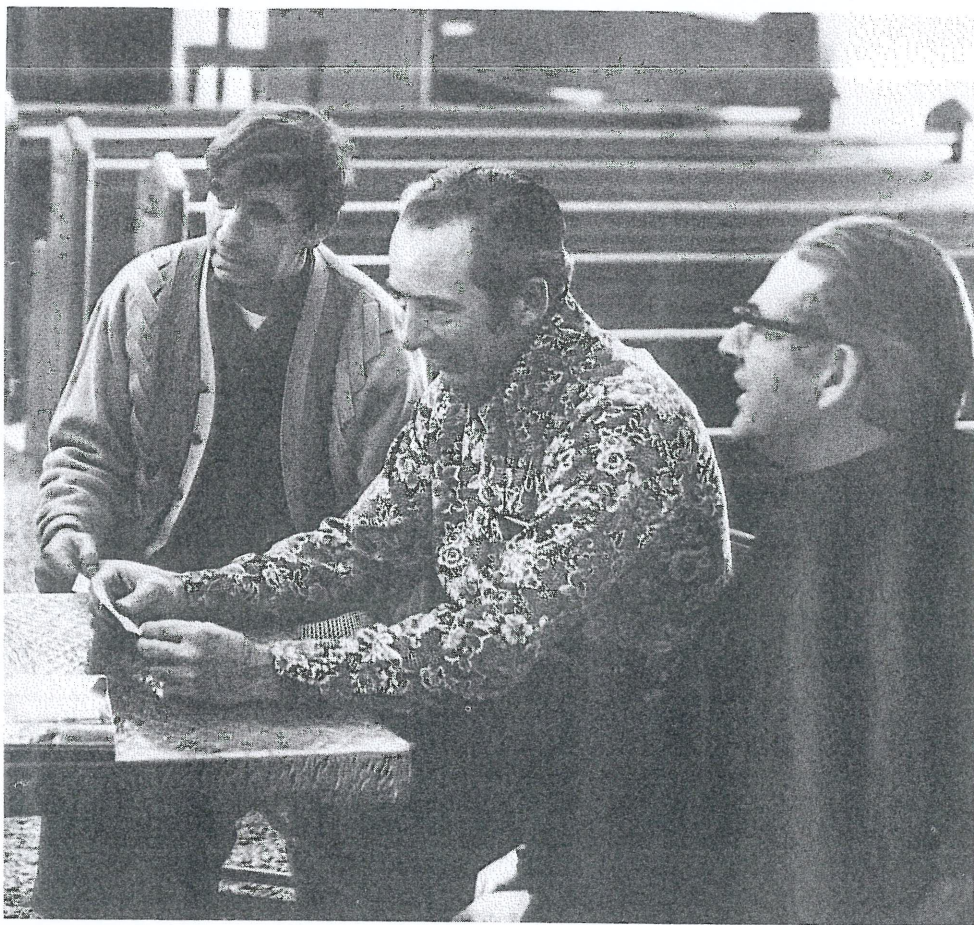
Sunday Masses seems to be a full time endeavor in itself; especially in the summer when Fr. Rookey says extra Masses on Sunday to accommodate the tourists who come to fish and camp. And these tourists are not just passing strangers to Fr. Rookey. He makes contact with them and encourages them to help the Extension Society because he and his parishioners appreciate the help they received from Extension.

When Fr. Rookey visits each of his churches during the week, his two important assistants, Sisters Dorothy Grace Finney, OSM and Mercedes Sarich, OSM, hold religious education classes for the parish school children. With the help of parish volunteers the nuns divide the children into age groups to form classes



Sr. Dorothy Grace Finney, above asks a question of her CCD class. Right, a volunteer teacher explains a point to the youngest CCD group.





## Your Stipends Can Help

Some things are very slow to change. At least that's how people see it in some of the isolated communities in southwest Texas. Many of these villages are still using makeshift chapels because they simply cannot afford something better. The priests who service them usually exist on Mass stipends for their essential needs. EXTENSION makes sure all Mass stipends go to the poorest missionaries. If your parish can't take care of your immediate needs for a Mass, send your intentions to EXTENSION.

**The Catholic Church  
Extension Society**

1307 South Wabash Avenue. Chicago, Illinois

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## An old pro

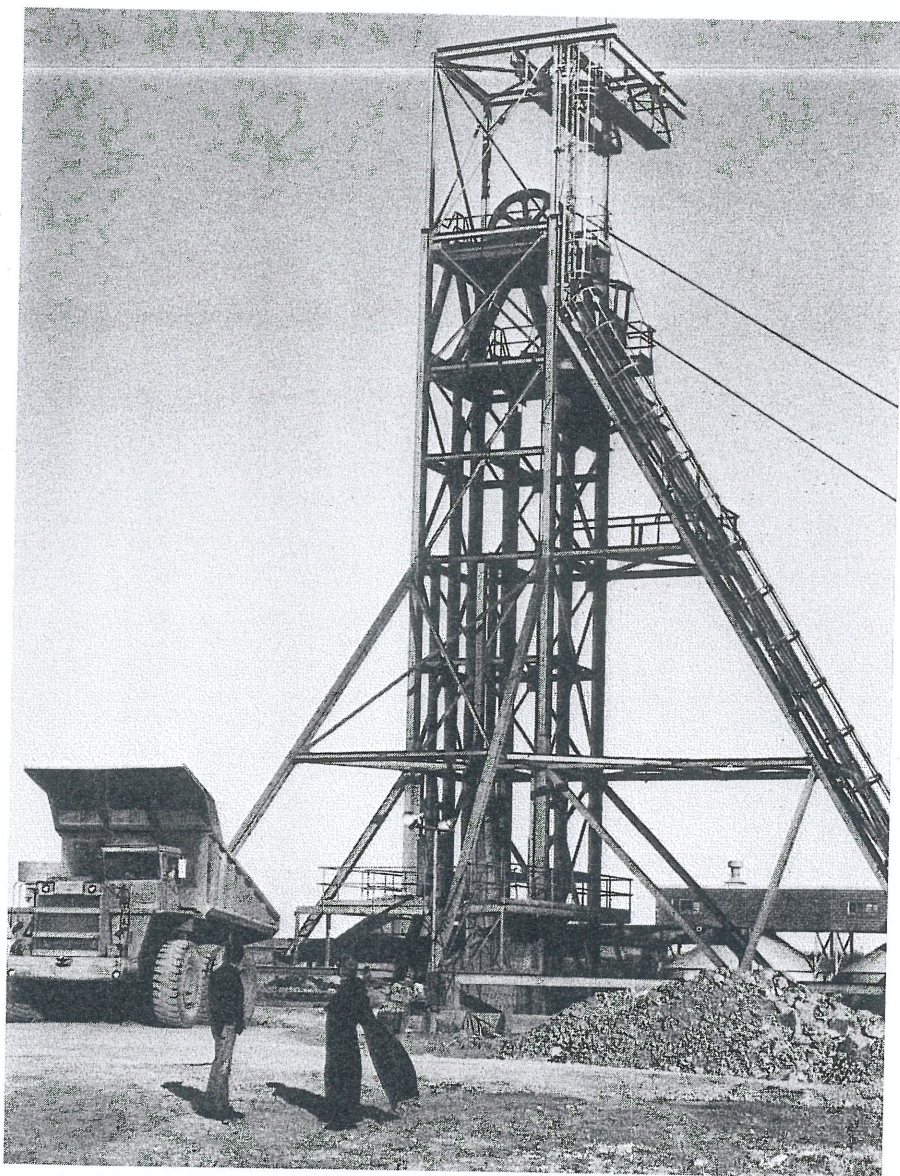
that are more personal and more successful.

After CCD classes Fr. Rookey celebrates Mass especially for the children. He has a good rapport with the young and his homilies are an easy flowing and entertaining mixture of story and lesson. Fr. Rookey enjoys these Masses, especially when he plays the organ to accompany the singing of hymns.

In the spring there is special instruction for First Communicants and courses in religious leadership for the whole family. The idea behind the latter is to educate small groups who in turn gather larger groups and lead them towards a spiritual life style.

The Catholics in Viburnum have come a long way since the days of their log cabin church. Their patience and persistence has brought them a priest, a church and parish hall of their own, and religious programs that make them a viable Catholic community in an area that is only one percent Catholic.

Their progress and success makes the help of Extension more than worthwhile. ●



A truck, above, gets ready to dump ore at St. Joe's lead mine, Viburnum's main industry. Left, Fr. Rookey relaxes with Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hope, who are his good friends. Fr. Rookey says he gives Bob his best jokes.