



mary
star
of
the sea
church

FREEPORT GRAND BAHAMA
DEDICATED FEBRUARY 11, 1972

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts"

mary star of the sea church

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Dr. Robert Antoni

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Ernie's Studio & Camera Centre Ltd.

diocese of nassau

Bishop:

His Lordship, The Most Rev. Paul Leonard Hagarty,
O.S.B., D.D., LL.D.

MARY, STAR OF THE SEA PARISH

Rector:

The Very Rev. Brendan F. Forsyth, O.S.B., M.A., J.C.L.
The Rev. Monsignor P. J. O'Connor
The Rev. L. B. Keegan

St. Jude's Mission, Williamstown

St. Leonard's Mission, High Rock

Very Rev. Cornelius Osendorf, O.S.B./O.B.E.

Mary, Star of the Sea School

Sister Mary Alice Gantley, O.S.F.

Catholic Women's League
Mrs. Pierette Tower

Men of Mary Star
Roy D'Augustine, President

Grand Bahama Catholic High School
Sister Agatha Hunt, O.S.B.

"A church should do more than beautify and dignify the neighborhood. It should personify and verify brotherhood. Its purpose is not to gratify man, but to glorify God."



architect:

Rene Valladares, O., A.I.A.

Principal: Rene Valladares O. Architectural Planning and Design Company.

Born: Guatemala City July 17, 1926

Education: Bachelor of Science and Letters, Instituto Nacionale Guatemala; Post Graduate Study, Universidad Autonoma de San Carlos, Guatemala; Universidad Nacionale Autonoma de Mexico; University of California, Berkeley, California; Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Experience:

1948-1959 — Architectural Offices in Mexico, D.F.

1959-1962 — Private practice (Cummins-Valladares, A.I.A.) New Orleans, La.

1962 — Formed own firm (Rene Valladares, O. Architectural Planning and Design Co.)

Member: American Institute of Architects, South Florida National Chapter with registration in the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida.

Planning and Design: Many commercial projects in Louisiana and Florida.

Monument: Benito Juarez, New Orleans.

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven Church and Hall, La Belle, Florida.

St. Margaret's, Clewiston, Florida.

St. Kevin's, South Miami, Florida.



CONTRACTOR

Julian O'Reilly,

Principal: San Jose Construction (Bahamas) Ltd.

Education: St. Vincent's College, Dublin, Ireland.
University College, Dublin, Ireland.

Experience: Three years with two hundred-year-old family contracting firm in Ireland.

Eight years contracting in Canada.

Eight years contracting in the Bahamas.

Five years with his own firm of San Jose Construction (Bahamas) Ltd. in Freeport.

Construction in Freeport: Antoni Clinic.

Custom Homes.

Multiple Apartments.



*"This is none other than the House of God . . . the Gate of Heaven . . . to be called the Court of God"
(Psalm 84)*



The Red Cross is lowered into its site in the completed Church.



statistics

Construction started: January 5, 1971

Construction completed: November 1, 1971

Materials:

4,134,375 lbs. poured concrete (in situ).

210,000 lbs. reinforcing steel

60,000 sq. ft. of form work used in construction.

85,020 lbs. asphalt paving, providing parking for 200 cars.

Dimensions:

Nave 8000 sq. ft.

Four Transepts 4,500 sq. ft.

Apse 34 ft. high

Exterior Cross 40 ft. high

Acreeage of entire Mary, Star of the Sea Compound (School, Convent, Rectory, Church): Almost 10 acres.

Ground-Breaking Ceremony - November 22, 1970

Lay Advisors: Mark Johnson, Amado Antoni

John Kimball, President-Port Authority; Garnett Levarity, O.B.E., formerly Govt. Administrative Office; Wallace Groves, founder of Freeport; Sister Mary Alice, Headmistress; The Honourable Milo Butler, then Minister of Labour; Rad Radomski, Chairman-Lay Advisors; Very Rev. Cornelius Osendorf, O.S.B., O.B.E., Vicar General; Very Rev. Brendan F. Forsyth, O.S.B., Rector; Julian O'Reilly, San Jose Construction Company — Contractor

description of church building

In the Architect's words, "Trans-Facetic Contemporary." Availability of material and the desire to eliminate pillars dictated the use of concrete reinforced with steel.

Perhaps the most outstanding exterior feature of the new church is its towering cross over the entrance. Painted a brilliant red, it cannot be overlooked. It soars forty feet above East Sunrise Highway. In explaining the red cross, the Pastor points out, "Holy Mother Church has for centuries used the liturgical colour red to symbolize Love, Sacrifice, and the Blood of Martyrdom. The red cross will be a perpetual reminder that we were redeemed by Our Saviour Who showed His Love when He sacrificed Himself on the cross and purchased our redemption through His Blood. The Hexagon at the bottom of the cross is a symbol of Eternity, denoting that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is still present before a timeless God."

Entering the church through wide, welcoming glass doors, the worshipper steps into a vast colosseum-like area, the walls and ceiling meeting in simple, unbroken lines. Over the Altar and Sanctuary area, the roof is broken by an Ape that rises to thirty-four feet. A recessed area behind the Altar provides an effective central location for the eight foot Crucifix. Two invisible windows reflect indirect lighting on the Crucifix. A simple, marble-topped Altar occupies the centre of the large Sanctuary, ample for the most solemn of liturgical worship.

The semi-circular form with the Altar in the centre was chosen so that no one in the congregation is any farther than sixty feet from the Altar. The inclining floor assures a clear view. Both the semi-circular form and the inclining floor aid full participation in the Sacred Liturgy.

To avoid a distracting glare in a climate of "eternal sunshine," the Architect surrounded the Nave with indirect lighting. This is achieved by a clever separation between foundation and wall, providing soft light which is reflected from below. Ventilation is also provided through these apertures.



"My dwelling place shall be with them, says the Lord, and I will be their God and they will be My People."

transepts

There are four Transepts in the new edifice.

Those to the right and left of the Sanctuary are separated from the Nave by one-way, soundproof windows, offering full view of the Sanctuary. One Transept is to be utilized as a "baby crying room," while the other is an all purpose room which can be utilized for overflow crowds during Divine Worship. A completely equipped kitchen makes this Transept available also for meetings and social events.

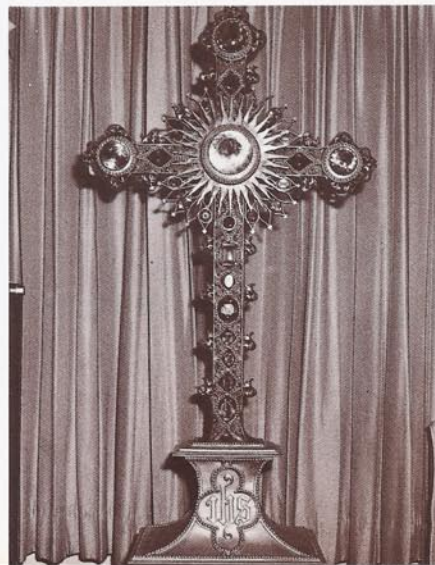
The two Transepts at the rear of the church contain Confessionals, but are large enough also to be used for overflow crowds. The Transept to the right is also the "Lady Chapel" where a patinaed bronze copy of the famed "La Virgen Blanca" of Toledo Cathedral in Spain is mounted.

The left Transept is the Holy Cross Chapel where a beautiful Tiffany Cross made of bronze and set with semi-precious jewels is mounted.

Tiffany Cross in Chapel of the Holy Cross



Statue of "La Virgen Blanca" in the Lady Chapel



church appointments

The Star Of David erected at Mary, Star of the Sea Church will serve as a continual reminder that, as Christians, we are all spiritual Semites.



The Crucifix, Star of David and Ten Commandments sculpted by Prince Monyo Mihailescu Nasturel, a Rumanian artist with studios in Toronto, Canada.



Crucifix:
Sculpted in Bronze and Brass, the Corpus having a brown patina.
Dimensions: 8 ft. x 24 in.
x 8 ft. x 20 ins.



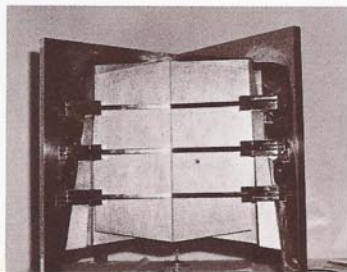
The Four Candlesticks are of brass with a silver base, executed in Spain.



The Baptismal Font is fashioned from marble and stainless steel.



The Ten Commandments erected at Mary, Star of the Sea Church as a continual reminder of the Hebraic-Christian Moral Code.



Tabernacle
To the left of the Sanctuary, on another marble altar, stands the Tabernacle, executed in Spain in brass and silver.

"O God, from living stones You prepare an everlasting dwelling place."

BISHOP OF NASSAU

Born: Greene, Iowa

Education: Loris College, Dubuque, Iowa
St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Priestly Career:

June 6, 1936 — Ordained as a Benedictine Monk to the Sacred Priesthood.

† 1937 — Assigned to the Bahamas.

† 1941 — Established St. Vincent dePaul Church, Hunter, Grand Bahama.

Oct. 19, 1950 — Consecrated Bishop as Titular Bishop of Arba and Vicar Apostolic of the Bahamas.

July 5, 1960 — Pope John XXIII raised the Vicariate Apostolic of the Bahamas to the status of the Diocese of Nassau, with Bishop Hagarty as first Bishop of Nassau.

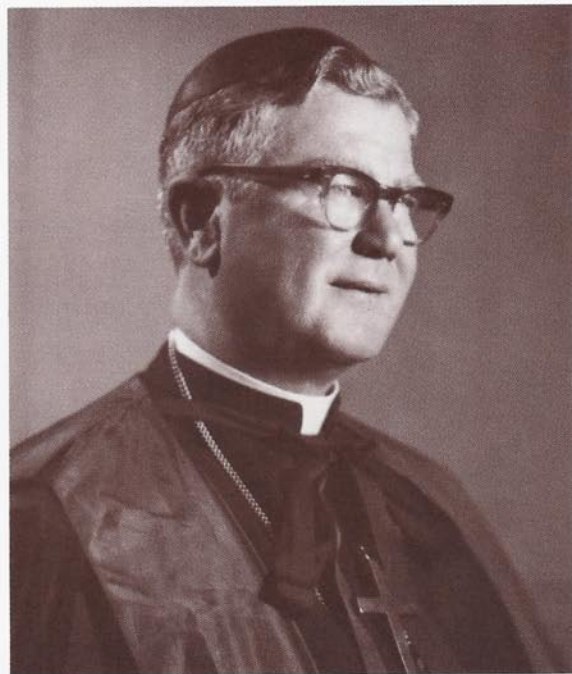
Progress of Diocese of Nassau under Bishop Hagarty:

New school buildings and churches erected on 12 islands in the Bahamas.

New High School buildings at St. Augustine's College, Xavier's College and Aquinas College; three new Parishes and three general clinics in Nassau.

Three clinics on the Islands of Grand Bahama and Andros.

On Grand Bahama, established St. Vincent dePaul School at Hunter; Mary, Star of the Sea School, Freeport; Grand Bahama Catholic High, Hawksbill.



**His Lordship, The Most Rev. Paul
Leonard Hagarty
O.S.B., D.D., LL.D.**

history of the church in the Bahamas

In 1492, Don Bernardo Boil offered the first Mass at Guanahani (now San Salvador) when Columbus made his landing.

The Spanish did not stay long, and it was not until 1763 that Bishop Challoner of London requested Rome to make some provision for Catholics in the West Indies.

In 1837, Pope Gregory XVI assigned the Bahamas Archipelago to the care of the Jamaican Vicariate. In 1858, the Holy See assigned the Bahamas to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina. Several priests from South Carolina made short visits to the Bahamas, until, in 1885 the Bahamas was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New York.

On February 13, 1887, Archbishop Corrigan of New York dedicated the first Catholic Church in the Bahamas, St. Francis Xavier, now the Cathedral in Nassau.

A vow made by a shipwrecked priest in 1891 inaugurated the modern phase of the history of the Catholic Church in the Bahamas.

The first Benedictine from St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, Father Chrysostom Schreiner, arrived in Nassau on February 2, 1891. He was sent by his Abbot at the request of the Archbishop to survey the possibility of permanent missionary work by the Benedictines in the Bahamas.

Father Chrysostom had just decided that conditions were too adverse for permanent establishment and was about to return to Minnesota, when his interest in the landfall of Columbus led him to hire the sloop "Rebecca" to make the voyage to San Salvador.

One night, off the shore of Conception Cay, in the midst of a storm, the sloop sank off a reef. In the heavily shark-infested waters Father Chrysostom made a vow that if he and the crew were saved, he would devote the rest of his life to work in the Bahamas.

He returned to Nassau and became the first permanent Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church.

The Sisters of Charity of Mount St. Vincent in New York, two years before, had already established the first Catholic school in Nassau.

Slowly but steadily, missionary work continued on New Providence Island, Harbour Island, Andros and San Salvador. These islands were dotted with churches when, on February 7, 1932, the Bahamas was raised to the status of a Prefecture Apostolic, and Father Bernard Kevenhoerster, O.S.B., was consecrated Bishop and Prefect Apostolic. It was during his administration that the Church expanded its work to include clinics and public welfare work.

In his first official report to Rome, the Catholic population of the Bahamas was listed as 3,400. In 1941, the Prefecture was raised to the status of Vicariate Apostolic.

When, in 1960, Pope John XXIII raised the Vicariate Apostolic to the status of the Diocese of Nassau, with The Most Rev. Paul Leonard Hagarty O.S.B. as the new Bishop of the Diocese, the Church had grown to a population of 30,000. The Diocese covers an area of about 900 miles in length and includes Turks and Caicos Islands.

Today, approximately 9,000 children are being educated in Catholic Grade and high schools. This education programme is being carried on by over 250 teachers, including teaching Sisters from nine Orders.

St. Augustine's College in Nassau was the first boarding school on the Islands. In addition to diocesan priests, and the Benedictines, four other Orders are represented among the 54 priests working in the Diocese.

"This is the House of God and Gate of Heaven"



**Very Rev. Brendan F. Forsyth, O.S.B.,
B.A., M.A., J.C.L.**

**Rector — Mary Star of the Sea Parish,
Freeport, Grand Bahama.**

Born: July 29, 1914

Education: University of Colorado;
Regis College, Denver;
Detroit University, Michigan;
Catholic University of America, Wash-
ington, D.C.

Priestly Career:

June 9, 1940 — Ordained to Sacred
Priesthood and assigned to the Bahamas.
1947-1965 — Rector — St. Francis Xavier
Cathedral.

1950 — Chancellor, Diocese.

1956 — Superintendent of Schools
Officialis of Matrimonial Tribunal

Director of Bureau of Information

Sept. 1965 — Appointed Pastor of Mary,
Star of the Sea Catholic Parish, includ-
ing Freeport and Eastern Grand Bahama.

history of mary star of the sea parish

In 1960, Mr. Wallace Groves, founder of Freeport, called on His Lordship, Bishop Hagarty, in Nassau to make a proposal. If the Bishop could get teaching Sisters, the Port Authority and its subsidiaries would build an eight-room school, a convent, and a building that could be used as a church. Mr. Groves was convinced that good schools were essential for the community he dreamed for Freeport.

The Bishop, while pointing out the difficulty in obtaining Sisters at the time, agreed to try. He appealed to his former teacher of grammar school days, Reverend Mother Leona Griffin, Mother General of the Franciscan Sisters of Clinton, Iowa. In honour of the elevation of her former pupil to the Bishopric of the Bahamas, the Mother General agreed, on March 19, 1960, to send Sisters to Freeport.

Sister Mary Eleanor Dunning, with Sister Mary Francis Burke and Sister Mary Jeanine Bradford, arrived in Freeport in August and took up temporary residence in the Groves' house on Amundsen Lane. Across the street, another house owned by Mr. Groves was converted into a temporary school, and Mary, Star of the Sea School opened its doors in September with an enrollment of 29.

The Sisters and the Catholics of Freeport motored to St. Vincent dePaul Church in Hunter for Mass. The roads in those days were very primitive, but the caravan from Freeport received a warm welcome from the parishioners at Hunter; and pioneers to this day cherish the memory of that warmth and magnificent singing. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the tiny chapel of the "convent" where Father Celsus Flynn, O.C.R. occasionally offered Mass.

The constant increase in the number of Catholics moved the Bishop to allow Mass to be offered in Freeport. The first "church" was the reception room of the Grand Bahama Clinic (now Rand Memorial Hospital). Mr. Keith Gonsalves, then Vice President of the Port Authority and a pioneer member of the Parish, provided new folding chairs. It was at this time the pioneer doctors, Amado and Robert Antoni began their continuing services to the church in this familiar atmosphere.

By September of the same year, the first wing of the present Mary, Star of the Sea School and the convent on East Beach Drive were ready for use.

It is interesting to note that it was Mr. Groves who suggested "Mary, Star of the Sea" as the title of the new Parish. Mr. Edward Cosentino of Miami provided the beautiful statue imported from Italy which occupies a prominent position in front of the school.

Father Flynn, a Trappist Monk from England, on loan for three years' pastoral work, won the hearts of all the pioneer residents of Freeport, as was indicated by the attendance of almost all the inhabitants at a farewell supper for him on the lawn of the convent.

Daily Masses were held in one of the classrooms of the new school until 1964, when the present school hall was built and used as a church. This arrangement continued until December 8, 1971, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, when the first Mass was offered in the new church. The school hall has now reverted to its original purpose.

In 1964, a small Rectory was built adjacent to the convent, and Father Bruno Walker became the first resident Pastor of the new Parish of Mary, Star of the Sea. In 1965, Mrs. Pauline Skipwith of Atlanta, Georgia, donated the funds required to double the size of the tiny Rectory. In March 1968 the Parish acquired a duplex at 93 Tamarind Street which is still used as a Rectory Annex and guest house. Rev. Monsignor P.J. O'Connor of Atlanta, Georgia, and Rev. L.B. Keegan of La Crosse, Wisconsin, both retired, reside in the duplex and assist with parish work.

Also in 1964 the Fund Drive for the new church of Mary, Star of the Sea was started, with a donation of \$100,000, consisting of a \$50,000 gift from Mr. James Rand of the Colonial Research Institute, and \$50,000 from the Grand Bahama Port Authority Group of Companies. The fulfillment of the dream in seven years would not have been possible without other generous individual donations.

The splendid cooperation of all the Parishioners in their contributions to a second collection every Sunday, coupled with the remarkable cooperation of the entire community, which knows no religious, racial or national barriers, has produced a church which will be carrying no mortgage. It is estimated that the church and furnishings represent a total cost of \$400,000.

Automatic chimes were installed in 1967 through the generosity of Mr. Keith Gonsalves, who donated them as a memorial to his parents. The Parish can never forget its debt of gratitude to Mr. Wallace Groves and the Grand Bahama Port Authority and Subsidiary Companies who donated the ten acres of land and the entire school-convent complex.

While the material needs of the Parish have been so amply met, the spiritual needs have not been overlooked. An annual Parish Retreat provides special spiritual incentive for the Parishioners.

The large number of Polish Members of the Parish observed the Millenium of the Polish Nation and Christianity in Poland in 1966. Right Rev. Monsignor Valerius Jasinski of Detroit presided at the services in the Polish language. Since that year, the first Sunday in May is observed as "Polish Sunday" at Mary Star, with home Masses offered by the Monsignor several days before and after.

French language services are also provided annually since 1966 in connection with the Feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24. Evening home Masses precede the observance, which concludes with a float parade and a solemn Mass. Each year at Christmas-time, Midnight Mass is preceded by a French language Mass.

The Parish observes the Bahamian Labour Day the first Friday of June with a special Mass. Remembrance Sunday, Discovery Day, and other Bahamian holidays are observed. Government officials traditionally participate in these services.

"The House of the Lord is well founded on a firm rock."



ST. JUDE'S MISSION, WILLIAMSTOWN

The people of Williamstown and Russelltown, along the shore about five miles from Mary Star of the Sea, had attended services at St. Vincent's in Hunter, but the construction of waterways made this very difficult. And so, in 1964, a regular Sunday Mass and a Thursday evening Mass were offered at Williamstown in a house belonging to Mr. Alonzo Williams. The Mission was dedicated to the patronage of St. Jude. Later, in early 1967, the people of the two communities built the concrete-tile structure which is in use to the present time. Mr. Ken Bowers throughout all these years was the faithful sacristan and assistant to the various priests who ministered to this Mission.



ST. LEONARD'S MISSION, HIGH ROCK

For several years, the Rector of Mary, Star of the Sea Church traveled 35 miles out to the High Rock area every Wednesday to offer Holy Mass for the personnel of the Guided Missile Base at Gold Rock and for the people of the High Rock area. Father Brendan again appealed to the parishioners of Mary, Star of the Sea Church to provide the \$25,000 necessary to purchase from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Vincent Biondo a 60' x 20' concrete block building to be used as a church, rectory and clinic. Again the Parish responded generously.

Father Thomas Pierson, S.J. was the first priest in charge in 1967. In 1969, Very Reverend Cornelius Osendorf, O.S.B., O.B.E., a veteran of thirty-five years in the Bahamas, took up residence. Father Cornelius, in addition to being Vicar General of the Diocese, is now Dean of Grand Bahama.

The mission at McLean's Town, 35 miles farther out to the eastern end of Grand Bahama, is also attended by Father Cornelius.



CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The Catholic Women's League, organized originally to arrange the farewell supper for Father Flynn, under the leadership of Mrs. Pierette Tower, meets the second Wednesday of each month and receives Holy Communion in a body the Sunday following. From a small beginning, it has grown to its present membership of 70.

Its aim: "To unite the women of the parish in a common spiritual goal by more intimate participation in the life of the Church; to assist the Pastor and Sisters in any way possible to further Catholic ideals."

MEN OF MARY STAR

Since 1964, under the presidency of Mr. Roy D'Augustine, the Men of Mary Star have grown from the original eight to the present 150.

The purpose of the men's group is to assist the Rector; promote involvement of Christian Laymen in the Church and community affairs; through good works of love and charity; to strengthen the Mystical Body of Christ; to form a nucleus of Lectors, Commentators and Ushers, and to perform corporal works of mercy, promote goodwill and stimulate brotherhood.





BRIEF HISTORY OF MARY STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

Sister Mary Alice Gantley, O.S.F. became Headmistress in August 1964 just when the population of Freeport began its massive growth. The Grand Bahama Port Authority came to the rescue and provided an eight-room wing in 1967. This wing included a Music Room and Library. The next year, another wing was added to house the Kindergarten, Art Room, Language Room and Staff Room.

Under Sister Alice's direction, the school curriculum was expanded to include French and Spanish.

The Music Department, under the direction of capable musicians, vied with the Fine Arts Department for the students' interest. Each year, art exhibits and fine musical concerts bring trophies and appreciation to the school.

The School Library is one of the finest in the area, and the Athletic Department offers a wide variety of sports to the student body.

Sister Mary Alice continues as Headmistress. Her capable supervision, remarkable personality, and devotion to the cause of education, coupled with a sincere interest in the students and in their parents, have endeared her to the entire community.

Under Sister Alice's supervision, the enrollment has increased from the original 29 students in 1960 to 700 students, with a staff of four teaching Sisters and 25 qualified lay teachers from Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Canada and the United States. Twenty-six classrooms provide adequate space for the large school population. Sister Mary Jeanine Bradford, O.S.F. of the original staff, continues as a popular Second Grade teacher. The school is self-supporting.



GRAND BAHAMA CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

This school, although in the Parish boundaries, is a Diocesan institution, but Mary, Star of the Sea Parish grants it a monthly donation.

The first eight classrooms of this co-educational school were constructed in the summer of 1966, and the school opened its doors on September 12, with Sister Mary Jeremia Januscha, O.S.B. as Headmistress.

The Port Authority, through its subsidiary, Bahamas Amusements, of which Mr. Keith Gonsalves was then President, donated the facilities, indicating the Port's continuing interest in education.

Eighty students registered the first year in the Freshman Class.

In 1969, Sister Mary Claire Lynch, O.S.B. became Headmistress, and during her three-year tenure, another wing was added to the school, containing a Library, Music Room, and other facilities. This, too, was a donation from the Port Authority.

Sister Agatha Hunt, O.S.B. a Bahamian from San Salvador, is the present Headmistress. The school population is 220 students, taught by 16 teachers, five of whom are Benedictine Sisters from St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, Minnesota, whose Bahamian headquarters are at St. Martin dePorres Convent in Nassau.

"No person is strong enough to carry a cross and his prejudices at the same time."

BENEFACTORS

Wallace Groves
Z. W. (Rad) Radomski
Herman Perl
Men of Mary Star
Keith Gonsalves
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Johnson
William Collins
Herbert Allen
Lilla Gonsalves
Colonial Research Institute
Dorothy Rand Connor
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Pirnak
William Heimbaugh
William McNeice
David Jennette
Mr. and Mrs. S. Amoury
Ubald Boyer

Mercantile Bank
Garnett J. Levarity
G. & D. Construction Co. Ltd.
Henry Wilson
Gertrude Tucker
H. A. Bainbridge
Dr. Amado Antoni
Dr. Robert Antoni
Miss Eileen Downs
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Barratt
Intercontinental Realty Company, Ltd.
Grand Bahama Port Authority Ltd.
Group of Companies
Grand Bahama Development Co., Ltd.
Freeport Hebrew Congregation
George Kates
Thomas Rozak

Mrs. Christine Burton
Mrs. Pauline Skipwith
Ernie Skog, Sr.
Prince Monyo Mihailescu Nasturel
Mr. and Mrs. Orlando Sarsfield
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Hillier
Mrs. Florence Pyfrom
Mrs. A. Brenninkmerijer
The Duchess of Marchena
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew M. Mitchell
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Blim
Mr. and Mrs. John Terrano
Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Gleason
Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Vagg
Chee-A-Tow and Company
The French Speaking Community
Robert V. Carey