The following bulletin announcements and parishioner recollections indicate the spirit of that school:

Monks and seminarians used to go walking past the school and even the rudest boys greeted them reverently with "Gelobt sei Jesus Christus," which means "Praised be Jesus Christ." They would answer, "In Ewigkeit" or "For all eternity."

School opens Tuesday. All children are to be present. Families having cases of mumps are asked to keep children at home for the period of quarantine, twenty-one days. Please do not send them — do not infect the whole school. (September 1, 1940)∗

The ladies of the parish scrub the school next Thursday. (August 24, 1930)∗

Let all the parents get their children in readiness to begin school. It is necessary for the teachers and pupils and a strict duty for all parents. (September 8, 1930)∗

We used to have our fun, go out in the woods during school and forget to come back for a half day. We would roll leaves together and smoke them. Boy, did we ever catch hell for that from the nuns.

As the grade school was an important focus of the parish since 1925, perhaps few parishioners seriously thought in 1960 that the school would close. The school had stayed open through previous hard times. "Many of you are making generous sacrifices to keep our little school going with good
teachers and at least good textbooks and comfortable warmth," the pastor, Fr. Lancelot Atsch, OSB, reported in 1962. But in the next five years the lack of students, rising costs, and personnel problems threatened the school's existence.

When the John F. Kennedy Public School opened in St. Joseph in 1965, many parents refused to register their students for the parish school for the following year. In February 1967, the pastor, Fr. Jordan Stovik, OSB, called a parish meeting to discuss the school's future:

Many thanks for the wonderful turnout last Friday evening for the parish meeting. One thing stands out — the MUST or great need of getting together to think, discuss, dialogue and exchange ideas on a parish level for a plan of action; otherwise things fall apart. It seems that we must do this again, at least once more, and soon. Another thing is clear — you have committed yourselves over the past year or two or more to District 742 and its support by taxes. You have made several steps already; and many have registered their children in the new public school for next fall. As a result, not enough children are registered in St. John’s at present to allow us to re-open in fall. The question now is, will enough change their registration from the public school and come back and re-register in St. John’s so that our school can re-open in fall? You must decide soon, within a week or ten days, and let your pastor know; teachers must be obtained now. You can call, come and talk, or write your pastor.

Other meetings followed. Many in the parish could not see the need to continue sending their children to a Catholic school and also pay taxes for a new public school. Others felt that the parochial grade school should continue at all costs. For example, a parishioner wrote Father Jordan on February 16, 1967:
There are a few comments that I should like to make in view of the situation.

In view of the critical sister-teacher shortage in the diocese, we can hardly justify two sisters for thirty students. This would mean a return to three grades of about fifteen pupils in each grade . . .

Several people now supporting the parish school have indicated that once the school in St. Joseph opens, they are going to decrease their contributions to support parish operation only.

In terms of building, available materials, lack of hot lunch, gymnasium space, the condition of the toilet, heating difficulties— we can hardly justify operation when a first class school is in operation four miles away. To improve the building and put it into good condition does not seem at all feasible for thirty students.

I favor closing the school as of the end of the school year.

The majority of parishioners voted to close the school. Thus, the pastor informed Bishop George Speltz in a letter dated March 7, 1967:

Last Friday evening we held our . . . last parish meeting . . .

During and after the parish meetings we held, I could not help the feeling that many, if not the majority of the people, felt that there is not much use in keeping up such a small school in view of the great need of sisters in other larger schools, and in view of the high lay teachers' salaries; some also felt that we are not able to keep up with the new facilities of education which always entail greater and greater expense to such a small parish, when these facilities are available only four miles away.
After holding the two parish meetings, and seeing the facts and figures, and hearing the feelings and impressions of others, there seems to be no other recommendation except to close the school here in St. John's parish.

Bishop Speltz accepted the parishioners' recommendation and wrote Father Jordan on March 8, 1967:

After reading your report on the mind of the people of St. John the Baptist Church toward the further continuance of your Catholic elementary school, there is little that one can say in reply. This being the mind of your parish... I can only accept their decision and you may proceed accordingly.

The school closed that spring on an air of distrust and bitterness among many parishioners. Some were angry at the pastor for calling the meetings that led to the closing, some were angry at other parishioners for trying to keep the school open, and others were just frustrated about the whole matter.

Although the parish school closed in 1967, the question of supporting parochial schools through parish funds remains an issue to this day. Some parishioners feel that as the parish closed its school, and thereby seemingly said "No" to parochial education, that parish funds should not help families send their children to other area parochial schools. Other parishioners feel the opposite.

A parish survey in the spring 1973 indicated that for the following fall thirty-one families were not interested in sending their children to parochial schools and thirty-four families favored the parish's financial support of parochial schools. Six of these latter families did not then have children attending parochial schools, eighteen families sent their children to public schools, and ten families had children enrolled in the area parochial schools. The same survey in-
dicated that only five families were opposed to the parish
offering such financial support. Twenty-six families, how-
ever, felt that the funds for parochial school support should
be raised by special projects, leaving the general fund un-
touched.

After lengthy and heated discussion at several parish
council meetings, the issue came to a vote at the May 28,
1973, meeting:

The parish should support the education of children
from our parish who attend parochial schools in 1973-74
through monies gained from a special education fund.
A survey by the committee indicates that thirty-eight
children of the parish will enroll in parochial schools
in the fall. Monies collected through fund raising events
for this purpose as well as monies donated in special
envelopes expressly marked for this fund in the weekly
collections will support this fund.

This committee advises that $100.00 be granted to each
elementary and secondary student (Grades 1-12) and
$50.00 to each kindergarten student. The parish should
make the checks payable to both the parents and the
parochial school that the child attends.

The committee recommends that the above matter be
adopted for the 1973-4 school year and that the com-
mittee and the Council consider the entire matter prior
to the 1974-5 school year . . . .

The motion passed by six “Yes” and four “No” votes.

During the 1973-74 school year the parish, through a
special education fund, assisted families who requested finan-
cial help toward paying parochial tuition to the area schools.
Then, in the spring 1974, the parish education committee
reviewed this matter, as the council had directed in its May
1973 meeting. The education committee then proposed to
Confirmation retreat, 1974

Razing of school, 1974

Centennial cookbook committee

Thrashing oats at Walter Goerger farm, 1974
the council on June 24, 1974, that the following financial support be rendered and that the monies be allocated parochial education from the general fund:

Recommendation No. 1: “The parish will provide tuition assistance to children attending parochial schools, Grades 7 through 12, at the rate of $100.00 per child. To obtain this assistance the parents contact the pastor who will issue to them a check made out jointly to the parents and the school.”

Recommendation No. 2: “The parish agrees to pay $17.20 per child in the CCD program at St. Joseph.”

Recommendation No. 3: “The parish agrees to pay $200.00 per child from our parish enrolled at St. Joseph Catholic Grade School and St. Boniface in Cold Spring. The parents are responsible for the tuition costs of $150.00 per child.”

The council endorsed these motions at that meeting.

After the parish school closed, the building itself was still used for parish meetings and socials. But, as the building was deteriorating because of age, neglect, and vandalism, the parishioners had to decide on its fate. On October 15, 1972, the pastor, Fr. Kieran Nolan, OSB, announced the results of a parish survey concerning the structure:

Eighty-five percent of those questionnaires returned said to get rid of the school building one way or another. Only fifteen percent stated that they would like to retain it to make some other arrangements for its use.

Four years earlier a parish sale—on August 11, 1968—emptied the building of much of its furniture, dishes, etc.: At our parish meeting last Monday it was decided that we hold a rummage sale in the parish school of
desks, tables, chairs, etc., and of dinnerware and other articles.

It was decided to hold this sale next Sunday afternoon, August 11, beginning at 1:00. It was decided to hold this, especially for our own parishioners instead of a general auction sale in order to give them an opportunity to obtain articles they need or can use at very low prices. (August 4, 1968)

Then, in December 1972 a parish auction emptied the building of most of the remaining useful items:

Thanks to all the parishioners who braved the sub-zero weather to attend the auction. Our special thanks to George Klein, turned age 85, who proved himself the best auctioneer in Minnesota ... (December 17, 1972)

Despite some controversy as to whether or not the parish ever had claim to a deed for the building, the parish turned over the empty school to the abbey and university, which then used it as a training facility for its fire department. More vandalism and a fire continued to raise havoc with the empty building. Thus in the fall 1974 the structure was razed and the debris hauled away, almost overnight.

Weekend catechism instruction has been an integral part of the parish education program for years — both for students who attended the parish school and those who did not. The pastors reminded the families of this important obligation:

Parents should be more careful to see that their children are learning their lessons. Where necessary, the parents should help them at home and should allow them enough time so that they can prepare sufficiently. (May 13, 1885)

Next Sunday begins instructions for all school children of our parish in the large chapel under the church.
Parents are kindly reminded to send their children diligently and also on time for the beginning of instruction, for if the school doesn’t teach them the parents must themselves. If the children have problems with their understanding of religion, they will have to be excluded from the reception of the holy sacraments. *(November 1, 1891)*

This afternoon is religious instructions. Parents should send their children. The last 4-5 times there were 5-6 students missing and they were always the same ones. Some seem to have gotten into the habit of not coming to instructions after they have at least completed their sixteenth year. In my opinion it would be good if they would even come longer than that. Certainly if the parents don’t seem concerned, the children won’t become excited either. *(September 14, 1930)*

There are some children of the parish that have not had an opportunity to attend the parochial school, but these children cannot grow up without religious instruction. So bring all these children to religious instruction on Saturday after the 8:00 a.m. Mass. *(September 14, 1940)*

Catechism—some parents don’t worry about it. Some children have not even a catechism. None more than a dime. Who is responsible before God for your children? Class work also poor—too much chasing at night. *(November 30, 1941)*

Since we no longer have a parochial school in operation, there is a greater obligation for parents who have
children to be confirmed that they help in preparing
them. (October 3, 1971)*

After its school closed in 1967, the parish gradually
heightened its Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD)
program through release-time, evening, and weekend educa-
tion programs. In 1970 the parish hired Sr. Clarice Schmidt,
a religious education coordinator, to establish a solid pro-
gram. A December 1971 parish survey provided input about
the program’s goals. The pastor, St. John’s University and
Seminary students, and parishioners worked with Sister
Clarice in teaching CCD classes.

Gradually, the parish decided to combine its CCD pro-
gram with that of the Cold Spring and St. Joseph parishes.
Thus, since 1972 the Collegeville youngsters not enrolled in
parochial schools have received instruction at these CCD
centers. In 1974-75, 121 young people attended these CCD
classes. Both financially and through providing teachers, the
parish has supported this instruction at the St. Joseph and
Cold Spring CCD centers. The following parents have worked
as teachers in these programs: Helen Braun, Lorraine Cofell,
Rita Kostreba, Susan McKeon, Lois Wolf, Richard and Eileen
Haeg, Marie Seitz, Dorothy Roske, and Rose Mary Cassidy.

The demise of the Collegeville parish school not only
necessitated that the parish educate its young in Christian
doctrine and practice through its liturgy and CCD programs
but also it encouraged more concern for adult education.
Vatican II certainly also emphasized this need. Thus, espe-
cially in the last three years, the parish education committee,
the pastor, and the council have organized adult education
study groups and other programs. Among these have been
workshops on Scripture study, the New Theology, parent-
teenager relationships, death and dying, and the discussion
of films such as Pasolini’s Gospel of St. Matthew.

Christian education pedagogy to some degree has com-
pleted a full circle in the first century of the Collegeville
parish. The liturgy and the homily—sometimes two per Sunday to this very day—provide the backbone to this instruction. The immigrant settlers largely educated their children at home or in neighborhood schools that the pastor visited weekly. Then, for forty-two years the parish school provided strong assistance to the parents and pastor in educating the young. And, with the closing of the school in 1967, the parish saw an upswing toward CCD instruction and family-centered preparation for the sacraments, especially for Penance and First Communion. Today, as in 1875, the Collegeville parishioner bears the same responsibility to educate himself and his family in Christian doctrine and living.
Construction of new church in 1958

Removing twin towers of old church

Bell banner of new church
Present church, completed in 1960

Assumption Chapel
Tabernacle in
Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Altar in Blessed Sacrament Chapel