

## Gesu School, Detroit



Gesu Catholic School, on Oak Drive at the edge of Detroit's University District, had 180 students enrolled in 1925 as a ministry of the newly founded Gesu Catholic Parish. There were four teachers, all IHM Sisters.

That first year, the chronicles reported that the sisters sold pies and candy and held a raffle to have enough money to buy pictures and statues for the classrooms.

School uniforms were required in 1930; the red and white uniforms could be purchased at Hudson's or made at home.

It was a tradition for the women of the Gesu congregation to hold a linen shower for the sisters in August at the beginning of the new school year. A few months later, the chronicler reports, the young girls of the congregation would stock the convent with plenty of fruit for the sisters.



The school grew rapidly in its largely Roman Catholic neighborhood. At its peak in 1968, our **featured class year**, Gesu had 1,660 children in two buildings. Around this time, the average class



size was 40 students per class. That year, the women's guild gave the school a gift of a traveling audio learning center complete with a tape recorder, new stereo record player, earphones, records and tapes. A parishioner donated a movie projector.

Class trips were made to Greenfield Village; to Detroit Institute of Arts to see the stage play, *Mark Twain*; and Americana Theater in Southfield to see *Finian's Rainbow*.

Today, Gesu School has about 180 students, most of whom are not Catholic. Rather, they are neighborhood residents who want a safe space to learn.

Students and parishioners can enjoy Gesu Green – a garden and fully equipped playground. Classrooms are equipped with Smartboards and streaming video, and class sizes are limited.

## Featured class year – 1968

The world population was 3.5 billion while the population in the United States was 200.7 million. An average new house cost \$26,600; minimum wage was \$1.60; a gallon of gas cost \$.34; average monthly rent was \$130; and a new car cost \$2,822. Average life expectancy in the U.S. was 70.2 years. Lyndon B. Johnson was president.

Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated.



Popular conveniences were TV trays (which cost between \$8-19 for a five-piece set); a phonograph (average cost around \$47.95); and a portable black-and-white TV (for about \$99.95).

Popular movies were *Rosemary's Baby*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Funny Girl* and *The Odd Couple*.



Album of the Year was *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, by the Beatles. Song of the Year was "Up, Up and Away," by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension.