

**faith memories** *prayer*  
**dedication** *endurance* Holy Spirit  
**change** *gift of faith*  
100 years **Church**  
*missionaries* **DIOCESE**  
**grace** *sacraments*

**YES**  
Christ  
**hope**  
Proclaim  
Good News!  
**worship**  
*Thanks be to God*  
**1912-2012**



History of the Diocese of Grand Island

*100 years of* **FAITH**



# *100 Years of Faith*

The History of the Diocese of Grand Island

Compiled by

Mary Parlin  
and  
Colleen Gallion



Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information contained on the following pages. However, by the very nature of compiling historical accounts, dates and other facts are subject to human error and may be inconsistent among sources and previously printed material.

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This book is dedicated to all the pioneers *who blazed the trail of faith and those who keep it lit.*

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# Foreword

I'm delighted to pen the foreword to the centennial history of the Diocese of Grand Island. These narratives and photos are accounts of human initiative shaped by divine intervention. This is a history of people who reshaped the "Wild West" into a culture of human and Christian living, primarily through parish communities.

Who were these people who shaped the Catholic Church in Western Nebraska? They were a diverse and adventurous people: the Czech, the Polish, the Irish, the Germans, the Scandinavians, the Bohemians and more recently, the Hispanics. Out of their diversity came the unity of parish and community centers. They became one people of the Catholic faith. Working together, they made a difference.

The patterns of development are very evident. They followed the many rivers of Nebraska: the Platte, the North, Middle and South Loup, the Snake, the Cedar, the Niobrara, the Dismal, the Calamus and the Wood River. Next came the railroads and villages. They either developed or disappeared because of the railroads. Now the cities and villages dot the Nebraska Highways 30, 20, 2, 26, 92, 281 and Interstate 80. Amid these changes, parishes and communities developed.

What attracted these people to Western Nebraska? Some would say adventure and some would say economic opportunities. Some were looking for religious freedom. Whatever the reason, faith played a significant role. Where a settlement started, a Catholic Church quickly followed.

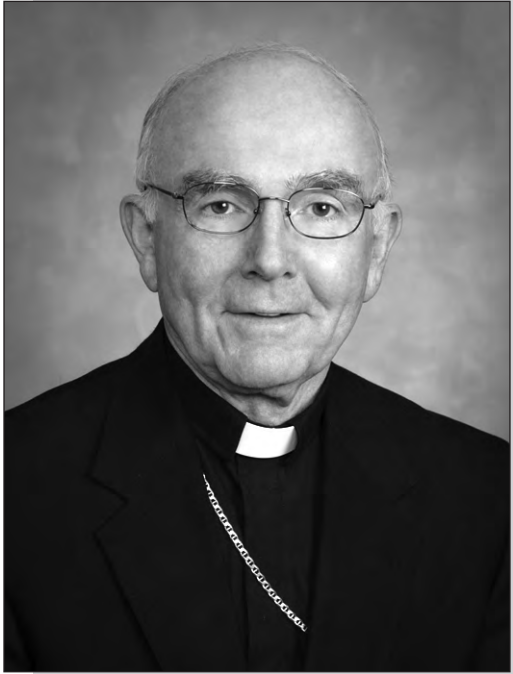
We read the accounts of these parishes, not to clone or idolize them, but to learn from them and find strength to enrich them for the next 100 years. Demographics may change, but our Catholic faith and human ingenuity will be constant.

I need to thank the contributing writers, editors and publisher of the centennial history. The documentation of our parishes may be limited, but the memories are vivid. The words and photos of people speak volumes about their faith. These accounts can shape the future direction of the parishes and diocese. Specifically, I need to thank the *West Nebraska Register* and its editors, Mary Parlin and Colleen Gallion. It took Mary and Colleen "extra innings" to gather the parish histories, to find the photos, and to write, compile and edit the centennial history.

As we look to the future, we recall the words of Isaiah 40:31. "They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint." We hear again the words of Jesus to the Apostles in Matthew 14:27. "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."



Bishop William J. Dendinger  
Bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island





This is a history of our diocese of 100 years. The church is the people, and our diocese as vast as it is, is made up of thousands of names that aren't recorded in this history that made it the celebration of our faith that we have today. Our work on this history has been a wonderful learning experience, rewarded by recalling the many postive, faith-filled things that have transpired in the diocese over the past 100 years. Although this year marks 100 years of the Diocese of Grand Island, our roots go back farther than that. Our history is a story of a deep heritage of faith and a future that is promising. Special thank yous to Bishop William J. Dendinger, who supported this effort and indicated his interest in so many ways; Ron Sack for his collection of photos and help in compiling parish histories; Pete Letheby for his insight and advice; to the Chancery Office staff for their support, research, proofing and typing; and to those priests and people who so willingly compiled the parish histories. One hundred years is a lot of ground to be covered ... by highlighting what we have in these pages, we hope you get a sense of the faith-filled people that built a strong foundation. There is a sense of being Catholic in rural parishes that is lived out. Like a small flower that may easily be overlooked on the roadside, many of these parishes are like that flower ... you pick it up and examine it, and it becomes a thing of beauty. This is our history ... this is our diocese ... this is our church. This is our "100 Years of Faith."

Mary Parlin



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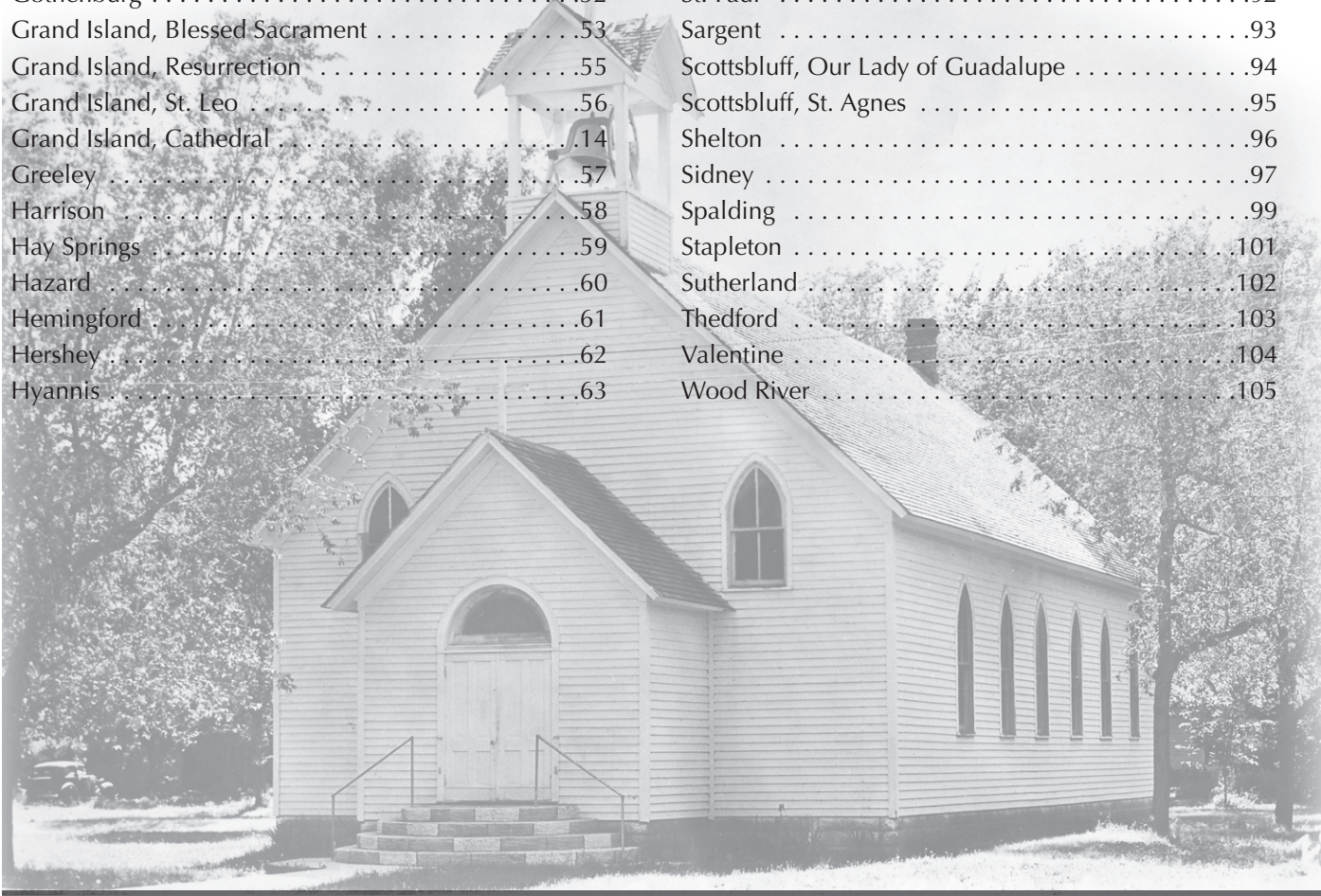
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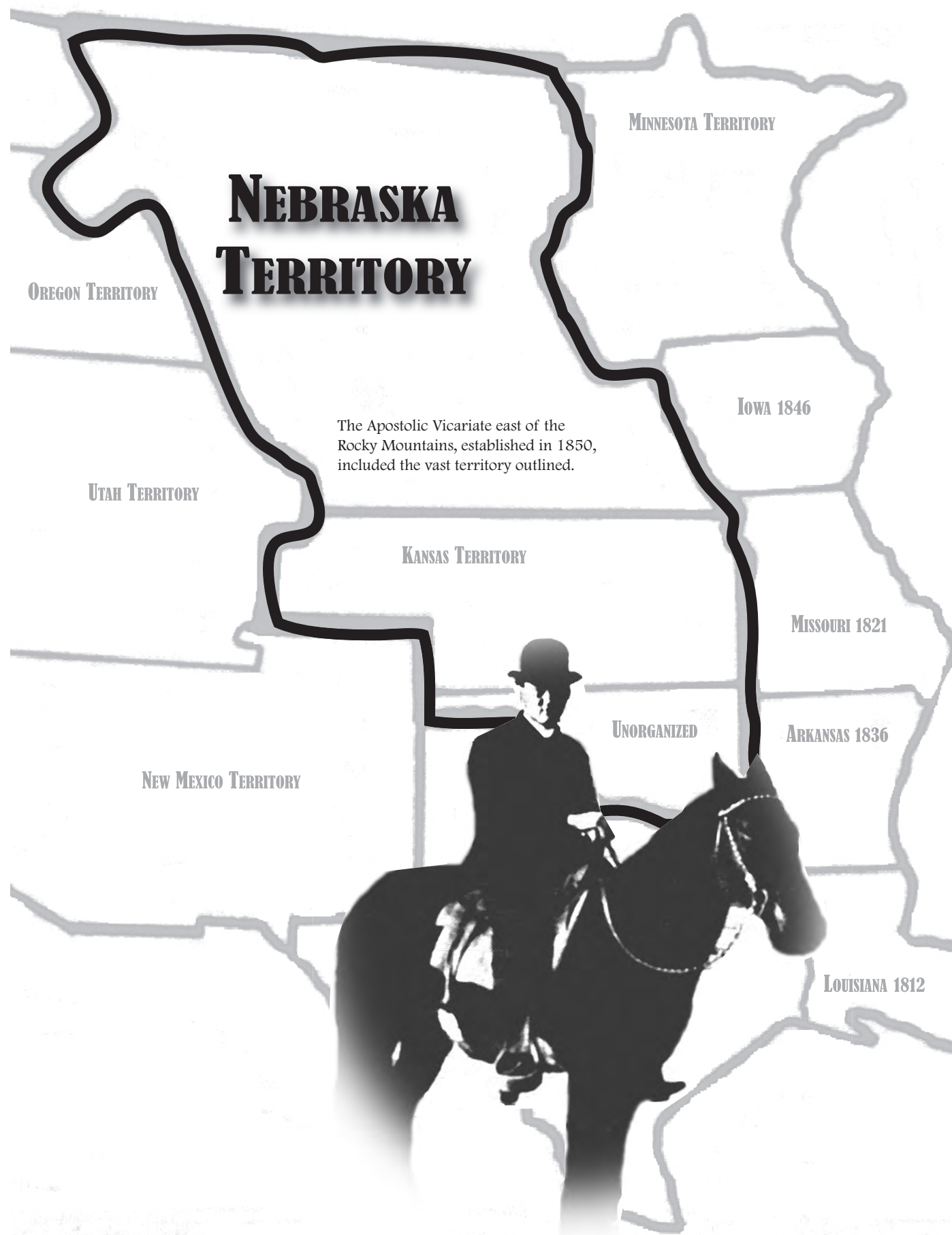
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Beginnings







*Celebrating* **100** *years*  
OF FAITH  
1912-2012

**DIOCESE of GRAND ISLAND**

## *Seeds of Faith:* Journey begins with steady growth

**T**he history of the Diocese of Grand Island began long before there was a Grand Island, before there was a formal United States.

The area that later made up the Diocese of Grand Island officially came under the Holy See's jurisdiction in 1850 as part of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Indian Territory. The territory included lands that would later be known as Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, parts of North and South Dakota west of the Missouri River, Montana, Wyoming and a large part of Colorado. In all, the territory covered an area of 1,250 miles north to south and 600 miles from east to west.

The Holy See appointed Jesuit Father Jean Baptiste Miegé vicar apostolic of the area and elevated him to a bishop.

Because most early explorations west of the Mississippi were led by French and Spanish explorers, priests probably accompanied most of the expeditions.

History records a Pawnee Indian massacre of a party of Spanish explorers that included Father Juan Mingues in August 1720. Records of the 13 soldiers who escaped the massacre indicate the party camped along the Platte River near the present city of North Platte.

It is assumed Masses were offered by priests in those early years. The first documented Mass within the 40,000 square miles of the diocese was along the Platte River near the Nebraska-Wyoming border celebrated by Jesuit Father Pierre DeSmet during a

council of Indian tribes in 1851.

Official records of the council show approximately 10,000 Indians attended the meeting.

During his entire 1851 trip, Father DeSmet instructed and baptized 1,856 Indians and half-bloods, according to his diaries.

The Indian Territory had been divided in 1857 with Nebraska, the Dakotas west of the Missouri River, Montana and Wyoming to the Continental Divide and the northeastern corner of Colorado named the Apostolic Vicariate of Nebraska. Bishop Miegé continued to oversee the territory until the consecration of Bishop James O'Gorman in 1859.

The first Catholic settlers in Hall county (in what is now the Diocese of Grand Island) were recorded in 1859. Communities started near present-day Grand Island and Wood River with priests from Columbus visiting the settlements at irregular intervals. The Union Pacific line was completed to Grand Island in 1866.

These were the days also of the Irish colonization in Greeley, fostered and encouraged by Bishop James O'Connor. Polish Catholics homesteaded in the area of Choynice, Farwell and Loup City about the same time—1876 to 1886. It was during the episcopate of Bishop O'Connor that most of the pioneer parishes of the diocese were established.

As the railroad advanced, centers grew at Kearney, North Platte and Sidney, with parishes formed as Catholics settled and wanted a place of worship.

The pioneer priests traveled many

miles in the days when transportation had neither speed nor comfort. The horse and buggy were probably the most common modes of transportation and the miles on foot would amaze many.

In 1885 during Bishop O'Connor's episcopacy, the Diocese of Omaha, which encompassed all of Nebraska, was established.

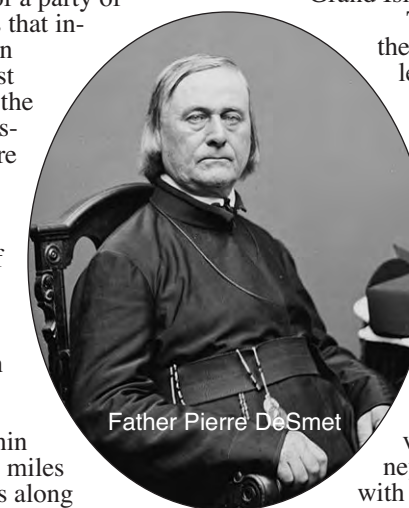
The Diocese of Lincoln was formed in 1887, with all Nebraska counties south of the Platte River under its jurisdiction; the territory of what was to become the Diocese of Grand Island remained with the Diocese of Omaha.

**B**ishop O'Gorman served this area from Omaha until his death in 1874. There was very little in the way of Catholic life or organized activity in what is now the Diocese of Grand Island. Two years passed before Bishop James O'Connor was appointed to succeed Bishop O'Gorman, and he served the territory and the Omaha diocese until his death in 1890.

Bishop O'Connor had a large part in the formation of what was to become the Diocese of Grand Island. Many of the parishes and missions of the diocese were established during his episcopate. Bishop O'Connor invited the Sisters of St. Francis to begin St. Francis Hospital in Grand Island in 1883. He laid the cornerstone for the third St. Mary's Church in Grand Island on Aug. 15, 1888.

Bishop O'Connor died on May 27, 1890, and was succeeded by Bishop Richard Scannell as head of the Omaha diocese in 1891.

During Bishop Scannell's episcopacy, the Catholic population of what was to become the Diocese of Grand Island continued a slow but steady growth with existing parishes strengthened and new ones formed. The Church in the eastern section of the state demanded more and more attention of the bishop. From Omaha to the western end of the state the distances were between



Father Pierre DeSmet





1917 priests' retreat with Bishop James A. Duffy and diocesan priests attending.

400 and 500 miles and Bishop Scannell vigorously lobbied for a new Nebraska diocese.

Much to the dismay of Archbishop James Keane, the Metropolitan of the Dubuque Province who was opposed to the addition, official notification from Rome was received on March 4, 1912, that a new diocese had been carved out of Nebraska territory. The papal decree established a See at Kearney, reducing the Diocese of Omaha to 27 counties. The Diocese of Kearney was formed with all Nebraska counties west of the county lines of Boyd, Holt, Wheeler, Greeley, Howard, and Hall and north of the Platte River as the new diocese.



Bishop James A. Duffy

The True Voice, newspaper of the Diocese of Omaha, on March 8, 1912, praised the apparent success of Catholic growth in the western part of the state: "The erection of a new diocese in Nebraska," boasted an editorial, "directs attention to the fact that the Church has been growing by leaps and bounds."

Archbishop Keane, on the other hand, was far less enthusiastic as he revealed in a letter to the apostolic delegate, Archbishop John Bonzano: "When the question of erecting the Diocese of Kearney first came up, I was decidedly opposed on the grounds that it was much too early and the fortunes of the Church in that territory were too uncertain.... A very large area of the Kearney diocese is desert. There are hundreds of miles of Sandhills that grow absolutely nothing. The good lands yield only when

they get timely rains, and this fails often...."

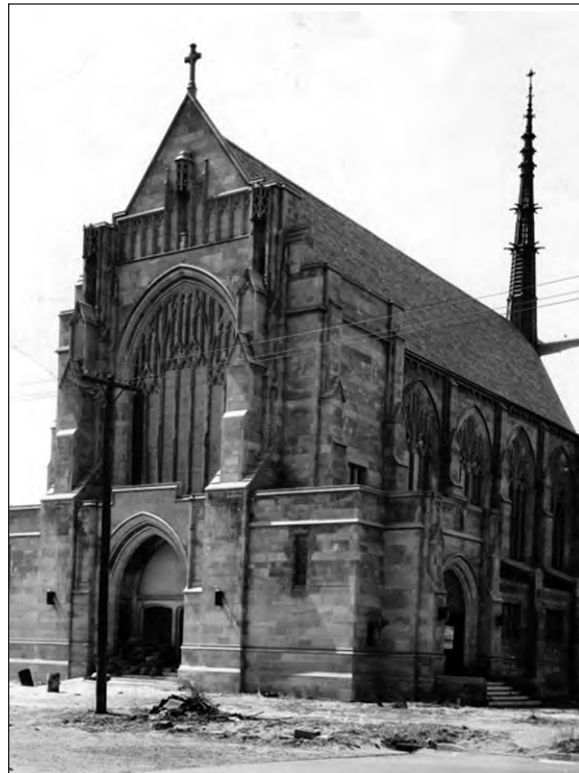
Bishop Scannell, however, saw this arrangement as a step in advancement for his diocese, reasoning that if Nebraska came to support three bishops, the state would have a greater chance for becoming an episcopal province headed by an archbishop from Omaha. Reluctantly, Archbishop Keane agreed to sign a petition requesting the separate See at Kearney. He did so only after receiving assurances from Bishop Scannell that within two years the Omaha diocese "would give Grand Island territory to Kearney."

Archbishop Keane was certain that the prosperous seat of Hall County "was the right place for a bishop." Grand Island was the main line of the Union Pacific and Burlington railways and served as the center for several branch lines, and Archbishop Keane felt strongly that this would give its prelate "opportunity and encouragement for development and growth."

Father James Albert Duffy of Cheyenne, Wyo., was consecrated bishop on Jan. 25, 1913, as the first shepherd of the Diocese of Kearney and St. James Church in Kearney served as the cathedral. Archbishop Keane presided at his installation, assisted by Bishop Scannell, but no mention was made of Grand Island. Three years later the Omaha prelate, Bishop Scannell, was dead, and his promise to Archbishop Keane had not been kept.

Conditions in Kearney were dismal. There was one small church which remained heavily in debt. The parlor in the cramped rectory was regularly used by the bishop, forcing the pastor to see his

parishioners in the small dining room. By March 1916 Archbishop Keane was lobbying for the transfer of Wheeler, Greeley, Howard, and Hall Counties to the Kearney diocese, insisting that the Omaha diocese did not need the four counties in question. Pope Benedict XV



St. Mary's Cathedral was built during Bishop James Duffy's tenure.

decreed those four counties added to the Diocese of Kearney on May 13, 1916.

The following year a further decree named Grand Island—as the heaviest populated city—the See City of the Diocese of Grand Island, formerly the Diocese of Kearney.

During the years that Bishop Duffy served as head of the diocese, St. Mary's Cathedral was built (1926-28) and consecrated.



Bishop Duffy, far left, first bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island is pictured at the 1917 priests' retreat.

As the Diocese of Grand Island changed from prairie to fields and from Masses celebrated in post offices and homes to church bells proclaiming God's houses, three bishops oversaw the nearly 300 percent growth in Catholic population during the first 50 years of the diocese.

It was under Bishop Duffy that the *Nebraska Register* (now the *West Nebraska Register*) was established. The newspaper became the second of the diocesan editions of the *Register* system.

Due to ill health, Bishop Duffy resigned his position in 1931, and he was named Titular Bishop of Silando.

He continued to serve as administrator of the diocese until the installation of the second bishop of Grand Island, Bishop Stanislaus V. Bona, in March 1932. Bishop Duffy retired to St. Joseph's infirmary in Hot Springs, Ark., where he served as chaplain until 1964.

Monsignor Stanislaus V. Bona from the Archdiocese of Chicago was installed as the second diocesan bishop March 8, 1932.

Bishop Bona served the diocese during the depression years of the 1930s. The low economic period meant little material expansion in the diocese.

During World War II, with the encouragement of Bishop Bona, five priests of the Diocese of Grand Island served as chaplains in the service.

Because of his fluency in both German and Italian, Bishop Bona personally ministered to German and Italian prisoners of war kept in camps in the Diocese of Grand Island—the Germans in Grand Island and the Italians in Scottsbluff.

In 1944 Bishop Bona was transferred to the Green Bay, Wis., diocese.

Monsignor Edward J. Hunkeler, vicar general of the Omaha diocese and pastor of St. Cecelia's Cathedral in Omaha, was named the

third bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island March 10, 1945.

Bishop Hunkeler purchased the first building to be used as a Chancery Office for the Diocese of Grand Island. Located near St. Mary's Cathedral, it also was the office for the *Nebraska Register* and several other diocesan departments. During the six years that he was bishop of Grand Island, Archbishop Hunkeler ordained 16 young men to the priesthood. In 1949 he established Blessed Sacrament Parish in Grand Island.

Because Bishop Hunkeler was the bishop of the diocese in the years immediately following World War II, and building had been restricted during the war, a large number of new churches and other religious institutions were built during his service to the diocese.

Bishop Hunkeler was appointed as bishop of the Kansas City, Kan., diocese in 1951, and his successor became the diocese's first native-born bishop—Bishop John L. Paschang, born in Hemingford.

Bishop Paschang was installed Oct. 11, 1951. He had served as a priest in the Archdiocese of Omaha from 1921 until his consecration as bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island.

The building in the diocese that had begun slowly following the war gained momentum. Under Bishop Paschang's leadership, 13 new schools, 33 new churches and many other parish facilities were constructed. Besides the magnitude of the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Paschang's 21 years of service to the Grand Island diocese are remembered as years of building of physical plants.

After the depression of the 1930s and war years in the '40s, many improvements were needed and approved by Bishop Paschang.

The time was also one of vocations to the priesthood. Bishop Paschang ordained 49 priests for the diocese.

After Bishop Paschang's retirement in July 1972, Father John J. Sullivan was named the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island. A priest of the Oklahoma City diocese for 28 years, he was ordained a bishop Sept. 19, 1972,



Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler



Bishop John L. Paschang



Bishop John J. Sullivan



in Tulsa, Okla. His installation ceremony was held at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island two days later.

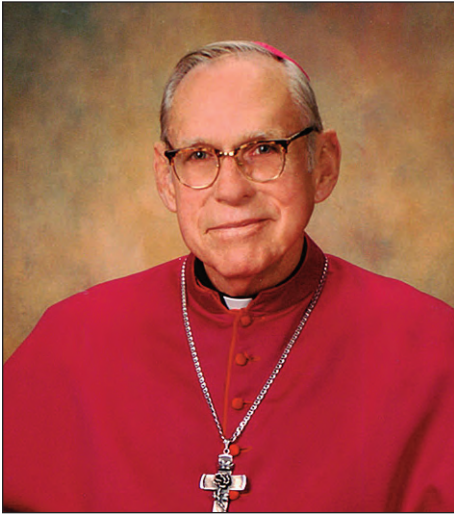
The Grand Island diocese, under the direction of Bishop Sullivan, was one of the first dioceses to use women religious as pastoral ministers extensively.

Three new parishes began during Bishop Sullivan's tenure—Holy Spirit in North Platte, and St. Leo and Resurrection, both in Grand Island.

People connected starting the new parishes in Grand Island to closing the two grade schools—Blessed Sacrament and St. Mary's—at the close of the school year in 1975, and it was a "tough time" for the people, as well as Bishop Sullivan.

After five years, Bishop Sullivan became bishop of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph in Missouri and on Jan. 10, 1978, Pope Paul VI appointed Father Lawrence J. McNamara as sixth bishop of Grand Island.

Bishop McNamara was ordained March 28, 1978, at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Grand Island.



Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara

Seeds of renewal and growth sown after Vatican II during Bishop Paschang's tenure and nurtured through new parishes and pastoral team ministry under Bishop Sullivan's leadership, matured to parish sharing and outreach in the 1980s.

Area hearings for the Heartland document, *Strangers and Guests*: Synod '82, the bishops' economic pastoral and the world Synod of the Laity gave individual parishes a feeling of belonging together as a diocese.

The synod process in 1982 was a call to all ministry—not just priests and religious. One of the quotes from the synod described the process, "we come to celebrate what we have; dream what can be."

Programs begun or expanded led to growth in the diocese with the Rite of

# Synod '82 allowed laity voice

The Grand Island Diocesan Synod of 1982, called by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara, resulted in 32 commitments promulgated as the result of the almost two-year synod process, and allowed the laity of the diocese a voice in diocesan planning.

Father Hubert "Hugh" Spanel, now a retired priest of the diocese, was named as synod director.

Fifteen area hearings were conducted across the diocese with almost 650 priests, religious and laity participating with Bishop McNamara striving to establish priorities for the greater concentration of energies and resources as the church in western Nebraska.

Twelve synodal commissions with observations and suggestions came from 156 parish hearings, February through April 1982. Ninety-two recommendations were put forth

for discussion.

Ministry, Youth and Young Adults, Education, Family and Liturgy were the areas cited as highest priority. Those were the "major currents" that emerged.

Many other recommendations under these areas were put forward—a new awareness for religious vocations; that there be parish councils in every parish; that we search to find the best ways of facilitating spiritual renewal, growth and enrichment; a program for training more priests, religious, laity in spiritual direction; more parish retreats, days of recollection; explore the possibility of the permanent diaconate; a course of study be developed by the Office of Religious Education; and that the roles of women in ministry be more extensively explored.

The synod closed with goals set for the diocese and parishes.

Christian Initiation for Adults, Marriage Tribunal, preparation for marriage, baptism, confirmation and ministry to priests. Diocesan offices of ministry to Hispanics, families and youth have began due to Synod '82.

The religious education office and REMEX, started in the '70s, expanded as parishioners grew in their faith.

The RCIA and the Rite of Election created a feeling for new members of relating to something happening all over the world, instead of a quiet solitary moment. The catechumenate started in the early years of Bishop McNamara's tenure, not as an option, but as a positive program to be accomplished.

Marriage preparation, already in place in the diocese in 1978, was extended to include all people planning to marry in the Catholic faith. Classes for parents who desired baptism for their children became more than casual visits.

Bishop McNamara served as president of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference from 1980 to 1983. Other episcopal responsibilities included memberships on the National Council of Catholic Bishops Committees on Liaison with Women Religious, the American Board of Catholic Missions and the

Campaign for Human Development, National Episcopal Advisor, and Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Bishop McNamara celebrated three milestones on Sept. 16, 2003—25 years of serving the Grand Island diocese as bishop, 50 years as an ordained priest and 75 years baptized in Christ. Bishop McNamara retired upon his 75th birthday, but held the position of bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island until his successor, Bishop William J. Dendinger was named on Oct. 14, 2004.



Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara answers questions about the diocesan synod at a press conference in November 1982. The synod was a call to all ministries.

Father William J. Dendinger, a retired two-star general and chief of the Air Force Chaplain Service, was pastor of St. Stephen the Martyr Parish in Omaha when he was appointed bishop of the Grand Island diocese by Pope John Paul II.

For the first time in more than 25 years in a majestic ceremony rich in tradition and symbolism, a new bishop was installed for the diocese. Bishop William J. Dendinger was ordained as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island on Dec. 13, 2004, at St. Mary's Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Within four days in December 2004, Catholics across the Diocese of Grand Island turned their tears of joy to sorrow

On Dec. 17 retired Bishop McNamara, 76, died—just four days after participating in the ordination of his successor, Bishop Dendinger. A funeral was held Dec. 21 at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Bishop Dendinger began his episcopacy by streamlining and consolidating the three converted home residences used for the Chancery Office and the *West Nebraska Register* in Grand

Island, and the North Platte Catholic Offices in North Platte, to more energy-efficient offices. The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, located at 804 West Division in Grand Island was relocated to North Platte.

The diocesan appeal, begun under Bishop McNamara's tenure, continued to gain momentum, and began to be a building block toward stewardship of the diocese.

Emphasis was placed on stewardship with the importance of the motivation for the appeal as a spirituality of time, talent and treasure.

A high priority for Bishop Dendinger was his presence and visibility, especially in the parishes of the diocese.

During his first year as bishop, he drove close to 28,000 miles visiting 53 of the 73 parishes.

Under Bishop Dendinger's leadership, diocesan ministries continued to grow with the addition of the Child Protection Office, Lay Ministry and Planning Office and the reintroduction of the Hispanic Ministry Office and the Episcopal Vicar for Hispanic Issues.

A Diocesan Pastoral Planning Council was reorganized into four areas of the diocese

called deaneries and included lay representatives from each area. The deaneries—North Platte, Alliance, Kearney and Grand Island—were made up of parishes from one of the four sections of the diocese. Before the reorganization, the council was a separate advisory body to the bishop, and the deaneries had no official representation on the DPPC and no true link to the bishop's office, or to each other. The reorganization opened up the dialogue across the diocese and made people more aware of their unity. The council became a springboard for a number of activities within the diocese. Listening sessions were conducted across the diocese to raise awareness of the need for lay ministry. A discernment team was established that assisted some parishes when their status was changed.

The priest shortage began to affect parishes within the Diocese of Grand Island, and in 2006 the first clustering of parishes was realized. Ashton and Hazard parishes were clustered with Loup City; Pleasanton and Rockville were clustered with Ravenna; and Elba and Farwell were clustered with St. Paul.

In 2006 Bishop Dendinger initiated a catechist training through the Religious

Education Office. The concept, mandated by Bishop Dendinger, was designed to help religious education instructors teach their students more accurately, more completely. The certification process was designed at the bishop's direction in response to the diocesan goal of "strengthening Catholic schools and religious education for youth."

The centennial celebration of 100 years of the Diocese of Grand Island in 2012 addressed the need to announce the Gospel. The theme, "The New Evangelization ... Proclaiming the Good News of Christ," focused on identifying ways to proclaim again the Gospel to those who

have heard it, but have become indifferent.

Four Masses of Thanksgiving were held throughout the diocese—Grand Island, Broken Bow, North Platte and Alliance—with Bishop Dendinger as the main celebrant.

The Diocese of Grand Island and its people have come a long way in faith. Hardship and tragedy were common to the first settlers. Religion, for many, became the only aspect of their lives which offered consolation. Truly, it has been 100 years of proclaiming the Gospel.

*Compiled with information from the History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska, True Voice, the Nebraska Register and the West Nebraska Register.*



The coat of arms of Bishop William J. Dendinger, combines elements that reflect the diocesan church as well as the bishop's life and ministry. The personal arms are shown combined with the arms of the diocese on the same shield in what is known as impaling the arms, or depicting them side by side. This is symbolic of the bishop being "married" to the diocesan church.

The left hand side of the shield depicts the arms of the Diocese of Grand Island.

The right hand side of the shield depicts the personal arms of Bishop Dendinger. The red background alludes to the Lord's passion and suggests a zeal for the ministry of priest to which the Lord called Bishop Dendinger. The golden hills represent the hills of western Nebraska and are surmounted by the state bird, the Meadowlark. This underscores that the bishop is a native Nebraskan. Above this is the Air Force Cross included to commemorate the years of priestly service Bishop Dendinger gave as a military chaplain.

Below the shield is the motto which Bishop Dendinger chose for his arms, "Justice With Mercy."



# St. Mary's Cathedral

## The Mother Church



Parishioners attending services at St. Mary's spacious and beautiful cathedral today would probably never realize the problems faced by their forefathers. Hall County was established by an act of the Legislature in 1855 and was organized in 1859.

When the spring sun of 1857 rose over the prairie, there was not a white man within the

boundaries of Hall County. The first settlement was made by a colony from Davenport, Iowa in July 1857. The members pitched their tents and erected sod houses in this great solitude just north of the large island formed by the two arms of the Platte River, to which the Indians gave the name of Grand

Union Pacific Railroad. In 1859, Patrick Moore and his brother, Richard, came from Iowa City, Iowa, to be the first Catholic families in Hall County. They immediately sought help from the bishop in Omaha for a priest, but it wasn't until the fall of 1861 that Father Almere Fairmont (also Fourmont), a Frenchman, came to visit the Hall County residents. Father Fairmont celebrated the first Mass in the Moore's log cabin in the fall of that year, three miles west of what is now the town of Wood River. The Moores raised Father Anthony Moore, the first priest ordained from Hall County. About the same time the Windolph families arrived in Grand Island. The Windolphs also had a son who became the first priest ordained from Grand Island, Father William Windolph.

Priests came from Columbus on horseback yearly to the Grand Island and Wood River areas to confer the sacraments and to celebrate Mass. Father M.J. Ryan offered Mass once a month in homes and railroad section houses in 1864, but there was no church for the growing community.

The town site of Grand Island was surveyed and laid out in 1866 by the Union Pacific Railroad company. The railroad was completed to this point in July 1866. With the arrival of the rail-



(Second wood-frame building of St. Mary's Parish. Photo courtesy Stuhr Museum)

Island. The colonists adopted this name for their colony and afterwards for the present city that was started and built three miles north around the depot of the

road, parishioners felt it was a necessity to have a church for the community. It was also due to the rapid growth of Grand Island that the Catholics organized a church. In 1868 the first church was built under the leadership of Father Ryan on land donated by the Union Pacific Railroad at First and Elm Streets, a block north of where the current St. Mary's Cathedral stands. Sadly, due to a windstorm, the church was destroyed before its dedication. This was a great shock to the young mission and its members. A second attempt to build a church was put to a halt with the economic depression and the church stood partially-built. The members of the church began again to rebuild and started in February 1877. St. Mary's, then a parish of about 30 families, was a mission of Columbus and was attended by Father Ryan.

The building was a frame structure with a good brick foundation and the cornerstone was laid May 7, 1877.

Construction of the second church was finished in July 1877; it was dedicated in September of that year. That same year, Father Philip J. Erlach was named the first resident pastor. He officiated at the first marriage in the parish that united Patrick Burns and Catherine Watts on Dec. 30, 1877; and he baptized the first baby, Michael Joseph Cary, on Jan. 6, 1878. A rectory was constructed by parishioners in 1879.

Father Richard Phelan became pastor on July 4, 1880, and found 52 families belonging to the congregation. Father Phelan served until his death from a stroke on March 10, 1884. Father Patrick Lynch then took care of the parish, which had been handled in the interim by Father John Smith of O'Connor. Father Lynch remained in Grand Island until Oct. 6, 1886, when he was transferred to the Wood River Parish, which had until then been a mission attached to Grand Island. The parishes of Doniphan and Kearney were also missions of St. Mary's for a number of years.

With the ever-growing Catholic community spreading throughout Grand Island, the construction of a new brick church was necessary. Bishop James O'Connor sent Father Wunibald Wolf to Grand Island with orders to build a new church. Construction started in 1888

under the direction of Father Wolf; Bishop O'Connor laid the cornerstone Aug. 15, and the church was completed and dedicated July 7, 1889, by the Vicar General Father R. Schaffel, representing Bishop O'Connor.

The new church was built of brick and stone, was 44 feet by 119 feet, had two towers 104 feet high and cost about \$20,000. The church faced First Street and this building would serve the parish until the construction of the present cathedral.

The next step parishioners took was to build a Catholic school for Grand Island. On Jan. 4, 1893, a meeting was held to discuss the erection of a parochial school. James Costello, Frank Lange and Henry Lange were elected building contractors and the Duhrsen property south of the church was bought. The school opened Sept. 9, 1893, with 120 pupils in attendance. Father Wolf had invited the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan., to teach and four arrived to serve as teachers, with Sister Eugenia Gravelle as superior. Sisters of St. Joseph would continue to staff the school until its closing in 1975. In July 1897 St. Mary's church, with five other churches of the Omaha diocese, was raised to the distinction of permanent rectorship by Bishop Richard Scannell.



The third St. Mary's church was 44 feet by 119 feet, had two towers 104 feet high and faced First Street. (Photo courtesy Stuhr Museum)

Father Wolf resigned as pastor of St. Mary's Cathedral in June 1917, due to failing health, and became chaplain of St. Francis Hospital. The community was deeply touched when on July 5, 1918, Father Wolf died. This was attested to by the appearance of over 50 clergy from parishes as far away as Iowa. The tribute to Father Wolf, with the record of his service to his people and Hall County, was published in the *Grand Island Independent*, July 5, 1918.

On March 8, 1912, western Nebraska, which was formerly in the Diocese of Omaha, was made the Diocese of Kearney and the See City was located in Kearney. Pope Benedict XV also ceded four additional counties—Wheeler, Greeley, Howard and that part of Hall County north of the Platte River—to the Diocese of Kearney on May 13, 1916.

The following year, on April 11, 1917, Pope Benedict transferred the See City to Grand Island with St. Mary's serving as the cathedral. The bishop's residence was also transferred in July of that year. With the headquarters of the diocese located in Grand Island it became an important center in Catholic affairs in Nebraska.

By 1918 the old school could no longer hold enough students for their growing attendance and ground was broken for a new school in the spring of 1920. In the beginning

The cathedral is the Mother Church of a diocese. There the faithful of a diocese gather to celebrate the liturgies proper to cathedral churches: the welcoming of a new bishop, ordinations and other diocesan celebrations.



Father M.J. Ryan





Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York consecrated the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Grand Island on July 5, 1928, for the Diocese of Grand Island. Besides Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop J.J. Keane of Dubuque, Iowa, 17 bishops, 150 priests and delegations of diocesan lay people attended the ceremony. Cost of the cathedral, approximately \$300,000, was paid by diocesan parishioners. The building was dedicated debt-free.

of its use, the first floor housed the elementary and high school grades, the second floor the parish hall and auditorium, and the basement provided for Knights of Columbus club rooms, a dining room and kitchen. Before long, two grade school rooms were added on the second floor, and in 1941 the complete second floor was taken over for classrooms. The Knights of Columbus vacated the basement and the area became the parish hall. From 1941 until the building of Central Catholic, the second floor was occupied by the high school department.

After the new school was built, the old church was deemed inadequate, so construction to build a new cathedral was begun in 1926 under Monsignor August Heimes and Bishop James A. Duffy.

Two years later, in 1928, St. Mary's Cathedral was completed. Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York City presided at the dedication ceremonies on an exceptionally hot July 5, 1928. All of the people of the diocese shared in the cost of building the magnificent Gothic structure which is still considered one of the most beautiful churches in the Midwest.

Although some in Grand Island scoffed at such a large church and joked that it would be empty, history has proven otherwise.

Bishop Duffy spent months traveling to study building styles before deciding on Gothic architecture. St. Mary's Cathedral is modeled after La Saint Chappelle in Paris, France and is a Gothic structure covering nearly half of a city block. It was built at a cost of \$300,000 and was paid for by donations from all the parishes of the diocese. It

was "debt-free" at its completion.

The main altar, which cost \$17,000 at the time, and four smaller altars are made of white Italian marble. The huge "rose window" at the back of the cathedral also came from Italy in its completed form. The window shows the Madonna and Child surrounded by celestial beings and saints.

Even with the new cathedral completed, there were still problems of overcrowding with St. Mary's Parish growing to more than 800.

It was decided to add another church to the diocese in 1948,

and Blessed Sacrament was constructed in the north part of the city in the spring of 1949.

During this time, two residences north of the school were purchased, giving the parish ownership of the entire block.

During the late 1950s, the cathedral was completely redecorated. Murals that were copies of classic paintings were added above the side altars by Monsignor Leo Keating. A new bishop's throne was installed and

wood paneling was placed across the rear of the sanctuary.

In 1951 the present rectory was completed next to the cathedral on the site of the sister's convent. The sisters moved into the former rectory on First Street and the two residences to the east.

Grand Island Central Catholic High School became a joint venture between St. Mary's Cathedral and Blessed Sacrament Church and was ready for use by the fall term of 1956. Besides the high school grades, the building housed the eighth grades from both St. Mary's and Blessed Sacrament Parishes.

In 1965 the old church, which had served as a gymnasium for St. Mary's School was torn down, and in 1975 St. Mary's grade school was closed.

A new St. Mary's convent was built and dedicated on Sept. 3, 1967. The convent had accommodations for 24 sisters.

Renovations to the cathedral over the years have included a wheelchair ramp and new heating and air conditioning plant in 1976; the organ was extensively remodeled in 1981; roof repairs, carpeting and redecorating of the interior in 1985-1986; new sanctuary furniture before the diocesan jubilee celebration in November 1987; and painting, restaining the pews, repairing and resealing the stained glass windows, new lights and new lighting system, as well as new carpeting under the pews were completed in 2006.

St. Mary's Cathedral was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 because of its architecture and the impact the parish had on the settlement of the county.

In August 2001 under the direction of Father Thomas Ryan, the old school, which had served the parish since 1920, was torn down in preparation for the construction of Cathedral Square.

The new parish hall included classrooms, offices, storage, and kitchen at a cost of \$4 million. The Gothic-style matched the cathedral and rectory and the stone used in the project came from the same Indiana quarry that supplied the stone to build the cathedral in 1927. The Knights of Columbus sold their community building to help fund the construction of Cathedral Square and were rewarded with new council chambers in the lower level of the building.

The City of Grand Island closed a block of West Division Street and deeded it to the Cathedral for a parking lot. Bishop



Father Richard L. Piontkowski



Father Jonathan Sorensen

Lawrence J. McNamara dedicated Cathedral Square in 2004 and in 2007, the parish offices moved out of the rectory into Cathedral Square, along with the food pantry, Mary's Table, now known as Camille's Cupboard. It was named in honor of Camille Glaze who served on the Christian Service Committee for many years before her death in 2010.

The year 2007 also brought changes to St. Mary's Cathedral when Cathedral's foundation, "Bagley's Bunch," was created. Theresa Bagley died in 2007 at the age of 87 and, thanks to St. Mary's Cathedral parishioners, her memory as well as her story will live on through the foundation.

For years Bagley would walk up to six miles a day, collecting aluminum cans and giving what money she received to St. Mary's Cathedral. Certainly Bagley, a widow, could have improved her lot in life by keeping the money she earned by recycling, but instead chose to walk countless of miles for her Lord, giving what was truly called, "the widow's mite," to her beloved Cathedral.

"Bagley's Bunch" are members and non-members of the parish that are committed to the financial stability and success of St. Mary's Cathedral from generation to generation. The only requirement for membership is to make some provision for the future financial security of St. Mary's Cathedral, no matter what the amount.

Also in 2007 St. Mary's Cathedral Parish agreed to sell St. Mary's Convent to Hope Harbor. The building included 24 individual bedrooms on the second floor, a few guest rooms on the ground level in addition to four offices, a dining room, kitchen and a chapel.

Although the property had been valued at more than \$600,000, St. Mary's sold the former convent for \$300,000 in support of Hope Harbor and the work it does in helping women and children in the Grand Island area.

St. Mary's Immigration office was established June 16, 2008 and accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals to help immigrants apply for visas, work permits and naturalization as U.S. citizens.

The parish council and members of the financial committee for the Cathedral came to pastor, Father Richard Piontkowski in 2009 with the idea of opening a daycare. Cathedral Square was the perfect setting because it was built with safety in mind, and Judy Priess was hired as director.



Some of the former St. Mary's Cathedral pastors included from left, top row: Father Wunibald Wolf, Msgr. August Heimes, Msgr. Leo Keating, Msgr. Carl Hayden and Father Carl Ferris. Bottom row: Father Robert Foster, Father Robert Chamberlain, Father James O'Kane and Father Thomas Ryan.



Enrollment for the daycare has grown to more than 100 children in 10 classrooms.

St. Mary's Cathedral has gone through four churches, many buildings and numerous changes from generation to generation through its history. Today's Cathedral offers many ministries to help its parishioners.

Groups such as the Christian Service Committee, Cathedral Ladies, music ministry and choir, liturgy committee, maintenance committee, funeral dinner committee, Knights of Columbus, Hispanic prayer group, parish vocations committee, and more, all point to the fact that the church is very adaptive and ministers not only to the spirit and soul, but also to the body.

Just as classes in English were offered to the immigrants in the early years of the church, today classes are also offered as a separate program in English as a Second Language at St. Mary's.

Pastors who have served St. Mary's Cathedral include Father Almire Fairmont, 1861-1863; Father William Kelley, 1863-1864; Father Philip J. Erlach, 1865-1866; Father M.J. Ryan, 1866-1877; Father Philip J. Erlach, 1877-1880;

Father Richard Phelan, 1880-1884; Father Patrick Lynch, 1884-1886; Father Wunibald Wolf, 1886-1914; Msgr. August Heimes, 1914-1951; Msgr. Leo Keating 1941-1964; Msgr. Carl Hayden, 1965-1973; Father Carl Ferris, 1973-1976; Father Robert Foster, 1976-1987; Father Robert Chamberlain, 1987-1993; Father James O'Kane, 1993-1996; Father Thomas Ryan, 1996-2005; and Father Richard Piontkowski, present pastor.

Associate pastors who have served St. Mary's Cathedral are Father Leo Keating, Father Bernard Cabanski, Father Carroll Liebig, Father Paul Wachtrle, Father Joseph Szynal, Father Jacob Bauer, Father Albert Godlewski, Father Joseph Abele, Father Andrew Augustyn, Father Kevin Cortney, Father Frederick Snyder, Father Thomas Mullowney, Father Edward Flinn, Father Robert Krystosek, Father James Kremer, Father Paul Button, Father Robert Wiest, Father Eamon O'Dowd, Father Ted Nekoliczak, Father Donald O'Brien, Father Donald Larmore, Father Bernard Berger, Father James Janovec, Father Richard Sullivan, Father Gerald Harr, Father Robert

Karnish, Father Miguel Guevara, Father Raymond Kosmicki, Father Francis Curran, Father Daniel Christensen, Father Richard Piontkowski, Father Thomas Reimers, Father Alex Borzych, Father David Rykwald, Father Paul Colling, Father Donald Buhrman, Father Mark Maresh, Father Harold Kurtenbach, Father José Chavez, Father Phil Flott, Father Vince Parsons, Father John Kakkuzhiyil, S.D.B., Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B., and present associate pastor Father Jonathan Sorensen.

Deacons assisting at St. Mary's Cathedral are Deacon John Farlee, Deacon Randy Lewandowski, Deacon Frank Moreno and Deacon Robert Puhalla.

Since 1973 sisters who have served at St. Mary's Cathedral include: Sisters Leona Augustyn, Barbara Bader, Rosemary Carraher, Teresa Farley, Ann Ference, Mary Agnes Hogan, Eileen Hurley, Mary Kloeker, Rita Kolbet, Regina McCarthy, Betty Maschka, Donna Marie McGargill, Beverly Nonte, and Sylvia Winterscheidt. Sister Isabel Sandino, O.Carm., presently serves St. Mary's Cathedral with Hispanic Ministry and Adult Formation.



In the summer of 1961 Bishop Stanislaus Bona returned to his former See to offer a Mass with three priests whom he had ordained on June 6, 1936—Father Michael Szczesny, Father Andrew McDonald, and Father Leo Keating. Pictured from left: Father Szczesny, Father McDonald, Bishop John L. Paschang, Bishop Bona, Bishop James Casey of Lincoln and Msgr. Keating. (Photo courtesy Jack Bailey Studio)

# Cathedral altar a gift of generosity



The following is from *The Record of the Diocese of Grand Island*, Vol. 11, No. 1, January 1927.

The outstanding act of charity in the erection and furnishing of St. Mary's Cathedral is the gift of Dr. M.L. Rich, a member of the Cathedral parish, a donor of the magnificent altar. A massive all-marble creation, of chase and refined design, it may well be looked upon as a most suitable ornament of its kind for the edifice it will adorn and a lasting monument to God's glory and to the memory of the generous benefactor.

The altar will be a masterpiece of pure Gothic design, in perfect harmony with the architecture of the Cathedral building, graceful in outline, beautiful in detail and admirably proportioned to the sanctuary in which it will stand. When completed it will no doubt compare favorably with the handsomest altars in this country.

The entire altar and baldachino with its four immense supporting piers will be made of pure white Italian marble. The figures to be placed above the caps of the piers, representing the four Evangelists, will also be executed in the same material. The marble roof of the baldachino is to be finished in a tile effect. The "Agnus Dei" and the "Alpha and Omega" in front of the mensa, likewise the "I.H.S." under the crown in the front of the baldachino will be cut in low relief and emphasized with a gold leaf background. The altar base is 17 square feet and the baldachino reaches a height of 31 feet.

It is expected that the new altar will be completed and erected by Sept. 1 of this year. The contract for its execution was given to the Frederick Pustet Company, of Cincinnati, Ohio, whose artists in this line of work are considered among the best in America.

As all devotions of the Church center upon the altar, that furnishing logically becomes the most essential part of church planning. It is at once the most important and the most conspicuous detail of the church interior. Upon its successful realization in an artistic sense, it deepens the beauty of the entire church. Ours is indeed a happy fortune to be assured of such a beautiful altar.



Dr. Max and Rose Ellen Rich family. (Photo courtesy Margaret Sigler)

Dr. Max Rich donated the main and side altars, one of which is pictured at the right, to Bishop James A. Duffy for St. Mary's Cathedral in memory of his wife, Rose Ellen, and his daughters, Marie and Helen. He had previously been Jewish but joined the Catholic Church when he and Rose Ellen married, explained his granddaughter Margaret Sigler of Grand Island. The couple were married in Omaha and the homily at their wedding was given by Father Francis Keller of Anselmo. According to the May 5, 1928, edition of the *Omaha World Herald*, the altar was said to be the finest and most costly church altar in the west with the exception of one at St. Louis. The altar was constructed entirely out of Carrara marble, apparently only attainable in one quarry in Italy. The cost at the time was approximately \$17,000.



# Vatican II an historic event for diocese



Bishop John L. Paschang was one of the Nebraska diocesan representatives to attend Second Vatican Council from 1962-1965.

Today adults remember a man who was pope for a short time only, but his impact on the world was great—Pope John XXIII.

Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to project the church into modern times.

Vatican II certainly changed what a lot of people had been taught. These changes were well-researched and thoroughly discussed.

The primary intent was to retrieve the best of Catholic tradition, and make it relevant to the modern world. Looking at the whole world, the council caused people to participate in not only the liturgy, but the life of the church.

The council's four sessions from 1962 to 1965 and its 16 landmark documents modernized the liturgy, renewed the priesthood and religious life, enhanced the role of lay Catholics, opened dialogue with other churches and non-Christians, and identified the church as the "people of God."

Catholics who lived through the Vatican II era will never forget the changes—altars were turned around so that priests faced the people. The Mass in Latin gave way to Mass in English. Other sacraments were updated and simplified. Men and women religious adopted a more modern form of dress.

Not everyone in the church saw the council as a positive thing. Some Catholics are still nostalgic for the old ways of worship.

Vatican II is sometimes described as a revolution, but it did not appear out of the blue. There had been 20 previous ecumenical councils in the church's history, including the First Vatican Council in 1869-70. Vatican I defined the dogmas of papal infallibility and the primacy of papal jurisdiction, but the council was suspended when war broke out in Europe, and it never resumed.

Pope John XXIII surprised almost everyone when, after only three months

as pontiff, he announced he was convening the council. The pope spoke of the need to update the church and promote Christian unity; above all, he said, he wanted to show the modern world that the church had been transformed and intellectually reinvigorated.

Preparation for the council took almost three years, and Pope John, already diagnosed with cancer when it began, presided over only the first of four annual autumn sessions beginning in 1962. The invitation to Protestants, Orthodox and other non-Catholics to attend had already made Vatican II an historic event. Pope John XXIII died in 1963, only four-and-a-half years after his election.

Pope Paul VI guided the completion of the council's work, presiding over the other three sessions and directing the important follow-up work in areas of liturgy, ecumenism, religious

life and evangelization.

Between 2,000 and 2,500 bishops attended each Vatican II session. Nebraska representatives to the Second Vatican Council were Bishop John L. Paschang, Diocese of Grand Island; Archbishop Gerald T. Bergan, Archdiocese of Omaha; and Bishop James V. Casey, Diocese of Lincoln.

"No other institution (in the world) could unite people together like a chain—link after link. All of the bishops were the same as I; ordained as I am, and believe what I believe. A black bishop from Africa, a bishop from India, a Japanese—our enemy only a few years before—all are the same as I," said Bishop Paschang of his experience of attending the council.

In the end, the council issued four constitutions on the liturgy, the church's structure and nature, the church in the modern world and divine revelation.

It produced nine decrees on the church and the media, ecumenism, Eastern Catholic churches, bishops, priestly formation, religious life, the laity, priestly ministry and missionary activity. It issued three declarations on non-Christian religions, Christian education and religious freedom.

In the years after its close, the renewal outlined by the council was refined and codified in a number of decrees, norms and changes in canon law.



Bishop John L. Paschang

# The ground that *keeps* on giving

Once the home of actor Henry Fonda, then St. Mary's Cathedral Convent, now it's Hope Harbor.

Many people may not know it, but when they walk past Hope Harbor in the 600 block of West Division in Grand Island—formerly St. Mary's Cathedral Convent—they are walking past where famed actor the late Henry Fonda once lived and was probably born.

Not that Fonda was born or lived in the convent, but many years before that, his home was located at 622 West Division on the corner of Division and Cleburn. It was one of three houses that were moved to make way for St. Mary's Convent built in 1967.

The Fonda House—now located at Grand Island's Stuhler Museum—was originally built in 1884, the home of William and Loretta (Howard) Hooper. She was the daughter of Blake Howard, general foreman of the Union Pacific Railroad's shops in Grand Island and he had purchased the lot from the railroad in 1882. In 1890 the home was then owned by George Bell, who was married to another of Howard's daughters, Emma. They built a home next door to the Fonda house at 616 West Division and Bell then rented the house at 622 West Division to Fonda's father, William, in 1904. Henry was born on May 16, 1905, but the family moved to Omaha in September of that year.

According to courthouse records, the three lots in the 600 block as well as part of a fourth lot, were acquired by St. Mary's Cathedral over the years, either by purchase or by previous owners who had willed the properties to the church. Initially, the diocese had planned to tear down the houses on these three properties. However, when Fonda heard about the sched-

uled demolition, he offered to pay the expenses to have the Fonda home moved instead.

On Sept. 3, 1967, the new St. Mary's Cathedral Convent was blessed by Bishop John L. Paschang. The two-story building of red antique brick was built to accommodate 24 sisters, with a chapel designed to seat up to 50 people. At one time, the convent was home to more than 20 Sisters of St. Joseph from Concordia, Kan. The convent closed in 2004 when

only two sisters remained and was later leased to Hope Harbor, formerly known as the Community Humanitarian Resource Center. Hope Harbor serves as a transitional and emergency shelter for those in need.

In July 2007 the convent was sold to Hope Harbor at just half of its appraised value to support Hope Harbor's service to the community.

Sources: Stuhler Museum, Grand Island Daily Independent



St. Mary's Convent was sold to Hope Harbor in 2007.



Bishop John L. Paschang blessed the site and turned the first shovel of dirt at groundbreaking ceremonies for St. Mary's Cathedral Convent in Grand Island on Oct. 7, 1966. Monsignor Carl Hayden, members of the parish lay board, and Sister Rudolph, superior at St. Mary's Convent, were present for the groundbreaking.





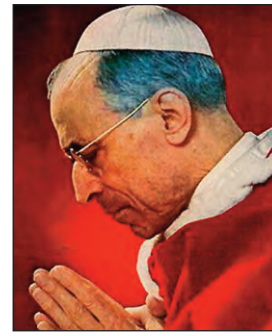
St. Pius X 1903-1914



Benedict XV 1914-1922



Pius XI 1922-1939



Pius XII 1939-1958

## *Popes during the 100 years of diocese*



Pope Benedict XVI greets Bishop William J. Dendinger of the Diocese of Grand Island. (Photo courtesy Servizio Fotografico de "L'O.R.")

With the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, there have been 265 popes in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. The pope is the spiritual leader of Roman Catholicism and the visible head of the Roman Catholic Church. He is the successor to St. Peter, the first among the apostles and the first pope of Rome.



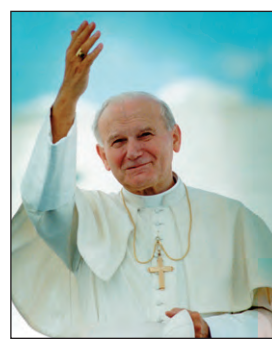
John XXIII 1958-1963



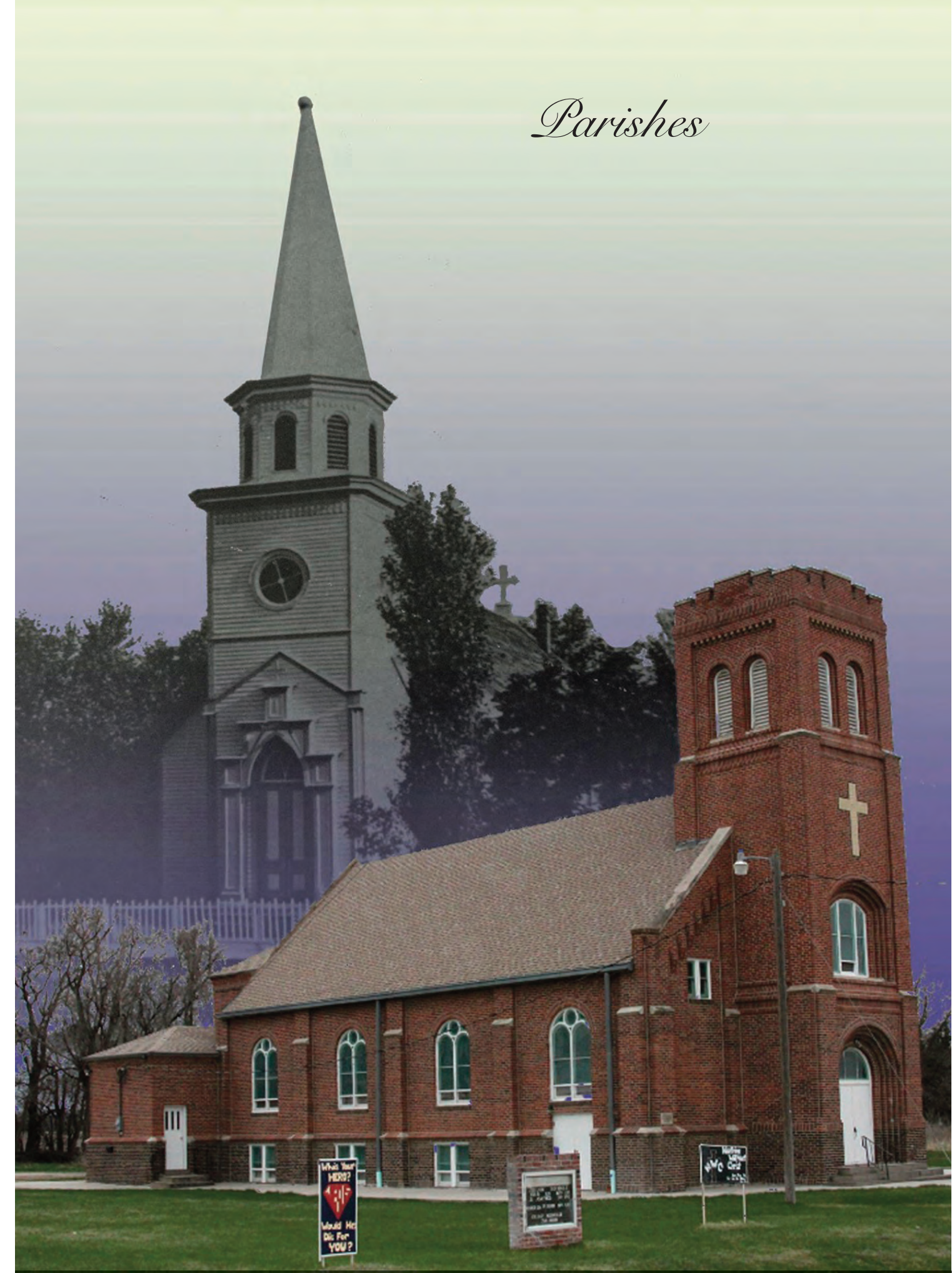
Paul VI 1963-1978



John Paul I 1978



John Paul II 1978-2005



## *Parishes*



*There is a season for everything, a time for occupation under heaven.*

*A time for giving birth,  
a time for dying;  
A time for planting;  
a time for uprooting what  
has been planted.*

*A time for killing,  
a time for healing;  
A time for knocking down,  
a time for building.*

*A time for tears,  
a time for laughter;  
A time for mourning,  
a time for dancing.*

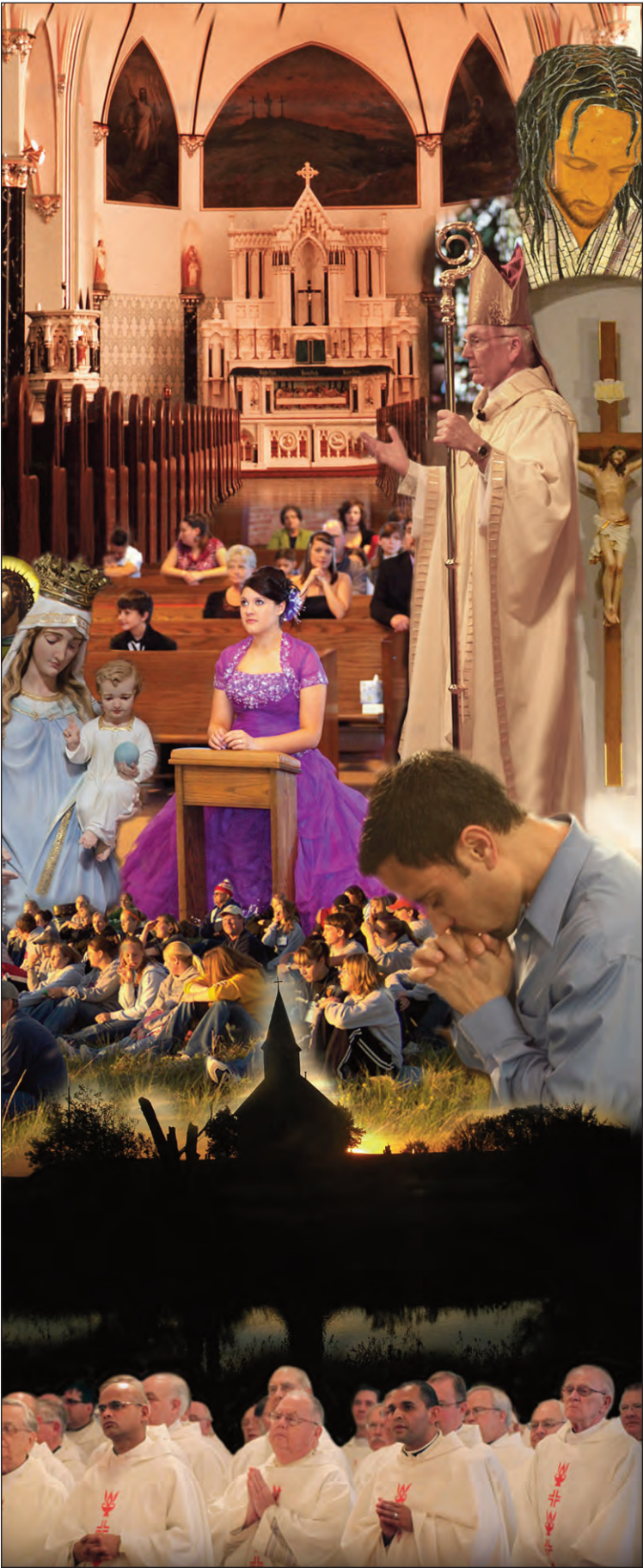
*A time for throwing stones away,  
a time for gathering them up;  
A time for embracing,  
a time to refrain from embracing.*

*A time for searching,  
a time for losing;  
A time for keeping,  
a time for throwing away.*

*A time for tearing,  
a time for sewing;  
A time for keeping silent,  
a time for speaking.*

*A time for loving,  
a time for hating;  
A time for war,  
a time for peace.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1-9



# Ainsworth St. Pius X

St. Pius X Parish's history began with a pilgrimage to Fatima, Portugal, made by Margaret Scheer of Wood Lake in 1948. When she returned from Fatima she presented the women of Ainsworth a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Knowing what great miracles had been performed by Our Lady of Fatima, the ladies decided to form a block rosary for the intention of acquiring a church and resident pastor. Each week families met in different homes to pray the rosary, and in July 1955, Bishop John L. Paschang asked Father Raymond Dooley to organize a parish. In less than 24 hours after the announcement, a meeting was held by Catholics in Ainsworth and enough money was pledged to build a church. Until that time Catholics in the area had attended Mass in Long Pine.

While the church was under construction, Mass was offered in a local funeral home, and both parishioners and Father Dooley worked diligently to complete the church. Less than 14 weeks after construction began, Bishop Paschang blessed and dedicated the new quonset-type building, St. Pius X Church, Oct. 12, 1955.

The front of the building served as the church, behind was a spacious hall for parish meetings and to the rear of the church were the living quarters of the priest. The altar was the wood-carved altar from St. Leo's Church in Gordon.

Sacred Heart Church in Wood Lake was attached to Ainsworth as a mission, as well as Newport and Norden.

Father Paul Button was named administrator of Ainsworth and its missions and served from 1958-1959.

Father Edward Flinn became pastor in 1959 and during his pastorate the need for more space necessitated the building of a rectory, which was completed in 1961.

Father Robert Foster became pastor in 1962 and served St. Pius X Church and its mission of Sacred Heart in Wood Lake and St. Agnes in Norden until 1965; Father Charles Scott served from 1965-



Father James Heithoff

1966. Both Father Foster and Father Scott were active in helping start Outward Bound, the diocesan youth camp, known as Higher Ground today. The first group of youth from St. Pius X Church who attended the pilot retreat at O'Connor were Gerald Chalupsky, Chuck Sevcik, Julia Clay, Barbara See and Mary Beth Salzman.

The changes of Vatican Council II began in the late '60s and English was introduced to the Mass. The sanctuary was remodeled to incorporate the change of the priest facing the people, and Eucharist was received while standing.

Father Harold Kurtenbach was assigned to St. Pius X in 1966 and served until 1968. During his tenure a Scripture class for adults was started, and there was a significant outreach to other churches in the community.

Father Donald O'Brien was appointed pastor of St. Pius X Church and St. Agnes Mission at Norden in 1968. During his pastorate the church at Norden was closed and Sacred Heart Mission in Wood Lake was still attended from Ainsworth. Construction began on a new church in 1970 and the first Mass was offered on May 9, 1971. Bishop Paschang dedicated the new church on Oct. 21, 1971, and the first church was now used as a parish hall.

Father O'Brien continued as pastor until 1972 when Father Hubert Spanel was appointed pastor. Holy Cross Church in Bassett became a mission of Ainsworth in 1973. Father Spanel served from 1972-1976.

September 1974 brought the Dominican Sisters from Great Bend, Kan., to help the parishes of Long Pine, Ainsworth and Bassett. Sisters Shirley Dohm Judy Menke and Hope Steffens moved to the old rectory in Long Pine and began assuming the duties of pastoral ministry. Parish religious education classes were begun on the first Sunday of each month, called the Family Program, where adults and youth were in peer classes for one hour before Mass, studying the same lesson at each one's age level. The teachers were prepared for the lessons by the sisters. This program continued until 1976.

Sister Shirley left the pastoral team in 1977. Sister Theresa Fox, a Dominican from St. Catharine, Ky., joined the team

and served for four months. Sister Jeanette Sulzman, a Dominican from Great Bend, Kan., served from 1978-1979. The sisters left the parishes in May 1979. Father James Janovec was assigned to the parish of Ainsworth and its mission and served from 1976-1981.



Construction on the church, totaling \$115,000, had its debt retired during his pastorate in a mortgage burning on March 23, 1980, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara attending the ceremony.

The 1980s were filled with construction plans, and completion of a parish hall under the direction of pastor Father James Murphy was realized.

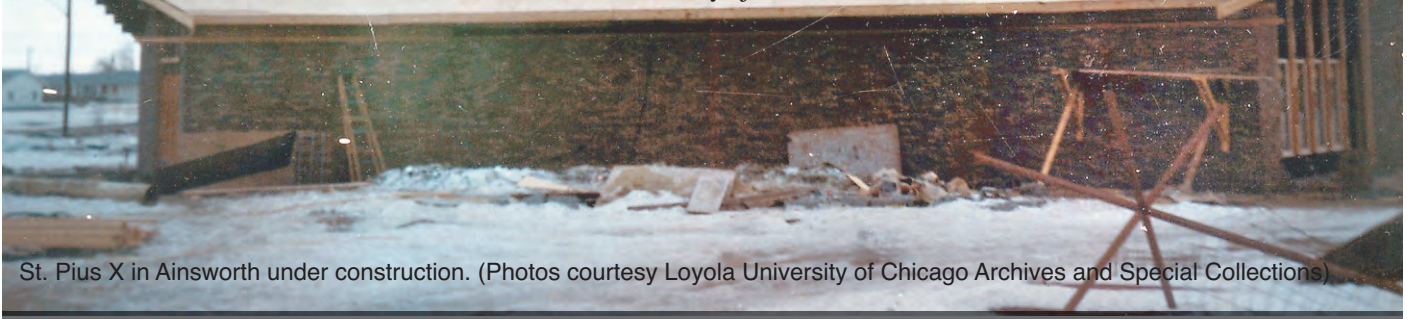
The parish sponsored a parish in Haiti in 1985 and the RENEW program was held in 1986-1987 with small groups meeting in parishioners homes. Father Murphy served from 1981-1987.

Father John "Jack" Rademacher was assigned pastor, and served from 1987-1996. Father James Hunt became pastor in 1996 and served until 2006. Parish activities continued to grow and new activities were begun.

Father Louis Nollette was assigned pastor in 2006. In 2009 the parish began the Diocesan Strategic Plan.

Father James Heithoff was assigned to the parish as pastor of St. Pius X Church and its mission, Holy Cross in Bassett in 2011.

Four committees for the Strategic Plan—Vocations, Faith Formation, Outreach and Stewardship—continue to develop goals and actions to improve parish faith life.



St. Pius X in Ainsworth under construction. (Photos courtesy Loyola University of Chicago Archives and Special Collections)



# Alliance Holy Rosary

There were Catholics among the earliest settlers in Box Butte County, and Catholic Masses celebrated as early as May 1886, but it was not until 1894 the first Catholic parish with a resident pastor was established in the county. The territory of the parish included all of Box Butte County and extended east along the railroad, probably as far as Custer County.

The Church of the Holy Rosary (its official name) has had 16 pastors in its 118-year history. About 50 priests also served as assistant or associate pastors, as well as teaching in the parish school. Father Raymond Dooley, Father Robert Rooney, Father Thomas Ryan and Father James Warner were superintendents at St. Agnes Academy.

The first church was a frame structure built at 423 Niobrara Avenue for \$8,000. It had a tower and seating for 300 people. With its rectory and large vegetable garden, it occupied a quarter of a block. Father Thomas Haley, pastor from 1894-97, celebrated the first Mass in the new church on Jan. 14, 1894. Bishop Richard Scannell came from Omaha to dedicate the church on April 27, 1894, and officially appointed Father Haley as its pastor.

After Father Haley was succeeded by Father James Aherne, 1897-99; Father Bernard Galvin, 1899-1905 and Father Julius DeVos, 1905-06.

In February 1911, the church burned to the ground. Father William McNamara, pastor from 1906-12, left at once for Omaha to consult with the bishop about rebuilding, and spearheaded the effort to replace it with the present building at Ninth Street and Cheyenne Avenue. The new church, built of “Denver pressed brick and trimmed with Bedford stone,” cost \$25,000. The dimensions were 45 feet by 90 feet, and the sanctuary seated 500 people. It was dedicated Nov. 11, 1911, and continues to serve the parish 100 years later.

Sadly, the first funeral from the new

church was that of its young pastor in January 1912. He was only 43 years old, and parishioners felt that his hard work contributed to his untimely death. He was not only a fundraiser and supervisor; he also got out and worked with the laborers when his duties permitted.

During the brief six years Father McNamara was in Alliance, he not only guided the church building project but also was instrumental in the building of a Catholic school in 1908 and a Catholic hospital in 1910. Father Peter Donnelly was pastor from 1912 to 1916.

In 1912 the state was divided into two dioceses, with the western part of the state to be known as the Diocese of Kearney. Local Catholic laymen and business leaders arranged a testimonial dinner in an attempt to persuade the bishop it should be the Diocese of Alliance. The *Alliance Herald* published an article under the headline “Alliance to be Site of New Bishopric,” stating the fine new church, school and hospital made this the

struction of a new brick rectory in 1926. The old house was sold and moved three blocks to 823 Niobrara, where it served as a funeral home for many years and is now a private residence. He also oversaw the building of the Lyceum, which was described at the time as “the finest facility for high school sports to be found in the Panhandle.” The building still serves the parish in several capacities, but no longer as a gym.

In 1943 Father Manning was named a Domestic Prelate, with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. In the local Knight Museum and Sandhills Center, he is depicted as a “difference maker” with a mannequin dressed in vestments donated by his family.

The Guadalupe Club was founded in the parish when Msgr. Manning was the pastor and its members have faithfully celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe every year since.

Monsignor Francis J. Keller came out of semi-retirement at the age of 74 to become the next pastor at Holy Rosary. In Alliance, he embarked on a program of remodeling and refurbishing the church, rectory and Lyceum. The basement of the church was finished to serve as a place to meet, and bathrooms were added in the church for the first time.

At age 81 with eyesight failing, Msgr. Keller retired again and moved to an apartment in St. Joseph’s Hospital. He was the hospital chaplain until he became entirely blind but continued to visit patients daily until he died in December 1973 at the age of 93.

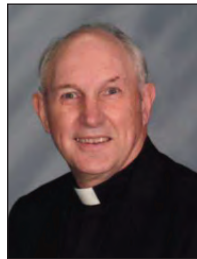
The next pastor, Father Andrew McDonald served from 1961-65. He supervised the transition of St. Agnes Academy from a private school owned by the Sisters of St. Francis to a parochial school. He appointed the first lay school board, believed to be the first lay school board in the country. The church purchased 20 acres northwest of the school and plans were drawn for a new junior-senior high school.

Succeeding years brought a decline

logical site for the bishop’s residence, but this was never to be.

Father Patrick J. Manning (pastor from 1916-54) arrived in Alliance in 1916, a very “green” immigrant who had been ordained in Ireland only a year earlier. He remained pastor for 38 years with only a few trips back to Ireland to visit his mother. He resigned after a massive stroke in 1954, died the following year, and is buried beneath a Celtic cross with Gaelic inscription at Calvary Cemetery in Alliance. His brother, Father Daniel Manning, who had been the pastor at St. Bridget Church in Hemingford for nearly the same period of time, is buried beside him.

Father Manning supervised the con-



Father Louis Nollette



The first Holy Rosary Church and rectory in Alliance, 1910. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

in the population of the parish and the new school was never built. The land was sold and new homes were built there.

In December 1963 Father McDonald was appointed a Domestic Prelate and he was invested as a Monsignor in early 1964. His health failed throughout that year and he died in a Denver hospital on March 30, 1965. After a funeral Mass in Holy Rosary Church his body was taken to his native home of Greeley.

Tekakwitha Hall on South Potash Avenue was constructed during Father McDonald’s tenure. It was envisioned as a center for ministry to the Indian people, but it was never fully utilized. Occasional liturgies and gatherings were held there, the parish donated the use of the building as a Head Start Center for a number of years, and the property was sold to a private business in 1985.

The original wing of the school was deemed unsafe and Father Raymond Dooley, pastor from 1965-67, supervised its demolition in 1966. The sisters moved to the former nurses’ home at 1104 Toluca and their living quarters were remodeled into classrooms at a cost of about \$12,000. Enrollment in the K-12 school stood at an all-time high of 428 in 1966-67.

During the time that Father James Murphy was pastor (1967-1973) progress was made toward implementing the reforms of Vatican Council II.

Changes needed to be made at the school in 1970 due to financial, staffing and space considerations. Meeting together, the pastor, parish council and school board first decided to close the high school and continue with elementary grades. After consultation with the bishop, the final decision closed the lower level and kept grades 7-12 open. In the fall of 1971 the younger children attended the Alliance Public Schools.

Pastoral ministers were introduced to the parish in 1970. Sister Agnes Taylor was the first, succeeded by Sister Bernard Meyer, who initiated the R.C.I.A. program. Also serving were Sister Joan Linenbrink and Sister Sarah Manchester. Sister Carmelita Telles was later added to the staff. Though retired, she continues to volunteer in the parish office.

In 1977 a “railroad boom” brought many young families to the parish and Father Gerald Harr, pastor from 1973-82, led a successful effort to reopen the elementary school. The old school building was completely renovated, with much volunteer labor, at a cost of about \$25,000. St. Agnes Academy was again a complete K-12 school system.

A small house north of the rectory was purchased and moved from the site to make room for a parking lot. Also about this time Holy Rosary adopted a

parish in Limbe, Haiti, and that relationship continues today.

In 1981 the church was completely remodeled and refurbished at a cost of about \$150,000. Masses were celebrated in the Lyceum throughout the fall and the church was finished in time for the Christmas celebrations.

Under Father Francis Curran’s leadership (1982-86) the parish and school continued to grow and became computerized. In 1985 Holy Rosary Parish joined many others in the diocese in the RENEW program, designed to revitalize the faith lives of its members.

Problems again arose in the late 1980s with the school. With much regret the pastor, school board and parish council decided to close the high school. The first high school class of three young women graduated in 1911 and the last group of seniors, 14 boys and girls, in 1988.

The second wing of the school building, built in 1910 with no steel infrastructure, was becoming unstable and demolition was scheduled.

About the same time, an architect was retained for a one-story addition to the remaining building. It would include an elevator shaft connecting the two wings so the entire building would be accessible to the handicapped. Holy Rosary Parish Center was completed and dedicated in 1991. It contained offices and meeting rooms for the parish as well as a chapel/library, music rooms, a gym/cafe-teria and rooms specially designed for a pre-school which opened in 1991 under the guidance of Father Edward Cortney, who served from 1986-93.

Father Bryan Ernest was named pastor in 1993 and Holy Rosary celebrated its centennial in 1994 at St. Joseph’s Park (former site of St. Joseph’s Hospital). Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara and visiting priests, and a dinner was held in the new parish center.

The Lyceum was remodeled in 1997 and the Collection Basket, a venue for recycling by making gently used items available at reasonable prices, occupies part of the building. The rest is used for meetings and dinners, and was used for bingo until the school supporters discontinued that activity in 2010.

When its pastor retired in 2001, St. Bridget Church in Hemingford became a mission of Holy Rosary. Administrative responsibility for Sacred Heart Church at Mirage Flats also were given to Holy Rosary Church.

In 2002 the dome on the church’s bell tower was covered in copper, and in 2004 the interior of the church was restored after a generous benefactor offered to donate an air conditioning unit for the building. The new decor used symbols and ornamentation faithful to its Romanesque architectural style and rem-

iniscent of the original interior.

In 2008 the parish celebrated 100 years of Catholic education. While the school had changed in form and governance throughout those years, students were present every term. Events were scheduled each month beginning in the fall of 2007 and culminated with an alumni reunion, dinner and dance in July 2008. Honored guests included Jean Kennedy Davis, a member of the class of 1928, and Florence Bamrick Johnson, class of 1934.

Other aspects of parish life which received special attention during Father James Heithoff’s time (2005 to 2011) were formation of a stewardship committee and increased emphasis on the stewardship of the faithful, adding to Hispanic ministry components that included a monthly Mass celebrated in Spanish, and encouraging and strengthening the lay leaders of the parish.

Father Louis Nollette was named pastor in July 2011.

No history of the parish would be complete without mention of Amy Weare, who was faithful custodian of Holy Rosary’s finances for about 30 years. She was a “war bride” who had been trained in business in her native country of Germany, and she applied for a part-time job as secretary-bookkeeper at the church for \$1.25 per hour.

When she was diagnosed with cancer in the 1990s she was not able to stay on the job long enough to train her replacement in what she felt was an adequate manner. Between chemo treatments, when she felt well enough, she came to the office to answer questions.

Other current members of the parish staff include Edna Broad, St. Agnes Foundation secretary; Noreen Placek, Faith Formation director; Ralph Yeager, youth minister; and Jenny Oligmueller, parish secretary. Ellen Lierk currently serves the parish as pastoral minister and director of the R.C.I.A. program.

Six sons of Holy Rosary have served the diocese as priests: the late Father Joseph Hargarten, Father Stephen Deaver, Father Raymond Kosmicki and Father Michael McDonald, as well as Patrick Powers and Edward Kunzman, now laicized. Father Daniel Wetzler, a 1955 graduate of St. Agnes, is a priest in the Diocese of Spokane.

Several local women have entered religious life, notably the late Sister Catherine Hargarten and the late Sister Coronata Manion. Those remaining are Sister Kathleen Dillon, celebrating her 65th jubilee in 2011, and Sister Patricia Podhaisky, who has celebrated 25 years in her order.

History of Holy Rosary Church, Alliance courtesy Dorothy Kunzman



# Amherst St. John Capistran

The first St. John Capistran Church was built in Amherst in 1914, beginning as a mission of St. Mary's in Prairie Center. Some of the early priests who served the mission from St. Mary's were Fathers Aloysius Kampman, Irenaus Jarka and Francis Tschida until 1922 when it became a mission of St. Patrick's in Eddyville under the pastorate of Father Paul Moser. He was followed by Father Carl Hollie in 1928, and served both parishes until 1933 when Father James Morning was assigned to the parish.

Father Morning served the parish for 18 years. Due to failing health, he resigned and was followed by Father Robert Foster, who served as administrator and pastor from February 1951 until 1957. A building fund was started for a new church at this time and several lots were purchased during his six years.

After Father Joseph Abele was appointed pastor at Eddyville and Amherst in 1957, a new church building was begun in 1958. It was dedicated on June 24, 1959, by Bishop John L. Paschang. The cost of the construction and furnishings was \$49,000 and the Catholic Church Extension Society contributed \$5,000 in memory of Archbishop Francis Noll, former bishop of Fort Wayne, Ind.

Father Abele, who had been an Army chaplain, was recalled to active duty in 1961. Father Donald O'Brien was named temporary administrator until August 1962 when Father Abele returned.

In late 1963 a three bell carillon, obtained from the Schulmerich Carillon Company of Sellersville, Pa., was installed. Frank Thompson of Eddyville constructed a steel supporting

framework for the bell and Leo Conroy of Eddyville made a supporting cabinet for the mechanism in the sacristy.



Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated St. John Capistran Church building on June 24, 1959.

Father Robert Krystosek was pastor of Amherst and Eddyville from 1965 until 1967 followed by Father Francis Michael until 1973. Father James Janovec was named pastor of Eddyville, Amherst, Callaway and Oconto from September 1973 until June 1976. From June 1976 until July 1980, Father Miguel Guevara was pastor.

In July 1980 Father Francis Curran was appointed pastor serving until July 1982. In 1982 St. John Capistran in Amherst became a mission of St. James in Kearney under the pastorate of Father James O'Kane. In 1989 Father Ted Nekoliczak was named pastor at St. James in Kearney and its mission, St John Capistran in Amherst.

In 1994 the parish was made a mission of Elm Creek under the pastorate of Father Neal Nollette.

In 2001 Father Mark Maresh was named pastor of the parishes at Elm Creek, Overton, and St. John Capistran in Amherst in addition to being administrator at Eddyville.

In 2006 Father Walter Phelan was named parochial administrator until Father José Chavez, present pastor, was appointed in February 2007.



The first Saint John Capistran Church building, shown here about 1914 or 1915. (Photo courtesy Loyola University of Chicago Archives and Special Collections)

# Anselmo St. Anselm

Prior to the building of St. Anselm's Church—known locally as the "Cathedral of the Sandhills"—Anselmo was one of the many stations attended by Father Thomas Haley, pastor from St. Andrew's in Dale, the first Catholic Church in Custer County.

According to the church's history, the first St. Anselm's Church in Anselmo was built in 1905. It was a wood frame building that would later serve as a parish hall. Father Michael O'Donoghue succeeded Father Haley and lived at Dale from 1888 to 1893. His successor, Father J.J. Flood, was pastor until 1899 and Father P. Flanagan was pastor until 1903. Father Michael L. Daly was then named pastor and built the first church at Anselmo. Its status was then changed from being a station to a mission of Dale.

In 1906 Father Paul S. Moser was appointed pastor of Dale. During his tenure, the first church at Merna was built and it also became a mission of Dale. The first rectory was built at Anselmo during the pastorate of Father Peter Donnelly and he became the first resident pastor at Anselmo while Dale became a mission.

In 1911 Father Thomas F. Minogue became pastor of Anselmo with Father Charles Kaufman as assistant. Father Minogue served as pastor until 1925. During this time, Broken Bow, Oconto, Stapleton, Sargent, and Seneca became resident pastorates and the pastor at Anselmo attended only Merna as a mission with a number of stations in Custer and Blaine Counties. St. Andrew's in Dale was closed in 1911 and torn down in 1931.

Father Francis Keller was appointed pastor in 1925 and it soon became apparent that the old church was too small for the growing parish. Five acres of land on the south side of Anselmo was

chosen for a building site. The land was farmed by Joe Downey at the time. Downey donated half of the land. The other half was purchased by Mart and Tess Johnson and her father, Angello Dondero, who donated the land to the church.

A fund drive for the construction began in 1927 and within one year more than \$19,000 was raised. Father Keller donated his entire salary of \$600 to the fund and, according to historical reports, he also cashed in his life insurance policy to purchase new pews for the church. In addition, several parishioners loaned the parish money. The cornerstone was laid Sept. 23, 1928.

The original blueprints for the church were comprised of a three-story school complete with boys and girls recreation rooms, a janitor's home, convent, baseball field, playground, handball court and tennis court, among other things. While much of that never materialized, the church and rectory were dedicated in August 1929 by Bishop James A. Duffy.

The building's architecture is English Gothic style with walls made of brick, steel and concrete. The church was designed with a 100 foot bell tower and the window traceries are made of limestone which was carved by stone-cutters in Kansas.

According to a Sept. 5, 1929, *Custer County Chief* article, more than 500 peo-

ple attended the dedication, which was presided over by 25 members of the clergy.



The "Cathedral of the Sandhills" St. Anselm's Church in Anselmo, was built in 1928 and dedicated by Bishop James A. Duffy.

In 1930 the parish donated \$544 for a bell for the bell tower. Another parishioner donated \$150 for carpet in the sanctuary. As the Great Depression progressed, however, donations ceased and Father Keller continued to refuse to accept his salary and in fact took no salary through the time until he was replaced in 1942. During his tenure, he donated a total of \$7,960 in salary and cash donations of \$2,133 to St. Anselm's.

In 1941, improvements were made to the church. The largest improvement was the relocation of the old church to a new site. The men of the parish







Father Francis Keller, pastor at St. Anselm's from 1925 to 1942, is shown above standing on the boiler to be installed during the construction of St. Anselm's new church. Father Keller was later named a monsignor. (Photo courtesy Patsy Downey)

excavated the basement and built concrete walls. The old church was then placed on the new foundation and remodeled to serve as the church hall, with a kitchen.

Father Daniel Devine succeeded Father Keller as pastor in 1942 and in 1945, the parish made the final payment on the church. During Father Devine's pastorate, major improvements were made in 1948 including installation of a marble main altar, a carved oak ornamental wall/partition behind the altar and a complete redecoration of the interior of the church. The new altar was consecrated by Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler in 1948.

Father Devine was followed by Msgr. Henry Muenstermann from 1952 to 1955 and Father Paul Wachtrle from 1955 until February 1964.

The church was served by Father Edward Cortney as temporary administrator from February 1964 until March 1964 when Father Constantine Shumski was named pastor. In 1965 Father David John was assigned pastor until 1967 followed by Father Frederick Snyder from 1967 to 1979.

In the church's history, St. Anselm's Church has been flooded four times—1956, 1960, 1977, and 1978.

The first flood occurred in May 1956. According to the church history, a three foot wall of water ran into town after seven inches of rain fell in Arnold and more rain came down in Eureka and West Dale. The parish hall ended up with five feet of water in its basement, but the rectory and church were spared.

Melting snowfall in March 1960 once again created a flood. This time, a ditch was dug on the north side of the property to drain water away from the hall, which was saved from damage.

The third flood threatened the church in September 1977 when heavy rains occurred in Eureka and Dale. The village board brought in earth-moving equipment

to construct a dike and trench just north of the church. A second trench was dug south of the church. The rectory received little damage, but the hall was flooded with about one foot of water.

The final flood took place in March 1978, once again the result of melting snow. A dike was built north of the church to protect the town, but St. Anselm's itself was surrounded

by water. Sandbags were brought in but water still seeped into the hall although the damage was not extensive.

After the fourth flood, the Loup Natural Resource District began constructing a channel on the south side of town to divert water into the Highway 2 ditch. The diversion ditch was completed in 1979.

St. Anselm's marked its 50th anniversary in 1979 and also that year, Father James Kremer was appointed pastor until 1983. In 1983 Father Neal Nollette was named pastor. In 1987 the parish opened the cornerstone. Father Nollette recounted at that ceremony it took nine hours to chisel and drill through the Indiana limestone cornerstone to reach the time capsule placed at the center.

In 1988 Father Lawrence Coulter was named pastor and a complete new water source heat pump was installed, which provided both heating and cooling to the church and parish house. Father Coulter was pastor until 1997.

In March 1994 the parish celebrated Mass in a newly-renovated church. The renovation included a reconstructed sanctuary, the removal of side altars to provide space for the music ministry and the removal of one confessional to create a devotional area. The plans also called for the moving of the tabernacle to the other side of the church, the creation of a reconciliation room by removing a second confessional and construction of a new altar, presider's chair and the addition of a handicap ramp. All of the woodwork was also sanded and a sound system was added. The work took three years to complete.

Father Mark Maresh was appointed pastor in 1997 and served until 2001 when St. Paul's Church in Merna was combined with St. Anselm's to form the

St. Anselm's/St. Paul's Church as a mission of Broken Bow under the pastorate of Father Todd Philipsen. Sister Bernita Hessling, O.P., served as pastoral minister from 2001-2005.

St. Anselm's Church celebrated its 75th anniversary and rededication of the church in 2003 with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara celebrating Mass. Father James Hunt was named pastor in 2006.

On March 12, 2008, St. Anselm's was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance.



Monsignor Francis Keller served the diocese for several years, 17 of those years as pastor at Anselmo. He reportedly not only went without a salary but also cashed in his life insurance policy to help pay for the building. He died Dec. 14, 1973.

Sources: Patsy Downey of Broken Bow, National Register of Historic Places.

## Arnold St. Agnes

Early Catholic farmers and ranchers in the Arnold area traveled to Dale between Merna and Anselmo, to worship in the first Catholic settlement in Custer County.

As the number of Catholics grew, area residents saw the need for a church in the Arnold area. John Faherty Sr. was instrumental in starting plans for a church.

In 1892 the first Mass was offered in the Pat Logan home east of Arnold by Father Michael Daly of Dale. By 1900 pastors from Dale celebrated Mass in Arnold, but not always on a regular schedule.

Father Paul Moser of Dale and Broken Bow traveled from Broken Bow to Gandy for Mass. Traveling by horse and buggy, he would spend the night in Arnold, and offer Mass the next morning before continuing his journey.

Mass was offered for several years in the Maddox and Duckett Hall.

In 1913 under the direction of Father Henry Muenstermann of Kearney, J.T. Knott, J.P. Lawless and John Faherty, funds were raised for the

building of a church.

St. Agnes Church was completed in 1914. With an altar of a carpenter's bench, Father Manuel Fernandez first resident pastor of Stapleton and Arnold, offered Mass. Bishop James A. Duffy dedicated the church on Sept. 16, 1916.

St. Agnes has always been a mission of St. John the Evangelist Church in Stapleton.

According to parish history, parishioners were responsible for starting fires before Mass in a small four-lid stove in the sacristy and a larger pot-bellied stove in the main part of the church. Corn cobs and coal were used as fuel.

"Some mornings you could see your breath in the sunlight as you prayed because it was so cold. Father Peter Kenny (pastor from 1923 to 1943) would hurry and have some hot coffee after Mass and then teach catechism classes for the children," the history said.

As the years went by, the Catholic community continued to grow and the church was enlarged in 1952 under the direction of Father Vincent Nepl.

The church building was extended to twice its original length and a full basement was added. This allowed the seating capacity to be tripled and provided space for socials and religious education classes.

In a spirit of joy St. Agnes Parish community celebrated their diamond jubilee Sept. 10, 1989, with Bishop



St. Agnes Church



Weldon Wilhelm greets Ralph and Betty Larson during a Mass at St. Agnes.

Lawrence J. McNamara as the main celebrant of a liturgy of thanksgiving.

In 2011 a combined group from St. Agnes at Arnold, St. Boniface at Callaway and St. John's at Stapleton formed a Welcome Home Ministry, reaching out to anyone who had left the Catholic Church for whatever reason.

Other priests who have served St. Agnes as pastors include Fathers Alphonse Gasser, Robert Maron, C.J. Moynihan, Raymond Miles, Louis Nally, Vincent Pelster, James McSweeney, Stephen Deaver, John "Jack" Schlaf, Robert Rooney, John Dennett, Hubert Spanel, James Heithoff, Reginald Urban, James Hunt, James Novakowski, Neal Nollette, Todd Philipsen and present pastor Father Antony Thekkkara.

Religious who have served St. Agnes include Sisters Claudia Podgorski, Beverly Hillis, Verona Weidig, Elizabeth Glynn, Roberta Anne Semper and Paulette Kuta.





# Ashton St. Francis

As far as the eye could see, there was prairie to greet the first German and Polish settlers who made what is now the village of Ashton their home in the late 1880s.

Ashton's Catholic pioneers were faced with a daunting days journey to New Posen, the nearest Catholic church about two-and-a-half miles south of Farwell, to attend Mass. As more Catholics settled in the Ashton area, a need for a nearer church was felt by the residents. Even when Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was built in Choynice (Paplin) in 1882, Ashton residents still had to awaken early Sunday

mornings to walk five or more miles through the rolling prairie to get there.

Sometimes Jesuit priests who periodically traveled through the area were invited into Ashton homes to offer Mass for the villagers.

But it wasn't until 1899, 10 years after the town was incorporated, that Ashton residents saw their dream of having a Catholic church in their community come true. Thomas Jamrog, an Ashton hardware dealer, spearheaded a movement to build a wood-frame church with a rounded East-

ern European bell tower. The church was dedicated on Oct. 4, 1899, by Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha. It was completed with about \$3,500 of material costs and many hours of volunteer labor.

Father Boleslaus Radka was the first priest to serve as pastor of St. Francis. For the first three years, the church operated as a mission to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Under Father Radka's care, St. Francis Parish obtained land for a cemetery in 1901 and built a rectory in 1903. Father Radka was replaced by

Father Joseph Augustyn in 1906, but he returned the following year to serve as pastor until 1919. Father Radka was instrumental in the construction of the stately two-story brick St. Francis School in 1909 which also served as a convent for six Felician sisters of the Chicago province sent to teach the 150 elementary students.

The school struggled to stay open during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Parishioners had little money to spare, but managed to raise the necessary funds at the church's annual bazaars, some of which included outdoor picnics with



St. Francis Church, 1910. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

homemade root beer and pheasant dinners.

For 36 years, from 1919 to 1955, Father Aloysius J. Jarzowski served the parish. During his stay, the plain glass windows in the church were replaced with stained glass, just in time for the church's 50th anniversary celebration in 1948.

Father Jarzowski was elevated to monsignor in September 1949. Msgr. Jarzowski retired in June 1955.

More construction awaited St. Francis parish-

ioners with the arrival of Father Michael Szczesny. Within six years, three new buildings were erected—a new two-story brick rectory in 1958, a brick convent in 1960, and a brick five-room St. Francis

School with an attached parish hall in 1964.

Despite declining enrollment, parishioners elected to build the new school after the old school was condemned. They hosted weekly bingo to help raise money for its construction and operation.

Father Ted Nekoliczak was assigned as pastor in 1969 and, for a few years, also ministered to St. Joseph's Church in Elba. In 1972 the church was remodeled in accordance to the Second Vatican Council. Father Nekoliczak also helped organize a parish council, and CCD classes were begun with parishioners serving as teachers.

From 1974 to 1982 St. Francis was ministered by Father Thomas Dillon, Father James Kremer and Father Andrew Gonda. The mortgage of St. Francis Church was paid off under the pastorate of Father James Schmitt, who served the parish from 1982 to 1987.

Declining enrollment and growing financial restraints led to the closing of St. Francis School in 1982.

Father Schmitt's successor was Father Frederick Snyder. He served the parish for 10 years. In 1997 St. Francis Church's first non-resident pastor in 94 years, Father Lawrence Coulter, arrived. During that year, St. Francis Church and St. Joseph's Church in Elba both became missions under St. Anthony's Church in Farwell. The consolidation of the three parishes under one priest also resulted in the closing of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Paplin.

In 1998 the 40-year-old parish rectory was sold at public auction and the convent was leased to the Polish Heritage Center, where Polish history is preserved and on display.

Father Coulter left in 2002 and Father Louis Nollette oversaw St. Francis Church from 2002 to 2006 while he was in Loup City. In July 2006 St. Francis Church became a part of a six-parish cluster that includes Ravenna, Loup City, Rockville, Hazard, Pleasanton, and Ashton. Father Martin Egging serves as pastor for this cluster with Sunday services in Loup City and Ravenna. Ashton attends services in Loup City, but has a weekday Mass once a month and a Sunday Mass three times a year. Mass is also offered on special occasions.

Five women have entered the convent from St. Francis: Sister Adelaide (Stella) Jamrog, Sister M. Veronica Grabowski, Sister Agnes Marie Lewandowski, Sister Alice Pruss, and Sister Betty Maschka.

*Compiled by Ron W. Sack from the resources of the Polish Heritage Center in Ashton, West Nebraska Register, and Father Neal Hock.*

# Bassett Holy Cross

Attending Mass in Newport or Long Pine became something that the people of Bassett were accustomed to, with Father John Cook, pastor of the parishes. All that changed in 1966, when permission was given to begin building the first Catholic church in Bassett. The church became a mission of Long Pine and Father Cook became the pastor of all three parishes—Newport, Long Pine and Bassett, and served in that capacity until being transferred in 1972.

Father Harold Kurtenbach became pastor in 1972 and served until 1973. The church at Long Pine and the mission of Newport were closed in 1973, and Holy Cross became a mission of St. Pius X in Ainsworth with Father Hubert Spanel as pastor.

Father James Janovec began serving the two parishes in 1976 and it was during his pastorate that the debt on the church was paid. The burning of the mortgage took place on Dec. 17, 1978, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara present.

Father Frederick Snyder served from 1979-1987.

Father John "Jack" Rademacher was assigned to the parish in 1987. During his tenure a gathering area in the church and more classrooms for re-

ligious education were added. The new gathering area was added to the west side of the original church and included a large classroom, sacristy, restroom and stairwell to the basement. The basement addition included four classrooms and a furnace room. The kitchen was also enlarged and modernized.



Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara sets fire to the original mortgage of Holy Cross Church at Bassett in a ceremony on Dec. 17, 1978. Pastor James Janovec and Gene Cosgrove, chairman of the church board, watch.

Father Rademacher served the parish until his transfer in 1996. Father James Hunt was appointed pastor in 1996 and served until 2006; Father Louis Nollette served from 2006-2011; and Father James Heithoff, assigned to Holy Cross in 2011, remains the current pastor.

The number of parishioners have grown from 40 families in 1966 to 71 families today.





# Bayard Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart Church in Bayard had its earliest beginning in 1919 when the first Mass was celebrated in the home of Mrs. George Cronkleton. Thirty-eight people attended that Mass officiated by Father Irenaeus Jarka. Father Jarka traveled by train to six missions along the railroad to say Mass.

Masses continued to be offered on the first Saturday of each month until January 1920. Father Joseph Hinzman succeeded Father Jarka, and he was followed by Father Carl Hollie who offered Mass in the upstairs of the old Ford Garage.

The ground was broken with a team of horses to excavate a basement for a church and Sacred Heart was built and completed in 1921. A house to be used for a rectory was rented across from the church for Father Hollie. The church of Bayard served 14 missions at that time.

Father Hollie was transferred in 1921 and Sacred Heart became a mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Scottsbluff.

Carmelite Sisters arrived in the North Platte Valley in November 1925. Catechism was taught in the church or parish hall and the sisters gave instructions twice a week. It was through their continued efforts of catechizing that the

faith was brought to the children.

Priests who served during those years were Fathers Nicholas Thees,



Bishop William J. Dendinger blessed the Ten Commandment monuments at the Meditation Garden at Sacred Heart Church in Bayard the weekend of July 22, 2007. Pictured from left: Father David Rykwald, Bishop Dendinger, Jonathon Baum, Juan Gonzales and Brandon Stuart.

James Fullam, Michael McDaid, Daniel Devine, C.J. Moynihan, George Schneider, Daniel Houlihan, Lawrence Portrey, Matthew Kosiba and Joseph Hargarten.

Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler re-established Sacred Heart as a parish in October 1947 and appointed Father Thomas Cooney administrator.

Father Vincent Pelster became pastor in May 1948 and during his tenure a new rectory was built.

Father Cletus Semper was appointed pastor in July 1955 with St. Mary's Church in Minatare as a mission of Bayard. Succeeding Father Semper was Father Robert Warner, Father James Kremer was appointed in 1960 followed by Father Robert Chamberlain, Father Robert Krystosek, Father Bernard Berger, Father John Dennett, Father

Lawrence Fenton, Father Raymond Kosmicki, Father John "Jack" Schlaf, and Father James Murphy.

Father Max Valdez, who served until 1993, was the last resident pastor. Sacred Heart Church became a mission of All Souls Church in Bridgeport in 1993 and pastor, Father Reginald Urban resided in Bridgeport, while the parish house in Bayard became the residence of Sister Doris Durant, pastoral assistant.

Father Christopher Keith served Sacred Heart from July 1996 to November 2001. During this time a formal parish garden was established and the church received a major facelift. An accessibility ramp was added; a reconciliation room created; a bathroom was included upstairs in the new gathering area, while two bathrooms were added in the basement social hall.

Mass was celebrated in the hall while the church was renovated. With the help of parish volunteers and their varied talents, the renovation and addition were paid in full by the rededication in 2002.

Father David Rykwald assumed leadership of Sacred Heart in late 2001 and is the current pastor. Lay prayer leaders have been trained and are used primarily in the absence of a priest. Lay ministry and involvement is encouraged and the religious education program is thriving, although small in numbers. Over the years the parish has excelled in its music ministry with many youth involved.

The annual Super Bowl buffet during February is quickly becoming a tradition that brings parishioners young and old together, not just as a fundraiser, but also as a community builder.

To reduce costs, the vacant rectory and the adjacent garden lot were sold in 2009.

Sacred Heart Parish continues to foster small town hospitality as it gathers weekly to celebrate the sacred Word and the Holy Eucharist in Mass.

The parishioners of today, like generations past, continue to make sacrifices to support their church community.



Sacred Heart Church in Bayard has served parishioners since its completion in 1921. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)

# Bridgeport All Souls

Priests arrived in the North Platte Valley to minister to the spiritual needs of the hardy pioneers even before Bridgeport was established. The original town of Bridgeport, located about three miles further west was known as Camp Clarke, a trading post consisting of a general store and post office.

When the Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad came through, the town of Bridgeport sprang up on the present site. It became the central city for a vast prairie that was being developed by the early settlers.

At this same time, priests began coming from Sidney to offer Mass for the Catholic families in and around Bridgeport. Mass was usually offered on weekdays in various Catholic homes.

The parish of All Souls was created by Bishop James A. Duffy in 1919. Father Irenaeus Jarka was the first resident pastor of Bridgeport with Dalton, Angora and Bayard attached as missions. His appointment began July 1, 1919, without a rectory. He wrote in a diary, "I fixed up the sacristies here and at Dalton for my living quarters and left the rest to the future." A rectory was built later that year.

Succeeding Father Jarka were Father Joseph Hinzman,

Father Robert Maron, Father Francis J. Tschida, Father James P. Fullam, Father Cletus Semper, Father Ted Nekoliczak, Father James Janovec, Father Max Valdez, Father Andrew Gonda, Father Reginald Urban, Father Christopher Keith and presently serving, Father David Rykwald.

The rectory, vacated since 1931, was rented out until in 1961 it was designated a parish and catechetical center to accommodate the children attending religious education classes and the high school study club.

A new brick and cement block church was built in 1976 when Father Valdez was pastor. The church was completed at a cost of \$115,622. A grant of \$20,000 from the Catholic Church Extension Society aided in the construction.

The mortgage burning took place on June 29, 1986, during Father Gonda's pastorate.

Father Reginald Urban was assisted by Sister Doris Durant as pastoral minister, and they maintained an active and visible presence in the community. The parish center was built that contained the parish hall and kitchen, classrooms and office.

Further improvements were made to the parish under



Father David Rykwald



Bishop William J. Dendinger blessed the Ten Commandment monuments at All Souls Church in Bridgeport, the weekend of July 22, 2007. The monument at All Souls Church in Bridgeport was a golden colored stone which came from a marble quarry in the Sinai desert not far from Mt. Sinai where the Ten Commandments were received by Moses.

Father Christopher Keith. The center's balcony was enclosed creating a youth room upstairs and baffles were mounted on the walls to improve sound quality.

Father Rykwald assumed his pastorate in Advent of 2001. With fewer priests in the area, lay prayer leaders were trained; LIMEX classes of the diocese met in the parish center, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous and Diocesan Council of Catholic Women meetings.

The burning of the mortgage for the parish center was held in 2004; the payment was made possible primarily due to the leadership of the Council of Catholic Women in the parish.

Improvements continued to be made with the installation of stained glass windows in the church, new stations of the cross, renovation of the church sanctuary and repainting of the parish hall.

The people of All Soul's Church are grateful to be able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist in their own church.



All Souls at Bridgeport as it stands today. At bottom right is a picture of All Souls early church which was built in 1919. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)



# Broken Bow St. Joseph

Although St. Joseph's in Broken Bow is more than 100 years old, it was not the first Catholic church in the area. In Custer County, the first Catholic Church was at Dale, also known as Dale Valley—a hub of activity at the time with hopes of the railroad coming to town—located 12 miles northwest of Broken Bow.

According to historical records, on Nov. 30, 1886, Father Thomas Haley and his parishioners at Dale began construction of St. Andrew's. Most of the material was hauled by wagon from Grand Island. The church served as a parish until 1911 and was torn down in 1931. The cemetery, however, remains and a pioneer memorial was dedicated there in 1975 by Bishop John J. Sullivan.

St. Andrew's priests—the last of whom was Father Peter Donnelly from 1908 to 1911—served Anselmo, Merna, Broken Bow, Ansley, Mason City, Oconto, Callaway, Arnold, Gandy, Seneca, Thedford, Brownlee, Dunning, Brewster, Hawley Flats, Sargent, Berwyn and Westerville as well as the Conway Ranch, Eureka, Ortello and New Helena.

Catholic settlers in the Broken Bow area worshipped at St. Andrew's until 1888 when the first church in Broken Bow was built. The 6-year-old village had grown large enough to be named a city and with its increasing Catholic population came the need for a new parish.

Early records show that the first Mass celebrated in the area was in 1880 by Father Richard Phelan of Grand Island in the sod house of William and Bridget Couhig in Dale Valley. For several years, Father James Hayes and Father Haley—at first from St. James Church in Kearney and later from St. Andrew's Church in Plum

Creek (now Lexington)—would visit settlements and celebrate Mass in area homes.

The first Mass in Broken Bow was celebrated on June 10, 1884, by Father Hayes at Dr. Wyman Hull's Sod Hotel on June 10, 1884. Later, Mass was celebrated regularly in the John McDonnell residence on the northwest corner of South E and 12th Avenue.

Parishioners at Dale helped to build a 30 foot by 60 foot frame structure that was dedicated to St. Joseph on the corner of Broad and Koon Streets, now South E and 14th Avenue. The new church was dedicated on July 29, 1888, by Bishop James O'Connor and Dale's pastor, Father Haley, was appointed St. Joseph's first pastor. A residence was bought at public auction and moved to the east of the church on April 22, 1889, to become the first rectory.

Gandy, Arnold, Thedford, Brownlee, Westerville, St. Patrick's at Lee's Park, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Tuckerville, St. Theresa's at Redfern, St. Thomas at Mason City, Litchfield, Sargent, Taylor, Callaway, Immaculate Conception at Oconto, Arnold, Alliance, Seneca, Lakeside and Dunning were all served—at one time or another—by the priests at Broken Bow. Masses in Dunning, however, were not celebrated in a Catholic church but rather were at a community church until those services were discontinued in 2001.

Father John Gieseler succeeded Father Haley in 1894, but was there less than eight months. While there, Father Gieseler cared for the missions of Ravenna, Mason City, Lee's Park and Westerville. But with the 1893 financial panic and the drought in 1894, parishioners were unable to support a resident pastor and Father Gieseler was forced to leave in 1895. From 1895 to 1908, the parish reverted to mission status of St. Andrew's Church in Dale. Father John J. Flood of St. Andrew's in Dale cared for St. Joseph's from 1895 to 1898.

From 1895 until 1908, St. Joseph's

parish was a mission of St. Andrew's except for two years when Father Anthony Duda cared for the Broken Bow, Mason City and Ravenna parishes from Broken Bow. Father Patrick Flanagan served from 1900 to 1903 and Father Michael Daly served from 1903 to 1906. During this time, St. Thomas Mission in Mason City was cared for by Father Jaroslav Hancik, pastor of Ravenna.

On Oct. 1, 1906, Father Paul Moser, was named pastor at St. Andrew's in Dale. The missions attached to St. Andrew's included Broken Bow, Anselmo, Merna, Eureka Valley, New Helena, Conway Ranch, Thedford, Seneca, Brownlee, Lee's Park, Banner, Gandy, Arnold, Oconto, Sargent, Ansley, Black Hill Creek, Pleasanton, and Mason City. While not all of these towns had churches, services were still celebrated, probably in area homes.

In May 1908 Father Moser succeeded in reestablishing the priest's residence in Broken Bow. With help from parishioners, the rectory was enlarged and improved, rooms were added on the back, a porch was built on the front, trees were planted and sidewalks laid. From Broken Bow, Father Moser continued to care for Berwyn (a station from 1917 to 1932), Pilot, Mason City, Pleasanton and Ansley. Father John Gleeson replaced Father Moser in 1915, but ill health forced him to leave in August the following year.

Meanwhile, in 1912, Pope Pius X had divided the Diocese of Omaha—which at the time included the area north of the Platte River west to Wyoming—into two parts creating the Diocese of Kearney and naming Bishop James A. Duffy the first bishop. Bishop Duffy was from the Diocese of Cheyenne and worked with the Conventual Franciscan Friars who had missions in Wyoming. He began discussions with Father Leo Greulich, Minister Provincial of the Franciscans, to work in Bishop Duffy's new diocese. The following is an excerpt from their agreement, finalized in September 1916:

*“Great is the territory of our diocese, great is the labor because of the vast dispersion of the faithful, but most great is the lack of priests. Hence, we come to the Franciscan Friars ... so that they may help us in the care of souls....”*

Beginning in 1916 the order of Friars Minor Conventual (Franciscans) were placed in charge of the churches at Broken Bow, Ansley and Mason City for the next 75 years, until 1991.

Father James Hermes, O.F.M. Conv. was appointed the first Franciscan pastor with Father Mathias Schnieders, O.F.M. Conv., appointed his assistant.

Both were stationed at Douglas, Wyo., at the time. Father Schnieders arrived shortly afterward and on Sunday,

Sept. 24, 1916, offered the first Mass by a Franciscan. Father Hermes came two weeks later on Oct. 6.

In 1917 a new rectory was built and furnished at a cost of \$9,000. The old rectory was sold for \$400 and moved to 532 D Street.

Father Constant Klein, O.F.M. Conv., became pastor in 1924 and built the new church, as the parish community had outgrown the small frame building. The cornerstone for the new church was laid on July 26, 1925, and the first Mass was Midnight Mass offered on Christmas Day that same year. The church was dedicated by Bishop Duffy on May 5, 1926. The new church was a 97 foot by 42 foot brick building that contained a full basement, a choir loft and a 60 foot bell tower.

Father Klein was succeeded by Father Nicholas Donohoe, O.F.M. Conv., in 1929 and he was replaced by Father Anacleto Patterson, O.F.M. Conv., the following year until 1932.

Father Justin Phelps, O.F.M. Conv. succeeded him on Oct. 12, 1932, but during one of the darker periods of the parish—a 17-year drought during the existing depression—until 1939. Father Andrew Maas, O.F.M., followed Father Phelps in 1939 but was forced to resign, because of ill health, on Sept. 1, 1940. Father Louis Wren, O.F.M., Conv., took his place and remained until 1947. In August Father Wren became ill and was replaced briefly by Father Alexis Martini O.F.M. Conv., as administrator. In December 1947, Father Martin Collet, O.F.M. Conv., was appointed administrator of the parish. He was made pastor by the Provincial Chapter of 1948.

Father Bernardin Singleton O.F.M. Conv., succeeded Father Collet on Aug. 17, 1954. After his arrival, a complete repair of the rectory was finished. At the same time, the chapel in the basement was remodeled. He resigned on April 21, 1957, and Father Bede Phelps O.F.M., was appointed administrator.

Father Hugh Rochkes, O.F.M., was named new pastor in July 1957 with Father Phelps as his assistant. Several other repairs were made on the church and porch including painting, paving the driveway, carpet in the church and new tile between the pews. A new ceiling was installed in the basement of the church and tile covering on the floor as well as kitchen improvements.

In the late 1950s, Father Rochkes purchased land adjacent to the rectory and laid out a ball diamond that would be named Hugh Field used by teams of the parish and other local leagues for the next 15 years.

Father Rochkes left Broken Bow on Aug. 20, 1963, and was replaced by Father Marcellus Lell, O.F.M.

In 1968 Father Lell bought the John

Adams residence on 14th Avenue to use for religious education classes for the next 12 years.

Father Eugene Henley, O.F.M., who was also an historian, said the building was “affectionately called The Annex.” Father Henley served from 1970 to 1976. Father Herbert Graf, O.F.M., was pastor from 1976 to 1982, and during his pastorate plans were made to build a multi-purpose parish center north of the parking lot. Construction began in May 1978. On Feb. 17, 1980, Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara dedicated the new parish center which cost approximately \$200,000.

Father Henley returned in 1982, and it was during his second tenure that a parish council was formed. One of the first projects of the parish council was construction of a new entrance to the church. The plan included a chair-lift elevator, a handicapped-equipped restroom, two entrances, access to the church basement and renovation of the kitchen in the rectory. A second project completed four classrooms in the church basement—a plan of the original church's construction from 1925.

During the spring of 1987 the interior of the church was renovated in preparation for the centennial celebration on July 31, 1988.

Father Florian Tiell, O.F.M., was named interim administrator in 1988. Other Franciscans who served as assistants at St. Joseph's included Fathers Ambrose Finnegan, O.M.C., Matthew Ramstein O.M.C., David Kosky O.M.C., Charles Zengel O.M.C., Fidelis Van Druemel O.M.C., Edward Collet O.F.M., Lucian Harkins O.F.M., Neil Callahan O.F.M., Kevin Cole O.F.M., Pius Poff O.F.M., Germaine Belen O.F.M., Bartholomew Leis O.F.M., Maurus Hauer O.F.M., George Schroeder O.F.M., Maximilian Korecki O.F.M., Dunstan Bryan O.F.M., and Alphonse Boardway O.F.M. Many of these Franciscans served as pastors in the individual missions of Broken Bow.

Father Louis Manna, O.F.M., arrived in Broken Bow on Dec. 12, 1988, and was named administrator. In 1988 the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary with Bishop McNamara celebrating Mass with Franciscan Provincial Father Wayne Hellmann, Fathers Henley and Tiell, and Grand Island diocesan priests.



Father Eugene Henley, O.F.M. Conv.

The Diocese of Grand Island assumed the care of St. Joseph's Parish and the Missions of St. Thomas in Mason City and Sacred Heart in Ansley beginning July 1, 1991. The Franciscan Friars celebrated 75 years in service before Father Harold Kurtenbach was named pastor in 1991, serving until 1996. In 1994 St. Joseph's rectory was sold and moved and a new rectory was built north of the church.

Father Kurtenbach was followed by Father Robert Rooney from 1996 to 2000. In 2000 Father Todd Philipsen was named pastor. In 2001 Father Philipsen was appointed pastor of St. Anselm's in Anselmo and St. Paul's in Merna, both missions of Broken Bow. The last Mass at St. Paul's in Merna was in 2000 and it was later sold in 2004. Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary in Sargent was added as a mission of St. Joseph's in 2004.

In 2004 Father Hubert Spanel was appointed parochial administrator of both Sacred Heart in Ansley and St. Thomas in Mason City and weekend Masses were discontinued.

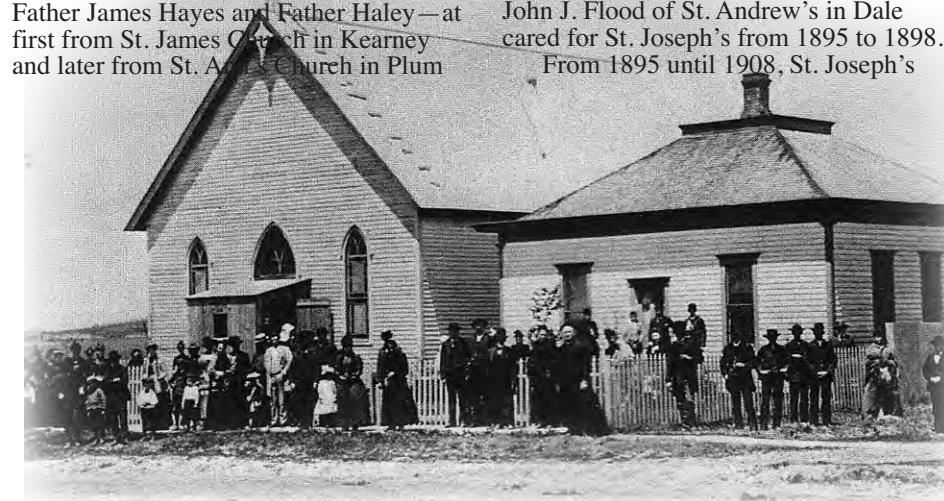
Father James Hunt was appointed pastor in 2006. St. Thomas in Mason City was sold in July 2006 and Sacred Heart Church in Ansley was sold in September 2007.

In 2009 the interior of St. Joseph's was “gutted and redone” at a cost of about \$300,000.

Religious who have served St. Joseph's Parish include Sister Leona Augustyn, 1987-1991; and Sister Bernita Hessling, 2001-2005.



Church construction, 1920s.



St. Joseph Church and rectory, circa 1884 (Photo courtesy Province of Our Lady of Consolation Conventual Franciscan Friars, Mount Saint Francis, Indiana)



# Burwell Sacred Heart

Nestled on the edge of the Sandhills, Sacred Heart Church is a thriving mission church that serves the people of Burwell, Taylor and surrounding areas as well as the needs of Calamus Lake tourists and campers.

After the Civil War many people settled in the area ... they were the people of God—greatly appreciating the gifts of the land. They were of many ethnic origins, many faiths. Among them were Catholics who thanked the good Lord for land, water and grass.

The first Masses in the 1880s were offered in private homes. In 1892 as numbers grew, Mass was first offered in Burwell by Father Michael J. Hayes. For some time the courthouse was used as a place of worship and, later on, the Catholics gathered in the school for Mass and instruction.

With the growth of Catholic families, the need of a church was recognized. In the spring of 1894 Michael J. O'Connor and John A. Murphy were appointed to solicit funds for building a church. Families were few and scattered, but the response was generous and sacrifices and inconveniences were soon forgotten

by the prospect of a house for God. A small frame church was erected, but the hopes of the people for Mass



First Communion was celebrated at Sacred Heart Church in Burwell on June 23, 1957, climaxing two weeks of religious vacation school. Father Carroll Liebig, pastor, officiated. Classes were conducted by Sister Rose, Sister Genevieve and Sister Toma of the Order of St. Francis from O'Neill.

on Sunday were not realized for a long time. Mass was still offered on week days, and the church was used on Sundays for instruction.

The area was served by priests from Greeley for a number of years, until 1910 when Burwell was designated a parish under the title of Sacred Heart of Jesus. Father Patrick Manning was named its first pastor and the parish continued to grow under his spiritual leadership.

The parish growth warranted a new church and in 1915 the present brick church was dedicated. The indebtedness left on the church was only \$2,000, but sufficient to defer the building of a rectory. Father Manning's dream of a church and rectory without debt was not realized, as he was transferred to Alliance in 1916. He was succeeded by Father Peter Donnelly, who remained in Burwell for a short time. Father Donnelly was replaced by Father James McMahon in 1917.

Shortly after America's entrance into World War I, Father McMahon volunteered for service and was sent overseas.

Father M.J. Lawler was pastor from 1918 to 1921. Father Thomas J. Murray succeeded him as pastor, and it was during his pastorate that the present rectory was built.

Father Robert Maron was pastor of Sacred Heart in Burwell from 1944-1948, and was succeeded by Father Albert Vifquain from 1948-1955.

During Father Vifquain's pastorate the debt was cleared, new heating systems were installed in the church and the rectory and a new organ were also added to the improvements of the church.

Father Carroll Liebig arrived July 1, 1955, and served until 1966. Under his administration the inside of the entire

rectory was repainted and several rooms refurbished and new siding installed. A new floor, storm windows and front steps were necessary additions to the church, together with complete replacements of vestments in all the liturgical colors.

In 1960 the original frame church was sold for lumber.

Father Hubert Spanel was appointed

pastor in 1966, and served until 1972.

During his pastorate Father Spanel supervised the building of a new parish hall. The lot east of the parish center was purchased for parking and former buildings were removed. The rectory basement was improved and a parish library was begun.

After years of Sandhill winters and summers, the need of interior renovation on the church became evident, and under Father Edmund Placek's guidance, the church was renovated in 1979.

The sanctuary altar area was extended 10 feet to the north; the redwood ceiling—a unique feature—was a memorial of the men of the parish.

The altar and sanctuary furniture were made of native Sandhill cedar and were a memorial of the Ladies Sodality of the parish. The art-glass cross behind the altar was a memorial of the parish youth group.

On Oct. 26, 1980, Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara presided at a rededication ceremony.

With each succeeding pastor—Father James Kremer, Father John "Jack" Schlaf, Father Edmund Placek, Father John Cook, Father Michael McDonald, Father Bernard Berger, Father James Heithoff, and present pastor Father Thomas Ryan, and associate pastor Father Mark Maresh—improvements continued to be made not only to the church, but to the faith life of the people of Sacred Heart.

Religious vocations from the parish have included Sister Irmina (Hilda Wunderlich); Sister Stanislaus (Theresa Kruml), Sister Francis Marie (Georgia Jean Kruml), Sister Paul Marie (Cecelia Kruml), and Sister Mary Catherine (Jenny Bykerk).

# Callaway St. Boniface

According to an article in the Sept. 14, 1962, Golden Jubilee issue of the *Register*, in the spring of 1908 Father Henry Muenstermann of Kearney and Theodore Ridder went with a team of horses and a buggy soliciting funds to build a church in Callaway. They were successful in their undertaking and R.E. Brega Sr. donated the lots for the church.

Joe Savidge Sr. and his crew dug the basement and hauled all the building material free. The new church—named St. Boniface—was built as planned in 1908 under the supervision of Charles Hall and Father Muenstermann, who was pastor at Eddyville.

Before this Mass had been offered in the homes of the community in the frame school house and occasionally in the Episcopal church.

In those days, priests came from Dale to take care of the faithful. Father Muenstermann was pastor until 1909. He was followed by Father Patrick Moynihan, who was pastor at Eddyville with missions in Oconto and Callaway.

In the spring of 1914 three Spanish priests from South America—Fathers Fernandez, Ballesteros and Herona—took up residency in Stapleton, and Arnold and Call-

away became missions. They were followed by Father Aloysius Kampmann who served from March 1915 to 1917. He was followed by Father Alphonse Gasser. Mass was held twice a month and the priests would ride on the Union Pacific from Stapleton to Callaway, stay all night sleeping on a cot in the sacristy and return to Stapleton on Sunday morning.

When Father Moynihan became the first pastor at Oconto in 1921, Callaway was attached as a mission to Oconto. Father Moynihan remained until 1950 when Father Paul Wachtrle was appointed. Father Walter Phelan served the parish from 1955 to 1958 when Father John Czajka was appointed. He served until 1967, when Father Michael Murphy became pastor.

In 1968 the parish decided to build a new building to include the church, a kitchen and other facilities. Mass was



St. Boniface Church in Callaway.

offered for the first time Easter Sunday 1969. The altar and matching lectern in the new church were designed and built by Richard Ridder, grandson of one of the founders. The all-brass bell, stamped

1927 and weighing 460 pounds, was removed from the steeple of the little white church and moved to a tall tower made of four-inch pipe with ring decoration, designed and built by Herman Franssen. He also designed and built the

Guevara was appointed to the post and was followed by Father Francis Curran. Father Louis Nollette served St. Boniface in Callaway from 1982-1987, along with St. Patrick at Eddyville and St. Mary at Oconto.

Father Michael McDermott was appointed pastor and served from 1987-1990, followed by Father David Rykwald until 1994, and Father James Hunt until 1996. Father Jim Novakowski served from 1996 to 2001.

In 2001 Father Neal Nollette was appointed pastor. On July 1, 2006, Father Todd Philipsen was named pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Stapleton; and its mission churches of St. Agnes in Arnold and St. Boniface in Callaway.

St. Boniface Church in Callaway celebrated its centennial on June 15, 2008, with Mass concelebrated by Bishop William J. Dendinger.

In 2008 Father Antony Thekkekara, S.D.B., was named pastor.

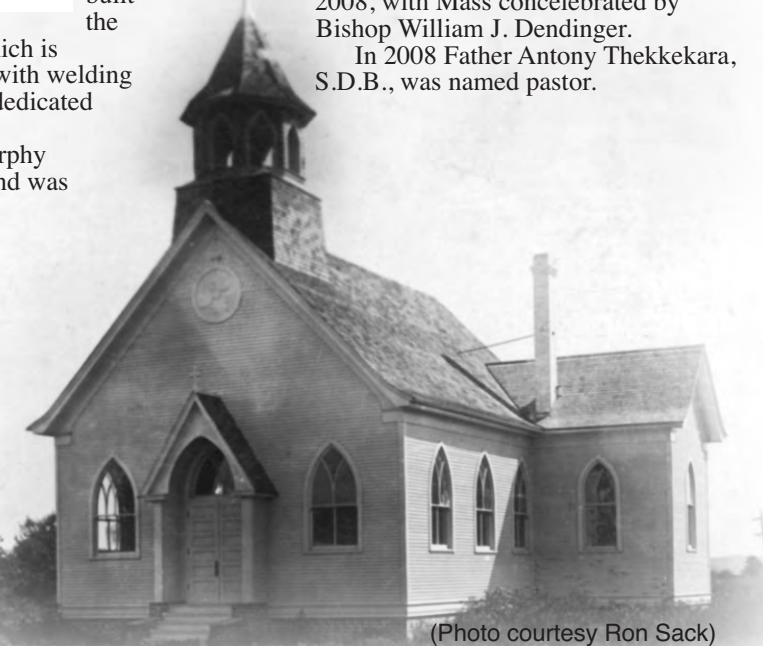


Religious education students at St. Boniface in Callaway show off their prayer rocks, a 2012 project for Child Abuse Prevention Month.

tabernacle, which is copper-toned with welding beads. It was dedicated July 30, 1969.

Father Murphy left in 1972, and was replaced by Father Robert Krystosek.

In 1973 Father James Janovec was appointed pastor at Eddyville with Amherst, Oconto and Callaway as mission churches. Later Father Miguel



(Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



# Chadron St. Patrick

St. Patrick's Parish in Chadron is one of the oldest parishes in the diocese. Priests from the Diocese of Omaha visited the town of Chadron in 1885 and the winter of 1886 and offered Mass in the home of one of the pioneers. Realizing the need for a priest in the area, Bishop James O'Connor of the Diocese of Omaha appointed Father Patrick Brophy as the first resident priest in May 1886. Father Brophy made his home with the O'Hanlin family and offered Mass in the old school on Second Street and later in a public hall.



Father Timothy Stoner

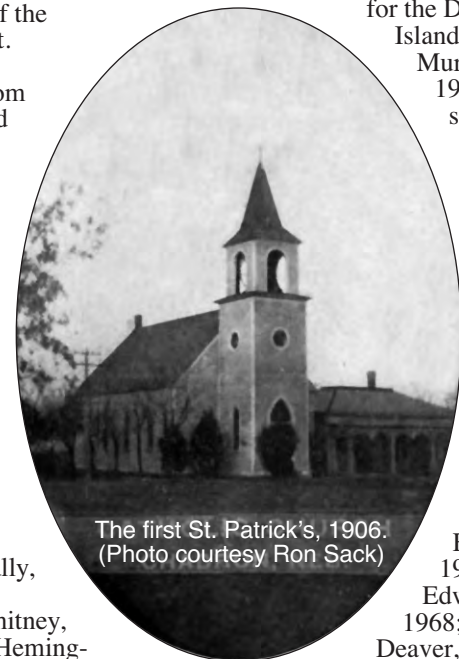
On May 25, 1886, a site was selected for the location of a church. The first Mass, in the yet unfinished wood frame church, was celebrated on Jan. 25, 1887. After the 1887 completion of the church, a rectory was built on a part of the lot belonging to the church. In May 1891, a lot north of the church was purchased and the rectory was moved to the new location, enlarged and renovated.

Father Brophy was transferred to Ponca on Nov. 4, 1897, and at the time of his transfer Chadron had a Catholic population of 30 families.

Father James Aherne was appointed pastor and served until Aug. 1, 1897; and Father Michael Waldron became pastor until his death on Feb. 15, 1899. It was through the efforts of these two priests that the debt of the church was wiped out.

Father W.L. McNamara served from 1899 to July 1904 and it was during his pastorate that the cemetery was moved north of the city to its present location. Father J. Barry was appointed in 1904 and resigned on Jan. 1, 1906, to return to his native Wisconsin.

St. Patrick's Parish extended into Wyoming and South Dakota until 1908, when new parishes were formed. Originally, missions under St. Patrick's included Whitney, Harrison, Montrose, Hemingford, Lawn, Evergreen, Crawford, Fort Robinson, Hay Springs, Mirage



The first St. Patrick's, 1906. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

Flats, Rushville and Gordon.

Father Michael E. Dolan was named pastor on Jan. 1, 1906, and served until his death Nov. 29, 1943. During his pastorate, a school and new church were built. The original church structure, razed by fire Dec. 15, 1927, was replaced by a brick church. Despite the school debt and parish funds lost when banks closed, the new church was built and was dedicated in 1929.

Father Dolan was named a monsignor on April 27, 1939. The school, Assumption Academy, opened in September 1923 with 130 students. Sisters of Mercy of Omaha staffed the school for its entire 48 years until it was closed in 1971.



Bishop John L. Paschang with Chadron parishioners at the dedication.

Monsignor Thomas J. Murray was named pastor in 1943 after Msgr. Dolan's death. Father Raymond Miles, first-native Nebraskan ordained for the Diocese of Grand Island, succeeded Msgr. Murray as pastor in 1948. Father Miles served until August 1957. During his tenure, a new sacristy was built as well Assumption Arena, a parish recreation center. The center was formally dedicated on Sept. 18, 1956.

Subsequent pastors were Father Robert O'Neill, 1957-1959; Father Robert Foster, 1959-1962; Father Edward Flinn, 1962-1968; Father Stephen Deaver, 1968-1973; Father Thomas Dillon, 1973-1975; and Father Ted Nekoliczak,

1975-1983.

St. Patrick's Parish started one of the first parish councils in the diocese in 1969, during Father Deaver's pastorate. After Assumption Academy closed in 1971, an active religious education program was established. In 1973, a fire in the rear of the church almost destroyed the second church. A Newman apostolate began at Chadron State College in 1969.

Father Hubert Spanel was named pastor from 1983 to 1988, and it was during his pastorate that a new church was built. In an effort to consolidate the church, rectory and parish offices into one center, the parish of St.

Patrick's began raising funds for the project. The new church would become more energy efficient and unify the scattered church-related buildings, some of which were blocks apart. The completed church, in conjunction with its 100th anniversary, was rededicated in March 1986. Funds for the new church were secured through the sale of church property, pledges and donations, plus numerous fundraisers by the parishioners.

In July 1986 just months after the dedication of the new church, a hail and windstorm caused considerable damage to the new St. Patrick's Church, Assumption Academy, the rectory and the Newman Center.

About three fourths of the church roof had to be replaced and hail also damaged the wood trim on the church. Assumption Academy building was hit the hardest with 47 windows broken. Floors and ceilings in the Academy received water damage and windows were also broken in the rectory, Newman Center and old St. Patrick's Church.

Father Frank Hoelck served from 1988-1993, and during his tenure a mortgage burning ceremony was held in 1991, that represented the payment of



Father Frank Hoelck, pastor at St. Patrick's Church in Chadron from 1988-1993, and Johnny Baker admire the new organ at St. Patrick's. The organ was blessed at Mass on March 17, 1991. A mortgage burning ceremony followed the Mass.



St. Patrick's in Chadron as it stands today.

approximately \$200,000 on the building debt.

Father Edward Cortney served from 1993 until his retirement in 2008. During his pastorate a new rectory was built. The ground floor of the parish center was remodeled along with the parish offices.

Father Timothy Stoner, current pastor, was appointed in 2008.

Religious serving St. Patrick's Parish include Sister Rita Beason, Sister Stephanie Reynolds, Sister Marguerite Ternus, Sister Marietta Spenner, Sister Jeannette Kneifel, Sister Leonette Wolff, and Sister Margaret Mary Preister.

## Chadron Newman Center



The Newman Club of Chadron State Teachers College was directed by officers and chaplain in this December 1957 photo. Pictured from left to right: Victor Ragaini, president; Father Robert O'Neill, pastor at St. Patrick's and chaplain; Mary Ann Sharp, secretary-treasurer and Charles Bruch, vice president.



The Chadron Newman Center, 2009

The Newman Center in Chadron originally operated out of St.

Patrick's Church until the home at 907 Main was purchased in 1969. Directors since then have included Fathers James Dunning, Pat Powers, Tom Reimers and Joe Whelan. Lay directors have been Hugh and Fran Brandon, Mike and Cheri Coffee, Greg Golka, Matthew Koperski, Stacie Sjomeling and Jill Stack. The current program director is Colby Thomazin.

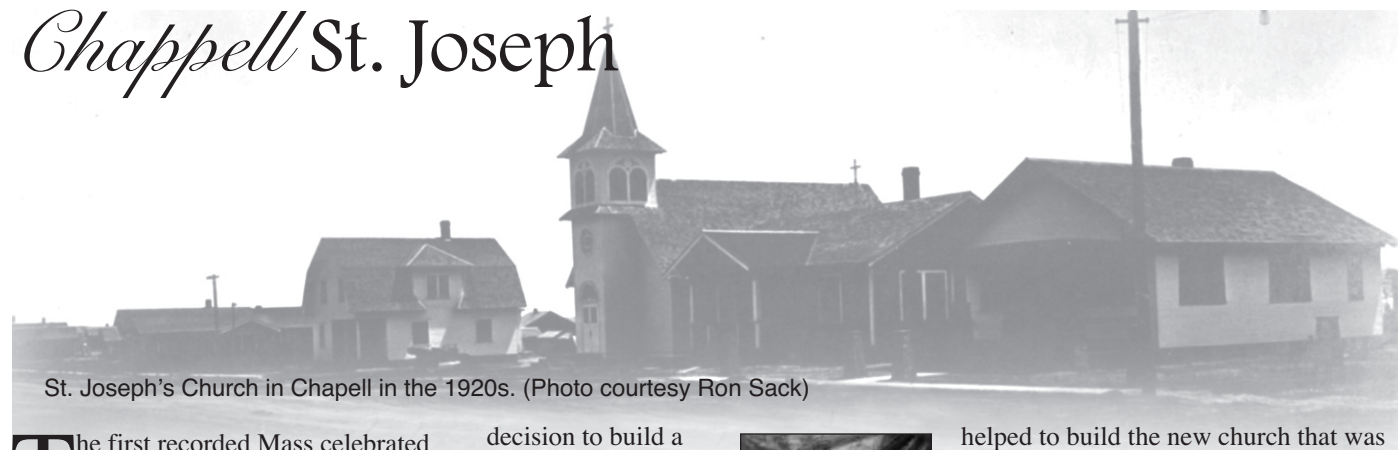
The center offers a place for students to participate in weekend Masses, retreats, group prayer and discussion groups in addition to social and community service activities.

Campus ministry began in the Catholic Church as far back as 1883 when students began what was called "The Melvin Club" at the University of Wisconsin. One of those same students began a similar group at the University of Pennsylvania and named it "The Newman Club" after reading John Henry Cardinal Newman's *The Idea of the University*.

The name for Catholic college ministry on secular campuses is taken from the 19th-century English priest, an Anglican priest who converted to Catholicism.



# Chappell St. Joseph



St. Joseph's Church in Chapell in the 1920s. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

The first recorded Mass celebrated in Chappell was May 2, 1909, with Father James Dobson of Sidney presiding in the Chappell Opera House. Mass was offered in the private residence of R.W. and Anna Wertz until 1916, when Father Anton Link, pastor of Sidney, oversaw the building of a church at Chappell.

The new church attracted more Catholics to the area and in July 1918, Bishop James A. Duffy appointed Father Francis Keller to be the first resident pastor of St. Joseph's Church.

Under Father Keller's direction, 14 regular pews and an altar replaced boxes and boards in the church. The church was enlarged and the rectory was built in 1918.

Father Carl Hollie succeeded Father Keller in 1925. In 1928 Father Henry Keil was appointed to Chappell and it was during his five-year pastorate that a parish hall was built and the interior of the church was decorated.

Priests who served the parish after Father Keil were Fathers Michael McDaid, Raymond Miles, Louis Nally, and Robert Maron.

Monsignor Leo Keating became pastor in 1964. During his tenure, two lots adjoining the rectory were acquired for a parking lot. It was on these lots that the new parish center was later built. Father Stephen Deaver served temporarily in 1964.

Father Carl Ferris came to Chappell in 1967, and was succeeded by Father Walter Phillips in 1970. Father Cletus Semper became pastor in February 1973.

The old church's deterioration, plus financial considerations, resulted in the

decision to build a new structure and on March 4, 1984, Father Semper, pastor, turned the traditional first shovelful of dirt for a new church. Also participating was the oldest member of St. Joseph's Parish, Anna Conrad, representing the pioneers who started and built the first church in 1916, and Lori Ann Littlejohn, four-month old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Littlejohn, representing the generations to come. Snowfalls of between 8-12 inches drifted over any hope of starting the project in early March. Actual construction began on April 16, 1984.

A double celebration took place at St. Joseph's Parish on Dec. 2, 1984, when parishioners observed their 75th anniversary of the founding of their parish and dedication of a new church and parish center. The new parish center included a worship area, sacristy and reconciliation room, together with a parish hall, kitchen, four classrooms, restrooms, and mechanical and storage rooms.

The new building of wood and brick veneer also has an attached bell tower which houses a bell moved from the old church.

The morning following the dedication celebration all were shocked and saddened to learn that Father Semper had died of a heart attack. Father Semper was a fisherman, known in western Nebraska as the "fishing Padre," but more importantly, he was a "fisher of men" inspiring all who knew him. The priest, who

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Father Neal Nollette

helped to build the new church that was the pride of Chappell parishioners, became the first funeral celebrated in that church.

Father Joseph Hargarten, a retired priest from Scottsbluff, came to Chappell following Father Semper's death. In his easy quiet way, he quickly picked up where Father Semper left off, and steered the parish on its way.

Father Loren Pohlmeier was appointed pastor in July 1985, and finished the transition from the old church to the new in a short time. During his pastorate, Father Pohlmeier added steel siding to the rectory, had the old church torn down and the space leveled for a parking lot. He also initiated a parish council, nursing home Mass, children's Mass, adult education, and the RENEW program.

Father Joseph Hannappel became pastor in 1992, and that same year Sacred Heart at Lodgepole was closed and Oshkosh and Lisco became missions of Chappell.

Father Martin Egging was appointed pastor in July 1999 and served the three parishes of Chappell, Oshkosh and Lisco until 2006, when Father Neal Nollette was appointed. Father Michael McDonald assumed the pastorate in July 2012.

Although the parish population has dwindled, parishioners have continued with their annual bazaar. Another activity that has gained enthusiasm in the community is the annual Enchilada Sale, held the weekend of the Super Bowl ... the first year over 1,000 enchiladas were made.

Chappell observed its 100th anniversary with Bishop William J. Dendinger officiating at a Mass of Thanksgiving on Oct. 11, 2009.



# Cozad Christ the King

In the area in and around the town of Cozad, settlers moved west with the Union Pacific Railroad which was being built north of the Platte River. Some Catholics took up residence in Plum Creek now known as Lexington, establishing the first parish in Dawson County in 1880. Others who took up farms 18 miles to the west in the vicinity of Willow Island, received permission in 1886 from the Bishop of Omaha to establish a new parish which they named in honor of St. Patrick. In Gothenburg, five miles further west, a new parish was established in 1901.

While Willow Island never developed into a town, St. Patrick's Church continued to be used as a mission church and was attended from Gothenburg. Five miles to the east of Willow Island, the town of Cozad continued to grow.

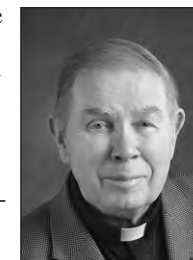
In 1946 the 20 Catholic families in Cozad asked Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler for a parish. After some thought, Bishop Hunkeler decided that the future of the church was in the growing town of Cozad rather than in Willow Island. With his permission, the families of Vinal McVicker, Alcide Gaudreault, Dr. Lloyd Fochtman, Vincent Ogorsolka and Edith O'Brien contributed the initial money to buy three large lots in the northwest part of town.

The first Catholic church in Cozad began as a station of Gothenburg. After it was built Christ the King Church became a mission of Gothenburg.

In the spring of 1946 Father Carl Hollie of Gothenburg offered the first Mass in the Cozad City Hall. Fathers Hollie and Stanley Gorak, pastors of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Gothenburg, visited the Cozad community once or twice a month to celebrate Mass in the Cozad City Hall before the first church was ready for use in May 1951. Shortly before that, Bishop Edward Hunkeler was transferred to Kansas City, Kan., and the church was used for almost a year before it was dedicated on May 6, 1952, by Bishop John L. Paschang. The cost of the church was \$52,000.

Two more lots were bought so that the church property would be on a complete half block. Others who contributed were Mabel McKee, Don Miquez, Alfred and Joseph Budd, LeRoy Gaudreault, Ronald Ritterbush, Charles Nelson, Morris Dillon, Robert McVicker and Charlie Williams.

A former resident of Cozad, Molly (O'Brien) Stears of Omaha furnished the marble altar for the church in memory of her parents Michael and Mary O'Brien, pioneers of the area. Her brother, Ward O'Brien, donated the communion rail



Father Donald O'Brien

while Edith O'Brien donated the tabernacle in memory of her husband George O'Brien. Mabel McKee of Willow Island donated the Stations of the Cross, in memory of the pioneers and parishioners of St. Patrick's church in Willow Island.

From 1952 to 1964 Christ the King Parish was a mission of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Gothenburg, under the care of Father Gorak until 1957. In February 1958 Father Gorak was transferred to Ord and Father Andrew Gonda was appointed to Gothenburg and Cozad. Father Gonda served for a year and a half, from 1958 to 1959, when he was replaced by Father Robert Warner until 1963.

Father Paul Wachtrle was appointed the first resident pastor of the Cozad parish in 1963, when a rectory was completed. A hall west of the church was built in 1969.

In 1973 Father Wachtrle was succeeded by Father Stephen Deaver.

In 1974 during Father Deaver's pastorate, the parish in Gothenburg became a mission of Christ the King Parish as well as Sacred Heart Church in Brady. The following year, Christ the King Church celebrated its 25th anniversary.

During Father Thomas Mullowney's pastorate beginning in 1981, the Sacred Heart Mission in Brady was discontinued and later sold.

A new worship area for Christ the King Church, was constructed and dedicated in 1984 adjacent to the original church. The eight-sided area allows for circular seating of 308.

Besides the worship area, the addition includes a sacristy, a reconciliation room, rest rooms and a mechanical

and electrical room. The cost was about \$330,000. The new addition was dedicated on Nov. 25, 1984, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara officiating. With the help of a Catholic Church Extension Society grant, the original structure was converted to religious education classrooms.



This photo shows the unique octagon-shaped addition built in 1984.

The parish is home to diocesan priest Father Joseph Hannappel who was ordained in 1984. Sally Louise Stanley, also a Christ the King parishioner, professed her vows at Mount Loretta Convent in Dubuque, Iowa, on June 22, 1984.

In 1989, Father Donald O'Brien was named pastor and he continues to hold that position.

Religious who have served Christ the King Parish include Sister Zoe Dieter, Sister Dominic Lawrence, Sister Calixtus McDermott, Sister Lynne Schmidt, Sister Juana O'Brien, and Sister Patricia Eichner.



Father Stanley Gorak poses with first communicants at Christ the King Church in Church.



# Crawford St. John the Baptist

With the threat of Indian wars still hanging over the territory, the town of Crawford was established in 1885. There was security in the fact that the town was under the protection of Fort Robinson, three miles away. In 1886 Father Joseph Ruesing gathered the few Catholics together with the soldiers at the fort and Mass was offered.



Father Bernard Berger

With true missionary spirit Father John Jutes, a Jesuit priest, began his trips through this Northwest territory that same year and offered Mass in various homes in Crawford. Mass was also celebrated in the Vetter, Rascher and Spannen homes, all within six miles of Crawford. Catholics found a vacant hall on the second floor of a shoe shop at Second and Linn Streets and Mass was celebrated in that hall whenever Father Jutes arrived.

Father Patrick Brophy, pastor at Chadron, began making regular trips to Crawford in 1887. That same year, half of an old school building on Fourth Street was purchased and moved to the corner of Fourth and Paddock. This structure was set on two lots purchased from the Porters-Masters estate, and served as the first parish church. It served the Catholic community for 15 years.

With the appointment of Father Becker to Crawford in 1908 and the gradual strengthening of a growing parish, the old church was sold and a new brick structure was built. This church is the one still used today.

Pastors listed in the church records include Father Muenich, 1896-1898; Wenceslaus Kroupa, 1898-1899; William McNamara, 1899-1901; Rehbach, 1901-1904; Lorcker, 1904; H.J. Buerger, 1904-1908; Becker, 1908-1913; John Gleeson, 1913-1915; Paul Moser, 1915-1919; James McMahon, 1919-1928; Paul Wiese, 1928-1932; Albert Albel, 1932-1952; Daniel Devine, 1952-1961; John

Madsen, 1961-1964; Constantine Shumski, 1964-1967; Robert O'Neill, 1967-1971; Joseph Hargarten, 1972-1981; Gerald Carlson, 1981-1988; Neal Nollette, 1988-1993; Robert Chamberlain, 1993-1995; Todd Philipsen, 1995-2000; Loren Pohlmeier, 2000-2008; and present pastor Father Bernard Berger, who was assigned in 2008.

A new rectory was built in 1919, and a two-story parish hall was erected in 1945.

Pastoral ministers Sister Florence Southall and Sister Agnesine Hargarten served the Crawford and Harrison parishes during Father Hargarten's pastorate. Sister Margarita Fields served in 1981, and Sister Loisjean Carlson served in the same capacity from 1981-1986.

The parish has always stressed the need for on-going faith formation. Currently, St. John's provides complete pre-school through 12th grade education in Christian Catholic living. Programs for adults are also offered, for present Catholics as well as those seeking admission into the church or more information about Catholic beliefs and practices.

In the summer of 2009, the upper level of the parish hall was remodeled.

Two smaller classrooms were painted, and flooring in the parish hall dining and kitchen areas were replaced and the kitchen painted. Three elderly spruce trees on the parish grounds were removed in May 2011.

A 15-foot section of trunk of the



St. John the Baptist Church in Crawford, 1915. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

largest tree remained and in 2011 Faye Braeeten of Loveland, Colo., constructed a lifelike representation of St. Francis, one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

Over the years other improvements have been made to the church, rectory, hall and parish grounds. At the parish cemetery, south of town, a new fence was installed in the fall of 2008. Regular maintenance by dedicated parishioners insures the beauty of this long-time sacred spot.

For the past several seasons summer yard sales have been conducted by the parish Support Group. Sale merchandise fills the second story of the parish hall and attracts clients from throughout the area.

Friday Lenten fish fries are held and have drawn crowds of a hundred or more from Crawford and neighboring towns.

The people of St. John the Baptist have reached out to the community in times of crisis and disaster. The parish celebrated their centennial in 1996 and look to the future with faith and hope.



The silver jubilee of Father Albert Albel on June 18, 1942, at St. John the Baptist Church in Crawford.

# Dalton St. Mary

Catholics in the Dalton area traveled to Sidney for their spiritual needs or were cared for by the missionary, riding the trail in quest of souls. Frontier life in the Dalton area could sometimes be intimidating but people survived, made homes, raised their children and kept the faith.

The community of Dalton began to form when the Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad came through Cheyenne County in 1889. The first Catholic church in Dalton, known then as St. Boniface, was begun in 1908 with Father J.S. Dobson of St. Patrick's Church in Sidney as pastor. Priests would travel from Sidney through the years to offer Mass with the people of Dalton.

The first resident pastor was Father Marcian L. Ballou in 1916. The church was incorporated in 1927 and changed its name to St. Mary Church. The old white church was replaced with a brick structure and was dedicated on Oct. 16, 1959. The old church was razed in 1960.

St. Mary's status has interchanged between parish and mission several times over the years. At the present time, St. Mary's is a mission of All Souls Parish in Bridgeport

Other priests serving at Dalton have



St. Mary's in Dalton, 1918. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)



Ground was broken on March 8, 1959, for the new St. Mary's Church in Dalton. Pictured from left are Frank Jennett and J.A. Vogt, trustees at the time of St. Mary's incorporation in 1927; Elmer Graff, mayor of Dalton; Mrs. Edward J. Walsh, president of the Altar Society; and pastor, Father Cletus Semper.

been Fathers C. Keyser, Irenaeus Jarka, Joseph Hinzman, Robert Maron, Francis Tschida, J.P. Fullam, Jacob Bauer, L.G. Lecher, Cletus Semper, Max Valdez, Andrew Gonda, Reginald Urban, Christopher Keith and the present pastor, Father David Rykwald.

Sister Doris Durant served the parish as a pastoral minister during the pastorate of Father Urban.

Under Father Urban's guidance a Eucharistic chapel was created, as well as a reconciliation room. A ramp was built at the entrance of the church as a project of the Eagle Scouts, and Jason Frei built a steeple cupola for the church roof.

The church foyer was enlarged during Father Keith's pastorate. The pews and a large crucifix were retained, the sanctuary was renovated and the interior of the church repainted.

Improvements to the church continue today under Father Rykwald.

Central air conditioning has been in-

stalled and a lift system was constructed to make the basement more accessible.

In 2007 the parish of St. Mary celebrated the addition of a Project Moses monument of the Ten Commandments on one side and the Beatitudes on the other side.



St. Mary's Church, Dalton.

The parish proudly claims the priestly vocation of native son, Father Bryan Ernest, the son of the late Phyllis and Dominic Ernest.

Parishioners today continue their long tradition of generously supporting their parish through time, talent and financial resources.



## Elba St. Joseph

Elba's Catholic church was built at the end of the year 1885 by Father Ladislaus Sebastyanski, a Jesuit who was the pastor of St. Anthony's Church at New Posen (Farwell). When the church was built and almost furnished, Father Sebastyanski, with the permission of Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha, blessed it on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1886.

St. Joseph's Church became a mission of St. Anthony's Church at New Posen, and Mass was offered there on two Sundays each month.

The first church was a wooden structure, 32 feet by 50 feet in size, and large enough to serve for many years. All the furniture was homemade. The entire cost of the building and the necessary furniture was about \$4,000. Father Sebastyanski undertook the building of the first rectory in 1889.

As the parish grew in numbers, a resident pastor became necessary. Father Thaddeus Jakimowicz was appointed the first resident pastor in 1889. Father Joseph Augustyn became the pastor in January 1894, and remained until 1897, when Elba became a mission of New Posen, with Father G. Breitkopf in charge. In January 1898 Father Stanislaus Jarczynski became pastor and held that position until 1903. Father Edward Soliwoski was placed in charge, and remained until October 1907. Father Alexander Cudzinski was pastor for two years, and Father Joseph Kolaska of Loup City was in charge for one year. Father Augustyn returned in 1911, and remained for 10 years, after which he returned to his native Poland.

Father Irenaeus Jarka became pastor, beginning his pastoral duties in September 1921. The parish is indebted to him for the present brick church, erected at a cost of \$13,000. Countless improvements were made to the parish house, and the church grounds were landscaped by Father Jarka.

In 1932 Father Jarka was placed in Choynice to take charge of Mount Carmel Church. Elba became a mission for the third time, with Father Joseph Hinzman of Farwell in charge. Until March 1934 it remained a mission. At that time Father John Czajka, was appointed administrator of the parish.

Father Czajka was transferred from Elba on Aug. 1, 1940, and Elba became a mission of Mount Carmel at Choynice,



St. Joseph's Parish in Elba celebrated its 100th anniversary with an outdoor program in the fall of 1985.

attended by Father Anthony Figlerski.

On Nov. 10, 1945, Father Constantine Shumski was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's at Elba, with St. Patrick's at Scotia, as his mission, and with his residence in Scotia.



(Sketch of early St. Joseph Church courtesy Ron Sack)

Father Shumski served the people of Elba until Aug. 18, 1949, and was succeeded by Father Bernard Cabanski, who also maintained his residence at Scotia. During Father Cabanski's pastorate, the interior of the sanctuary and altars were completely redecorated.

Father Robert Karnish, pastor from

1971 to 1972, celebrated the first Mass facing the parishioners. In 1972, St. Joseph's became a mission of St. Francis in Ashton and Father Ted Nekoliczak, pastor, formed the first parish council and the first church constitution was written. On June 12, 1975, Father Thomas Dillon was appointed pastor of St. Francis Church of Ashton and St. Joseph Church in Elba.

On March 1, 1977, Father James Kremeier became pastor of St. Francis of Ashton with St. Joseph's in Elba as a mission. Due to a bicycle, automobile accident, his stay was cut short and Father Bernard Mischke, a Crosier priest from Minnesota, took over the duties at St. Joseph's until 1978.

Father Andrew Gonda was named pastor of St. Francis in Ashton and St. Joseph's in Elba on June 8, 1978.

He was followed by a series of priests who resided at St. Anthony's in Farwell and served St. Joseph's in Elba as a mission—Father Thomas Ryan, 1982-1991; Father Richard Piontkowski, 1991-1994; Father David Rykwald, 1994-1997, and Father Lawrence Coulter, 1997-2002.

St. Joseph's Church became a mission of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in St. Paul with Father Raymond Kosmicki serving as pastor.

In 2006 St. Joseph's was clustered with Sts. Peter and Paul Church and stopped having Sunday Masses. Father Kosmicki still oversees St. Joseph's Church. Masses are celebrated at Elba for special occasions and events.

St. Joseph's has had one vocation, native son Father Frank Kristi, son of Zigmund and Emilia Krzycki.

Compiled by Ron W. Sack with information from the West Nebraska Register.

## Elm Creek Immaculate Conception

Elm Creek was populated by those who helped to extend both railroad and telegraph lines across the plains of the United States. As the Union Pacific Railroad was built across Nebraska in 1866 and 1867, Father James Ryan of Columbus would go to the end of the rail line and would be taken further west to the workers' camps where he would administer to their spiritual needs about twice a year. Father Patrick Lynch assisted Father Ryan.

In 1871 people began to take homestead and preemption claims and each year had more and more settlers immigrating into the valley.

Later the priests from Kearney had Elm Creek as a mission. They were Fathers Nicholas Stoltz, Albert M. Hork, Eugenius Gear, James Bruen, John Fitzpatrick, Patrick McGovern (later bishop of Cheyenne), Karl Z. Petlach, P.L. Kennedy, Thomas P. Haley, F. McCarthy and J.L. Daly.

Priests from North Platte, Gothenburg or Lexington also offered Mass in Elm Creek.

The Catholics of the Elm Creek community organized in 1878 under the leadership of John I. Ulrich, but it was in the spring of 1879 that construction of the church began. Until the first frame church of Immaculate Conception Parish was dedicated, Mass was celebrated in homes in Elm Creek whenever a traveling priest came on the train.

For several years the early Catholics of Elm Creek had Mass only a few times a year in the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Barron.

J.P. Arendt donated a site for a church on the west side of his property on the Armada Road (Highway 183), south of the first school house. Begun in 1879, the church was dedicated to the Blessed Mother under her title of Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, 1880.

On Sept. 1, 1883, Bridget and John Tyler gave one half acre of land and the church was moved. The church was moved into Elm Creek in 1883 and enlarged in 1889. The present Catholic



Father José Chavez

cemetery land was deeded to the Catholics by Charlie and Cathy Davis on March 25, 1878.

Omaha Bishop Richard Scanell appointed Father Timothy D. Sullivan to be the first resident pastor of Elm Creek with Overton attached as mission. He arrived the first Sunday of October 1907.

A fund was started for a new church and from Nov. 16, 1913, to Jan. 14, 1918, contributions amounted to \$8,163.03. The old church was sold and the new church was dedicated in September 1918. Father Sullivan lived with the Broe and Fitzgerald families while the two-story, nine-room rectory was being built.



Christmas 1978 at Immaculate Conception in Elm Creek.

Father John Kavanagh served the parish from 1922 until his death on April 20, 1943.

Father Peter J. Kenny was appointed pastor until 1950, followed by Father Lawrence Portrey's pastorate from 1950 to 1952. During his tenure, a Catholic Youth Organization group and Cana group for young married couples was organized. He also brought in the Carmelite Sisters from Kearney to help teach religious education.

Father Robert O'Neill was pastor from 1952 to 1957. Father O'Neill purchased a building in Elm Creek for \$4,500 that was to be made into a church hall for a variety of functions in 1954. Father O'Neill was followed by Father Anthony Radziewicz, who served from 1957 to 1958.

Father Vincent Nepl was appointed pastor in 1958 and served until 1974 when he left the diocese, moving to Beaver Dam, Wis. While in Elm Creek, Father Nepl organized a cemetery association and began cooperation with other

Elm Creek churches.

For 10 months in 1974 Father Robert Karnish commuted from Kearney to Elm Creek to serve as pastor. In those 10 months, the interior was redecorated, the altars renovated and the organ was moved.

Elm Creek was made a mission of Lexington under Father James Schmitt in 1975. Father Schmitt moved to Elm Creek and remodeled the basement into classrooms, created the parish council and family religious program. The church building was remodeled to conform to Vatican II directives as well.

Father Hubert Spanel was appointed pastor at Elm Creek and Holy Rosary mission in Overton from 1981 to 1983, and also directed Synod 1982 of which the parish was very active. Father James Warner was appointed in 1983, serving until 1986, when Father Walter Phelan was named pastor. In 1989 Father Andrew Gonda was named pastor.

Father Neal Nollette was named pastor at Elm Creek and Overton in 1993. On July 1, 1994, Father Nollette assumed duties as pastor of St. John Capistran in Amherst, in addition to his responsibilities at Elm Creek and Overton. Father Nollette was appointed administrator of St. Patrick's Church in Eddyville in 1996.

The first church at Eddyville was built in 1888, and moved to the site of the present church in 1893. The present church was built in 1907, dedicated in 1909, and ceased to function as a parish in 1994.

In 2001 Father Mark Mareh was named pastor at Elm Creek, Overton, Amherst and administrator at Eddyville. Father Phelan returned to Elm Creek as parochial administrator in 2006 until Father José Chavez, present pastor, was named pastor in February 2007.

Contributing historian Mrs. Helen E. Palmer.





# Ericson St. Theresa

Ericson is situated on the Cedar River in the Sandhill region of Wheeler country, 25 miles east of Burwell on Highway 91, and about the same distance from Ord.

Mass was offered for the first time in Ericson in the Chris Lawles home on Feb. 12, 1925, with 15 people present. It was at this time that the possibility of a church was explored. Services continued to be held twice a month and early in 1926, Father Martin Lawler, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Ord, decided the people of Ericson needed a church building and an appeal went out to parishes in Ord, Greeley and Spalding.

The church, dedicated to St. Theresa the little Flower, was completely paid for when it was built. The Catholic Church Extension Society donated \$1,000 toward the total cost of \$4,500.

Mass was offered every other Sunday until St. Theresa's became a mission of Burwell in 1936 and Mass began to be offered every week.

Priests who have served St. Theresa's Church from its beginning until 1993 are Father Martin Lawler, Father Robert Schneider, Father Daniel Devine, Father Robert Maron, Father Joseph Muldoon, Father Thomas Murray, Father Robert Maron, returned from 1944-1948; Father Albert Vifquain, Father Carroll Liebig, Father Hubert Spanel, Father James Kremeier, Father John "Jack" Schlaf, Father Edmund Placek, Father Lawrence Fenton, administrator, 1986-1987; Father John Cook, Father Michael McDonald, and Father Bernard Berger.

St. Theresa's became a mission of Spalding. Father Joseph Hannappel was appointed pastor of St. Theresa's Church in 1994, with Father James Murphy, retired priest of the Diocese of Grand Island, assuming the responsibility for weekend liturgies.

Father Donald Buhrman was appointed pastor of St. Theresa's Church in 2009, with Father Murphy continuing in his role of weekend liturgies.

St. Theresa's Church has seen many changes and improvements through

the years.

During Father Spanel's pastorate the interior was painted and paid for by St. Theresa's Altar Society. The church was shingled and painted on the outside. Father Spanel made classrooms and a partial bathroom in the basement and, through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the church was completely carpeted.

Under the direction of Father Placek, a new addition was built in the front of the church and a new entrance was also built with a ramp going into the church. James Veverka Sr. constructed the exterior railing in memory of his son, John Jr., who was killed in World War II.

Following extensive remodeling in 1979-1980 St. Theresa's Church was rededicated by Bishop Lawrence J.

McNamara on Oct. 26, 1980.

In 2005 new carpet was installed upstairs and, in 2008, the basement was painted and a rubberized flooring laid in the kitchen. Because of drainage problems in the basement, new tiles were added to the northwest side of the foundation in 2010 and the entire upstairs was painted.



Father James Murphy



Father James Murphy celebrates Mass at St. Theresa's in Ericson.

Clergy and church photos were added in the church, showing the thankfulness of the faithful of Ericson for the good people, past and present.



St. Theresa's Church, 1928. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)

# Farwell St. Anthony of Padua

Bolstering its claim as the oldest Polish Catholic parish in Nebraska, St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Farwell had its beginning in 1877. It was the first distinctively Polish parish formed in Nebraska, originally centered two miles south of the present town of Farwell. The first settlement was called New Posen, after the ancient province of Posen.

New Posen was a project of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, which was established in Chicago in 1873 to assist Polish immigrants.

Father Anthony Klawiter was the first priest and made his headquarters at the Bohemian church curiously named Warsaw, four miles northeast. Initially, the Burlington Railroad gave 40 acres of land to the Polish parish. It also assigned a nearby 40 acres for the town of New Posen, a town that never developed. A settlement was planned in hopes the railroad would reach it, but as luck would have it, the railroad missed New Posen.

Father Klawiter served from September 1877 until June 1878. On April 28, 1878, the new church at New Posen was dedicated. Successors to Father Klawiter were Father C. Augustynski in 1879 and Father Joseph Barzynski from 1879 to 1880.

Father Phillip Maly, a Jesuit priest, followed and was replaced by Jesuit Father Francis X. Stuer in January 1882. In June, Father Joseph Spierl was named pastor. He died in 1883 and was the first priest to be buried in the New Posen cemetery.

Under Father Ladislaus Sebastyanski, who came in 1884, New Posen made significant progress. During his 12-year stay, he built a rectory and then a school, but the small combination church, school and living quarters was destroyed by fire. A larger church, with two towers and two large bells was built but, before completion, this too was destroyed by fire. Undaunted by their misfortune, Father Sebastyanski and his parishioners were determined to have their church. This time they hauled new lumber from Dannebrog and built

the church—on the same foundation—in 1886, with the first Mass in August 1887.

Father C. Breitkopf was the next pastor followed by Father S. Jaszczynski in August 1901 and Father A. Raczyński until 1924. Father Gebhard Stake-meier attended St. Anthony's from Rockville until December 1925.

At this time a majority of the parish voted to move the church two and one-half miles northeast to Farwell. A new brick parish school, rectory, and convent were begun at the same time. Today the original settlement of New Posen is marked only by the parish cemetery.

Father Joseph Hinzman was named in December 1925, and he was instrumental in the erection of a new parish school, rectory and convent. The new church was dedicated on May 5, 1926. The school was open from September 1926 until 1967.

Father Anthony Radziewicz was named pastor from 1958 to 1973, and Father Bernard Berger was pastor from 1973 to 1977. On Sept. 3, 1975, Sister Maria del Rey Mangan arrived at Sts. Peter and Paul's Parish in St. Paul. She served as pastoral minister, spending part of her time in Farwell.

Father Bernard Mischke, a mission priest of the Crosier Fathers, took over until July 1978. He was followed by Father Milan Kopushar from 1978 to 1982; Father Thomas Ryan 1982 to 1991 and Father Richard Piontkowski, 1991 to October 1994.

Father David Rykwald was named pastor in 1994, and revived many Polish customs.

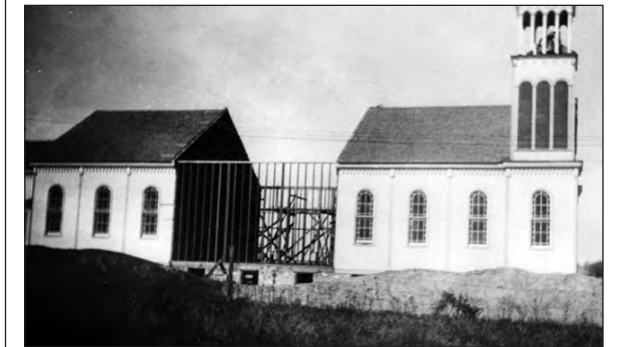
Father Lawrence Coulter came in July 1997 and at that time St. Francis Parish of Ashton was assigned as a mission of St. Anthony's.

The parish celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2002 and that year, St. Anthony's became a mission of Sts. Peter and Paul's Church in St. Paul with Father Raymond Kosmicki serving as pastor.

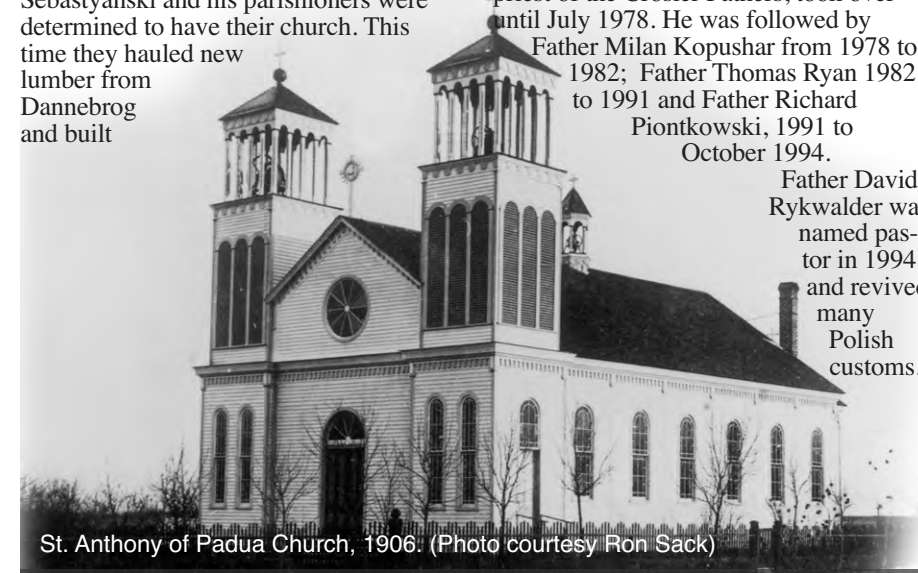
In 2006 St. Anthony's remained a canonical parish with Masses celebrated on confirmations, first Communions, feast days, and on special occasions approved by the pastor.

Vocations from Farwell include three sisters and one priest: Frances Robak, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Robak, who became Sister Clara Marie of the Sisters of St. Joseph; Linda Lukasiewicz, daughter of Larry and Kayleen Lukasiewicz, who became Sister Lucy of the Franciscan Order of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; Ann Lukasiewicz, daughter of Lavern and Eunice Lukasiewicz, who became Sister Joanna of the Franciscan Order of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; and Father Alex Borzych, son of Ed and Rita Borzych, who serves as a Navy chaplain.

Compiled by Ron Sack with information from the Polish Heritage Center in Ashton and the West Nebraska Register.



St. Anthony's Parish contacted a moving company in the 1920s, who agreed to move the church from New Posen to Farwell for \$800, on the condition that the church be cut in half for transporting. All seemed to be going smoothly with only one obstacle—the creek bottom between the old and new church properties. In an attempt to cross the gully, the first section of the church slid off the runners into the creek bed. A rope harness was quickly devised, and with the aid of a steam engine and team of horses the tower section of the church was set right, before there was any permanent structural damage. When the halves were finally set in place upon the new foundation, the building was nearly 90 feet long, leaving a 40 foot gap in the center to be built in as an addition to the church. When the project was complete, the members of the parish had accomplished even more than they had hoped ... an almost completely new church at an enormous savings of time and expense. (Photo courtesy Randy Lukasiewicz)



St. Anthony of Padua Church, 1906. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

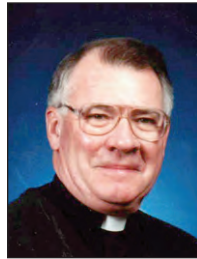


# Gering Christ the King

Up until 1957 parishioners in Gering were either members of St. Agnes or Our Lady of Guadalupe in Scottsbluff before the first church was built. According to the church's history, Father James Whalen, administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe, was appointed by Bishop John L. Paschang to organize and establish the parish of Christ the King in Gering.

The land for the church was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Masek and groundbreaking ceremonies were April 23, 1958. The church was dedicated by Bishop Paschang in November 1958.

When Father Whalen was appointed pastor of St. Agnes in January 1959, Christ the King in Gering was made a mission to St. Agnes Parish. At the time,



Father Gerald Harr

the parish was made up of 40 families.

The church boasted granite altars, made in Minnesota, that were consecrated in 1961 by Bishop Paschang. Also that year, a mortgage-burning ceremony was held.

A rectory was purchased and Father James Kremer was appointed the first resident pastor of Christ the King parish in 1963.

Father Walter Phelan served parishioners from 1966 to 1967.

A religious education building was added by Father Andrew Gonda, who served from 1967 to 1973, and the church was remodeled. A six-room religious education building was constructed east of the church in 1969.

Father Jacob Bauer became pastor for eight years, from 1973 to 1981. In 1974 because of the shortage of priests,

St. Mary's Church in Minatare—built in 1919—became a mission of Gering. While Father Bauer was pastor, the parish again became debt-free in 1976. St. Mary's in Minatare was transferred to Sacred Heart Church in Bayard on July 1, 1980, under the care of Father John "Jack" Schlaf.

Father Stephen Deaver was named pastor at Gering in 1981 until current pastor Father Gerald Harr was named in 1989.

The church celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1983 with a dinner, balloon launch, penny carnival and pictorial church history display.

In July 1993 services were discontinued at St. Mary's in Minatare except for special services and Father Harr was named administrator. The church was sold in 1997.

In 1996 Christ the King Church was rededicated after extensive remodeling.

The remodeling included the altar being cut and formed by the Herstead Monument Co., Scottsbluff, from the granite altar of the original church. The face of the present ambo was also cut and formed from the granite in the face of the origi-



Bishop John L. Paschang, the officers of the Mass and the visiting clergy are shown at the beginning of the dedication of the new Christ the King Church in Gering on Dec. 2, 1958.

nal altar, as well as the granite on the font. The present gathering area was retained as part of the renovated original Christ the King Church.

The church's nave windows are stained glass and the chapel and reconciliation room are faceted glass windows. The south upper window depicts the first person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father, creator of all things. The inner circles represent the traditional symbol of God as the infinity. The six-pointed Creator's star reflects the days of creation. The west upper window above the altar depicts the second person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son. The artist presented a cross that hints of the suffering and death of the Lord but emphasized the glory of His resurrection. The north upper window completes the Blessed Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. The center dove-like form depicts the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. The flame-like section reflects Pentecost as well as born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit. Other windows represent the Beatitudes, the Alpha and Omega and the reconciliation room window represents "Father forgive them."

Arson was found to be the likely cause of a July 1, 2003, fire that caused nearly \$100,000 worth of damage to the church's education center.

Christ the King in Gering celebrated its 50th anniversary with the dedication of its new steeple in February 2008. The steeple completed a \$450,000 expansion project. Bishop William J. Dendinger officiated at a Mass of Thanksgiving.

Religious who have served Christ the King Parish include Sisters Doris Moore, Mary Richardson, Laureana Perez, Frances Schaf, Mary Jo Swift, Inez Thebeau, Claudia Wissman, Patricia Blake, Mary Ann Hain, Jane Hamilton and Victorine Downes.

# Gordon St. Leo

Like many parishes and missions in the diocese, St. Leo's in Gordon was established long before the Diocese of Grand Island, when most or all of the state was under the Diocese of Omaha.

Father Patrick Brophy came to northwest Nebraska at the request of Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha in 1885. Father Brophy made Chadron his headquarters and established a church there. He also started congregations in Box Butte, Sheridan and Sioux Counties. One of these congregations was in Gordon.

Father Brophy was serving St. Leo's missions when it was decided to build the first church. All denominations in the Gordon area joined in raising funds and an auction was held. Some of the people donated livestock for the auction.

*"No one has been more closely identified with Catholic Church history than he (Father Brophy), and his kind heart and progressive spirit has endeared him to the hearts of his people."* An excerpt from an article in the *Hay Springs Leader* on Nov. 27, 1896.

The first St. Leo's Church building was built in 1887 by a small congregation of 30 families. Prior to this time, an occasional missionary priest like Father Brophy and others offered Mass in the school building, other buildings or private homes. Priests from Chadron eventually attended St. Leo's mission on a regular basis until the Jesuit Fathers from Holy Rosary Indian Mission in South Dakota took charge. Under this group, the church saw its first improvements: the walls were finished, pews took the place of benches, an organ was purchased and a new altar installed.

Father John Nepper took charge of the church as a mission from Rushville in 1910. Father Nepper further improved the building, adding side altars, statues, a balcony and decorating the interior. In the 1920s St. Leo's Church became the only mission of Rushville and had Mass every Sunday.

Father Joseph Bean replaced Father Nepper as pastor of Rushville and Gordon in 1937. Father Bean remained until 1943 when he entered the armed services as a chaplain. He was replaced by Father Anthony Egging. During his pastorate, the church was again redecorated, new altars and new statues were added, electricity and a central heating plant were also installed. In late summer 1946 Father Bean returned from the armed forces and assumed his old post as pastor of St. Leo's.

Father Andrew McDonald became



Father James Joseph, S.D.B.

pastor of Rushville and St. Leo's, Gordon in the spring of 1947. Because of the growth at St. Leo's, Father McDonald began a building fund for a new church. He also acquired more property for long range planning of a separate parish.

Father Joseph Hargarten was appointed pastor of Rushville and St. Leo's Mission in Gordon in October 1950. Under Father Hargarten's pastorate, a new St. Leo's Church was begun in 1953 and completed in the spring of 1954.



People gathered outside the church at the dedication Mass of the new St. Leo's Church in Gordon, built in 1954.

The first Mass was offered in the new church on March 21, 1954.

The parish continued as a mission of Rushville until 1965 when Father Hargarten became the first resident pastor of St. Leo's. He lived in a rented house until the new rectory was completed later in 1965.

Father John Cook became the second resident pastor on May 24, 1972. He served until Nov. 11, 1976, when Father Walter Phillips was named pastor at Rushville, with Gordon and St. Columbkille Church in Hay Springs as missions. On March 1, 1977, Father Phillips was appointed pastor of Rushville and Hay Springs and moved to Gordon as pastor at St. Leo's.

Father Phillips served from 1976 to 1982 and it was during this time—in 1978—the sanctuary was renovated. Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara and Father Phillips concelebrated Mass in

November 1979 to mark the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church.

In 1980 St. Elizabeth's in Merriman was made a mission of Gordon.

Father John "Jack" Schlaf served as pastor of St. Leo's from 1982 to 1985. Father Walter Phelan, assisted by Monsignor Thomas Siudowski, was administrator of the parish from January 1986 until July 1986.

Father Bernard Berger was appointed pastor at St. Leo's in July 1986.

The parish celebrated its centennial in 1987.

Father James Heithoff was appointed pastor of St. Leo's and St. Elizabeth's Mission in Merriman, on July 1, 1991.

On July 1, 1995 Father Robert Karnish was appointed pastor of St. Leo's, St. Columbkille in Hay Springs and St. Elizabeth's in Merriman, which was sold in 1995.

Father Karnish was followed by Father Timothy Stoner who served from 2002 until 2008 when Father James Joseph, S.D.B., was named pastor.

St. Leo's Parish celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2012.

Religious who have served St. Leo Parish include Sister Eugracia Nowinski, Sister Leona Augustyn, Sister Rosalima Wilkinson, and Sister Rosemarie Maly.

*Maureen Panzer and Doris McGinley compiled material for St. Leo's Parish history.*



# Gothenburg Our Lady of Good Counsel

Catholic pioneers settling in the vicinity of Gothenburg, endured many hardships and one was having no Catholic church. Journeying by ox team, or on foot to Willow Island, Mass was offered in a school at Vroman in those early days. Within a few years, more Catholics began moving from their farms into town, among them the Burns and O’Kane families. These faithful Catholic pioneers attended Mass in the Burns home.

Parishioners were able to lease the High Episcopal Church and the church was founded on Sept. 4, 1908, with Mass offered there until 1911, when Our Lady of Good Counsel Church was built.

The church, originally known as Mother of Good Counsel, was a mission of Lexington, and was first served by Father Thomas Haley. The church was transferred to a mission of North Platte in 1912, and was served by Fathers Patrick McDaid, John Gleason and John Kavanagh.

Father Kavanagh was appointed the first resident pastor in Gothenburg with missions at Willow Island, Brady, Maxwell and Stapleton in November 1913. Stapleton was made a parish in 1914, leaving the three missions to Gothenburg. Father Kavanagh served from 1913 to March 1921, and it was during his pastorate that a rectory was built. Father Joseph Monaghan succeeded him and served for the next 11 years.

Father Monaghan and trustees Ed Delahunty, James O’Kane and Anton Novak drew up plans to enlarge the church building in 1926. A basement was dug and additional space was built onto the ends of the original building. Electricity and heating were added at this time.

Parishioners gave as much as they could, but economic conditions made paying off the building a struggle. Card parties, bake sales and fall dinners helped to sustain the parish.

Father C.J. Hollie was appointed pastor and served from 1933-1946, and is remembered as a master craftsman, building the wooden altar for the church.

Father Stanley Gorak served as pastor from 1946 to 1958, and it was during his pastorate that Willow Island was torn down and the new Christ the King mission church at Cozad was built.

Father Andrew Gonda served as pastor from 1958 until Father Robert Warner was appointed pastor with the mission of Cozad attached in 1960.

On June 4, 1961 Bishop John L. Paschang broke ground for the Our Lady of Good Counsel Church building and rectory. The site was then changed from

16th and Lake to 20th and J streets.

Construction began on July 5, 1961, and the first Mass was offered in the church on Dec. 24, 1961. The church was blessed and dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang on May 15, 1962.

Father Warner served as pastor until 1966, when Father Harold Kurtenbach was appointed temporary administrator of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Gothenburg and Sacred Heart Church in Brady. Father Carroll Liebig served from 1966 to 1973, and then Father Gonda returned for one year.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church and Sacred Heart Church in Brady became missions of Christ the King Church in Cozad on Sept. 16, 1974, under the pastorate of Father Stephen Deaver.

Father Deaver served until 1981 and was the first pastor to employ pastoral help in ministering to the needs of the people of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Father Thomas Mullaney served from 1981 to 1989, and during his tenure the church building was renovated with the installation of new windows, insulated interior walls, relocation of the tabernacle, removal of the communion rail and a devotional area added.

Father Donald O’Brien was appointed pastor in 1989, and remains the current pastor.

A multi-purpose parish center was completed in 1994, where fall dinners, parish gatherings, CCW and parish council meetings, and religious education functions are held.

Many activities have been added throughout the years—the parish is led by Father O’Brien and the parish council and they provide support for building maintenance, religious education and liturgical celebrations; religious education is provided for all parish children from

preschool to 12th grade. Rest home visits and Communion for shut-ins are provided by Father O’Brien and lay ministers. The altar society is now called the Council of Catholic Women; volunteers mow the lawn, plant and water the flowers and clean the parish center and set up for Sunday and daily Masses. Our Lady of Good Counsel Church also has an active Catholics Encounter Christ (CEC) group.

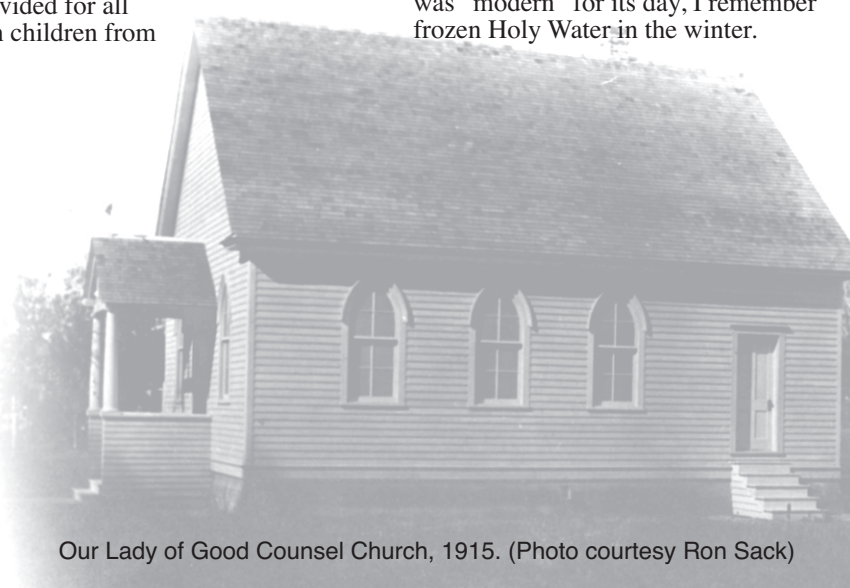
Sisters who have served Our Lady of Good Counsel have been Sister Lynn Schmidt, Sister Dominic Lawrence, Sister Calixtus McDermott, Sister Zoe Dieter, Sister Juana O’Brien, and Sister Patricia Eichner.

Our Lady of Good Counsel celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 28, 2011.

*Compiled by Jan Lipski from information from the West Nebraska Register, The Gothenburg Times, the 7th Anniversary book for Our Lady of Good Counsel, the History of Gothenburg, and memories of parishioners.*

**As remembered by parishioner Joe Lyons ...** Father Joseph Monaghan served the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel from 1921 to 1933 and was a native of Pennsylvania. Father Monaghan had never driven an automobile until coming to Nebraska. He bought a Model T in Grand Island and was bringing his new car home when he was stalled on a railroad crossing at Wood River. Father Monaghan was able to get out of the car, but a train demolished the Model T. He never drove a car after that ... that’s why someone always had to drive him to the missions. There were no paved roads and the trip to Brady (from Maxwell) took 30 to 45 minutes.

**As remembered by parishioner Dan Gauderault ...** Although the building was “modern” for its day, I remember frozen Holy Water in the winter.



Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, 1915. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

# Grand Island Blessed Sacrament

When the rebuilt Blessed Sacrament Church in Grand Island was dedicated in December 1985, the pastor, Father Donald O’Brien, wrote, “This beautiful and unique church symbolized the faith and courage of the parish community.”

And that faith and courage has been challenged during the 38-year existence of the second parish established in Grand Island. The retirement due to poor health of the founding pastor, Monsignor Anthony Egging in 1971; the sudden death of his successor, Father Paul Button on Easter Sunday 1973; the closing of the parish grade school in 1975 and the almost total destruction of the church by fire in 1984 were occasions of great sorrow and loss.

But after each setback, the parish community rebounded with spirit intact and energies rededicated to serving its church.

Blessed Sacrament Parish began in a small Army chapel surrounded by cornfields. The building was purchased from the U.S. government for \$2,300 on Oct. 28, 1947, and was moved from the Grand Island airbase to the parish site.

The official decree, issued by Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler, establishing and erecting Blessed Sacrament Church was made effective March 27, 1949. This document emphasized the building

of a grade school as one of the main reasons for establishing a new parish. Monsignor Egging was appointed the first pastor.

The parish registry numbered 190 families when Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler dedicated the church April 3, 1949.

Bishop John L. Paschang was appointed as the new bishop of the diocese in 1951. Immediately following Bishop Paschang’s appointment, discussion of plans for the building of a school began. A parish grade school opened on Sept. 8,



Father Todd Philipson



Father Joseph K. Joseph, S.D.B.

1952, with an enrollment of 190 children. The following year, a convent for the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Ky., who staffed the school, was added.

As the north-side residential areas expanded, parish membership increased and the parish outgrew its facilities. A new church with a seating capacity of 900 was dedicated in 1962 by Bishop Paschang. A rectory was added in 1965.

Because of poor health, Msgr. Egging retired in the spring of 1971 and Father Paul Button was appointed pastor. Monsignor Egging died in the summer of 1971 and the parish mourned.



Blessed Sacrament’s first church was a small Army chapel purchased from the U.S. government for \$2,300 on Oct. 28, 1947, and moved from the Grand Island airbase to the parish site. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

The parish suffered another unexpected loss when Father Button died suddenly on Easter Sunday 1973.

Father Thomas Mullaney was named pastor in 1973. During his tenure five former classrooms were converted to a parish social center named for Msgr. Egging and the original church was dismantled.

Continued growth of the city resulted in the division of Blessed Sacrament Parish in 1973 and the formation of Resurrection and St. Leo’s Churches.

The closing of the grade school in

May 1975 was an agonizing decision for Bishop John J. Sullivan, and for the parishioners of Blessed Sacrament. In a Dec. 1974 article in the *West Nebraska Register*, Bishop Sullivan wrote, “Having weighed all the factors involved and still wishing that we could keep the whole system open, I reluctantly have had to make the decision to close our elementary schools in Blessed Sacrament and St. Mary’s parishes effective at the conclusion of the current school year ... I want to assure all concerned that it has been made after prolonged and prayerful deliberation....” Parishioners were disappointed, but drew together in their concern and helped plan and teach classes for over 500 students in the newly developed Christian Education program.

Father Donald O’Brien was appointed pastor in 1981. His responsibilities multiplied a thousandfold when a sudden and unexplained fire razed the church Dec. 22, 1984. Father O’Brien told the *West Nebraska Register* that he had heard sirens but thought they were at the Veterans Administration Medical Center several blocks north of the rectory.

When the housekeeper called the priests and told them the church was on fire, Father Reginald Urban, associate pastor, tried to retrieve the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle but as he opened the door to the school, the gust of wind caused by the fire was so great that he could not venture further.

Attempting to cope with the results of the fire that nearly gutted their church parishioners rallied together.

Of immediate concern was finding an alternate place to have Christmas Masses. The parish council decided to hold services at Central Catholic High School and parishioners came together



Msgr. Anthony Egging



to set up the altar and decorate.

For the next 10 months Masses were celebrated in the Central Catholic High School gymnasium.

Rebuilding of the church allowed the designers to fulfill Vatican II liturgical directives.

The “homecoming” was an emotional experience for parishioners when they celebrated their first Mass in the new church on Oct. 19, 1985.

Father Stephen Deaver was named pastor in 1986 and during his pastorate parish services and building renovations were made to accommodate the growth of the parish. The former convent, now called Button Building, was modernized in 1987 to provide space for parish meeting and education programs.

Father Donald Larmore was named pastor in 1994. Blessed Sacrament had become the second largest parish in Grand Island and the growth of the parish necessitated the construction of a new parish center.

Groundbreaking for the 14,800-square-foot Jubilee Center took place in September 1998 and construction began in November of that year.

The project was completed in time for the 50th anniversary of the parish, and Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara and nearly 25 diocesan priests helped celebrate an afternoon Mass on Sept. 19, 1999.

The new facility included a large reception area that could be made into three separate rooms, several new offices, a kitchen, family gathering area, restrooms and shower facilities, and an open-air courtyard. Featured in the courtyard is a wall that reads, “The past was given to us. The future is ours to give.” Personalized bricks with names of donors and other writing make up the wall. A commissioned bronze sculpture, by parishioner Brad Czaplowski, of the Blessed Virgin Mary sits on one side of the landscaped courtyard.

Construction on the church’s east side was completed in November 2010, converting the former Egging Hall into classrooms for the religious education program. The hall was renamed the Egging Educational Center.

A parish nurse, Sharon Osentowski, was hired by Father Larmore and the parish council in 1999, providing parishioners with a minister who served the whole person—body, mind and spirit. Osentowski retired in 2010 as parish nurse. Mary Miller is currently serving in that capacity.

The pastor and parish council began a preschool at Blessed Sacrament in August 2000, using some of the remaining original classrooms from the grade school.

Father Francis Curran was appointed pastor in 2002. During his tenure the school was accredited by the National

Association for the Education of Young Children in 2003.

The school’s current teachers are Chris Thede, Ann Brondel, Bridget Anspauch, Andrea Hill, and Barb Seier, who also serves as director; Kris Carlson is the paraeducator for the 3-year-olds and extended care program. The preschool capacity is 68 and offers Jesus Time curriculum appropriate for each age level as well as activities with religious staff, children’s music ministry and a library.

A capital campaign for renovation of the church was launched in October 2006. Cost of the project was \$1.1 million including new pews and sound system with video capabilities. Mass was held in the Jubilee Center during the renovation. The renovation included purchasing a new crucifix from Italy, reshaping the sanctuary and putting more emphasis on the baptismal font. Three solariums were also added as well as the purchase of a statue of the Holy Family, also from Italy.

Especially significant were the changes to the altar, built by parishioner Greg Remppe.

Other changes included a new sacristy in the southwest corner while the smaller sacristy was turned into a parish food pantry.

A three-in-one celebration was held on June 22, 2008, that included Father Curran’s 65th birthday and retirement and the rededication of Blessed Sacrament’s renovation. Bishop William J. Dendinger celebrated the Mass.

In July 2008 Father Todd Philipsen was named pastor and Father Mark Maresh, associate pastor. Father Joseph K. Joseph, S.D.B., replaced Father Maresh as associate pastor in 2011.

Other priests serving as associate pastors include Fathers Robert Foster, James Naughtin, Thomas Dowd, Carl Ferris, Charles Scott, James O’Kane, John Kremeier, Paul Curro, Richard Maciejewski, Bernard Nelson, Rodney Pruss, Thomas Ryan, James Heithoff, Louis Nollette, Reginald Urban, Loren Pohlmeier, Lawrence Fenton, Edward Kunzman, Ernest Murillo,

Joseph Whalen, Thomas Reimers, Martin Egging, and Frank Hoelck.

Deacon Charles Cantrell is also presently serving Blessed Sacrament Parish.

Religious who have served Blessed Sacrament as teachers in the school or pastoral ministers include Sisters Matthias Adams, Barbara Arthaud, Josetta Barnard, Collette Marie Bauer, Rose Angela Burke, Catherine Dominic Burns, Regina Marie Bruner, Loyola Campbell, Margaret Rita Carr, Rosemary Carraher, Columba Casey, Mary Gabriel Clark, Veronica Colohan, Rosellen Davey, Joan Dunning, Ignatia Filbin, Theresa Fitzpatrick, Jean Goering, Rita Goodall, Elizabeth Glynn, Jean Clare Heffner, Mary Louise Hellman, Rose Catherine Jones, Mary Hugh Kankovsky, Annunciata Keenan, Paulette Kelly, Marceline Lynch, Bertrana McAleer, Amata McCleary, Mary Victor MacDonald, Rosalita McMahan, Rosemarie Maly, Maria del Rey Mangan, Caroline Miller, Marlene Mohatt, Trinette Nolan, Rebecca O’Brien, Catherine Roby, Margaret Philip Shaw, Helen Schmeitz, Frederick Marie Simpson, Ollie Thibodeau, Rosalie Van Ackerman, Monica Woods, Leonette Hoelsing, Bridget Kelliher, and Madonna Schmitt; Marilyn Uhing, Joseph Gabriella Halblieb. Nadine Heimann, and present pastoral minister Benedictine Sister Clarice Korger.



## Grand Island Resurrection

It was a shaky start, full of growing pains, doubts and a lot of blisters. But through it all, Resurrection parishioners of Grand Island were also full of a real sense of unity as they formed a parish community.

Bishop John J. Sullivan announced the formation of Resurrection Parish for the northwest area of Grand Island on June 7, 1973, forming two new parishes (the other St. Leo’s) to serve the Grand Island Catholic community.

The first Mass was celebrated on June 23, 1973, in the Central Catholic High School cafeteria by pastor Father John “Jack” Schlaf.

The other two members of the pastoral team were Sisters Vera Meis and Catherine Meyer.

The actual building of the church started with the purchase of 12 acres of land on Cannon Road in August 1973.

On Feb. 17, 1974, the building committee presented the proposed floor plans and the finance committee began the building fund pledge drive. The fund was given a generous boost with a grant of \$20,000 from the Catholic Church Extension Society. By Christmas of 1974 parishioners were able to spend a cold Christmas Eve in the basement of the half-completed church. Roaring heaters provided warmth and parishioners felt the accomplishment of their first milestone.

A second milestone was reached when Father Schlaf moved into the new rectory just east of the church in February 1975.

On Easter Sunday 1975 the main floor of the church was swept and parishioners moved aside saw horses and building materials to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord.

The parish moved into the church on Aug. 10, 1975. By this time Sister Rosemary Carraher had arrived to replace Sister Meyer.

Bishop Sullivan dedicated Resurrection Church on Nov. 1, 1975. Retired Bishop John L. Paschang was a special guest, as were officers of the



Father Michael McDermott

Catholic Church Extension Society from Chicago.

The completed church, built as a multi-purpose building with movable pews and special Blessed Sacrament Chapel, included three offices and a basement for religious education classes as well as a kitchen. The building comprised 5,400 square feet and cost nearly \$175,000.

Father Harold Kurtenbach succeeded Father Schlaf in 1977 as the second pastor of Resurrection Parish. Sister Meis left Resurrection in 1977 and Sister Celine Taskan joined the pastoral team of Father Kurtenbach and Sister Carraher.



Members of the Mission Hope 2010 team worked at the Marian Home for the Elderly, run by Carmelite Sisters in St. Lucia. Pictured with some of the sisters are back row from left: Leonard Kaslon, Brandon Quick, Kristi Miller, Father Mike McDermott, Dr. Steve Higgins, Pat Knust, Bill Partington, Alexa Hopping, Adam Dziacky, Sara Miller, Candace Edwards, Jim Kitten. Middle row: Stephanie Quick, Sister Lucretia, Dani Jo Dobbins, Sister Ann Terese, Kathy Ripp, Justine Mock and Sister Annie Reneau. Front row: Dorene Spies, Sister Mary Phillipe, Sister Theresa Dominic, Renee Miller and Lea Schneider.

Sister Carraher moved in June 1982, and Sister Celine Taskan moved in 1983.

In 1983 the new pastoral team assigned to Resurrection became Father Robert Wiest, Sister Theresa White and Sister Carole Wakefield.

Father Thomas Dillon was appointed pastor in 1985.

Father Richard L. Pionkowski was appointed administrator of Resurrection and served from 1990 until 1991, when Father James Schmitt was appointed pastor.

Fundraising for a new church addition began in 1994 when “Resurrection 2000” was launched. Church members were asked to give an extra \$20 a month toward the project. By the year 2000 \$250,000 had been collected.

Groundbreaking began in April 2000,

and members were able to use the new section by Christmas of that year.

The entire addition was finished by Ash Wednesday 2001. The steel structure included a gathering area for the church, new offices, a multi-purpose room and parlor and eight classrooms. Expansion was mostly north of the church.

Resurrection’s worship space also had a major facelift. Pews surrounded the altar and new lighting and carpeting were installed.

Because of volunteer labor, the addition for the Grand Island church that was supposed to originally cost \$1.6 million, ending up costing \$775,000. Every job inside the existing church was done entirely by volunteers.

Father Michael McDermott, present pastor was appointed in 2003.

Resurrection Church joined the International Stewardship Council in 2007.

Youth from Resurrection made trips in 2008, 2010, and 2011 for Young Neighbors in Action, a weeklong service experience designed to help youth learn about social justice and to serve those in need.

Resurrection Church began mission trips to St. Lucia in 2008 and again in 2010 and 2011. As part of Resurrection’s outreach, this has become an annual trip in support of the Corpus Christi Carmelite Order and other areas of St. Lucia.

Resurrection Church announced plans for a capital fund drive in January 2012 and a campaign kickoff was held in the parish hall. The first effort, entitled “For All Generations” campaign, targeted raising the funds required to expand and enhance parish facilities, including building a new worship and welcoming area. A minimum goal of \$1.2 million and a challenge or groundbreaking goal of \$2.5 million were set for the initial phase of the four phase master plan.



Easter 1975.



# Grand Island St. Leo

Nine months after becoming bishop of Grand Island, Bishop John J. Sullivan announced the formation of the new Grand Island Parish, St. Leo's, on June 7, 1973. The following weekend, members of the parish community gathered at Barr Junior High School auditorium to celebrate Mass for the first time.

Located in southwest Grand Island, St. Leo's was named after St. Leo the Great, the patron of courage and fortitude. The name, chosen by Bishop Sullivan, was given in honor of Monsignor Leo Keating who served in the Grand Island diocese for 30 years.

Monsignor Keating was born Feb. 25, 1907, at O'Connor and was ordained to the priesthood June 6, 1936, by Bishop Stanislaus Bona. Monsignor Keating became well-known in Grand Island while he was pastor at St. Mary's Cathedral. In May 1951 he was named a domestic prelate. He resigned in May 1973 and died July 31, that same year. Father James O'Kane was appointed pastor by Bishop Sullivan on May 25, 1973.

Sisters Mary Jean Assell and Esther Fehringer joined the pastoral team in August 1973.

Six acres of land were purchased at Blaine and Commerce Avenue for the church. At this time, new parish boundaries were drawn in Grand Island between the four parishes. Bishop Sullivan divided Grand Island's two parishes, St. Mary's Cathedral and Blessed Sacrament, to form the parish boundaries for St. Leo's as well as Resurrection Parish in 1973.

St. Leo's Parish encompassed the southwest section of Grand Island and



Father Charles Torpey

included about 350 families. On March 11, 1974, a building contract was signed and work began on the new church. The cornerstone was laid Dec. 31, 1974, but it was on Nov. 10, 1974, the Feast of St. Leo, that Mass was offered for the first time in the new church. The dedication ceremony with Bishop Sullivan was on April 6, 1975. Resurrection Parish in the northwest part of Grand Island was also created at this time. Each of these new parishes was to have one priest and two sisters who would have pastoral duties as



In 1993, St. Leo's Parish broke ground for a multi-purpose addition to the parish center on Oct. 3, 1993. Standing behind the shovels are from left: Parish Council President Dennis Harb, Father Robert Rooney, Michael Eden, and Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara.

well as working with religious education at all levels in the parish.

In 1980 St. Leo's conducted a major finance drive to build a parish hall and enlarge the church proper to accommodate the growing membership. The 9,300 square foot addition was completed in November 1981 at a cost of \$511,000. It was dedicated on Nov. 15, 1981.

Father Donald Larmore followed Father O'Kane as St. Leo's second pastor. Father Larmore returned to mission work in Africa in 1985 and Father Bernard Nelson was named pastor. Due to Father Nelson's ill health, Father Francis Curran was named temporary administrator of the parish in 1988.

Fathers Robert Rooney and Harry Kurtenbach were appointed co-pastors in July 1988.

Father Nelson died on Oct. 5, 1989.

Father Kurtenbach left St. Leo's in July 1989 while Father Rooney was pastor until 1996.

In 1994 a multi-purpose addition with offices, classroom space, kitchen and a parish hall was built. Father Rooney was followed by Father John "Jack" Rademacher who served from 1996 to 2009.

Since its inception, the parish had grown to more than 700 families. In 2004, the church was remodeled. New carpeting, marble flooring, and new lighting was installed along with moving and removing walls that created 50 additional seats.

The renovation also included painting, remodeling restrooms, several new offices and expanding the pastor's office. The church also installed a new sound system and handicapped accessibility equipment.

Father Charles Torpey was named pastor in 2009.

Religious who served St. Leo's Parish include Sisters Mary Jean Assell, Esther Fehringer, Theresa McGahan, Kathleen McCarthy, Viginia Pear, Brideen Fohey, Celine Taskan, Leona Augustyn, and present pastoral minister Sister Mary Margaret McGowan, S.F.C.C.

# Greeley Sacred Heart

The first notations in the parish ledgers are dated Dec. 16, 1893, but the history of the church in the Greeley area began with the immigration of Irish Catholic settlers in 1877.

In 1879 Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha, Bishop John Ireland of Saint Paul, Minn., and Bishop John Spalding of Peoria, Ill., together with other clergy and laymen, founded the Irish Catholic Colonization Society. Disturbed by reports that Catholic immigrants in eastern cities were suffering from social and economic hardships, the organization bought land in rural areas to the west and south and helped resettle Irish Catholics from the urban slums. The funds raised by the efforts of the organization was enough to fund two colonies, one near Adair, Minn., and the other in Greeley.

In late 1879 the Irish Catholic Colonization paid the Burlington and Missouri Railroad \$34,812 for 25,303.55 acres of land in Greeley County; \$1,283.57 for a church; \$149.18 for an immigrant house, \$477.81 for a priest's residence and \$75 for freight, and the colony was open for settlement.

In selecting candidates for the colonization effort, the bishops ruled that a prospective colonizer must have in his possession at least \$300 to enable him to exist until the first crops could be harvested. Colony lands had been taken up by 1882, and by 1891 with all stock redeemed, the Irish Catholic Colonization Society ceased to exist, and the village of Greeley began to grow.

Although the first Mass in the vicinity of Greeley was offered at the sod house of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Hynes in 1877, the first Mass offered in Greeley was celebrated by Father James Hayes of O'Connor in 1888 at the Gaffney Hall. Father Hayes attended Greeley as a mission of O'Connor until 1893. At that time, Father Peter Judge, the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Omaha was appointed as assistant to Father Hayes. Father Judge saw the possibilities of Greeley as a parish and petitioned Bishop Scannell in Omaha. Bishop Scannell gave his approval to the new venture, and the parish of Sacred Heart was established in the late fall of 1893.

Father Judge assumed his duties as pastor of Greeley in mid-December 1893 and continued for six weeks until illness forced him to leave.

Father Peter McLaughlin took the reins of the fledgling parish of Sacred Heart in March 1894. A new frame church was erected as well as a parochial residence. The first rectory is now located at the Larry O'Connor farm, but the first church no longer exists.

Father Patrick Flanagan was appointed pastor in 1903 and labored for 12 years to build the faith community of Greeley. Under his pastorate, the current church was built and dedicated on May 24, 1905 by Bishop James Keane of Cheyenne, Wyo.

Father Flanagan's love of beauty and attention to detail are still evident in the beauty of the church. Built of brick and stone in beautifully proportioned Romanesque design, it has kept its dignity throughout the years. The total cost of the church was \$32,000. A man of artistic appreciation, Father Flanagan improved the church property and grounds. Due to advanced age and ill health Father Flanagan resigned in 1915.

Father Michael Aloysius Feeney arrived in November 1915 and served for 36 years until his death on Dec. 3, 1951.

Under Father Feeney's direction religion classes on the high school level were organized and held after school. Greeley at that time had no Catholic school and Bishop Scannell questioned its necessity since the public school was staffed and supervised by Catholic teachers.

Greeley County was transferred to the Diocese of Grand Island in 1916. Bishop James Duffy decided that a Catholic school in Greeley would enrich the well being of the Catholics and secure the permanency of the parish. Plans were begun to build a three-story building to house a complete school through the 12th grade, and convent space for the sisters who would

teach there. The school, which cost approximately \$100,000, was opened in 1924 with the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Ky., in charge.

In the drought and depression of the 1930s, and into the '40s, Father Feeney and the parish struggled to meet expenses and pay off the debt. The sisters worked for very little and many times Father Feeney took no salary.

Father Feeney became seriously ill in the fall of 1948, and two young assistant priests, Father James McSweeney and Father Jacob Bauer carried much of the burden of running the parish. Father Bauer became temporary administrator of Sacred Heart Parish during the last year of Father Feeney's pastorate and remained until Easter of 1952 when Father Lawrence Portrey was appointed pastor.

During Father Portrey's tenure, 1952-1955, many improvements were made to the parish property. He started the Legion of Mary, remodeled the church basement and built a brick grotto, dedicated to the Little Flower, as a request of Father Feeney's will.

Father Albert Vifquain was appointed to the parish in 1955 and served until his death in an automobile accident on May 5, 1957. In addition to the usual parish tasks, he worked to have every home in the parish dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with individual enthronement ceremonies.

Father John Cook served as temporary administrator, until Father Vincent Pelster, the sixth pastor of Sacred Heart, was assigned.

Father Pelster began work on a gym for the school that was completed during Father Andrew Gonda's tenure in 1960. Father Gonda, appointed in January 1960, was also instrumental in building the running track adjacent to school property.

Father James Kremeier led Sacred Heart Parish during the years after Vatican II, 1967-1972, when Latin gave way to English in the Mass, altars were turned around, and movements such as Cursillo, Marriage Encounter and charismatic renewal became common experiences.

In 2004 Sacred Heart Church became a mission of St. Michael's Church in Spalding.

After prayerful consideration, Sacred Heart parishioners voted to merge grades 9-12 with Greeley Public School in the fall of 1970. At that time the elementary grades were retained and sisters continued on the staff until the spring of 1989. The grade school was closed in May 2005.

Other priests serving Sacred Heart Church include Fathers Walter Phelan, 1972-1981; James Schmitt, 1981-1982; Robert Chamberlain, 1982-1987; Louis Nollette, 1987-1992; Loren Pohlmeier, 1992-1997; Gerald Carlson, 1997-2002; Larry Coulter, 2002-2004; Joseph Hannappel, 2004-2009. Father Sidney Bruggeman, served the parish as associate pastor from 2009 to 2011. Current pastor is Father Donald Buhrman.

Sister Roberta Anne Semper served the parish from 2004 until her death in 2010. Sister Patricia Eichner, C.S.J., currently serves as pastoral minister.

Vocations from Sacred Heart in Greeley include Msgr. Andrew McDonald, Fathers Robert Warner, James Whalen, Raymond Dooley, Bernard McQuillan, John Cook, Ted Nekoliczak, Charles Scott, Gerald Harr, Basil Doyle, Robert Rooney, Francis Curran, James Warner and Joseph Whalen. Sisters from Greeley and O'Connor include Sisters Mary Beatrice Larkin, Mary Inez Brannen, Mary Bernadine Connors, Lawrence Jean (Ellen) Donahue, Mary Luke (Helen) Connors, Mary Viola (Ellen) McCarthy, Francis Xavier (Lorraine) Theil, Mary Reparata (Harriet) Harrahill, Mary Austina (Marguerite) Harrahill, Esther Marie Moore, Mercedes (Helen) Duffin, Consilia (Joanna) Bohan, Robertina (Margaret) Fitzpatrick, Theresa Fitzpatrick, Brendan O'Malley, M. Marceline McDowell, Rose Rita Murray, Adelaide (Margaret) Donovan, Rosellen Davey, Columba (Ellen) Casey, Maria (Agnes) Fitzpatrick, Mary Agnes (Pauline) Fitzpatrick, Mary Clarence (Ethel) Sanders, Edith Bohan, Thomas Patrick (Eulalia) Dooley, Pauletta Kelly, Regina McCarthy, Clarita Costello, Mary Clare Costello, Mary Patricius (Eileen) Maloney, Eileen (Florence) Gibbons, Barbara (Johanna) Tracy, Aloysius (Mary) Keating, Mary Daniel (Ellen) Kavanaugh, Mary Marcella (Theresa) Kavanaugh, Mary Anthony (Margaret) Burns, and Mary Charlotte (Josephine) Harrahill.

Elizabeth Yax King contributed to this story.



# Harrison Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mass at Harrison is recorded as having been offered as early as 1885, although the railroad did not reach Harrison until 1886. Priests were few in the early days and had to come from great distances, and transportation was difficult. Mass was offered in the homes of the Catholic families or in vacant buildings.

Articles in the 1886 *Sioux City Journal* often mentioned the M.J. Blewett home as the place for Catholic services. Travel by team and buggy or wagon was very difficult at times, and the day of the week on which Mass was held was determined by the availability of a priest.

The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary was begun in Harrison in 1906 and completed in 1907. It was located one block east of Main Street. The two lots for the church had been deeded originally to Bishop Richard Scannell by Mr. and Mrs. Grant Guthrie and the Pioneer Townsite Company in 1902. The church was built under the supervision of Father Becker and cost approximately \$1,600. From the time that the church was built until 1940, Harrison was served as a mission parish by priests from Crawford.

The Church of the Nativity of Harrison ceased to be a mission parish in 1940. On Aug. 1 of that year, Father John C. Madsen was appointed pastor and established the Church of the Nativity with a resident pastor, and Immaculate Conception Church at Montrose named as a mission parish. Later that same year, the church was moved to its present site.

Three lots were purchased from Minnie Scott in 1940, and this is where the church and rectory are now situated. Another lot just south of this was purchased from Leonard Schaefer in 1943. Three more lots were purchased from Avis Tanner Tipton in 1943 and were sold in 1969. All of these lots were acquired through the generosity of Paul Wunder in memory of his sister, Maggie.

A full basement, vestibule, sacristy and sanctuary were added to the main part of the church when it reached its new location. In the summer and fall of 1941, a rectory was built south of the church. The exterior of these buildings was made of log siding, with some of the material brought from the Black Hills. During the time when the church and rectory were under construction, Mass was held in the courthouse basement. The pastor lived in a private home in the western part of town.

The entire debt of the church was paid off by the fall of 1944, due to the ardent support of the parishioners, the help of friends of Father Madsen and a generous donation of \$5,000 by the Slatery family. The pews in the church were donated by Octavious Harris in 1946. Stained glass windows were placed in the church and were provided by families in memory of loved ones who were deceased. The first one was in memory of Octavious and Caroline Harris. Others were in memory of the Slatery family, Dan and Barbara Jordan, Nickolas and Catherine Schaefer and the Wunder family. The remaining windows were paid for by the parish. In 1947 the organ was purchased.

Much of the landscaping was done by Father Madsen with the help of high school students and others. Some of the trees were brought from the Black Hills.

The church again became a mission of St. John the Baptist Parish in 1973 when Father Joseph Hargarten was named pastor. At this time, Immaculate Conception Church at Montrose was closed.



Father Edward Flinn with first communicants.

Sister Florence Southall and Sister Agnesine Hargarten moved into the rectory and included Harrison in their pastoral ministry along Highway 20. Father Hargarten and the sisters retired in July 1981. Father Gerald Carlson became the pastor and, in 1983, extensive remodeling was done.

The old vestibule was removed and a much larger addition replaced it. A new entrance was made to the choir loft, a stairway to the basement from the vestibule was added and the entire church was recarpeted. A new altar and presider's chair were installed about 1992.

Sister Loisjean Carlson was the religious education coordinator from 1981 to 1986.

Priests who have served Church of the Nativity Parish have been Fathers Joseph Ruesing, John Jutes, Patrick Brophy, John Broz, Rehbach, Muenich, Anthony Duda, Wenceslaus Kroupa, William McNamara, J.F. Higgins, Rhancekl, Clemens Strattmann, Lorcker, H.J. Buerger, John Pieper, Becker, John Gleeson, Joseph Macourek, Paul Moser, Robert Barry, Daniel Sobolewski, A. Patterson, James McMahon, William Sullivan, Aloysius Raczynski, Paul Wiese, G. Esser, Edmund Butz, M.L. Daly, Albert Albel, John Madsen, Joseph Szynal, Nicholas Nowicki, Edward Flinn, Robert O'Neill, John Dennett, Joseph Hargarten, Gerald Carlson, Neal Nollette, Robert Chamberlain, Todd Philipsen, and Loren Pohlmeier.

The Church of the Nativity and St. John the Baptist Church in Crawford welcomed Father Bernard Berger as their pastor in 2008.



Parishioners at Church of the Nativity Church in Harrison celebrated the 100th anniversary of the parish and the 25th anniversary of the ordination of the pastor, Father Loren Pohlmeier, on May 30, 2007. Bishop William J. Dendinger attended the celebration.

# Hay Springs St. Columbkille

As in most rural communities, Mass was first offered in homes in the Hay Springs area. The first recorded Mass was celebrated in 1884 with a church completed in either 1887 or 1888. The congregation, at this time, was made up of Irish settlers.

An organizational meeting was held in November 1886 and work on the church was started soon after that. The parish was named St. Columbkille in honor of one of Ireland's earliest saints. Father Joseph Ruesing, later a monsignor, offered the first Mass in the new church.

Father Patrick Brophy who was stationed at Chadron, was the priest in charge of the congregation in 1886. His territory included the towns of Gordon, Chadron, Harrison, and Hay Springs.

After Father Brophy, a succession of visiting priests from Holy Rosary Indian Mission of Pine Ridge, S.D., came to Hay Springs.

During the early years, the need for a cemetery prompted the purchase of land southwest of Hay Springs in 1889. The cemetery's name was changed from St. Columbkille's to St. Mary's in 1921. In 1898 the cemetery was enclosed with a fence. The land was turned over to the city of Hay Springs in 1974.

Father Michael Waldron—resident priest at Chadron—was pastor until 1899 and Father W.W. Kroupa, according to the *Hay Springs Ledger*, looked after the missions until a new pastor could be appointed. Father William I. McNamara came in 1900 serving until about 1906. He was followed by Father J. Barry (also Berry). Mass at Hay Springs was also celebrated by priests from Pine Ridge—Father Henry Westropp and Father Henry Gotegeers, S.J.,—during this time.

Father P. Paul Kern, S.J., held services in 1909 in several different churches in the area including Gordon, Mission Ranch, Rushville, Mirage Flats and Hay Springs. During the latter part of 1909 Father Eugene Beuchel served the mission parish of Hay Springs until Oct. 10, 1910.

The parish was a mission of either Chadron or the Holy Rosary Indian Mission of Pine Ridge until 1910 when Father John Nepper became the first resident priest at Rushville with missions at Hay Springs, Mirage Flats, Nenzel and Merriman.

Father Henry Kiel became the first resident pastor of St. Columbkille's in 1920, and a rectory was purchased that year. The parish was formed after Father Louis Nally came to Hay Springs. Residents formerly had to go to Chadron or Hay Springs to attend services. Father



Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated St. Columbkille's Church in Hay Springs in 1955. Father Albert Godlewski, pastor at Hay Springs at left is assisting Bishop Paschang. Fathers Joseph Hargarten and Carl Hayden are standing at Bishop Paschang's right.

Nally was pastor from 1922 until about 1933.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in Beaver Valley became a mission of Hay Springs in 1926, remaining until 1944.

Subsequent pastors were Fathers Joseph Bean, 1934-35; Joseph Monaghan, 1937-39; and Andrew McDonald, from February 1939-42. During World War II, Father McDonald served as a chaplain in the European Theatre and upon his discharge, returned to Hay Springs.

While Father McDonald was in the service, administrators at Hay Springs were Fathers William E. Grace, 1942-43; Robert Maron, 1943-44, and Vincent Nepl, 1944-46. After World War II, Father McDonald returned until 1947, when Father L.G. Lecher was named pastor. Father Albert Godlewski was appointed pastor from 1948 until September 1964, followed by Father Robert Wiest from 1964-69.

Bishop John L. Paschang officiated at the cornerstone laying for a new brick church on Dec. 29, 1954. He dedicated the completed church April 13, 1955. The old church building was donated to the Holy Rosary Mission in South Dakota.

The Shrine of the Holy Family in St. Mary's Cemetery at Hay Springs was dedicated Nov. 4, 1962, by Father Godlewski of St. Columbkille's Parish. In 1969 St. Columbkille became a mission of Rushville again under the

pastorate of Father Gerald Carlson.

Father Carlson was pastor at Rushville, Hay Springs and Mirage Flats from 1969 to 1973 followed by Father Walter Phillips, who served until 1977. Father Lawrence Fenton was named pastor of Rushville and Hay Springs from 1977 until 1980.

Renovations at the time included remodeling of the entrances to the church and sanctuary area. The

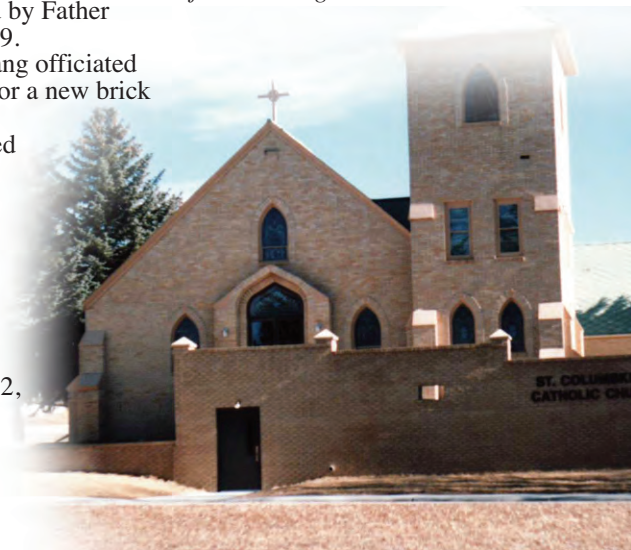
interior was also carpeted.

From December 1980 until July 1981, Father Neal Nollette, pastor at Chadron, attended the parish of Rushville and mission at Hay Springs.

Father Art Faesser was appointed pastor of Rushville and its mission Hay Springs from 1981 to 1987. Other pastors included Father Alex Borzych, 1987-1992; Father Louis Nollette, 1992-1993; and Father James Heithoff, pastor at Gordon, who assumed responsibilities of both Rushville and Hay Springs from 1993-1995. Father Robert Karnish served as pastor from 1995 to 2002, followed by Father Timothy Stoner who served from 2002 to 2008.

Father James Joseph, S.D.B., was named pastor in 2008.

*St. Columbkille's history was compiled by Shari Harris with information from the Register.*





# Hazard St. Gabriel

In 1930 while Father Paul Moser was pastor at Prairie Center, he began serving the Catholic community at Hazard. Four years later, he helped establish a parish there, and St. Gabriel's became a mission of Prairie Center.

Land was purchased that same year and a frame structure was built with the aid of a donation from the Catholic Church Extension Society. Bishop Stanislaus Bona dedicated the church on Oct. 22, 1934.

St. Gabriel's became a mission of Pleasanton in 1936.

Father Stanley Gorak was appointed pastor of the parish in 1940.

Throughout the history of the church, many changes have occurred in the structure.

A fire broke out in the church following the funeral of Michael Cronin on Jan. 19, 1943. The interior was damaged extensively, but the parishioners wasted little time in repairing the building themselves. Only a month later, the work was completed, and Father Gorak dedicated a new altar, donated by the parishioners.

Following Father Gorak was Father Constantine Shumski, who was succeeded by Father Joseph Hargarten in 1946.

During Father Hargarten's pastorate, the church basement was remodeled. A concrete floor and concrete block walls replaced the dirt floor and walls.

Father August Wajckus succeeded Father Hargarten and served for nine months; Monsignor Carl Hayden served from October to November 1951, and then Father James McSweeney was assigned as pastor.

Father Jan Smutny arrived at St. Gabriel's in 1958 and served for 26 years.

During Father Smutny's pastorate, St. Gabriel's saw many changes in the Catholic Church, the parish family and the physical structure of the church itself.

A sanctuary added to the original structure in 1965 allowed for more seating. A kitchen and restrooms improved the basement.

A well was dug for \$750. Remodeling was done to the interior of the church in the 1970s, including a cry room, reconciliation room, carpet, paneling, light fixtures and new pews.

A new altar donated by the family of John and Domicella Jarzynka was blessed by Father Smutny on May 3, 1981.

The parish expanded its facilities by adding a 24 foot by 32 foot addition to the east end of the structure in 1983.

The parish celebrated its golden jubilee on Sunday, Oct. 7, 1984. Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara was the main celebrant at the Mass of



2008-2009 CCD students and teachers, 35 students and 11 teachers gathered on Wednesday evenings at St. Gabriel's Church in Hazard.

Thanksgiving. Several parishioners took part in the ceremony and many former parishioners traveled back to Hazard to attend the anniversary.

St. Gabriel's has never had a resident priest. From 1936 to 2002, St. Gabriel's was a mission parish of St. Mary's in Pleasanton. In 2002 St. Gabriel's became a mission of St. Josaphat's in Loup City. St. Josaphat Church in Loup City, St. Gabriel Church in Hazard, and St. Francis Church in Ashton joined Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Ravenna as clustered parishes in 2006.

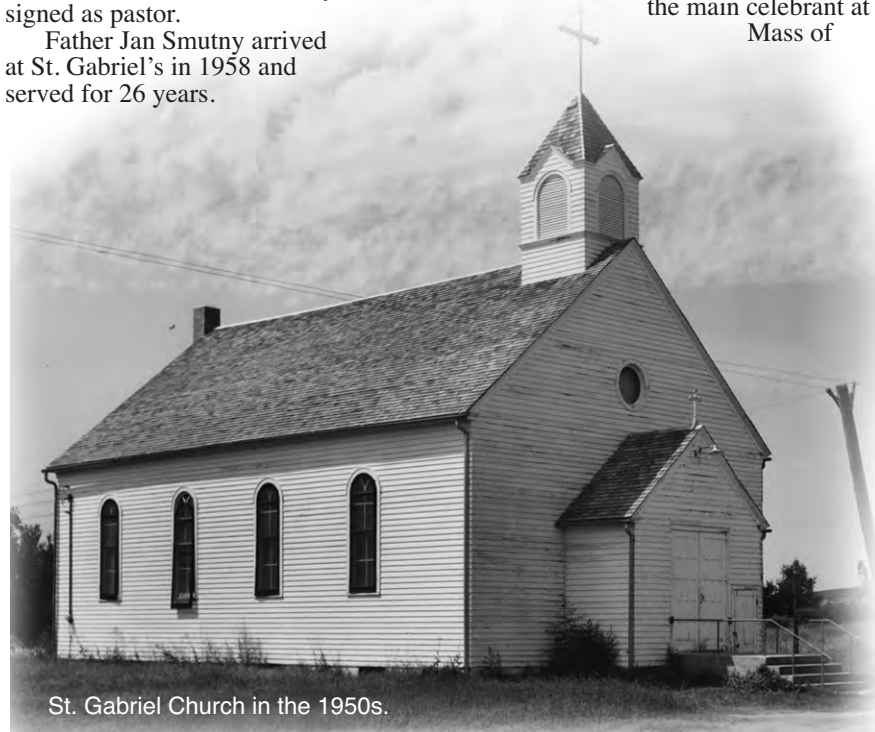
The spiritual needs of the parishioners were met in a variety of ways over the years. Study clubs and home Masses, Bible studies and prayers groups were some.

There is baptism preparation for parents and godparents, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults; instruction for altar servers, lectors and Eucharistic ministers. Lay ministers have helped the parish to recognize talents to serve the Lord and his people, and the diocese has offered many programs that have benefited parishioners.

The last regularly scheduled weekend Mass at St. Gabriel's was celebrated June 25, 2006. Weddings and funerals are still held at St. Gabriel's, but only three weekend Masses are scheduled per year.

Priests serving the parish of St. Gabriel include Fathers Stanley Gorak, Constantine Shumski, Joseph Hargarten, August Wajckus, Msgr. Carl Hayden, James McSweeney, Jan Smutny, Andrew Gonda, Harold Kurtenbach, Loren Pohlmeier, Louis Nollette, Rodney Pruss and current pastor, Father Martin Egging.

Father Robert Wiest, who died in 1997, was the only vocation from St. Gabriel Parish.



St. Gabriel Church in the 1950s.

# Hemingford St. Bridget

Recorded notices of religious services started in 1887 and a simple frame church, St. Bridget's, was built in 1888 at Nonpareil, just south of Hemingford. The first Mass was Christmas Day 1888. The early pastors of St. Bridget's also served St. Wenceslaus Church at Lawn, 12 miles west of Hemingford. That church no longer exists.

The county seat was moved to Hemingford in 1890, and St. Bridget's Church was moved, too. It sat all winter on a farm, midway in its journey, because weather made it impossible to finish the trip.

Priests from Chadron, Holy Rosary Mission in South Dakota, Crawford and Alliance served the parish until Father Charles Keyser was appointed as first resident pastor in 1914. A two-story residence was built just north of the church.

Father Keyser served until July 1917 when Father A.M. Steder was appointed pastor and served until September 1918.

Plans to build a new church structure began in the 1920s. The financial crash in the 1920s, the terrible drought years of the 1930s, and World War II, put the building plans on hold. It was not until July 6, 1947, that the cornerstone was blessed and the long-delayed groundbreaking ceremonies were celebrated.

The new structure seated 400 people, and cost \$120,000. It was dedicated April 27, 1949, by Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler.

A new rectory was built in the 1960s. Up until 2001 St. Bridget's pastor also served the Mirage Flats Sacred Heart Parish as a mission, with a priest driving north to say Mass every Sunday morning. Sacred Heart Parish closed in 2001 and is now administered through St. Patrick's Parish in Chadron. Hemingford is again a mission of Holy Rosary Church in Alliance.

Sister Sarah Manchester, O.S.F., is the full time pastoral minister at St. Bridget's, living in Hemingford since 2001. In the absence of a resident priest, the parish remains a vital home for 133 parish families, with trained lay parish members leading prayer and offering Eucharist twice each week. The prayer

leaders are trained to offer Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, Stations of the Cross, Ash Wednesday and All Soul's Day services.



St. Bridget's Vacation Bible School in 1956 with Father Andrew McDonald, pastor, and Sister George and Sister Xavier of St. Agnes Academy in Alliance as teachers.

Sister Manchester is also active in the Hemingford Ministerial Association, which operates a food pantry. The church's faith formation program has added Generations of Faith and youth

ministry to the traditional CCD and CYO programs.

St. Bridget's Parish celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2011.

Pastors who have served St. Bridget's Parish over the years include Fathers Charles Keyser, A.M. Steder, Daniel Manning, Robert O'Neill, Robert Foster, Andrew McDonald, Daniel Devine, Constantine Shumski, Andrew Gonda, Raymond Kosmicki, Walter Phillips, Hubert Spanel, Bryan Ernest, James Heithoff and present pastor Father Louis Nollette.

Hemingford was the first home of late Grand Island Bishop John L. Paschang, born five miles east of the

village. John Linus Paschang, infant son of Mrs. and Mrs. Casper Paschang, was baptized in St. Bridget's in 1890 with Mrs. and Mrs. John Gasseling as his godparents.



St. Bridget's in Hemingford, pictured here in 1962, before the new rectory was built.



# Hershey Our Lady of Guadalupe

The town of Hershey was named in honor of one of the members of the Paxton and Hershey Land and Cattle Co. It was incorporated into a village in April 1909.

For nearly 70 years, however, there was no Catholic church in Hershey. Before 1910 the pastors of St. Patrick's Parish in North Platte ministered to the spiritual needs of the Catholics living in the western part of Lincoln County, the eastern part of Keith County, and even parts of what is now Perkins County. St. Patrick's in Sidney also cared for the district at one point.

Bishop John L. Paschang asked Father Constantine Shumski—pastor at Sutherland—to build a mission church in Hershey to accommodate the needs of the people.

Father Shumski asked Dell Brownfield, postmaster and mayor of Hershey, to find some land north of the tracks where the old Sutherland church could be moved. Brownfield approached Waude Rouche, who owned some lots on the north side of town. When Rouche found out the plans and lack of funds for purchasing the lots, he donated them for the church.

It became impossible to get permission from the highway department to move the old church from Sutherland, and the cost was prohibitive. The solution was purchasing a schoolhouse south of Sutherland, move it to Hershey and renovate it for the church.

The establishment of the new mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe was made possible by a gift of \$5,000 from the Catholic Church Extension Society, the generous donations of friends, and the sacrifices of the local congregation. The building was finished in November 1959 and the first Mass was offered by Father Shumski on Nov. 22, 1959. The church was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Paschang on May 8, 1960.

A picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe—for whom the church was named—was donated by Father Edward Jaworowski who had returned with it after a visit to Mexico.

Subsequent pastors at Our Lady of Guadalupe include Father Walter Phelan, 1961-1966; Father James Kremer, 1966-1967; Father Gerald Harr, 1967-1973; Father Gerald Carlson, 1973-1981; and Father Jacob Bauer, 1981-1982. Sister Esther Fehringer, served in pastoral ministry from 1977 to 1981 and Sister Christina Meyer, from 2003-2009.

The parish continued to be a mission of Sutherland until 1982 when it was transferred to Holy Spirit in North Platte under Father Frank Hoelck.



Members of the Adela Hernandez family planted a tree at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in her memory. Pictured are members of the Otzel, Hernandez and Soto families.

After 25 years, a need for a larger church became necessary to accommodate the growing parish.

On Oct. 27, 1984, groundbreaking ceremonies were held. The new church was built east of the old church on ground that was donated by the "Brown brothers" family. With the completion of the new church, dedication ceremonies were held on Sept. 29, 1985, in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the parish.

In 1988 Father Robert Karnish was appointed pastor until 1993 when Hershey returned to Sacred Heart Church in Sutherland as a mission under the direction of Father Thomas Dillon, who

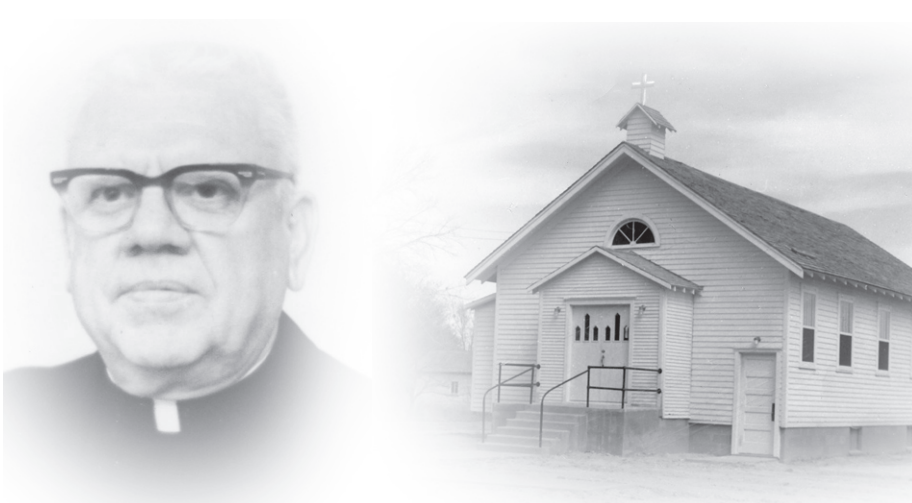
served until 1998.

Father James Janovec was appointed pastor and served until 2003.

In 2004 Sacred Heart in Sutherland was made a mission of Holy Spirit in North Platte under Father Art Faesser.

It was announced in 2004 that Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey would no longer have Sunday Mass with Eucharist. The parish continues to teach faith formation classes.

Hershey continues to be served by the pastor and associate pastor at Holy Spirit Church in North Platte, Father James Novakowski and Father Jerry Wetovick.



Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey as it stood in 1962, a renovated school house. Father Constantine Shumski was in charge of building the mission church in Hershey to accommodate the needs of the people.

# Hyannis All Saints

The oldest of the Sandhills churches, All Saints Church in Hyannis, was built in 1895 by Father W.L. McNamara and was a 16 foot by 20 foot frame structure. All Saints was a mission of Alliance in the early days of the parish and the priest would arrive in Hyannis by freight or passenger train, spend the night with a local family, celebrate Mass, and then board the train for the return to Alliance.

Father Edward Hynes became pastor in the fall of 1914, with Father Albert Albel as associate. From the summer of 1920 to the fall of 1921 the parish was served by Father Thomas Murray and his assistant, Father Robert Maron.

Father W.H. O'Keefe came to the

area in the fall of 1921 and was pastor until the fall of 1922. He was succeeded by Father M.L. Daly from 1922-1925 and Father Patrick Moriarity from 1924-1927, when All Saints became a mission

of Seneca.

In 1949 Mullen became the central parish for the surrounding churches with Father Mitchell Koprowski as pastor.

The present brick church, with a seating capacity of 150, was built under the direction of Father Koprowski and was dedicated in 1954 by Bishop John L. Paschang.

Father Koprowski served All Saints until his retirement in 1987.

Other pastors who have served include Father Bryan Ernest, 1987-1993; Father Louis Nollette, 1993-2000; Father James Warner, 2000-2008; Father Loren Pohlmeier, 2008-2011 and present pastor Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B.



Present day All Saints Church in Hyannis.



Early All Saints Church and rectory in Hyannis.



# Kearney Prince of Peace

In August 1985 Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara announced a second Catholic parish in Kearney to help alleviate overcrowding at St. James Parish. Prince of Peace Parish, established in January 1986, was designed to include Catholics living south of Highway 30.

With the help of the parish's first resident priest, Father John "Jack" Schlaf, parishioners renovated an existing two-story building with more than 10,000 square feet they called "the great white" previously used by the Eaton Corporation for office and warehouse space. For nearly 25 years Prince of Peace Parish would be located at 1210 East 11th Street. The main floor was converted into offices and classrooms with a large area for worship. Additional classrooms and living space were created on the second floor.

During the first weekend in February 1986, approximately 700 people attended four scheduled Masses.

Initial plans were to rent the building temporarily until a new church was built. Instead, the building was purchased later that same year and the site became permanent. Father Schlaf served until 1993 when Father Gerald Carlson was named pastor. In 1994, a rectory was purchased at 404 East 10th Street. Father Mike McDonald was named pastor in 1997. On Jan. 6, 2008, Bishop William J. Dendinger celebrated Mass at the FirstTier Events Center for a united service between St. James and Prince of Peace parishioners as new parish boundaries were drawn between the two parishes.

Approximately 2,600 people attended the Mass which was celebrated by Father Charles Torpey, pastor at St. James; Father Mike McDonald, pastor at Prince of Peace; Father

Matthew Koperski, associate pastor at St. James; and retired priests, Father Robert Chamberlain, Father Robert Rooney, Father Ted Nekoliczak and Father Thomas Mullowney. After this Mass, about 800 families were asked to move from St. James to the new Prince of Peace, while about 200 families from Prince of Peace were asked to move to St. James.

Construction on the new building began in November 2009. The new Prince of Peace Parish, located at 2407 West 56th Street (between 17th and 30th Avenues), was dedicated Aug. 5, 2011. The event coincided with the church's 25th anniversary and Father McDonald's 15th year as pastor.

Since the new parish boundaries were drawn, Prince of Peace parishioners had been attending weekend services at Kearney High School's auditorium and Kearney Catholic High School.

The new boundaries were the result of a five-year discernment process addressing the overcrowding issues at both Kearney parishes. The boundaries were changed from 25th Street and Highway 30 to 5th Avenue, a more centrally located north-south street. Shortly after the parish boundary changes were announced, the building at 1210 East 11th was sold and a capital campaign to raise money began with a \$6 million goal.

The church was completed in July 2011 and a dedication Mass was held on Aug. 5 with Bishop Dendinger presiding.

The new church was designed in a contemporary interpretation of the Romanesque style. Angels on the pilasters symbolize the real angels that

are present during the Liturgy and the mural of the lambs at the back of the church symbolize Christ and the 12 apostles.

The rose windows of Prince of Peace Church each express one of the four classical elements of earth, air, fire and water. The cross is superimposed over each of the primary elements, symbolizing that all creation has been redeemed by Christ through His incarnation and redemptive act on the cross. The altar is visible and approachable from all sides and stands at the center of the church and its community.

The new space accommodates 740 people with a lower level for classrooms and offices. Subsequent phases include a gathering space and offices on the second floor and the construction of a social hall.

Father Paul Colling assumed the pastorate at Prince of Peace with Father Abraham Kaduthodiyil, S.D.B. named associate pastor in July 2012.

Religious serving as pastoral ministers for Prince of Peace Parish include Sisters Grace Michael Perry, Roberta Anne Semper, Mary Walling, and current ministers Sister Mary Chamberlain, O.S.M., Sister Doris Durant, O.S.M., and Sister Patricia Cary, O. Carm.



Prince of Peace Church, 2011.



Mass January 6, 2008, at the FirstTier Events Center

# Kearney St. James

In 1912 St. James Church in Kearney became known as St. James Cathedral, mother church for the first bishop of the diocese (at that time, the Diocese of Kearney) Bishop James A. Duffy.

St. James Parish, however, had its beginnings long before that.

During the 1830s Kearney was just a stopping point on the Oregon Trail, better known then as Fort Kearny. Fort Kearny was established in 1848 and was garrisoned with United States troops until 1873.

But it wasn't until after the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1869 that the present townsite was founded on April 11, 1871. The Burlington Railroad was completed to Kearney in 1872 and several years later, Mass was offered on a relatively regular basis. After 1876 Mass was offered at regular periods, first in an old printing shop and then in a hall which was over an office of a lumber firm on Central Avenue, just south of the railroad tracks. Mass was first offered by priests from Omaha, Columbus and Grand Island.

On June 1, 1881, Bishop James O'Connor purchased property in the south section of Kearney on the east side of Avenue 'A', between 18th and 19th streets. That same year, Father P.J. Boyle was appointed the resident pastor. The first rectory was built by him in 1883 and the first church was built during this time. Father Boyle was succeeded by Father Nicholas Stoltz, a native of Luxemborg, in 1885.

Kearney rose from being a mission to becoming its own parish and at one time extended to all of Buffalo County and parts of Dawson and Custer Counties. The parishes at Prairie Center, Pleasanton, Elm Creek, Lexington, Eddyville, Oconto, Shelton, Ravenna as well as the mission churches of Amherst, Overton, St Joseph and St. Wenceslaus were all separated from the original Kearney parish.

A new site for St. James was purchased at 26th Street and 6th Avenue on June 20, 1884. During Father Albertus Hork's pastorate, a church was begun on this property. Because of financial limitations, the basement was roofed and used for worship. The lumber from the old church was used. Within the next several years, a frame church and rectory were built.

Father Eugene Geary was appointed pastor of Kearney on Sept. 1, 1890. Two years later, in 1892, Father James A. Bruen was made pastor, followed by Father John Fitzgerald a year later.

Father Fitzgerald served until 1897 when he was succeeded by Father Patrick McGovern, who would later become the Bishop of Cheyenne. Father McGovern served the people of Kearney for almost two years when Father Charles

Petlach was made pastor. He was followed in July 1902 by Father Thomas Haley.

When Father F.M. McCarthy was named pastor in 1905, he purchased a Presbyterian Church on the northwest corner of First Avenue and 24th Street. The rectory was also built that year.

Late in 1906 Father Michael Daly was named pastor of St. James. With the guidance of Father Daly, plans were made for a new church in 1908. Father Henry Muenstermann was appointed pastor when the church was completed in January 1911.

On March 8, 1912, the northwestern part of Nebraska became a diocese and Kearney was chosen as the bishop's residence. Bishop Duffy, was chosen as the first bishop of Kearney and was installed in St. James Cathedral on April 24, 1913.

On Dec. 30, 1914, at the instigation of Bishop Duffy, St. James Parish purchased the two lots on the southwest corner of 25th Street and 2nd Avenue and on April 1, 1915, the adjoining lot on

25th Street was purchased. Plans were then made for a new school to be built.

With the aid of \$10,000 from the Catholic Church Extension Society of Chicago, the school was completed and dedicated in September 1915. The school was staffed and operated by the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine in Kentucky.

Kearney remained as the seat of the diocese until April 11, 1917, when Grand Island was made the See City by Pope Benedict XV at the request of Bishop Duffy because Grand Island—being larger—provided better resources. At that time Kearney had only 65 Catholic families, not all of them practicing Catholics.

Good Samaritan Hospital was established in Kearney in 1924 by the Sisters of St. Francis of Lafayette, Ind. Francis G. Keens and his wife contributed \$25,000 for the addition of a fourth floor of the hospital. He also donated an apartment building to the Carmelite Sisters to be used as a home for the aged. The Francis G. Keens home for the aged was opened in 1929.

Father Muenstermann remained pastor until Aug. 15, 1938. On Aug. 27, 1938, Father Francis J. Tschida was named pastor and was installed Sept. 11, 1938. Father Tschida was made a domestic prelate in 1951, and was appointed as Vicar General of the diocese.

On April 2, 1953, Monsignor Tschida purchased additional property on 24th Street adjoining the parish property for \$10,055. He served the parish until his death in December 1956.

After the death of Msgr. Tschida, Bishop Paschang appointed Father Raymond Miles pastor of St. James Parish on Feb. 1, 1957. That same month the parish purchased 60 acres of land



Father Joseph Hannappel



Father Josh Brown



Palm Sunday 2007 with Father Robert Rooney (at left) and Father Matthew Koperski.



for the city's first Catholic high school. That year the church was refurbished and St. James School was remodeled.

Kearney Catholic High School was opened in September 1961 and dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang on Oct. 18, 1961.

Father Eamon O'Dowd served the parish from 1970 to 1975 and was followed by Father Robert Chamberlain.

During Father Chamberlain's tenure, and as the parish family and the Kearney community grew, the church downtown became overcrowded both for parishioners and parking. The church also needed extensive remodeling.

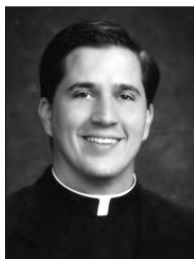
The possibility of a new church started to materialize in 1977. The cost to build the new church was \$750,367 but this did not include carpeting, sound system, pews, organ, windows or a parking lot. The amount of \$300,000 was collected from the sale of the former St. James Church, the rectory, and St. James grade school.

Another \$100,000 was acquired from the sale of items from St. James Parish. Donations by the people of the parish equipped the church with the organ, altar furniture, landscaping, carpet, sound system and the parking lot.

The new St. James Church could accommodate 640 people while the old St. James could only seat 350.

## Kearney Newman Center

The "Newman Club" as it was originally known, existed on the Kearney State Campus (now the University of Nebraska at Kearney) for many years before the present Newman Center was purchased. This new ministry—that began as early as 1883 in Wisconsin—was designed to offer a place for students to participate in weekend Masses, retreats, group prayer and discussion groups in addition to social and community service activities. Chaplains served out of St. James Parish and activities were



Father Matthew Koperski



Sister Rosemarie Maly, O.S.B.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the present St. James Church—the fifth building for the parish since its creation—was held June 11, 1979. Dedication of the church was July 25, 1980, on the feast of St. James the Greater with Bishop Lawrence J. Mc-



Photo courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Namara presiding. The old St. James Church and its rectory at 24th Street and First Avenue were sold and today, the former St. James Church is used as office space.

Father Chamberlain continued to serve the parish until 1982 when Father James O'Kane was appointed, serving until 1989. During his pastorate, St. John

Capistran in Amherst became a mission of St. James until 1994 when it became a mission of Elm Creek.

St. James Parish was divided to form a new parish, Prince of Peace, for residents in southern Kearney in 1986.

Father Ted Nekoliczak was appointed pastor in 1989 serving until Father Charles Torpey was appointed in 1996. New parish boundaries between St. James Parish and Prince of Peace Parish were drawn again to alleviate overcrowding at St. James in 2008. About 800 families were asked to move from St. James to the new Prince of Peace, while about 200 families from Prince of Peace Parish were asked to move to St. James Parish.

Father Joseph Hannappel was appointed pastor in 2009 and Father Joshua Brown was assigned associate pastor of St. James in 2010.

Religious serving the parish include Sisters Nicole Engler, Mary Walling, Adolorata Watson, Magdalena Leonard, Teresa Wolfe, Mary McNulty, Theresa Rolling, Jackie Thorn, and Caroline Turnovsky.

Sister Patty Rinn, O.P., currently serves as pastoral minister.

McDonald as chaplain. Rachel Wagner served as campus minister from 1998 to 2002.

Shirley Wallace was named director in 1999. In 2002 Genevieve Mougey replaced Rachel Wagner as associate director. In 2004 Mougey became the director.

In 2006 Sister Rosemarie Maly, O.S.B., was named the director of campus ministry.

Father Matthew Koperski was appointed as chaplain for the Newman Center in 2008, in addition to being associate pastor of St. James Parish.

Father Koperski was named full-time chaplain for the Newman Center and also Director of Vocations for the Diocese of Grand Island in 2010.

The present staff includes Sister Rosemarie Maly, director; Pam Cimmelfel, administrative assistant; Dianne Keiter, director of music ministry. The Newman Student Ministry Council assists the staff.

The centers are named for John Cardinal Newman, a 19th century English priest who converted to Catholicism.

## Kimball St. Joseph

The early Catholic settlers in the Kimball area were served by priests from Sidney and for 12 years, from 1909 until 1921, Kimball was attended at "more or less" regular intervals. Mass was offered in private homes—Mary Lynch, Jim Kinney, Pat Maginnis, Art Bickel and Ed Roche.



In 1911 a small frame church was built on ground given by Patrick Maginnis.

Father Robert Karnish

The first church accommodated about 30 members. Later it was enlarged to seat about 100, and in 1951 it was replaced by the present structure.

The first pastor, Father Patrick Moriarity, lived in a small room attached to the rear of the church. This was later made into the sanctuary and sacristy. Later a house was rented as the priest's residence. A two-story brick rectory was built alongside the church in 1928. Monsignor Lawrence Kintz was appointed pastor in 1928 and served until his death in 1967.

A new rectory was built under his pastorate in 1957.

Monsignor Kintz had a dream of having a Catholic parochial school. By 1963 he had completed building an eight classroom building, fully equipped on an eight acre piece of ground two and a half blocks from the church. Unfortunately a shortage of teaching sisters developed and the school never opened.

Monsignor Leo Keating served the parish from 1967 to 1973 when Msgr. Carl Hayden was appointed pastor. He served the parish of St. Joseph for 23 years.

In 1970 Joaquin Flores donated a bell to the church and the parish members erected it in 1993 under the supervision of George Barp.

Father Francis Curran was appointed pastor in 1996 and served until 2002. Under his supervision, St. Joseph's underwent another remodeling project. The building that had been used for religious education class was used for a temporary church during that time.

Father Robert Karnish, appointed pastor in 2002, is the current pastor.

In 2009 St. Joseph's renovated the downstairs kitchen.

Other priests serving St. Joseph's include Fathers Lambert Heinen, Henry Keil, and Michael Lyons. Father John "Jack" Schlaf was an associate pastor from 1964 to 1967.



Bishop William J. Dendinger officiated at confirmation at St. Joseph's Church March 7, 2010. Pictured front row from left: Cecilia Biberos, Michael Robinson, Tyson Culek, Shawn Nagel, Bishop Dendinger, Matthew Merryfield, Brook Jones and Dawn Moeser. Second row: Karen Long, Hunter Baliman, Kaitlin Moritz, Rachel Moeser, Amber Schadeegg, Samantha Long, Hannah Stull, Father Robert Karnish and Ashley Harrison.

The parish has an active parish council, altar society, Knights of Columbus Council and a Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly.

There were many priests, sisters and people that helped develop the church enjoyed today and contributed to the history as well.

It is difficult to write a summary of the history of St. Joseph's without leaving someone out, but make no mistake, all members were important to have the church enjoyed today. There were many firsts, first baptisms, first marriages, first Communions, first priests, and yes, first funerals. This is the history that makes us proud to belong to this parish and we look forward to the future.



The first St. Joseph Church in Kimball.



# Lexington St. Ann

The history of St. Ann's Church dates back to the days of the building of the Union Pacific Railroad. In the summer of 1867 the Delahunty brothers—Michael, Patrick and James—invited Father James Ryan of Columbus, the nearest priest, to come and offer Mass for their families and a small group of railroad workers. At first, the Holy Sacrifice was offered in a box car and then in the homes of the families as they began to increase in numbers. Father Patrick Lynch also came to the settlement, then known as Plum Creek, during those years.

According to the St. Ann's Centennial book, 1883 to 1983, the Delahunty family played a large part in the settlement of Lexington and creation of St. Ann's. Following are excerpts:

*"In 1867 Michael and his wife and baby son, John; Patrick and his wife and three children and their unmarried brother James 'came up the Missouri River on a steamboat to Omaha and from there to Plum Creek station by Union Pacific.' They arrived on May 5, 1867... Aside from Daniel Freeman and his family (who first had the Plum Creek store on the Oregon Trail south of the Platte River and later moved to the east edge of Lexington), the Delahunty's were the only settlers until about 1870."*

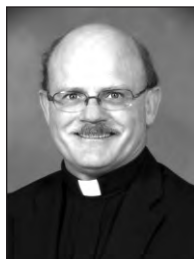
*"Their Catholic heritage had been instilled in their nine children by John and Mary White Delahunty in County Tipperary, Ireland. Michael said they were 'home taught' but opportunities in Ireland were limited and in 1861, part of the family sailed from Liverpool on the Columbia and landed at New York July 7 after a 52-day voyage."*

The following was an excerpt from the March 6, 1932, edition of the *Nebraska Register* regarding the Delahunty families:

*"Imbued with a faith both Catholic and practical, those hardy sons of toil—Michael, Patrick and James Delahunty—lost no time in inviting the nearest priest to come and work among them. The good Father (James) Ryan of Columbus harkened to their request, came and offered Mass in their humble abodes and thus laid the foundation of the present progressive and flourishing congregation of St. Ann's Parish."*

In 1880 Father James Hayes began the project of building a church to accommodate the growing Catholic population. A small frame structure was erected on land donated by the Union Pacific Railroad and was the first of three church buildings to occupy this site.

Father Thomas Haley put the finishing touches on the church and St. Ann's



Father Paul Colling



Father Jorge Canela

church in 1890. The cost of the structure was \$2,400.

The years 1891, 1892, and 1893 were difficult years financially for the early settlers in the area due to poor crop conditions. A debt of \$800 remained on the church and a solicitation netted \$400. Creditors were pressing for the remaining \$400. Robert Stuart went to Iowa and was able to borrow \$400, at an interest rate of 9 percent on condition that 12 land-owners sign a joint note. Eighteen landowners signed the note, dated Nov. 23, 1895. Although it was a burden during those times, the note was paid Jan. 20, 1897.

Father J. M. Delboe served St. Ann's from 1903 to 1908.

Father Thomas P. Haley returned to serve from 1908 until his death in 1916.

Father Timothy Molony succeeded Father Haley and remained until 1919. It was during his pastorate that the rectory was constructed.

was dedicated in 1883.

Other early pastors of St. Ann's Church included Fathers J.J. Flood, Michael Donaghue, and James Burke.

Land for St. Ann's Cemetery was deeded by Edward Delahunty to Bishop James O'Connor, Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, on Sept. 11, 1886, for \$1. The first known burial was Edmar Jacque, who died Sept. 19, 1887.

The congregation continued to grow and, under Father Flood's pastorate, construction began on a larger frame

church in 1890. The cost of the structure was \$2,400.

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Father Thomas Minogue served St. Ann's in Lexington for 30 years and built the current St. Ann's Church. Father Minogue, who retired July 1, 1955, died on Nov. 26, 1964.

Father T.J. O'Byrne was appointed pastor in 1919 and served until 1924. During his tenure, the parish purchased a large home with 12 acres with the intention of using the home for a convent and building a parish school on the acreage. The project did not materialize and the property was sold sometime later. Father M.L. Daly came in 1924 but remained little more than a year.

Father Thomas Minogue came to St. Ann's from Anselmo in July 1925. Under his leadership, in 1950, the present St. Ann's Church was built at a cost of approximately \$200,000 and paid in full in 1955.

Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler blessed the cornerstone during a Dec. 10, 1950, ceremony. The church was dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang in 1951. Father Minogue retired July 1, 1955, after 30 years at St. Ann's.

On May 10, 1950, an additional 1.5 acres of land was sold to St. Ann's Church by Claude C. Rosenberg and Vere R. Olsson for \$1. This parcel of land adjoins the original cemetery on the south.

Father Lawrence A. Portrey came to St. Ann's on July 1, 1955. In 1956 the parish purchased a residence with two lots across the street from the church to be used temporarily for a convent; a house and lot contiguous to the church

property for expansion purposes and 34 acres of ground on the east edge of Lexington for the construction of a junior-senior high parochial school.

On May 26, 1957, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to begin construction for St. Ann's School.

Construction of the school began in early 1957 and was completed in August 1958 at a cost of \$350,000. The school opened for classes in September 1958, for seventh, eighth and ninth grades, with 67 students enrolled. Bishop Paschang dedicated the school on Oct. 21, 1958.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton, Iowa, staffed the school and an upper grade was added each year.

On May 20, 1962, the first senior



The altar at St. Ann's Church in Lexington is shown before Vatican II. Altar servers are Robert Caraway, Joseph Schmitt, Santos Gutierrez, Leo Cook, Lawrence Weides and Leo Ogorsolka.

class graduated.

When the old St. Ann's Church building was sold, the bell was saved as well as a few other relics. It was reinstalled on the front lawn of St. Ann's school.

Father Robert Wiest became the first assistant to serve in St. Ann's Parish in September 1959. He was succeeded by Father Gerald Harr.

Other associate pastors were Fathers Edward Cortney, Gerald Carlson, Thomas Ryan, John "Jack" Rademacher, James Schmitt and James Warner.

Parishioners, former parishioners, priests and sisters celebrated the 100th anniversary of St. Ann's Church on May 1, 1983, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara as principal celebrant.

In April 1988 St. Ann's Parish council and school board decided to close the school due to low enrollment and inadequate financing.

Other pastors serving St. Ann's Church have been Father Robert Warner, 1966 to 1971; Father Thomas Mulowney, 1971 to 1973 and Father Harold Kurtenbach, 1973 to 1977.

During Father Kurtenbach's tenure—after the changes that arose from Vatican II—a mosaic made in Italy replaced the

traditional crucifix at the altar. The mosaic artwork depicts images found in Nebraska including a windmill, an ear of corn, a stalk of wheat and a steer. The plywood altar was replaced with one made of marble and was placed closer to the congregation. The Blessed Sacrament and saint's shrines, built on either side of the sanctuary, were made from the rest of the altar and parts of the communion rail. Portions of the candle holders and the lectern were also made from the communion rail.



Youth and adults from St. Ann's Church in Lexington attended Going Bananas for Jesus in March 2009.

Father Thomas Dillon was named pastor in 1977 and served until 1982, followed by Father Walter Phillips, 1982 to 1986.

Father Raymond Kosmicki was ap-

pointed pastor in 1986.

Lexington experienced rapid growth in 1990, with the opening of the IBP Packing Plant. The parish blossomed to over 1,000 registered families and still remains at this level of members.

Father Donald Buhrman was named pastor in 1994 and in 1995, the parish offices were moved from the rectory to the school building that is now known as St. Ann's Parish Center.

In 1998 a committee was formed to head a campaign to raise \$300,000 for a major renovation of the church.

The stained glass windows were repaired and restored. An air conditioner was installed as well as an elevator and a handicap-accessible restroom was added. The project was completed on June 1, 1999.

Father Paul Colling replaced Father Buhrman in 2003 and served until 2012. Father Jorge Canela was named associate pastor in 2009.

Father Neal Nollette assumed the pastorate at St. Ann's Church in July 2012.

Sisters have played an important role at St. Ann's Parish since the Franciscan nuns first came to staff the school. Religious who have served St. Ann's include Sisters Imogene Kirkey, Rita Marie Goodall, Catherine Gallagher, Margarita Simon, Celine Taskan, Leona Augustyn, Rosemary Carraher, Margaret Giroux, Florence Brinker, Loretta Beyer, Clara Scherr, Dottie Moss, Regina McCarthy, and present pastoral minister, Sister Mary Ann Flax, C.S.J.



# Lisco St. Gall

After the building of the railroad on the main line and the completion of the branch of the Union Pacific from North Platte, Catholics became more numerous in the area, and it was in 1916 that it was decided to build a church in Lisco. Under the supervision of Father T.J. O'Byrne, pastor of Scottsbluff, who was then attending the spiritual needs of the people in the Platte Valley, two churches were built—one in Lisco and the other in Oshkosh.

St. Gall's in Lisco became a mission of St. Elizabeth's Church in Oshkosh, and was built at the cost of \$3,000.

Father O'Byrne was succeeded by Father Martin Lawler and Father J.J. Kavanagh, who came in frequent intervals to offer Mass both in Lisco and Oshkosh. Other pastors serving during the early years were Father L. Heinan, Father Carl Hollie, Father L.H. Kintz, Father J.M. Lyons, Father Albert Vifquain, Father C.J. Moynihan, Father Vincent Neppi, Father Albert Godlewski, Father John Madsen, and Father Daniel Fishburn.

During Father Madsen's pastorate the sanctuary was enlarged and a kitchen and dining facilities were added.

Father Joseph Abele was appointed pastor in 1964 and served until 1986. During this time many improvements were made—the ground around the church was leveled and a lawn planted. Father Abele initiated the annual clean-up weekend on the first Saturday in June, gathering parishioners together to paint, trim trees and provide general maintenance.

Father Daniel Christensen became pastor in 1986 and served until 1991. During his tenure the sanctuary was painted, a new well was drilled, the inside of the church was painted and in 1990, carpet was replaced and the belfry was enclosed.

Father Walter Phillips began his tenure in 1991, and the basement kitchen received an update with new cabinets; a storage shed was built and paneling added to the stairway to the basement. Tree removal was done, sidewalks repaired, wiring was updated in the kitchen and a new stove and furnace unit were purchased.

Father Joseph Hannappel was appointed pastor in 1994 and the outside of the church received a facelift. A street light was installed



St. Gall Church in Lisco.

to provide illumination for evening services and a lighted, stained glass window was added in the belfry of the church. St. Gall's was visible from the highway for the first time since it had been built in 1916.

Father Martin Egging became pastor in 1999. By this time, the parish had grown to 64 members. During his pastorate, new carpet was installed throughout the church, a new roof was added, book holders were attached to the pews and heating and central air was installed. Father Neal Nollette was appointed pastor in 2006.

St. Gall's is a busy community, serving its members and Lisco's extended community. Plates of goodies are prepared for the elderly and shut-ins of the community during the year; dinners are served; pastors, graduates, first communicants are honored; and new members

are welcomed.

Each month members host a social gathering.

Father Mike McDonald was named pastor and began his pastorate in July 2012.

## Sister Bernice Rowlan

By LINDA HEATON

My sister, Maryann, devoted her life to the service of God and her fellow man. Our mother, Bernice Rowlan, was born in the Lisco area and St. Gall's was her church for all but two of her 92 years years. My father, William, attended St. Gall's, as well, from the time of their marriage in 1935 to his death in 1996.

St. Gall's was our childhood home and where we received our devotion to God.

Our grandparents, Bernie and Anna Dailey, were some of the first members, homesteading on a farm north of Lisco. My aunt, Mary Ellen Dailey, is presently a member of St. Joseph Church in Chappell.

Maryann entered the Order of St. Francis of Assisi in 1955 and took her final vows in 1959, receiving the name of Sister Bernice.

Sister Bernice taught elementary education and music in Scottsbluff, Holy Rosary and Rosebud on the Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota and Cheyenne, Wyo.

She became a member of the Catholic Community of Christian Doctrine and returned to Lisco in 1978 and taught at Lisco Elementary until her death on Oct. 28, 1979.

Sister Bernice was an accomplished musician, compassionate friend and teacher, and devoted to the service of her God.



Mass was celebrated at St. Gall Church in Lisco for Maryann Rowlan, daughter of William and Bernice Rowlan, before she left for the convent in 1955. Members of the Rowlan/Dailey family are pictured along with Father John Madsen and sisters from the Motherhouse in Denver—the Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

# Loup City St. Josaphat

In the late 1870s Father Francis Stuer came from Krakow, Poland, to minister to the Catholics of the Loup City area. Father Stuer, traveling by horse and buggy, celebrated Mass in homes and public meeting places. By 1881 a small group of Polish residents obtained permission from Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha to form a parish. J. Woods Smith donated 12 lots of land to the Catholic community with the requirement that a church be built within five years.

Construction of a small frame church began in 1882 and was called St. Joseph's Church. In 1887 a small wooden school building was erected north of the church and was used for religious instruction.

Loup City was attended from New Posen in 1883 and from Choynice until 1890, principally by Father Stuer, then later by Fathers A. Jakimowicz, Alexander Mathauschek, Joseph Augustyn and Boleslaus Radka.

A tornado struck Loup City during the night of June 5, 1896, and almost completely destroyed the church, lifting it from its foundation. All that remained was a wall on which hung a picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Polish Madonna. That same icon hangs in the church of St. Josaphat's today.

From 1896 to 1908 construction on a new brick church was started. As the number of Catholics in Loup City increased, plans were made for an adequate church facility. Financial difficulties slowed the progress of the new church, but after 12 1/2 years, the building was completed. The church was dedicated as St. Josaphat's Church on July 15, 1908.

Father Joseph Kolaska was the first resident pastor of St. Josaphat's and without a rectory, he lived in the old school building. Father Al Gudzinski followed as pastor from 1910-1915.

Father Irenaeus Jarka was appointed pastor in 1915 and began building a rectory which was completed in the spring of 1916. The building of the rectory was funded primarily from outside donations, acquaintances of Father Jarka in Chicago and West Point.

Following Father Jarka were Fathers Alexander Grzeszykowski, Joseph Hinzmann, and Aloysius Szczerkowski, who was appointed in 1932.

Immediately after his arrival, Father Szczerkowski began to plan for an evident need in the parish—a school and parish hall. He carefully planned and carried out an educational campaign to gain the support of the parish. In spite of drought and depression, a school with a full basement hall started in the



Father Martin Egging

Leonard Ziolkowski was appointed pastor in 1936; Father Henry Bednarczyk followed in 1946, and served until his death in 1961; and Father Constantine Shumski was named pastor in August 1961. Under Father Shumski's pastorate a new school, auditorium and sister's convent were built.

Father Daniel Fishburn was appointed pastor in March 1965. During Father Fishburn's pastorate, the elementary and high school were closed in May 1969, due to the shortage of teaching religious and lack of revenue for operational costs. Father Fishburn resigned in November 1969 and assistant pastor, Father James O'Kane was named administrator.

The entire school complex was purchased by the Loup City Public School System on June 1, 1970, for \$525,000.

Father Edmund Placek was named pastor in 1970 and during his pastorate the present church facility—church, rectory and hall—were built. On Dec. 5, 1971, Bishop John L. Paschang broke ground and the cornerstone was laid.

The stained glass windows in the current church were taken from the old church, and reflect the faith of the forefathers and mothers of the parish. Along with these, two more modern stained glass windows depicting the geographical location were added. Each of those two new windows contains the Loup River; one has Father Placek's little black dog and the other depicts a replica of the old church. The woodwork behind the altar is from the benches of the old church. The altar is made of native cedar and walnut wood. The church complex was dedicated on Nov. 21, 1972.

The 100th anniversary of the parish was cele-

brated on Sept. 20, 1981. St. Josaphat's Church joined the six parish cluster with Ravenna, Hazard, Ashton, Pleasanton and Rockville in 2006.

In 2009 the worship space was in need of updating, so renovations were made to accomplish this.

Pastors also serving St. Josaphat's Parish include

Fathers Robert Foster,

Carl Ferris, John

Cook, Michael

McDermott, Art

Faesser, Thomas

Ryan, Reginald

Urban, Louis Nol-

lette, and present

pastor Father

Martin Egging.

Associate

pastors serving were Fathers John

Czajka, Herman Ostrowski, Michael

Szczesny, Steven Kraus, L.J. Charko, B.

Cabanski, A.M. Wajckus, Milan

Kopushar, Ted Nekoliczak, Ronald

Kokes, Robert Wiest, Paul Curro,

Lawrence Fenton, James Dunning and

James O'Kane.

Religious serving St. Josaphat in-

clude Sisters Olive Geiger, Sophie Glen-

ski, Janice Ludvik, Betty Maschka, Mary

Chamberlain, Lee Ann Danczak, Doris

Durant, Rita Kolbet, and Paulette Kuta.

Sister Bernadette Engelhaupt, O.S.F.,

currently serves St. Josaphat's Church as

pastoral minister.

Vocations listed in the parish histo-

ries from St. St. Josaphat's Parish are

Fathers Andrew Augustyn, John "Jack"

Rademacher, David John; Sisters

M. Casimir, M. Esra, M. Ernestine,

M. Gertrude Augustyn, M. Paula

Kusek, M. Rosalie Bals, M. Gabriel

Grudzinski, M. Dennis Zulkoski,

Marysia Sok, Pauline Sok, Lourdine

Sok, Leona Augustyn, Camille Ference,

Lee Anne Danczak, Paulette Kuta and

Ann Ference.



St. Josaphat Parish school and convent were blessed and dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang on Sept. 19, 1963. The banquet was held in the new auditorium following the Mass.



# Lyman Sacred Heart

The history of Sacred Heart Mission in Lyman began with the establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Scottsbluff when the sugar beet industry came to the North Platte Valley at the close of World War I.

In the early 1920s the Great Western Sugar Company began to import large numbers of Hispanic families from Mexico to fulfill the need for hand labor. These families first attended Mass at St. Agnes Parish but as these numbers increased, it became more necessary for their spiritual needs to be attended by a priest fluent in their own language. Father Carl J. Hollie, resident chaplain at St. Mary Hospital in Scottsbluff, was appointed in 1921.

The Lyman mission began in 1928 under St. Theresa's Parish in Mitchell. Pastors at Mitchell and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Scottsbluff had served the mission before that time.

Pastors who served at Lyman included Father Michael McDaid, 1928-1932; Father Patrick Moriarty, 1932 to 1953; Father Kevin Cortney, 1953 to 1954; and Father Vincent Pelster, 1954 to 1957. Father Andrew Gonda was pastor for one year before Father Walter Phelan was appointed in 1958.

Sacred Heart Mission was attached to Our Lady of Guadalupe as a mission under Father Thomas Dowd in March 1960.

Father Max Valdez was named pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Scottsbluff and its mission, Lyman in 1964. A commemorative field Mass was held on Aug. 27, 1967, during Nebraska's centennial year, in honor of the first Mass offered in the territory later to become Nebraska. The site of the first Mass was just east of Lyman on Sept. 14, 1851, by Father Pierre DeSmet, S.J.

Father Valdez was pastor until Father James Murphy was named in

1973. In 1976 Lyman was returned to a mission of Mitchell under Father Edmund Placek. Father John "Jack" Schlaf was named pastor at Mitchell, Morrill and Lyman in 1977.



Sacred Heart Church in Lyman, February 1988.

For nearly 40 years, area families had also been served by the Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters. The sisters lived in Scottsbluff and visited families twice a week. They taught religious education and taught in the homes of the colony of sugar beet workers comprised of a large Spanish-speaking community.

Sacred Heart celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1987.

Subsequent priests have included Father Miguel Guevara, 1980 to 1987; Father James Schmitt, 1987 to 1991; Father Edward Kunzman, 1991 to 1993; Father Thomas Reimers, 1993 to 1994; Father Rodney Pruss, March 1994 to July 1994; Father Stephen Deaver, 1994 to 2008; Father Anthony Madhichetti, 2008 to 2011; and Father Thomas Gudipalli, 2011 to present.



Sacred Heart Church in Lyman, shown in these three photos, as construction was completed.

# Mitchell St. Theresa

The first Catholic Mass in Mitchell was offered just a year after the very first Mass in Nebraska was celebrated by Jesuit Father Pierre DeSmet, a missionary who worked with Native Americans in the territory.

According to historical records, the first Catholic Mass in Mitchell was offered in 1852, also by Father DeSmet. In the late 1800s Mass was offered occasionally by priests who would travel through on horse-back or buggy. With the coming of the railroad in 1900, priests from Sidney would visit the area once each month. Two of these priests were Fathers T.D. Sullivan and John Devane.



Father Thomas Gudipalli

When a resident priest was assigned to St. Agnes Parish (then known as St. John's) in Scottsbluff in 1912, Mitchell became a mission of St. Agnes. During these years, Mass was offered in private homes or Harris Hall.

During Father T.J. O'Byrne's pastorate at St. Agnes Mass was celebrated in a hall reportedly for about 12 or 14 families. In 1913 under his direction, the church was built and dedicated December 1913 by Bishop James A. Duffy.

The church remained a mission of St. Agnes until 1921. In 1922 it became a parish under the leadership of Father Michael Daly, the first resident priest. After a short period of time, it returned to a mission status of St. Agnes in Scottsbluff. During this time, Father Tim Molony offered Mass in Mitchell every other week.

Due to the increase of population with the opening of the Tri-State Canal and the influx of Hispanic laborers, it was reestablished as a parish under the leadership of Father Michael McDaid who remained in Mitchell until 1932.

During Father McDaid's pastorate Sacred Heart Church at Lyman and St. Ann's in Morrill were built. When completed, they were attached as missions to St. Theresa's.

In 1930 the church in Mitchell was enlarged due to an increase in members.

Father Patrick Moriarty, who came in 1932, built a new sanctuary, and a sacristy was added to the church. The brick rectory was also built under his supervision in 1937.

Father Moriarty died on Dec. 20, 1953, and Father Kevin Cortney served the parish until the appointment of Father Vincent Pelster in February 1954. With the help of Father C.J. Hollie, chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in Scottsbluff, Mass was offered in Morrill and Lyman each Sunday.

Father Andrew Gonda was appointed in August 1957, serving until 1958 when Father Walter Phelan was appointed. During Father Phelan's pastorate, the parish purchased land on the east edge of town for future parish development. In March 1960 Sacred Heart in Lyman was transferred to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Scottsbluff as a



St. Theresa's in Mitchell received the Silver Award in the Stran 1974 Building Design Achievement Awards. The new church replaced the original church which was built in 1913.

mission.

Father James Murphy was assigned in August 1961 and he was followed by Father Robert Chamberlain, 1967 to 1969 and Father Robert Wiest, who served from 1969 to 1973.

During Father Wiest's pastorate, Bishop John J. Sullivan began the program of pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Grand Island with the arrival of Sisters Theresa White and Carole Wakefield, both Sisters of Humility of Mary. The idea was still considered new, even though in a similar move, Bishop James A. Duffy invited four Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters to minister to Hispanics in the Scottsbluff area nearly 50 years earlier.

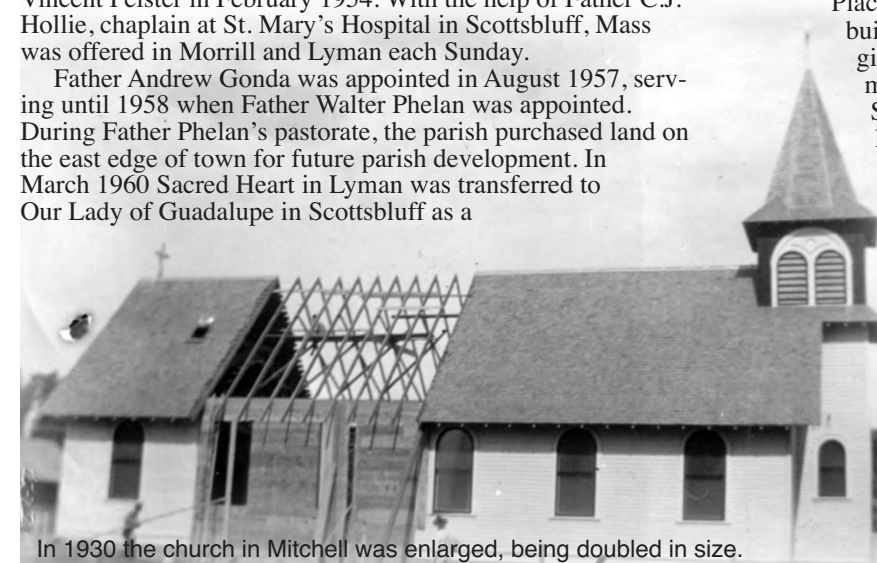
Sister White and Sister Wakefield were initially called parish coordinators and were involved in many aspects of the parish life including instruction, liturgy, and ministry to the elderly and ill. Their ministry also extended into the community through ministerial associations, nursing homes and other community activities. Sister Leonette Wolf also served the parish in pastoral ministry.

In 1972 the old church was torn down and a new church begun and completed in 1974. During its construction, parishioners shared a hall in Mitchell for worship services with Episcopalian parishioners who were also building a new church. The church was dedicated on April 23, 1976.

The new church of steel and concrete was planned during Father Wiest's tenure and completed by Father Edmund Placek, who was appointed pastor in 1973. The new building received a Silver Award, the second highest given in the Stran 1974 Building Design Achievement Awards competition sponsored by National Steel Products Company. The building was selected from entries submitted worldwide to demonstrate outstanding design and functional use of metal building systems.

Father Placek was pastor until 1977 when Father John "Jack" Schlaf was named pastor at St. Theresa's in Mitchell, with St. Ann's in Morrill and Sacred Heart in Lyman, as missions.

Subsequent pastors were Father James Schmitt, 1987-1991; Father Edward Kunzman, 1991-1993; Father Thomas Reimers, 1993-March 1994; Father Rodney Pruss, March 1994 to July 1994; Father Stephen Deaver, 1994-2008; Father Anthony Madhichetti, 2008-2011, and current pastor Father Thomas Gudipalli, named in 2011.



In 1930 the church in Mitchell was enlarged, being doubled in size.



# Morrill St. Ann

The first time that Mass was offered within the boundaries of the present state of Nebraska—for which there is documented evidence—was in the area of St. Ann’s in Morrill on Sept. 14, 1851.

At that time, according to historical reports, Father Pierre DeSmet, S.J., was attending the Great Council where more than 10,000 Native Americans and 270 army troops were present as well as 20,000 to 30,000 horses. Some of the tribes present were the Sioux, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Crow, Snake, Shasone and many others. Father DeSmet had daily conferences on religion with the different tribes and the women built a “tent sanctuary” for him to offer Mass.

The council—which closed on Sept. 23, 1851—was held in the valley where Horse Creek meets the North Platte River, south of Morrill.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Catholics of Morrill had to travel many miles to attend Mass. It wasn’t until 1913 when the church was built in Mitchell that the distance was somewhat shortened. However, on opposite Sundays, parish-ioners still had to travel to Scottsbluff to attend Mass.

For a short period of time Father Michael Daly served at St. Theresa’s in Mitchell before the parish was served again by Scottsbluff along with the mission in Morrill.

When St. Theresa’s in Mitchell was established as a parish under Father Michael McDaid in 1928, it was obvious that a church was needed in Morrill with the large influx of migrant workers who came to work in the beet fields. In 1930, a church was built primarily for these workers and mostly by them. St. Ann’s then became a mission of St. Theresa’s, having Mass every other Sunday. St. Ann’s has been a mission of Mitchell ever since. Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters worked among St. Ann’s parishioners from 1925 until 1967.

In January 1932 Father Patrick Moriarity became pastor of St. Theresa’s in Mitchell and St. Ann’s in Morrill as well as Sacred Heart in Lyman offering Mass in the missions on alternating Sundays. Father Moriarity served at St. Ann’s until his death on Dec. 20, 1953.

Father Kevin Cortney served St. Ann’s until the appointment of Father Vincent Pelster in February 1954. Under Father Pelster, improvements included new sidewalks, a new altar, a basement for parish functions and catechetical work, landscaping and the church was redecorated. All of this work was done by parish volunteers and completed in 1955.

Beginning in 1954 Mass was offered in St. Ann’s every Sunday. After priests began coming to the church each week the population of the church grew, and the mission flourished.



Father Vincent Pelster, pastor from 1954-1957, poses with first communicants.

Father Andrew Gonda became pastor in August 1957 followed by Father Walter Phelan in February 1958. Father James Murphy was appointed in August 1961 serving until 1967.

Ten acres of land were purchased in 1962 for a future building site as the parish outgrew the 1930 building. Father Robert Chamberlain served the parish from 1967 to 1969, followed by Father Robert Wiest, from 1969 to 1973.

It was during Father Wiest’s tenure that the concept of pastoral ministry came to the Diocese of Grand Island. Sisters Theresa White and Carole Wakefield, both Sisters of the Humility of Mary, arrived in the diocese in 1969 and 1970, respectively. The duo served as a pastoral team at St. Ann’s in Morrill and St. Theresa’s in Mitchell with Father Wiest. Sister Leonette Wolf also served in pastoral ministry at Morrill.

Under the guidance of Father Edmund Placek, who served from 1973 to 1980, a committee was formed to build a new church for the growing community. The old structure was moved to Henry to be used by the Pleasant Grove Community Church.

The 63 foot by 63 foot octagon-shaped building was built with windows depicting the way of life in the valley and the unity of Mexican and Anglo people. Eighty-year-old art glass was used to make windows and a skylight, and the tower cross came from St. Josaphat’s Church in Loup City.

While the church was being constructed the Methodist Church in Morrill shared its building with St. Ann’s parish-ioners for worship services.

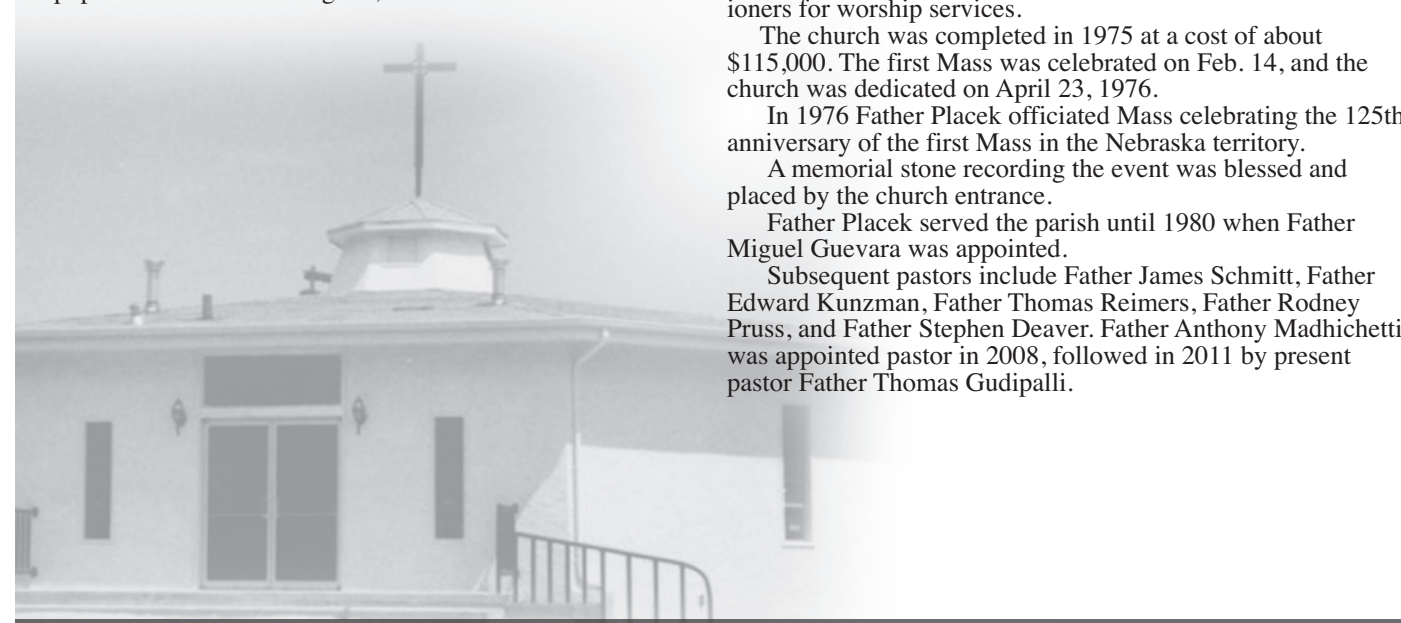
The church was completed in 1975 at a cost of about \$115,000. The first Mass was celebrated on Feb. 14, and the church was dedicated on April 23, 1976.

In 1976 Father Placek officiated Mass celebrating the 125th anniversary of the first Mass in the Nebraska territory.

A memorial stone recording the event was blessed and placed by the church entrance.

Father Placek served the parish until 1980 when Father Miguel Guevara was appointed.

Subsequent pastors include Father James Schmitt, Father Edward Kunzman, Father Thomas Reimers, Father Rodney Pruss, and Father Stephen Deaver. Father Anthony Madhichetti was appointed pastor in 2008, followed in 2011 by present pastor Father Thomas Gudipalli.



# Mullen St. Mary

Catholics were served in the Mullen area as early as 1910 when Father Peter Donnelly came from Alliance to offer Mass. The first St. Mary’s Church in Mullen was built and dedicated in 1914 and was a mission of Alliance.



Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B.

Father Donnelly and Father Timothy Molony served the spiritual needs of Catholics in Mullen from 1914 to 1916. Father Albert Albel, associate in Hyannis, cared for Mullen in 1917. Mullen became a mission of Seneca in 1918 and Father Albel served as pas-



First St. Mary’s, Mullen. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)

tor until the fall of 1930. He was followed by Father Patrick Burke, 1930-1931; Father J. O’Farrell, 1931-1932; Father Joseph Muldoon, 1932-1935; Father Robert Maron, 1935-1943; Father William Grace, 1943-1947 and in 1947, Father Mitchell Koprowski was appointed pas-

tor of Seneca with Mullen, Hyannis, Thedford and Brownlee as missions.

In October 1949 Mullen replaced Seneca as the parish church and pastor, Father Koprowski, moved to Mullen and served until 1987.

The church was moved to its current location at 309 South Blaine Street. A rectory—a house moved in from a ranch—was placed just south of the church. Father Bryan Ernest served from 1987 to 1993; Father Louis Nollette, 1993-2001; Father James Warner, 2001-2008; Father Loren Pohlmeier, 2008-2011; and serving as present pastor is Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B.

In the early days of St. Mary’s history, Mass was held about every two weeks. An oil burning stove was used to heat the church and music was provided by using a pump organ. Some of the “firsts” recorded in the church were baptism—Gertrude Elaine Quinn, 1915; funeral—Mr. Carr, 1932, Father O’Farrell officiating; marriage—Willard Francis Vinton and Frances Motl, Father Muldoon officiating.

Sister Jean Macke, currently serving in North Platte, is the only vocation from St. Mary’s.

A new church was built under the direction of Father Koprowski and dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang on June 28, 1965. Parts of the old church can still be found in the current church—the Stations of the Cross and pews in the choir loft.

Sts. Peter and Paul Mission in Seneca was closed in 1966 and the missions of Brownlee, Thedford and Hyannis were missions of the Mullen parish until August of 2002 when the Brownlee church was closed.

St. Mary’s Altar Society was organized for the purpose of caring for the altar and cleaning of the church. Today, it is called St. Mary’s Council of Catholic Women and the parish women are actively involved with the activities of the church and reach out with helping hands to others in need through programs in our diocese, state, nation and world.

“Walk by Faith, Not by Sight,” was the theme for the 2011 CCD gathering at the river.





# Nenzel St. Mary

Nestled among the Sandhills of western Nebraska is the village of Nenzel, the most northerly parish of the Diocese of Grand Island. And it was here in the fall of 1886 that Jesuit Fathers from St. Francis Indian Mission in South Dakota—in response to the request of new settlers—made arrangements for Mass to be offered in Nenzel. For four years Jesuits taught catechism in the home of George Nenzel to about 12 families.

Father Ferdinand Leichleitner, pastor at Valentine, served Nenzel as a mission in 1890. The local school was used twice monthly until a frame church was built in 1907. Father Leichleitner traveled by freight or passenger train to tend to the spiritual needs of the people of Nenzel, and flagged the train with a lantern at 4 a.m. in order to return to Valentine. With no shelter from the winter blasts, it was said that the pioneer priest never wore overshoes or gloves, but was always dressed in his frock coat and tall silk hat.

St. Mary's first resident pastor was Father Henry Kiel who was appointed in 1915. He lived in rented quarters until a rectory was completed in 1916. Two missions, Crookston and Merriman, were assigned to the parish.

With a resident priest, attendance at Mass grew. Father Kiel remained at Nenzel until his transfer in 1917. Succeeding pastors were Fathers Cornelius McLaughlin, A.M. Steder, Joseph Bogoszyk, J.P. Buggy, and N.J. Thees.

Father Joseph Kolaska was appointed pastor in February 1930. He carried out major improvements in the church, rectory and parish

grounds. Father Kolaska died during his pastorate in December 1932. Father Robert Maron was appointed administrator of the parish and remained in charge until Father Daniel Devine was named pastor in April 1933.

Father Devine served through the years of the depression until July 1942, when Father Carroll Liebig was appointed.

Father Jacob Bauer was named pastor in June 1955 and served until 1959 when Father Carl Ferris, a native of Valentine, was appointed pastor.

During Father Ferris's tenure the present St. Mary's Church was built. A formal groundbreaking ceremony was held in April 1962 with Anthony Clasen and Mary Scholtes, two of the oldest parish members, turning the first shovel-ful of dirt. The new church in Nenzel, designed after one of the nation's finest churches, would grace the little prairie town with a population at that time of 32.

Construction began and Father Ferris along with parishioners traveled as far as Texas to select artwork for the new church.

Progress was short-lived however, when a tornado struck Nenzel on June 15, 1962. Both the old church and new church under construction were destroyed.

It was with heavy hearts that parishioners began reconstruction, and the determined parish completed the church. Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated the church on Sept. 12, 1963.

The original cost of the building was about \$80,000; furnishings added another \$25,000. The Catholic Church Extension Society gave \$10,000 toward the cost and the Nenzel Altar Society contributed another \$40,000 through its annual bazaars and other projects. By 1968 the church was free from all debt except a small loan from the Grand Island diocese ... this was quite an undertaking for a parish of 47 families.

Father Paul Curro was named pastor in 1967 and remained for two years. In



May Crowning at St. Mary's in Nenzel on May 2, 2009. Standing from left back row: Father John Kakkuzhiyil, Nathan Van Winkle, Jana Nollette, Chelsea Fullerton, Andy Altmaier, and Sheldon Lincoln. Front row: Justin Nollette, Rylie Sexson, Clayton Osburn, Ethan Pitkin and William Osburn.

1969 St. Mary's Parish resumed mission status and was served by Father Robert Foster, pastor in Valentine, until 1973.

The pastoral team of Father Robert Wiest and Sisters Theresa White and Carole Wakefield came in 1973, and ministered until 1976.

With the assignment of Father John Dennett in 1976, St. Mary's was again an independent parish. Father Dennett retired in 1979, and the previous pastoral team from Valentine resumed care of Nenzel as a mission.

Father Ted Nekoliczak, Sister Marietta Spenner and Mary Jo Szydzik began serving Valentine and Nenzel in 1983 until 1989. Father James Janovec, 1989-1998, was the next pastor and was succeeded by Father James Heithoff, who was transferred in 2003.

Father Bernard Berger became pastor in 2003 and served until 2008.

Sister Agnesmarie Slaight also served from 2005-2007.

Father John Kakkuzhiyil, S.D.B., was appointed pastor in 2008.

St. Mary's faith community established a Memorial Brick Garden in 2011 as a way to remember and honor families and friends. The Brick Garden is inlaid with red bricks that can be engraved with personalized inscriptions surrounding a cross created with black bricks inlaid in the center. The garden provides a place and opportunity to reflect and remember.

A new sign was also installed at St. Mary's that was given as a memorial in honor of two families who were long-time members of St. Mary's Parish, Ferd and Erma Nollette and Paul and Ruth Krajewski.

Six members of St. Mary's Parish have professed their faith in religious life: Sister Eunice (Agatha Stasch), Sister Bernard (Margaret Ann Nollette), Sister Susan (Susan Campbell), Sister Connie (Connie Campbell), and brothers, Father Louis Nollette and Father Neal Nollette.

# North Platte Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit Parish was created by Bishop John J. Sullivan in June 1973. At the time, he thought St. Patrick's Parish in North Platte had grown too large and he wanted to "create smaller communities so the people were identifiable and knowable, so they weren't just a crowd but a community," Father Bernard Nelson—first pastor at the new church—said in an interview for the August 1979 dedication.

The parish started in the southwestern section of North Platte with approximately 320 families who had been members of the original parish, St. Patrick's.

Father Nelson was appointed the first pastor of the new church effective June 7, 1973.

The ground was broken at 2901 West E Street on March 31, 1974. Weekend Masses were celebrated in a North Platte school until the first phase of construction was completed in 1977. The total cost of construction was \$157,000. A dedication Mass was held in December 1977 following the completion of the first phase of the project. It contained a kitchen, lobby, and a multi-purpose room which could be divided into five smaller rooms. It was later named Nelson Hall in honor of its first pastor.

The sanctuary was started in the spring of 1979. The sanctuary, semi-circular, seated 425. The second phase of the structure was completed and the first Mass was June 19, 1979. A dedication Mass was celebrated by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara on Aug. 19, 1979.

Father Frank Hoelck succeeded Father Nelson in 1980. In 1983 the Holy Spirit Apostolic Committee was created as well as the Pantry Program. The parish also adopted a Haitian parish, and works with St. Patrick parishioners on several local service projects. A major fund-raising project—a pork barbecue and carnival—is held annually in June.

Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey became a mission of Holy Spirit in North Platte in 1982.

A fund drive was held raising pledges of \$40,000 to retire existing debts, establish a reserve account and build an addition to Nelson Hall in 1984.

Father Robert Karnish was appointed pastor at Holy Spirit in 1988 followed by Father James Heithoff in 1995. During Father Heithoff's tenure, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey became a mission of Sutherland. In 1998 Father Art Faesser



Renovated in 2011, this picture shows the entrance with unique one-of-a-kind oil paintings on canvas of the Communion of Saints.



Groundbreaking ceremonies at Holy Spirit in North Platte on March 31, 1974, included from left to right: Bishop John J. Sullivan, Msgr. Lawrence Portrey, (pastor at St. Patrick's) and parish board members Phil Sock, Dick Dunn, Russ Masters, Ken Langford, Bob Hinde, Don Piper, Jack Burns, Charles Suiter and Father Bernard Nelson.

Religious serving Holy Spirit Parish included Sisters Magdalena Leonard, Teresa Wolfe, Roberta Anne Semper, Patricia Eichner, and Marcia Guest.

On July 1, 2010 Father Jerry Wetovick was named associate pastor.

Renovations began at Holy Spirit in 2010 and a rededication was held July 31, 2011, with Bishop William J. Dendinger officiating.



The construction of the faith formation building was the next phase while the third and final phase of the project will be remodeling the offices, hall and kitchen space. The total project cost around \$2.5 million.

St. Mary's Nenzel, 1908 (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)



# North Platte St. Patrick

The parish of St. Patrick's Church in North Platte was officially organized in 1859, although it did not function as a parish at the time, the landmarks were established.

The development of the parish coincided with the development of the community of North Platte. In 1866 the Union Pacific Railroad paused it's construction across the Platte River before proceeding further across the plains. Railroad workers resided in tents, shanties and adobe houses that eventually evolved into more substantial housing. The town of North Platte had been established. North Platte was the hub of missionary activity as early as 1867 with Father James M. Ryan, a priest from Columbus, making occasional stops in the community to minister to Catholics. The first Mass was offered in a sod house west of the depot by Father Ryan and it was the beginning of Catholicism in the territory.

Father Ryan continued to minister to the Catholics, offering Mass about once a month. In the early years it was the practice of the railroad to donate lots on which to build churches. In 1874 the UPRR offered Father Ryan the lots at First and Dewey to build a church. Securing the deed for the lots had been neglected and when plans to begin construction of the church were made, there was no title to the property. In the meantime the practice of donating lots was discontinued and the railroad demanded one half of the price, \$137, before relinquishing the deed.

Father Patrick Lynch was appointed to the area in 1875. His travels took him west to Cheyenne, Wyo., and east to Columbus. Father Lynch was the first resident priest and when he arrived in 1875, he decided to build a frame church located at Fourth and Chestnut. A new frame rectory was built immediately north of the church.

Two days after it was insured in 1880 the church caught on fire from the furnace. Since the small town could not boast a fire brigade, the Union Pacific sounded the alarm and immediately men, women and children seized buckets, tubs and other utensils and ran to give assistance. In a short time every pump in the



Father James Golka



Father Mathew Thekkekara, S.D.B.

neighborhood was in action and the fire was extinguished with minimal damage.

Father John Lee served from 1877 to 1879 and was succeeded by Father William Byrne of Lincoln. Father Byrne had been ill for some time and had come from Lincoln with the hope of regaining his health. He died, however, on June 16, 1880. He was followed by Father T.E. Donnelly and he remained in charge until 1881. During his tenure the \$800 debt on the rectory was paid. The rectory remained at that location until 1930 when it was moved to 2nd and Sheridan Street where it continues to exist as a private residence

Because of the growth of the Catholic population, in 1883 the frame church was replaced by a larger brick church built in the same location, the southwest corner of the parish lot. The building cost was \$10,000. The

frame church had been moved east of the building site of the new church and was used for the first school classes, church socials, parties and home talent plays.

The foundation was laid and the brick construction was begun on a new church. Thirteen stained glass windows depicting biblical characters and scenes were donated by various parishioners.

The original structure had two entrance doors on either side of the vestibule with the two aisles on the north and south sides of the church. Later it was changed to one entrance door and a center aisle. The church was financed by many contributions including money from the Altar Society and pew rent. Families paid \$20 a year for assigned pews that were used by the same families for generations,

St. Patrick's new brick church was dedicated in September 1883.

The parish property expanded when 40 acres of land five miles south of North Platte was purchased in 1886. Two and a half acres were surveyed for a cemetery at a cost of \$700.

School classes had begun in the old frame church and in the building used as a convent. In the spring of 1887 when the church debt was reduced to \$1,000, an opportunity arose to purchase the house and lots on the east of the church at a cost of \$3,000. On Sept. 8, 1891, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan., opened Nativity Convent School on the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets. There were five teachers and 120 students in the school. The sisters remained in charge until about 1902 when the school closed.

The parish purchased the corner lot at 5th and Chestnut Street in 1897. This would be the future site of the new rectory and later the current church.

In the late 1890s the Angelus bell weighing a ton was purchased for \$614.10 and was named "Maria." After many years the bell fell, was damaged and was considered unfit for further use. It remained dormant until the war when it was sold for scrap iron for the war effort.

The oldest church organization was the altar society The ladies assumed much of the day-to-day care of the church property including enormous efforts with fundraising for the church. These were pioneer days before telephones, autos, electric lights, gas stoves, paving and city water. The Altar Society, then as now, contributed their time, effort and resources to attain their quotas and increase the church treasury. They held meetings in their respective homes, paid dues of 10 cents a month and solicited on foot through snow drifts, ditches, rough and muddy roads among sparsely located homes. Furniture was carried back and forth for bake sales and suppers. Sewing machines were moved from house to house to help make bedding for the rectory, sunbonnets, aprons, and fancy articles for the annual fair. Major suppers and bazaars were held at the Lloyd Opera House. Water was carried in from outside pumps. Food and other essentials were carried in on children's wagons and baby buggies. The ladies crocheted lace for altar clothes, albs, and embroidered church linens. The men built the fires, shoveled snow before Mass and did all the necessary repairs around the property.

It was at this time that the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin was organized. This would be the one of the first of many ministries which would be organized throughout the years.

Priests serving St. Patrick's during the 1890s-1900s were Father Thomas



Father Jim Golka, pastor of St. Patrick's Church in North Platte, greets participants at the last night of the Los Posada hosted by the church in December 2007.

Conway; Father Michael Waldron, Father M. O'Toole, Father P.E. McCarthy, Father Thomas Haley, and Father J.B. Fitzgerald. In 1903, Father S.F. Carroll became pastor and served until 1910. During Father Carroll's pastorate the school reopened with the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Ky., in charge. They continued until 1912.

St. Patrick's Council of the Knight's of Columbus Council 1211 was instituted in April 14, 1907, with a membership of 83 men. Father Carroll was it's first chaplain. For a time, they occupied a third floor space on Dewey Street until 1914. It wasn't until 1950 that they were able to purchase land at 3rd and Walnut Street and build a KC hall for \$53,000.

Father Patrick McDaid arrived from Londonderry, Ireland, in 1910 and became the first resident pastor. When he arrived in North Platte there were about 65 families in the parish and 47 children in the school. His missions included Willow Island, Gothenburg, Brady, Max-well, Gandy, Keystone, and Sutherland.

St. Patrick's Church was now under the direction of the Diocese of Grand Island and Bishop James A. Duffy.

Bishop Duffy encouraged Father McDaid to erect a new parochial school and in 1913, when Father McDaid returned to Ireland for a three week vaca-

tion, he had plans drawn for a three story brick school.

The plans were given great publicity in Ireland for their architectural as well as educational triumph. Father McDaid also traveled to Rome and had an audience with Pope Pius X. The Holy Father was greatly interested in St. Patrick's congregation, asking many questions about the parish and giving him "his blessing" to impart on the

parish on his return. Plans were developed for the new structure directly east of the church. Cost of the structure was \$52,000. When the new three story school was erected in 1916, the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ky., were placed in charge of the grade and high school. Enrollment had increased considerably.

Father McDaid also erected the brick rectory in 1930 at a cost of \$26,000.

Father McDaid served the parish for 37 years when he resigned and returned to his homeland of Ireland, making his home with relatives in Londonberry. He did return to the parish for a visit in 1960 receiving a warm welcome from his former parishioners and friends. He was in poor health and after his return to Ireland, he died on Jan. 18, 1961.

The school was renamed McDaid School in 1968, in honor of Father McDaid's ministry to the parishioners of North Platte. During his pastorate Father McDaid built a school, rectory, purchased a large residence to be used as a convent, the entire block which was property of the church was paved, all debt had been retired, and he began a building fund for a new church before leaving the parish.

Father Thomas J. Murray succeeded Father McDaid as pastor in 1948. Under

his leadership the present church was built in 1949 and dedicated in 1950. Cost of the structure was \$300,000.

Shortly thereafter in 1954 building was begun on a new

high school and was completed in 1955.

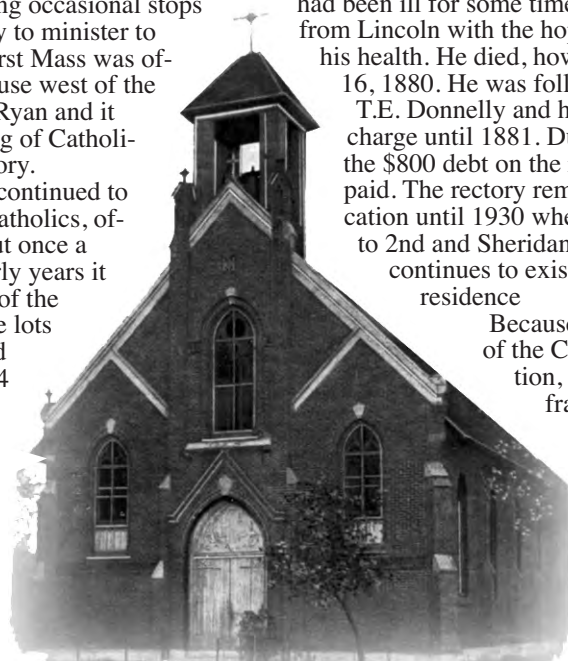
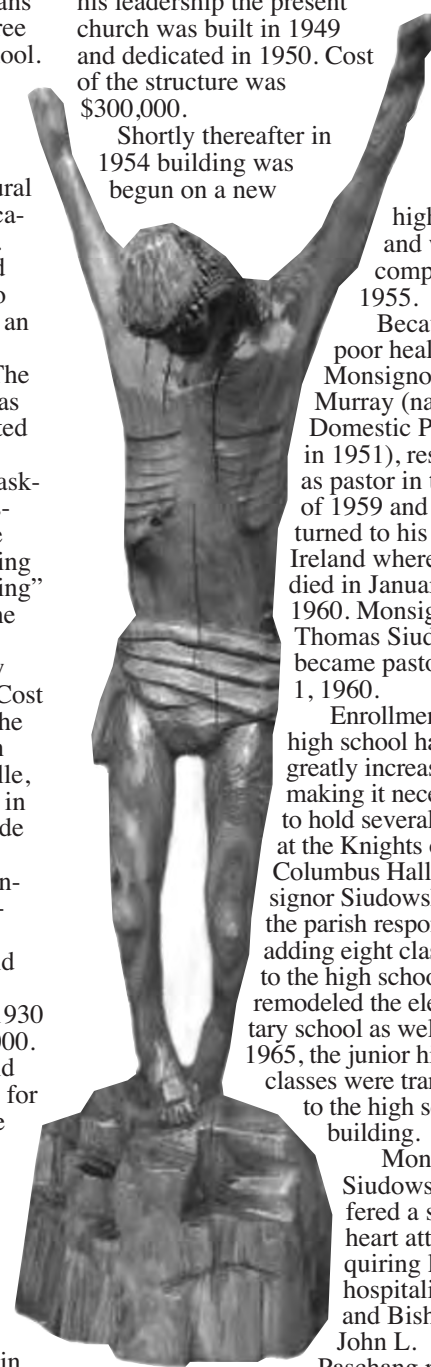
Because of poor health, now Monsignor Murray (named Domestic Prelate in 1951), resigned as pastor in the fall of 1959 and returned to his native Ireland where he died in January 1960. Monsignor Thomas Siudowski became pastor Jan. 1, 1960.

Enrollment in the high school had greatly increased making it necessary to hold several classes at the Knights of Columbus Hall. Monsignor Siudowski and the parish responded by adding eight classrooms to the high school and remodeled the elementary school as well. In 1965, the junior high classes were transferred to the high school building.

Monsignor Siudowski suffered a severe heart attack requiring lengthy hospitalization and Bishop John L. Paschang relieved

him of the responsibilities of the growing parish in 1966 and appointed Monsignor Lawrence Portrey as pastor. Monsignor Portrey served St. Patrick parishioners for 17 years and he credited the generosity of the parishioners to completely amortize a sizable debt and adequately finance procurements, street paving, development and maintenance of the many properties of the parish.

Father Gerald J. Harr was named pastor of St. Patrick's Church in 1982. During his tenure, he and a dedicated committee drew up plans for a parish hall. Plans included a large community hall attached to the east side of the church with a shelled in area along the south side for offices, meeting rooms,



St. Patrick's Church, 1920s. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



and nursery. A fundraising plan was set into action to raise \$532,500. Within one week the goal was met. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1988.

Parish organizations and activities had met in various locations around the parish. Father Harr said the parish had "suffered with the lack of ability to have an area immediately approximate to our worship space." Construction began by the end of 1988.

Father Harold R. Kurtenbach was appointed pastor in 1989, and completed the parish hall. The new addition would now offer a corridor connecting the church with the parish hall as well as much needed office space and meeting rooms. The highlight of the north entrance to the hall was a stained glass window commissioned to L & R Design of Chicago that reflects the history of St. Patrick's and the North Platte area. The Mexican Athletic Club provided \$10,000 to purchase the window, donated by the Mexican community of North Platte as a tribute to all past and present people. Dedication was held May 13, 1990.

Father Bernard M. Berger was named pastor in 1991. Plans were already underway to renovate the church. Original plans had been commissioned in 1985 by Father Harr but were put on hold. Father Berger stated that the renovation had been in the works for a long time and came about because of the vision of many people.

Six committee members, along with Father Berger, persisted throughout the five-year period until completion. Rededication of the newly renovated church was on Sunday, Feb. 18, 1996, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara presiding at the Mass along with priests of the diocese.

In 1995 Father Berger and a group of community leaders in North Platte were instrumental in establishing the Lincoln Connection, a facility developed to assist the homeless people, the underprivileged or temporarily unemployed. A new three story facility renamed 'The Connection' was constructed and opened in the spring of 2010.

Father Richard L. Piontkowski Jr. was appointed pastor in 1997. During Father Piontkowski's tenure, attention was given to developing the external environment around the church grounds including a courtyard and statuary. The monthly Sunday breakfast was initiated with the Ladies of St. Patrick's developing a full breakfast menu to be served cafeteria style the third Sunday each month. Parishioners from other congregations responded to an invitation and enjoyed the hospitality of the parish. Father Piontkowski, a major with the U.S. Army Reserves, was deployed to serve as chaplain three times during his tenure at St. Patrick's, to Desert Storm, to Fort Bliss, Texas, and to Fort Riley, Kan. Though parishioners regretted his absence from the parish, there also was a sense of pride in their pastor's service. Father Vincent L. Parsons, associate pastor, served as parish administrator during Father Piontkowski's absence. Father Parsons introduced plans for the new Stewardship Program before his reassignment and also began the

Liturgy of the Hours.

Father James Golka arrived as the new pastor of St. Patrick's in 2006. A major building project was completed on the school campus—the Martin A. Cordes Education Building, immediately south of the McDaid playground provided space for the kindergarten classes and the Boy Scouts. Preschool was also established in the fall of 2008 with classrooms located in the McDaid School.

Father Golka began to help parishioners understand their parish and lives through the lens of stewardship. All that we have is a gift from our generous God. We are to be good caretakers of those gifts. We find that more and more people are stepping forward and getting involved in their parish and their faith. There is a decided difference in celebration of community among parishioners.

At Father Golka's suggestion, a historical committee established the historical room located in St. Patrick's Church.

Much historical data, sequence of events, and archival items are available for viewing.

In 2009 a Welcome Home committee spent over a year praying and developing plans to provide a six-week support program aimed at helping family and friends on their journey in returning home to the Catholic church.

A parish library was established in 2010 with a comfortable setting for peaceful, meditative reading or research.

Father Mathew Thekkarakara, S.D.B., who served St. Patrick's Parish since 2010, was replaced in 2012 by associate pastor, Father Neal Hock.

Religious who have served St. Patrick's Parish include Sisters Esther Anton, Judith Warmbold, Mary Anne Hain, Cabrini Hatley, David Keppers, Veronica Koger, Mary Kathryn Meagher, Regina McCarthy, and M. John Heumesser.

Sister Jean Macke, S.F.C.C., currently serves as pastoral minister.

The story of St. Patrick's

Parish has taken us from the first glimmer of Catholicism in unsettled territory. The faithful, trusting in their faith, used what means they had to help build up a parish from the first Mass in a sodhouse, to the old frame church, to the present beautiful structure, always striving to improve parish circumstances. Through those early faithful beginnings, the present active church campus exists. The stewardship program as we know it—giving of our time, talent and treasure—was also the foundation of the early settlers, the early parishioners. They just didn't have a formal name for it.

We are a community, ever attempting to grow in Jesus Christ by fidelity to the incomparable means He gives us through the Catholic Church.

*Compiled by Alyce Zulkoski from information from the Jubilee Editions of the Diocese, West Nebraska Register; newspapers, archive data, the North Platte Historical Museum, the North Platte Public Library, the school archives, the Nebraska Catholic church archives.*



Joyce Lamp (left) and Alyce Zulkoski, show a vestment that is on display in the historical room at St. Patrick's Church. Lamp and Zulkoski were two of the people who worked on the project.

The historical room at St. Patrick's Church in North Platte houses pictures of past and present priests who have served the North Platte Parish, as well as the bishops of the diocese and popes since the parish was started.

An altar, stations of the cross, and various vestments used during different eras as well as a history of the parish and other memorabilia are also on display. The historical museum was a project of various members of the parish and one that brings the past to life.

# Ogallala St. Luke

According to the early records from Ogallala and the surrounding area, Jesuit Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, S.J., was one of the first priests to say Mass in what is now St. Luke's Parish in Ogallala.

Early history reports state that Father DeSmet stopped at the south river, crossing to instruct and baptize 263 Ogallala Indians in 1859, supposedly close to the present location of the bridge south of Ogallala.

Ogallala, initially a "cowtown" filled with cowboys, was named for the Ogallala Band of Dakota Sioux, located on the Union Pacific Railroad. The town had its beginnings with the coming of the Union Pacific Railroad to western Nebraska in 1867. Keith County was organized in 1873 and by 1884 the village of Ogallala was incorporated.

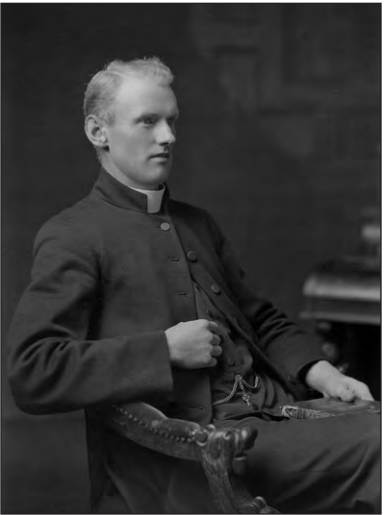
In the early days of the settlement, priests came occasionally from Fort Sidney to the west or from North Platte to the east to say Mass for the Catholic settlers. In the very early days of Ogallala, Mass was offered in the west end of town and the priests stayed overnight at the home of James L. Bush.

Records of the William Mullane family, who came to Ogallala in 1885 and founded the *Keith County News*, show they were active in promoting the building of a small frame church in Ogallala.

That first church, built in 1887, was a mission of St. Patrick's Parish in Sidney. St. Luke's became a parish in 1913 with its own resident pastor, Father Edward Hynes, and the parish built a rectory. Other priests who served at St. Luke's include Fathers Timothy P.



Father Bryan Ernest



Msgr. Peter Kenny

Molony, M.L. Daly and H.L. Herman.

Father John Gleeson served at St. Luke's with missions in Paxton, Keystone and Sutherland until 1917, followed by Father Patrick Sloan. Father Cornelius McLaughlin served as pastor for two years until the return of Father Sloan in 1920.

By 1922 the congregation had outgrown the small church. Under the leadership of Father Sloan, a transept was added to the east of the church and the whole structure was stuccoed with gray plaster and crushed stone. The interior was also remodeled. Later during the pastorate of Father James McMahon (1927-1941) the basement of the church was extended to the west. At this time, only Keystone was served from St. Luke's.

Hard times in Ogallala during the 1930s were followed by boom times during the construction of Kingsley Dam (Lake McConaughy). Once more, the church building was enlarged as the parish outgrew the facilities.

During Monsignor Francis Keller's pastorate, 1942 to 1949, a new brick entrance was added and a basement completed beneath the oldest part of the building.

Under the leadership of Monsignor Peter Kenny (1950-1965) and Bishop John L. Paschang, St. Luke's School and convent were built in 1953.



The interior of St. Luke's in Ogallala shortly after it was built in 1960.

Dedication of the elementary school was Sept. 6, 1954. Total cost of the school and convent was \$154,000. They were debt free at the time of the dedication.

Monsignor Kenny was also in charge of the building campaign for the present St. Luke's Church which was dedicated Nov. 29, 1960, at a cost of \$250,000. Monsignor Kenny, who had been named a domestic prelate in 1959, died in 1965 after overseeing the completion of a new rectory in 1964.

After Msgr. Kenny's death, Father Thomas Ryan—who was named associate pastor in 1964—was administrator of St. Luke's until Msgr. Thomas Siudowski was appointed pastor in 1966. Father Walter Phelan and Msgr. Siudowski served as co-pastors until Father James Whalen was assigned to St. Luke's in 1970.

That year, St. Luke's School closed the two upper elementary grades and the Dominican Sisters who had staffed the school since its inception were withdrawn in 1971.

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ky., began teaching at the school in 1972 and continue to do so.

Father Whalen served as pastor at St. Luke's and superintendent at the school until 1989 when Father Thomas Mullowney was appointed pastor.

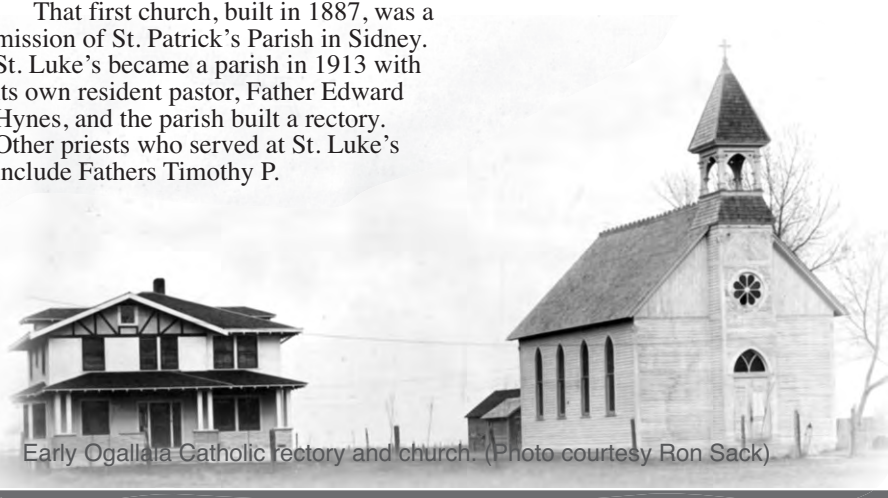
Father Mullowney served until 1993 followed by Father John "Jack" Schlaf, who served from 1993 to 2005.

In 2003 St. Patrick's in Paxton became a mission of St. Luke's.

Father Bryan Ernest, was appointed pastor in 2005 and is the current pastor.

Sister Mary Foley served the parish from 1973-1994. Sister Shirley Simmons, O.S.U., currently serves as pastoral minister.

Priests and sisters from Ogallala include Fathers Art Faesser, Thomas Reimers, Todd Philipsen, Matthew Koperski; Sisters Anne Matthias Beckius, Loretta Krajewski, and Patricia Eichner.



Early Ogallala Catholic rectory and church. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



# Ord Our Lady of Perpetual

Father Wenceslaus Kroupa arrived in Ord on July 1, 1908, to establish a new parish. The native of New York was 34 years old at the time.

Father Kroupa found many willing people in Ord who wanted to help with a new parish—Vincent Kokes, John Kokes, John Meese, Frank Petska, Charles Bals, Will Gruber, Frank Osen-towski, Victor Danczak, Joseph Beran, Joseph Carkoski, Frank Koupal and Louis Puncoschar. A house was rented and meetings were held. Mass was offered in private homes and in an unused church building. Catechism was taught in the home of Mrs. and Mrs. Will Gruber ... all willing to give their all to bring a house of God to Ord.

On Sept. 7, 1908, a lot was purchased on North 19th and G Streets from Joseph Capron for \$500. It was decided on the name Our Lady of Perpetual Help for the church and parish. During this time St. Wenceslaus in Geranium was also a mission of Ord.

There weren't any detailed blue-prints for the church building, but in the spring of 1909 the new church became a reality. Father Kroupa offered the first Mass on March 28, 1909, with the people sitting on planks set on nail kegs because the pews had not arrived.

The dedication was held on April 26, 1909 ... the pews still had not arrived and the weather was threatening, but the church was filled to capacity. Father Wunibald Wolf of St. Mary's Church in Grand Island gave a talk in English and Father Joseph Chundelak of South Omaha talked in Bohemian. It was a great day for Father Kroupa; it was his 35th birthday.

On March 8, 1912, the new Diocese of Kearney was established and Ord with Valley County would belong to this diocese. The first bishop was not yet consecrated but despite the waiting period, work started in 1913 on building the rectory for Father Kroupa.

In the spring of 1914 Father Kroupa decided to return to New York but in the six years in Ord he accomplished great things.

For a few months after his departure Ord was attended from St. Paul, but in August 1914, Father Ferdinand Suesser



Father Thomas Ryan



Father Mark Maresh

was appointed pastor. Father Suesser was a native of Europe and had been a missionary in South America.

An article in the Ord paper dated Aug. 13, 1914, read ...

*"The Catholic people of Ord and Geranium have a resident pastor who comes here*

*directly from South America. The reverend gentleman is a Bohemian and speaks seven or eight languages, but English is not one of them."* When he left for the Lincoln diocese in October 1919 the paper commented on his remarkable progress in the English language.

Father B.J. Chudacek succeeded Father Suesser and in one year he set a record for the number of weddings performed. On Aug. 24, 1920, the parish bought three and half acres north of Ord from Jerry and Louise Petska for \$2,100 for a Catholic cemetery.

Father Martin Lawler came to Ord on June 21, 1921, and at this time St. Wenceslaus at Geranium was detached from Ord. For a year in the 1920s Father Lawler had Arcadia as a mission, and then later Ericson.

The growth of the parish required more space, and in 1925 it was decided to enlarge the church. This was done by



Bishop John L. Paschang laid the cornerstone for the present church on Dec. 16, 1966. Pictured from left: Father Andrew Gonda, Father James Fullam, Bishop Paschang, Father Albert Godlewski and Father Stanley Gorak.

cutting the church and moving the part with the sanctuary to the west ... a basement was dug under the church using horses and scoops, the two parts of the building were then united with a connecting section.

Father Lawler served for almost 20 years, and dreamed of a Catholic school. He purchased a block west of the church for this purpose, but the dream did not come true in his lifetime.

The 1930s were years of drought and depression, difficult years for everyone. It was during these years that Father Lawler showed his "heart of gold" by raising a garden and giving everything to those in need. Father Lawler's health was failing, and he died on Dec. 18, 1940 and is buried in the Ord Catholic Cemetery.

Father Thomas Siudowski was appointed pastor on Jan. 15, 1941. Father Siudowski was an accomplished pianist and was known for his great hospitality. For five years the national effort was concentrated on winning World War II, and the parish contributed its share. After the war, improvements were made to the church and plans were made to build a parish school.

On May 12, 1950, the lot to the south of the church was purchased. Bishop John L. Paschang was ordained bishop in 1951, and the new bishop persuaded parishioners of the benefits they would gain from having a parish school. The school was completed in 1955 at an approximate cost of \$275,000 and the Sisters of St. Joseph from Chicago came to staff the school. It was on the property purchased by Father Lawler that the present St. Mary's School was built.

Father Stanley Gorak was appointed pastor on Feb. 1, 1958.

The desire to build a new church was great, but changes were taking place in the world and the church. Pope John XXIII called for a General Council of Church and Second Vatican Council began in October 1962. In view of the possible changes, it was difficult to decide what kind of church should be built. Vatican Council II ended in 1965, and changes were to be made to the church.

There was a groundbreaking for a new church on May 30, 1966, and furnishings were taken to the auditorium. Mass was offered there until the new church was built.

Bishop John L. Paschang laid the cornerstone on Dec. 16, 1966, and dedicated the church on Oct. 9, 1967.

On Sept. 19, 1972, the final payment for the loan on the church was paid and Bishop John J. Sullivan joined the parishioners on Feb. 11, 1973, for the burning of the mortgage.

Father Gorak retired in 1989. Priests serving Our Lady of Perpetual Help include Fathers James O'Kane, James Warner, Robert Rooney, Hubert Spanel, James Heithoff, and current pastor Father Thomas Ryan and associate pastor and Ord native, Father Mark Maresh.

Sister Lee Anne Danczak, S.S.J., serves the parish in pastoral ministry and as a director of religious education.

# Oshkosh St. Elizabeth

Among the early settlers who homesteaded along the Platte River near the site where the present town of Oshkosh is located were the Catholic families of Duffin, Burke, Moloy, Hoob, Monaghan, Breenan, Kennedy and Connors. After the building of the Union Pacific Railroad branch from North Platte, the Donely, Madden, Casey and Bamberick families arrived. These families were the first members of St. Elizabeth's Parish, a church history that began about 1887.

Catholic parish families were visited by a priest from Omaha, then the See City of western Nebraska. It took days for the priests to make the trip over long rough trails. Later priests came to the area from Sidney and Scottsbluff and offered Mass in homes until the first church was built in 1916.

Two churches were built, one in Oshkosh and the other in Lisco for an estimated cost of \$3,000 each. Father T.J. O'Byrne, pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Scottsbluff, supervised the building and served as mission pastor.

Father Martin Lawler and Father J.J. Kavanagh, both serving in Sidney, also offered Mass at St. Elizabeth.

Father L. Heinan was appointed first resident pastor of St. Elizabeth's in 1921. During his two-year pastorate the church was enlarged, a basement was built and a furnace installed.

Subsequent pastors have been Father Carl Hollie, 1923-1925; Father L.H. Kintz, 1925-1927; Father M.J. Lyons, 1928-1939; Father Albert L. Vifquain, 1940-1941; Father C.J. Moynihan, 1941-1943; Father Vincent C. Nepl, 1943; Father C.J. Moynihan, 1944-1946; Father Albert Godlewski, 1946-1948; Father John C. Madsen, 1948-1961; Father Daniel Fishburn, 1961-1964; Father Joseph Abele, 1964-1986; Father Dan Christensen, 1986-1991; Father Walter Phillips, 1991-1994; Father Joseph Hannappel, 1994-1999; Father Martin Egging, 1999-2006; Father Neal



Father John Madsen poses with the sons of Grace and Cliff Polk Sr., who were altar servers for St. Elizabeth Church in Oshkosh in 1956. Pictured from left are Bill, Tom, Jerry, Pat, Mike and Cliff Jr.

Nollette, 2006-2012. Father Michael McDonald assumed the pastorate of Oshkosh in July 2012.

During Father Fishburn's tenure the Holy Joe Cattle group was organized to raise money to build a new church. The program raised over \$50,000 for the parish in its 19 years.

Also, during the early 1960s, the women of St. Elizabeth's Parish began serving an annual turkey dinner for the community of Oshkosh. The tradition promoted fellowship in the community and well as a fundraiser for St. Elizabeth's.

Changes after the Second Vatican Council were effected under the leadership of Father Abele. They included moving the altar table and lay participation in the celebration of the Mass.

Construction began on a new St. Elizabeth's Church in June 1975 and the

church was dedicated on Nov. 14, 1976, by Bishop John J. Sullivan. The altar and organ from the first church were used in the new building. Carillon bells were installed in the bell tower in 1980 at the bequest of Edna Withers.

Paintings of Mary and Joseph, done by Santa Fe artist Drew Bacigulpa, were hung in the church in 1979 and a stained glass window depicting the Visitation was added to the church as a memorial from parishioners.

New windows designed and created by parishioner Barb Webster were installed in St. Elizabeth Church in 2006 and blessed by Father Egging. The windows are nine scenes in stained glass, seven of which represent the sacraments, literally in a rainbow of color. From waves of water and rays of sunshine, to angels, grapes and wheat, parishioners have a new view through their windows.



Early St. Elizabeth Church. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)



St. Elizabeth Church today.



# Overton Holy Rosary

Since the church was established 100 years ago, Holy Rosary has always been a mission parish of either Elm Creek or Lexington.

The first Mass in Overton was offered by Father James Ryan of Columbus in 1867, but the first church was not built until 1907. Early priests who visited the area before the church was built included Fathers Ryan, Patrick Lynch (from 1867 to 1880), James Hayes, Thomas P. Haley, F.E. Clark, Thomas Walsh, J.J. Flood, Michael Donaghue, James Burke and J.M. Delboe.

Father Timothy Sullivan was assigned pastor in 1907, taking up residence at Elm Creek with Overton attached as a mission. Father Sullivan was transferred to Wood River in 1922 and Father John J. Kavanagh served the parish from 1922 until his death on April 20, 1943.

In 1947 sparks from a burning building ignited the church, completely destroying the building. Father Peter Kenny, the current priest at the time, returned immediately from Ireland to supervise the construction of the present church.

Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler dedicated the new church Sept. 7, 1949, with 33 priests present. Father Kenny was transferred to Ogallala on June 10, 1950, and Father Lawrence Portrey served the parish from 1950 to 1952. Father Portrey began the



Deacon William O'Donnell teaches Blair Brennan about the symbols of the dreidel at the 2011 Vacation Bible School.

served the parish from 1974 to 1975 until Father Schmitt was assigned as permanent pastor at Overton and Elm Creek in June 1975. With a resident priest in Elm Creek, Holy Rosary became a mission of Elm Creek again. In conjunction with area ministers, Father Schmitt started a Vacation Bible School for children of all faiths in the Overton and Elm Creek communities during his pastorate.

Father Hubert Spanel was transferred to the parish on July 1, 1981, and served until July 1, 1983; Father James Warner was appointed pastor from 1983 to 1987; and Father Walter Phelan served from 1987 to 1989 when Father Andrew Gonda was named to the position. Father Gonda served until 1993, followed by Father Neal Nollette, who served from 1993 to 2001.

Father Mark Maresh was named pastor in 2001 and served until 2007.

Father José Chavez, current pastor, was assigned to the parish in February 2007, and is assisted by Deacon William O'Donnell.

Parishioners celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Holy Rosary Mission with a special Mass of Thanksgiving Sept. 12, 1982. Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara was the main celebrant of the Mass.

Holy Rosary Church in Overton celebrated its centennial year on Aug. 26, 2007, at the church with Bishop William J. Dendinger concelebrating.

Catholic Youth Organization, assisted by the Carmelite Sisters from Kearney, until he was transferred to Greeley. From 1952 to 1957, Father Robert O'Neill served the parish followed by Father Anthony Radziewicz, from 1957 to 1958. Father Vincent Neppl served the church for 16 years, from 1958 until 1974.

Father Robert Karnish was pastor for the next 10 months, and in September 1974, Overton Holy Rosary became a mission of St. Ann's in Lexington served by Father Harry Kurtenbach and Father James Schmitt.

Fathers Kurtenbach and Schmitt



Father Lawrence Portrey, later named Monsignor, served Holy Rosary Parish from 1950-1952.

# Paxton Holy Rosary

The first Catholic priest to serve in the Paxton area, recorded in 1859, was Father Pierre Jean DeSmet. At the time, Paxton was known as Alkali and the Alkali Post Office was established on Dec. 6, 1883. In the 1880s and '90s, priests from Fort Sidney said Mass in homes and in Paxton store buildings, Gunnel Hall and the Globe Hotel. The name of the post office was changed to Paxton on Dec. 22, 1885, named after Keith County cattle baron William Paxton.

The first Mass recorded was offered by Father J.J. Barrett on Feb. 27, 1887, in the section house then occupied by the McSweeney family.

In 1888 Paxton was a mission of Sidney and Mass was offered once a year and in the late 1890s, once a month on Saturday with the priest making the trip on a freight train.

With the encouragement of Father John J. Flood, a small frame church was built in 1902. During 1912, Paxton was a mission of Sidney under the pastorate of Fathers Aloysius Kampmann and Robert Blum.

In 1913 the church had to be moved a short distance because it was built partly in the street.

In October 1913 Paxton—along with Sutherland—became a mission of the new St. Luke's Parish in Ogallala under the direction of Father Edward Hynes.

Father Hynes was pastor until 1914 followed by Father Timothy Molony, 1914-1916; Father John Gleeson, 1916-1917; and in 1917, Father Patrick Sloan was appointed pastor of Ogallala and its mission Paxton.

St. Patrick's in Paxton returned to Ogallala as a mission in 1919.

The parishes in Paxton and Sutherland were changed to the pastorate of Father Alphonse Gasser in August 1922. Sutherland was chosen as the residence for the pastor and Paxton became a mission of Sutherland.

The present brick church at St. Patrick's was built in 1930 under the direction of Father Gasser. Parishioners donated \$16,000 for the building, but an additional \$10,000 was borrowed to complete the church. The first Mass in the church was offered Christmas morning 1930. The dedication services were conducted by Bishop James A. Duffy on May 28, 1931.

This new church was modeled after St. Joseph's in Elba although it is unclear whether the building was started in the fall of 1929 or the spring of 1930.



Catholic Church and town of Paxton. (Photo courtesy Gene and Jeanne Krab)



This photo was taken shortly after the completion of building St. Patrick's Church in Paxton in 1931. The man on the left is believed to be Father Alphonse Gasser, pastor at Sacred Heart in Sutherland and its mission, St. Patrick's in Paxton.

Through the Depression years, only enough money was collected to pay the interest on the loan. According to one history, Father Gasser called together a gathering of men to encourage them to help to make a payment on the principal stating, "You should see some of the nasty letters from creditors." One parishioner responded with, "You should see some of mine." That, the history reads, was the end of that meeting.

Father Gasser died later that year on Dec. 4, 1931, and Father Francis Tschida became the next pastor. Under his direction, the church became debt free in the late 1930s. He served until 1938. In 1936 the coal stoker was converted to heating oil.

Father Joseph Muldoon served from 1938 until his death in 1949 and Father Anthony Radziewicz was assistant during Father Muldoon's last year. In 1949, Father C. J. Shumski began serving the Paxton parish until 1961. During his tenure, a forced air gas furnace, water heater, and bathrooms were installed and the kitchen was revamped. The stained glass windows were installed at this time with each window being donated by a family or families. Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey also became a mission under Sutherland along with St. Patrick's in Paxton during this time.

From 1961 to 1966 Father Walter Phelan served as pastor followed by

Fathers James Kremer, 1966-1967; Gerald Harr, 1967-1973 and Gerald Carlson, 1973-1981. After Vatican II, the old altars and statues were removed and the church was remodeled in 1970 and the old altar was replaced with a more modern version. In the mid '70s, a pastoral ministry program and a parish council was formed.

Father Jacob Bauer was named pastor in 1981 until his retirement in 1990. During this time, Paxton was again the only mission of Sutherland.

Father Thomas Dillon served from 1990 until his retirement in 1998. In 1993, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Hershey returned to a mission status of Sutherland along with Paxton.

Father James Janovec was pastor from 1998 until 2003 when St. Patrick's in Paxton became a mission of St. Luke's in Ogallala under the pastorate of Father John "Jack" Schlaf, who retired in 2005. Sister Christina Meyer also joined St. Patrick's Parish, staying until 2009. In 2005 Father Bryan Ernest was appointed pastor and in 2006 St. Patrick's Parish in Paxton celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Pastoral ministers who have also served include Sisters Esther Fehringer, Anita Zamora, Ann Manthey, and Rita Kolbet.

Compiled from "Paxton Yesterday and Today" by Gene and Jeanne Krab, and the West Nebraska Register.

The present church of Holy Rosary Parish in Overton, shown here in 1962, was built in 1949 to replace the original 1907 building which was destroyed by fire on Aug. 9, 1947.



# Pleasanton St. Mary

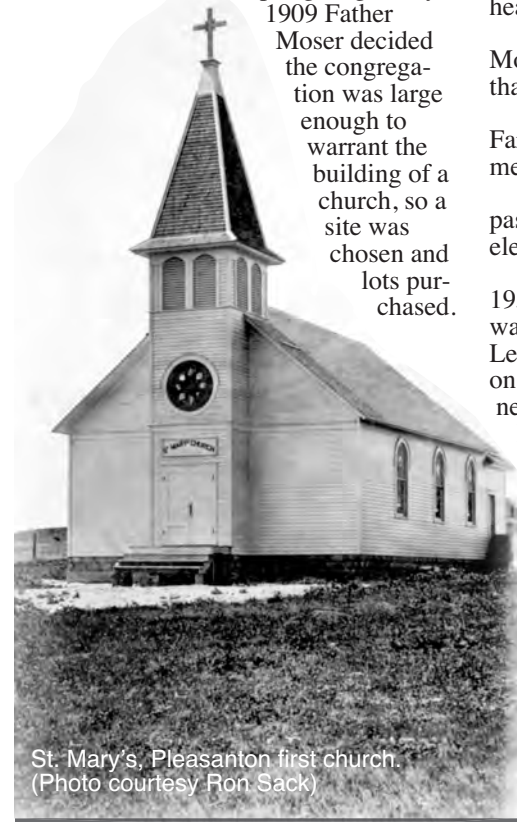
The history of St. Mary's Parish begins with the history of the Catholic families who came to take homesteads in the early 1880s. There were 13 original Catholic families who settled in the area. In 1889 Father Patrick McGovern came from Kearney to the David Zwiener home to offer Mass and to baptize 22 children. After the church at Prairie Center was built in 1891, Mass was discontinued at the Zwiener home and people attended Mass in Prairie Center.

In 1890 the Union Pacific Railroad built their branch line and platted the village of Pleasanton. This was the beginning of the community on the north bank of the South Loup River. The first train came to town on March 1, 1890. By June of that year, dozens of small shops and businesses were in operation. It was not until 1906 that a priest was sent to offer Mass. While riding out to Boelus one day, he inquired about the Catholic families from a Pleasanton man who was seated beside him. After listening to him, the priest began plans to have a Mass in Pleasanton.

Frank Grammer offered the use of a hall and Father John Kavanagh came to celebrate the first Mass.

St. Mary's became a mission of Broken Bow in 1908, and Father Paul Moser came to offer Mass once a month. Father Moser would take a train from Broken Bow to Ravenna and from there a family would give him a ride in a horse drawn spring wagon. By 1909 Father

Moser decided the congregation was large enough to warrant the building of a church, so a site was chosen and lots purchased.



St. Mary's, Pleasanton first church. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

A sturdy frame structure, 30 feet by 40 feet with a sanctuary and sacristy at the rear was erected. The congregation sat on planks placed on nail kegs. Later, some second-hand pews were purchased.

St. Mary's of Pleasanton became a mission of St. Mary's of Prairie Center—which now had a resident priest—in 1913. Mass was offered twice a month in Pleasanton.

Father Francis Tschida served St. Mary's for six years. During his pastorate, two acres of land adjoining the town cemetery were purchased so that St. Mary's would have a burial plot for the parish. Also during Father Tschida's tenure the old wooden altar was replaced by three composition marble altars and there was a bell for the tower donated.

Father Moser was sent to Prairie Center in 1936. Father Moser was made a resident priest of Pleasanton in 1937, serving St. Gabriel's in Hazard as a mission. He served for three years until his health began to fail.

Father Stanley Gorak replaced Father Moser and it was during his pastorate that a rectory was purchased for \$1,400.

Church dinners were held in the Old Farmers Union hall and altar society meetings were held in the homes.

Father James McSweeney became pastor in 1952 and new pews and an electric organ were installed.

Father Jan Smutny became pastor in 1958. The parish hall, 40 feet by 80 feet, was built on land purchased from the Legion and this building was dedicated on Oct. 8, 1958. A new rectory was needed and construction started in December 1958 and was completed in May 1959, with a full basement that contained rooms for instructional and meeting purposes.

On June 27, 1959, disaster struck. A tornado hit St. Mary's Church and moved it 20 feet off its foundation. The beautiful, original church was completely destroyed. Father Smutny was in the church to hear confessions when the storm hit. During the height of the storm, Father Smutny, feeling the impact of the



Bishop William J. Dendinger and Father Jan Smutny during the Mass of Thanksgiving for Father Smutny's 65th anniversary of ordination at St. Mary's Church in Pleasanton on July 15, 2007.

movement of the building, decided it best to leave the building. He took refuge in the road ditch east of the church and fortunately was not seriously hurt.

The decision was made to build a new church and groundbreaking was held Sept. 27, 1959. The cornerstone for the new church was dedicated on Dec. 20, 1959. After much labor and help from the parish, the church was dedicated on May 31, 1960. The building was built of pumice block and red Yankee brick and accommodates 200 people.

The original bell from the old church tower was installed in the new church and continues to ring forth over the community.

St. Mary's became a mission of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ravenna in 2002 along with St. Gabriel's of Hazard and St. Mary's of Rockville. In 2006 Pleasanton, Rockville and Ravenna clustered with Loup City, Ashton and Hazard. Mass is still held three times a year on Sundays at St. Mary's in Pleasanton and on the first Thursday of each month. Parishioners typically attend Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes during the rest of the year.

Priests who have served St. Mary's include Father Paul Moser, Aloys Kampmann, Anton Link, Irenaeus Jarka, Francis Tschida, Henry Keil, Paul Weiss, W.H. O'Keefe, Stanley Gorak, Constantine Shumski, Joseph Hargarten, A.M. Wajckus, Monsignor Carl Hayden, James McSweeney, Jan Smutny, Andrew Gonda, Harold Kurtenbach, Loren Pohlmeier, Louis Nollette, Rodney Pruss and present pastor, Father Martin Egging.

Religious serving St. Mary's Parish include Sister Mary Walling and Sister Paulette Kuta.

# Ravenna Our Lady of Lourdes

In the early 1880s several Irish families came from the East and settled on a tract of land known today as "Dry Creek," about 9 miles northwest of Ravenna.

They settled on Nebraska prairie with a hope of making it their homes, and they did. By hard labor, perseverance and faith in God, they transformed the buffalo grazing valleys and Indian hunting grounds into fertile farms and cozy homes.

They encountered many dangers and hardships, blizzards, grasshoppers, prairie fires, but they thought that if God gave man teeth He had to give him something to eat, and so they pulled through by grinding corn on grist mills, as well as on coffee mills ... and grew into strong, husky and successful men. In those days there were plenty of antelopes and prairie chickens, so meat was easy to get, but for the real flour, the staff of life, they had to travel 36 miles.

Having erected their "sod mansions" and providing for the material part of life, they thought of providing also for their souls. And so in 1883 Father Patrick Boyle of Kearney had the first Mass in Buckley's house to the great joy of all. It was decided that in order that nobody would feel slighted, but rather honored, Mass would be held by turns. All were glad to do the little extra work of cleaning and decorating the place where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for them, where they could receive the sacraments to strengthen them for their further battle of life. And so Mass was held every month by Father Boyle till the end of 1883.—History of Ravenna, Buffalo County, Nebraska, by Rev. Joseph Macourek, Pastor, March 6, 1932.

The early Ravenna territory was composed of Irish, Czech, German and Bohemian families, all speaking their native language.

The difficulty in understanding each language explains why it took some time to organize the various groups into



Father Martin Egging

one parish.

The first Catholic church, St. Mary's, was built in Ravenna in 1887 with Father Thomas Haley of Kearney in charge. Lumber was hauled from Grand Island by team, a distance of 36 miles. Among the pioneer priests serving the Ravenna church in those early years were Father William Choka, Father Philip Maly, Father John Mueller, Father John Hodyc, Father Joseph Chundelak, Father John Broz, Father John Giesler, Father John Stocker, Father Charles Mugan, Father Anthony Duda, and Father Paul Moser.

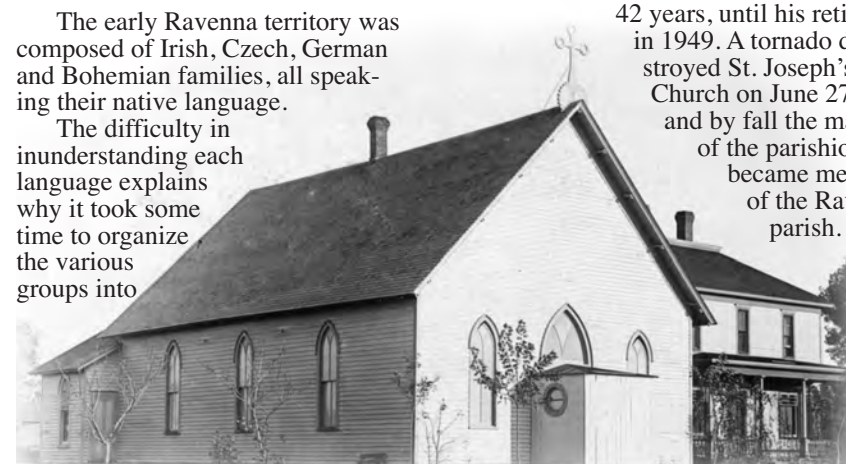
An attempt by Father Duda in 1899 to build a rectory failed. That same year during the winter, the German colony south of town, prompted by a desire to hear the Gospel

preached in a language they could understand, organized St. Joseph's

mission and built a church in Schneider Township. The following spring, Father Wunibald Wolf and assistants from Grand Island began offering Mass there.

Ravenna received its first resident priest, Father Jaroslav Hancik, in 1902. Father Hancik built the first rectory in 1903. When Father Hancik transferred to the Lincoln diocese in 1906, the two missions reverted to the care of Father Wolf in Grand Island and his assistants.

Father Joseph Macourek was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in Ravenna in 1907 and served for the next 42 years, until his retirement in 1949. A tornado destroyed St. Joseph's Church on June 27, 1950, and by fall the majority of the parishioners became members of the Ravenna parish.



St. Mary's, the first Catholic church at Ravenna. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

During the early part of the 1950s, the present brick church was built to replace the wooden structure which had served the parish since 1887.

The new laminated wood-arched church was 63 feet by 123 feet, seated 400, and was equipped with complete hall and kitchen facilities in the basement.

Among the original stained glass that was retained was an image of Our Lady standing under the rays of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the entrance of the church.



Bishop John L. Paschang and members of the clergy and Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus are shown following the dedication of Our Lady of Lourdes Church at Ravenna on April 27, 1954. Father Anthony Radziewicz, pastor of the parish, is to the front and slightly to the right of the bishop.

The rectory, which had been originally built in 1903, was replaced by a new brick rectory to match the church in 1961.

Bishop John L. Paschang gave permission to officially change the name from St. Mary's to Our Lady of Lourdes in 1954.

In 1987 the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary. A series of renovations occurred from 1997 to 2003, and a new parish center was constructed and the basement was updated. The interior of the church was also renovated to add a Blessed Sacrament chapel and a gathering space, along with the addition of a canopy over the main entrance.

Our Lady of Lourdes became part of the six parish cluster with Loup City, Hazard, Ashton, Pleasanton and Rockville in 2006.

Other priests who have served Our Lady of Lourdes include Father Anthony Radziewicz, Father Robert Foster, Father Jacob Bauer, Father Paul Wachtrle, Father Hubert Spanel, Father Daniel Christensen, Father Thomas Mullowney, Father Rodney Pruss and present pastor Father Martin Egging.

Sister Loisjean Carlson served Our Lady of Lourdes in 1988. Sister Paulette Kuta, S.S.J., currently serves as pastoral minister of Ravenna and Pleasanton.



# Rockville St. Mary

The first Catholics came to the area and settled the land on the south side of the Middle Loup River. When they arrived, there was no church close to their homesteads, so the early pioneers had to ride the train to Loup City on Saturday and return home on Sunday following Mass. A priest would come from Grand Island to visit the families and offer Mass in their sod homes, celebrate the sacraments and baptize the children. But a necessity of having their own church was becoming evident to the early settlers.

Plans for a church in Rockville began to be made. The decision was made to choose a strong leader to take their case to Father Wunibald Wolf in Grand Island. Joseph Roszczynialski made contact with Father Wolf and shared with him the wishes of the Catholic community of Rockville. Those wishes were passed on to Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha and soon after, permission to build a church in Rockville was granted. A building committee was organized and a campaign to collect funds for the new church began. Shares of \$25 were collected from all families in the Rockville area.

The project began quickly through the support of the community and the leadership of the building committee. Roszczynialski served as the architect and carpenter of the building project. The 40 foot by 92 foot frame was erected by members of the community. Construction began in the spring of 1908 with the cornerstone being laid and blessed on May 9, 1909, by Father Wolf. During the construction period, Father Alexander Cudzinski from Loup City offered Mass every Sunday.

Construction was completed in October 1909. The church had a seating capacity of 300. The main altar was designed and built by Roszczynialski. Side altars and pews were not immediately part of the structure due to the lack of funds; simple benches were used for the first two years. The church was dedicated on Oct. 20, 1909, by Bishop Scannell of Omaha.

Father Aloysius Jarzowski pastored Rockville from 1910 to 1911 as a mis-

sion of St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island. He traveled by train from Grand Island, and all the records of baptism during that time were recorded in Grand Island.

In 1912 and 1913 Father William Fitzgerald, Father Paul Wiese and Father N.J. Grupa shared responsibilities in Rockville. St. Mary's in Rockville also shared priests with Loup City, Farwell and Paplin during those trying times and, due to a shortage of priests, they were not always available to offer Mass.

The determined parish family purchased ground to build a rectory in hopes of getting a resident priest. On Aug. 1, 1911, the purchase was made and the rectory was built, but their hopes for a resident priest were not answered until 1918. Father Aloysius Raczyński became the first resident pastor of Rockville. He was followed by Father Joseph Bogacz, who resided there from 1919 to 1921. Father

Henry Keil became pastor from 1922 to 1923 and during his pastorate a basement was dug, a furnace was purchased, and the church and rectory were wired for electricity. The final resident priest in St. Mary's history was Father G. Stakemeier who served from 1924 to 1926. Father Stakemeier was the resident priest with St. Anthony's of Farwell as the mission church. When Farwell built a rectory the situation was reversed and St. Mary's became a mission parish.

Other pastors serving during that time were Father Joseph Hinzman, Father Joseph Muldoon, Father Irenaeus Jarka, and Father John Czajka.

Father Joseph Hinzman served St. Mary's for a second time from 1935 to 1946. Improvements to the structure continued through the years and the parish was served by priests from Loup City, Farwell, Ashton and Chynice. The old rectory was converted into a parish hall and a new home was purchased with continued hopes of a resident pastor.



St. Mary's Church, Rockville.

During the 1950s, the sanctuary was remodeled and the ceiling was lowered. In 1978, the bell tower was struck by lightning. The tower was removed and the bell was placed next to the entrance to the church.

With the exception of eight years between 1918 and 1926, St. Mary's Catholic Church has been a mission parish. It has been served from Grand Island, Loup City, Farwell, Ashton, Chynice, and currently Ravenna.

In 2006 St. Mary's of Rockville became part of the six parish cluster along with Ravenna, Loup City, Pleasanton, Hazard, and Ashton.

On Aug. 30, 2009, St. Mary's celebrated the 100th anniversary with Mass offered by Bishop William J. Dendinger.

Other priests serving St. Mary's in Rockville were Fathers Anthony

Figlerski, James Kremer, Milan Kopushar, Donald Larmore, John "Jack" Schlaf, Robert Foster, Carl Ferris, John Cook, Michael McDermott, Art Faesser, Hubert Spanel, Daniel Christensen, Rodney Pruss, and present pastor Father Martin Egging.

Sister Paulette Kuta, S.S.J., also serves the parish.

Sherman County records show incorporation papers for St. Mary of Holy Rosary Church in 1919 and, as late as 1952, financial records carried the formal title of the parish. At some time in the history of the church, the name was shortened.



Father John Czajka

# Rushville Immaculate Conception

Just after the turn of the 20th century, records show that Immaculate Conception Parish in Rushville—originally known as St. Mary's—had its beginnings.

The Rushville parish records date back only to 1906, but show that was the year the parish was first organized. Before that Mass was celebrated in homes in the area by Jesuit-order priests from Pine Ridge, S.D. For one year, Mass was celebrated in the house of Mrs. Amalia Hiller, later known as the "Mission House."

The Jesuit Fathers at Pine Ridge had charge of the missions in Sheridan County—Rushville, Gordon, Hay Springs and Mirage Flats. These pioneer priests helped Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha organize the scattered missions of Sheridan County.

Father Matthias Schmitt, S.J., started a building campaign and built the new church at Rushville. A subscription of \$1,800 was taken up and four lots were donated by James F. McFarland.

Fathers Henry Gotegeers, S.J., Henry Westropp, a missionary for many years in East India and Eugene Buechel of Pine Ridge attended the missions for brief periods of time. For more than a year, Father P. Paul Kern, S.J., was attending priest at Rushville, Gordon and Hay Springs and applied to the bishop of Omaha to take back these places and give them a diocesan priest as pastor.

Mass was celebrated in the first church Nov. 1, 1907. St. Mary's continued as a mission church until Oct. 13, 1910, when Father John Nepper became the first resident priest staying in "rooms above the Union bank and eating at the hotel for six months." A rectory was built in June 1911.

In 1910 Father Nepper took charge of St. Leo's mission in Gordon. During the 1920s, St. Leo's became the only mission of Rushville. The name St. Mary's was changed to Immaculate Conception sometime between 1912 and 1916.

In a 1932 article from the *Register*, travel to the remote area missions was "by train at inconvenient hours; by wagons, buggy, sled and stagecoach. Merri-man was added as another mission of Rushville and at the time there were no highways making it impossible to get to Merri-man by car because of the deep sand," the article read. After five years, Merri-man was placed in charge of Nenzel. After 10 years with four missions, the west end of the parish—Hay Springs and Mirage Flats—was turned over to the newly appointed pastor of Hay Springs, Father John Keil, who took charge Sept. 1, 1920.

A school was built and staffed by

Ursuline Sisters from Louisville, Ky., with the first classes beginning on Sept. 18, 1916. The first year, six nuns were stationed in Rushville and the enrollment reached 61 students.

The school, known as St. Mary's High School, grew until there were 177 children. In the summer of 1924, the church building was enlarged, doubling the seating capacity. In 1928 the school had reached its maximum enrollment.

At the peak of prosperity, a building campaign was begun. A large dormitory and gymnasium were built as well as a central heating plant. However, owing to financial reverses resulting from continued droughts, the school was forced to close in 1933.

Father Nepper served as pastor at Rushville for more than 26 years before Father Joseph Bean was appointed on Jan. 2, 1936. He served until becoming an Army chaplain in 1943. Father Anthony Egging replaced Father Bean until 1947. Father Bean returned to the parish after the war for a short time.

Father Andrew McDonald, appointed pastor in 1947, reopened St. Mary's school with the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Charity serving the parish and school with 60 grade school students. The high school department, with the exception of the ninth grade, was not reopened and that grade was dropped a few years later. Enrollment in the school remained in the 60s and the school stayed open until 1967. The building was razed in 1975.

During Father Joseph Hargarten's pastorate, begun in 1950, a building fund was started. Built at a cost of \$140,000, a new church was dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang on Dec. 13, 1962.

Father Frederick Snyder served from January 1965 to April 1967. It was during this time that St. Leo's in Gordon was no longer a mission of Rushville. Father David John served from April 1967 to August 1968.

In June 1969 Father Gerald Carlson was appointed pastor at Rushville and St. Columbkille's Parish in Hay Springs and Sacred Heart Parish, Mirage Flats, became missions of Rushville. In 1976 Mirage Flats became a mission of Hemingford. Under Father Carlson's tenure, a mortgage burning ceremony was held on Jan. 31, 1972.



Rushville St. Mary's School. (Photo courtesy Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections)

While Father Walter Phillips was pastor, 1973-1977, a new rectory connected to the church was built that included a large meeting room and four religious education rooms. The cost of the new rectory was approximately \$73,000.

Father Lawrence Fenton followed Father Phillips as pastor from 1977 to 1980. A memorial dedication was held July 4, 1977, for the dedication of the bronze bell from the old St. Mary's Church belfry. Only Hay Springs was served as a mission at this time.

Father Neal Nollette of Chadron attended the parish of Rushville and Hay Springs from December 1980 to July 1981. Pastors serving from 1981 to 1987 were Fathers Art Faesser, Alex Borzych, and Louis Nollette. Father James Heithoff, pastor at Gordon, assumed responsibilities of Rushville and Hay Springs as missions in 1993. Father Robert Karnish served from 1995 to 2002 followed by Father Timothy Stoner, from 2002 to 2008 when Father James Joseph S.D.B., current pastor, was appointed.

The iconic nearly 50-year-old steeple was removed at the request of the church's insurance company in 2010. The steeple had been struck by lightning two times causing extensive damage. The first was in 1987 damaging a support beam, while the second happened in 2008 blowing a hole into the same support beam.

For many years, Rushville and surrounding parishes and missions boasted of "The God Squad" better known as Sisters Agnesine Hargarten and Florence Southall. The duo worked as traveling religious education instructors along Highway 20. Also serving was Sister Rosalima Wilkinson.

Compiled with information from Betty Kearns and Moreen Rasmussen.



# St. Libory St. Libory

Leaving their homeland and coming to America under the protection of St. Liborius, immigrants settled in St. Clair County in southern Illinois where they founded a parish called St. Libory. After spending 30 years in Illinois, in the spring of 1876, a few of the original settlers moved further west and established a German Catholic colony they called St. Libory, in honor of the patron of their ancestral home, the Diocese of Paderborn, Westphalen, Germany. These families—Joseph Gruntmier, Henry Cordes, Bill Buddecke, John Dingwerth, Conrad Evers and Joseph Strehle—endured many trials, and in all these hardships the people turned to prayer. Since they had no church, they erected a cross in the cemetery where Catholics and Protestants gathered in prayer.

The pioneers realized that they could not thrive and prosper without religion. They purchased 10 acres of land from the Union Pacific Railroad at \$4 an acre with money donated by Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Arends.

Before the church was built, services took place in the sod home of Conrad Evers. It was here that Joseph Strehle of St. Libory and Mary Selbach of St. Maurice, Ind., were married on Nov. 30, 1877, with Father Gafron, a Franciscan from Columbus, officiating.

The first church, begun in 1878, was rather primitive in appearance. A frame structure, with the earth for the floor, the sanctuary a raised platform, the altar a plain wooden box, and the first benches—planks laid across kegs—provided seating capacity for about 40 people.

Mass was offered in the new church for the first time on July 4, 1878, and a petition for a resident priest was sent to Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha. Father John N. Kilian was appointed the first pastor on Sept. 1, 1884. During

Father Kilian's pastorate, a rectory was built.

Father Kilian's immediate successors were Father Bernard Ahne, 1885-1886; Father Nicholas Stoltz, 1887; and Father John Mueller, 1887-1892. During Father Mueller's pastorate, the first frame school was built and was later used as a winter chapel. Father M.G. Baumgartner was in charge of the parish from 1893 to 1896, to be followed by Father Einzig, 1896-1898; Father A. Bimbach, 1898-1899; and Father A. Hork, 1899-1903. Since the old church had been completely destroyed by fire, a new frame church was built in 1900.

Father Ferdinand Leichleitner served the parish from 1903 to 1905, and Father Casper Grobel from 1905 to 1907. It was during the latter's administration that a new rectory was built, which later served as the convent.

Father August Heimes served as pastor from 1907 to 1914. The brick school was built during his pastorate in 1913, and dedicated by Bishop James A. Duffy.

Sisters of St. Francis were the first religious order to teach in St. Libory. Later the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concor dia, Kan., took over, but only for a short time. From 1911 to 1945, the School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, Wis., taught in the school. In 1945 the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis of South Bend, Ind., came to the community and taught until the school closed in 1968.

Father W. Buerger served as pastor in 1914 and 1915. He was followed by Father Charles Kaufman until 1934. Father Joseph Carroll served as administrator from 1933 to 1936 and was replaced by Father Anthony Figlerski who remained only for a short period of time. On Jan. 1, 1937, Father John Nepper was named pastor, but lived only until August 1938. Father Albert Vifquain took care of the parish temporarily. In September 1938 Father Henry Muenstermann was named pastor.

Father Muenstermann and the parishioners decided to build a parish hall to be used as a community center with funds of approximately \$7,000 that had been

originally planned for a new church. The parish hall was to be constructed so that it would eventually be the basement for a new church.

The men of the parish furnished all of the labor, and by October 1940, the hall was completed. It was used regularly before the interior was completely finished. All social events of the parish, and many of those of the town, were held in this hall.

Father Andrew Augustyn was named as pastor on July 1, 1952.

Since the old frame church could no longer adequately serve the parish, the building of a new one became imperative. A meeting was held Oct. 21, 1952, to propose a plan for raising funds to build a new church. The 35 men present unanimously agreed that each parishioner should voluntarily pledge an amount to the building of the new church with payments to be made over a three-year period. After each parishioner had been contacted personally, \$67,000 had been pledged.

The parish was informed at the Midnight Mass on Christmas 1952, that a new church would be built on the site of the present parish hall.

Work on the new church began June 8, 1953, with Leo A. Daly Company of Omaha as architect and on Oct. 18, the cornerstone was laid by Bishop John L. Paschang.

The new church was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Paschang on May 31, 1954, and the parish also celebrated its diamond jubilee the same day.

Bishop Paschang offered a Mass of Thanksgiving on Feb. 24, 1957, to celebrate the parish becoming debt free and said, "This is proof of what can be done, with God's help, when there is united effort. There is no doubt but that every family made heavy sacrifices in order to see this become a reality." In a period of four years, the 90 families in the parish had built and furnished a \$100,000 church, and paid for it completely ...."

At Mass on New Year's Day 1959, it was announced that a new rectory would be built. With the generous cooperation of the men of the parish, the project was

completed by fall. Several parishioners did the mechanical work in the construction. The new rectory was blessed by Bishop Paschang in September 1960, with 30 neighboring priests present.

The old rectory was completely remodeled to accommo-

date the four sisters who had previously been living on the top floor of the school. The work in connection with this project was also donated by the parishioners.

An anonymous gift of \$5,000 was given to the parish in December 1960, with the provision that the parish would match the gift within a month. The amount was contributed, and the debt on the rectory reduced to less than a third of the original cost.

Father Robert Warner arrived to serve the parish in 1974. On June 11, 1984, a tornado struck St. Libory and caused extensive damage. Numerous gravestones were damaged, as well as the roofs of the church, rectory, and school. Parishioners assisted in the removal of 50 trees that were destroyed.

After Father Warner's death on Dec. 2, 1990, Father Walter Phelan was appointed administrator and named pastor of the parish July 1, 1991.

Father Richard Piontkowski served the parish from 1995 to 1997 and directed the substantial renovation of the church. In 1996 the old brick school building was demolished and a modern parish hall with classrooms for religion education classes

was constructed.

Father David Rykwald administered to the pastoral needs of the parish from 1997-2001;

Father Michael McDermott from 2001-2004; and Father Lawrence Coulter, 2004-2009. Father Donald Buhrman was named pastor in 2009 and Father Sidney Bruggeman was named associate pastor. In 2011 Father Sidney Bruggeman became pastor.

The parish has provided 18 vocations to the church; 16 sisters and two priests: Sister Mary Mathia Boyle, Sister Mary Martha Kuiper,

Sister Mary Florentia Kuiper, Sister Mary Lucida Greenwalt, Sister Mary Guido Buhrman, Sister Mary Emmerencia Burghardt, Sister Mary Rosata Graczyk, Sister Mary Geralda Rock, Sister Mary Leonita Wilson, Sister Mary Secunda Buhrman, Sister Mary Martine Hundeldt, Sister Mary Roderick Wissing, Sister Mary Olivett Evers, Sister Mary Catalda Turk, Sister Mary Madeline Rose, Sister Mary Jacinta Janovec, Father Robert O'Neill, and Father James Janovec.

Compiled by Ron W. Sack with information from the St. Libory Catholic Church archives and the West Nebraska Register.



Father Sidney Bruggeman



Father Andrew Augustyn

Father Andrew Augustyn was pastor at St. Libory Church from 1952 to 1974 and built the brick church and rectory that serves the parish today. As of 2009 he was the oldest native Nebraskan priest in the diocese until his death on Nov. 22, 2010, and was one of only two living priests to have met all seven bishops of the Diocese of Grand Island. Father Augustyn was a priest for 63 years.



During Father Andrew Augustyn's tenure the present brick church was built and was dedicated May 31, 1954, by Bishop John L. Paschang. Pictured from left are Father James Naughtin, Bishop Paschang, Father Anthony Figlerski and Father Albert Vifquain. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



The present St. Libory church and rectory, 1960s. (Photo courtesy Jack Bailey Studio)

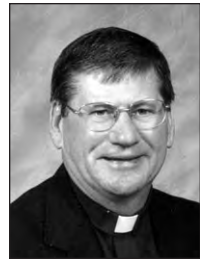


The first St. Libory Church and parishioners in 1898. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



# St. Paul Sts. Peter and Paul

The history of the Catholic Church in St. Paul began in 1878 when the area was settled by immigrants from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. Mass was celebrated in private homes, local stores and the courthouse before the first church was built in 1883.



Father Raymond Kosmicki

In 1882 the corner on which the church now stands was deeded to Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha. Catholics, under the leadership of John Barzynski, with John Mackin, Laurence Blaszczyk, and Xavier Piasecki, began to collect funds for a church. In 1883 when the sum reached \$1,000 they began to erect a church. The first church was made of bricks and was probably fired in the local brick kiln. The church was completed at a cost of \$5,000. It was made possible largely by the generosity of the laborers who were working on the building of the Union Pacific Railroad at that time.

Between that time and 1885 Father Wunibald Wolf of Grand Island also celebrated Mass occasionally at St. Paul, along with Father Bernard W. Ahne of St. Libory.

Sts. Peter and Paul Church was incorporated in 1885 and in 1887 Father John Mueller of St. Libory served the parish as a mission.

Father Eugene Geary was appointed the first resident pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in March 1888. Soon after his arrival, the parish rectory was built.

Father Geary was replaced by Father John S. Broz in September 1890. At this time, Warsaw, Ravenna, and Geranium were added as missions to St. Paul. Father Broz was succeeded by Father Joseph Chundelak, who served from 1894-1902. Other priests serving were Father Joseph Macourek, 1902-1906; Father Joseph Rose, 1906-1908; and Father Peter Grobbel, 1908-1910. Father Grobbel began to plan for a church building and he and some parishioners were sent to Kansas City to employ an architect to draw up plans.

Father C.E. Hovorka was named pastor Jan. 23, 1910, and under his guidance in June 1910, the contract was let for the erection of a new church in the sum of \$13,000. The cornerstone was laid Aug. 25, 1910, and the building was completed in December 1911.

Other priests serving as pastors were Father Felix Gebauer, 1911-1912; Father Michael Grupa, 1912-1914; Father E.A. Clemenz, 1914-1915; Father Daniel

Manning, 1915-1915; and Father Aloysius Jarzowski, 1915-1919.

Father John Gleeson began his pastorate in July 1919 and served the parish for 37 years, until his death Oct. 18, 1956. During his tenure a brick rectory was built at a cost of \$12,000, and lots for a future parochial school were purchased.

During this time, to provide for the spiritual growth of the parish, missions were conducted along with 40 Hours Devotion by neighboring priests with sermons in Polish and Bohemian.



A new bell tower was built to house the bell from the old St. Paul church. The tower was an Eagle Scout project of Neal Hahn, parishioner at St. Paul. Funds for the project were raised by selling personalized bricks.

Following the death of Father Gleeson, Father Anthony Figlerski was appointed pastor on Dec. 15, 1956. During his pastorate, a new parochial school was planned.

On Sept. 2, 1960, ground was broken for Sts. Peter and Paul School. It was built at a cost of \$211,759, and completed on Aug. 11, 1961. The Benedictine Sisters of Yankton, S.D., staffed the school.

Father Figlerski served the parish until Aug. 28, 1968, and Father Vincent Pelster served the parish from 1968-1969, until his death in an auto accident. Father Gerald Carlson was appointed pastor in 1969 and served the parish for a brief period.

Father Michael Szczesny was appointed pastor from 1969 to 1970. He was followed by Father Thomas Mulowney, 1970-1971; Father Robert Warner, 1971-1974, and Father Robert Rooney, 1974-1980.

A parish pastoral minister was added in 1975 with the arrival of Sister Maria del Rey Mangan. Serving Sts. Peter and Paul Parish and its mission at Wolbach, her primary focus was visiting parishioners and the homebound. She minis-

tered two days a week at three parishes, St. Paul, Farwell and Elba. After the Catholic school closed in 1986 and the Benedictine Sisters left St. Paul, Sister Maria's role in religious education for the parish began to grow. She continued to serve the parish until her retirement June 30, 2007.

Father Bernard Nelson was appointed pastor in 1980 and served until 1985; Father John "Jack" Rademacher served from 1985-1987; and Father James Murphy was appointed pastor in 1987.

Under Father Murphy's direction, a new church was built and completed in 1992.

Father Michael McDermott was appointed pastor after Father Murphy's retirement in July 1993. Father McDermott also served St. Joseph's in Wolbach from 1993 until 1997.

Father Raymond Kosmicki arrived in July 2001 and currently serves as pastor. The mortgage on the church building was paid off in 2003. In 2006 St. Anthony's of Farwell and St. Joseph's of Elba were clustered with Sts. Peter and Paul's Parish.

Three women of the parish have entered the religious life: Sister Ann Francis Sidel, daughter of William and Anna Sidel; Sister M. Marylyn Nabity, daughter of Lewis and Lillian Nabity; and Sister Mary Kay Panowicz, daughter of Albin and Barbara Panowicz.

*Compiled by Ron W. Sack with information from the Sts. Peter and Paul's Church and the West Nebraska Register.*



(Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

# Sargent Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Like many other small towns in the Loup Valley area of Nebraska in the late 19th century, the first known Mass in Sargent was offered—before the church was built—by Father Thomas Haley in 1887, the priest at Dale.

Father Haley was succeeded by Father John J. Flood, then Father Patrick Flanagan who held Mass at the home of Daniel Bogan, an employee of the very same railroad company that brought the first Catholics to Sargent. Father Michael Daly of Dale also offered Mass in 1905. Father Peter McLaughlin of Greeley then came to Sargent to offer Mass and would later be in charge of both Sargent and Arcadia.

Father Iraneus Jarka of Ashton was given Sargent as a mission in 1907 and planned the construction of a permanent place of worship in Sargent. He traveled from Ashton to Sargent to give a monthly Mass, and in 1910 the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church was dedicated. Father Jarka moved to Sargent for his remaining four years of service.

Father Jarka was succeeded by Father Peter McLaughlin, who served from 1914 to 1918. It was during this time that Sacred Heart in Arcadia was a mission of Sargent until 1922.

Father Paul Moser came to Sargent next, serving until June 1921. Father Bartholomew Chudacek served only for a short time before Father Joseph Hinzmann came to Sargent later that year.

In 1922 St. Wenceslaus in Geranium—the first Catholic church in Valley County—became a mission of Sargent.

Shortly after Father Hinzmann's arrival, a fire started in the sacristy. The exterior of the church had been saved, but extensive smoke and water damage had desecrated most of the interior. The altar, statues, and pews all needed to be replaced. Father Hinzmann took this as an opportunity to remodel, completing a larger sanctuary, brand new sacristy, and adding a vestibule all before his transfer to Farwell in December 1925.

From 1925 to 1936 Fathers Gerhard (also spelled Gebhart) Stakemeier,



Members of St. Mary's Church in Sargent honored retiring director of religious education Colleen Grint and the 2007 graduates.

Joseph Bogaczky and Nicholas Thees served the parish.

Father Thomas Siudowski was first named to the Sargent parish as administrator in December 1936. He became pastor in December 1939 serving until January 1941. While there, Father Siudowski added an additional sacristy, decorative wall board around the interior, new light fixtures, and a new finely crafted altar.



Father Joseph Szynal

Father Michael Szczesny, who served as pastor from 1941 to 1955 modernized the architecture of the church. By the end of Father Szczesny's pastorate, the church featured finely detailed stained glass windows encompassing symbols that represented the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and everything from the walls to the floor was completely redecorated.

He also equipped the church with virtually every modern convenience of the era. Among these conveniences were a modern kitchen in the newly built basement, a heating system and an electric organ. The church was moved several feet, and in 1954, the two-story brick rectory was built.

Father Joseph Szynal was appointed pastor in 1955 and served until 1978.

In 1958 street lights were added to the church area, and a lot adjoining the property was purchased for a playground.

The parish celebrated its golden anniversary on Oct. 6, 1959, with Bishop John L. Paschang officiating.

Under the guidance of Father Szynal, planning began for a new church. Father Szynal died March 31, 1978, and Father

Robert Karnish replaced him and completed the building project.

The old church structure was razed in three days saving the stained glass windows and church bell.

The first Mass in the new church was the Easter Vigil celebrated on Holy Saturday night 1979 before the interior was completed.

The building was formally dedicated on Aug. 15, 1979, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara officiating. The parish celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1984.

Father John "Jack" Rademacher, served from 1981 to 1985, and conducted a mortgage-burning ceremony in February 1984 in Father Szynal's honor. Father Rademacher established a parish council July 1, 1983.

In 1985 Father Michael Richards was named pastor at Sargent until 1988 when Father Gerald Carlson became pastor.

Father Michael McDonald, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Burwell, assumed duties as pastor of Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary at Sargent, now a mission of Burwell. St. Wenceslaus in Geranium celebrated its last liturgy and was closed in 1993.

Father Bernard Berger assumed pastorate of Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Church from 1997 until 2003.

Sargent became a mission of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ord under the pastorate of Father James Heithoff in 2003.

In July 2004 Sargent became a mission of St. Joseph's in Broken Bow under the pastorate of Father Todd Philipsen.

In 2006 Father James Hunt was named pastor at Broken Bow.

Parishioners at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated the 100th anniversary of the parish on Aug. 23, 2009, with a Mass officiated by Bishop William J. Dendinger.

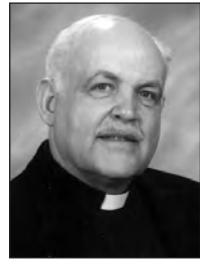


(Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



# Scottsbluff Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe in Scottsbluff began at the close of World War I with the establishment of the sugar beet industry in the North Platte Valley. In the early 1920s the Great Western Sugar Company began to import large numbers of Hispanic families to fulfill the need for hand labor.



Father Phil Flott

These families first attended Mass at St. Agnes Parish in Scottsbluff, but as the number of these Spanish speaking families increased, it became necessary for their spiritual needs to be attended by a priest fluent in their own language.

Father Carl J. Hollie, resident chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital in Scottsbluff was appointed associate pastor to serve with Father T.J. O'Byrne.

In October 1925 Bishop James A. Duffy purchased a large frame house on 17th Street and 4th Avenue as a residence for four Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters who came from Duluth, Minn.

The bishop also purchased a home for Father James Fullam and Father Michael McDaid in April 1926.

The Corpus Christi Carmelites were asked to undertake catechetical work. Four of these women arrived in Scottsbluff Nov. 11, 1925. By Dec. 12, 1926, a small frame church was built and sufficiently furnished to celebrate Mass on the feast of its patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe. It was originally called a mission house.

The work of Fathers Fullam, McDaid and the Carmelite Sisters is told in an account of *The Record* of the Diocese of Grand Island, Volume II, No. 1, dated January 1927:

"...Considering the great distances the priests and sisters must travel to get

to the various places, one can gain some appreciation of the work and the great sacrifices that are being made to continue the great enterprise undertaken by the diocese last year in behalf of the home missions."

There were large first Communion classes, the first of which took place in a large dormitory building where many Hispanic families lived and which they called "White City." Confirmations also took place at regular intervals in order to accommodate the great number of infants. Even so, such occasions found the church so densely packed that infants were sometimes handed in through the windows, according to one history.



Children await the arrival of the sisters in this early Our Lady of Guadalupe photo. The first Communion classes were so large that infants were sometimes handed in through the windows.

Father McDaid served the people until 1933. Father C. J. Moynihan was appointed to assist Father McDaid in 1931 and succeeded him as pastor in 1933.

Father Lawrence Portrey was appointed associate pastor in 1939, succeeding Father Moynihan in 1940. During his 10 years, the parish of Bayard was established as an independent parish with St. Mary's in Minatare as its mission.

During Father Portrey's administration, the "Scottsbluff Mission Fund" was established to provide a financial means whereby many of the families in the parish financed the purchase and remodeling of homes. This fund served as the basis for the establishment of the first federal credit union in the diocese in March 1962.

Father James Whalen succeeded Father Portrey in 1950 and work on a new

church was begun in 1953. Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated the new brick church on Dec. 18, 1953. In 1956 the new rectory was built.

Father Thomas Dowd was appointed pastor on Jan. 31, 1959, and Father Max Valdez was appointed assistant pastor on Aug. 24, 1962. In March 1960 Lyman was attached to Our Lady of Guadalupe as a mission. It remained a mission until 1977.

Father Max Valdez was pastor from 1964 to 1973. The Carmelites withdrew from Scottsbluff and the area was without permanent Religious women until the Daughters of Charity arrived in August 1975. Father James Murphy was appointed pastor from 1973 to 1981 and the parish celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1976. Bishop John J. Sullivan was the main celebrant.

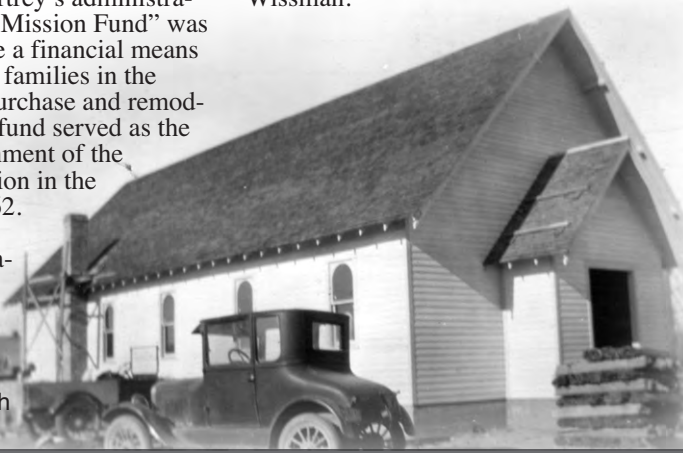
Sacred Heart Church in Bayard became a mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe from Nov. 11, 1976, to June 24, 1977. Father Raymond Kosmicki was named pastor at Bayard until 1978 when Sacred Heart was returned to a mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe. On July 1, 1980, Father John "Jack" Schlaf was appointed pastor of Bayard and the mission of Minatare.

The Guadalupe Center, built for \$125,000 in 1969, was debt free in 1979. In 1978 Sacred Heart in Bayard was added as a mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and in 1993 became a mission of All Souls Church in Bridgeport.

From 1981 to 1989, Father James Janovec was named pastor followed by Father Patrick Powers, 1989 to 1993. In 1993 Father Paul Colling, was named pastor until 2001 when Father James Golka was named pastor.

Father Phil Flott, current pastor, was appointed in 2006.

Religious who have served Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish include Sisters Cyril Armshaw, Mary Ann Hain, Patricia Blake, Inez Thebeau, Doris Moore, Laureana Perez, Mary Richardson, Jane Hamilton, Cynthia Marie Starke, Mary Jo Swift, and Claudia Wissman.



At right, the first Our Lady of Guadalupe was a small frame church built in 1926 and was originally called a mission house.

# Scottsbluff St. Agnes

The spire atop the 118-foot steeple of St. Agnes Church has landmarked significant growth within the Catholic faith of Scottsbluff.

Through the years of 1890 to 1900, the Catholic people of the Scottsbluff Valley were attended by priests from Sidney or Cheyenne, Wyo.

In the year 1900 Father John Devane started to come regularly to Scottsbluff and Gering. Father Devane was the pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Sidney, and served 12 missions, including Scottsbluff.

Under the supervision of Father Devane, the first Catholic church was built in Scotts Bluff County in 1903. It stood at First Avenue and 17th Street in the newly founded city of Scottsbluff. Originally named St. John's, the altar consisted of a kitchen table covered with a white sheet and church members brought their own chairs. Father T.J. O'Byrne was appointed as first pastor. As the membership grew, the services were moved down the street a block to the upper floor of the Weller Building.

Oct. 5, 1912, Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha established the new parish in Scottsbluff with Mitchell, Bridgeport, Oshkosh and Lisco attached as missions.

After St. John's became a parish, property was purchased at 20th Street and First Avenue, but William Frank of Grand Island, offered to donate land on the outskirts of Scottsbluff for a new church. With Bishop James A. Duffy's approval, a contract was awarded to erect a 50 foot by 100 foot church at its present site, 2304 Third Avenue. The church was dedicated to St. Agnes in April 1919.

The name — St. John's — remains somewhat of a mystery. Although mentioned in early writing, it had been forgotten until St. John's was found inscribed on the back side of the cornerstone, set in July 1917, when contractors removed it for the new entrance and gathering area in 2002.

Father Timothy Molony succeeded Father O'Byrne as pastor in 1919 and served the parish until his death in 1958. During his pastorate a large debt was retired, the present rectory was built in 1954 and St. Agnes School was begun in



Father Vince Parsons

1955. Father James Whalen served St. Agnes Parish from 1959 until 1970. During his tenure the gym was built which completed the physical plant of the parish.

Succeeding Father Whalen were Fathers Walter Phelan, Donald O'Brien, Robert Karnish, and Father Charles Torpey. In all those years, the building remained structurally sound. Upgrading mechanical services, new air conditioning, painting the 35-foot tall ceiling and walls, and basement renovation had been key to previous improvements. Parish members never questioned the need to support the physical needs of the church.

Under the pastorate of Father James O'Kane structural deficiencies became evident. During deliberations, construction of a new building was never an option; instead it was the desire to preserve the original architecture features of St. Agnes.

A renovation project of \$1.5 million was begun and it was during the reconstruction phase that crews uncovered sidewalks buried under dirt, sags in the floor and even that the church choir loft was supported only by the floor below and not all the way to the ground. As a result, the loft was nearly pulled away from the wall.

The interior of the church was modernized and structural problems corrected. An elevator was added to reach the lower level, now called the "garden level" and an enclosed gathering space was added to the front of



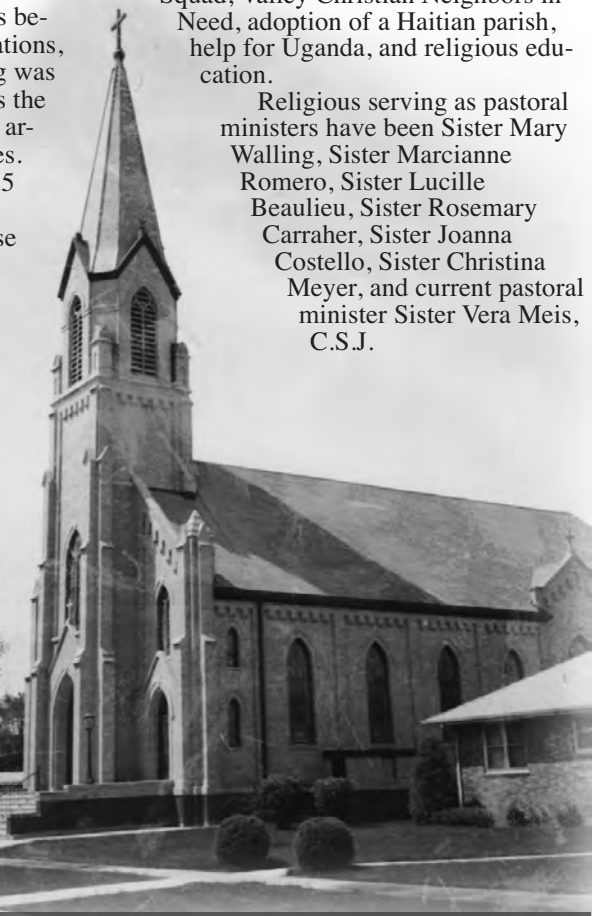
Commissioning of catechists was held on Catechetical Sunday at St. Agnes Church, Scottsbluff in 2010 by Father Vince Parsons.

the church. Rededication was held on June 9, 2002, officiated by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara.

Succeeding Father O'Kane was Father Donald Buhrman and present pastor, Father Vincent Parsons.

St. Agnes Parish has supported numerous parish ministries throughout the years. Some of these ministries include CCW, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Legion of Mary, 16 small groups in the RENEW process, God Boosters, God Squad, Valley Christian Neighbors in Need, adoption of a Haitian parish, help for Uganda, and religious education.

Religious serving as pastoral ministers have been Sister Mary Walling, Sister Marcianne Romero, Sister Lucille Beaulieu, Sister Rosemary Carraher, Sister Joanna Costello, Sister Christina Meyer, and current pastoral minister Sister Vera Meis, C.S.J.



St. Agnes Church in Scottsbluff before recent renovations. The 118-foot steeple is a landmark in Scottsbluff.



# Shelton Sacred Heart

Catholic settlers had little opportunity to attend Mass in the early years of Wood River Center, now known as Shelton, as there was no church close by. As Catholic families began to settle in the vicinity and the town was renamed to Shelton, Patrick Walsh offered his home for the first Catholic Mass at Shelton. Walsh, a soldier stationed at Fort Kearny, homesteaded what is now the original town site of Shelton and became deputy clerk of Buffalo County and postmaster. Later the post office in Shelton served as a place of worship.

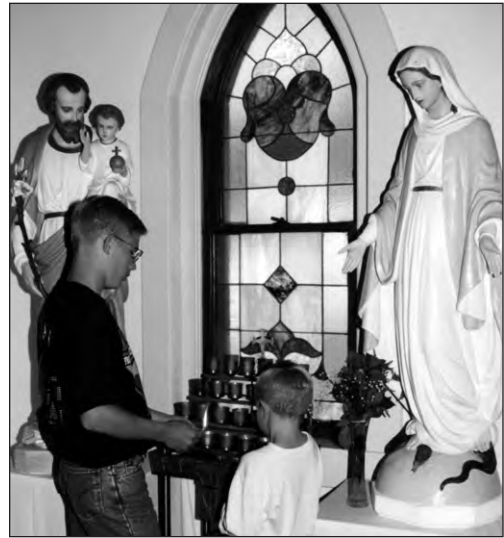
Priests serving the Catholics in those early years traveled from Columbus, Kearney, Grand Island and Wood River.

Although attempts were made to build a church for Shelton area residents as early as 1894, a crop failure that year caused the matter to be dropped.

Area Catholics organized in 1908 and gained permission from Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha to build a church. Priests from Kearney—Fathers J. Daly, H. Aberts and Henry Muenstermann—served the parish until the first resident priest was appointed.

The cornerstone for Sacred Heart Church in Shelton is dated May 24, 1908, and the dedication of the church took place June 18, 1908, with the ceremonies directed by Father Wunibald Wolf of Grand Island, assisted by Father Patrick Lynch of Wood River. The cost of the new church was \$11,000.

Father Cornelius McLaughlin was named the first resident pastor offering the first Mass on Oct. 6, 1921. Father



Darrick Manning, left, and Logan Bruner light votive candles, in this 1995 photo.

Joseph Bean was appointed pastor in 1947.

Father Bean became ill in January 1959 and was confined to the hospital in Denver. During his illness Bishop John L. Paschang attended to the spiritual needs of the Shelton people. Father Bean died on May 5, 1959.

Diocesan priests who served Sacred Heart parishioners from 1959 until 1970 were Fathers Frederick Snyder, James McSweeney, Donald O'Brien, Robert Chamberlain and Gerald Carlson.

In August 1970 Father Michael Szczesny was appointed pastor. During Father Szczesny's pastorate the inside of the church was remodeled.

In 1987 Father Szczesny retired and Father Harry Kurtenbach was appointed and served until 1988. Pastors since then have included Father Paul Wachtrle, 1988-1992; Father Michael McDermott, 1992-1993; Father Thomas Mullowney, 1993-1994; Father Raymond Kosmicki, 1995-2001; Father



During Father Bean's illness in 1959, Bishop John L. Paschang attended to the spiritual needs of the Shelton people. Bishop Paschang is pictured with Shelton First Communicants.

Paul Colling, 2001-2003; and current pastor Father James Janovec.

Sacred Heart Church became a mission of St. Mary's in Wood River on Jan. 1, 1995.

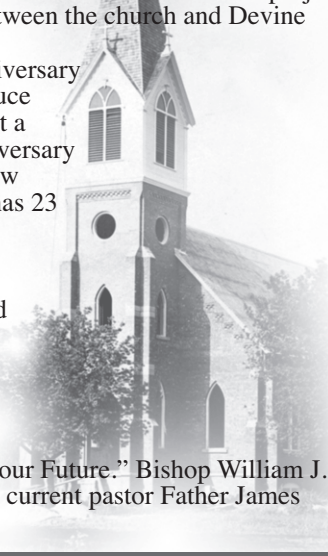
There was period of rapid growth in the parish during the following years and more space was needed to accommodate the increase of children in the religious education program. Satellite classrooms were used at Pioneer apartments and the Community Room as well as the church basement and rectory. A committee was formed to explore options available. The parish voted to build a new hall but funding was not available and the project was put on hold. A pledge campaign was begun but additional funding was still needed. A decision was made to sell the church rectory as well as the farmland, donated in 1966 by the Devine family, to help fund the project. Permission was granted to build the parish hall by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara in February 2002.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new parish hall was held July 21, 2002, and when construction was completed was named Devine Hall.

The Angelus bell, purchased in memory of Father Bean's mother, became too expensive to repair and maintain and when a leak developed above the belfry in 2003, it was decided to remove the heavy bell before repairs could be made. A project was spearheaded in 2004 by Joe Turek and Gary Spellman for an outdoor bell tower. Name bricks were sold to fund the project and the tower now stands between the church and Devine Hall.

With the church's 100th anniversary in 2008, plans were made to spruce up the church. Parishioners spent a year planning for the 100th anniversary beginning with a \$26,500 window restoration project. The church has 23 stained-glass windows, many of which had been damaged over the years. Mass was relocated to the parish hall while painters and carpet installers worked on the interior of the church.

Sacred Heart celebrated its centennial May 25, 2008, under the theme "Remember the Past, Celebrate our Present, Dedicate our Future." Bishop William J. Dendinger celebrated Mass with current pastor Father James Janovec.



# Sidney St. Patrick

The Union Pacific Railroad reached Sidney in 1867 and the United States government established an independent post at Fort Sidney in 1870. At this time, Sidney was the nearest town of consequence to the Black Hills. Mass was offered occasionally in Catholic homes. In April 1877 the church in Sidney had its first house of worship, one month before the plat of the town of Sidney was filed.

The first Catholic church in Cheyenne County was also the first church in Sidney. The small frame church—originally called St. Charles Church—was built largely with the help of the soldiers from Fort Sidney.

A rancher, H.V. Redington, donated two lots for the church if money could be raised in two months for the building. Soldiers from Fort Sidney acted as carpenters for the building.

Bishop James O'Connor named Father M.J. Barrett the first resident pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in 1883 succeeded by Father Michael Waldron in 1888. A rectory had been begun by Father Thomas Conway of North Platte and was completed in 1885. The first recorded baptism in the parish is dated Nov. 4, 1886.

Pastors who served from 1888 to 1907 were Fathers Michael Waldron, 1888-1891; M.M. St. Lawrence, 1891-1893; J.R. McGrath, 1893-1894; J.V. McCarthy, 1894-1897; D.P. Harrington, 1897-1898; E.S. Muenich, 1898-1899; J.J. Flood, 1899-1902; J.F. Devane, 1902-1904; T.D. Sullivan, 1904-1907; and J.S. Dobson, 1907-1912.

Father Dobson initiated plans for a new church in 1908, but built the Dalton church instead as he received little response to the project. Father Aloysius Kampmann was appointed pastor in 1912 and served until 1913.

Twelve missions were attended by these priests including Ogallala, Chappell, Lodgepole, Potter, Kimball, Dalton, Bridgeport, Oshkosh, Lisco, Scottsbluff, Mitchell and Paxton.

Father Anton Link, named a monsignor in 1943, began his 38-year pastorate of St. Patrick's in 1913. He was transferred from Prairie Center where he had been pastor since his arrival in the U.S. from Germany in 1910. He immediately began plans for a larger church. Sufficient funds for the new church were collected in one week.

The cornerstone was laid in October 1913 and the church was dedicated on Nov. 18, 1914. Parishioners hauled limestone from nearby hills to the construction



Father Art Faesser

site with teams of horses and excavated the foundation of the church. The structure was completely paid upon completion. The new rectory was also built.

An excerpt from the Sidney history about construction of the church reads:

*"Jim Dugan was the stone cutter using just a hammer and a chisel. He used one horse and rope to pull the stone up. He was paid \$2.50 per day for his work."*

The interior of the church featured a main altar, side altars, and 14 stained glass windows and a statuary. An organ was bought from a church in Chicago, which had also been built in 1913.

In 1914 the Ursuline Sisters arrived to open the school and a school building was under construction. In the fall of 1915 a two storied frame building, 32 foot by 52 foot was erected at Father Link's own expense. Five Ursuline nuns from Louisville responded to his appeal to staff St. Charles School of 48 students. They arrived Dec. 29, 1915.

In 1916 the Ursulines established a boarding school called St. Patrick's Academy. St. Charles School was still used for classroom space and for living quarters for the male boarders of the academy. In 1920, the sisters sold the school to the parish.

The Ursulines had become impoverished by a devastating fire that destroyed their boarding school in Louisville, Ky. Therefore they sold their school at Sidney to the parish. Consequently, the St. Patrick Academy was erected.

The present St. Patrick Academy took form. St. Charles School was sold and moved to the corner of 12th and Osage.

The church building was expanded to the north, south and west in 1937. Two side entrances were added, along with two stained glass windows in each wing.

During Msgr. Link's tenure, St. Patrick Academy (formerly St. Charles School), St. Patrick Youth Center and a modern rectory were constructed. Formal laying of the cornerstone for the new \$100,000 youth center was Aug. 15, 1948. A brief ceremony was held by Msgr. Link. The cornerstone was contributed free of charge by the Sterling Monument Company. Included in the building was an auditorium.

In June 1951 Msgr. Link was appointed as prothonotary apostolic, the first in the history of the Diocese of Grand Island and the investiture was made in Sidney. Four months later Msgr. Link died and was buried in the local cemetery.

In 1952 Father Albert Albel assumed the duties of pastor relieving Father Bernard McQuillan, assistant pastor, who



Monsignor Anton Link was appointed as prothonotary apostolic, the first in the history of the Diocese of Grand Island and the investiture was made in Sidney. Four months later Msgr. Link died and was buried in the local cemetery.

In the Roman Catholic Church, prothonotary apostolic was the title for a member of the highest non-episcopal college of prelates in the Roman Curia or, outside of Rome, an honorary prelate on whom the pope has conferred this title and its special privileges.

In later antiquity there were in Rome seven regional notaries, who, on the further development of the papal administration and the accompanying increase of the notaries, remained the supreme palace notaries of the papal chancery (notarii apostolici or protonotarii).



in the history of the Diocese of Grand Island and the investiture was made in Sidney. Four months later Msgr. Link died and was buried in the local cemetery.

Father Albert Albel assumed the duties of pastor in 1952 relieving Father Bernard McQuillan, assistant pastor, who had served since Monsignor Link's death. In 1955 the parish purchased the Sidney Junior-Senior High building for use as a grade school and it became St. Patrick's grade school. Grades 7 through 12 remained in the Academy building. In 1958, the boarding department of St. Patrick's schools was closed since accommodations were no longer available.

The McLaughlin house at 14th and King was purchased by St. Patrick's Church in 1952. It was used for male boarders who attended St. Patrick's Academy and then it housed St. Patrick's coach Francis Clapham and his family. Since St. Patrick's had no boarding school after 1958.

Monsignor Thomas Siudowski was appointed pastor in 1948, and Father Vincent Pelson, followed him and served from 1960-1968.

The church basement was remodeled under the guidance of Father Pelster. He began extensive plans for repairing and redecorating the upper structure of the

church including painting the interior of the church, replacing the wooden doors at the three main entrances with glass doors, painting the exterior trim of the church as well as that of the other buildings belonging to the parish. In June 1961 work was begun to remodel the upper floor of the original building of the present academy as a convent area for the sisters.

Plans began to form for a new school to be located on the property in west Sidney. Father Pelster purchased the remaining portion of the 20 acres of land and St. Patrick's Junior Senior High School was dedicated in 1964.

A rummage house for exchange of household items and clothing was started in 1965 by parishioners Mary Peetz and Freida Seidel.

One of the homes formerly used for school boarders, the McLaughlin Home, became the new home for Rummage House in 1967 and is still open two days a week for purchases.

Father Edward Flinn replaced Father Pelster in 1968 and served until 1973 when Father Frank Hoelck was appointed pastor. Father Robert Rooney served from 1980-1988, and Father Charles Scott was pastor from 1988-1992.

St. Patrick's grade school was closed in 1971 and in 1977, St. Patrick's grade

school was sold and razed. St. Patrick's Junior Senior High School was closed after the 1991-1992 school year.

Father Francis Curran was named pastor and served from 1992-1996. In 1992 the junior-senior high school building was sold to Sidney Public Schools, the rectory was converted into a temporary catechetical center, a new home was purchased for use as a rectory and a new Rummage House was built.

In 1994 the old rectory was sold and moved to West Highway 30.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held May 1, 1994, for a new parish center which was dedicated in 1995. The center included a fellowship hall, kitchen, instructional areas, a Knights of Columbus meeting room, a chapel and sacristy, a parish library and resource room and offices for parish personnel.

Father Ted Nekoliczak was named pastor from 1996 to 2001 followed by Father James Novakowski.

Father Novakowski began a much-needed remodeling and after a 20-month process, a rededication Mass was held Feb. 6, 2005 for the renovated church. The cost was \$4 million.

The last time any updates had been made to the 100-year-old structure was in the 1970s. Structurally, nothing had been done in decades leaving the church in desperate need of repairs and updating including making the building handicapped-accessible. A unique feature was the restoration of the bell tower.

Current pastor Father Art Faesser was appointed in 2007.

Religious who have served St. Patrick's include Sister Gabriel Blotter, Sister Ellen John, Sister Agneta Kuhn, Sister Delores Heidrick, Sister Sylvia Winterscheidt, and Sister Clarice Gentrup. Sister Marietta Spenner, O.S.F., currently serves as pastoral minister and director of faith formation.

## Spalding St. Michael

In the 1870s in the Spalding area the first settlers drifted up from the Cedar Valley from Platte County. Father James Ryan was pastor at Columbus and his parish extended westward along the line of the Union Pacific.

A little frame church was constructed close to Platte Center, which was known as the Gleeson settlement, and from there a priest, one of Father Ryan's many assistants, drove up the Loup Valley to what is now Genoa, then to Fullerton and Cedar Rapids, to Halifax along the Cedar, and offered Mass in the sod houses and dugouts for the first settlers. The first baptismal records were taken down to Gleeson settlement and afterwards to Platte Center or Columbus.

In 1876 Bishop James O'Connor came from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to be Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska. As a young priest he had labored among the coal miners in Northern Pennsylvania, in what is now the Diocese of Scranton. The miserable condition of the miners and their families made such a deep impression on him that, after coming to Omaha, riding through the rich valleys of the Platte, Loup, Elkhorn and Republican and Cedar Rivers, he was determined to induce his former parishioners to abandon the hard coal mining—for which they were not adapted—to come out to the western prairies to raise corn, grain, cattle and hogs for which they had inherited a traditional aptitude.

At about the same time, Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul was filled with the same dream for the vast Northwest, Minnesota and the Dakotas. Likewise, Bishop John Lancaster Spalding of Peoria, Ill., entered with enthusiasm into the plans of the other two and between them in 1878 they organized the Irish Catholic Colonization society. Bishop Spalding was selected as president, Bishop O'Connor treasurer and Count William J. Monahan of Chicago, secretary. The board of directors consisted of many distinguished Catholics. Among them were Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World* and Daniel Dougherty of Philadelphia.

Bishop O'Connor toured the east and spoke to large crowds in churches and halls. He was welcomed with great enthusiasm everywhere, though a number of pastors were fearful of the consequences of their people migrating into the wilderness without churches, priests or schools. After acquiring a large tract of land that had been granted to the Burlington railroad by the U.S. government during the presidency of General Ulysses S. Grant, the work of dividing up the land among the colonists com-



Father Donald Buhrman

families from Scranton, Boston and New York.

The post office name of Halifax was changed to that of Spalding in 1881, but the village was not incorporated and legally organized until 1898.

In the first years the nearest railroad points were Grand Island and Columbus. Then the railroad came to Albion and St. Paul and finally to Cedar Rapids, 20 miles down the Cedar Valley. After years of heart-breaking efforts, the Union Pacific was induced to build the last link of railroad connecting Spalding with the rest of the nation. The first train arrived in Spalding Dec. 18, 1902. One may well imagine the rejoicings of the natives when they saw the smoke coming up the valley.

Spalding for many years was a mission attended from O'Connor. The first Mass was offered on June 19, 1876, in the home of Michael Sullivan, part sod house, part dug-out, located near the Halifax post office.

A little frame church was cut and framed in Chicago, shipped on the railroad to Albion and then hauled to Spalding by team and erected in the beginning of the 1880s. It was dedicated to God under the title of St. Michael by Bishop O'Connor, and served afterwards as a school taught by the Dominican sisters until 1910. Father Julius DeVos, first assistant in O'Connor, was appointed pastor in Spalding on June 19, 1886.

The first church, also known as the "white church," was unable to adequately house the growing congregation, and was transformed into a school, and a new larger church was constructed, being dedicated June 9, 1890, by Bishop Richard Scannell of Omaha. The "red church" had a turreted high altar that was crowned with the heavenly statue of Our Lady Of Lourdes. The "red church" was not insulated and was very cold.

Father DeVos continued in Spalding until 1905, when he was succeeded by Father Bernard Galvin, who continued as pastor until his death June 25, 1942.

It was during the administration of Monsignor Galvin, named monsignor in

menced. The center of the colony was in O'Connor where there was established a "colony house" for the care of the newcomers.

The church was built in O'Connor and the pastor, Father James Smythe, worked strenuously to cheer and encourage the homesick and sometimes scared

1939, that the present church was erected. It was dedicated by Bishop Scannell on Sept. 14, 1914.

The church was built with 110 stained glass windows that were made in the basement of the church, and the rose window located in the choir loft, is considered by many to be the most beautiful in the church. Designed by Father James McMahon, the window is taken from a coin commemorating Pope Leo XIII's installation in Rome. The coin was stamped with the figure of St. Michael the Triumphant and is used as the center of the window. Surrounding St. Michael are symbols portraying the Old and New Testaments.

In 1914 the Holy Name Society donated the bells for the new St. Michael's church in honor of the holy names of Jesus and Mary. The inscription on the bells read, "O Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, be ever mindful of the children of Spalding."

Monsignor Galvin was succeeded in 1942 by Father McMahon who served the parish until poor health forced him to retire in 1954. Father James Fullam, a native of Ireland, was then appointed pastor. Father Carl Ferris served for a short time while Father Fullam was on a leave of absence. In 1962 the church was redecorated and painted and Father Fullam continued to serve until his retirement in June 1967. He returned to his homeland and died in 1970.

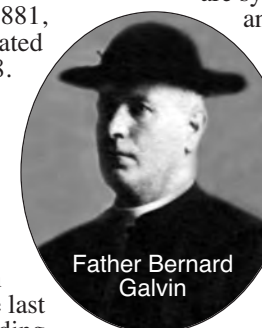
Father Raymond Dooley was pastor of St. Michael's from 1967 until November 1968; Father Charles Scott was appointed pastor in 1968.

After much discussion, ground was broken April 30, 1971, for a parish center.

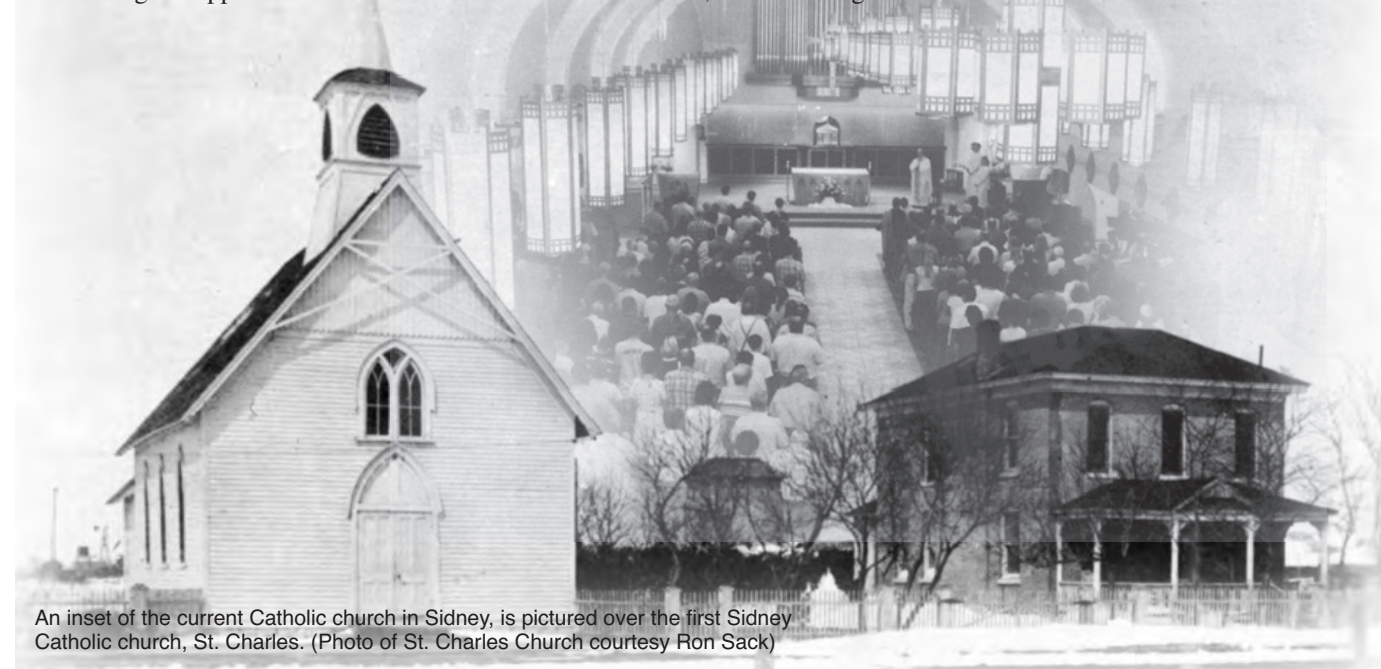
Father Thomas Ryan was appointed pastor of St. Michael's Church on Feb. 3, 1977, and Father Art Faesser was named as associate pastor. It was during Father Ryan's pastorate that the church was remodeled in accordance with Vatican II norms. A new rectory was completed in 1981.

Father Thomas Dillon was named pastor in 1982 and served until 1985. Maintenance of St. Michael's complex continued in 1982 with repair of the stained glass windows and installation of a cement ramp at the west door of the church. The church and Spalding Academy were listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Father James Heithoff was appointed pastor and served from 1985 to 1986; Father James Warner served from 1986 to 1993 and Father Frank Hoelck from 1993 to 1999.



Father Bernard Galvin



An inset of the current Catholic church in Sidney, is pictured over the first Sidney Catholic church, St. Charles. (Photo of St. Charles Church courtesy Ron Sack)



## Religious Vocations from St. Michael's Parish Spalding, Nebraska

Vocations listed below are from St. Michael's Church in the *History of St. Michael's*:

Father John Davlin, S.J.  
Father Ignitius Davlin, S.J.  
Father Linus McManaman, O.S.B.  
Father Cletus Semper  
Father James Naughtin  
Father Jacob Bauer  
Father Walter Phelan  
Father James Kremer  
Father James Murphy  
Father Harold Kurtenbach  
Father John Kremer  
Father Michael Murphy  
Father James Dunning  
Father John Schlaf  
Father Bernard Berger  
Father John Bopp  
Brother Joe Fairbanks, S.J.

Sister Consilia Bohan, O.P.  
Sister Annunciata Keenan, O.P.  
Sister M. Ceslaus Schmeits, O.P.  
Sister Maria del Rey Mangan, O.P.  
Sister Joan Mariam Glaser, O.P.  
Sister Mary Louise Glaser, O.S.B.  
Sister Mariam Patricia Carraher, O.P.  
Sister Collette Marie Bauer, O.P.  
Sister M. Helen Sullivan, S.Sp.S.  
Sister Joan Michael McVeigh, O.P.  
Sister Anthony JoAnn McMaster, O.P.  
Sister Joan Dunning, O.P.  
Sister Joan Seamann, O.P.  
Sister Roberta Semper, O.P.  
Sister M.M. Haun, O.S.B.  
Sister Marie Seaman, O.P.  
Sister Ivo McManaman, O.P.  
Sister M. Martin Langan, O.P.  
Sister Catherine Galvin, O.P.  
Sister M. Claudia Davlin, V.J.M.  
Sister Marie Leonard, O.P.  
Sister Michaela Phillips, O.P.  
Sister M. Bernard Dwyer, O.P.  
Sister Esther Fox  
Sister M. Deborah Pfeifer, C.S.J.  
Sister M. Christiana Keber, O.S.F.  
Sister Mary Klein  
Sister Dolores Bauer, O.S.B.  
Sister M. Mark Mangan, O.P.  
Sister Anastasia Gorney, O.P.  
Sister Benignis McCarthy, O.P.  
Sister M. Paul Philbin, O.P.  
Sister Henrica Walsh, O.P.  
Sister Mary Ann Naughtin, O.P.

Father Joseph Hannappel was appointed pastor in 1999 and served until 2009. During Father Hannappel's tenure construction was done to repair the church bell towers and renew the stained glass windows. Fifty-six clerestory windows were removed, cleaned and repaired.

St. Theresa's Church in Ericson became a mission of Spalding in 2003, and Sacred Heart Church in Greeley became a mission in 2004. These churches were added to Father Hannappel's duties.

Father Donald Buhrman was named pastor of St. Michael's Church in 2009. Father Sidney Bruggeman was named associate pastor, serving Sacred Heart in Greeley with residency in St. Libory and served in that capacity until 2011. Father Bruggeman was appointed pastor of St. Libory, reverting Greeley to be taken care of by the pastor at Spalding.

St. Michael's Church building received extensive smoke damage and water damage after a fire broke out March 2, 2012. The fire apparently began in the west sacristy and was reported shortly after 1 p.m. Friday afternoon by the church's pastor Father Buhrman. Fire damage was limited to the church sacristy while the entire church received substantial smoke damage.

Some of the organizations of the

parish include St. Michael's Mens Club, originally the Holy Name Society; St. Anne's Altar Society; Catholic Daughters of the Americas; Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

St. Michael's Parish has produced numerous vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Seventeen Spalding natives have been ordained to the priesthood and 34 young women have entered various orders.

Associate pastors serving St. Michael's include Fathers Anthony Radziewicz, Vincent Pelster, Andrew Gonda, Jacob Bauer, Raymond Dooley, Carl Ferris, Thomas Mullooney, James Warner, Raymond Kosmicki and Art Faesser.

At the 100th anniversary of the parish Cora Esch, historian of St. Michael's wrote: "We have many reasons to rejoice here at St. Michael's ... we have the Body and Blood of Christ to sustain us ... and we have beautiful St. Michael's to inspire us. Deo Gratias!"

Religious who have served St. Michael's Parish include Sister Barbara Arthaud, and Rosemary Rule.

*Compiled by Elizabeth Yax King, with information from the Centennial of O'Connor history book, Nebraska Register, and the West Nebraska Register.*



Fire damage was limited to St. Michael's Church sacristy in Spalding after a fire broke out March 2, 2012. The entire church had extensive smoke damage and some water damage.

## Stapleton St. John the Evangelist

The year was 1884 when the John Brosius family, the first German Catholics to settle in what is now Logan County, settled upon the wind swept plains. More German Catholic families followed and took up homesteads—Schrader, Becker, Pohlzel, Karn, Walz, Beckius, Kramer and Santo.

Those early pioneers saw the need for a church—a place of worship—and erected a small church in Gandy in 1886.

The scarcity of priests and the difficulties in traveling the prairies made these early pioneers grateful when a traveling priest would offer Mass a few times a year.

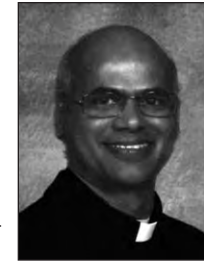
Every Sunday these loyal Catholic families assembled in the little church in Gandy and prayed the rosary under the leadership of John Brosius, John Schrader or John Polzkill.

Priests from North Platte and Dale ministered to the early area Catholics.

With the extension of the railroad from Callaway to Stapleton, Catholic residents decided to build a new church in Stapleton, three miles from Gandy.

Under the supervision of Father J.J. Kavanagh, pastor at Gothenburg, the new church was built in 1913 and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. The bell was rung for the first time on Oct. 17, 1913 and the church was dedicated Oct. 23, 1913.

In the spring of 1914 the first resident pastor was appointed—three St. Augustian Spanish priests from South America—Father Manuel Fernandez, Father Leonardo Azcona and Father Samuel Ballesteros.



Father Antony Thekkekara, S.D.B.

The priests of Stapleton also served the communities of Arnold, Callaway, Tryon, Ringold, Arthur and Thomas Counties at that time.

From 1915 to 1943 Fathers Aloysius Kampmann, Hermes, Alphonse Gasser, Robert Maron and Peter Kenny were pastors at St. John's.

The church debt was paid during Father Maron's pastorate.

The present rectory was built in 1925 for \$8,000 while Father Kenny was pastor.

Since 1943 Fathers C. J. Moynihan, Raymond Miles, Louis Nally, Vincent Pelster, Vincent Neppl, James McSweeney, Stephen Deaver, John "Jack" Schlaf, Robert Rooney, James Warner, John Dennett, Hubert Spanel, James Heithoff, Reginald Urban, James Hunt, James Novakowski, Neal Nollette, Todd Philipsen and present pastor Father Antony Thekkekara have ministered to the Stapleton, Arnold, Callaway and Oconto parishes.

All of the recent pastors of St. John worked to maintain the structure of the church—a garage was built, remodeling of the interior of the church in accordance to the guidelines of Vatican II Council was accomplished, painting was done to the interior of the church and pews refinished, a new heating and cooling system was installed and cement work was done around the rectory.

Many second, third and fourth generations still call this church home—the Brosius, Walz, Santo, Kramer, Karn families and many others have celebrated

40th, 50th, 60th wedding anniversaries. Baptisms, first communions, confirmations and weddings are celebrated at St. John's thanks to our forefathers.



Participants in a 2007 Lenten spiritual experience were St. John the Evangelist parishioners Amanda Vetter, Marie Lemmer, Charlene Walz, Alice McFadden, Karen Brosius, Leo Walz, Pete Klosen, Eloise Kramer, Bonnie Sadi, Patrick Powers, Mary Beshaler, John Beshaler, Vernon Brosius, Tom Hoff and Chris McCarraher.

People of St. John's are generous in offering their time and talents for God—music ministers, hospitality ministers, lectors, altar servers, gift bearers, Eucharistic ministers.

Altar Society members, parish council and finance committee members, those who maintain the cemetery, religious educators, parish secretary, and those who care for lawn maintenance, and the people who pray for our church community—all contribute much and are appreciated.

All are thanked and remembered with gratitude.

Religious who have served the parish include Sisters Elizabeth Glynn, Claudia Podgorski, M. Zachary Kahlick, Beverly Hillis, Veronica Weidig, Roberta Anne Semper, and Paulette Kuta.



Father Aloysius Kampmann and parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Church. (Photo courtesy Donald Schrader)



# Sutherland Sacred Heart

Before 1910 the pastors of St. Patrick's Parish of North Platte ministered to the spiritual needs of the Catholics in the Sutherland, Paxton areas. The first known Mass in the area was celebrated by Father Pierre Jean DeSmet and, for awhile, the pastors of Sidney cared for the area.

Early priests who served the parish before the church was built included Fathers Thomas Haley, Stephen Carroll and Patrick McDaid from North Platte; Fathers T.D. Sullivan, James Dodson, Aloysius Kampmann of Sidney; Fathers T.P. Molony, Cornelius McLaughlin and Patrick Sloan from Ogallala.

At Sutherland, Mass was celebrated in the Yoeman Hall and later in the old opera house before the first church was built under the supervision of Father Patrick Sloan of Ogallala.



Sacred Heart Church as it was in 1962. The church was built and dedicated in 1954 by Bishop John L. Paschang.

After 1913 when St. Luke's Parish of Ogallala was established, Mass was offered at irregular intervals in Sutherland, which then became a mission attached to Ogallala in the early part of the 1900s.

The first Sacred Heart Church in Sutherland was built in 1922 at a cost of \$2,700 under the direction of Father Sloan. Bishop James A. Duffy dedicated it on the Feast of the Sacred Heart on June 23, 1922.

In August 1922 the missions of Paxton and Sutherland were made into separate parishes with Sutherland being chosen as the place for the resident pastor.

In the spring of 1923 a rectory was purchased. In the fall of 1928, additional property was purchased, giving the parish five acres of property.

Father Alphonse Gasser served as the first resident pastor serving from the fall of 1922 until his death on Dec. 4, 1931.

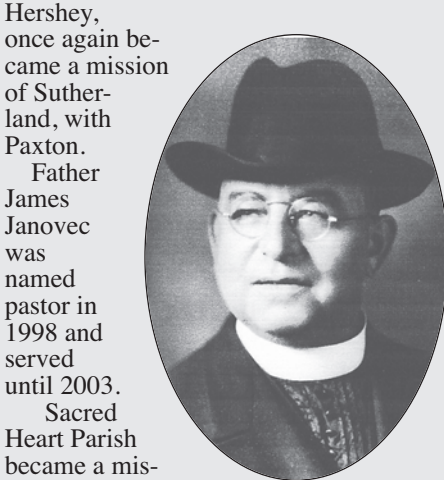
Father Francis J. Tschida who served until August 1938 followed Father Gasser. Father Joseph Muldoon became the next pastor and was assisted by Father Anthony Radziewicz for awhile.

In the summer of 1949 Father Constantine J. Shumski was appointed pastor until August 1961. During this time the present church was built and dedicated in 1954.

On April 26, 1955, Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated the present rectory.

Spirit in North Platte in 1982.

In 1990 Father Thomas Dillon was named pastor and served until 1998.



Father Alphonse Gasser

Father James Novakowski was appointed pastor in 2007. Associate pastor, Father Jerry Wetovick was appointed in 2010.

Religious serving Sacred Heart Parish include Sisters Esther Fehringer, Rita Kolbet, Ann Manthey, and Christina Meyer.

Religious vocations from Sutherland include Sister Joella Simons, Father James McSweeney, Father Robert Chamberlain, Father Walter Phelan, and Sister Christina Meyer.

# Thedford St. Thomas of Canterbury

St. Thomas of Canterbury Church was the last of the Sandhills' missions to be established in 1924 as a mission of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Seneca. The cement block building was built under the administration of Father Albert Albel. John McNamara made the cement blocks and Bill Haumann, along with other volunteer labor, set up the walls of the church. The ceiling was stamped tin, and after the church was finished, McNamara planted five small cedar trees at the front of the lot.

Mass in Thedford was originally celebrated by priests from Anselmo and Broken Bow in a room in the courthouse. After the courthouse burned in the early 1920s, Catholics attended Mass in the home of Wendell Noel and in McCarty's store. The priests were only able to visit the area occasionally, and traveled by train between towns and to Brownlee by the mail route. In January 1922 Mr. and Mrs. John R. Evans deeded a piece of land for the new church.

St. Thomas became a mission of St. Mary's in Mullen in 1949 and for many years Mignon Hanks, Ethel Carter and a Hispanic man remembered only by the name of "Frankie" were the only parishioners. They were later joined by members of the Dick Havermann family and membership increased in the 1970s as several young families took up residence in the Thedford area.



Father Albert Albel



St. Thomas of Canterbury, Thedford

and remodel the interior. Much of the work was done by members of the church.

The ladies of St. Thomas Altar Society started the tradition in the mid-'60s of serving coffee and rolls after the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass. There was no facility to hold meetings, so families would take turns hosting this time of fellowship in their homes.

In 1992 a parish hall was built adjacent to the church with a main room to accommodate 100 people, a kitchen, rest rooms and three classrooms. New siding was put on the church in 1996 to match the hall as the original cement block was disintegrating.



The cement block church of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Thedford was built in 1924.



St. Thomas Canterbury Church in Thedford received an apostolic blessing signed by Pope John Paul II in 1994.

Priests who have served St. Thomas include Father Albel; Father Costello, Father Joseph Muldoon, Father William Grace, Father Robert Maron, Father Mitchell Koprowski, Father Bryan Ernest, Father Louis Nollette, Father James Warner, Father Loren Pohlmeier and current pastor, Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B.



# Valentine St. Nicholas

During the summer of 1882 several months before the organization of Cherry County and Valentine, the first Mass was offered by Father John T. Smith of O’Neill at the railroad construction camp known as “the Big Cut” on the Niobrara River.

From 1882 to 1890 priests from O’Neill and South Dakota ministered to settlers in the Valentine area before the establishment of the first parish.

Father Ferdinand Lechleitner was appointed the first resident pastor in Valentine in 1890, but he served without a church or rectory. A tremendous task awaited the pioneer priest as he assumed the responsibility of his young parish in Valentine and surrounding missions from Newport to Merriman, Nenzel, south to Brownlee, and northeast to Norden and Springview. Mass was celebrated in the homes of W.E. Haley and Professor O’Sullivan and on special occasions, in the county judge’s office and at Fort Niobrara.

The first church, 20 feet by 40 feet included living quarters for the pastor and was started in 1891 and completed in 1896.

The Feb. 12, 1892, issue of the *Republican* newspaper noted: “P. Donohier informed the editor of this paper that Father Lechleitner will bring 50 families from the east to locate in Cherry County early this spring. Great praise is due this man.... He is helping both the people here and those that are to come by the work he is doing.” Father Lechleitner is remembered as the “pioneer priest of North Central Nebraska,” and served the area for 14 years.

Father Charles Breitkopf of Stuart ministered to St. Nicholas Parish until the appointment of Father Henry Muysen. Father Muysen served the parish from 1903 to 1906 followed by Jesuit priests from St. Francis Mission in South Dakota who cared for the parish as a mission until Father Leo Blaere’s appointment in 1907.

A rectory was built under Father Blaere’s direction in 1909 and a larger church was completed in 1911. The new church was more elaborate than the first small building with stained glass windows imported from Germany.

Father Blaere, in a letter to Bishop James A. Duffy, described his territory as covering 4,200 square miles which included Valentine and 13 missions.

Churches built during his pastorate included Nenzel, Merriman, Wood Lake, Newport and Norden.

Father Blaere’s concerns were broader, however, than his own faith community. Father Blaere contributed much to the growth of the church and the community of Valentine, loaning personal funds in 1912 for the building of the Cherry County Hospital. He was a promoter of the arts, serving on several committees for community concerts. Father Blaere dreamed of building a parochial school in Valentine, but this dream was never realized. He was regarded as the “first ecumenical priest,” attending Protestant churches on occasions of special celebrations and holding funeral services for a member of another denomination denied burial in their own church.

On Dec. 15, 1949, Father Blaere was elected to the rank of Domestic Prelate.

After 51 years of service Monsignor Blaere died Feb. 18, 1958, in Valentine and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

Father Carl Ferris was appointed temporary administrator following Msgr. Blaere’s death, and on March 7, 1958, Father Raymond Dooley was appointed pastor.

Ground was broken for a new church on April 26, 1959, and the building of a church, rectory and parish hall was begun. Bishop John L. Paschang dedicated the new church on May 3, 1960. The stained glass windows from the old church were installed in the new church, and the bell, weighing 880 pounds, was installed in the tower of the new church along with a 440 pound bell from the former Benedictine College in Spalding, a gift from Father Dooley. A third bell weighing 240 pounds was also installed.

Father Robert Foster was appointed pastor in 1965 and served for eight years, inspiring and encouraging both the parishioners and residents of Valentine and Nenzel through his genuine concern and Irish wit.

During Father Foster’s pastorate two sisters assisted with parish activities— Sisters Agnesine Hargarten and Florence Southall, served several parishes in northern Nebraska and were affectionately known as “God’s Squad.”

Participation by St. Nicholas parishioners in ministerial roles began under the direction of Father Robert Wiest and Sisters Carole Wakefield and Theresa White, appointed in 1973. The pastoral

team served until 1983. Religious education for all age groups was started and a parish council was formed during their 10 years of service.



Bishop William J. Dendinger signs the installation decree of Father John Kakkuzhiyil as pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Valentine. Pictured from left: Bishop Dendinger, Father Kakkuzhiyil and trustees, Jim Lutter and Lewis Johnson.

Father Ted Nekoliczak, Sister Marietta Spenner and Mary Jo Szydzik began serving as a pastoral team in 1983. In 1988 the church was remodeled, with the altar moved forward and the former altar area made into a small chapel, improving the beauty of the church.

June 1989 brought Father James Janovec to St. Nicholas as pastor. During his pastorate the RENEW program was promoted and religious education was begun for adults. Father Carl Ferris, retired diocesan priest, assisted Father Janovec when needed.

Father James Heithoff was appointed pastor in 1998.

On April 28, 2002, Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara rededicated the completion of a 4,000 square foot addition. The two-year process included two multipurpose rooms used as meeting rooms for religious education; a hospitality room for funerals, weddings and informal gatherings; and the back portion of the church was remodeled and included a new reconciliation room.

Father Bernard Berger became pastor in 2003 and served until 2008 when Father John Kakkuzhiyil, S.D.B., was appointed pastor.

Father John was the first international priest from India to serve in the diocese of Grand Island and St. Nicholas Parish.

Sister Agnesmarie Slaughter also served St. Nicholas Parish from 2003 to 2008.

# Wood River St. Mary

When the Nebraska Territory was organized in 1854, the spiritual director for all Catholics living within the area was Bishop John Baptist Miede, S.J., who resided at St. Mary’s, Kan.

In 1857 the ecclesiastical authority for Nebraska was changed, establishing the territory as Vicariate Apostolic of Nebraska. Bishop James M. O’Gorman was named the first Vicar Apostolic, and took up residence in May 1859, in Omaha.

Meanwhile settlers, many of whom were Mormons, were heading west along the Overland Trail. Some of these Mormons settled on the Wood River in the Buffalo precinct in 1858. This was called Wood River Center until 1867, when it was renamed Shelton.

In 1859 the first Catholic settlers in what is now Hall County, Patrick and Richard Moore, traveled from Iowa City and each preempted a tract of land along the south shore of the Wood River west of the present town site.

This was the start of what is referred to in history books as “the Irish Catholic settlement along the Wood River in western Hall County.”

Anthony Moore joined his cousins, Patrick and Richard, in 1860, and other settlers soon came to stay in the fertile green valley. They worked together hauling logs to build cabins and outbuildings and to plow the land to satisfy their shelter and food needs. It was another year or so before their religious needs began to be fulfilled.

Carrying the Mass requisites in a satchel strapped to his saddle, Father Almere Fairmont (also known as Fourmont) arrived on horseback in the fall of 1861 to celebrate the first Mass in the Wood River settlement



Father James Janovec

at the cabin of Anthony and Mary Moore.

Catholic families began settling around Grand Island, and the area grew rapidly. In 1872, Grand Island counted some 75 Catholic families with twice that number of adults, while Wood River numbered 38 Catholic families with 84 adults.

From 1861 to 1877 the Catholic community of Wood River celebrated Mass offered by Father Fairmont, and by Fathers William Kelley, Philip Erlach, and James Ryan, known affectionately as Old Cap. When the news came that a priest was expected, settlers from miles around gathered at the largest home in the area. A rough table would serve as an altar.

The first church in Hall County was built by the pioneers of the Irish Catholic settlement near the Wood River on a site just east of the present St. Mary’s Cemetery. The church was constructed of rough hewn logs hauled from the saw mill on the banks of the Platte River and worshippers sat on plank seats. The first Mass was celebrated in the church by Father Ryan in 1868.

In 1874 the Union Pacific depot was established two miles west of the original settlement.

Father Richard Phelan took charge of St. Mary’s in Grand Island in July 1880. There were 52 families in that parish and 72 in the Wood River Church. He started a collection in 1883, to build a church for the 200 parishioners in the new town of Wood River.

The cornerstone was laid in October but due to devastation of crops by grasshoppers, money proved hard to collect, so Father Phelan had the unfinished structure boarded up before Christmas.

Father Phelan, who had cared for the Catholics of Wood River, died of a stroke on March 9, 1883. Father Patrick Lynch was appointed pastor of Grand Island and Wood River. Father Lynch set the first Sunday in July 1884 as the goal for completion of the new church. This was made possible when E. O’Brien and the three Moores signed a note for \$3,500 from the



St. Mary’s Church and rectory, 1909. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



local bank. Reports were that Tom Connors was nailing the last shingles on the cupola just minutes before the first Mass was celebrated, July 1, 1884.

The town of Wood River grew around the depot, and St. Mary's Church continued to serve the area Catholics.

The church sat on a block of land on the west end of town. The lots across the street south of the church were donated to St. Mary's by Patrick Moore to be used for a parochial school. When this wasn't accomplished after some years, the lots were returned. The first priest's residence was built in 1891 next to the church where Father Lynch lived for the rest of his life.

Father Joseph Monaghan was assigned to Wood River in June 1919 to assist Father Lynch. After serving St. Mary's Parish for 37 years, Father Lynch died in 1921. A Wood River history records "business places were closed during the time of the (Father Lynch's) funeral, schools were closed and all joined in paying tribute to one of the best known clergymen in the state."

Father Timothy Sullivan, a native of Ireland, was appointed St. Mary's next pastor. Father Sullivan built a new rectory in the middle of the east side of the church block in 1927, which is still in use. The old rectory was sold to Dr. and Berna Langan Green and moved south across the street. It is now the Apfel home.

The hard times and drought of the 1930s affected St. Mary's Parish along with the rest of the nation. Father Sullivan took no pay for several of those years and asked only for grocery money. It took many Sundays of "passing the hat" to collect the \$100 needed to pay for the insurance premium due on the property.

On the occasion of Father Sullivan's golden jubilee as a priest in 1953, a drive for pledges to construct a new church was begun. Wage earners were asked to pledge a week's wages, and each farmer was requested to donate a God's acre (the income off the crop from one acre of land). By 1962 Father Sullivan had close to \$87,000 in the building fund. That same year Father Eamon O'Dowd came to serve as assistant to



Father Sullivan.

A building committee was formed and it was decided to erect both a church and a school. The total cost of the entire project was approximately \$272,000.

The old church had to be moved and the new church was constructed on the same site. Mass continued to be celebrated in the old church during construction. Worshipers could glimpse green grass between the cracks in the flooring, and with the arrival of winter weather, snow could be seen blowing around the altar. The congregation huddled in the choir balcony for more than one service to try to keep warm. St. Mary's was the first church built in the Diocese of Grand Island following the liturgical norms of the Second Vatican Council II.

The first Mass in the new church was celebrated on Nov. 29, 1964, and dedication took place on March 1, 1965, with Bishop John L. Paschang officiating.

The men of the parish braved the winter elements to take the 80-year-old church apart, board by board. An auction of the lumber and furnishings took place and bidders shivered on a bitterly cold day in early 1965 to acquire a souvenir of the church that had been their church home for so many years.

Father Sullivan died Sept. 25, 1966. At the time of his death Father Sullivan had the distinction of being the eldest priest in the diocese in age, 89, and in years of service, 63 years as a priest.

Subsequent pastors at St. Mary's have been Fathers Eamon O'Dowd, Robert Chamberlain, Donald Larmore, Bernard Berger, Walter Phelan, Robert Wiest, Raymond Kosmicki, Paul Colling and present pastor Father James Janovec. Monsignor Thomas Siudowski assisted during Father Phelan's pastorate.

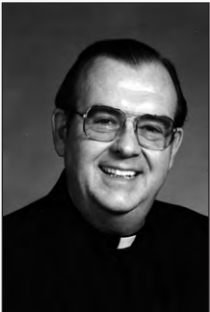
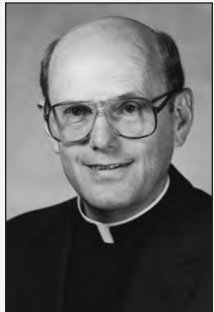
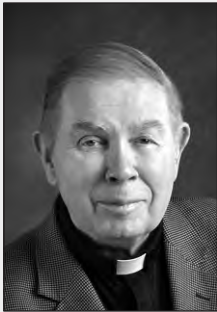
Sisters serving St. Mary's Parish as pastoral ministers have been Sisters Theresa McGahan, Dominic Lawrence, Carole Wakefield and Theresa White.

St. Mary's parishioners, about 150 families, are active in the Council of Catholic Women, religious education, parish council, and liturgical ministries.

Five men from St. Mary's Parish have been ordained to the priesthood—Father Anthony Moore, son of one of the earlier families, Anthony and Mary Moore, celebrated his first Mass on July 1, 1885; Father Joseph Nolan, ordained in 1936 and died in 1938, is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery and Father Patrick Nolan, his brother, was ordained in Omaha in 1948—both were sons of John and Theresa Nolan; Father Bernard Nelson, son of Joe and Patricia Nelson, was ordained May 21, 1964, and died in 1989; and retired priest, Father James O'Kane, son of Mildred and Harold O'Kane, ordained May 19, 1965.

Deacon Michael Wetovick, son of St. Mary's parishioners Robert and Louise Wetovick, was ordained a transitional deacon for the Diocese of Grand Island on May 25, 2012.

*Compiled from parish histories by Sunny Welch and West Nebraska Register articles.*



Anthony and Mary Collins Moore, homesteaded near Wood River in 1869. The Moores emigrated from County Cork, Ireland. In the fall of 1861 the first Mass in Hall County was celebrated in the Wood River settlement at the cabin of Anthony and Mary Moore. Their son, Anthony Moore, became the first priest to be ordained from Hall County. He offered his first Mass on July 1, 1885. Descendants of Anthony and Mary Collins Moore and priests of the Diocese of Grand Island are from left: Father Donald O'Brien, pastor of Christ the King Church in Cozad; Father Charles Torpey, pastor of St. Leo's Church in Grand Island; Father Bernard Nelson, deceased; and Father Robert Wiest, deceased.



Anthony Moore

# Schools





The majority of the Catholic schools in the Grand Island diocese started as part of parish formation. The early schools were staffed by religious women.

Seven parishes—O'Connor, Spalding, Loup City, Farwell, Choynice, Grand Island and North Platte—established schools before 1900. Schools at Farwell and Loup City began as catechetical classes with official schools built in 1926 and 1934, respectively.

O'Connor, as one of the early Catholic settlements in the diocese, records the first school in 1888. As population shifted to larger towns, the school was closed in 1951.

Spalding Academy in Spalding begun in 1890, St. Agnes Academy in Alliance, 1908, and St. Patrick School in Sidney, 1915, all started as boarding schools. All three schools converted to day schools in the 1950s and 1960s. The Alliance and Spalding schools continued as kindergarten through 12th grade facilities. St. Patrick discontinued elementary classes in 1971.

Four grades schools—Ord, Ogallala, Scottsbluff and St. Paul—started in the 1950s. Declining enrollment forced closures of the St. Paul school in 1986.

A combination of finances, population shifts and fewer teaching sisters caused a number of parish schools to close.

In addition to the ones mentioned, parishes in Ashton, Chadron, Farwell, Greeley (high school), Grand Island (St. Mary and Blessed Sacrament elementary schools), Kearney (elementary), Loup City, Rushville and St. Libory discontinued schools since 1967. As surrounding communities grew, the school at Choynice closed in 1927. Greeley grade school closed in 2005.

As the diocese celebrates its 100th anniversary, parish schools remain in Alliance, P-8; Grand Island, 6-12; Kearney, 6-12; North Platte, Pre-12; Ogallala, Pre-5; Ord, K-8; Scottsbluff, Pre-5; and Spalding K-12.

## The Lord's school

An interesting thing happened between the time I graduated from St. Patrick High School in North Platte in 1960 and came back to the school as a teacher in 1966.

The Second Vatican Council, 1962-65, Pope John XXIII's breath of fresh air, changed everything. In that short time we went from Latin to English Mass. Guitars and community singing took the place of organs and choirs.

Lay people were reading the Epistles, which were now "readings." The altar was turned around so the priest faced the people. The Communion rail was no longer used.

Meatless Fridays came around only during Lent. Everything that we had been taught as children in a Catholic family and at Catholic schools seemed to have been changed.

Add to all of this, the turmoil of Vietnam and race riots. It is no wonder there was confusion, distrust and just plain fear of the unknown among Catholics.

And this was certainly reflected in the Catholic schools.

For me, the opportunity and challenge of teaching and administrating at the North Platte Catholic Schools for 45 years has been nothing short of a miracle. The Lord could have led me to any of the multitude of places when, back in 1966, Marilyn and I started looking for teaching jobs.

How did it happen that St. Patrick High School needed a music teacher and a business teacher that particular year? I will always believe it was the Lord leading and calling us.

We have been blessed with the opportunity to grow in faith in a way few people really have the chance. The Catholic school teacher was forced, in the '60s and early '70s to become informed about the "new" theology of the church.

Our commitment to church and worship had to be strong to allow us to be supportive of our students and provide them with appropriate faith experiences.

It is so difficult to say "this or that led us to today." But the truth is the North Platte Catholic Schools and our work there were the core of our entire lives as spouses, family and church members.

At each point in our lives He has sent us new challenges, new opportunities, new calls to be involved in His "teaching" work for our children, and our friends in Holy Spirit and St. Patrick Parishes.

How blessed we have been to be able to work in His school.

*William McGahan retired in 2011 after 45 years of service to the North Platte Catholic Schools.*



William McGahan

## Alliance St. Agnes Academy

St. Agnes Academy school's beginnings date back to the early 1900s with two nuns traveling to South Dakota. In the fall of 1907 two religious women from the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity stopped at Holy Rosary Church in Alliance while on their way to Lead, S.D. Father William McNamara, who was pastor at the time, encouraged the sisters to stay and open a school like the one in O'Neill. Father McNamara's sister, Agnes McNamara Pope, had died recently and left him \$15,000 for the purpose of building a school. With the help of other men in town, Father McNamara contributed another \$25,000 and a block of land to build the school which would be named after his sister.

Building began on March 1, 1908, while the city of Alliance was also in the process of building its first high school. By Sept. 8 the building was ready for eight sisters and the first boarding student arrived on Sept. 13. Classes that year began on Sept. 14 with 89 day students and one boarder. By Christmas, there were 19 boarders at the all-girl school.

By the end of the second year there were 66 boarders and 150 day students and the building had become too small. In 1910 a second wing was added as the school had grown to 205 students and 82 boarders. The wing included three stories and a basement that cost \$30,000. The first graduating class was June 22, 1911.

For several years, boarders were turned away because of a lack of rooms. It was not possible to add to the building because, during World War I, there was a

shortage of materials. In November 1921 plans for a third wing were announced. The school now had 300 students. The construction cost \$125,000.

In 1925 boys were allowed to attend the school with the first class graduating in 1929.

In 1961 the school announced it could no longer take boarders. Shortly after that, the title to the school property was transferred to Holy Rosary Parish and it became a parish school. In the mid '60s, enrollment stood at an all time high of 428. A lay school board was appointed to advise the pastor and the sisters continued to administer and teach as employees of the parish.

The original wing of the school building was demolished in 1966 and classes continued in the remainder of the structure.

As the population of the community and parish declined, the grade school was closed in 1971. A few years later a shift in Burlington Northern Railroad activity brought a population boom to Alliance and many young families moved into the parish. In 1977 under the leadership of Father Gerald Harr, St.

Agnes grade school was reopened.

The St. Agnes Academy Foundation was established in 1981 for the purpose of receiving gifts and bequests for the school and establishing a permanent endowment fund.



St. Agnes Academy in an aerial photo, 1960.

The upper four grades of St. Agnes were discontinued at the end of the 1987-1988 school year; kindergarten through eighth grades would continue. In 2008, the school celebrated its 100th anniversary with a Mass officiated by Bishop William J. Dendinger.

In recognizing the occasion, the seventh and eighth grade classes wrote and illustrated a children's book about St. Agnes called "From A to Z with St. Agnes Academy." Currently, the school houses classes from preschool through eighth grade.



St. Agnes Academy—pictured here in 1914—was built in 1908 under the guidance of Father William McNamara. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)



# Grand Island Central Catholic

The kids in the neighborhood loved to play in the huge open lot on Ruby Street. There was always room for baseball, kickball and even a game of touch football.

But in the spring of 1955 neighborhood residents were surprised to see a sign poking out of the newly thawed earth on 13th and Ruby Streets.

“Home of the future Central Catholic High School,” the sign read.

And that was the beginning of a 57-year institution.

Bishop John L. Paschang and the two pastors of St. Mary’s Cathedral and Blessed Sacrament—Monsignor Leo Keating and Father Anthony Egging—decided during that spring of 1955 to build Central Catholic High School to serve not only the city of Grand Island but also the surrounding area.

The Diocese of Grand Island purchased the 25 acres of land on Ruby and 13th Streets from Mrs. Belsa Cunningham and her sons, and in November of that same year, future students and their parents gathered for the groundbreaking of their new school.

The following year, on April 29, 1956, Monsignor Keating laid the cornerstone of the new building, and five months later, on Sept. 24, Central Catholic opened its doors to 201 students in grades 9 through 12.

Father James Naughtin was named superintendent of the school, and the beloved young Irish priest immediately infused Central Catholic with his own particular energy and passion.

“I trust you appreciate deeply your good fortune in having this school given to you and denied so many,” he wrote to the students enrolled that first year at GICC. “Wonderful traditions are being established. You must live up to them....”

Although Father Naughtin died just a few years later while only in his early 40s, his love for the school deeply influenced students, their families, and the teachers who worked for him. Teachers who initially considered leaving after his death nevertheless remained at Central Catholic for several years to help see their beloved Father Naughtin’s dream unfold to fruition.

The ’60s and ’70s was a period of both growth and turbulence during the school’s history. The late Father Frank Hoelck, who was named the youngest superintendent ever at the school after Father Naughtin’s death, introduced modular scheduling to the school. It was a time when large Catholic families helped boost the school’s enrollment. But it was also a tumultuous time in which President John Kennedy, his

brother Robert, and Martin Luther King were assassinated. The Civil Rights Movement had come into being, and the Vietnam War was changing people’s attitudes. The students of Central Catholic were hardly immune to the changing times.

“It was an uproarious period in both our country’s history and our school’s history,” Father Hoelck said of his administration at GICC. “There was a real rebellion in the sense of regimentation.”

Nevertheless, students excelled at Central Catholic and were drawn to the family atmosphere of the school and its Catholic spirit so important to Father Naughtin.

In 1975 when Bishop John J. Sullivan made the difficult decision to close Blessed Sacrament and St. Mary’s grade schools, the fate of Central Catholic also seemed uncertain. But the school made careful plans to incorporate a junior high school after the grade schools were shut down. Seventh and eighth graders held classes on the second floor while high school students inhabited the first floor.

The high school survived and even thrived. Girls’ basketball was added to the curriculum for the first time, and girls’ athletics slowly came into its own. The entire sports’ arena was steadily making a name for itself through the end of the ’70s and into the ’80s. Fine Arts programs branched out as well, and enrollment held steady.

Lean times periodically threatened the school’s survival, and the hard hitting recession of the mid-’80s was no exception. The dedication of the community prevailed, however, and Central Catholic continued to exist and stay true to Father Naughtin’s dream of a centrally located Catholic school.

The ’90s ushered in changes to the Grand Island educational system. When Grand Island Public restructured their high school curriculum and built a brand new Walnut Middle School for sixth, seventh and eighth graders, Central Catholic stayed competitive by adding sixth grade to its own curriculum. The addition of 60 to 75 new students necessitated an addition to the school. With the launch of a capital campaign, a brand new wing was added to the north side of



On Nov. 6, 1955, Bishop John L. Paschang prepares to bless the land before officially starting construction of Grand Island Central Catholic. Pictured from left are Bishop Paschang; Father Anthony Egging, pastor at Blessed Sacrament; Monsignor Leo Keating, rector at St. Mary’s Cathedral; Father James Naughtin, superintendent at GICC; Jack Martin, mayor of Grand Island; Eldon Cunningham, county superintendent of schools; Oren Cunningham, city councilman; Leonard Melkus, architect and partner in the Geer-Maurer Construction Company; and Walter Lauritsen, president of the Chamber of Commerce.

the school. It provided a state of the art media center, an additional classroom, a new development office, and two administrative offices. A new fine arts wing was also attached to the west end of the building, and the old library was converted to classrooms.

In 2006 a second capital campaign was started to finance a new gymnasium, wrestling deck, coaches’ offices, training rooms and additional rest rooms.

Today, Central Catholic enjoys a steady enrollment and a very respected status in the community. Nearly 100 percent of students go on to college and earn millions in scholarships. The school has garnered 26 athletic state championships in its 57-year history and 28 state runner-up championships. Numerous team and individual state and all-state championships in speech, music, dance and other sports have been added to the school’s trophy cases as well.

Father Naughtin’s dream for a Catholic school that would assist young people to reach their full potential in every aspect of their lives—especially their faith—has propelled nearly three generations of children to adulthood.

“Through you,” Father Naughtin once wrote to his students in 1957, “a wonderful pride and enthusiasm is growing on the part of all Catholics of Grand Island and the surrounding areas. Can’t you see God’s Hand in all this?”

And almost 60 years later, Father Naughtin would be happy to know that God’s hand still guides the students of Grand Island Central Catholic.

Compiled by Cathy Howard, English 8, 9, and 11 teacher at Central Catholic.

## A beautiful voice falls silent

Father James Naughtin—vice chancellor and Central Catholic superintendent—dies after performance

He was only 41 when he died, but Father James Naughtin, for whom the Central Catholic High School library is named, left a lasting impression on students and faculty at Grand Island Central Catholic, as well as clergy of the Diocese of Grand Island.

Father Naughtin, a teacher at St. Francis School of Nursing, had a heart attack after directing a musical performance given by the student nurses at Kearney Catholic High School. He was not only a teacher, but also a chaplain of St. Francis Hospital in addition to being superintendent at Central Catholic High School. He was vice chancellor for the Diocese of Grand Island and was involved in the Community Chest, Little Theatre Group and community concerts where he was known for his “beautiful Irish tenor voice.”

A priest in the diocese for nearly 16 years, almost 100 priests and nearly 1,500 lay people reportedly filled and overflowed St. Mary’s Cathedral for his funeral.

Following is the article printed in the May 24, 1963, edition of the *Nebraska Register*:

*The Diocese of Grand Island, both clergy and laity, was shocked and saddened by the unexpected death Sunday evening, May 19, of Father James Naughtin, diocesan vice chancellor and superintendent of Central Catholic High School in Grand Island.*

*Father Naughtin had just finished directing a musical production given by the student nurses of St. Francis School of Nursing at Catholic High School of Kearney when the fatal attack occurred.*

*Funeral services for Father Naughtin were conducted in St. Mary’s Cathedral, Grand Island, Friday morning, May 24, with Bishop John L. Paschang offering the Solemn Pontifical Mass. Father Robert Foster of Ainsworth, who had been a classmate of Father Naughtin during their eight years in the seminary, delivered the funeral sermon. Burial was in the priest’s plot in Calvary cemetery in Grand Island.*

*Father Naughtin, a native of Spalding, was born Jan. 13, 1922, to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Naughtin. His parents died while he was still a young boy and he and his brother and sister were adopted by Mr. and Mrs. E.E. Walsh of Spalding.*

*Father Naughtin was graduated from Spalding Academy and later entered St. John’s Seminary in Little Rock, Ark., where he completed his studies for the priesthood. He was ordained in St.*

*Mary’s Cathedral in Grand Island by the Most Rev. Edward J. Hunkeler, then bishop of Grand Island, on June 5, 1947.*

*Following his ordination he served as assistant in St. Mary’s Cathedral for two years. In the fall of 1949, he began two years of graduate work in Canon Law at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., receiving his Licentiate in Canon Law.*

*Upon his return to Grand Island, he was placed in charge of the diocesan matrimonial court and named vice chancellor, positions he held at the time of his death.*

*He was named superintendent of Central Catholic High—then still in the building stage—on Jan. 13, 1956.*

*On Feb. 2, 1956, he was named chaplain of St. Francis Hospital in Grand Island. In connection with his duties there, he was an instructor in medical ethics for the student nurses at the St. Francis School of Nursing.*

*Father Naughtin was noted for having an outstanding beautiful voice and was in great demand as a singer.*

*Survivors include his foster mother, Mrs. Margaret Walsh of Grand Island; his brother, John Naughtin, Spalding; and his sister, Mrs. Mary Ann Duffy, Omaha; as well as seven nieces and nephews.*

*Besides his parents, he was preceded in death by his foster father, E.E. Walsh.*

Shortly after Father Naughtin’s death, Central Catholic decided to memorialize Father Naughtin by naming the library expansion project in his honor. In a brochure promoting the expansion, a page was dedicated to Father Naughtin’s memory:

*“Whether you found him seated at a community concert, briskly walking down the hall of the hospital or talking to the teenager in confidential tones, you knew that he was doing what he loved the most—doing things for others. His exceptional ability in fine arts, in speaking, in meeting new friends, was only a small facet of the many qualities of this man’s personality. No man was a stranger to him. He felt boundless capacity for extending himself to others and to their problems. His inability to say no was at the same time a blessing and a curse—a blessing because he conceived the desire to help so many who were apparently helpless, and a curse because it sapped him of his youthful energy at the early age of 41. A man is long since remembered by his deeds. The occasions and contacts for charity*



Father James Naughtin

*were so numerous for this man that his memory will linger and live with our generation. The human faults that are the lot of any man were vastly overshadowed in this person by his outstanding desire to please. Some will remember him for his thrilling Irish tenor voice, others for his intellectual ability. We would like to especially remember him for his gift of himself to the young people of our community. With an example such as this, our only alternative is to complete what he so generously began.”*

On May 16, 1965, Bishop Paschang cut the ribbon and blessed the new Father James Naughtin Memorial Library at Central Catholic. Mrs. E.E. Walsh, foster mother of Father Naughtin and John Naughtin, brother of Father Naughtin, also cut ribbons at the entrance to the library.

In an article from a May 21, 1965, issue of the *Register*, the late Father Frank Hoelck, superintendent said, “We think this is the kind of memorial Father Naughtin would have liked. He was always so close to young people and because a good library is part of a young person’s growth we feel he would have been proud. The students and the school were his first love and this will always be a part of it.”

The library was completely renovated and extended, housing twice the number of books. The cost of the renovation was \$8,000, but more than \$15,000 was raised. The rest of the money was used to purchase other books and reference materials.

“The library is looked upon by both faculty and students, as the place in the school,” said Father Hoelck, “because of the fitting memorial inscribed in marble immediately inside the room.”

“We are grateful to the generous people of Grand Island for this memorial to a much loved person and a dedicated educator.”



# Kearney Catholic

The idea for Kearney Catholic High School began in the 1950s to relieve overcrowding at St. James School. In 1957 St. James Parish, under the pastorate of Monsignor Raymond Miles, purchased 60 acres for Kearney's first Catholic high school. Fundraising efforts began in 1959.

Groundbreaking was held in July 1960 with the opening of Kearney Catholic High School on Sept. 5, 1961. In that first school year, 123 students enrolled in 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grades with the intent to add 11th and 12th grades later as classes advanced. The school was led by four Dominican nuns and two priests.

The school, which cost \$600,000, was dedicated on Oct. 18, 1961, by Bishop John L. Paschang.

In 1962 the 11th grade class was added along with two more teachers. In 1963 Father David John was appointed superintendent. The enrollment that year had grown to 188 including 76 students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades and 112 in 9th-12th grades. This was the first year to have a senior class.

In September 1967 St. James Grade School closed and 6th grade classes were dropped from Kearney Catholic High School.

The Kearney Catholic High School Foundation was founded May 31, 1984. Since then, the annual G.O.L.D. event has raised more than \$2.2 million.

A record 51 students graduated from Kearney Catholic in 2005. That year, the school also remodeled, modernizing rooms and adding technology. In 2006 groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the new student activity center. The center included a new gymnasium with

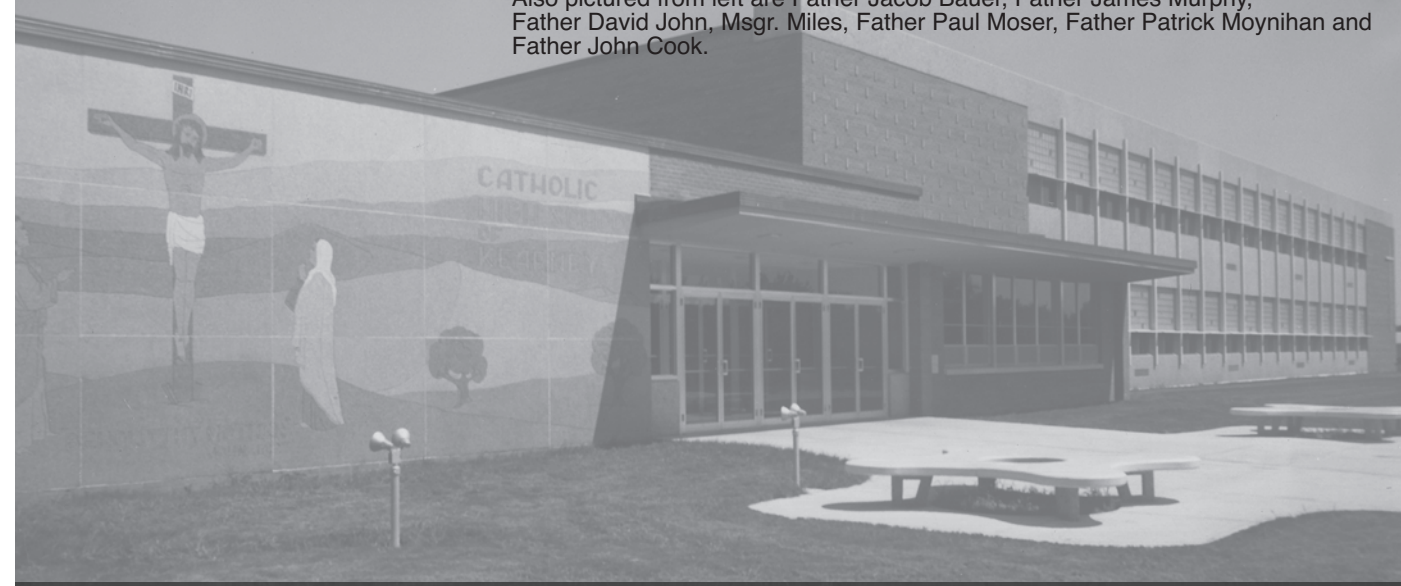
seating for 1,284 spectators including handicap-accessible areas, practice courts, locker rooms, expanded concession area, rest rooms, offices, equipment room, storage and a large foyer. The second story of the center included a 2,847 square foot wrestling area and weight training facility.

Kearney Catholic celebrated its 50th anniversary July 2, 2011, at the school with Bishop William J. Dendinger officiating at a Mass of Thanksgiving.

At right, students participate in the Mardi Gras dance celebration at Kearney Catholic.



Monsignor Raymond Miles, center, turns the first shovel of dirt during the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Catholic high school in Kearney, Kearney Catholic. Also pictured from left are Father Jacob Bauer, Father James Murphy, Father David John, Msgr. Miles, Father Paul Moser, Father Patrick Moynihan and Father John Cook.



# North Platte St. Patrick Middle High School and McDaid Elementary

The Catholic schools in North Platte had their beginning in the 19th century tradition of "a Catholic school in every parish." In the 1880s when North Platte was still a young community, Father Thomas Conway first suggested a Catholic school to the community.

The first Catholic school, Nativity Convent School, in North Platte opened its doors Sept. 8, 1891, with 105 students. It was operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan. In 1902 the Sisters of St. Joseph left the school in a dispute with the pastor over salaries, and the school was closed for four years. It reopened under the teaching of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Ky., in 1906. The Dominicans also eventually left because of salary issues, and the school was again closed for a couple of years.

Father Patrick McDaid was appointed pastor in 1910. In 1914 Bishop James A. Duffy encouraged Father McDaid and members of St. Patrick's Parish to construct a new school. Work on St. Patrick School, recently known as McDaid Elementary, was completed in 1916 for \$52,000. The original Nativity School structure was sold and moved when construction started. The Nativity building still stands in North Platte at the southwest corner of "B" and Sycamore Streets as a private residence.

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ky., began their journey to North Platte and the new school was opened on Sept. 25, 1916.

The first graduating class was the Class of

1920. From 1916 through the mid-1930s, graduating classes were small. Even through the hard times and dust bowl years of the 1930s, the community continued to support and operate the school.

Monsignor Thomas Murray suc-

ceeded Father McDaid as pastor in April 1948. Under his leadership the present St. Patrick Church was built in 1949 as well as the present St. Patrick High School in 1955.

Large enrollments during the pastorate of Monsignor Thomas Siudowski made it necessary to add eight new classrooms to the high school and remodel the elementary building.

Under the leadership of Bishop John L. Paschang and Monsignor Lawrence Portrey, Father Thomas Muldowney became the first full-time superintendent of the school, and the first school board was organized.

Father Muldowney and the Board directed a dramatic growth of the instructional staff of the now junior-senior high school. Added were a new counseling program, instrumental and vocal music, art, speech and drama and industrial arts. Other "college prep" academic disciplines were expanded.

Bill McGahan was appointed principal of McDaid Elementary in 1968 and became the first lay school administrator in the Diocese of Grand Island. Father Robert Rooney succeeded Father Muldowney as superintendent in 1970. McGahan was named principal of both buildings in 1970. In 1974 he was named superintendent.

Others serving as principals in either the elementary or middle high school have been Martin Cordes, Michael Engel, John Hannagan, Tom Rhodes, Terry Schmit, Rick Carpenter, and current St. Patrick Middle-High School principal Mark Skillstad and McDaid Elementary principal Rick Elsasser. Kevin Dodson is the current superintendent.

A visionary quartet of school parents, Bill Ramaekers, Ward Lingo, Jim Schneider and Bill McCormick, established the North Platte Catholic Schools Endowment-Trust, Inc., in 1977.

The Endowment has become the mainstay in efforts to keep St. Patrick's and McDaid fiscally stable and educationally sound. In 1983 Jerome Gilg was appointed Endowment Director and in 1986 also assumed the role of Development Director for the school. Wendy Dodson is the current director.

The Alumni Association was organized in 1981. The alumni have played a significant role in the sustainability of the school and special building projects.

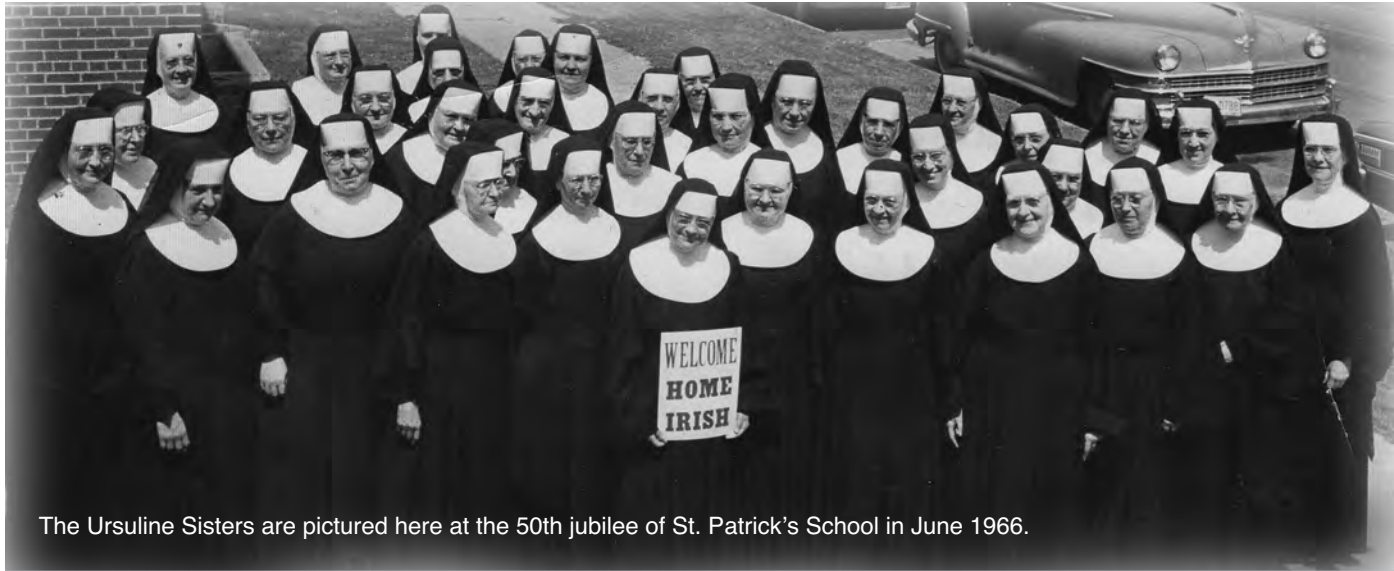


Students and faculty pose in front of Nativity School in North Platte, which opened in 1891. This building is now a private residence at 'B' and Sycamore Streets.



In this 1976 photo, Lisa McNeel, a second grader, shows her grandmother and other guests how important it is to thank God for his many gifts.





The Ursuline Sisters are pictured here at the 50th jubilee of St. Patrick's School in June 1966.

The Ursuline Sisters came to the Diocese of Grand Island on Dec. 29, 1915. Father Anton Link invited the sisters to come and staff the Catholic school in Sidney. Five Ursuline Sisters came from Louisville and opened St. Charles School in January 1916. St. Charles School, a wooden structure, was replaced by St. Patrick Academy in the fall of 1916. The Ursuline Sisters served at "The Academy" from 1916 until it closed in 1991. Individual members of the order also served in parish ministry at Sidney after the school closed.

Over those 75 years of service many sisters passed through the hallways of the Academy. Their lives of generosity helped form many young lives, and also helped foster at least 13 vocations to the religious life and six to the priesthood. A number of those "vocations" generated at Sidney and North Platte later served the Academy, North Platte St. Patricks,

O'Connor St. Joseph's, and Ogallala St. Luke's schools.

That same year, 1916, Father Patrick McDaid and the people of St. Patrick's in North Platte were constructing a "modern" three-story school building. Again the Ursuline Sisters were called and, quoting from a journal of Sister Eutopia, one of the sisters sent:

"The Ursuline Nuns left the Ursuline Motherhouse in Louisville, Ky., on Aug. 24, 1916, to open a school in North Platte. The original group consisted of the following nuns: Sisters Clotilda, Irene, Gerard, Eutopia, Liboria, Loretto and Rosalin. Housing facilities were not yet completed for their residence (on the third floor of the school) so Father Anton Link offered them the hospitality of St. Patrick Academy in Sidney .... The sisters, after several weeks' stay there returned to North Platte (Sept. 8) to take up their abode in Father Patrick McDaid's parish

house which he had vacated for them...."

Over the next 83 years, 165 Ursuline Sisters provided St. Patrick School with over 700 years of faith-filled and academically excellent instruction. At one point in the late 1960s there were 14 sisters on the school faculty. Sister Elizabeth Anne Schleuter was the last Ursuline Sister to serve in North Platte, and taught upper elementary into her late 70s.

Sister Shirley Ann Simmons who now serves at St. Luke's in Ogallala was taught by the Ursuline Sisters as a student at St. Patrick High School in North Platte.

Sister Loretta Krajewski, now principal at St. Luke's in Ogallala, was taught by the Ursuline Sisters at St. Patrick Academy in Sidney.

Both schools have provided many priests, sisters and teachers for the Catholic schools of the diocese.

*Compiled by William McGahan.*

In the fall of 1978 the first kindergarten class was enrolled at McDaid Elementary. In 1987 the attached garage at McDaid that served many years as the band rehearsal room was remodeled and the library was moved to that facility. This opened up one more classroom and McDaid became a full K-6 elementary for the first time. In 1992 the St. Patrick Junior High School was reorganized into a middle school program with Martin Cordes as the director.

Energy costs and conservation concerns prompted the remodeling of the exterior of St. Patrick High School in 1981. A new rubberized roof covering, insulation and new classroom and gymnasium light were also part of the project.

The 1990-1991 school year was a time for celebration and growth. The community celebrated the 100th jubilee of the Catholic schools in North Platte and the 75th jubilee of the Ursuline Sisters service. Most significant of the centennial activities was the "2nd Century Campaign" conducted by the Endowment-Trust. The capital campaign raised nearly \$1 million. One third of the funds were used to plan and construct a classroom and chapel addition to the east end of St. Patrick High School and to equip a state-of-the-art computer lab and schoolwide network that is now connected to the internet system. The high school library was also remodeled during the centennial year. The balance of the campaign funds were placed into the permanent endowment fund of the Endow-

ment-Trust to help provide fiscal stability to the school.

The 1998-99 school year brought an historic time to school when Project 2000, the plan to build a new elementary school and competition-sized gymnasium resulted in a capital fund drive which raised \$4,005,000. Groundbreaking for the new McDaid Elementary and Activities Center was May 21, 1999. The new 48,000 square foot facility was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara on Aug. 20, 2000.

William McGahan retired in 2011 after 45 years of service to the North Platte Catholic Schools.

Over the years St. Patrick's students have dedicated their lives to the service of the Church. Eleven priests, 23 sisters and three brothers, have attended or graduated from St. Patrick's during the past century. In the post-Vatican II church many St. Patrick graduates serve in their parishes in a full range of ministries.

Although St. Patrick's has long been recognized for its athletic successes, it is the academic and fine arts programs that are the base of school tradition. Many St. Pat's scholars, athletes, musicians, artists and thespians have received top awards for their efforts in sports and fine arts performance. For more than a century, graduates have achieved academic and professional success nurtured in the classrooms of St. Patrick's High School.

*Compiled from a History of North Platte Catholic Schools by William McGahan and West Nebraska Register articles.*

## Ogallala St. Luke

St. Luke's Catholic School in Ogallala began as the idea of Monsignor Peter Kenny, pastor at St. Luke's in Ogallala from 1950 to 1965.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were Nov. 2, 1952, and dedication of the elementary school was Sept. 6, 1954, with Bishop John L. Paschang presiding over the Mass. The school was designed with five classrooms and a library and was built in conjunction with the convent as the school was staffed with Dominican Sisters from St. Catharine, Ky. The total cost was \$154,000 and the initial enrollment that year was 132 students.

After the death of Msgr. Kenny in 1965, Father Thomas Ryan was administrator of St. Luke's until Msgr. Thomas Siudowski was appointed pastor in 1966. Father Walter Phelan and Msgr. Siudowski served as co-pastors and administrators at the school until Father James Whalen was assigned to St. Luke's in 1970.

Father Whalen was pastor at St. Luke's and superintendent of the school from 1970 to 1989. St. Luke's closed the two upper elementary grades in 1970 and the Dominican Sisters were withdrawn in 1971.

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ky., began teaching at the school in 1972.

A kindergarten class was added to the school in 1981. During the 1983-84 school year, a new playground was developed and equipped on property west of St. Luke's Church.

In 1985 the St. Luke Catholic School Endowment-Trust Inc., was formed to provide a vehicle for attracting, receiving and administering all gifts of cash, stocks, bonds, real estate, life insurance, etc.

In 1987 the sixth grade class was discontinued because of the middle school program in the public school system.

Father Thomas Mullaney was appointed pastor and superintendent from 1989 until 1993 and was followed by Father John "Jack" Schlaf, who served from 1993 to 2005.

Father Bryan Ernest was appointed pastor in 2005 and is the current pastor. Also serving the school have been Sister Shirley Ann Simmons, who served as school principal for more than 25 years; Sister Mary Foley, who served the school and parish for 23 years, and Sister Loretta Krajewski, an alumnus of St. Luke's School, who has served as principal from 2005 to present day.



In 1957 Father Peter Kenny (later a monsignor) blessed the statue of St. Luke, patron of the parish and school in Ogallala, that was given as a memorial from friends of the late Mrs. Charles Thalken. Pictured with Father Kenny are three of Mrs. Thalken's grandsons who attended St. Luke's School, James Meisner, Thomas Meisner and Daniel Meisner.



Pictured above are 1960 graduates of St. Luke's Catholic School with Msgr. Peter Kenny, pastor, center back row, and assistant Father Stephen Deaver. Graduates were Michael Mueller, Thomas Meisner, Corrine Spear, Marlene Kalkowski, Theodore Sass, James Jarosz, Raymond Garcia, Kurt Buer, Terrence Rourke, Barry Nowak, Martin Nowak and James Fuller. Also pictured are class sponsor, Sister Teresa, right, and Sister Columba, principal, left.



## Ord St. Mary

Father Martin Lawler, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in 1921, dreamt of a school for his parish.

Nearby parishes of Ashton, Farwell and Greeley had schools, but the Ord parish wasn't large enough.

Father Lawler purchased a block west of the church for the purpose of building a school and he kept on dreaming.

For five years the national effort was concentrated on winning World II and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Ord contributed its share. Father Lawler died in 1941 ... never realizing his dream. After the war, improvements were made to the church and plans were made to build a parish school.

Construction of the school began in 1954 at the urging of Bishop John L. Paschang.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Chicago, who already staffed the parish school in Loup City, were recruited to teach at the Ord school.

St. Mary's School became a reality in the fall of 1955 when approximately 70 students arrived for grades 1-8.



2011-2012 students at St. Mary's School, Ord.



St. Mary's School students in Ord welcomed Governor Dave Heineman to their school on April 2, 2009. The governor presented certificates to the winners of the 2009 Nebraska Department of Agriculture poster contest. Pictured back row from left: Sister Lee Anne Danczak, second grade teacher; Gov. Heineman and Ann Heil, third and fourth grade teacher. Front row poster winners, Cali Lech and Ashley Carson.



Enrollment of the school continued to increase and during the 1960s, enrollment reached a peak of 160 students.

Parishioners formed a parish activities committee in 1981 to raise money to pay for the expenses of a kindergarten teacher along with other expenses and improvements to the school.

Decreasing availability of Roman Catholic nuns

for teachers brought about a change in 1986, when the school began operating with an all lay faculty. The dedicated work of the teaching sisters was the backbone of the establishment and continuation of the school, and prayers were answered two years later when Sister Lee Anne Danczak, S.S.J., joined St. Mary's faculty.

A foundation for the school was established in 1985 to add another dimension to the financial structure. In 1987, classrooms were remodeled and the school playground was restructured.

In the last seven years new double doors have been added along with a cement sidewalk to the front of the school and Father Gorak Hall. Recent renovations include a new heating and air conditioning unit in each classroom, lowering of ceilings, energy efficient lighting, installation of windows and playground equipment and landscaping.

Plans are underway to remodel the gym, kitchen and bathrooms.

As part of the mission of the parish, the understanding of a good Catholic school education by parents and priests helped to keep the school strong.

The school began as an extension of the faith of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parishioners and remains a source of pride to this day.

*Father Thomas Ryan, Superintendent at St. Mary's School in Ord, contributed to this article.*

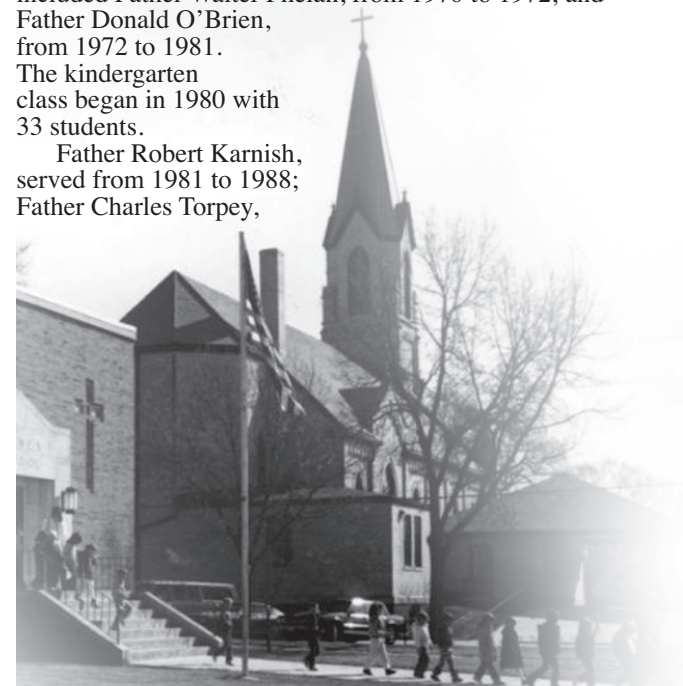
## Scottsbluff St. Agnes

St. Agnes School in Scottsbluff began in 1955 with 89 students in the first three grades with just four classrooms while construction continued on the second floor for additional classrooms. The St. Agnes K-6 grade school was built in 1956 under the direction of Father Timothy Molony. Father Molony, who came to Scottsbluff in 1919, served the parish and school until his death on Dec. 28, 1958. The first teachers were Sisters Monica and Maureen, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Charity.

By September 1960 the school had a total enrollment of 247 students, eight full-time teachers and a band director for grades one through eight. All eight grades continued until 1968 when grades seven and eight were discontinued.

The parish later purchased a tract of 20 acres on the north edge of the city to build a high school. A gym was added to the grade school while Father James Whalen, who succeeded Father Molony, was pastor. Father Whalen served until 1970 and subsequent pastors have included Father Walter Phelan, from 1970 to 1972; and Father Donald O'Brien, from 1972 to 1981. The kindergarten class began in 1980 with 33 students.

Father Robert Karnish, served from 1981 to 1988; Father Charles Torpey,



Built in 1955 St. Agnes School serves both parish and community educational needs. At right, Father Vince Parsons, current pastor, blessed pets in celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi for St. Agnes students who brought their pets to school.



Sixth-grade students of Mrs. Peggy Olsen, upper left, finish a year-long quilting project at St. Agnes School in Scottsbluff in this 1987 photo.

1988 to 1996; Father James O'Kane, 1996 to 2003; and Father Donald Buhrman, 2003 to 2009 when Father Vincent Parsons, current pastor was appointed.

St. Agnes School celebrated its 50th anniversary in June 2006. The school employs seven full-time teachers, a half-time music instructor and a half-time physical education instructor. In the 2011-12 school year, enrollment was 116 students.





# Spalding Spalding Academy

The beginning of Catholic education in Spalding was started after Hugh Davlin, one of the early colonists, wrote to Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha on Aug. 18, 1889, and expressed the need of the children in the parish and his desire for a good sound Catholic education for his children.

Within a year, three Sisters of Mercy arrived to teach in the district schools. With the opening of the new church in 1891, the old church structure was re-modeled into a school

building and the parochial school was started. In 1899 the Sisters of Mercy were called to Omaha and in 1901, Father Julius DeVos became instrumental in recruiting the Dominicans of Kentucky to teach in Spalding. By 1905 a full four-year program was offered. The first graduates of the school were Mary Leonard and Anna Burchell in 1906.

In 1913 the present school was erected, known as Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, and continued to be conducted by the Dominican Sisters from St. Catharine, Ky. For many years, the school accepted boarders as well as day

students. An all-girl school, the early curriculum was college-preparatory and was later expanded to include normal training courses to assist both experienced and prospective teachers.

deterioration of the convent, it became advisable to build again. Begun in 1926 and completed in 1927, the three story building providing sleeping quarters for the sisters, a large assembly hall, a large chapel, club rooms and a music department.

The 1930s were a time of dire poverty and general hard times caused by drought, crop failures and financial set-backs. The sisters made every possible sacrifice to keep their beloved school open.

At the death of Father Bernard Galvin in 1942, Father James McMahon came to Spalding. In 1942 under the pastorate of Father McMahon, all school properties and the convent was purchased from the Dominican Sisters by the parish and became Spalding Academy.

The 1950s saw the beginning of lay teachers.

Father Charles Scott served as superintendent of Spalding Academy and chaplain of St. John's Hospital in Spalding from 1966 until 1977.

In 1974 a program of shared classes with the public school was begun. That same year, St. Michael's Parish Center was built to accommodate parish needs as well as Spalding Academy's need for a gym for its sports and physical education programs.

Both Spalding Academy and Spalding Public Schools declared their willingness to share sports teams together in 1997. They elected the Knight to be the mascot in this cooperative effort and silver, white and black were chosen for colors.

On Oct. 12, 2001, the Dominican Sisters celebrated their centennial anniversary of dedication to Catholic education at Spalding Academy.

Today, Spalding Academy continues with a K-12 program. Over the years, the school has been noted for its scholastic excellence and athletic ability.

*Compiled by Elizabeth Yax King from current website information, Spalding Academy; St. Michael's Parish, Spalding, Nebraska, history book, 1986; Nebraska Register, jubilee edition, 1962.*

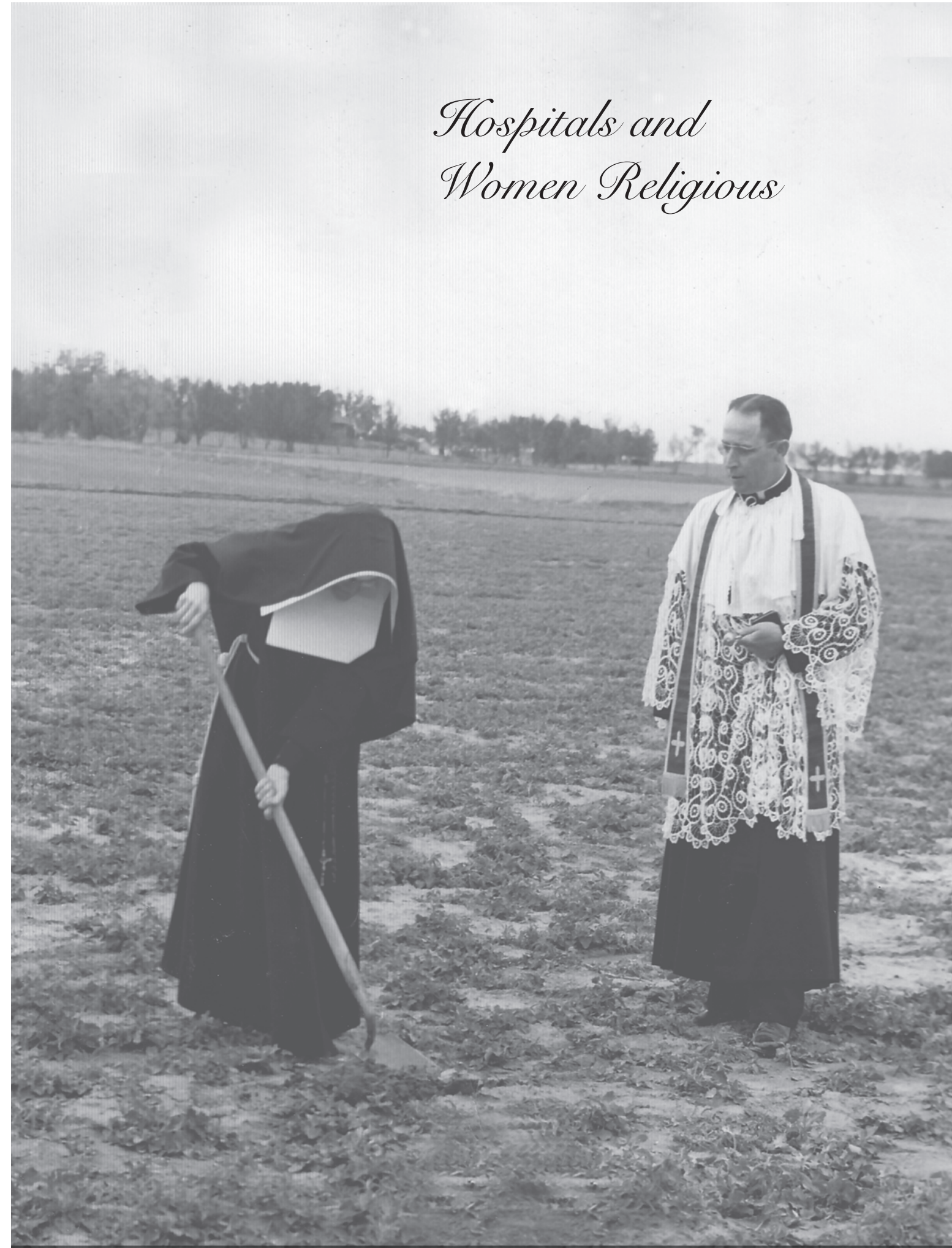
At left, the Spalding Academy Boys' Glee Club around 1955-56. Among those pictured are Sister Claudia, O.P., (Father) Bernard Berger, sixth from the left in back row, and (Father) John "Jack" Schlaf, eighth from the left in front row.



Spalding Academy was built in 1912.



# Hospitals and Women Religious





# Grand Island St. Francis Medical Center

*"Fourteen years after the industrial East and the golden romantic West had been joined by the completion of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads. Bishop (James) O'Connor passed through the little prairie town of Grand Island and informed Father (Richard) Phelan that it was very likely that Grand Island would be chosen in preference to Lincoln as the location for the establishment of a hospital to be conducted by the Poor Sisters of St. Francis, of Lafayette, Indiana."*

*"At this time Grand Island boasted a population of between 1,800 and 1,900 people, who had suffered much at the hands of marauding bands of Indians, and suffered the tragic devastation of the grasshoppers. The thought that the Sisters were to erect a hospital in their midst was a source of joy to them."*

(From the souvenir printed for the dedication of the new chapel and wing of St. Francis Hospital, Saturday, June 13, 1931)

At the request of Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha, two Sisters of St. Francis—Venerable Sisters Magdalena and Lucia—arrived in Grand Island on Oct. 24, 1883, to solicit funds in the city for the erection of a hospital.

In spite of their heroic efforts, the sisters failed in collecting the sum required to begin the construction, owing to drought, grasshoppers and mainly poor soil and scattered, sparse and struggling populations. The sisters were forced to return to Omaha at the end of



St. Francis Hospital, 1931.

1883, their mission unfulfilled.

Undaunted, the sisters returned to Grand Island in 1884. After they had visited practically every town in the area, they ventured as far as Wyoming and collected in the railroad camps. In the meantime,

the people of Grand Island formed a building committee to help the sisters. The committee and the sisters looked for a suitable site in the southwest part of town, the site located at Adams Street between Koenig and Charles. The plot chosen was a two-acre tract of land purchased from Charles Wasmer for \$375. Conditions of the sale were that within five years, a hospital be erected at a cost of not less than \$20,000.

By 1887 the two-story building with

a basement and attic was ready for occupancy. The records show that 218 patients were cared for during the first year. Sister M. Magdalena Rohland was the first administrator. The hospital was formally dedicated on June 29, 1887.

Four years later, the first wing was added to accommodate the growing number of patients. Again in 1905 another wing at a cost of \$40,000 was constructed. In 1912 another wing at a cost of \$80,000 was built. In 1924 the west wing of the hospital was built and housed x-ray, surgical and obstetrical de-

partments, a pathology laboratory and additional space for medical and surgical patients. At the time the cost was \$280,000 and increased the hospital's capacity to 150 beds.

In the meantime, St. Francis School of Nursing was formally opened in February 1920 with Sister M. Bertranda Kersten in charge. The first class—consisting of three nurses—graduated in 1923.

Until 1931 the original hospital was used as a geriatric section when it was razed to secure space for a large new hospital.

The new five-story building was begun in 1931 at a cost of \$400,000. The chapel was built during this building campaign and was dedicated by Bishop James A. Duffy in June of that year.

In 1934 Father Paul Wiese was the hospital chaplain and there were 21 sisters on duty in the hospital including the superior. In 1935 the deep therapy x-ray equipment was installed. During the second World War, most of the young doctors were called to the service, returning after the war years. During this period, the medical staff worked many overtime hours, many doubling their work loads. The air base and ordnance plant were established at Grand Island which also increased the hospital's workload. In 1948 the hospital opened a physical therapy department.

On June 20, 1949, Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler turned the first shovel of dirt at groundbreaking ceremonies for the new St. Francis School of Nursing.

In October 1951 the building was dedicated by Bishop John L. Paschang. The radiological school was approved by the Medical Association in December 1950.

The thought that the sisters were to erect a hospital in their midst was a source of joy ...'

Grand Island St. Francis School of Nursing students crown the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 1, 1955, in the St. Francis Hospital Chapel.



Present St. Francis Medical Center.

On June 5, 1967 the intensive care unit, located on the second floor of the hospital, was opened.

In 1975 more than 26 acres of land were purchased in—that time—a very barren northwest Grand Island.

The new St. Francis Hospital opened on West Faidley in 1978. The National Guard assisted in moving patients, while a mobile unit was furnished by St. Joseph's Hospital in Omaha, for transporting six babies in isolettes. By noon, all patients and staff had moved into the new all ground-level facility.

St. Francis purchased the Grand Island Lutheran Memorial Hospital and opened its Skilled Nursing Unit in 1987. Ground-breaking ceremonies for the Cancer Treatment Center were in July 1988 and the center opened in 1992.

And—as the saying goes—history repeats itself.

In 1887 St. Francis Hospital was a two-story building in downtown Grand Island soaring over the city.

After nearly 30 years of being a sprawling all ground-level facility, St. Francis once again soared above the city as the new St. Francis Medical Center nine-story patient tower opened on Oct. 16, 2007.

The new medical center, easily seen from several miles outside of Grand Island, was dedicated and blessed by Bishop William J. Dendinger on Sept. 14, 2007. In blessing the hospital Bishop Dendinger said, "I ask God to bless all who enter, whether working or as a patient."

A number of dignitaries were present for the ceremony including Governor Dave Heineman, Representative Adrian Smith and the city's mayor, Margaret Hornady, as well as hospital board member Michael Rowan, chief operating officer of Catholic Health Initiatives.

The tower boasted 163 patient rooms and an additional 270,000 square feet of space. An upgrade to the heating and air conditioning unit at Memorial Health Center cost \$2,100,000. The total cost of the project was approximately \$65 million.

The main floor houses the gift shop, conference rooms and information desk.

An exhibit of historical items and memorabilia displays photos, a rosary from the cornerstone of the original hospital on Charles Street, a gray nursing cape and nursing cap and uniform.

The kitchen and cafeteria, were designed to be similar to hotel room service.

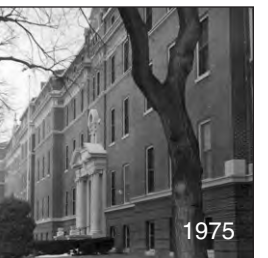
An artwork collection of more than 500 pieces is placed throughout the building with different themes on each floor. The art is unique to Central Nebraska. Themes include patron saint St. Francis on the first floor; child and family on the second

floor; and quilting as the theme on the third floor.

To date, the St. Francis Medical Center tower continues to be the tallest building—not only in Grand Island—but in Nebraska outside of Lincoln and Omaha.



1887



1975



1976



1986



# Kearney Good Samaritan Hospital

In April 1921—before Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney was built—Sisters M. Hubertina and M. Godharda (also Gotthardt), came to Kearney and lived in the brick residence on the hospital property in front of where the hospital would be erected. While the hospital was being built, the sisters took care of patients in their home and in the city hospital. The property for the hospital had been purchased several years earlier, but due to the rising cost of building materials, the hospital itself would not be completed until 1924. The cost was just more than \$200,000.

The first building, according to historical accounts, consisted of a basement and three stories and was formally dedicated by Bishop Francis J.L. Beckman, Bishop of Lincoln, on July 23, 1924.

Construction of the fourth and fifth floors began in September 1929 and was completed in October 1930. An addition was completed in 1950 and dedicated the same year at the joint celebration of the silver anniversary of the hospital's founding. The Christ the King chapel of Good Samaritan, located in the new wing, was blessed by Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler on Feb. 20. Donations from Francis G. Keens made this addition possible. Plans for another addition began in 1956. In 1962 Sister M. Edwardine, O.S.F., was administrator and the hospital was staffed by eight sisters and 165 employees and 38 doctors. Father Robert Krystosek was the resident chaplain. At the time, the hospital was owned and conducted by the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph of the Perpetual Adoration, whose motherhouse is located at Mt. St. Francis, Colorado Springs, Colo.



The kitchen was located in the northeast corner of the basement. Basements at the time were built partially above ground for ventilation.

In 1974 a fourth addition began and included new parking facilities for employees and visitors, a new boiler plant and maintenance shop, a five-story elevator tower, extended lab, surgery, recovery room and storage facilities, a new wing with a basement and kitchen, dining rooms, store-room and pharmacy; first floor admitting offices, gift shop, radiology department and emergency outpatient department and second floor with 48 new patient beds. Good Samaritan Hospital was upgraded and expanded in



Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney was completed in 1924 and is shown here with doctor's parked in "Doctor's Only" parking spaces.

1980 and, in 1987, Good Samaritan acquired the Richard Young Hospital.

On April 27, 1993, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for a \$19.5 million building project, in the planning stage since 1989. The project involved the renovation of 119,057 square feet in the existing hospital and new construction totalling 61,581 square feet.

In 2005 Bishop William J. Dendinger participated in a welcoming ceremony and blessed the Good Samaritan Healthy Living Center, located in the new West Tower addition at Good Samaritan.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were Oct. 20, 2010, in front of the Good Samaritan Hospital West Tower. New surgical suites and surgical support departments, new endoscopy suites, a new atrium-style cafeteria and dining area, new gathering spaces for visitors and the Ron and Carol Cope Heart Center are part of a 120,000 square foot construction project scheduled for completion in 2012.

Good Samaritan is part of Catholic Health Initiatives, which also manages St. Francis Medical Center in Grand Island.

Sister Rita Beason, O.S.F., contributed material for this story.

# Mount Carmel Home Carmelite Sisters

The basis of the Carmelite tradition, goes back to Elijah, who had been a model for monks and others. During the 12th century, a group of hermits journeyed to the "Fountain of Elijah"—the Carmelite Mountain Range, located at the southern tip of modern day Israel and Egypt.

The hermits were in various places in the desert-like area, when they came together and formed a community life, but maintained a sense of solitude, forming the monastery high up in the Carmelite area.

Historically, notable Carmelites who helped reform the monastic life were Teresa of Jesus (Avila), 1515 to 1582; John the Cross, 1542 to 1591; and Thérèse of Lisieux, 1873 to 1897. Edith Stein, who lived from 1891 to 1942, was Jewish, but converted to Catholicism becoming a Carmelite nun in Germany. She was executed in a Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz and declared a saint in 1987.

Corpus Christi Carmelites began in 1908 by Clare Ellerker, who would later be known as "Beloved Little Mother" and founder of the order.

Ellerker was born Clare Perrins at Handsworth, Birmingham, in October 1875 and baptized at St. Mary's Church of England in Handsworth in 1876. At a young age, she wished to convert to Catholicism and, when she was 14, began attending a Catholic school where she was taught by the Assumption Sisters at Kensington. She was received into the church when she was 16 and changed her surname to Ellerker, a Catholic ancestor on her mother's side of the family.

Choosing to live a community life, she, her own mother and sister comprised the first group and placed themselves "at the disposal of the bishop to go wherever they were needed."

They were taught the religious life by Father Vincent McNabb O.P., a holy Dominican priest. During World War I, the sisters corresponded with soldiers on the battlefield. News spread of the works being done by the first sisters and soon a letter was received from the Archbishop of Port of Spain, Trinidad, Most Rev. Pius Dowling, O.P., asking for their help in his archdiocese.

Three sisters from the original group left England on Nov. 14, 1919, for Trinidad, British West Indies. In May 1920 the first American foundation was laid in Duluth, Minn.

In 1927 the group affiliated with the Order of Carmel through invitation of the Calced Carmelite Fathers of the



Clare Elleker

Chicago Providence. The sisters worked with troubled girls and women, Native Americans, and at the request of the bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island James A. Duffy, children of migrant workers from Mexico in the sugar beet fields in the Scottsbluff area. They arrived in Sidney in 1925 and came to Kearney in 1928.

Made possible through the generosity of Francis G. Keens, on March 6, 1929, the present Mount Carmel Home in Kearney was given to the Catholic Church and the sisters to be used as a home for the aged, then known as the F.G. Keens Home. The home was a skilled nursing facility licensed by the State of Nebraska and operated by the Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters.

Opened in 1929 the home was staffed by the sisters with the first Mass offered in one room set aside as a temporary chapel in April 1929. In 1931 Keens provided an enclosed porch and, when he died, left a substantial amount of money for continued improvements. In 1952 a modern wing was added with chaplain's quarters and a permanent chapel. Another wing with a 54-bed capacity was completed in 1965 and the name was changed to Mount Carmel Home—Keens Memorial.

In 1979 the home celebrated its 50th anniversary and building once more became a necessity when fire regulations could no longer be met in the original building. A new wing, named St. Joseph's, was added and included an activity room, visiting room and a physical therapy room.

Construction was completed for the Day Care Center attached to the southeast part of Mount Carmel Home off of St. Joseph's Wing in May 2006. Little Shepherd Kidz Place opened its doors in June 2006 to the children of employees. This new addition solidified Mount Carmel's dedication to improving the lives of elders, staff, and their families.

Mount Carmel Home—Keens Memorial is now a 75 bed skilled nursing community licensed by the State of Nebraska.

The Home was operated and administrated by the Carmelite Sisters until December 1991. They still own the Home, serve as the Board of Directors, and remain active in administration and supplementary activities.

In 2007 indoor stores on the home's Main Street were added including a beauty shop, ice cream parlor and a Big Red Diner. The Corpus Christi Carmelites also began celebrating their centenary year.

Sister Dorothy Cavaness, O. Carm., is the current Mother Superior of the Corpus Christi Carmelites in Kearney.



The Corpus Christi Carmelites posed for a photo after Sister Isabel Sandino's (back row, third from right) perpetual profession of vows in 2009 at St. James Church in Kearney.



# Sister's Council

The Sisters Council began in the Diocese of Grand Island in April 1969. St. Ann's Convent in Lexington hosted the first meeting.

Sisters Verona Weiding, Laurette Quinn and Marilyn Mueller served as the first officers of the organization.

The council gives the sisters ministering in the diocese the opportunity to strengthen their faith life through sharing with one another. At the present time, 16 different Religious communities minister in the Diocese of Grand Island.

The council is also a vehicle of communication through which issues can be addressed and responses given.

The organization gives the sisters a further opportunity to be part of the network that is



The present executive team includes Sister Margaret Proskovec, N.D., Sister Rosemarie Maly, O.S.B., and Sister Clarice Korger, O.S.B. Other members include Sister Mary Ann Flax, C.S.J., and Sister Patty Rinn, O.P.

spreading the kingdom of God in rural Nebraska.

All of the sisters in the diocese are members of the council, those in the active apostolate and those semi-retired or retired who minister in prayer.

In the council's early days, a representative of each Religious community was a member of the executive board, along with the elected officers. There are approximately 60 sisters in the diocese.

Participation and sponsorship of continuing education workshops, jubilee celebrations, and diocesan ordinations are all a strong source of strength for the council members.

The present executive team includes Sisters Mary Ann Flax, C.S.J., Rosemarie Maly, O.S.B., Margaret Proskovec, N.D., Patty Rinn, O.P., and Clarice Korger, O.S.B.

## Communities serving in the Diocese of Grand Island

**BENEDICTINE SISTERS:** The Benedictine women of Yankton, S.D., share their gifts of seeking God through prayer, work, study and community life. Rooted in their rural heritage and growing in relationship with God and one another in monastic community, they live a life of prayer, work, and lectio by which they serve God and God's people in our time and place.



### DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SINSINAWA:

As Sinsinawa Dominican women, they are called to proclaim the Gospel through the ministry of preaching and teaching in order to participate in the building of a holy and just Church and society. In a world graced by the Holy Spirit, and yet wounded by divisions, exploitation and oppression, they are impelled by God's tender mercy to commit themselves in partnership with others to seek and foster right relationships among all of God's people and with the Earth.



### MISSIONARY CATECHISTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE:

The Missionary Catechists of Divine Province, with a unique gift to serve Hispanics, are inspired by Sister Benitia Vermeersch, their foundress, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. They are called to live the Gospel and minister to all people, especially the poor.



### NOTRE DAME SISTERS:

The Notre Dame Sisters of the Omaha Province are prayerful, gifted women of Gospel justice. Their response to unmet needs, especially of the poor and marginalized, calls them to risk for their sake, trusting God at work in and through them. In the spirit of Mary and their founders, and in solidarity with their international congregation and Czech heritage, they are called to a simple community lifestyle. Bonded by love, unity and hospitality, they are sent to be a joyful presence, proclaiming God's saving action.



### SCHOOL SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS:

The School Sisters of St. Francis serve in educational, prayer, healing, social and pastoral ministries. Their mission is to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ and the presence of the reign of God as they enter into the lives and needs of people, especially those who are poor.



### DOMINICAN SISTERS OF PEACE:

As part of the global Dominican family, Dominican Sisters of Peace, claim their charism to preach truth—with a new fire. Their preaching flows from their contemplation and is embodied in prayer, study, community and ministry. Rooted in the 800-year tradition of the Order of Preachers, they witness to the living presence of the Risen Christ.



**SERVANTS OF MARY:** The mission of the Servants of Mary is to manifest God's compassionate presence in the spirit of Mary. They respond to the words of Jesus: "Be compassionate as your God is compassionate." They do so by following the example of Jesus, under the guidance of Mary. Their commitment to compassion calls them to witness Gospel values; center their lives in love of God and neighbor; share with others healing and hope; be in right-relationship with all creation; welcome others in a spirit of hospitality; and live joyfully their charism of compassionate presence.



### SISTERS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY:

They are Christian women consecrated to God in a non-canonical, ecumenical community. They strive to realize the prayer of Jesus, "That all may be one." Committed through baptism to this Gospel mandate, they fulfill their mission to build community globally by birthing a new understanding of the reign of God. Their ministries are diverse, based on discernment of time, treasure and talent. They recognize and affirm the richness of all cultures. They stand in solidarity with all of those who strive to realize their God-given rights as human beings, free from dominance, injustice and oppression.



### SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PENANCE AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY:

Called by God's goodness, they profess the Gospel life in the spirit of St. Francis and Mother Magdalen Damen, following the teaching and footprints of their Lord Jesus Christ. They commit themselves to constant conversion in openness to the Spirit and live as sisters minor in the midst of God's people becoming a sign of hope in a struggling world.



### SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION:

The Sisters of Saint Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Saint Joseph Province, are a community of Catholic women religious. They are called to continue the mission of Jesus as they follow in the footprints of Francis, Clare and their foundress, Mother Maria Theresia Bonzel. Empowered by their charism of Eucharistic and lived adoration and in the love they share in community, they witness the Gospel values of conversion, contemplation, poverty and humility by standing in solidarity with those who are in any way poor or powerless; addressing unmet needs of their times with justice, mercy and compassion; and reverencing all of creation.



### SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH, THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS:

Dedication to Jesus involves the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis, intimately with His liberating and reconciling mission—to make God more deeply known and loved and in so doing draw all persons to a fuller and freer life. Together with all their sisters and brothers who strive for a more just world, they undertake those activities which will promote the material and spiritual development of the human family.



**SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH:** They live and work that all people may be united with God and with one another—rooted in the mission of Christ, the same mission which continually unfolds

in His Church, "That all may be one as You, Father, are to me and I in You; I pray that they may be one in us." Responding to the unmet needs in the church and world, they serve in education, health care, pastoral and parish ministry, social work, spiritual care and faith development, and in other ministries that respond to spiritual, social and physical needs.



### SISTERS OF THE HUMILITY OF MARY:

They share in Jesus' mission of bringing more abundant life to God's people, especially to those who are poor, by announcing the liberating message of the Gospel and by the witness of their lives. They are dedicated to works of peacemaking, justice and care for Earth through education, health care, social service and pastoral ministry.



### URSULINE SISTERS OF LEXINGTON:

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ky., an apostolic religious congregation of the Roman Catholic Church, are rooted in the spirit and tradition of St. Angela Merici, are committed to a life of prayer and community and participation in the teaching mission of the Church. Teaching Christian living is the corporate ministry of the Ursulines. This ministry, cuts across socio-economic, racial and national boundaries, assists women, men and children to live more fully and to develop a personal relationship with God.



Bishop William J. Dendinger greets Sister Mary Ellen Comiskey, O. Carm., of Kearney at one of the sister's luncheons held in 2005. Sister Charlene Vogel, O.P., is also pictured.



# Sister Margaret Ann Buser celebrates 75th jubilee

Ask Sister Margaret Ann Buser, C.S.J., how people react when they first find out she's a nun and she is likely to chuckle. "They say, 'I didn't know you were a sister!'" she laughed.

The only symbol denoting Buser's vocation is the ring on her left hand, which only a few people notice.

"They just think I'm married," she said and smiled, "but I am taken."

Sister Margaret Ann of Concordia, Kan., who formerly taught at St. Mary's High School and Grand Island Central Catholic, celebrated her 75th jubilee in 2011 as well as her 95th birthday in December. She and other jubilarians at the motherhouse were recognized at a Mass and program in June 2011. The day began with Ascension Sunday Mass, celebrated by retired diocesan priest Father John "Jack" Schlaf, in the Sacred Heart Chapel at the Nazareth Motherhouse.

One of eight children, Sister Margaret Ann was born Dec. 31, 1916, and grew up in Halstead, Kan., near Wichita, where her mother, Ida, was a homemaker and her father, Dan worked for the city of Halstead.

In high school, she found a natural talent in fine arts and was involved in several extracurricular activities including debate, literary contests, drama and music.

She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph when she was 18 and was received into the congregation March 19, 1936.

"I felt God was calling me to serve in

church and serve people in a special way," she said.

She received her bachelor of arts degree from Marymount College in Salina, Kan., and her master of arts degree from Notre Dame University. She has

spent most of her life teaching, spanning 40 years at different institutions throughout the Midwest. She began teaching at an academy in Silver City, N.M., and then moved back to Kansas teaching in Beloit and Aurora. After six years, she moved to Grand Island to teach at St. Mary's High School from 1947 to 1952. Those, she said, were the fun years.

"The high school was upstairs and the grade school was downstairs, so we were like sardines rubbing elbows," she said. "We became very close."

She left Grand Island to teach in Junction City, Manhattan and Salina, Kan. From 1960 to 1965, she was an English instructor at Marymount College and from 1965 to 1971, she was secretary general for the congregation.



Sister Margaret Ann Buser delivering food to the poor.

She returned to Grand Island and taught at Central Catholic from 1973 to 1982. Sister Margaret Ann said—with her English background and communication skills—she was asked by Bishop Lawrence McNamara to take part in the marriage tribunal investigating broken marital

relationships. She worked in the Marriage Tribunal Office for the Diocese of Grand Island for more than 10 years, retiring in 1993.

Though she retired, she began serving as a St. Stephen Minister at St. Mary's Cathedral in 1994. At age 79, Sister Margaret Ann did not intend to be a Stephen leader, fearing her age would be a problem. She was encouraged by retired diocesan priest Father James O'Kane, who began the program at St. Mary's.

"I had my age against me," she said. "But he knew I was a teacher with lots of skills and talents."

She was a Stephen Minister for 10 years until 2004 when she returned to the motherhouse.



Sister Margaret Ann Buser outside St. Mary's School in Grand Island. (Photo courtesy Grand Island Independent)

'I felt God was calling me ... in a special way.'

# Life as a Kentucky Dominican became the 'bow upon her braid'

For her 70th birthday, Sister Regina McCarthy, O.P., was granted a wish made several years ago when she first saw "The Wizard of Oz."

"It was like when I was in high school and I knew I wanted to be a nun and my friends would ask me how I knew," she said. "I'd say, I don't know, I just know."

And that was exactly how she explained her desire to—at least once—ride in a hot-air balloon.

On the evening of Aug. 14, 2006, in a weaved basket gondola below a multi-colored larger-than-life-balloon of blue, red, yellow and green, Sister McCarthy was up, up and away.

As a gift, two longtime friends planned the ride for Sister McCarthy, waiting for the weather conditions to be just right—not too hot, not too cold, and especially not too windy.

"Then I got a call," she said. "I was surprised, but not too surprised."

With a wave good-bye to the crowd below, Sister McCarthy said, "If I don't come back..." but the rest of her sentence was lost to the sound of the burner and flames that took her farther away in her 'beautiful balloon.'

Sister McCarthy, a Kentucky Dominican, was born Aug. 26, 1936, to Edward J. and Agnes Smyth McCarthy, both of whom were natives of Greeley County.

She entered religious life in 1954 and from 1956 to 1971 taught in the elementary, junior high and senior high schools of Mattoon, Ill., Jeffersonville, Ind., and in Nebraska at Cedar Rapids, Spalding and North Platte. She received a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish/English from Siena College in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968; a master of arts in Spanish from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1972; and a master's degree in theological studies from the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, in 1983.

Sister McCarthy also served as director of ministry for the Kentucky Dominicans from 1978 to 1981, and director of religious education and pastoral minister in North Platte.

While in North Platte, she was named director of the newly created Office of Hispanic Ministry for the diocese in 1982. In 1994 she came to St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island serving in the same capacity until 1996.

Sister McCarthy said her choice to

work with the Hispanic population had been guided by the Holy Spirit.

And why not? The Greeley native, as Irish as the Blarney Stone itself, initially set out in life to become a teacher.

That was until a college instructor told her she needed to enroll in four semesters of either French or Spanish to complete her degree. Since French classes didn't begin for another year, the choice was simple ... and the rest is history.

She served for the next six years, from 1996 to 2002, on the leadership committee at the motherhouse for the Kentucky Dominicans. She returned to the Grand Island diocese in 2002 as pastoral minister at St. Ann's in Lexington, and again worked with the Hispanic people.

In 1981 on her 25th jubilee, Sister McCarthy wrote in her reflections that she had spent a summer with migrant people in Ohio. While she was there, she met a woman whose hair had never been cut. She wore it in a crown around her head.



Sister Regina celebrated her 50th jubilee in 2006.

of the Visitation in O'Connor where her parents were united in marriage. That celebration was life-giving and her brothers and sisters were living proof of that love. Her second strand, she said, was a little older than the first. That strand was grown as a result of a Sunday sermon preached in February 1822 when a Dominican priest pleaded for help to meet a great need of the Church of that time—education for young women in Washington County, Ky.

Nine young women responded to that call and in April of that year the Kentucky Dominican Sisters became a reality. Early in the 1900s they arrived in Nebraska and in 1924 came to Greeley to Sacred Heart School. It was there that Sister McCarthy met these women for the first time in the person of Sister Madeline Farrell in the fall of 1941. Educated by them, and then called by God to join the Kentucky Dominicans, she made her profession.

The final strand of braid Sister McCarthy referred to began early in her lifetime. This strand, she said, is thick and rich, because it includes all who are present in her life ... it was the strand of friendship.

It was the entwining of these three strands that revealed to her the person of her God—for it was mostly through the people in her life that God had come to her. Her mother always said, "You can't leave the house without a bow on that braid," so she concluded ... the celebration of her life as a Kentucky Dominican was her bow upon that braid.



Sister Regina helps members from St. Ann's Parish in Lexington during the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest training in 2008.

At first, Sister McCarthy wrote, I only admired the beauty of that crown and then I began to be reminded of those days of long ago when my mother would braid my hair and put it on top of my head. From those thoughts I began to realize that a braid could well be the symbol of my life, for a braid generally has three strands.

Taking it as a symbol of my life, she continued, the first strand of my braid began on April 12, 1921, in the Church



## 71 years of service: Leading the way in pastoral ministry

Many people may still vividly remember the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Sister Theresa White, H.M., remembers that and at the very same time, something else that was life altering—joining the Humility of Mary community in Villa Maria, Penn.

Born in 1922, at Conneaut, Ohio, to Francis “Frank” and Julie (Petrucelli) White, Sister Theresa was the fifth of seven children. A sister, Louise Buckley lives in Ashtabula, Ohio and her brother, Brother Valentino Bianco lives in Elk Grove Village, Ill. Her other sister, Catherine Rich and brothers, Charles, Anthony and Joseph White are all deceased.

Sister Theresa said she first thought about entering religious life in the first grade when her teacher asked the boys who wanted to be a priest and the girls who wanted to be a sister.

“I think that was mostly born in me. I was very close to the nuns (who taught school) and I think that was instilled in me then,” she said.

She graduated from Conneaut High School in 1939. Her father died in 1937 of what they now think was appendicitis. She remembered the sisters from school coming to her house afterwards.

“The sisters were a big support when my father passed away—Sister Martha my first grade teacher and Sister Myra my music teacher,” she remembered. “When I saw them coming, they were like angels.”

It was at a dance when the thought of joining religious life would come to her again.

“I remember thinking ‘What am I doing here?’” she said. “That thought came to me ... that I would like to become a religious.” She worked for a year and a half after high school before taking that next step, surprising many of her classmates. On Jan. 12, 1941 Sister Theresa joined the Humility of Mary community and took her perpetual vows on July 17, 1946, the feast of Holy Humility of Mary.

She attended Fontbonne College at St. Louis, Mo., where she studied culinary artistry and also attended



Father Charles Torpey, Sister Theresa White, Sister Susan Schorsten, pastoral leader from the Sisters of the Humility of Mary and Sister Carole Wakefield, share a table at an ordination reception in 2009.

Boston College. She received a certificate in pastoral ministry from St. John College in Cleveland.

After joining the Humility of Mary community, Sister Theresa would be known as Sister Mary Bede for more than 20 years. After Vatican II, she not only went back to her baptismal name, but more common clothing as well. After years of wearing the traditional blue habit of the community, the “blue nuns” were allowed to wear more informal blue

suits. Eventually the community would switch to ordinary clothes.

In 1970 Sister Theresa attended a National Assembly of Women Religious convention in Cleveland where she heard Sister Carole Wakefield, who was a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame at the time, speak on “co-pastoring” in Mitchell with Father Robert Wiest.

Father Wiest had begun implementing the concept as parish coordinators, long before it became a normal part of parish life.

Sister Theresa came to the Diocese of Grand

Island and joined Sister Carole and Father Wiest, serving in pastoral ministry at St. Theresa Parish in Mitchell and St. Ann’s in Morrill from 1970 to 1973. The trio then ministered at St. Nicholas in Valentine and St. Mary’s in Nenzel from 1973 to 1983, Resurrection Parish in Grand Island from 1983 to 1985 and St. Mary’s Parish in Wood River from 1985 to 1994. Sister Theresa has lived in Grand Island since 1994 and is a member of St. Leo’s Parish.

## Pastoral Ministry at work in diocese

In June 1964 when Father Robert Wiest was assigned pastor of St. Columbkille Parish in Hay Springs, he spoke with Bishop John L. Paschang concerning the possibility of sisters assisting with parish work.

The idea that “sisters could reach people whom the priest could not” appealed to Fathers Joseph Hargarten, Ted Nekoliczak, Raymond Dooley, Edward Flinn and Robert Chamberlain. Together, several of the priests chartered a plane and sought religious women to work with them in the Sandhills parishes.

They visited several Motherhouses in Colorado, Kansas and Omaha, receiving a positive response from the Franciscan Sisters of Marycrest in Denver.

Consequently, Sisters Agnesine Hargarten and Florence Southall, O.S.F., became pioneer women specializing in parish ministry. They lived in Hay Springs working with Father Wiest and also worked in the missions of Mirage Flats, Gordon, Rushville and Chadron.

Sisters Agnesine and Florence earned the nickname of the “Vagabond Nuns” and later the “God Squad of Highway 20,” as they traveled to a different parish along Highway 20 each day.

Besides Sisters Agnesine and Florence, one other ministry team was active in the diocese in the late 1960s.

After working with Sisters Florence and

Agnesine in Hay Springs, Father Wiest was transferred to Mitchell in 1969, and recruited Sister Carole Wakefield, and a year later Sister Theresa White, both Sisters of the Humility of Mary.

During the renewal that followed Vatican II, the Grand Island diocese led the way in a new area of church ministry—team pastoral ministry.

Bishop John J. Sullivan is credited as being among the first in the U.S. to initiate a program of pastoral ministry—a large scale movement that invited 30-40 sisters to apply for the job of pastoral associate and to serve in the parishes of the diocese. By 1976, 32 priests, 49 sisters and two lay women were active in the program of team ministry serving the needs of 22 parishes.

The unique contribution of religious women serving in the capacity of pastoral ministry has clarified the vision of the church as a dynamic institution present and active in the lives of the people.

Team members today are involved in all aspects of parish life: praying, counseling, teaching, visiting, promoting and sharing Christian community, developing lay leadership, liturgy, ministry to the elderly, and celebrating sacramental and daily life.

In most communities, the team’s ministry extends beyond the parish community through ministerial associations, and other community activities with their parishioners.

## Clergy





## 64 years as priest: 'A job with lasting results'

Retired Father Jacob Bauer, oldest living priest in the Diocese of Grand Island, celebrated his 64th year as a priest in 2012, all because of a neighboring Protestant Presbyterian.

"I walked a quarter mile to the section line and a good Protestant Presbyterian who worked at the creamery downtown, picked me up and I would sweep out his feed store to earn my free ride to town," he said. "I did that for two years, otherwise I wouldn't have gotten to go to high school. After that my sister and brother were going so we got to drive the Model A into town."

"If it weren't for that Presbyterian," he said. "I wouldn't be a priest today."

Father Bauer was born to Jake and Mary (Latzel) Bauer on July 12, 1922, in Spalding, the middle child of a blended family of seven boys and three girls. His dad's first wife had five children and she died in the first flu epidemic, he said. "My dad married my mother and I was the first of the second crop."

His parents farmed in the "dusty sandhills of Spalding" and he attended School District 19 until the eighth grade. It was important to his mother, he said, that he have the opportunity to attend high school. The older members of his family were only educated to the eighth grade and then went back to work on the farm. Thanks to the generosity of that neighboring Protestant, Father Bauer was given that opportunity.

He received his education at Spalding Academy and his



Father Jake Bauer, oldest living priest in the Diocese of Grand Island, celebrates Mass at Riverside Lodge in 2008.

college, philosophical and theological training was taken at St. John's Seminary in Little Rock, Ark.

While there, Father Bauer said he would oftentimes see former Bishop James A. Duffy—the first bishop of the diocese—who served from 1913 to 1931. "We (seminarians) would visit him," he said, "but he was pretty old." Father Bauer is one of the few priests in the diocese who knew Bishop Duffy, as well as the other six bishops.

"I remember (Bishop Stanislaus V.) Bona. I signed up with (Bishop) Bona and (Bishop Edward J.) Hunkeler ordained me," he remembered. Bishop Duffy, he said, had already retired.

Father Bauer said he was inspired to enter the priesthood, mostly because he saw the need when he was growing up. He watched Monsignor Bernard Galvin, priest at St. Michael's Church in Spalding from 1905 until his death in 1942, simply "wear out."

"He served for nearly 40 years," he said. "At that time, there was no new priest to replace him."

Father Bauer said he stayed home to farm the first year out of high school, but said he was "looking for a job with lasting results that was worthwhile."

He remembered visiting with Msgr. Galvin about going into the seminary.

Father Bauer said that he didn't know anything about the church and that he was just a

"farm boy in the country." Nevertheless, a fellow Spalding native and seminary student by the name of James Naughtin encouraged him to give it a try.

Father Naughtin, a talented tenor, served as a diocesan priest for just 15 years until his untimely death after a musical performance.

"At the end of the program, with the congregation, the bishop and several priests watching, he went on stage and thanked everyone for their support throughout the year, and he died on the stage," Father Bauer said. "He had a stroke, a massive hemorrhage and died right there. He died as dramatically as he lived."

Ordained to the priesthood in St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island by Bishop Hunkeler on May 27, 1948, Father Bauer has served parishes in Kearney, Greeley, Alliance, Grand Island, and Dalton.

Appointed administrator of St. Mary's at Nenzel and St. Elizabeth's Mission at Merriman on July 1, 1955, it was under his direction that the new church at Merriman was built and later dedicated in August 1957. He was later named as pastor of the parish and the mission.

Father Bauer was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ravenna in 1959. In 1961 the rectory that had been built in 1903 was replaced by a new brick rectory to match the church.

During the late 1960s Father Bauer saw the changes from Vatican II make their way to the Diocese of Grand Island at about the same time he broke his leg skiing.

"That was when the new liturgy came in and you had to stand," he remembered and said he propped himself up on a barstool behind the altar.

But Vatican II, he said, was a difficult time for the church. "I liked the change, but there were people that wanted it and people that didn't," he said. "I wasn't an extreme either way."

A new concept also to come out of Vatican II was a personnel board and Father Bauer became one of its first members under Bishop John L. Paschang, the fourth bishop of the diocese.

Father Bauer also served parishes at Gering, Minatare, Sutherland, Paxton, and Hershey.

Father Bauer retired on Sept. 17, 1990, and lives at Riverside Retirement Lodge in Grand Island where he is still able to offer Mass.

"I made up my mind, as long as I'm able, I'm going to say Mass."

## International priests: Coming to America

Father John Kakkuzhiyil, S.D.B., logged nearly 20 hours from his home state of Kerala, South India, to arrive at Omaha May 14, 2007—his first time to the United States.

"It was my first non-stop flight, too," he said. "If you crash land, you land in the water."

Luckily, he didn't though, and arrived safe and sound at his Grand Island destination.

With the help of the late Father Walter Phelan, the journey to Nebraska began with a friend of his in San Francisco who knew Father Phelan. He told Father John, "If you ever get the chance to come to the U.S., you should take it."

Father John took his friend's advice and used the opportunity to update his religious studies in the United States during a break from his position in India. He then contacted Father Phelan, who in turn contacted Bishop William J. Dendinger.

Through a series of phone calls, e-mails, packages, and a lot of paperwork, Father John worked with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (CLINIC) in Omaha, who handled his case to acquire a visa and permission to stay in the U.S. for the extended period of time. The entire process took a relatively short amount of time compared with the actual interview Father John was asked to do at the American Consulate in India.

"I stood in line for two hours for a two minute interview," he said. "They asked me 'Why are you going to Nebraska?' Nobody goes to Nebraska. Usually, they went to California or New York."

Ordained a Salesian priest on Jan. 1, 1986, Father John was born on Feb. 25, 1957, in Kerala, South India, the oldest of seven children—three sisters and three brothers. One sister



Father John Kakkuzhiyil, a Salesian priest from Kerala, South India, opens the door to St. Mary's Cathedral. Father John was the first international priest to serve in the Diocese of Grand Island.

died in a 1995 accident, and his father, a farmer, died in 1994.

Father John said he was inspired by a Salesian priest who had visited his school. When he was 13, he joined the Salesian Aspirantate near Kolkata—2,000 miles from his home. After high school, he was selected to join the Salesian Novitiate at Shillong, North East India, and took his first vows on May 24, 1976.

Father John was granted a break from his priestly duties in 2006 and then offered his services to Bishop Dendinger.

Since leaving home at such a young age and working in everything from mission work to elite parishes, Father John said he doesn't find it difficult to adapt to new situations and environments.

Here in Nebraska, though, Father John said he has been surprised and impressed with the collaboration efforts we have and is welcomed by the warmth and openness of the people. India, he said, does not have this level of laity involvement.

"Eucharistic ministers or lay people giving Communion is non-existent," Father John said. "We have some lay people, but not to this extent, probably because we don't have the priest shortage."

For the most part, though, Father John's Catholic traditions are similar to traditions here. While many people in India follow the Hindu religion, Father John said his family actually has a rather longstanding tradition of Catholicism.

"They say we were baptized by St. Thomas," Father John said and laughed.

Father John Kakkuzhiyil, S.D.B., was the first international priest to serve in the Diocese of Grand Island.

The International Priests Program continues today to bring much-needed pastoral help to many parts of the diocese. There are now seven priests in the program including Father John, pastor at St. Nicholas Church in Valentine and St. Mary's Church in Nenzel. Other international priests serving are Father Thomas Gudipalli, Father Joseph K. Joseph, S.D.B., Father Joseph Kadaprayil, S.D.B., Father Antony Thekkekkara, S.D.B., Father James Joseph, S.D.B., and Father Abraham Kaduthodiyil, S.D.B. Two priests serving in the Diocese of Grand Island left the diocese in 2012—Father Mathew Thekkekkara, S.D.B., and Father Anthony Madhichetti.



Father George Palamattam traveled to Grand Island from his native India to celebrate a Mass Nov. 2, 2010, at Tiffany Square Care Center where longtime friend, Father Walter Phelan, was a resident. The international priest's program began with Father Phelan's help. Pictured at the gathering are back row from left: Fathers Antony Thekkekkara, John Kakkuzhiyil, William Kalin, James Joseph, Jose Kadaprayil, George Palamattam, Mathew Thekkekkara, Tom Kunnel, Jonathan Sorensen, and Mark Maresh. Front row: Fathers Harold Kurtenbach, Andrew Augustyn, Gerald Carlson, Walter Phelan, Bishop William J. Dendinger and Father Jacob Bauer. Father Phelan died a month later on Dec. 8, 2010.



# Mother Teresa of Kolkata

## Her touch reaches the Grand Island diocese

**M**other Teresa of Kolkata (formerly spelled Calcutta) may have been one of the most recognizable and well-known religious figures of the 20th century, but few people knew her on a personal level like native Indian Father James Joseph, pastor at St. Leo's in Gordon.

Father Joseph said he first met Mother Teresa in August 1982 as a young seminarian when she visited the Salesian College in Dimapur Nagaland, North East India. She left a lasting impression on Father Joseph and others at the seminary with her simplicity and Godly ways, and he learned more about her work for the poor. He visited her again in December at her motherhouse in Kolkata with his mother and newly ordained older brother Father Antony, a Franciscan missionary in the state of Uttarakhand in Northern India.

Beginning in 1993 Father Joseph said he began to send vocations from his parishes to Mother Teresa.

"I would visit her at times especially when those young girls professed as nuns in her order," he said. "I would visit her convents in Assam and elsewhere and gave them some medical supplies my sister used to send me from Germany."

In 1996 Father Joseph said his work among the Bengali Christians in Agartala, Tripura, on the borders of Bangladesh brought him closer still to Mother Teresa and her order.

"I was at that time pastor of the Cathedral Church at Mariamnagar in Agartala. Her sisters were working in that parish and I set up a dispensary for them to help the poorer people. I visited Kolkata often and met her whenever I could."

Mother Teresa had even asked Father Joseph if he could work with her for at least five years, but his provincial denied his request.

"He told me that she gets enough help and that I was needed to work in the missions as a Salesian," he remembered.

Father Joseph said his last visit with Mother Teresa was May 3, 1997, while he was in Kolkata staying at the Salesian provincial house. A young Bengali Salesian, Ashish Das, had asked him if he

could introduce him to Mother Teresa. He called the motherhouse and was told that she wanted to speak with him, wishing him a Happy Feast of St. James.

"She then asked me where I was and when I told her I was in Kolkata she asked me to

come and see her and celebrate Holy Mass. I humorously remarked that she had so many priests around her and she could let them say Mass. To that she replied saying that there was only one Italian priest who did not know any English. She also reminded me that the novices, some of whom were vocations sent by me, wanted to see me. So I agreed to go to her place ... she was waiting at the door to wish me happy feast and then I introduced Brother Ashish to her. I celebrated Mass for the sisters and the volunteers and the Italian priest concelebrated."

Father Joseph said they spoke for some time before she asked if he wanted a memento.

"I told her that was not necessary for me as I always remembered her in my heart," he recalled. "We prayed for some time in the church and then she came out and walked through the corridor holding my hand."

He later learned from Mother Teresa's nuns that she had a fall that night and broke her hip. She was in a wheelchair from that time forward until

her death Sept. 5, 1997.

"She gave me pictures and books and I gave them away to some of her nuns or to other people who wanted to have them for her memory," Father Joseph said because, "I knew that she had a very special love for me."

## MEMORIES OF MOTHER TERESA

BY FATHER JAMES JOSEPH, S.D.B.

My memories of Mother Teresa are many. I don't remember the exact dates or the years of some of them.

Once I visited with Mother to Nirmal Hriday, the Home of the Pure Heart ... the home for the dying.

As we walked through and visited the seriously ill and dying inmates, some of them without limbs and some with gaping gangrenous wounds, I noticed great joy on the faces of each of the inmates as they looked at Mother.

As they beamed a smile even in their pain, she too would smile and put her hands around them. She would bend close to each of them and talk consolingly, touch them and kiss them with such reverence ... as though she was kissing Jesus himself. Mother would say a word of encouragement to each of the nuns there. All the sisters, along with the volunteers, were cleaning and dressing the wounds while attending to their different needs. As we walked through meeting each of them, now and then she would hold on to my hand and would speak to me explaining how she began this work and how much more needed to be done. She said there were so many less fortunate ones who needed care and were in dire need. She and her nuns were trying to do their best to help people to die with dignity.

I was then a very young priest and I thought of myself as quite brave and courageous to touch some of those people who were just brought in from the streets by the nuns, dirty and with oozing wounds. But as I saw how Mother Teresa would hold them, bend over them and kiss them, I realized my courage was no match for her grace and love.



# Priest, Father and Husband

## Father Sidney Bruggeman becomes first married Roman Catholic priest in Nebraska

**W**hen Bishop William J. Dendinger spoke at Father Sidney Bruggeman's Rite of Candidacy March 27, 2009, at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island, he discussed something that everyone does on a daily basis—opens their mail.

Envelopes, he said, come in all different shapes, colors and sizes. Except for the occasional bulk mailing, no two are exactly the same.

Such was the case with seminarians and soon-to-be ordained deacons and priests. Such was the case with Father Bruggeman, who was ordained a deacon on April 18, 2009, before being ordained a priest of the Diocese of Grand Island on June 5, 2009.

Father Bruggeman was not the only seminarian ordained a deacon that year, nor was he the only priest ordained that year. He was, however, the only one that was a married father and grandfather and one of only 100 married priests in the country, said Bishop Dendinger.

"He is the first—and only—married (Roman Catholic) priest in Nebraska," said Bishop Dendinger.

Unusual indeed, but an acceptable practice in the Catholic Church with some exceptions and limitations. The first known documentation dates back to Pope Pius XII, said Bishop

Dendinger. During post World War II, Pope Pius XII granted a handful of Lutheran ministers special permission to become Roman Catholic priests, but only on a case-by-case basis.

Many years would pass before the concept was reintroduced when Pope John Paul II reissued a statement in 1980, granting permission for married Anglican priests—and later to other married Protestant priests—to become Catholic priests.

Born on March 7, 1952, in Auburn, to Orville and Dorothea Bruggeman, Father Bruggeman farmed for several years before attending Peru State College, then went on to graduate from Emory University in Atlanta with a masters of divinity degree. He became a licensed lay pastor for seven years before becoming an ordained minister for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in 1988.

He resigned from his ministry in 1995 and he, his wife, Carol, and their four children all joined the Catholic Church on Christmas Eve. The couple had come to their decision at the same time and were relieved and grateful that all four children joined them.

But a lot of people asked Father Bruggeman: 'Why? Why would you want to be Catholic? Is this what God

wants you to do?'"

"I only want to do it if it's what God wants me to do," he said.

**F**ather Bruggeman, who was raised in a Lutheran environment, said he

has always been drawn to the Eucharist, that Christ is still present. He described a sense of awe and an early attraction to the Eucharist that he still has today.

But his diverse background with several denominations left Father Bruggeman confused, he said.

"I knew that these people all had a genuine affection and love for the Lord, but they all had very different beliefs. I found that very troubling and thought 'Something is wrong,'" he said. "I think it's me."

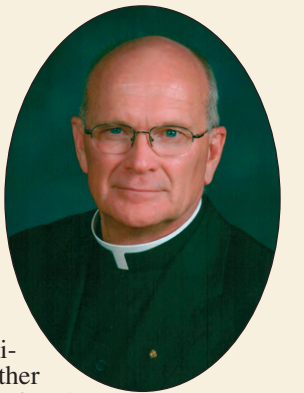
Because he was married first, and then converted to Catholicism, Father Bruggeman found himself in a unique position. His background gave him the opportunity to pursue becoming an ordained Catholic priest, despite his marital status. After some thought and prayer, Father Bruggeman made a decision.

But even before he could begin studying to become a Catholic priest, Father Bruggeman had to receive approval from the Holy See. After a long period of time—and a lot of documentation, he said—it finally came through in April 2005.

As difficult as the process had been, Father Bruggeman said it was very reassuring that the church has spoken by its highest authority and said that it is okay.

"This wasn't done without the auspices of the church," he said. "It was done under the proper authority. It comes from the pope. I tell people, with all due respect, this was the pope's decision."

Father Bruggeman is pastor at St. Libory Church in St. Libory and chaplain to the Veterans Affairs Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in Grand Island.



Father Sidney Bruggeman kneels before Bishop William J. Dendinger, Bishop of Grand Island, during his June 5, 2009, ordination at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island. Father Bruggeman is the first known married Roman Catholic priest in Nebraska and one of approximately 100 in the country.



# Priests valued freedom: Diocesan priests began new life in America following war

Even after 67 years marking the end of World War II, accounts tell of the joy of Europeans at being liberated from the Axis powers. Two European-born priests of the Diocese of Grand Island, both deceased, had slightly different memories.

Father Jan Smutny and Father Milan Kopushar remembered being glad that the Nazis had been defeated, but both knew their countries were trading German occupation for that of communist Russia.

Both priests reiterated over and over during the years following World War II that the people of the United States should value the freedom they have and be prepared to defend that freedom against communism.

Father Smutny, born in Strelice, Czechoslovakia, a town of 4,000, was ordained “underground” for the Diocese of Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1942.

Father Kopushar, a native of Yugoslavia, was ordained there in 1934.

Both priests said their countries were “given” to the Russians in the

Yalta agreement of February 1945.

By that time, the surrender of Germany was imminent and the heads of state of the three Allied powers—U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Russian Premier Josef Stalin—met in Yalta.

At the conference, the three leaders formulated plans for governing the formerly German-occupied countries after the war.

Father Smutny said the Germans occupying Czechoslovakia retreated from the Russian forces and wanted to surrender to the American military, but the Americans had to wait outside Prague, the capital city, for the Russian invasion to reach the Germans.

Father Kopushar said the Yugoslav communists, under Marshal Tito, had been taking over the government of his country during the war, and the American military did not enter Yugoslavia.

Many of the Yugoslavs worked for a free country against both the Germans and the communists from 1941 to 1945.

## Placed under house arrest, priest escapes



Bishop William J. Dendinger and Father Jan Smutny pose before processing in at the Mass of Thanksgiving for Father Smutny's 65th anniversary of ordination in 2007.

Father Jan Smutny had worked with an underground group from the time of his ordination until the end of the war. The group planned and organized a democratic government for Oslavany, Czechoslovakia, that could be put into operation as soon as the Nazi occupation ended, but that never happened.

After the initial “liberation” by the Russian military, the Czechs did have a semi-democratic government until 1948, when the communists effected a bloodless coup and took over the country.

Father Smutny was placed under house arrest and was no longer able to carry out his priestly duties, except for saying Mass on Sundays. His duties of teaching religious instruction to children in the public schools had been suspended. One of the witnesses against him was a superintendent at one of the schools.

He was told he would be arrested because he continued to speak out for the church after he had been warned by the

government. A sympathetic border guard helped Father Smutny and a medical student, whose studies had been suspended by the government, to escape to Austria in 1949. At the time of his escape he was an assistant priest in a mining community parish where communism was strong.

Father Smutny spent two years working in displaced persons’ camps in Austria and Italy before immigrating to the United States in 1951, and came to Nebraska because a priest from Strelice was in the Lincoln diocese. Father Smutny was appointed chaplain of St. Joseph’s Villa in David City and also served as administrator of the parishes of Curtis and Farnam in the Lincoln diocese.

In 1958 Bishop John L. Paschang, fourth bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island, invited Father Smutny to join the Grand Island diocese.

The invitation was accepted and he was appointed pastor of Pleasanton and Hazard. The parish of Prairie Center was added to his responsibilities later and he served there faithfully for 35 years until retiring in 1993.

Father Smutny helped to establish and administer the Grand Island Diocesan Priests’ Welfare and Pension Fund.

## Never to serve under communism Priest’s choice was freedom

Father Milan Kopushar was an associate pastor when the Germans and Italians occupied Yugoslavia in 1941. He said the Axis countries divided his country between them, with the Germans taking over two-thirds and the Italians occupying the other third.

All the priests were expelled by the Germans to the Italian section in the first two weeks of occupation.

During his time in the Italian section, Father Kopushar said people would come to the church every night for refuge. He said he did what he could do to help them but everyone was frightened and hungry.

Father Kopushar left Yugoslavia by bicycle on May 5, 1945, rather than live under communist rule. He was in Austria, which was only a two-hour ride, when the Germans surrendered.

Father Kopushar spent the next four years working as a chaplain in hospitals in Austria. He came to the United States in 1949 after deciding he could never serve as a priest in Yugoslavia again.

Father Kopushar served in the



Father Milan Kopushar

Father Smutny returned to his native Czechoslovakia in August 1990. It was his first visit there since he escaped the communist regime in 1949. The mayor of his hometown gave him the seal of the town in a special ceremony; he was the first person to ever receive this recognition.

He also held a 2 1/2 hour press conference because of the interest in conditions in the United States.

A quiet reserved man, Father Smutny was overwhelmed by the attention and credited it to his vocation as a priest, not to himself.

Father Smutny died on Sept. 2, 2008, at the age of 89. He was taken back to his home in Strelice, Czech Republic, for burial.

Freedom of religion was “the greatest result” of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989, Father Smutny said. The Czechs believed the revolution was due to the canonization of St. Agnes of Bohemia on Nov. 12, 1989 ... the government began collapsing without bloodshed on Nov. 17.

On Jan. 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully dissolved into its constituent states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

Cheyenne, Wyo., diocese a year before coming to the Diocese of Grand Island.

He served as associate pastor at St. Josaphat’s Parish in Loup City; chaplain of St. Joseph’s Hospital in Alliance; administrator of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Paplin and St. Mary’s in Rockville; pastor of St. Anthony’s Parish in Farwell and Mt. Carmel. Father Kopushar retired to Loup City in 1982.

Father Kopushar died on Feb. 18, 1995 at the age of 85.

Yugoslavia pursued a policy of neutrality after the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, and became one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was the Yugoslav state that existed from the abolition of the Yugoslav monarchy until it was dissolved in 1992 amid the Yugoslav Wars.

Yugoslavia today is a federal republic operating under the constitution of 1992 as amended. It has a bicameral federal assembly (Savezna Skupština). The president is directly elected and may serve two four-year terms; the president nominates the prime minister and chooses a federal executive council.



Serving our Country

Farwell native Father Alexander J. Borzych is serving as a Navy chaplain at the Training Support Center in Great Lakes, Ill. He said he always had a desire to enter the military and repeatedly asked Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara permission to join. With the shortage of ordained priests, Father Borzych said the answer was always 'no'.

But when enough priests had retired from the military Bishop McNamara gave in to Father Borzych's request and his military career began in 1992.

He began his career in California, serving at Camp Pendleton until 2007 when he was transferred to his present post at Great Lakes. He also served at Yokosuka Naval Base, Chapel of Hope, Yokosuka, Japan, as well as overseas serving six months in the Middle East and another 40 days in Fullajah, Iraq, with the Marines.

There, Father Borzych said cities looked like ghost towns and he found himself doing Mass among mortars and artillery. Despite all the destruction, Father Borzych said he saw signs of hope.

The English language, he said, is taught in schools and many children would seek out Marines just to have conversations. The Marines would save their rations of candy bars for the children.

"I'm proud to be from the Grand Island diocese," he said in an interview from 2005. "It's a great bunch of priests to work with. I always feel welcome."

Born July 13, 1953, to Ed and Rita Borzych, Father Borzych graduated from St. Paul High School in St. Paul.



Father Alex J. Borzych

In September 1971 he entered Conception Seminary College in Conception, Mo., and studied theology at St. Thomas Seminary School of Theology in Denver.

In 1992 Father Borzych was assigned to military chaplaincy in the Navy and will retire from his rank of Lieutenant Commander in November 2012.

Other priests in the diocese who have served in the military include Bishop William J. Dendinger

(Air Force); Father Thomas Dillon (Navy); and Father Rodney Pruss (Air Force).

Father Richard Piontkowski, pastor at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island, is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserves. Due to the war in Iraq, he was activated into service in 2003. He recently returned from being stationed as a chaplain with the 103rd Sustainment Command at Joint Base in Balad, Iraq.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Father Joseph Abele	April 28, 2006
Father Joseph Bean	May 5, 1959
Father Kevin Cortney	March 10, 1998
Father Mitchell Koprowski	Dec. 14, 2010
Father Leander Lecher	Aug. 31, 1971
Msgr. Andrew McDonald	March 30, 1965
Father James McMahon	April 6, 1965
Father Albert Vifquain	May 5, 1957



In 1954 Cardinal Francis Spellman greeted Father (1st Lt.) Joseph Abele, Army Chaplain (at left) on his arrival from Korea for his Christmas visit with American troops stationed there. Father Abele joined the Chaplains Corps in 1953.



During World War II, Fort Robinson at Crawford was established as a German prisoner of war camp. Father Albert Abel, pastor at St. John the Baptist in Crawford at the time, served as the camp's chaplain. (Photo courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)

The priest who worshiped the Old West

Shortly after President Lyndon Johnson's inauguration, a Colorado Congressman received a caller in his Washington office—a smiling priest from Western Nebraska.

Father Robert L. O'Neill hadn't gone to Washington merely to see LBJ raise his right hand, but to create interest in the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

At the time of the inauguration, a measure establishing the monument was soon to be introduced by Nebraska Senators Roman Hruska and Carl Curtis and Representative David Martin.

Father O'Neill, secretary of the monument promotion committee, wanted to give it a little extra push, and he had been told the Colorado man was the man to see.

The discussion didn't seem to be going so well, perhaps because Father O'Neill mentioned that the legislation had the backing of Interior Secretary Stuart Udall.

"Well," huffed the Congressman, "I'm the chairman of this committee, not Mr. Udall."

Just when it appeared that the bill might be pigeon-holed, Father O'Neill mentioned casually that he had "said a prayer for the Congressman's reelection because I knew you would want to do what is right."

A change came over the Congressman immediately, and progress was made.

The bill became law on President Johnson's signature, and the National Park Service began an intensive project at the fossil beds in Nebraska's northwest corner.

Senators Hruska and Curtis and Congressman Martin were so impressed with Father O'Neill's efforts that they sent him one of the pens used by President Johnson to sign the bill.

With Agate Fossil Beds National Monument now on the way to becoming a reality, one might think Father O'Neill would have been satisfied to settle down to saying prayers for the parishioners of his Church of the Nativity in Harrison.

But friends who knew Father O'Neill best realized that this 58-year-old native Nebraskan constantly was looking for new worlds to conquer.

He began his next project—heading the Fort Robinson Association, Inc., an organization formed to promote the conversion of the old military post into the state's tourist attraction.

Long before Father O'Neill became the president of the association, Mel Steen, director of the Nebraska Game Commission, had called Fort Robinson's potential for tourism "unlimited."

Fort Robinson's history as an Army post during the Indian wars is well

known. It was the site of the killing of the great Sioux chief, Crazy Horse. At old Camp Robinson, Lieutenant Walter Reed began an illustrious medical career.

The late General Douglas MacArthur's father once served as post adjutant. And last but by no means least, Jules Sandoz, made famous by his daughter Mari's book, had his broken leg mended in Fort Robinson's hospital.

Why would a priest become involved in both the Agate and Fort Robinson activities?

Father O'Neill felt it was his duty to help provide a better future for Western Nebraska.

Father O'Neill was hard to spot as a priest. He frequently wore cowboy boots, a sports shirt and rode horses

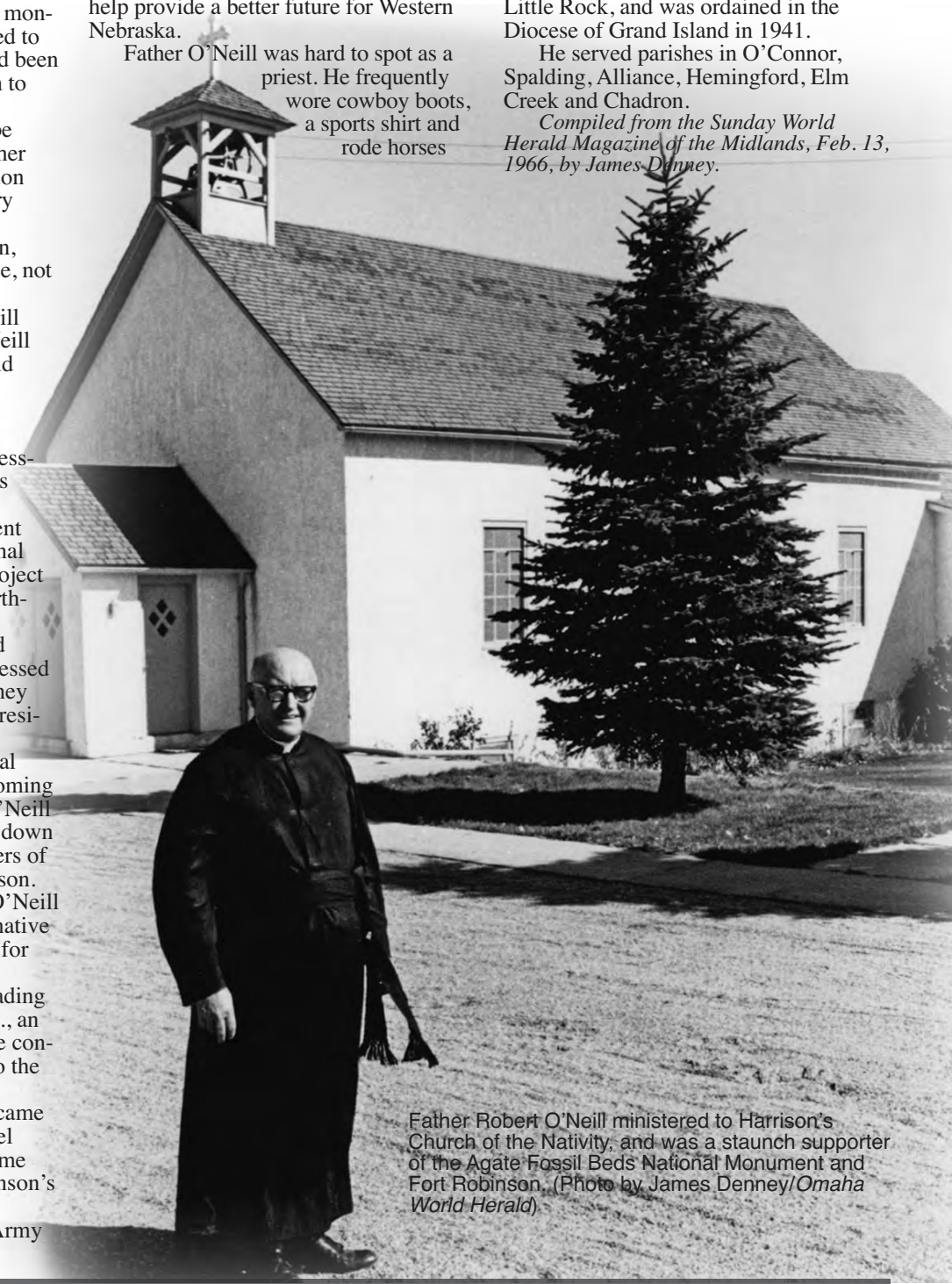
when he had the time.

With approval of Bishop John L. Paschang, he took on his civic responsibilities because he believed all of us out here in the wide open spaces should contribute something.

A native of St. Libory, Father O'Neill advanced to the priesthood the hard way—by working his way. He attended grade school in St. Libory. Because of the Depression, he was unable to start high school until age 24. He graduated from Omaha's Creighton Prep at age 27 in 1934. He attended St. John's Seminary in Little Rock, and was ordained in the Diocese of Grand Island in 1941.

He served parishes in O'Connor, Spalding, Alliance, Hemingford, Elm Creek and Chadron.

Compiled from the Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands, Feb. 13, 1966, by James Dinney.



Father Robert O'Neill ministered to Harrison's Church of the Nativity, and was a staunch supporter of the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument and Fort Robinson. (Photo by James Denney/Omaha World Herald)

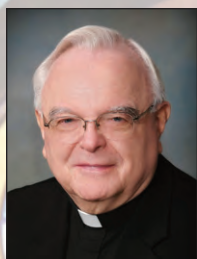


## Retired Priests of the Diocese of Grand Island

To live in the midst of the world without wishing its pleasures; to be a member of each family, yet belonging to none; to share all sufferings; to penetrate all secrets; to heal all wounds; to go from men to God and offer Him their prayers; to return from God to men to bring pardon and hope; to have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity; to teach and to pardon, console and bless always. My God, what a life! And it is yours, O Priest of Jesus Christ!



Father Jacob Bauer



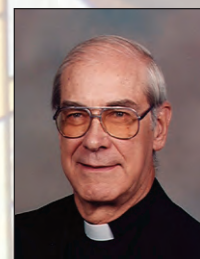
Father Robert Chamberlain



Father Lawrence Coulter



Father Francis Curran



Father Stephen Deaver



Father Thomas Dillon



Father Thomas Dowd



Father Carl Ferris



Father Miguel Guevara



Father Robert Krystosek



Father Harold Kurtenbach



Father Donald Larmore



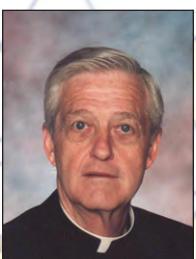
Father Thomas Mullowney



Father Ted Nekoliczak



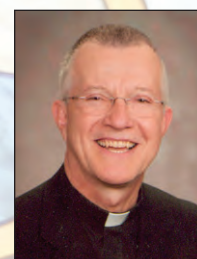
Father James O'Kane



Father Loren Pohlmeier



Father Rodney Pruss



Father John Rademacher



Father Robert Rooney



Father John Schlaf



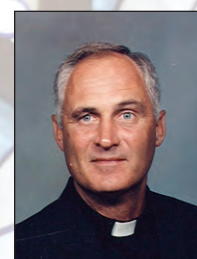
Father James Schmitt



Father Frederick Snyder



Father Hubert Spanel



Father James Warner

\* Father James Murphy, retired priest of the Diocese of Grand Island, serves the parish of St. Theresa in Ericson. Father Murphy is pictured on their parish page.

## Diaconate Formation



A permanent diaconate formation program was introduced in the Diocese of Grand Island in 2006. The permanent deacon program was restored by the Vatican II Council which saw the need for ministers of the church to be engaged with the working world.

The restoration of the permanent diaconate program was authorized in the United States in 1968. The liturgy has specific roles for a permanent deacon such as proclaiming the Gospel at Mass, baptizing infants, and witnessing marriages. Their purpose is to minister at the altar and minister in the marketplace. In the Roman Missal there are certain parts for the deacon, certain parts for the priest, and then certain parts for the bishop.

While the diaconate is most often thought to be a step on the way to becoming a priest, a permanent deacon is called to three primary types of service—service to the church, especially to his bishop and the priest, service to lay people of God and service to the Word. A permanent deacon—unlike a transitional deacon—is ordained to service not to the priesthood.

A permanent deacon retains his family and occupational responsibilities but now volunteers for ministry at the altar and some specific ministries in the local community and parish. The emphasis in the ordination rite is ministry to the Church.

To become a candidate for the diaconate program, one must meet a number of criteria including being active in their parish, being at least 35 years old and receiving a recommendation from their pastor.

Candidates can be married or unmarried, but if a candidate is married, he must have the full consent of his wife.

A permanent deacon can perform baptisms, distribute Holy Communion and bring Holy Communion to the sick, officiate at a marriage, lead prayers at a funeral vigil and officiate at burial services.

Deacons presently serving in the Diocese of Grand Island include Deacon Charles Cantrell, Blessed Sacrament Church, Grand Island; Deacon John Farlee, Deacon Randy Lewandowski, Deacon Frank Moreno, and Deacon Robert Puhalla, all serving St. Mary's Cathedral, Grand Island; Deacon Bill O'Donnell, Immaculate Conception, Elm Creek; and Deacon Ron Ridder, Prince of Peace Church, Kearney.

Deacons from left are John Farlee, Robert Puhalla and Randy Lukasiewicz shown at their 2010 diaconate ordination at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island.



# To Rome and Back

## Priest studied in Rome to serve the diocese

For the first time in more than 40 years, a priest from the Diocese of Grand Island not only studied in Rome, but was ordained as a deacon there as well.

Father Neal Hock studied at the Pontifical North American College in Vatican City, Rome, for three years and was ordained to the Order of Deacon Oct. 7, 2010, at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Bishop William J. Dendinger and several priests from the diocese including vocation director Father Matthew Koperski and Father Hock's uncle, Father Paul Colling, attended.



Father Neal Hock

He earned his S.T.B. (Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus) or bachelor's of sacred theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in 2010 and graduated with his S.T.L. (Licentiate of Sacred Theology) in dogmatic theology (a license in between a masters and a doctorate) from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in June 2012. There were 45 students in his class Father Hock said, and he was one of 32 ordained in Rome. Father Hock said students can be ordained in Rome or in their diocese, but the final decision lies with each diocesan bishop who must grant special permission.

A 1996 graduate of McCook High School, Father Hock attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he received a bachelor's degree in business accounting in 2000. He then worked as an accountant, first in Indiana and then later in Illinois. Father Hock quit his job on his 27th birthday in 2005 and returned home to farm before transitioning to the seminary. After his father died unexpectedly in an accident, Father Hock said he felt his vocation and conviction become even stronger.

"It was a rough summer, but I filled out the application and started at Conception in August, three months later."

Although Father Hock is from McCook, which is in the Lincoln diocese, he chose to study for the Diocese of Grand Island where he said he felt "an inner peace." At Conception, he received a pretheology certificate and when the opportunity to study in Rome came up, Father Hock decided it was the right direction.

"These things don't happen by chance. God didn't create the world by chance. Everything happens for a reason. But it wasn't necessarily because it was me. If someone else happened to be there when the idea came along, they would have been asked, too," he said. "I was strong in my commitment to my vocation and I was pretty convinced that God was calling me to the priesthood."

He said he spent the first week simply adjusting to Rome's temperature and culture before spending a month of intensive language study. All of his classes were in Italian.

"There's a language proficiency exam in order to study, so we had to learn Italian before we could even start at the university."

Father Hock was ordained to the priesthood on June 10, 2011, at St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island by Bishop Dendinger.

The last priest to study at the Pontifical North American College in Vatican City was Father Charles Torpey, pastor at St. Leo's in Grand Island. He was ordained in 1969.

Father Neal Hock was among 30 seminarians from the Pontifical North American College to prostrate during their ordination as deacons in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Oct. 7, 2010. Bishop William J. Dendinger is pictured wearing his zucchetto near the center.

## Diocesan Offices and Organizations





# West Nebraska Register: First diocesan office still spreading the Good News

The oldest individual office in diocesan history—*The West Nebraska Register*—began with the first bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island, Bishop James A. Duffy.

At the time of formation, it wasn't called *The West Nebraska Register*. That name would come later in the paper's history.

It was called *The Register* and was part of a group of diocesan newspapers included in the *Register* system of newspapers. The idea began in the 1920s when Father Matthew Smith, a newspaper man from Pennsylvania moved to Denver. It was his intention to provide every home in such small dioceses with a Catholic newspaper.

The first paper, *The Register, Nebraska Edition*, was printed in Denver on Feb. 23, 1930. Father Patrick McDaid, who was pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in North Platte, was named as the first Grand Island diocesan editor and would be in charge of one of the 34 papers to eventually participate in the *Register* system.

Originally, when Grand Island was part of the Diocese of Omaha, some parishioners received Omaha's Catholic newspaper, *The True Voice*, now known as *The Catholic Voice*. But in 1916, the City of Grand Island was moved into the Diocese of Kearney, and parishioners were mostly without news in the diocese, especially news of local events.

Father McDaid continued to lead the paper's staff as editor until 1946 when Monsignor Carl Hayden was named to that position.

With the

arrival of Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler, third bishop of the diocese, came the purchase of a residence at 607 West Division which would serve as the offices of the Chancery as well as *The Register*.



Front page of the first issue of *The Register*, Feb. 23, 1930.



Bishop James A. Duffy, first bishop of the Diocese of Grand Island, began the *Register* newspaper on Feb. 23, 1930.

In 1965 the Chancery and *The Register* moved to 311 West 17th Street.

Monsignor Hayden served as editor from 1946 to 1973, when Father Donald Larmore was named interim editor. The next person to be named editor of the *Register* was Father Bernard Berger.

In 1980 Mary Parlin joined the existing staff of Father Berger, Dorothy Goc and Ralph and Margaret Doud.

In April 1984 the office of the *West Nebraska Register* moved to their new

location at 804 West Division, which was previously the home of Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara. The offices remained at this location until 2005.

In December 1984 Marilyn Zastrow joined the staff.

Father Francis Curran was named editor in 1986 and held that position until 1991.

In 1991 for the first time in the newspaper's history, two women would be named to share the title of co-editors. Bishop McNamara, announced on Dec. 6 of that year that Mary Parlin and Marilyn Zastrow would become co-editors. Not only was this unusual for the Diocese of Grand Island, but for Catholic newspapers in general. Parlin and Zastrow were the first lay editors for the paper, bringing the number of female Catholic editors in the country to 10 that year.

Zastrow retired in 1998 and Colleen O'Neill was named associate editor.

O'Neill left the *West Nebraska Register* in 2004 to pursue another career, and Colleen Gallion joined the staff, replacing O'Neill as associate editor.

In 2005 the newspaper moved into new, more efficient offices and shares their location with the Chancery Office at 2708 Old Fair Road.

While the diocese has gone from horse and buggy days to modern-day modes of transportation, the *West Nebraska Register* has gone from sending letter and stories to the *Denver Register* to the modern

digital process in house. The mission is still the same, to spread the Gospel to the far corners of the diocese and to educate all the people in their Catholic faith.



Mary Parlin, editor (left), and Colleen Gallion, associate editor look through past issues of the *West Nebraska Register*.

## Diocesan Offices

**CHILD PROTECTION:** The Safe Environment for Our Children and Youth Program was mandated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to the sexual abuse crisis. The Diocese of Grand Island named Elizabeth Heidt, Ph.D., as the director of the Office of Child Protection. The office trains parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, volunteers and others involved with minors and is responsible for background checks.

**HISPANIC MINISTRY:** The office of Hispanic Ministry is directed by Sister Veronica Rivas, M.C.D.P. The office provides assistance to priests and catechetical leaders in providing resources to those in ministry with Hispanics. The office also provides assistance with immigration issues, cultural celebrations, and ESL opportunities.

**LAY MINISTRY:** The office of Lay Ministry and Planning was designed to assess lay ministry needs of parishes and identify appropriate education and resources for those needs. Michael Davis is director of the Lay Ministry and

Planning Office. Lay ministry includes volunteer positions such as extraordinary ministers, lectors, catechists, acolytes, cantors and other positions that laity hold. Through this office, lay ministers can discern their gifts and seek the education and training needed to share their gifts at the parish and diocesan level. Strategic planning at the parish level is a primary thrust of this office.

**MARRIAGE TRIBUNAL:** The Marriage Tribunal of the Diocese of Grand Island serves to review marriages that have ended in divorce. The Church reaches out in support of those whose marriage has broken down, while upholding the permanence of a true Christian marriage. The Tribunal assists everyone with integrity, confidentiality and proceeds within the tenets of canon law.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:** The Religious Education Office, under the direction of Donald Kurre, includes teacher training programs, curriculum development, workshops, continuing education, catechist training and

core catechist certification. Guidelines are also provided for parish organizations for programs of sacramental preparation and other programs to help parishes provide comprehensive catechesis.

**RURAL LIFE:** The Rural Life Office was created to provide support and advocacy for family-owned and operated farm and ranches and provide suggestions for the spiritual enhancement of rural families. Father Neal Nollette, director of the office, was replaced in 2012 by Father Bryan Ernest. The diocesan office has worked with the Nebraska Rural Response Hotline for more than 20 years as well as coordinating and disseminating information about and advocacy for family owned and operated farms and ranches.

**DIOCESAN EDUCATION:** The diocesan Education Office directed by Superintendent of Schools Father Thomas Ryan coordinates schools' relationships with the State Department of Education, with other private schools under religious spon-

sorship and with the National Catholic Education Association. The office also works with the Nebraska Catholic Conference's lobbyist in Lincoln on legislation affecting Catholic schools.

**YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES:** Emily Wyatt is director of the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office. Other programs included under the Youth and Young Adult Ministries umbrella include Higher Ground, TEC, Going Bananas for Jesus, Youth Encuentros, National Catholic Youth Conferences and World Youth Day. Higher Ground continues to be one of the diocese's most successful programs with more than 10,000 graduates.

**VOCATIONS:** The Vocations Office coordinates efforts to help men and women called by God to the religious life to say 'yes' to that call. The office provides seminary training, summer ministry experience and works with each seminarian individually during their years of formation. Father Matthew Koperski is Director of Vocations for the Diocese of Grand Island.

## Kathy Hahn: First woman in any Nebraska Marriage Tribunal to be canon lawyer

When you ask Kathy Hahn about her JCL degree, she laughs and will tell you it stands for "Just a crazy lady."

According to canon law though—the laws that govern the Catholic Church—JCL is actually short for Juris Canon Law.

For a broader definition, Wikipedia.com explains it as a "Licentiate of Canon Law: the title of an intermediate graduate degree with canonical effects in the Catholic Church offered by pontifical universities and ecclesiastical faculties of canon law."

More simply put, it means Hahn is now a lawyer—a canon lawyer, that is. In fact, she is the first known woman on record in any Nebraska diocesan marriage tribunal to receive such a degree.

Hahn, who is procurator and advo-



Kathy Hahn, J.C.L.

cate for the Grand Island Diocesan Tribunal Office, graduated May 16, 2009, from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. It was an accomplishment so rare that Hahn was one of just six people—five who are priests—attending the ceremonies. The university is the only one in the country that offers canon law degrees. Statistically, four out of five canon lawyers are priests.

With this degree, Hahn will be able to do a multitude of tasks, not only within the marriage tribunal but within the bishop's office as well. She can serve as a judge or advocate on the

tribunal; assist the bishop with processes for opening, closing, or clustering parishes or for obtaining or disposing of church goods; explain, advise and coordinate processes for settling disputes in the church; advise on sacramental policies and laws as well as advising religious orders, associations of the faithful, teaching, administrative procedures and more.

Basically, a canonist must know and be able to research the 1,700-plus canons in the *Code of Canon Law*, the norms established by the USCCB and the diocese as well as the various *motu proprio*s and decrees from the Holy See.

As a female, she cannot, however, serve as a judge in a single judge tribunal, become the judicial vicar or other vicar, or judge a clergy person in certain types of trials.



## Strategic Plan: Overview

**T**he Strategic Plan for the Diocese of Grand Island, *One Future/Un Futuro* began in December 2007 with Bishop William J. Dendinger naming Sister Marietta Spenner, on-site coordinator. Comprised of several phases, the strategic plan initiated a long-range plan for the Diocese of Grand Island.

**PREPARATION, REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT PHASE:** A steering committee, along with Father Wayne Cavalier, O.P., of the Congar Institute for Ministry Development, was implemented to share and direct the planning process. An agenda of information gathering consisting of demographic research from focus sessions, along with diocesanwide surveys was set. The committee created a calendar, bilingual planning prayer and logo, developed a bilingual communication process, and celebrated a kick-off liturgy.

**DATA GATHERING PHASE:** During this phase of the process 24 focus sessions were held with 178 people throughout the diocese providing input. A survey was made available through the *West Nebraska Register* and online in English and Spanish. Participation in the survey was encouraged through bilingual DVDs distributed to all parishes. Over 1,000 people throughout the diocese completed the survey.

## Social Justice

**S**ocial justice has always been important to the Diocese of Grand Island and each of its seven bishops. The social justice teachings of the Catholic Church are rooted in the Scriptures and the teaching authority of the Church, said Bishop William J. Dendinger: The Right to Life and the Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers; and Solidarity and Caring for God's Creation.

The Church calls us—not only as Catholics but as Christians—to reach out a helping hand whenever and wherever there is a need. Many parishes in the diocese have answered that call by creating food pantries, soup kitchens and thrift stores that can be found in North Platte, Sidney, Alliance Valentine and Grand Island among others.

Both parishes in North Platte, St. Patrick's and Holy Spirit, began a joint food pantry in 1983. St. Patrick's Parish in Sidney created a rummage house for



Steering committee members for the One Future/Un Futuro strategic plan for the Diocese of Grand Island are pictured from left: Father Wayne Cavalier, Mike Meier, Mary Ridder, Sister Marietta Spenner, Donald Kurre, Ana Maria Hermosillo, Father Edward Cortney, Kathy Schroeder, Ellen Lierk, Jodi Studnicka, Greg Huck, Jerry Menke, and Bishop William J. Dendinger. Not pictured: Wayne Brown and Nathaniel Zimmer.

**ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK PHASE:** The steering committee reviewed the data analysis and planned deanery feedback sessions. A mission and commitment statement was written for review by diocesan leaders. The data analysis, with preliminary planning priorities, and the revised mission and commitment statement was presented at 11 deanery feedback sessions with over 300 participants. The steering committee analyzed the survey data and presented the information for feedback

from the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

**PLAN DEVELOPMENT PHASE:** The final analysis of the feedback to the data led to a fourth draft of the mission and commitment statement and to the first draft of the goals and focus areas. These were reviewed and revised by the steering committee and the plan was presented as the One Future/Un Futuro Long-Range Plan for the Diocese of Grand Island.

exchange of household items in 1965. Holy Rosary Parish in Alliance continues to assist its adopted parish in Limbe, Haiti. For years, donations were collected through Father Donald Larmore and his parish missionary work with the Maryknolls in Africa.

For the past several years, Resurrection Parish in Grand Island has planned annual mission work trips to St. Lucia and the Corpus Christi Carmelites. In 2007 a 24-member work crew of parishioners from the diocese assisted the efforts coordinated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia to help repair damage sustained from Hurricane Katrina two years earlier.

Historically, the issue of immigration has involved the Catholic Church in Nebraska as early as the 1920s when the sugar beet factory first began importing Hispanic laborers. In 1965 the migrant ministry program began. At that time, 6,000 to 7,000 migrants were coming to the Panhandle each May.

Following a 1979 study on the needs of Hispanics in the Grand Island diocese,

Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara created the Office of Hispanic Ministry and named Sister Regina McCarthy, O.P., as its first director.

A 2003 study showed that more than 40 percent of all Catholics under age 30 in the Diocese of Grand Island are Hispanic. Of the three dioceses in Nebraska, Grand Island's has seen the largest percentage of Hispanic growth.

In 2008 St. Mary's Cathedral in Grand Island announced the development of an immigration assistance program at the church to assist people with petitions for family members, citizenship applications and other immigration issues.

"We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person." —*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1999 U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

## Catholic Daughters of the Americas 'Unity and Charity' is their motto

**U**nder the patronage of the Blessed Mother, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas are united by their faith in Jesus Christ, in their devotion to the Church and the Holy See.

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas is one of the oldest and largest organizations of Catholic women in the Americas.

They donate to charities, administer scholarship programs and strive "to be helping hands where there is pain, poverty, sorrow or sickness."

The CDA motto is "Unity and Charity."

The CDA was formed over 100 years ago and today numbers 75,000 dues-paying members in 1,250 courts (local chap-

ters) in 45 states across the country, and in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.

Catholic Daughter women enjoy each other's company at meetings and work hard for their parishes and communities.

Deeply spiritual, together they share faith, love of God and a distinctly feminine spirituality alluded to by Pope John Paul II when he spoke of the necessity of "feminine genius" in today's world.

The program includes concerns of today's church and society as well as issues that affect the well-being of women and children.

There are nine active CDA courts in the Diocese of Grand Island.

## Magnificat Chapters

**T**he Magnificat Chapter, Mary Full of Grace in Kearney was incorporated Sept. 10, 2007.

The Magnificat Chapter, Our Lady of Harvest in Ogallala began in 2001. Father James Janovec is the spiritual advisor.

Magnificat began in New Orleans, on the feast of the Holy Rosary in 1981 and has since grown to 77 Chapters throughout the world. Magnificat is charismatic, evangelistic, Marian, pro-life, faithful to the Church and provides a biblical image for Catholic women. Women of all faiths are welcome to attend.

## Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

**T**he Diocesan Council of Catholic Women was organized in the Diocese of Grand Island in 1933, and held its first convention at Kearney on Oct. 24 of that year.

Monsignor Anton Link was named the first diocesan moderator. Father Stephen Deaver is the current moderator.

After World War II and until 1968, the DCCW and Confraternity of Christian Doctrine held joint meetings, with three district meetings each year and a diocesan convention in the fourth quarter.

In 1946 the Grand Island Council joined the Omaha Province composed of the Archdiocese of Omaha and the Dioceses of Lincoln and Grand Island. At this time the priests presented papers on subjects such as the lay apostolate; Confraternity of Christian Doctrine; extension of the kingdom of God in society, families and individuals, the Catholic Bible, Marian Year; devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Family, as well as many more. The conventions were a joint effort of the DCCW and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The DCCW moderator also served as director of the CCD.

The Council reorganized in 1959 to conform more closely to the national council. Deaneries replaced districts and a parish representative was appointed from each parish.

In 1967 the committees changed to the present commissions.

The DCCW constitution was amended to provide biennial conventions with institutes in alternate years. CCD was no longer involved in the conven-

tions after 1968.

DCCW members became active in legislative action in the 1970s and added a legislative committee chairman to the organization's board of directors in 1980.

Board of director members from the three Nebraska councils formed a tri-diocesan board in 1972. The group meets yearly to exchange ideas.

The first two-day Spring Assembly met at Halsey National Forest in 1973 and this event continues today with women across the diocese coming together for spiritual enrichment and continuing education for leadership



The DCCW convention held at Grand Island on Oct. 12, 1948, included a presentation by Father Constantine J. Shumski on the vocation of marriage. (Photo courtesy Jack Bailey Studio)



## Serra Clubs

Bishop William J. Dendinger implemented the Serra Club within the Diocese of Grand Island in 2006. “They will be recruiters the ‘old fashioned way’—asking people to consider the priesthood and religious life one at a time,” Bishop Dendinger said.

The Grand Island Serra Club is a Catholic lay organization dedicated to supporting and encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The first Serra Club in the diocese was chartered on Nov. 29, 2006 at Blessed Sacrament Church in Grand Island.

The club is a voluntary organization of Catholic men and women of various ages, races and backgrounds and its members are committed to promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The North Platte chapter of the Serra Club was added in 2009 and the Panhandle Serra Club in 2010.

The Serra Club is named after the organization’s patron, Father Junipero Serra. Father Serra was an 18th-century Spanish Franciscan missionary to the American West coast who was influenced in creating a system of nine missions in what is now the state of California.



## Knights of Columbus

### Called to evangelize, serve

The Knights of Columbus, a Catholic, family, fraternal, service organization boasts 25 councils and 11 Fourth Degree assemblies in the Diocese of Grand Island. Knights of Columbus are called to evangelize, to be charitable and to serve as instruments of God’s love.

The Knights of Columbus was founded by Father Michael J. McGivney, a New Haven parish priest, in 1882. It has grown into the world’s largest lay Catholic organization, with more than 1.8 million members throughout North and Central America, the Philippines, the Caribbean Islands and Poland.

There are more than 1.8 million members in 15,000 councils, with nearly 200 councils on college campuses. Membership is limited to Catholic men aged 18 or older.

In Nebraska the Knights of Columbus programs contribute money in support of the mentally challenged with the Tootsie Roll program; One-Rose—One-Life campaign for the bishops pro-life cause; and also contributes annually to aid seminarians and missions.

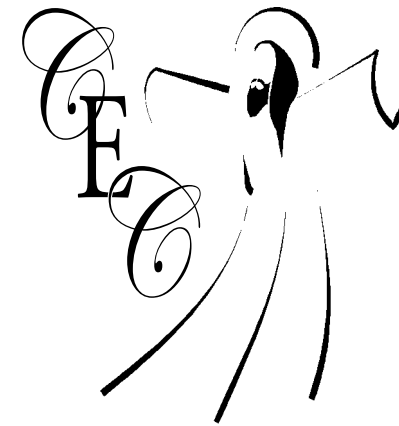
The Knights of Columbus have also aided in the formation of a number of Columbian Squire circles throughout the diocese.

The Squires are a junior organization and are groomed as future members and leaders of the Knights of Columbus.



Knights of Columbus pose with Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler and priests of the Diocese of Grand Island. (Photo courtesy Father Jonathan Sorensen)

## Catholics Encounter Christ



The Cursillo Movement and its successor, Catholics Encounter Christ, have helped members of the diocese grow in their relationship with Christ for almost 50 years.

Cursillo was originally developed in Spain in the 1940s as a “short course in Christianity” and came to the United States in 1957. The first Cursillo weekend in the Diocese of Grand Island occurred April 25-28, 1963, in Gering. Cursillo continued to serve the diocese until the 126th, and final, weekend March 24-26, 2000, in Gothenburg.

Catholics Encounter Christ filled the void of a personal encounter with Christ program with its first weekend March 5-7, 2004, in Lexington. CEC has hosted 17 weekends as of March 16-18, 2012.

The Catholics Encounter Christ movement strengthens one’s individual relationship with Christ on an ongoing basis and shares the grace of Jesus’ love with others through word, deed and action. Men and women meet on separate weekends to develop and enhance a deeper relationship with Jesus as well as learning ways to deepen that bond.

## Charismatic Renewal

The Catholic Charismatic Movement in the Diocese of Grand Island grew from a series of prayer meetings during Lent of 1970 at St. Francis Parish in Ashton, to prayer groups scattered throughout the diocese.

During the 1970 season a small group of people, guided by Father Ted Nekoliczak, met weekly for prayer and praise. Around the same time, Father Nekoliczak accompanied two parish catechists, and two high school students, to a charismatic weekend retreat at the Benedictine Abbey in Pecos, N.M.

After Lent, the group joined two Religious women in Grand Island who had also formed a small group of people praying for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit.

By Pentecost of 1970 over 120 people from Grand Island, Ashton, Hastings, Kearney, Greeley, Loup City and Farwell were gathering each Sunday evening at the St. Francis School of Nursing meeting room for prayer. Because of the interest in the prayer group, prayer communities in various towns were started in the fall.

Several other priests were pioneers in the movement in the Grand Island diocese. Father Bernard Nelson headed a group at Blessed Sacrament Church in Grand Island and Father Donald

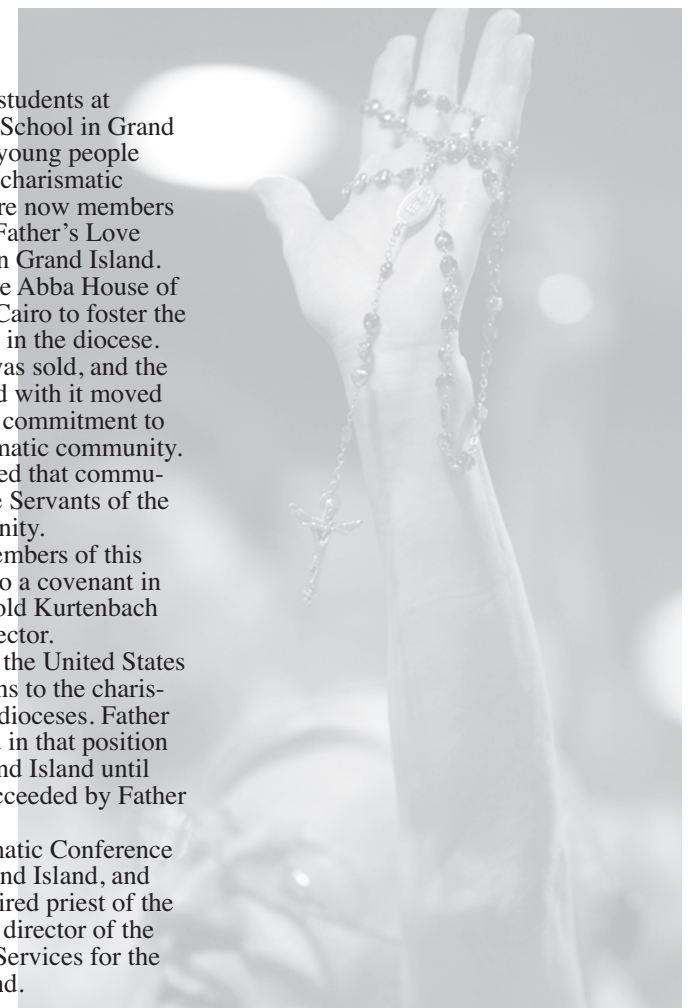
Larmore worked with students at Central Catholic High School in Grand Island. Many of these young people remained active in the charismatic movement and some are now members of the Servants of the Father’s Love covenant community in Grand Island.

On Jan. 2, 1975, the Abba House of Prayer was opened in Cairo to foster the charismatic movement in the diocese. In 1977 Abba House was sold, and the five families associated with it moved to Grand Island with a commitment to live and form a charismatic community. The families that formed that community developed into the Servants of the Father’s Love Community.

Thirty-six adult members of this community entered into a covenant in 1987, with Father Harold Kurtenbach serving as spiritual director.

In 1975 bishops of the United States appointed priest-liaisons to the charismatic renewal in their dioceses. Father Ted Nekoliczak served in that position for the Diocese of Grand Island until 1983, when he was succeeded by Father Harold Kurtenbach.

An annual Charismatic Conference is held each fall in Grand Island, and Father Kurtenbach, retired priest of the diocese remains as the director of the Charismatic Renewal Services for the Diocese of Grand Island.





# Spirit 91.5 FM KJWM

## Catholic radio comes to Grand Island diocese

The phrase “Catch the Spirit” took on a whole new meaning as Catholic radio station Spirit 91.5 FM came to Grand Island.

As the station went on the air for the first time, Bishop William J. Dendinger was a guest on the Spirit morning show Dec. 23, 2009, originating from Omaha’s Spirit station KVSS, by remote broadcast at Blessed Sacrament Church in Grand Island, the first voice Grand Island area Catholics heard.

“This is good ... good for the entire state. Our goal is to have all of the state on the Catholic radio,” Bishop Dendinger said. “It’s good to move it out to Grand Island and this is a significant step and a great step. It’s a good Christmas present for the people here in Grand Island.”

Since April 2010 the Grand Island studio has been located at 828 N. Diers Ave. The call sign, KJWM, reflects Bishop Dendinger’s episcopal motto, “Justice with mercy.”

Initially, the signal covered a 45-mile radius with a 1500 watt 110 foot tower



Bishop William J. Dendinger went on the air for the first time on the Spirit Catholic Radio morning show Dec. 23, 2009, originating from Omaha’s Spirit station KVSS, by remote broadcast at Blessed Sacrament Church in Grand Island.

off of Highway 30.

The effort to bring the radio station to Grand Island began in the Summer of 2009 with nearly \$150,000 raised to purchase the signal. Spearheading the fundraising effort was a small group of Grand Island business people including Kevin Pfeifer of Grand Island.

“We can’t thank people enough for volunteering their time and treasure to make this happen,” he said. “The priests have been awesome as well as the bishop with his support. It’s very historic to have Catholic radio ... it’s very humbling.”

In July 2011 the radio station’s signal expanded to include Hastings, Kearney and more of the Grand Island area with the installation of a new tower located near Wood River. The new signal — 11,000 watts — reached a radius of 50 to 70 miles around Wood River.

In April 2012 plans were announced to raise money to construct a 1,400 watt signal that would

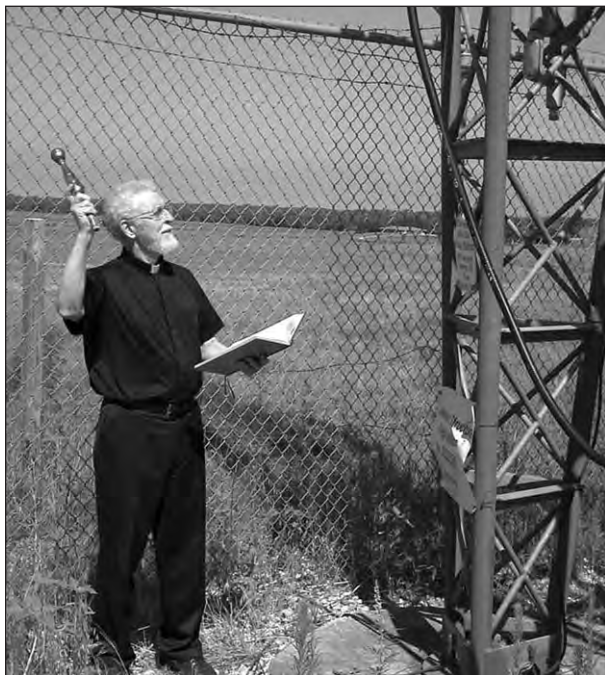
broadcast on the 90.1 FM band in North Platte. Once on the air, the North Platte signal will become the fourth signal in the network based out of Omaha.

Those outside the broadcast range can hear the radio station online at [www.kvss.com](http://www.kvss.com).

Spirit Catholic Radio is owned and operated by VSS Catholic Communications. The radio station originated out of Omaha in 1999 with a small 500 watt signal.

John Soukup is the Grand Island station manager and Father Sidney Bruggeman, pastor at St. Libory Church in St. Libory, is the chaplain of the Grand Island Advisory Committee for Spirit Catholic Radio.

The station’s format includes Christian music, family theater class radio, live call-in shows, EWTN programming and Sunday Mass.



In July 2011 Father James Janovec, pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Wood River and Sacred Heart Church in Shelton, blessed the radio tower located near Wood River. The new tower enabled the 91.5 Spirit Catholic Radio signal to reach Hastings, Kearney and more of the Grand Island area.

# Eucharistic Congress: Jesus the Bread of Life

Catholic unity through the Eucharist was the theme for the diocesan Eucharistic Congress held in Kearney in June 1976.

Over 2,000 laity, 60 sisters and 53 priests braved the 90 degree heat to gather at Kearney State’s Cushing Coliseum for the Eucharistic celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi.

Archbishop Jean Jadot, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, was the principle celebrant and was assisted by Bishop John L. Sullivan and retired Bishop John L. Paschang.

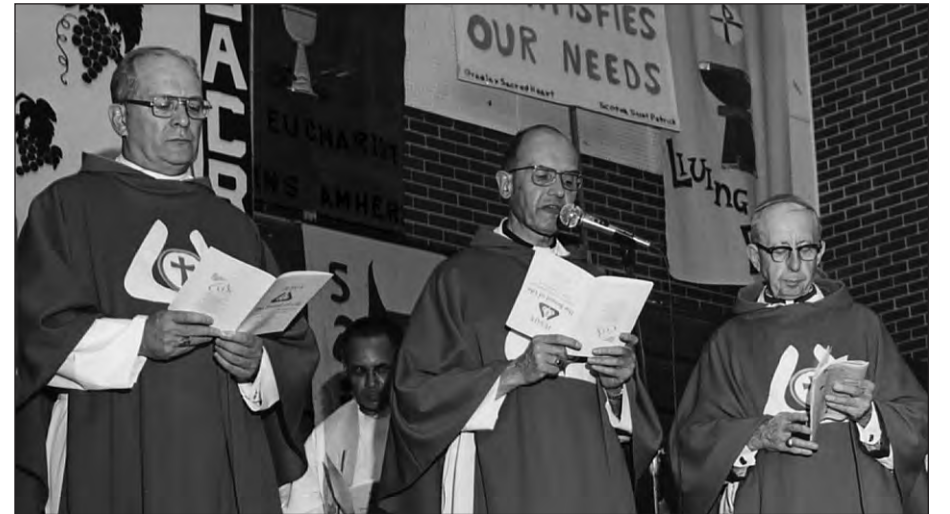
The archbishop’s visit was the first of an Apostolic Delegate to the Grand Island diocese in over 45 years.

In stressing the significance of Archbishop’s Jadot’s visit, Bishop Sullivan said in his homily that, “Many faithful and religious and even clergy in our diocese have never in the past, and will never in the future celebrate a Eucharist with greater meaning and significance than this Eucharist.”

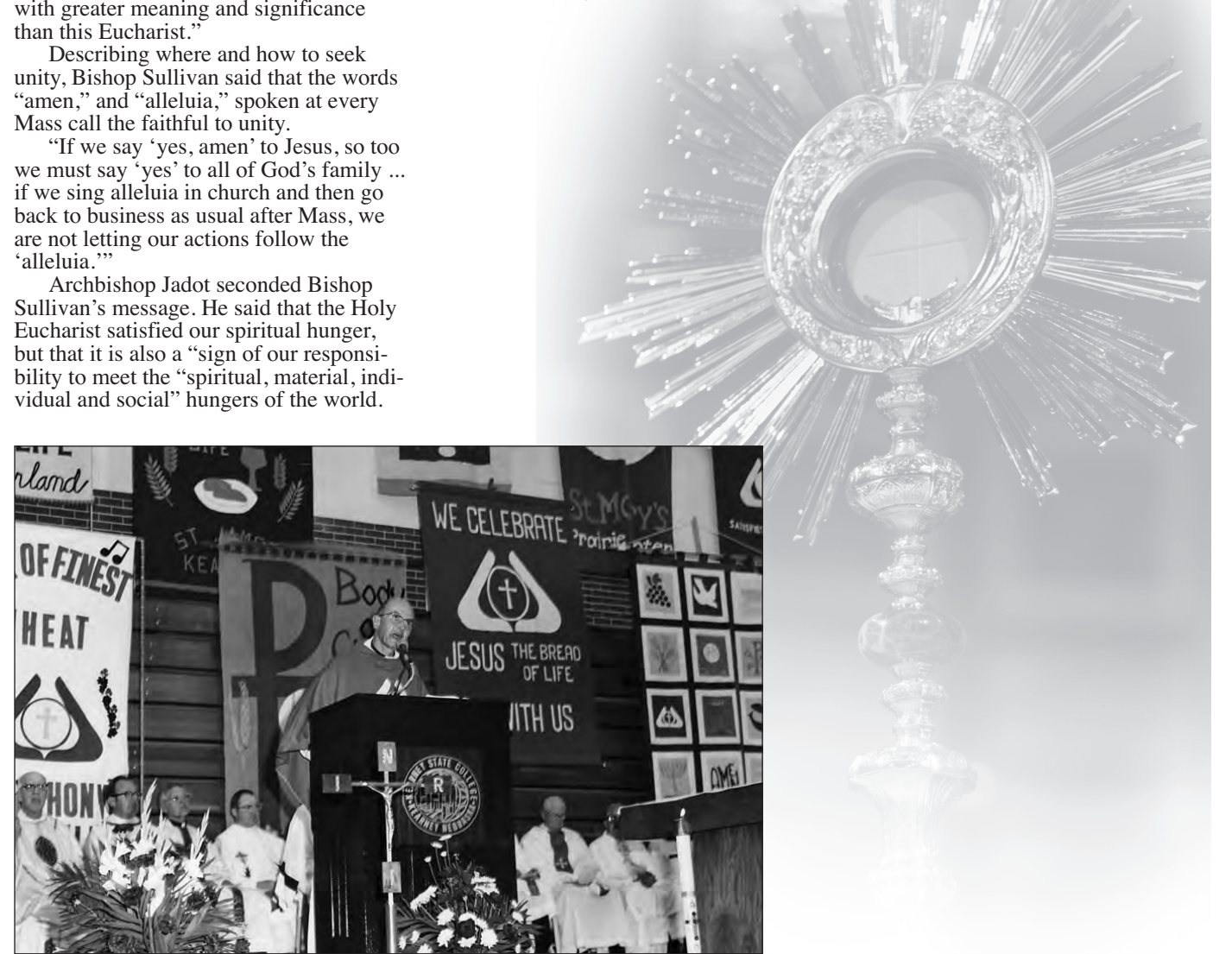
Describing where and how to seek unity, Bishop Sullivan said that the words “amen,” and “alleluia,” spoken at every Mass call the faithful to unity.

“If we say ‘yes, amen’ to Jesus, so too we must say ‘yes’ to all of God’s family ... if we sing alleluia in church and then go back to business as usual after Mass, we are not letting our actions follow the ‘alleluia.’”

Archbishop Jadot seconded Bishop Sullivan’s message. He said that the Holy Eucharist satisfied our spiritual hunger, but that it is also a “sign of our responsibility to meet the “spiritual, material, individual and social” hungers of the world.



Bishop John L. Sullivan, Archbishop Jean Jadot and Bishop John L. Paschang were celebrants at the 1976 Eucharistic Congress held in Kearney. The visit by Archbishop Jadot, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, was the first in the Diocese of Grand Island in over 45 years.



Archbishop Jean Jadot spoke before a backdrop formed by some of the more than 40 banners made by parishes and organizations across the diocese.



# Damien Leper Relief Society

Bishop John L. Sullivan once wrote that Bishop John L. Paschang had a “constant concern for the helpless that should be an inspiration for all of us.”

Despite Bishop Paschang’s death in 1999, that caring concern continues today in the form of the Damien Leper Relief Society.

Although Bishop Paschang had never visited India or Africa, he knew the needs in those countries, especially among the people with Hansen’s disease, more commonly known as leprosy, a chronic skin infection.

With the approval of Bishop Sullivan, Bishop Paschang established the Damien Leper Relief Society in 1976 and he continued to administer the charity from his home. He made the stipulation to Bishop Sullivan that he would never actively solicit contributions for the fund. He introduced the Damien Leper Relief Society with an explanation to readers of the *West Nebraska Register*.

“In acquainting you with this project, which is very dear to me, it is not my intention to appeal to you for help ... Nevertheless, I can conceive that some of you who read this message might wish to have a part in this most charitable and humane undertaking. You might feel slighted and hurt were this participation denied you. Far be it from me to cause you such heartaches.”

He said he chose to focus his energy toward the lepers because “their conditions have been sad through the ages and they are still ostracized.”

After the society was established, Bishop Paschang reported that on Feb. 11, 1976, the first check in the amount of \$1,000 was sent to the Catholic Medical Mission Board in New

York to be used to procure medicines for the patients of the Damien Leprosy Centre in India. Another check for \$1,000 was sent in March.



St. Damien

Faithfully, he reported quarterly on the people and places that had benefited from the fund in the *West Nebraska Register*. A list of donors was also published quarterly.

In a 1989 interview with the *Omaha World Herald*, Bishop Paschang said he never had to ask for money to keep the leper relief society going. He said “You’d be surprised how many people want to help. I’ve never asked anyone for a penny.”

When Bishop Paschang retired to his hometown of West Point in 1992, he asked Father Walter Phelan to take over the administrative duties.

Vice Chancellor Linda Wemhoff took over in 2007, and the charity is now managed by diocesan Chancellor Kathy Hahn.

The principal beneficiaries of the society funds have been hospitals in Africa and India where those with the disease are treated. Donations have also paid dowries for several young women to enter convents in India, as well as helping to build hospitals in Eluru and Jellipara, India, and St. Peter’s Hospital in Kakkampalayam, India.

At the time of Bishop Paschang’s death in 1999, contributions to the fund had totaled more than \$300,000.

Bishop Paschang once explained his reasoning behind his desire to create the Damien Leper Relief Society in a 1995 interview with the *West Nebraska Register*, recalling a chance encounter with a businessman at a filling station in the 1920s. It led to his conviction that people want to help their fellow man, but don’t always know how.

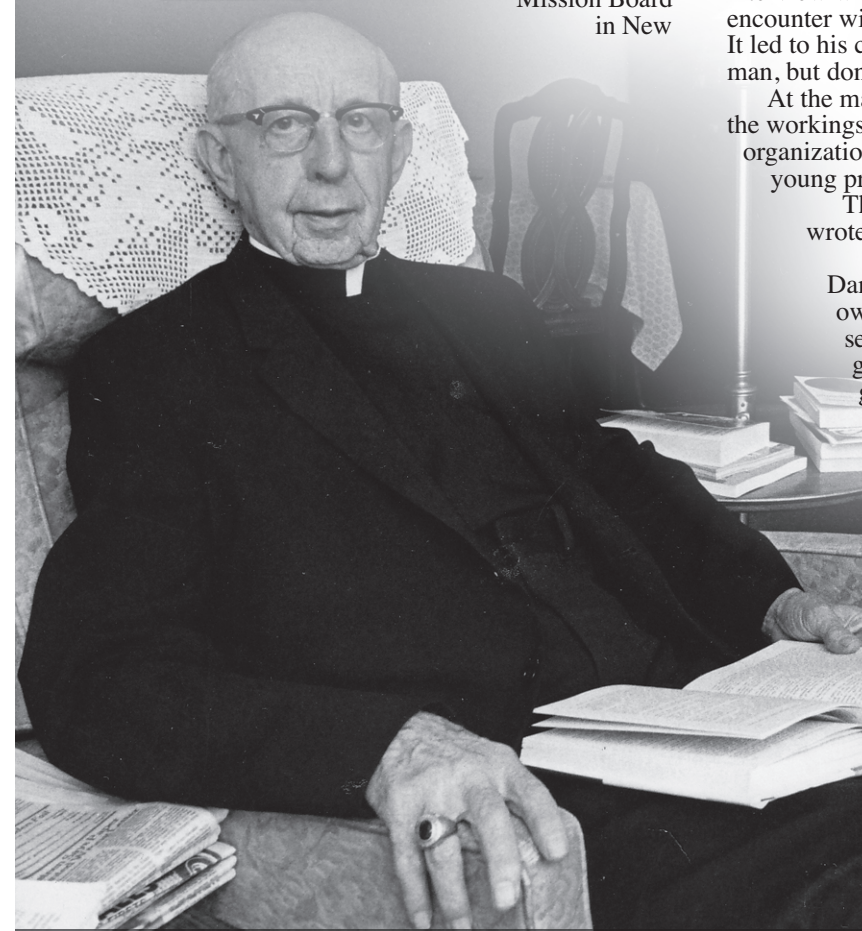
At the man’s invitation, Bishop Paschang said he explained the workings of the St. Vincent de Paul Society—a Catholic organization that helps the needy—to this man while the then young priest’s car was being serviced.

The man thanked him, took out his checkbook and wrote a check to the society for \$300.

The Damien Leper Relief Society was named after Damien Joseph de Veuster, now Saint Damien. At his own request, the missionary priest volunteered to serve at a leper settlement in Hawaii in 1873. He gained a reputation as a pastor, medic, adviser and guardian to the 800 members of the colony.

However, in 1885, he too was diagnosed with the disease and died April 15, 1889, at Molokai, Hawaii, when he was 49 years old. Pope John Paul II beatified the priest on June 4, 1995, in Brussels, Belgium, where he was born and he was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in October 2009.

Bishop John L. Paschang, at left, managed the Damien Leper Relief Society from his Grand Island home after his retirement.



# Parishes of the Past





# O'Connor

## Historic church was a parish without a town

Despite the disappearance of O'Connor from most any Nebraska state map, a roadside sign (albeit a dirt road) reading 'O'Connor' points the way to an historic church with a towering steeple easily seen above the trees from several miles away.

O'Connor's Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—closed more than 30 years ago—is practically all that remains of the once bustling settlement five miles southeast of Greeley.

The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 and the existence and development of the village of O'Connor was a direct result of the Irish Catholic Colonization Association, promoted by Bishop James O'Connor, beginning in the 1870s. The association was created to offer a better way of life for Irish immigrants living in impoverished conditions in large eastern cities.

The idea, largely due to Bishop O'Connor, began as a corporation in which thousands of acres of land in Nebraska were purchased from the railroad and sold to prospective settlers from the east coast at attractive terms.

The Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was officially organized on Feb. 1, 1880, and in early spring, a church and rectory were erected on the hill of its present location.

The first Mass, however, had been offered earlier in the home of Patrick Hynes by Father J.M. Smyth, a priest from Platte County from 1878 to 1879. He was appointed pastor at O'Connor on Feb. 1, 1880.

The original church was demolished by a severe windstorm in June of that year. It was the first parish in Greeley County, but the village began to dwindle after losing the railroad and county seat

to neighboring Greeley in 1890.

But while O'Connor was just beginning, a new church and rectory were built during 1882-83 at a cost of \$5,288.52. The Irish Catholic Colonization Association contributed \$1,248.

On Aug. 15, 1885, Father J.E. Devos was appointed pastor. He fenced the church property and graveyard; improved the church building and built a small brick church in Scotia, 18 miles away. He was followed by Father J.F. Hayes the next year. It was during his tenure that the first school and convent were built. In 1888 the Sisters of Mercy arrived.

Piece by piece, the Church of the Visitation was furnished, first with pews installed in the church in 1894. In 1898 the Stations of the Cross were erected and the next year the church was enlarged and improved. In 1900 statues were obtained and in 1901 the rectory was enlarged and improved. The church was painted and reshingled in 1904.

But on May 7, 1904, disaster struck and the second church was destroyed by fire. The cause of the fire was never determined. Parishioners, however, were able to save the interior decorations, sanctuaries and pews. The present brick church building (which cost only \$25,000 at the time) was built in 1905 and O'Connor also became home to a bank, general store and livery stable.

Father Hayes retired in 1924 and was succeeded by Father T. J. O'Byrne, who built the new rectory and repaired the school. He died in 1935 and was followed by Father Michael McDaid. Father McDaid built the new school, replacing the one built in 1880.

Since 1934 the Sisters of Mercy had no longer been able to staff the O'Connor school and the Dominican Sisters from Sacred Heart in Greeley came in-

stead. Father McDaid razed the old school—saving all the lumber—and built a new combined school and convent for the Ursuline nuns in September 1937.

The high school was known as St. Joseph's Academy and the Ursuline Sisters remained at the school until it closed in 1951.

Father McDaid died on Aug. 15, 1950, and was followed by Father Robert O'Neill. During his tenure, the rectory was remodeled and the debt was paid. Father Andrew Gonda was appointed pastor on May 6, 1952, with St. Joseph's at Wolbach as a mission.

In preparation for the upcoming 75th anniversary of the church, the interior was redecorated and the parish hall (first built in 1883) and old barn were razed. A new hall was constructed and dedicated on April 14, 1955. The parish celebrated its 75th anniversary on July 4, 1955.

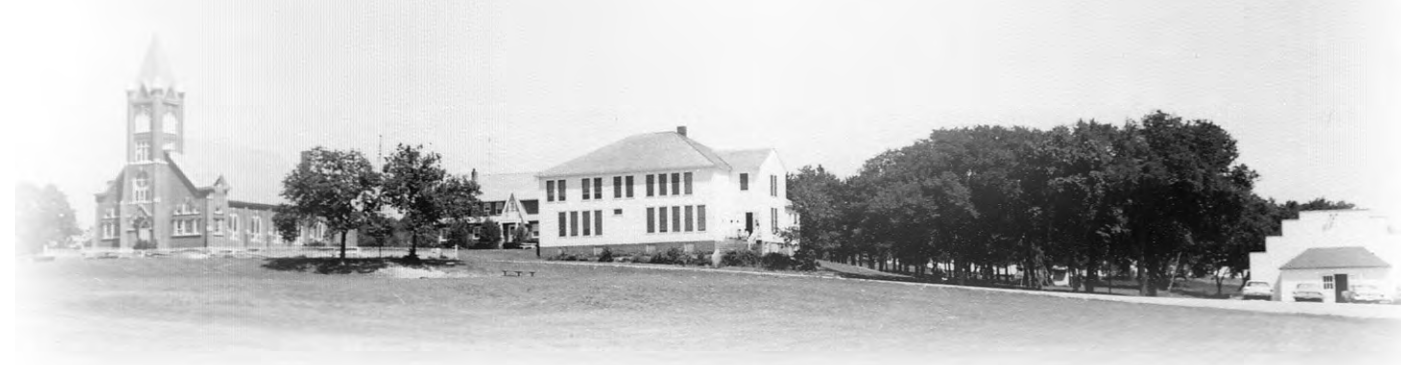
Other pastors serving were Fathers Thomas Mullowney, Bernard Berger, Hubert Spanel, Lawrence Fenton, Frank Hoelck, and Carroll Liebig.

The Outward Bound youth program—now known as Higher Ground—originated at O'Connor in 1965 under the leadership of Father Spanel.

In 1972 another fire, this time caused by an electrical storm, forced the parish to rebuild once again. The spire of the church had been struck by lightning and the fire was discovered after the storm by Father Lawrence Fenton, pastor at the time.

The Church of the Visitation at O'Connor became a mission of Sacred Heart in Greeley in 1978.

Just four months before the parish could celebrate its 100th anniversary and centennial in 1980, O'Connor's historic church was closed.



The O'Connor complex—Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the rectory, and St. Joseph's Academy.

# Montrose Immaculate Conception

The town of Montrose, named for the wild roses that covered the high banks of Hat Creek, was founded in 1886 when James Clark saw the possibilities that he thought would support a town.

Catholics in the area gathered for the first recorded Mass in Sioux County at the home of Jacob Marking, who settled near Montrose in 1886. In excerpts taken from John Marking's oral history, a descendent of Jacob, he recalled:

"They had only one priest down at the agency, Father John Jutes, and he would come up once in awhile. He came to the house one Saturday and introduced himself. Since there was no church at Montrose, Dad sent us kids here and there to spread the word around, and we had people at our house the next morning, there were about 80 people there. They used the middle room, and about three-fourths of the people had to stand outside and listened out there as to what was going on."

Faith in the small community continued to prosper and in 1887 Immaculate Conception Church was built by Theodore Remm. Parish members assisted the carpenter and Solomon Borky, hand carved the altar.

It is unknown who the first priest was to offer Mass in the church, but Father Patrick Brophy of Chadron was the second priest to minister to the spiritual needs of Catholics in the Montrose community. A rectory was built in 1890 but was abandoned shortly afterward due to sparse population.

By 1891 only the store, a law office and the church remained, and by year's end the site was abandoned.

In 1920 due to the shortage of priests in the Diocese of Grand Island and the remoteness of Montrose, the Catholics of the area were placed under the care of the priests at Ardmore, S.D., in the Diocese of Rapid City.

In 1940 with the appointment of a resident priest for Harrison, Montrose was attached as a mission of that parish. In 1973 when Harrison became a mission of Crawford, the Montrose church was closed.

Today the church and active cemetery remain as reminders of the early settlement. Like a scene from "Little House on the Prairie" the Montrose Immaculate Conception Church and cemetery sit alone on a hillside.

People continue to gather for a Eucharistic celebration each year at the church upon the hill.

In 2010 Bishop William J. Dendinger, along with Father Bernard Berger, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Crawford and St. Mary's Church in Harrison, concelebrated a



Theodore J. Remm



Theodore Remm of Denver, great-great grandson of the builder of Immaculate Conception Church in Montrose, visited the gravesite of his great-great grandmother after the 2010 Mass.

did not contain the precious metal of gold, there was a gold of "faith" that the townspeople yearned for.

That faith, carried on by the descendants of the first founders and members of the community, was shown in those attending the Mass to celebrate their roots.



The Montrose Cemetery is shown out of the window of the church as a woman prays.



Mass for approximately 100 people who gathered at the Montrose church.

In his homily, Bishop Dendinger referred to the answer in the old west movies to the question, "Why do you want to go there?" because, he said, "There's gold in them thar hills."

Bishop Dendinger said that although the town of Montrose



# Paplin Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Three miles east and two miles north of the town of Ashton, in a wooded valley, nestled the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. A town site named Choynice was laid out in hopes of the railroad going through, but the train never came. The area is also called Paplin, but neither name has official standing. Once there was a Paplin post office and general store; both are long gone.

John Barzynski, an agent of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad, organized a colony, inviting people to come by selling them railroad land at moderate prices. The railroads actively promoted new land opportunities and recruited settlers, even sending agents to Europe for recruitment purposes. A large influx of Polish people came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Illinois. The first colonies in the vicinity were at Warsaw, a Bohemian mission, and New Posen (Farwell) in 1876.

Jesuit priests at New Posen built a church and organized St. Anthony of Padua mission in 1877. From these headquarters priests traveled by horse and buggy, or even on foot to Loup City, Arcadia, Elba, Boleszyn, Greeley, St. Paul, St. Libory, and Choynice, taking care of the spiritual needs of the new settlers. Mass was offered and sacraments received in private homes or schools.

The people of Choynice traveled or walked to New Posen on Sundays, attending Mass in the morning, and awaiting the afternoon Benediction before returning home. Many were married or buried at New Posen. The settlers at Choynice had by this time begun to plan for their own church and to obtain a resident priest, since they now had 75 families. It took an entire day to perform their Sunday obligations because of bad roads and poor transportation. The priest could not always come to attend to the spiritual needs of the sick and dying.

Prominent settler Stanley Badura donated several acres to the church. Stanley Badura, Frank Miholski, Stanley Sekutera, and Robert Swirczynski formed a building committee and made plans. Pioneers donated as much money as they could. Father Francis Stuer, who was later appointed the first pastor of Choynice, went with several English-speaking men to Omaha to ask for help



Early 1900s picture of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church interior with Father Boleslaus Radka, pastor. (Photo courtesy Ron Sack)

from Bishop James O'Connor, which was granted. Farmers hauled the rough stone from Davis Creek, 10 miles away, and the lumber from Grand Island. They were two or three days on the road with their wagons drawn by horses or oxen. The first Mass was offered on Christmas Day 1882. The church was completed and blessed in July 1883.

A rectory was built in 1884, but Father Stuer still ministered to the needs of his flock in New Posen, walking both ways.

A two-room parochial school was conducted in the rectory, but the parish needed a boarding school and teaching Sisters. The Franciscan Sisters came in 1890. In 1891 a new school was built, a frame building with two classrooms.

Besides the schoolwork, the first Religious women (Sisters Sebastian, Ignatia, and Prudentia) nursed the sick of the parish.

In 1888 a wind of tornadic proportions blew the church about a foot and a half off its foundation. The parishioners were greatly concerned about this and many discussions were held as to the best way to remedy this situation.

Finally, when they had decided to build a new foundation to support the church, a wind blew from the opposite direction and settled the church back on its foundation.

In 1892 a severe diphtheria epidemic broke out, soon reaching disastrous proportions. There were no doctors or hospitals, nor any sanitary precautions.

Children especially were most vulnerable to this disease. Some estimate that about 100 children died within one year and are buried in the cemetery. The lower part on the west side of the cemetery contains the unmarked graves of the children who succumbed to this dread disease.

In the year 1895 a terrible drought struck the territory. Not a drop of rain fell. There were no crops and people were on the verge of starvation. The following year, on June 5, 1896, there was a severe hailstorm, followed by seven and a half inches of rain.

The whole valley around Choynice was flooded. Several buildings were washed out and moved by the flood. The church basement was flooded and the plaster in the church ruined. Mass had to be offered in the new school for about six months. Father Stuer was recalled to Poland in June 1896, and died there a few years later.

The sisters left in 1927 and the parish was unable to replace them. The drought and bad years which followed prevented the parish from keeping a school viable. It was then closed.

Other priests serving have been Father Alexander Matausek, Father Joseph Augustyn, Father Boleslaus Radka, Father Irenaeus Jarka, Father John Palubicki, Father Aloysius Jarzowski, Father Francis Szczepukowski, Father J.J. Herek, Father Paul Wiese, Father Joseph Bogaczyk, Father A. Raczynski, Father Joseph Hinzman, Father Albert Albel, Father Irenaeus Jarka, Father Anthony Figlerski, Father James Kremer, Father Milan Kopushar, Father James Schmitt and Father Frederick Snyder.

In October 1980 most of the rectory's contents were sold. Father Snyder was the last priest to say Mass at Mount Carmel. It was closed in 1997. The rectory and the remaining contents were sold in 1998.

The church building of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has the distinction of being the oldest church structure still standing in the Diocese of Grand Island. Devoted descendants of the early pioneer families have enabled the church to be preserved and the cemetery maintained.

*Compiled by Ron Sack with information from the Polish Heritage Center in Ashton and West Nebraska Register.*

# Geranium St. Wenceslaus

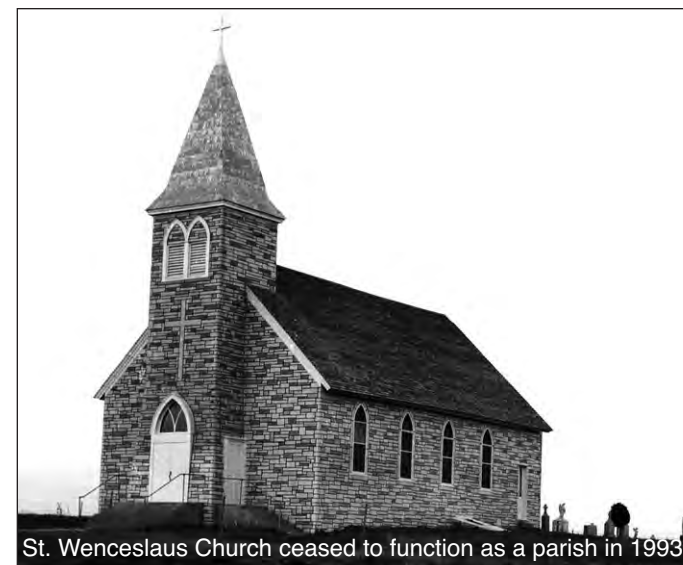
When Valley County was being settled in 1877 and 1878, a few Czech and some Polish families homesteaded in the prairie district of Netolice, 12 miles west of Ord and 16 miles east of Sargent. They lived in sod houses and dugouts, some living on porridge made of corn that they ground in the coffee mill. A Polish missionary, Father Antonin Klaviter (also Klawiter) came in 1881. He took up a claim four miles north of the church, offering Mass in the two-room sodhouses of parishioners, traveling by foot using only a wheelbarrow to carry the items needed for Mass.

On Jan. 5, 1881, 13 farmers met to make plans for a cemetery and to erect a church. Vaclav Studlar donated six acres of his quarter section. A frame church, 18 feet by 32 feet, was built at the cost of about \$300. Father Philip Maly of St. Paul blessed the church and offered Mass in the fall of 1882. The church was named St. Wenceslaus in honor of the patron saint of the Czech people—one of four so-named in the diocese. Netolice changed its name to Geranium, named after the post office located about two miles south of the church.

During the fall of 1882, on a Sunday, a prairie fire was discovered approaching the church from the southeast. The people rushed out of the church to take care of their teams near the church and backfired—meaning they built a minor fire a little at a time and beat out the flames next to the property site to meet the main fire. The idea worked and after all danger was past, everyone returned to church where Father Maly had waited and then resumed Mass.



The 75th jubilee of St. Wenceslaus in Geranium was celebrated with a Mass officiated by Bishop John L. Paschang.



*"... to the person who has never seen a prairie fire in progress, it is almost incomprehensible. When it is fanned by a strong wind, human effort is almost useless and like a demon sweeping down the landscape, it devours everything in its path."* (from the *Nebraska Register*, Sept. 14, 1962)

Father John Stephan Broz was the next pastor and by the close of 1890, the church had outgrown its present building. In 1892 the church was replaced by a 32 foot by 60 foot building at a cost of \$3,000. The church was dedicated by Father Broz and the old church was later sold.

Father Matej Nemec, a native of Omaha, was ordained Feb. 4, 1899, by Bishop Richard Scannell and was the only resident pastor of Geranium. He

offered his first Mass on Aug. 15, 1899. A new rectory was built and the home was the first in the area to have a telephone.

Father Nemec was pastor for seven years and from 1906 to 1908, priests came from St. Paul and Warsaw. In 1908 the parish in Ord was established by Father W. Kroupa. He was succeeded by Fathers Ferdinand Suesser, Bartholomew Chudacek, Joseph Hinzman, Gebhard

Stakemeier, Joseph Bogaczyk and by Father Nicholas Thees.

The church celebrated its 50th jubilee on Sept. 13, 1932, as not only the first Catholic Church in Valley County but the first Catholic Church in the upper Loup Valley. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Stanislaus V. Bona.

Father Thees remained until 1937 when Father Thomas Siudowski was appointed to serve Geranium. He was transferred in 1941 and was succeeded by Father Michael Szczesny. During his tenure, new stained glass windows were donated and installed. In 1951 a new altar was installed, the interior of the church was redecorated and new stations of the cross were obtained.

In 1955 Father Joseph Szynal replaced Father Szczesny. On Oct. 1, 1957, Bishop John L. Paschang offered Mass celebrating the parish's diamond jubilee. Father Szynal served the parish for 23 years and died of leukemia in 1977.

Lay ministers of the Eucharist and lectors began participating in the Mass celebration after Father Robert Karnish's appointment as pastor in 1978. The interior of the church was renovated and repairs were made to the exterior at this time.

Father John "Jack" Rademacher served from 1981 to 1985 followed by Father Michael Richards from 1985 to 1988.

The parish celebrated its centennial on June 6, 1982, with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara celebrating Mass. In July 1988 Father Gerald Carlson was appointed pastor until 1993 and the last Mass was June 27, 1993.

In 1993 Father Richard Piontkowski was appointed administrator and St. Wenceslaus ceased to function as a parish.



Closed Parishes

Below are the names of the churches that have ceased to function as a parish since the publication of the 1962 Golden Jubilee of the Diocese of Grand Island. However, records for these parishes—and those closed previously—are archived in area parishes.

Arcadia, Sacred Heart  
Ansley, Sacred Heart

Boleszyn, St. Stanislaus Kostka  
Brady, Sacred Heart  
Broadwater, St. Dominic  
Brownlee, St. Joan of Arc

Choynice (Paplin), Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Eddyville, St. Patrick  
Elyria, St. Mary

Geranium, St. Wenceslaus

Lewellen, St. Ansgar  
Lodgepole, Sacred Heart  
Long Pine, Sacred Heart

Mason City, St. Thomas  
Merna, St. Paul  
Merriman, St. Elizabeth  
Minatare, St. Mary  
Mirage Flats, Sacred Heart  
Montrose, Immaculate Conception

Newport, St. Michael  
Norden, St. Agnes

O'Connor, Church of the Visitation  
Oconto, St. Mary

Prairie Center, St. Mary

Schneider, St. Wenceslaus  
Scotia, St. Patrick  
Seneca, Sts. Peter and Paul

Wolbach, St. Joseph  
Wood Lake, St. Mary

Priest Necrology

JANUARY

3 Rev. Robert E. Wiest .....1997  
6 Rev. Vincent Pelster .....1969  
6 Rev. Leonard Ziolkowski .....1962  
11 Rev. Alex Grzechykowski .....1932  
17 Rev. Patrick McDaid.....1961  
19 Rev. James Fullam .....1970  
22 Rev. James McSweeney.....2000  
23 Rev. Francis Mlynarski.....1953  
25 Msgr. Thomas Murray .....1960  
29 Rev. Joseph Hargarten .....2000

FEBRUARY

2 Rev. Bernard Cabanski .....1995  
4 Rev. Michael McDaid .....1953  
5 Rev. Aloysius Raczynski .....1947  
10 Rev. Michael Daly.....1936  
10 Rev. Patrick Lynch .....1921  
11 Most Rev. John Sullivan.....2001  
12 Most Rev. James Duffy .....1968  
15 Rev. T.J. O'Byrne .....1935  
18 Msgr. Leo Blaere .....1958  
18 Rev. Milan J. Kopushar .....1995  
22 Rev. Patrick Moynihan.....1961  
23 Rev. Robert Barry .....1969  
27 Rev. Robert Foster .....2000

MARCH

10 Rev. Kevin Cortney.....1998  
15 Rev. James R. Whalen .....2004  
19 Rev. Joseph Augustyn .....1927  
19 Rev. Fidelis Skiera, O.F.M. ....1954  
21 Most Rev. John Paschang.....1999  
22 Rev. Henry Bednarczyk.....1961  
29 Rev. Vincent C. Nepl .....1982  
30 Msgr. Andrew McDonald .....1965  
30 Rev. James Hayes .....1928  
31 Rev. Joseph J. Szyнал .....1978

APRIL

3 Rev. James A. Kremeier .....2006  
6 Rev. James P. McMahon .....1965  
7 Msgr. Lawrence Portrey .....2003  
8 Rev. Raymond Miles .....1983  
10 Rev. Herman Ostrowski .....1947  
11 Rev. William E. Grace .....1947  
16 Rev. Frank Hoelck .....2003  
17 Rev. Joseph P. Monaghan .....1955  
19 Rev. Carl J. Hollie.....1966  
20 Rev. J.J. Kavanagh.....1943  
21 Rev. Albert A. Godlewski .....1982  
22 Rev. Paul Button .....1973  
27 Msgr. Lawrence A. Kintz .....1967  
28 Rev. Joseph P. Abele .....2006  
30 Rev. Thomas Cooney .....1958

MAY

1 Rev. Edmund Placek.....1986  
4 Rev. Paul Wiese.....1953  
5 Rev. Joseph Bean.....1959  
5 Rev. Albert Vifquain.....1957  
13 Rev. Matthew J. Kosiba.....1946  
19 Rev. James Naughtin .....1963  
29 Rev. Walter Phillips .....2010

JUNE

17 Msgr. Anthony E. Egging.....1971  
22 Msgr. A. Jarzowski.....1959  
28 Rev. Joseph Muldoon .....1949  
24 Rev. Irenaeus Jarka .....1953  
25 Rev. M.J. Lyons.....1943  
25 Msgr. Bernard Galvin .....1942  
26 Msgr. Patrick Manning.....1955  
26 Rev. Edward Cortney.....2011

JULY

2 Msgr. Henry Muenstermann..1957  
4 Rev. John N. Cook.....2009  
5 Rev. Wunibald Wolf .....1918  
7 Msgr. August Heimes .....1941  
24 Rev. Stanley C. Gorak .....2004  
27 Rev. Carroll J. Liebig.....1994  
28 Msgr. Joseph Macourek .....1952  
31 Msgr. Leo P. Keating .....1973

AUGUST

3 Rev. Robert L. O'Neill .....1983  
7 Rev. John A. Nepper .....1938  
7 Msgr. Thomas Siudowski .....1991  
9 Rev. Robert Maron .....1970  
21 Rev. Patrick Sloan.....1958  
28 Rev. Patrick Long .....1929  
28 Rev. Jan Smutny .....2008  
29 Rev. Gerald Carlson .....2011  
31 Rev. Leander Lecher .....1971

SEPTEMBER

5 Rev. James W. Morning .....1964  
8 Rev. James Hayes. ....1959  
14 Rev. Nicholas Thees .....1953  
25 Rev. Timothy D. Sullivan.....1966  
29 Rev. Cornelius McLaughlin ...1961

OCTOBER

1 Most Rev. Edward J. Hunkeler 1970  
5 Rev. Bernard L. Nelson.....1989  
6 Rev. John A. Dennett .....2003  
13 Rev. Boleslaus Radka.....1932  
18 Msgr. Alois Szczerkowski .....1963  
18 Rev. John Gleeson .....1956  
18 Rev. Constantine Shumski.....1991  
18 Msgr. Carl T. Hayden .....2011  
22 Rev. Hubert Janssen.....1955  
23 Rev. Louis Nally .....1987  
30 Rev. Joseph Hinzmann .....1968

NOVEMBER

2 Rev. Peter Donnelly.....1945  
2 Rev. Matthew O'Donahue.....1936  
2 Rev. Stanislaus Jaszczynski .....1916  
2 Rev. Peter McLaughlin .....1920  
2 Rev. Alexander Cudzinski.....  
5 Rev. Daniel Devine .....1980  
7 Rev. Thomas Haley.....1916  
7 Rev. Paul Moser.....1963  
10 Rev. Francis J. Michael.....1988  
12 Rev. John C. Madsen .....1964  
22 Rev. Anthony C. Figlerski.....1989

22 Rev. Andrew Augustyn.....2010  
23 Rev. Msgr. Anton Link.....1951  
23 Rev. Michael Szczesny .....2003  
26 Rev. Andrew Gonda .....2004  
26 Rev. Thomas F. Minogue.....1964  
29 Rev. Msgr. M.E. Dolan.....1943  
29 Rev. Eamon O'Dowd.....2009

DECEMBER

1 Most Rev. Stanislaus Bona .....1967  
2 Rev. Msgr. Francis Tschida .....1956  
2 Rev. Marcian L. Ballou .....1947  
2 Rev. Robert V. Warner.....1990  
2 Rev. Lawrence Fenton .....2011  
3 Rev. Michael A. Feeney .....1951  
3 Rev. Cletus P. Semper .....1984  
4 Rev. Alphonse Gasser .....1931  
5 Rev. Daniel Manning.....1944  
5 Msgr. Peter J. Kenny.....1965  
7 Rev. Albert Albel .....1961  
8 Rev. Walter Phelan .....2010  
14 Msgr. Francis J. Keller .....1973  
14 Rev. Mitchell Koprowski.....2010  
17 Rev. Joseph Kolaska .....1932  
17 Most Rev. Lawrence McNamara 2004  
18 Rev. Martin Lawler .....1940  
18 Rev. Joseph M. Nolan .....1938  
20 Rev. Patrick Moriarty .....1953  
21 Rev. C.J. Moynihan.....1963  
22 Rev. Frederick Seberger .....1918  
24 Rev. Charles Kaufmann .....1938  
27 Rev. Max Valdez .....1998  
28 Rev. Timothy P. Molony .....1958  
28 Rev. Edward Flinn .....1972  
31 Rev. Bernard McQuillan.....1953  
31 Rev. John Czajka .....1992  
31 Rev. Paul Wachtrle .....1993



# Facts and Trivia

• The transfer of the See City from Kearney to Grand Island occurred because Grand Island was a railroad center which offered accessibility to the rest of the diocese, had more Catholics than Kearney and it offered more economic pursuits and easier access to transportation

• The current Cathedral was consecrated on July 5, 1928, and was attended by about 1,400 people in the Cathedral, 900 people in chairs on the school lot, 200 people in their cars and approximately 150 priests from the diocese, state and area

• Bishop James A. Duffy considered his two most outstanding works in the diocese as the building of the Gothic-style cathedral and the establishment of the *Nebraska Register* newspaper

• Bishop Edward J. Hunkeler oversaw the building of a \$1 million dollar hospital by the Franciscan Sisters in Scottsbluff, a \$350,000 new church at St. Patrick's in North Platte (the second largest parish in the diocese at the time) and the establishment of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Grand Island but was not able to do much more because of the shortage of materials for capital projects and the shortage of priests right after World War II

• From World War II through 1962, new churches were erected at Grand Island (Blessed Sacrament), Ainsworth, Mason City, Dalton, Broadwater (a completely converted and expanded former Protestant church building), Amherst, Overton, Gothenburg, Cozad, Hay Springs, Mirage Flats, Hemingford, Kimball, Brownlee, Hyannis, Nenzel, Merri-man, North Platte (St. Patrick), Ogallala, Pleasanton, Ravenna, Rushville, Gordon, St. Libory, Scottsbluff (Our Lady of Guadalupe) and Valentine

• From World War II through 1962, Catholic high schools were established in Grand Island, Kearney, North Platte and Lexington

• From World War II through 1962, new Catholic hospitals were built in Scottsbluff, Loup City and Spalding and a new school of nursing was built at St. Francis Hospital in Grand Island

• The town of O'Connor was named in honor of Bishop James O'Connor, the second Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, who fostered and encouraged Irish and Polish immigration to Nebraska

• During the administration of Bishop O'Connor (1876-1890) most of what are known as the "pioneer parishes" of the Diocese of Grand Island were established

• In the "pioneer days" Mass was normally offered at first in the homes (often sod houses or dugouts) of the pioneers and the priest came only a few times a year

• The Diocese of Omaha was established on Oct. 2, 1885, with Bishop James O'Connor as the first bishop.

• The Diocese of Kearney was established because it was 400-500 miles to the western end and northwestern corner of the state of Nebraska from Omaha

• The Diocese of Omaha became the Archdiocese of Omaha on Aug. 7, 1945, with the Diocese of Lincoln and the Diocese of Grand Island as suffragan dioceses

• The Province of Omaha in the State of Nebraska, included the Archdiocese of Omaha, the Diocese of Lincoln, and the Diocese of Grand Island

• From 1950 to 1960, there were 23 priests ordained, but 22 priests died in the same decade

• The highest number of Catholic high schools in the diocese was 10 as reported in the 1949 and 1965-1969 OCD (Official Catholic Directory)

• From 1962 to 1966, the OCD shows the number of Catholic schools peaked at 19, with enrollments ranging from 4,167 in 1962 to 3,050 in 1966

• The highest number of priests working and/or living in the diocese was 98, both in 1944 and 1965

• The most seminarians for the diocese was reported in 1961, 1962, and 1963 at 59 for each year

• In the history of the diocese, there have been four churches named after St. Wenceslaus—Lawn Corner, Schneider, Warsaw and Geranium

• At the time of his death in 1999, Bishop John L. Paschang—the fourth bishop for the diocese—was the oldest living bishop in the world at age 102

• More parishes in the Diocese of Grand Island have been named after the Blessed Virgin Mary than any other saint

• Bishop William J. Dendinger is a two-star general in the Air Force and was chief of the Air Force Chaplain Service with headquarters with the U.S. Air Force at the Pentagon before he became the seventh bishop for the diocese

• Father Donald Larmore, retired diocesan priest, served in Africa for Maryknoll as a missionary priest

• Cheyenne, Wyo., is the largest diocese in the continental United States covering nearly 100,000 square miles. Fairbanks, Alaska, is the largest diocese in the U.S., covering 400,000 square miles. The Diocese of Grand Island covers approximately 42,000 square miles

• St. Mary's Parish in Wood River is the oldest parish in the diocese, established in 1866. St. Mary's Church in Grand Island (now the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) was the second parish created, established in 1868

• The first time that Mass was offered within the boundaries of the present state of Nebraska—for which there is documented evidence—was in the area of St. Ann's in Morrill on Sept. 14, 1851

• St. Michael's Church in Newport was donated to the Rock County Historical Society and moved to its present location at the Bassett City Park as part of the Historical Society Museum

• In 2012, the Diocese of Grand Island had 69 priests, 69 parishes and 49,544 Catholics in 42,000 square miles covering 35 counties

Spalding College in Spalding (pictured in the background) operated from 1908 to 1918

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