

**History of St. Joseph Parish of Cheyenne**  
**1940-1950**  
**Jerome H. Denk, Pastor**

In the book History of the Diocese of Cheyenne this parish is mentioned as having been created in 1938, and there being an obligation of \$3500.

During 1940, and for some time after, the parish was paying off the debt and making some improvements, mostly cement work and shrubbery around the church and house. At that time the parish report showed 80 families, 17 infant baptisms, and an income of \$3600. Here are the 1950 figures: 225 families, 80 baptisms, and \$27,000 income, but this latter figure includes monies for the new hall.

In January of 1944 the pastor was released to join the armed forces. Most of that time he was chaplain for the 11th Cavalry Group in Germany.

Sixty members of the parish served their country and the plaque in the vestibule of the church shows that four gave their lives; Edward Monjaras, Salvador Garcia, James Stack, Eugene Messersmith.

Father John Marley was appointed administrator during the absence of the pastor. He organized the Confraternity of Our Lady of Perpetual Help with novena services every Tuesday. In 1945 the parish acquired lots 1 to 4 in block 659 across from the rectory. This property and more will be needed for a school, which is contemplated for some time in the future. The cost was \$1200.

In the Spring of 1946 Father Denk returned to the parish and Father Marley went to Our Lady of Sorrows, Rock Springs. Due to the good financial condition of the parish, it was decided that a parish hall could be planned. At first the cheaper types of construction were considered, but finally it was decided only brick veneer and tile would be proper construction to fit in with the rest of the plant. Kellogg and Kellogg the architects and T. Snedaker & Son the contractor. It is a \$30,000 building. Ground was broken in October of 1949 and on April 15, 1950, coadjutor Bishop Hubert M. Newell dedicated it. In June and July the men of the parish conducted a drive to pay for it and raised money and pledges to the amount of \$12000. This effort together with activities in the hall should retire the debt in 1951.

Just recently two Mexican Sodalities have been organized, The Holy Family and The Rosary. A men's club has been functioning since the opening of the Hall, and Spanish movies are now being shown regularly. A history of this parish would not be complete without mentioning the devoted efforts of Mrs. Rudolph Rezac whose leadership and work in the Altar and Rosary Society has been tireless. The rummage sales held regularly by this organization has been a very substantial assistance in acquiring the improvements and developments of the past ten years.

## **HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF ST. JOSEPH CHEYENNE 1950-1960**

On October 10, 1952, it was announced by His Excellency, Bishop Hubert M. Newell, that a new community of teaching Sisters, The Missionary Sisters of Victory Noll, were to take up residence in the Diocese with their headquarters in St. Joseph's Parish.

On the following Sunday, the pastor, Rev. Jerome Denk, announced plans for a new catechetical center so that the new community could teach religion to the children attending public schools. The firm of architects, Kellogg and Kellogg were engaged to draw up plans for the new center and on Sunday, November 2, 1952, ground was broken for the new building by Bishop Newell. The contract for the new center was awarded to Jacob Weber, Cheyenne Contractor, who submitted the low bid of \$34,500.00. The building consists of two standard size classrooms, a principal's office, lavatories and a heating plant in the basement. It is the first unit of what eventually will become a grade school, capable of accommodating eight grades. On September 13, 1953, the new structure was dedicated by Bishop Newell.

The coming of the Sisters to the parish necessitated a convent but owing to the excessive building costs, a suitable convent was not feasible at that time. Father Denk had his rectory converted into a temporary convent and purchased a residence in the same block for a rectory for the sum of \$13,000.00.

The new structures left the parish in deep debt but in the Spring of 1955, the Bishop's Fund Campaign helped considerably to defray this debt. More than \$20,000.00 was collected in St. Joseph's Parish from that campaign.

In the Spring of 1956, Father Denk was forced, because of ill health, to take a leave of absence during which time the Rev. Michael Scullion administered the affairs of the parish. He continued in this capacity until May, 1957. During his tenure as administrator of the parish, the property on East 6th Street was landscaped and new sidewalks were installed.

In May of 1957, the Rev. Jerome Denk was advised by his doctors that he would be unable to return as pastor at which time he submitted his resignation to Bishop Newell.

On June 18, 1957, the Rev. James Ruddy, J.C.D., was appointed pastor. Due to the great zeal and work of the Sisters, as well as to the natural growth of the parish, a third Mass was added but even this was not sufficient to take care of the ever increasing attendance of the Catholics at Sunday Mass.

In the Fall of 1958, Bishop Newell decided that the time had come when the needs of the parish demanded the services of another priest and the Rev. James O'Neill was appointed as its first assistant. Two more Masses were added but even this did not seem to be sufficient to take care of the ever-increasing population. In the Fall of 1959, the Rev. James O'Neill was transferred to Newcastle and the Rev. Daniel Colibraro replaced him as assistant.

In the Spring of 1960, the Rev. James Ruddy, J.C.D., having consulted with the Bishop and the trustees of the parish decided that the time had come when the present church was no longer capable of taking care of the needs of the parish and the firm of Kellogg and Kellogg were again consulted as to the feasibility of enlarging the present church. In August, 1960, the contract for two additional wings to the church was let to Garton and Garton, Cheyenne contractors, for the sum of \$60,300.00. Cruciform in design, the completed structure has now a seating capacity for approximately 500 people. In addition to the new wings, new sacristies, a new baptistery and

toilet facilities were added. A new fixed altar, of Carrara marble, was installed and the entire church was redecorated. The total cost of the renovation of the present church exceeds \$70,000.00.

On February 7, 1961, Bishop Newell blessed the new structure.

## **HISTORY OF ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH 1960-1970**

### **PRIEST APPOINTMENTS**

1960 Rev. James Ruddy

1962 Rev. James Ruddy took a year's leave of absence

1962 Rev. James O'Neill was named administrator of St. Joseph's Parish

1964 Rev. James O'Neill was appointed to St. Mary's Cathedral and

Rev. Cyril Hmelovsky was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's

Rev. Daniel Colibraro was appointed assistant to St. Joseph's

1965 Rev. Cyril Hmelovsky was appointed pastor of Worland

Rev. John J. Corrigan was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's

Rev. Daniel Colibraro was appointed assistant

1967 Rev. John Murray was appointed assistant of St. Joseph's and editor of the Wyoming Register

1968 Rev. Matthew Benko of Latrobe, Pa., replaced Rev. John Murray who was appointed pastor in Pinedale

Jan. 12, 1960 A meeting of the Trustees of the Church of St. Joseph was held in the rectory at 317 East 7th St. The first order of business was to re-elect John E. Waters as secretary of said corporation and Carl Christensen, Treasurer of the corporation. Those present were John E. Waters, Carl Christensen, Rev. James Ruddy, pastor, and Rev. Daniel Colibraro acting as proxy for His Excellency Bishop Hubert M. Newell and Rt. Rev. Thomas O'Reilly, V.G.

Aug. 1, 1960 A special meeting of the corporation of St. Joseph's Church was held. Present were Rev. James Ruddy, Pastor, Rev. Gerald Chleborad, acting as proxy for His Excellency, Hubert M. Newell and the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas O'Reilly, V.G., Carl Christensen and J.E. Waters.

On a motion made by the Rev. James Ruddy, seconded by J.E. Waters, the corporation was authorized to spend the sum of \$60,300.00 for alterations and improvements to St. Joseph's Church.

The officers of the corporation unanimously approved a motion authorizing Bishop Newell, the president of the corporation, to execute and sign a contract with Garton and Garton Construction Company for the said sum. The officers of the corporation unanimously authorized Rev. James Ruddy, pastor of St. Joseph's Church to borrow whatever sum of money was to be necessary to meet the obligation.

Sept. 12, 1961 A special meeting was held of the corporation of St. Joseph's to authorize and approve a loan to be made by the parish, for the sum of eight thousand dollars from the church of St. Mary Magdalen, Evanston, Wyo.

Jan. 4, 1964 The annual meeting of the Trustees of the corporation of St. Joseph's was held in the church rectory to elect new officers. Unanimously elected were Vaughn Ditzler, Treasurer, and Joseph Kishman, Secretary for the corporation, to replace Carl Christensen and John Waters.

March 7, 1966 A meeting of the Corporation of the Church of St. Joseph's was held at the rectory. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the purchase of property adjacent to present rectory known as and recorded as "East 44 feet of Lot 1, in Block 624 in the City of Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming." The purchase price was paid to Mrs. Mary Kovacheff, owner. The property was purchased as a site for further expansion to parish building.

Sept. 9, 1966 The Neddeau property adjacent to the Catechetical Center was purchased for the sum of \$6,000,00.

June 7, 1967 A meeting of St. Joseph's Corporation was held to re-elect the trustees of the corporation. The trustees reelected were Vaughn Ditzler and Joseph Kishman. Rev. John Murray was proxy for Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell and Rt. Rev. Thomas O'Reilly.

June 1, 1969 A meeting of the Corporation of the Church of St. Joseph was held at the rectory. The purpose of the meeting was to reelect the trustees of the corporation whose terms of office expired. Vaughn Ditzler and Joseph Kishman were reelected for another two years to June 7, 1971. Present were Rev. John J. Corrigan, Pastor, Vaughn Ditaler, Joseph Kishman, Rev. John Murray, proxy for Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell and Rt. Rev. Thomas O'Reilly.

#### CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

May 1, 1960

95 children received First Communion.

May 31, 1960

The Sisters from St. Joseph's taught Religious Vacation School in Gillette.

June 20, 1960

The Sisters from St. Joseph's started census work in Sheridan; also had three CCD training courses for adults.

Sept. 28, 1961

CCD Priests' Institute was held in Rawlins. Sister Mary Evelyn of St. Joseph's spoke on the need of well-trained teachers. Sister Angeline gave a demonstration class.

April 1, 1962

92 children received First Communion.

May 13, 1962

49 children and 14 adults received Confirmation.

July 1, 1962

Sisters from St. Joseph's conducted a vacation school and census work in Saratoga.

November 1962

A Day of Recollection was held for CCD teachers. Father Fahey conducted the retreat.

March 24, 1963

111 children received First Communion.

May 12, 1963

93 children and 17 adults received Confirmation.

August 1, 1963

The Sisters from St. Joseph's made a Cursillo.

September 1964

N.C.C.W had a vocation day. Sisters from St. Joseph's were on the panel.

March 8, 1964

115 received First Communion.

April 17, 1964

Mother Florentine, Superior General, came for Visitation.

April 22, 1964

A High School Day of Recollection was conducted. A Maryknoll priest conducted the retreat.

May 4, 1964

84 children were confirmed by Bishop Newell.

Jan. 1965

Five workshops were held during the week which involved more than 600 priests, Religious, and laity in every section of the State. This was the first series of workshops which were held in the five Deaneries of the Cheyenne Diocese. The Prelate expressed himself as "deeply pleased with the presence of so many priests, Sisters and lay representatives from practically every parish of the Diocese." The following toured the State and had CCD workshops: Father Logue, Diane Porter, Mrs. John Demmer, Father Russel Neighbors from the National CCD Office, Father Blaze Bonpane from Denver, and Sister Mary Evelyn from St. Joseph's. Cheyenne.

Jan. 17, 1965

C.C.D. Workshop for all Cheyenne Deanery parishioners was held at St. Mary's.

Sept. 21, 1965

A class in Methods and Doctrine for Teachers and Helpers was started.

Feb. 2, 1967

A Teacher Training Course in Methods and Doctrine was held in St. Joseph's Catechetical Center.

March 7, 1967

A Spring Series of Informal Religious Lectures for Adults of Cheyenne Parishes was held at St. Mary's High School Library.

Sept. 4, 1967

Bishop Newell and Sisters met at St. Joseph's Convent to plan a new CCD program where one Sister, a priest, and two lay people would be in charge of the CCD in each Deanery. They would meet together bi-annually to make plans for the program.

May 1969

Mr. Joe Velasquez was appointed Co-coordinator for the CCD program of the three parishes, St. Joseph's, Holy Trinity, and St. Mary's.

Sept. 1969

The pastors and Coordinators of the three parishes met together to discuss the budget that would be allotted for the Unity CCD Program both for High School and Grade School. The Parish Coordinators appointed were: Sister Beatrice of St. Joseph's, Pat Flaim of St. Mary's, and Sister Theresa of Holy Trinity.

September 1969

A new formation program was started whereby novices of the Order of Missionary Sisters could be missioned in one of the convents in place of the Motherhouse at Victory Noll as formerly. Sister Diega was appointed to St. Joseph's in Cheyenne.

Dec. 1969

An evaluation was made of the Unity CCD Program. All seemed to approve that a tri-parish program had its advantages and should continue.

March 1970

Teachers from all three parishes in Cheyenne attended the Mile Hi CCD Convention in Denver

## SISTERS' AFFAIRS

### ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH

May 26, 1960

A Golden Jubilee Celebration was held for Sister Petronilla, O.S.F., and Sister Rose Francis, O.P. 61 Sisters attended.

May 25, 1962

Sisters from St. Joseph's Parish started working with Father James O'Connell C.S.S.R. in Torrington with the migrants. It was rugged but effective. They returned on June 28th. Each year up to the present four Sisters have been working with Father O'Connell in the migrant program.  
March 13, 1962

Father John J. Sigstein, founder of the Victory Noll Sisters died at Victory Noll, Huntington Ind.  
March 31, 1962

Vocation Day and Exhibit was held. Sr. Dolores Balch, O.L.V.M., spoke on Victory Noll Sisters.  
July 24, 1962

Bishop Newell, Dominican Sisters from St. Mary's, Franciscan Sisters, Charity Sisters from DePaul came to St. Joseph's to celebrate the new change in the Franciscan habit.

Sept. 15, 1964

A Cow-Boy Patio Barbeque picnic was held at St. Joseph's. All the Sisters from Cheyenne were invited. Mr. & Mrs. Walter Murphy supplied the western scenery for the patio, including bales of hay, harnesses, ox head, etc.

Oct. 6, 1966

Sister Beatrice and Sister Mary Magdalen went to Rock Springs with the CYO for the State Convention.

Feb. 1, 1967

Bishop Newell offered Mass in the newly remodeled Chapel in St. Joseph's Convent. Dinner followed with the three Franciscan Sisters present. Father Corrigan, Father Murray, Sister Hildegard, Sister Mary Magdalen, and Sister Beatrice.

September 1967

Back to School Get-Together for all the Sisters in Cheyenne Deanery was held at St. Mary's.  
August 1969

Sister Jeanette was appointed as Area Coordinator of the Mountain States Area: Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. Sister is to visit the area regularly.

## YEARLY APPOINTMENTS

### MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY

St. Joseph's Convent

314 East 6th Street

Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

Aug. 15, 1960 ;

Sister Mary Evelyn

Sister Dorothy

Sister Angeline

Aug. 15, 1961

Sister Mary Evelyn

Sister Dorothy

Sister Angeline

Aug. 15, 1962

Sister Mary Evelyn

Sister Genevieve (up to Oct. 20, then replaced by Sister Mary Ann)

Sister Angeline

Aug. 15, 1963

Sister Mary Evelyn  
Sister Mary Ann  
Sister Chrysostom  
Aug. 15, 1965  
Sister Beatrice  
Sister Mary Magdalen  
Sister Mary Ann  
Aug. 15, 1966  
Sister Beatrice  
Sister Mary Magdalen  
Sister Hildegard  
Aug. 15, 1968  
Sister Beatrice  
Sister Hildegard  
Sister Denise  
Aug. 15, 1969  
Sister Beatrice  
Sister Hildegard  
Sister Denise  
Sister Diega (Formation Program)



**Cheyenne St Joseph 1981-1990**  
**Rev. Michael Carr**

1. Names of clergy & religious serving during the decade and dates of service:

Rev. Angel Ornelas - June 1977 to

Rev. Charles Hardy - June 15, 1982 to

Rev. John Wright - June 15, 1984 to

Rev. Michael Carr - July 9, 1990

2. Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners (give dates):

Doris Garcia - President of Council of Catholic Women. Third Vice-President of National Council of Catholic Women.

3. Notable accomplishments by the clergy and religious during the decade: (give dates)

John Wright - Chairman of Presbyteral Council.

Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe - 1987.

Parish Hall kitchen was remodeled and expanded - 1989.

4. Construction - new or remodeling: (give dates)

1981 - Repair of church property.

1988 - New car for Sisters (Extension Society matched funds).

1989 - Parish Hall kitchen remodeled and expanded.

December 10, 1989 - Dedication of Parish Hall kitchen.

5. Land acquisitions: (give dates). None.

6. Lay Trustees and term of service for each:

Nettie Arias -- 1980 - 1990.

Bernard Kinsella -- 1980 - 1990.

7. Pastor's overview of the decade:

8. Significant Parish events and programs: (give dates)

Ordination of Rev. Charles Velasquez on February 14, 1985.

**Cheyenne St. Joseph**  
**1990-2000**  
**Eva Estorga, Youth ministry/ DRE**  
**April 11, 2000**

Dear Father:

Here is the information you requested. Let me know if you need more info.

1. Names of clergy and religious serving during the decade and dates of service.

Fr. Vernon Clark from May 1998 to present time.

Fr. Michael Carr from 1990 to May 1998.

Sisters left the parish in 1994.

2. Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners. (Give dates.)

Parish offices moved to 314 E. 6th in 1994.

Lay leaders and parishioners remodeled the priest's residency - all volunteer work in 1994.

Bathroom was added on to the church.

3. Notable accomplishments by the clergy and religious. (Give dates.)

Through Fr. Carr leadership the house was remodeled in 1994, parish office was moved to 314 E. 6th in 1994, also a bathroom was added in the church in 1994, roof on the north side of the church was redone in 1996, the sidewalk in front of the CCD center was also redone in 1997.

4. Construction - new or remodeling. (Give dates.)

Remodeled the priests residence in 1994, added a bathroom in the church also in 1994.

5. Land acquisitions. ( Give dates.)

None

6. Lay Trustees and term of service for each.

Bernie Kinsella from 1977 to 1996

Lillian Valdez from 1990 to present time

Fred Madrid from 1996 to present time

7. Pastor's overview of the decade.

Very productive decade through the participation of lay leaders and parishioners.

Lay people are running the different programs and events, since the sisters left the parish.

This is an 80 % Hispanic parish. We also have one of the largest distribution of food and financial help to the poor.

8. Significant parish events and programs. (Give dates.)

We celebrate a Fiesta every year, St. Joseph's feast and Our Lady of Guadalupe also every year.

Fr. Carr celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest in 1993, and in 1998 celebrated his 30th anniversary.