

## **Gillette, St. Matthew Bishop McGovern**

[88] St. Matthew's, Gillette, is one of the more recent parishes of Wyoming, although the history of the mission goes back more than a generation.

Gillette became a parish September 18, 1926. The first priest known to have said Mass in Gillette was Rev. P. Cassidy of Hot Springs, S. D., who visited there in 1892. The section-house was first used for this purpose, but later on yielded the honor to the city hall and the Morgan and Daly homes. Fr. Cassidy baptized two persons on his first visit, one of whom was a convert. At that time there were about twelve members in the congregation.

Rev. P.J. Lynch of Newcastle occupies a prominent place in the developing days of the parish. St. Matthew's church was built under his direction, and opened for services in 1907. The two lots for the church were purchased for \$175.00, an amount which had been collected principally by Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Daly. The largest subscriptions for the building were received from John T. Daly and James T. Morgan, who donated \$100.00 apiece.

The clergymen identified with the mission of Gillette were: Rev. John C. Ahern, Nov., 1896-Nov., 1897; [89] Rev. P. Cassidy; Rev. G.F. Dillon, Sheridan; Rev. T.P. Hayes, Newcastle, and Rev. P.U. Sasse, Sheridan, 1899-1902; Rev. P.J. Lynch, Newcastle, 1902-1910; Rev. F.J. Keller, Buffalo; Rev. T.D. Lynch, Buffalo; Rev. P. Long, Buffalo, September, 1910-October, 1911; Rev. John Duffy, Sheridan; Rev. T.P. Hayes, resident pastor; Rev. Joseph De Nichola, Newcastle, October, 1911-April, 1914; Rev. Casimir Tomiak, Newcastle, April, 1914-April, 1915; Rev. J.H. Mullen, Newcastle, May-December, 1915; Rev. J.T. Nicholson and assistants, Newcastle, 1916-1917; Rev. J.T. Nicholson, Buffalo, November, 1917-1921; Rev. John O'Connor, Buffalo, 1921-1923; Rev.

Edward McDonnell, Buffalo, 1923-1924; Rev. John Brady, Buffalo, 1924-1926.

From 1915 to 1916 Rozet and Gillette were attended by Frs. James Boland and John Mullin of Newcastle. Arvada was attended by pastors residing at Buffalo until 1926.

The mission at Rozet was attended by Rev. John Nicholson, 1916-1917; Rev. John Brady, 1917-1923; Rev. Bernard Schneiders, 1923-1926.

A class of twenty-eight was confirmed June 12, 1917, by Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D. The last payment on the church debt was made on that occasion by Mrs. John Daly.

[90] September 18, 1926, found Gillette no longer a mission of Buffalo, but an established parish with the missions of Arvada and Rozet.

Rev. P.P. Szymanski was appointed the first pastor. Soon after his appointment he bought a parochial residence for \$8,000.00. During the year 1927, the parish received a generous donation of \$1,000.00 toward liquidating the debt on the parochial residence.

Fr. Szymanski was transferred to Greybull in November, 1928, and was succeeded by Rev. John Marley. There was a debt of \$3,000.00 on the rectory when Fr. Marley took charge. With the assistance of special collections and donations the debt was gradually reduced to \$250.00 in 1938.

Fr. Marley was transferred to Lander in October, 1938, and was replaced by Rev. James McBride.

During the year 1938 there were twenty baptisms and five marriages. Since the establishment of the parish there have been 167 baptized; sixty couples married; one hundred nineteen confirmed; fifty-four deaths.

Active organizations in the parish are the Altar and Rosary society with a membership of twenty-six, and the Catholic Youth organization with a membership of nineteen.

[91] There was a mission in 1930 and one in 1939. There are approximately ninety families in the parish and missions. The average Sunday attendance at Mass is about one hundred and twenty, and the average number of monthly communions is approximately forty-five.

The parish comprises the churches of St. Matthew at Gillette, Sacred Heart at Rozet and St. Catherine at Arvada.

**St. Matthew's Church**  
**Gillette, Wyoming**  
**1940-1950**

Father James McBride was transferred to Greybull in October 1944 and Father James Power was appointed to succeed him. In the beginning of 1945 the new pastor, seeing the urgent need for a new church, began to make remote preparations for a building program. Accordingly a fund raising campaign was begun. In October of that year and with the advice of Bishop McGovern, the old rectory was sold for \$9,000. Then John K. Monroe, a Denver architect, drew plans for a new church and rectory. Mr. Monroe's estimate for church and rectory was \$45,000.

The buildings were to occupy adjacent lots to the site of the old church. This property is regarded as the most desirable in Gillette. It consists of two adjacent lots, 50 x 140 each on the corner of Gillette Avenue and Sixth Street. Since building controls were imposed as a wartime measure, permission to start construction was denied in 1947 and 1948. In 1949, in view of the increased prices, an extensive campaign to raise sufficient finances was engaged in and proved satisfactory since all the parishioners realized the necessity for a new church. On April 11, 1950, at St Mary's School in Cheyenne in the presence of their Excellencies Most Rev. P.A. McGovern and Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, the parish trustees and a representative group of the men of the parish, the contract for the church was let to D.J. Dalbey, Gillette contractor, for \$71,320.30.

Work began in May and continued without hindrance until the first part of October when a delay in delivery on the Indiana limestone for the doorway and rose window prevented further progress. The stone arrived in late December and at this writing work is being resumed. Weather conditions and sub zero temperatures have currently to be reckoned with and more delay is anticipated.

The building will be ready for dedication, however, in the early spring. It is of Italian Romanesque design with a fifty-foot high belfry. Constructed of buff brick its length is approximately 92 feet and width is 32 feet in front. It is the first church in Wyoming to have radiant heat. The rose window and the large side windows will be of stained glass and are all donations from parishioners. The altar, stations, statues, baptismal font, and two side altars are also being donated. Of particular interest is the fact that the candlesticks have been carved from native cedar wood by the Schlautmann family of Savageton. The building will seat 250 persons.

The parish now has approximately 150 families scattered over its 7,000 square mile territory. Bishop McGovern administered the Sacrament of confirmation to a class of 35 in 1945 and Bishop Newell confirmed a class of 55 in 1949. Active organizations in the parish are the Holy Name Society with about 80 members, St Elizabeth's Altar Society with 30 members, and St Anne's Altar Society for young married women with 50 members. The present trustees of the parish are Henry K. Hays and: Phil Wagner.

[Signed] James Power  
Pastor

**SAINT MATTHEW'S CHURCH  
GILLETTE, WYOMING  
HISTORY OF ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH, GILLETTE,  
WYOMING  
1950-1960**

April 1950 Bids for construction of new St. Matthew's Church, Gillette, Wyoming.

May 1950 Contract awarded in Cheyenne to the D.J. Dalbey Construction Company of Gillette, with a bid of \$71,500.00. Construction began in the same month.

July 1950 Cornerstone was blessed and laid by Bishop Patrick A. McGovern, assisted by Bishop H.M. Newell.

July 1951 Building completed.

July 26, 1951 was the Dedication of new St. Matthew's Church by Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell.

Solemn Mass Celebrant, Rev. James Power, Pastor

Deacon, Right Rev. Msgr. John McDevitt

Subdeacon, Rev. James McBride

Master of Ceremonies, Right Rev. Msgr. James Hartmann.

Sept., 1956 Total debt on new church paid off.

1951 Three lots on 600 Block, Gillette Ave., Gillette, donated to the parish by Mrs. Margaret Goings.

1953 Property consisting of house and lot, 510 Gillette Ave., Gillette, purchased for \$6,000.00 for priest's Rectory.

Oct.1, 1954 Rev. George Stoll becomes new pastor of St. Matthew's parish. Rev. James Power becomes new pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish, Buffalo, Wyoming.

Jan. 1958 Property, consisting of house and lot, 510 Gillette Ave., Gillette, purchased to be future Sisters' Convent, for \$10,000.00.

June 19, 1959 Rev. Charles Brady becomes pastor of St. Matthew's Parish, Gillette. Rev. George Stoll becomes pastor of Holy Name Parish, Sheridan, Wyoming.

July 14, 1959 Rev. Charles Brady installed as pastor of St. Matthew's; ceremony conducted by Very Rev. George Stoll, Dean of the Sheridan Deanery.

### Gillette 1960 Missions

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### Our Lady of the Snows, Mission Church, Rockypoint, Wyoming

1953 Land (consisting of 100 square feet) and old school building donated by Mr. and Mrs. George Pavlovich of Rockypoint. The old school building was remodeled by free labor donated by the Catholic families of the Rockypoint area, and has served as a Church since it's Dedication in September of 1955.

## St. Francis Mission Church, Savageton, Wyoming

Sept. 1958 Land donated and a large sum of money donated by Miss Kate Schlautmann, Savageton, to help provide a Church for the Savageton community.

Contract for building a new Church (Chapel) at Savageton granted to Richard Grant Construction Company, Gillette. Building completed in the spring of 1959.

May 2, 1959 Dedication of the new Chapel at Savageton by Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell.

A gift of \$5,000.00 from the Catholic Extension Society to this new Chapel was greatly appreciated.



**HISTORY OF ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH  
GILLETTE, WYOMING  
1960-1970**

January 20, 1960 Future plans for parish school discussed at trustee meeting. Trustees Lee Mankin, F.W. Geis and W.R. Hays.

June 8, 1961 Sale and removal of parish hall (first church here) at 605 Gillette Ave transpired. Jack Sinclair paid \$150.00 for building.

Nov. 1, 1961 Ray O'Brien & Sons of Casper awarded contract for parish hall and catechetical center to be built at 605 Gillette Ave. let for \$52,500. Building to be 120 ft. by 40 ft., structure to be steel and concrete blocks.

Nov. 5, 1961 Ground broke for new hall.

Jan. 10, 1962 Loan of \$15,000 from Church of St. Mary Magdalen's, Evanston, at 4% interest was granted.

May 1, 1962 Bid for \$11,408 from W.G. Ross Masonry Construction Co., of Buffalo for brick veneer for new parish hall accepted. Father Brady reported \$42,435 of the \$52,500 contract to Ray O'Brien & Sons has been paid balance of \$10,065 to be paid on completion of contract.

April 9, 1964 \$800 was approved for new ceiling in parish hall. Discussion of rental of hall class rooms for public year 1964-1965.

Aug. 14, 1965 Contract to buy residence from Yvonne I. Hannum at 505 Gillette Ave. for rectory, price \$25,000.

Nov. 1965 Trustees agree to spend \$4,000 on painting and papering and purchase new furnishings of rectory.

Dec. 2, 1966 Bid from Ostlund's Inc. for \$565 to convert church heating system from coal to gas accepted. Opening of grade school postponed.

Jan. 20, 1967 Removal of old rectory at 507 Gillette Ave., housing thrift shop was completed. A parking lot for church was located here.

Aug. 22, 1968 Father Brady transferred to Casper St. Anthony's. Father O'Conner, new pastor.

July 2, 1969 Sale of old rectory at 502 Gillette to Campbell County completed, the agreed upon price \$21,000.

## **St. Matthew Church**

### **The parish history for Saint Matthew's Church in Gillette, Wyoming, for the years 1970 - 1980 follows:**

Rev. Cornelius O'Connor served as pastor from 1968 until 1970. In September of 1970, Rev. James Ruddy was appointed pastor of St. Matthew's parish. The title of Monsignor was bestowed upon him in January of 1974. During his early years as pastor of St. Matthew's, Msgr. Ruddy was assisted at various times by Rev. James Healy and by Rev. Vincent Bauer. In October 1975, Rev. Vincent Langfield was appointed to serve as an assistant in St. Matthew's parish.

**New Church Complex Built:** With continuing growth in the parish and because of a shortage of priests in the diocese and an indication that Gillette might have only one priest in the future, there was a need for a church with a larger seating capacity. In October 1974, St. Matthew's Church was vacated and Mass was offered in St. Matthew's Parish Hall. A fund raising campaign was launched. On November 1, 1974, St. Matthew's purchased two blocks of land on Butler Speaeth Road for \$50,000. The former church, rectory, and adjoining lots on Gillette Avenue were sold for \$150,000.

Architect Jan Wilking of Casper was engaged to draw up plans for a new church complex, and on April 8, 1975, a contract was let to Julien Construction of Cody for \$670,000 to build the church, hall, and adjoining rectory. In November of 1975, the parish hall property on Gillette Avenue was sold to the Campbell County School District for \$200,000. The new St. Matthew's Church, hall, and rectory were completed, and dedicated on August 18, 1976, with His Excellency Bishop Hubert M. Newell officiating. With the cost of furnishings added to the contract with Julien Construction, the total cost of the church, hall, and rectory, was between \$800,000 and \$900,000. The extra land south of the church (Block 26) was sold for \$70,000 in the fall of 1977.

Parish Council Formed: A parish advisory council consisting of twelve lay persons was formed in November 1975. Meeting four times a year in regular session, the purpose of the council is to advise and assist the pastors in matters pertaining to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the parish. The first advisory council members were appointed by Msgr. Ruddy for terms of one, two, or three years. Subsequent members have been elected by the parish.

BVM Sisters: In August, 1975, Sister Mary Kelliher, of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, came to St. Matthew's parish to assist with the religious education program and with home visits. She was joined by Sister Anita Montavon in August 1977. In April 1977, St. Matthew's parish purchased a house for the sisters to use as a convent. A purchase price of \$50,500 was paid for the residence at 706 West 10th. This was sold in the fall of 1979 for approximately \$72,000, and house closer to the church was purchased. Cost of the new convent, which is located at 1608 Monte Vista, was \$66,500.

Sister Mary Artura Buza joined Sisters Mary and Anita in the fall of 1978, and served in the parish until May of 1979. Sister Mary Christella Dee came to St. Matthew's parish in August, 1980, again bringing to three the number of BVM sisters serving the parish.

Death of Msgr. Ruddy: On August 10, 1978, Msgr. Ruddy suffered a heart attack and died. Bishop Newell and priests of the diocese gathered in Gillette to join with friends and parishioners for the wake and funeral Mass. Msgr. Ruddy was buried in Mr. Pisgah Cemetery at Gillette on August 16, 1978.

Following Msgr. Ruddy's death, Rev. Joseph Fraher was appointed pastor of St. Matthew's. In 1979, he was joined by Rev. Vincent Langfield as co-pastor.

Permanent Deacon Ordained: John Aloisio was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate by His Excellency Bishop Joseph Hart at St. Matthew's Church on October 28, 1979. The Rev. Mr. Aloisio's duties include marrying, baptizing, officiating at funerals, preaching, serving as an ordinary minister of Holy Communion, visiting the hospital and the Pioneer Manor.

Mission at Wright Established: The community of Wright, which is 40 miles south of Gillette, was established as a Mission of Gillette. Property was purchased for the future of the mission there. The lot is 3-1/2 acres and cost \$13,590. The first Mass was said on Easter Sunday of 1980, and services are now held there on the first and third Sundays of the month.

**St. Matthew's Catholic Church**  
**Gillette 1990 2000**  
**Gwen Geis, Secretary/Receptionist**  
**April 21, 2000**

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

Pastors: Rev. Tom Ogg (1986-1999)

Rev. Thomas Kadera (1999-Present).

Associate pastors: Rev. Thomas Kadera (1990-1991)

Rev. Rory Schiffbauer (1991-1994)

Rev. Andrew Duncan (1994-1998)

Rev. James Schumacher (1998-1999)

Rev. Karl Millis (1999-Present)

Religious: Sr. Letitia Lenherr, S.C.L. (1987-2000)

Sr. Agnes Claire Beyer, O.S.F. (1988-1996)

Sr. JoAnn Schmitz, O.S.F. (1992-1993)

Sr. Carol Mechtenberg, O.S.F. (1993-Present)

Sr. Rita Meneke, O.S.F. (1996-1999)

Rev. Mr. Stan Piasecki (1993-1999).

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

Helen W. Fitch was awarded the Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice, Sept. 17, 1997.

Eva Kalke — Counselor to parishioners & community (1996-2000).

Lay Ministry Graduates:

1991 - Rebecca Barrett, Wm. Barrett, Carol Bennett, Larry Bennett, Ed Chaulk, Coleen Chaulk, John Gaffney, Gary Melgaard, Jaci Melgaard, Teri Norfolk, Rose Mary Ostlund, Terri Rieman, Steve Rieman, Evelyn Rothleutner, John Rothleutner, Sherry Samuels, Diane Solomon

1992 - Jo DeSomber, David Layden, Annette Rourke, Phil Weibel

1993 - Deb Boyles, Don Boyles, Linda Cundall, Joan Holzer, Mike Deegan, Sally Sheehan, Patti Spaulding

1994 — Karen Desch, Ron McGinley, Pamela McMahaon  
1995 — Charles Butz, Dona Butz, Lori Donmyer, Rhonda Krueger,  
Rosemarie Rye, Cindy Weber  
1996 - Barb Courtney, John Gutierrez, Norma Hall, Dorothy Henley,  
Dan Lubken, Denise Lubken, Janet Neel, Dorothy Slattery, Mike  
Slattery  
1997 - Ann Baker, Ken Baker, Mickie Daigle, Tom Gill, Bob Johnson,  
Eva Kaike, Gary Kautzman, Danette Miller, Susan Windham  
1998 - John Bigelow, Susan Bigelow, Marty Gulley, Mike Hogan, Beth  
Kirsh, Larry Overton, Madonna Recce

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

Rev. Tom Ogg was noted as bringing back the vibrancy to the church. Fr. Ogg was instrumental in breaking down barriers that existed between different religious denominations in Gillette, in the 13 years of service at St. Matthew's and building the Family Life Center.

Sr. Rita Meneke was instrumental in help the two mission parishes grow and prosper in her time at St. Matthew's.

Sr. Letitia lead the R.C.I.A. groups for 14 years and help the spirituality of the parishioners grown.

All the Clergy and religious have been very involved with the Gillette Minstrel Association, and active Chaplains at the Hospital.

Fr. Ogg & Sr. Agnes Claire provided professional counseling to the parish and community.

Fr. Drew Duncan had an active Jail ministry, instituted the Release Time - Religious Education class and incorporated the Life Teen mass into St. Matthew's.

4. Construction - new or remodeling, (Give dates.) St, Matthew's Family Life Center (1996-1998)

5 Land acquisitions. (Give dates.) Foothills Recreation Center - 1997  
Rolling Hills Lot - 1997 Energy St. Lot - 1996

6. Lay Trustees and term of service for each.

Helen Fitch (1984-1992) Donald J. Scott (1988-1991) John Rothluetner (1992-1994) Sherry Samuels (1993 - Present) Larry Bennett (1995 - Present)

7. Pastor's overview of the decade.

St. Matthew's is a young growing parish. In the past 10 years, it has grown and matured, with more adults going through the R.C.I.A. program and the building of the Family Life Center to service the youth of the community. What a wonderful opportunity this has been for our youth. The preschool has an area that is great for learning. The religious education has a feeling of belonging with everyone having a room for classes to meet. The parish has also undertaken the Renew process for the last 3 years and the small faith sharing groups is spiritually enriched. St. Matthew's is a leading force in Campbell County and the state of Wyoming.

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

Building of the Family Life Center (1996-1998)

Spring Fest (2000)

Counseling for parish 6 community (1986-1999)

Incorporation of Life Teen Mass

Release Time - Religious Education Class (1998-2000)

Christian Based Preschool (1994-2000)