

History of Parish from 1940 to 1950.
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
PINE BLUFFS, WYO.

The pastor of St. Paul's parish in 1940 was Rev. Charles Gormly. At that time there were about fifty families (Catholic) including the missions of Carpenter and Albin. Since this community is constituted almost entirely of farmers and ranchers, financial success is largely determined by the weather conditions, which up to this period had been most unfavorable. However, beginning with the year 1940 and even up to the present day the community has enjoyed considerable success resulting in the spiritual and material growth of the parish.

Father Daniel Carroll succeeded Father Gormly as pastor on February 1, 1942. During his administration there was a marked increase in the number of Catholic families, i.e. from about fifty to seventy. Several improvements were made in the parish property. In July 1942 the church in Pine Bluffs was repaired at a cost of \$889.39. In August 1945 a new oil furnace was installed in the church amounting to \$430.00. In July 1946 the furnace in the rectory was converted from coal to oil and new living-room furniture purchased, all of which amounted to an expenditure of \$888.55. In March 1947 the roof of the rectory was re-shingled at an expense of \$250.00. In April of the same year rubber kneeling pads were installed in St. Paul's, which cost \$360.39. In February 1948 a new organ was purchased by the Altar and Rosary Society and installed in St. Paul's church at an expense of \$840.00.

In October 1948 Father W.J. McCormick as pastor of the parish succeeded Father Carroll. During his administration in December 1949 a new garage was built at an expenditure of \$968.62. In September of 1950 Rev. J. Godley as administrator of the parish succeeded Father McCormick.

During the past decade a noticeable increase in the Catholic population is in evidence. At the time of writing (Jan. 1951) there are seventy-five Catholic families or a total of 224 souls in the parish.

St. Paul's Parish
Pine Bluffs
1950 - 1960

In June of 1950 the Rev. William McCormick, pastor at the time, was transferred to St. Anthony's in Casper, and the Rev. James Ruddy, assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne was appointed administrator of the parish. Father Ruddy remained in this capacity until October of the same year when the Rev. James Godley, assistant at St. Anthony's in Casper, was appointed pastor of St. Paul's.

At a parish corporation meeting in November of 1953 a motion was made by Father Godley and seconded by the Trustees, Charles Gross, Sr., and George Phillips, that The Hendershot Machine Shop be purchased and remodeled into a hall for parish social affairs. Work began immediately on the purchase of the building under the direction of Clifford Haukap, Gerald Nett and Ed Prosser along with volunteer help from the men of the parish. The hall was ready for occupancy in the spring of 1954.

In the fall of 1954 Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters from St. Joseph's Parish in Cheyenne came to Pine Bluffs for the first time to instruct the grade school children in catechism on Saturday afternoons. These Sisters drive from Cheyenne to Pine Bluffs weekly to teach classes held in the church and the hall. The first two nuns to come to Pine Bluffs in 1954 were Sister Mary Rose and Sister Jacqueline.

In February of 1955 Father Godley was transferred from St. Paul's to St. Mary Magdalen's in Evanston as pastor, and Rev. John J. Corrigan came to St. Paul's as pastor from St. Mary Magdalene, Evanston. Shortly after, the interior of the church in Pine Bluffs was renovated which included the installation of a new ceiling, redecorating the sanctuary and walls of the Church. During this time of remodeling, Mass was said in the Parish Hall.

In September 1958 it was decided that the parish needed additional property as a future site for a new and larger church. At a parish corporation meeting the motion was carried that all the lots in Block 32 Bickel Addition in the Town of Pine Bluffs, along with 6 lots in Block 31 of Bickel Addition be purchased for this purpose. It was also moved at the same meeting to acquire the 6 remaining lots in Block 31 when they became available for sale.

In the spring of 1959, the Langhart and McGuire Firm of Architects from Denver, Colo. was employed to draw up sketches for a new church. When the design and the capacity of the new church was chosen from the preliminary drawings, Bishop Newell gave permission to proceed with prints and specifications for construction.

In September of this same year [1959] Angel Ornelas, son of Mr. and Mrs. Angel Ornelas, Sr., entered St. Thomas Seminary in Denver, as the first student for the priesthood from the parish.

HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH 1960-1970

By Martha Thompson, Carpenter, Wyo,

Within a span of 10 years, two major building programs were completed, a young native of the parish was elevated to the priesthood and there was spiritual and physical growth generally in the parish of St. Paul's at Pine Bluffs, St. Raphael's (St. Peters), Carpenter, and St. Joseph's, Albin.

On Sunday, March 6, 1961, the Rev. John Corrigan, pastor of St. Paul's Church, troweled into place mortar for the cornerstone of the just-completed new St. Paul's Church at Pine Bluffs, Wyo. About 130 persons attended the corner-stone laying ceremonies in the eastern part of town at 200 West Eighth Street. The ceremonies brought to a formal conclusion the construction of a \$108,000 building to house the families of Catholics for their Mass activities. An open house was held after the corner-stone laying activities.

The first Mass in the new church was held on Palm Sunday. Dedication was held on Tuesday, April 11, 1961, at 10 a.m. with Bishop Hubert M. Newell of Cheyenne officiating at the ceremonies. Forty-five priests from Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska were present. Father Corrigan with Bishop Newell presiding in the sanctuary celebrated solemn Mass. The Rev. William Delaney of Cheyenne and the Rev. James Ruddy were deacon and subdeacon. Acolytes for the Mass were the Rev. Charles Taylor of Laramie and the Rev. Jerome Logue. The Rev. Michael Butler of St. Joseph's Orphanage at Torrington was the censer bearer. Prelates present in the sanctuary were the Rt. Rev. Msgr. T.F. O'Reilly, V.G., of Casper, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John McDevitt of Laramie, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Lawrence Kintz of Kimball, Neb., and the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Tom Siodowski of North Platte, Neb. The priest choir under the direction of the Rev. Cyril Hmelovsky sang hymns and the Litany of the Saints for

the dedication ceremony. Chaplains to Bishop Newell were the Rev. F.J. Kimmett and the Very Rev. Leo Morgan.

The Church architecture was of modern Romanesque lines of red brick and stone construction. It measured 104x45 feet and contained three beautiful cream cordova altars. A nine-foot Italian hand-carved crucifix surmounted the main drape of gold spun beige, surrounded by indirect lighting. The same art studios in Italy supplied the hand-carved statues of Mary and Joseph for the two side altars. Mrs. George Thompson of Carpenter and her husband donated the two statues. Lending a distinctive mark to the new church was a six-foot cast iron-bronze gilded statue of St. Paul that enhanced the bell tower. News releases in the Wyoming Catholic Register on Friday, April 7, 1961, said the new St. Paul's Church was a fitting memorial to mark the golden anniversary of St. Paul's parish in the fall of 1962. George C. Stoval of Fort Collins, Colo., was general contractor for the new building which was designed to seat 400 people.

A program of the dedication of the new St. Paul's Church was as follows. Blessing and Presiding—Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, Bishop of Cheyenne, assisted by the priests of the dioceses of Cheyenne, Grand Island, and Denver. Officers of the Mass; Celebrant—Rev. John J. Corrigan; Deacon—Rev. William Delaney; Subdeacon—Rev. James Ruddy; Master of Ceremonies—Rev. William McCormick; Acolytes—Rev. Charles Taylor, Rev. Jerome Logue; Thurifer—Rev. Michael Butler. Chaplains to the Bishop, Rev. F.J. Kimmett, Very Rev. Leo B. Morgan, and the Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell delivered Sermon. Mass sung by St. Paul's choir under Mrs. Robert Wilhelm, organist. Dinner--1 p.m. Program: Master of Ceremonies—F.W. Pat Poelma; Blessing, Welcome, Introduction of clergy and guests. Remarks were by Bishop Newell. Later, St. Paul's Altar and Rosary Society served Thanksgiving Dinner for clergy and parishioners in Jaycee Hall.

The Wyoming Catholic Register of September 7, 1962 announced “Clergy Changes Announced by Chancery Office.” The new appointments were to become effective on Friday, September 14, 1962. Among the changes announced was that the Rev. Michael Butler of St. Joseph’s Orphanage at Torrington would become pastor of St. Paul’s Church at Pine Bluffs, succeeding the Rev. Philip Colibraro who had been in charge since the resignation in the spring of 1962 of the Rev. Herbert Kraus, who left because of ill health. The Rev. John Corrigan was transferred to Worland in July 1961.

The Rev. Herbert Kraus
The Rev. James Ruddy
The Rev. Philip Colibraro

Father Butler had been the assistant at St. Joseph’s Orphanage and in charge of collection for the institution since 1959. He was a native of Ireland and was ordained June 7, 1953, after studies at St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny, Ireland. He was first appointed assistant to the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Rock Springs and then to St. Anthony’s parish in Casper, before going to Torrington.

One of the highlights of St. Paul’s in the decade from 1960-1970 occurred midway during the decade when a native of Pine Bluffs— Angel Ornelas, son of Mrs. Rosario Ornelas, and the late Angel Ornelas — was ordained at St. Paul’s Church in Pine Bluffs. The Rev. Ornelas was elevated to the priesthood in his home parish by His Excellency, the Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, Bishop of Cheyenne, on May 28, 1965, at 10:30 a.m. Father Ornelas said his first Solemn Mass at 4 p.m. on Sunday, May 30, in St. Paul’s Church in Pine Bluffs.

Father Ornelas was one of nine children, and was born in Pine Bluffs on September 11, 1932. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in aeromechanical engineering in 1954 at the University of Wyoming and served in the United States Air Force from 1954 to 1958 in the United

States, Japan and Okinawa as a jet pilot. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from St. Thomas Seminary in Denver and his Baccalaureate Degree in Sacred Theology from the Catholic University of America.

Father Ornelas, at the time of his ordination, held the rank of Captain in the United States Air Force Reserve. All of his sisters and brothers attended his ordination, including his sister who returned from Zambia, Africa, where she had worked for the United States Embassy. His mother was also in attendance.

Additional information about Father Ornelas was included in the PINE BLUFFS POST, Pine Bluffs, Wyo., on Friday, May 8, 1965: Ornelas, believed to be the only young man from this community to enter the priesthood, received his elementary and high school education in Pine Bluffs, and graduated in 1950. He was an affiliate of Sigma Tau, engineering honorary society. In August 1954, he joined the air force, and received a 2nd Lieutenant commission through the reserve corps training office. He received jet fighter pilot training at Laredo Air Force Base, Tex., and after completing the training he was sent to gunnery school at Luke Air Force Base, Phoenix, Arizona, before receiving an overseas assignment with the 49th fighter-bomber squadron and the 44th tactical fighter squadron in Japan and Okinawa. He was discharged in October 1958, with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. He began his religious education in 1958 at St. Laurence Minor Seminary at Mount Calvary, Wis., for a year, and then moved to St. Thomas Seminary in Denver. He has minor degrees in history and education.

His four brothers and sisters are: Martin, Albert, Magdalene, Harry, and Jessie Baker, Frances Manriquez, Virginia and Urbana Ornelas.

Ordaining prelate for Father Ornelas was the Most Rev. Bishop Hubert M. Newell of Cheyenne. About 30 priests and seminarians from the Diocese of Cheyenne and adjoining dioceses assisted him. Officers

assisting at the ordination were the Rev. William Delaney, Cheyenne, deacon; Rev. Charles Taylor, Laramie, subdeacon; Rev. Michael Butler, Pine Bluffs, archdeacon; Rev. John J. Corrigan, Worland, sermon; and seminarian Lawrence Forsberg, Denver, master; seminarian Francis Bessler, Denver, thurifer; seminarian Carl Beavers, Denver, commentator.

Following his first Mass on May 30, a public reception, was held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of the high school.

The Rev. Michael Butler and the congregation of St. Paul's Catholic Church held the dedication of their new Catechetical Center on Sunday afternoon, December 6, 1970, with about 200 persons in attendance.

The Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, Bishop of Cheyenne, was principal celebrant at the Concelebrated Mass at 3 p.m., with the blessing of the building afterwards. Assisting the bishop were Rev. Butler, Rev. John J. Corrigan of St. Joseph's parish of Cheyenne, the Rev. Terrence McGovern of Lusk, Very Rev. John J. Meyer of St. Laurence O'Toole parish, Laramie, Rev. Charles Hardy of St. Mary's parish, Cheyenne, and the Rev. William J. McCormick, Cheyenne, master of ceremonies.

Other members of the clergy present were the Rev. Lawrence Etchingham and the Rev. Eugene Sullivan of St. Joseph's Orphanage at Torrington; Msgr. Leo P. Keating of St. Joseph's, Kimball; Rev. William Delaney of Holy Trinity, Cheyenne; Rev. Thomas Tracy of DePaul Hospital, Cheyenne; Rev. Thomas Fahey, St. Mary's Cathedral, Cheyenne; Rev. Gerald Chleborad of St. Mary's, Cheyenne; and Rev. (Lt. Col.) John Borkowski, chaplain at F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

Sisters Beatrice, Hildegard and Denese [?] of Our Lady of Victory Sisters from Cheyenne, who instruct the children at Pine Bluffs on Saturday mornings, were also in attendance along with their regional

director from Denver—Sister Janett—and three sisters from the Bishop's house in Cheyenne.

Members of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus formed an honor guard during the ceremonies. They were William Boyle, James Byrd, Ed Braun, Jim Key, Leroy Hardy, Ray Cahalane, George Dugas, John Doody, Tony Dickman, all of Cheyenne, and Lawrence Uri of Pine Bluffs. Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Byrd, Mrs. Braun and Mrs. Key also attended.

The new catechetical center has been in use since September 26, although final work was not completed until October 23. Construction of the center was started in May 1970, at a cost of \$86,000 dollars. The interior of the structure is finished in cinder brick with glazed brick hallways. It houses four classrooms for CCD classes, an office, storage room and partial basement.

The primary purpose of the hall is its use as a catechetical center each Saturday morning throughout the school year from 9:30 to 10:30 with classes staffed by Our Lady of Victory Sisters from Cheyenne. Children from Carpenter, Burns, Albin, Egbert and Pine Bluffs and some children from across the line in Nebraska have attended formal instruction in their religion since the Rev. James Godley began the program in 1954.

The new center is used by grades three through eight with Mrs. Gerald Wood and Mrs. Bernard Moritz as lay teachers. CYO classes for high school students are held every two weeks at the center.

Members of the Pine Bluffs Altar and Rosary Society furnished draperies for the new center. The Holy Name Society purchased tables and chairs for the classrooms.

Atlas Construction Company of Cheyenne built the center at a total cost of \$86,148. And Kellogg and Kellogg of Cheyenne were the architects.

BISHOP NEWELL GIVES ADDRESS. Bishop Hubert H. Newell gave the homily and dedication address at the dedication ceremonies of

December 6. He led a procession to the new center after the Mass for the blessing and dedication of the new building. Immediately following, there was an open house with the members of the Altar and Rosary Society in charge of refreshments.

Altar boys who served at the dedication ceremonies were Mark Haukap and Mike Lang.

St. Paul, Pine Bluffs
St. Raphael, Carpenter
St. Joseph, Albin
1970-1980

The parish history for St. Paul's Church, Pine Bluffs, Wyoming; and St. Raphael's Church, Carpenter; and St. Joseph's Church in Albin, for the years 1970 - 1980 follows:

Improvements have been made in St. Paul's Church at Pine Bluffs, at St. Raphael's Church at Carpenter, and at St. Joseph's Church in Albin during the past ten years, and there has been a decided increase in the Catholic population, especially in the rural areas of Carpenter and Albin during that time.

The increase in population in the Carpenter area resulted from new housing developments north and west of the community at Durham Estates due west of Hillsdale, Thunder Basin housing just west and south of Burns, and from a small housing development just west of the Antelope Station two miles south of Burns. People wanting to remove their children from a city environment have purchased acreage allowing them to have small animals for their children and access to rural schools and a more healthful environment. The increase in population at Albin was due to more farm jobs available in that community and moving in of workers to help plant, tend and harvest crops like potatoes, wheat, oats, barley, beans, feed crops and other things. There has been some increase in the Catholic population at Pine Bluffs due to a quite stable economy in the rural area there, and demand for help in the potato plant industry there until 1979.

Three priests, Rev. Michael Butler, Rev. Philip Colibraro and Rev. Patrick Trujillo served the parishes in those ten years.

One of the big improvement projects in St. Paul's parish was the building of the catechetical center adjacent to St. Paul's church in 1970. Bishop Hubert M. Newell of Cheyenne officiated at dedication ceremonies of the center on December 6, 1970. The Atlas Construction Company of Cheyenne completed it on October 23, 1970, at a cost of \$86,148, with four classrooms, an office, a storage room, and a partial basement. Kellogg and Kellogg of Cheyenne were the architects. Dedication ceremonies began with a concelebrated Mass at 3 p.m., with Bishop Newell as principal celebrant, assisted by Rev. Michael Butler, Rev. John J. Corrigan of St. Joseph's Church, Cheyenne; Rev. Terrence McGovern of Lusk; Rev. Thomas Cleary of Torrington; Very Rev. John J. Meyer of Laramie; Rev. Charles Hardy of Cheyenne; and Rev. William J. McCormick of Cheyenne were master of ceremonies. The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Victory of Cheyenne, catechism teachers for the weekly classes in Pine Bluffs, were special guests. Various rejuvenation projects and expert upkeep of the church in Pine Bluffs has continued over the years, maintaining the beautiful church which was dedicated on Tuesday, April 11, 1961, during the term of Rev. John J. Corrigan.

In this month of November, 1980, parishioners under the direction of Rev. Patrick Trujillo of Pine Bluffs, will begin a renovation project at St. Raphael's, also known as St. Peter's Church, at Carpenter. One of the life-long parishioners, Gerald G. Thompson of Carpenter, who was baptized in the church in 1918, donated paneling for the church, and workmen will begin installing the paneling soon.

Plans have also been made to repair the altar area and paint it to blend with the new paneling. Over the 10-year interval, women of the Altar and Rosary Society have repaired cracks in the plaster over the whole church, painted the confessional area, and kept the church in as good repair as possible, although major repairs have been needed during all that time. They have cleaned weekly, attended the altar linens, and have held fund-raising events each year to pay for heat and lights and

contribute to the general fund of the church through the Pine Bluffs parish. They present the current pastor with a Christmas check yearly and provide whatever assistance he needs in the parish.

Catechism classes for children and CYO classes for high school students have been provided at Pine Bluffs for children and youth of all three parishes. Altar and Rosary Societies function in each parish and contribute to the growth and vigor of the parishes. They provide a source for serving wedding, funeral, First Communion and other dinners as needed in the parish. They also provide a voice to speak out on needed issues facing the parishes. They serve from time to time as the educational source of spiritual, political and community affairs. Some members of the society are active in the Cheyenne Deanery and the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women, and many have served in offices. A parish council is functioning and considers needs of the parishes. There are representatives of all three parishes on the council, and they, with the current pastor, consider the needs of the churches and the people. Ministers of Communion were appointed in recent years, and have been added to since that time at Pine Bluffs and Albin.

It is noted that catechism classes have been held weekly during the school year and on Saturday since 1954. Families in the rural areas of the three parishes have traveled thousands of miles taking their children to Pine Bluffs for religious instruction.

The Wyoming Catholic Register is distributed to each family in the parish, and they are able to keep current with the important happenings in the diocese and learn what messages our Bishop has for us for the week. Several in the parishes have served as correspondents to the newspaper and one person has been responsible for news of the parish since 1952.

The parish of St. Paul's has provided one priest for the diocese, the Rev. Angel Ornelas, who was born and grew up in Pine Bluffs. From time to

time, he returns to officiate or assist at activities in the area, and has helped with funeral Masses of old friends.

A member of St. Raphael's parish was an official delegate to the 1980 Year of the Family conference in Cheyenne. A member of St. Raphael's and her husband serve as family life chairpersons for their parishes.

The rural parishes of Carpenter and Albin have had the privilege of attending weekly Mass in their own churches the past two years, eliminating long trips to the main parish at Pine Bluffs. This has been of great benefit to Colorado Catholics across the line south of Hereford, Colorado, who have no parish and no Mass in their area and attend weekly Masses in Carpenter. It is also of benefit to those at Burns and Hillsdale who are a long distance from Cheyenne.

There are some leaders among parish members in the evangelization program planned to increase the spirituality of those in the parish. Many parishioners have participated in the Cursillo program directed by the Rev. Patrick Trujillo, formerly of St. Paul's parish. Several members of St. Paul's and St. Raphael are assisted in giving a retreat for Cheyenne Holy Trinity parish council in 1979. Parish members participate in a program to provide assistance for indigent families who come through the area. They provide financial assistance or spiritual help to those in the parishes who need help. They welcome new members into the church and visit them at their homes. Special services have been held for graduating seniors and special programs have been scheduled for high school students. As of December 1980, a family prayer program is progressing in the three parishes and booklets have been distributed to every family, following an explanation by the priest, by Sister Angelita, and by program leaders.

An indebtedness of \$28,000 on the catechetical center at Pine Bluffs has been cleared as of July 1978. New carpet was installed in the church at Pine Bluffs. Parishioners are contributing to the carillon system

established by the family of a deceased member of St. Paul's parish. From time to time, extraordinary donations are made to the parishes as memorials.

Parish members in the three communities give of their talents to community programs and assist with social, service, and education projects. Father Trujillo and several members of the parishes serve on a committee to monitor sex education programs in the schools in the district.

There have been 36 deaths in the past ten years in the parishes, 108 baptisms, about 80 marriages, and 123 First Communions.

In Addition to his parish duties, Father Trujillo serves as spiritual director for the Cursillo movement, assists in coordinating religious observances of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and is state director of the Spanish Apostolate. He has distributed "My Daily Bread" booklets for spiritual assistance for parishioners, and in December 1980, began use of "Share the Word" as a spiritual background for readings of scripture of the preceding Sunday to promote group discussions and family discussion at home to give knowledge and appreciation of the scriptures.

In her report, Sharon Sandridge Rabout of the Albin parish said: "In the last ten years, St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Albin has had a tremendous increase in membership--nearly double in size. During the past year (1979-1980), Mass has been held nearly every Sunday, contributing to the number attending church. Before 1980, our Masses were only the first and third Sundays of the month. And in the last ten years, three priests have served us: Father Butler, Father Colibraro, and presently Father Trujillo. Improvements and repairs have been made also in our church. Inside the church, carpet was laid, the walls painted, and the altar beautifully painted also. The outside of the church has been painted and the foundation repaired within the last year (1979-1980). Also a new sign was painted for the outside of the church telling its

name and Mass schedule. Though we have a relatively small Altar and Rosary Society, contributions have been large. They purchased the carpeting for the church and made many baby clothes for the Madonna Plan. Since 1970, we are proud to say that our church is making improvements, people are involved, and our members growing. And we have many members willing to give their time for St. Joseph's Church in Albin."

**St. Paul
Pine Bluffs
1990-2000**

**The Reverend Thomas E. Cronkleton, Jr. Pastor
Mary Anne Shields, Pastoral Council Secretary
May 30, 2000**

1. Names of clergy and religious serving at St. Paul's during the years 1999-2000.

The decade began with the Reverend Monsignor Lawrence Etchingham serving as pastor. The Reverend Vernon F. Clark succeeded him in 1990 and was pastor until 1991. In 1991 Father Clark was transferred to Sacred Heart Parish in Greybull due to the death of Monsignor Meyer. A resident pastor was unavailable to replace him. The Reverend Thomas Sheridan, pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Cheyenne, was given the additional assignment of being pastor of St. Paul's Parish in 1991. He remained pastor of St. Paul's through 1993. The Reverend Gerald Sullivan, the new pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Cheyenne, was also appointed pastor of St. Paul's and served as pastor of St. Paul's for the first six months of 1994. While there was no resident pastor at St. Paul's, two lay women served as resident pastoral ministers. Theresa Wyburn served as Coordinator of Ministry from 1991 until 1992. In 1992 Betty Mowry began service as Coordinator of Ministry until her death in March of 1994. In July of 1994, the Reverend Thomas E. Cronkleton, Jr. was named as pastor, and the parish once again had a resident pastor. He continues to serve as pastor.

2. Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners.

3. Notable accomplishments by clergy and religious.

4. Construction - new or remodeling.

5. Land acquisitions.

In July of 1992 the parish sold the corner property at 2nd and Beech Street. In 1993 the parish celebrated its 80th anniversary which included

the publication of a parish history authored by Martha Thompson. In February of 1994 the parish sold the old Rectory on 8th Street. In 1996, sidewalks along around the St. Paul's Church were replaced, the mission church of St. Joseph's in Albin was remolded and rededicated, and St. Peter's in Carpenter was repainted. In 1997, the interior of St. Paul's Church was painted, and the exteriors of the church, the parish hall and the rectory were also painted. The old baptistery was converted into a prayer area with some of the parish statuary and religious art. In 1997 new cement steps and a ramp were added to the mission church of St. Peter's in Carpenter facilitating handicap access to the church. In 1998 a new organ was purchased for St. Paul's Church and central air conditioning was added to the rectory. New carpet was also installed in the parish hall. In 1999, new thermostats were put into the hall, and boiler work was done in both the parish hall and the church. A new carillon was installed in time for Christmas of 1999. A grant was also received to develop a parish video library for use in the parish's religious education program and for use by individuals, families and groups in the parish. In 2000 the sidewalk and curbing in front of the rectory was replaced.

6. Lay trustees and terms of service for each:

1990-1998

Clarence Gieber

Stan McNamee

1998-present

Robert Reed

Norman Sanders

7. Pastors overview of the decade:

Probably the most significant event during the last decade was the three-year period in which the parish did not have a resident pastor and the two mission churches of St. Joseph's in Albin and St. Peter's in Carpenter were shut down. The people of the parish greatly missed having a resident pastor although they greatly appreciated the ministry

of the two lay women who served in the parish as Coordinators of Ministry. The loss of a resident pastor had a demoralizing effect on the parish. The people are apprehensive they will once again lose their resident pastor. In addition, expenses increased during the period in which there was not a resident pastor, but giving did not. Much needed maintenance was deferred, and buildings and equipment fell into disrepair. Much effort has been made in the last six years to provide this maintenance and repair, and both the Catholic Home Missions and Catholic Extension Society have been instrumental in funding these projects.

The principal industry in the area continues to be farming and ranching. Low prices at market through much of the 1990's and high production costs have made farming and ranching difficult and have put severe strain on the families involved. Fewer people are ranching and farming, and operations tend to have to be larger and larger in order to compete. Most ranching and farming families help support themselves with outside employment with at least the wife being employed in a position not related to the farm or ranch and sometimes even the husband holding a position in addition to working the farm or ranch. The older generation is about to surrender the farm or ranch to a new generation and will probably be turning over the operations to members of their grand or great-grand children's generation.

8. Significant parish events and programs:

Each year the Council of Catholic Women holds a Fall Dinner as one of their principal fundraisers. In 1998, the CCW started a scholarship program to encourage and reward high school youth of the parish for their involvement in the parish life. The CCW also started an annual St. Patrick's Day Party for the adults of the parish and has begun conducting rummage sales fundraisers. The Knights of Columbus have taken an active part in the parish. They served breakfast once a month September through May. The Knights have conducted the last six years an annual dinner raffle to raise needed funds for projects in the parish. They also

started an annual prime rib dinner as a community builder for their members. Jointly, the CCW and the Knights of Columbus have provided a free breakfast to the First Communicants and their families, a free meal to the parish after Confirmation and a reception for the graduating high school seniors of the parish. The parish holds carry-in dinners for all the members of the parish in Advent and on Holy Thursday. These events are well attended. There is an annual May Crowning, and the graduating high school seniors from the parish are honored each year at Sunday morning Mass shortly before their graduation. Beginning in the fall of 1996, junior and senior high youth groups were formed and each group met twice per month, September through May.

“Church as the People of God”
Father Hugo L. Blotsky, O.S.B.
St. Paul Catholic Church, Pine Bluffs

A local historian, Martha Thompson of Pine Bluffs, wrote an article on the former St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Burns, which was published in the Pine Bluffs Post in mid-April of 2003. The restored church building is part of the Texas Trail Museum. I will address the question asked in the article, whether Catholic weddings may be held in the former church building.

In our Catholic Tradition, the church building is not the church. The church are the people of God who gather on a regular basis to worship together, to celebrate the sacraments, to bury their dead, to celebrate life, and to build up the Kingdom of God here on earth. A church building is not any more the church than a house is a home. A house is a building and only the people living in the house can transform a house into a home.

The church building becomes a sacred space because the community of believers in the Lord Jesus gather on a regular basis to experience the presence of the Risen Lord in their midst in their celebrations (Matt. 18:20). Over the centuries the community of believers have gathered to worship in caves, catacombs, private homes, prisons, and church buildings.

When a church building needs to be vacated because the needs of the Christian community have changed, the former churchmembers feel an emotional attachment to the building. Their attachment is not primarily to the bricks, mortar and furnishings, but rather to the memories of the meaningful celebrations, and to the memories of their experience of God’s Presence in the church building.

The permanent closing down of a church is always painful. There is a grieving process that the former church community needs to work through. The role of the pastor is to facilitate the grieving process so the community members may be healed as they move on to join a new church community. As the numbers of church closures increase around the country, the challenge increases for both the clergy and the laity to find ways to work together in reconciliation and healing as they grieve their loss.

Here in Pine Bluffs, the Catholic Community has St. Paul's Church available for celebrating the sacraments, including the sacrament of marriage. The notion of using a church building at a museum as a wedding chapel for Catholic weddings is foreign to Catholic Tradition. However, using the church building as a wedding studio would not be out of place. The presence of the former St. Mary's Catholic Church building at the Texas Trail Museum is a testimony to what has been. The presence of St. Paul's Catholic Church in Pine Bluffs is a sign of what is yet to be for our Catholic Community.

May 15, 2003