

Lusk 1887 1976
St. Leo Catholic Church
(Compiled by Veneda Serres)

Though the edifice of the Catholic Church of Lusk is new by Old West standards, the church community goes back to 1887 when Father Patrick Brophy said the first Mass here en route to the Douglas mission. From this time until 1902 Masses were heard only when a traveling priest could be prevailed upon to hold services. In November of that year, however, Douglas began to hold regular services and Lusk was named as one of its missions. Masses were held in various homes, such as the D.E. Goddards', Ed Arnolds', and Richard Pfisters'. It remained so until 1912 when the original St. Leo's was erected on land donated by H.C. Snyder of Snyder's General Store and located on the outskirts of town. The contract price for the church was \$1,535 and the windows cost \$165. The church was dedicated on May 30, 1913, with ceremonies including the blessing of the church, High Mass, and Confirmation. Father Dominick of Douglas said High Mass while a quartet composed of Misses Elizabeth and Pauline Bruch, George Penkoske, and Albert Bruch sang Mass. The first Nuptial Mass performed in the new church was the wedding of Miss Ella Arnold and Earl Updike October 8, 1913. The first Requiem Mass was the funeral of Valentine Pfister Nov. 26, 1913.

In 1938 due to the development of the Lance Creek oil field it became necessary to have two Sunday Masses in Lusk. St. Leo's became a parish August 5, 1947. Until 1948 when Father Othmar Miller became the first resident priest, St. Leo's was served by missionary priests stationed at Douglas. The rectory next to the church was completed in April of 1953 when Father Michael McBrien was pastor.

After serving St. Leo's Parish for more than 50 years the small beautiful church was considered no longer adequate or safe, and a decision was made to build a new church on the present location of the west end of

5th street. The blessing of the cornerstone was April 5, 1967, by Monsignor O'Reilly of Casper. Open house was held May 21, 1967, fifty-four years to the month after the first church was dedicated. The futuristically designed church was the first one built in Wyoming after the architectural changes were allowed by the Vatican Council II. A steel bell tower 40-feet high surmounted by a cross later completed the church. The first Nuptial Mass performed in the new church was between Diane Rapp and William Dockery on July 29, 1967. The first Requiem Mass was for Gregory Kuhn on June 5, 1967.

In 1976 under the guidance of Father Bartholomew Svete the new rectory adjacent to the church was completed.

A total of 41 pastors have served the Lusk Catholic community beginning with Father Patrick Brophy in 1887, up to the present Father Bernard Bianco who ministers to approximately 70 area families.