

**STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS PARISH.
ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING
1910-1939
Rev. Albin Gnidovec**

[1] ST CYRIL AND METHODIUS PARISH, ROCK SPRINGS, WYO.
A number of reasons have been given, majority of them without any foundation, why Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church separated from the Church Our Lady of Sorrows. Examining the records of both churches and calling as witnesses Rev. F. J. Keller, pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, from Feb. 27, to July 28, 1910, and Rt. Rev. J. A. Duffy, then secretary of the Diocese of Cheyenne and afterwards the pastor of Kemmerer, Wyoming, the following causes brought about the separation:

- (1) of the parishes
- (2) of the churches

The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows could not accommodate since the year of 1902, all the Catholic people in Rock Springs. Bishop Keane attempted several times to induce the congregation to build a new church. The subscriptions were taken up twice, once in 1907, and the second time in 1909. The management of the Church was poor, no accounts kept for a period of four years, and a debt of over six hundred dollars (\$600.00) was against the church on February 27, 1910, when Fr. Keller was put in charge of it. In the month of April, 1910, Fr. Keller received from the Bishop, a set of plans and specifications, (now in possession of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows), together with the instructions to build a new church. A subscription was taken up at once by the pastor among the English speaking people and Italians, and by his assistant among the Slavish people. The pastor received a subscription of \$352.00, and the assistant \$6732.00. Rev. F. J. Keller disgusted with the outcome of the situation, handed his resignation to the Bishop, which was accepted on July 28, of the same year, and the only available man to

step in his place was Rev. M.A. Kennedy. He accepted the pastorate under the condition that he should not be forced into building a new church, giving his age of 68 years as an excuse. Furthermore, he demanded that the Slavish portion of the population shall be taken care of by the Rev. Anton Schiffrer, who was made pastor for that purpose on the 28th day of July, 1910, thus, a new parish has been created by Bishop Keane, who named it: Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish.

The following arrangements were made by Rt. Rev J. J. Keane on August 31, of the same year, and the following instructions given: Father Kennedy is the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, and Father Schiffrer his assistant and pastor of the parish of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, both of them to live under the same roof and both parishes use the same church for services. Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish has to turn all the “jura stolae” to the Church of Seven Dolors, together with all the donations and plate collections. To defray the expense of the house, the new parish will pay \$40.00 a month to the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Rev. Anton Schiffrer had no income, as the people had never been properly organized before this time, and, in order to make his living, he was forced to open a night school, teaching the foreigners the English language, and how to become citizens.

[2] The above instructions were kept until Fr. Kennedy’s death which occurred in April, 1911. During all this time the work of organizing the parish was going on, and the money collected for the purpose of building a new church in Rock Springs. The land was secured only through the intercession of the Bishop. After the first payment was made for the church lots, an attempt was made again to unite the two parishes. Two meetings were held for that purpose, one on July 9, 1911, presided over by Bishop Keane personally, and the other meeting on July 16, 1911, which was presided over by the Rev. James Duffy, delegated for that

purpose. The meetings were well attended, and it was decided as follows:

1. To sell the property of the church of Our Lady of Sorrows, and to build a new church, which will serve both parishes, on the north side of the tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad Company. This was done for the purpose of favoring 96 percent of the Catholics who were residing in that part of town, and the majority of them refused to send the children alone to Catechetical instructions on account of the constant danger on the tracks.
2. All nationalities shall have the same rights in the new church, and all languages used for the benefit of the people.
3. Father Schiffrer should be made pastor of both congregations.

Rt. Rev. J. J. Keane answered to these decisions and petitions of the people by sending Rev. M. J. Kelly as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, with the same instructions as were previously given to Father Kennedy. This made it imperative for the people of the new congregation to build a church of their own. The subscriptions promised in the year 1910, by the Slavish people of the church of the joint congregations were consequently used for the erection of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church.

Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish was established by Most Rev, J. J. Keane, then Bishop of Cheyenne. The name was given to the parish by the bishop in honor of the apostles of the Slavish Nations (Sts. Cyril and Methodius). All the Slavs—Slovenians, Croatians, Slovacs, Poles, Serbs, and the Greek-Catholic Ruthenians, in Rock Springs and vicinity became subjects of the newly established parish, and the Rev. Anton Schiffrer was given charge of it.

The location for the new church was secured through the assistance of the Bishop, from the Union Pacific Land Company, and the plans and

specifications were drawn and executed by D. D. Spani, Architect, were approved by the Bishop on March 17, 1912. No permission to build a separate church was given until July, 1911. The corner-stone of the church was laid by Rt. Rev. P.A. McGovern, Bishop of Cheyenne, on July 7, 1912, and the first Mass was celebrated in the basement at midnight, Dec. 25, 1912.

[3] According to the census taken during the month of Nov., there were 169 families (practical and non-practical Catholics) and nearly 2000 souls belonging to the parish. The children of the age to attend the Catechetical instructions numbered 203 between the ages of six and fourteen years. 47 children received First Holy Communion on December 25, 1912, and 122 persons, young and old, were confirmed by the Rt. Rev. P. A. McGovern on July 7, 1913. 17 persons were buried from the church, 17 marriages solemnized, and 98 children baptized during the year 1912.

The following sums of money were paid on the property:

To the Rock Springs Lumber Co., (Contract)-----	\$13,962.10
Union Pacific Land Company, (3 lots)-----	1,800.00
For Fixtures and church vestments-----	753.36
TOTAL-----	\$16,515.46

The parish had no funds on hand when the work began. A sum of \$6732.00 was subscribed by the parishioners. Due to the lack of funds, it was decided to complete only the basement part of the church, the front part of it to be used for church purposes and the back part for the pastors residence. The account book of the parish states that \$7300.00 were paid on the lots and building before January 1, 1913. Thus, leaving a debt of \$9219.46 against the parish.

Unsettled conditions of labor and imminent strikes between the years of 1912 and 1917 almost decimated the congregation. A large number of families moved away to different parts of the country, six of the families

took up homesteads in East Fork, Fremont County, eighty-six miles north of Rock Springs, and thus gave a start to the first Catholic colony in that part of the country. The settlement at present numbers 34 souls, and the pastor of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish is attending to their spiritual wants.

Statistics for 1917 show that there [were] 94 families and 1804 souls belonging to the parish. 168 children attended instructions in Catechism during the year, and 31 of them received the First Holy Communion; 3 couples were married; 57 children baptized; and 18 parishioners buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery, which is owned by both churches and governed by a board of Directors, presided over by the Bishop of the Cheyenne Diocese.

On January 1, 1917, the debts of the parish amounted to \$3700.00.

The brick rectory was built in 1920, at the cost of \$3700.00; and the handsome brick church, one of the finest in the diocese in 1925 at a cost of about \$75,000.00, exclusive of furnishings.

To Fr. Schiffrer and his devoted people is due the fact that this parish has a church and parochial residence that would be a credit to any metropolitan city. This good priest is [4] beloved by the inhabitants of Rock Springs, irrespective of their church affiliations. So generously has he labored for the welfare of his parish and community that his health has broken down under the strain, and he is at present away on a year's leave of absence.

The Pastor.

Rev. Anton Schiffrer was born on June 14, 1885, in Stara Loka, Carniola, Province of Austria, in Europe. He came into America on May 1, 1906. Completing his Theological studies in St. Paul's Seminary in Minnesota, and in Le Grand Seminaire au Montreal in Canada, he was ordained on February 17, 1910, by the Rt. Rev. P.P. Rhode, in St.

Michael's Church in South Chicago, Illinois. He became assistant pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church on March 4, 1910, and was made pastor of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church on the 28th day of July, of the same year.

[5] History of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish, Rock Springs, Wyo., from data supplied by the Rev. Albin Gnidovec, Acting Pastor.

The Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius was built by the Rev, Anton Schiffrer, pastor, and was dedicated by His Excellency, the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, December,13, 1925.

On June 6,1926, Father Schiffrer, was compelled on account of ill health to leave Rock Springs, for a lower altitude. The following priests have been acting pastors since the departure of Father Schiffrer:

Rev. John Marley, from June to October, 1926.

Rev. John Henry, from October, 1926 to August,1927.

Rev. J. L. Zaplotnik, J.C.D., from September, 1927 to July, 1930.

While Father Zaplotnik was in Europe in 1928, for four months, his place was taken by the Rev. John Henry.

Rev. Philip W. Krass from August, 1, 1930 to June, 1931.

Rev. Albin Gnidovec, from June, 1931 to present date (July, 1935).

In 1933, a new Pipe Organ was installed, and dedicated by the Rev. William J. Short, Kemmerer, on Sunday, May, 7, 1933.

The indebtedness in the year 1926, was \$20,500.00. During the past seven years, \$20,000.00, was paid off the debt. The indebtedness on June 2, 1933, was \$500.00.

The Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, on May 20,1928, confirmed a class of 150, and on October 11,1931, a class of 144.

[1939 Version]

Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius
633 BRIDGER AVENUE
ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING
March 8, 1939

HISTORICAL DATA FOR THE PARISH SINCE 1925.

1. PRIESTS in charge of the parish:

The Rev. Anton Schiffrer, founder of the parish left June 6, 1926.

Rev. John Marley, June 13, 1926 to October 1926.

Rev. John Henry, October 31, 1926 to August 31, 1927.

Rev. John L. Zaplotnik, Sept. 1, 1927 to July 31, 1930

Rev. Philip W. Krass, August 1930

Rev. Martin Kennedy, Sept. 7, 1930 to June 21, 1931.

Rev. Albin Gnidovec, June 28, 1931 to . . .

2. Dates of Confirmations and number confirmed:

May 20, 1928 - 150

October 11, 1931 - 144

May 27, 1934 - 125

May 22, 1938 - 165

3. In 1938: Baptisms - 38; Marriages - 11

4. Missions given:

May 1929 (Slovenian); January 1934(Slovak); March 1934 (English - Slovenian); February 1936(Slovak); April 1936 (Croatian); June 1937 (English).

5. Since July 1938 the Holy Mass is said two times a month, on a weekday, in Pinedale.

6. The church building, as it is (upper part) was erected during the year 1925 and dedicated December 13, 1925 by His Excellency Most Rev. P.

A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, Wyoming.
In 1933 (for Easter) a Kilgen Pipe Organ was installed.

7. Money in the treasury December 31, 1938: \$10,232.35.

8. A parochial school for Rock Springs is contemplated.

9. Number of Holy Communions (estimated):

1928: 3880; 1929: 4400; 1930: 4500; 1931: 7100; 1932: 8300;
1933:10,300; 1934: 13,500; 1935: 11,000; 1936:11,000; 1937: 10,300;
1938: 12,100.

[Note. Father Gnidovec typed a 1933 draft, "Historical data of Sts. Cyril and Methodius' parish of Rock Springs, Wyo. Since 1926," which contained lists, dates, and information repeated or corrected in the 1935 and 1935 versions and so is not included (see scan RS SCM 1925-1939.pdf). The 1939 summary is included. These two versions were typed by Shaun Jones of Wheatland. Ed.]