

History of St. John The Baptist Catholic Church - Buffalo, Wyoming 1880-2000

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC CHURCH Buffalo, Wyoming 1880-2000

Information taken from histories compiled by Father John O'Shea, S.J., and Anna Silva Washut with additional information and editing by Sue C. Myers

Early History

Although it wasn't until 1880 that the first Masses were celebrated in Buffalo, the Catholic faith was evident as early as 1851 when Rev. Pierre Jean DeSmet came to this area to work as a missionary to various Indian tribes.

Father DeSmet, a Jesuit priest missionary from Antwerp, Belgium, made his way from St. Louis, Missouri to the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain area in 1840. On July 5 of that year, he offered the first Mass in what is now the State of Wyoming at the Green River Rendezvous near the present town of Daniel. His missionary work was cut short as he was soon called back to manage the affairs of the Jesuit Order at St. Louis. However, he made seven more visits to the Rocky Mountain area during the 1850s and 1860s as an agent for the Federal Government, and it was during one of these visits that he traveled through northern Wyoming, and on Aug. 10, 1851, he offered Mass north of Buffalo near the lake which bears his name.

The Rev. Michael F. Cassidy was the first priest to serve the Catholics of Buffalo on a regular basis. In 1880 he would come up from Rawlins twice a year to celebrate Mass at Fort McKinney (now known as Veterans' Home of Wyoming).

The first resident priest was Rev. Henry Bex. A congregation of eight or ten attended Mass in the dining room of the John A. Fischer home on North Main where Reimann Oil station stood in 2000. Later, Mass was held in a log school house which was situated across Main Street where the Hersey Apts. were located in 2000. For the most part, Father Bex made his home with the Fischer family.

In the year 1885, six lots were secured from J .W. Hart, and the title conveyed by warranty deed to Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha, Nebraska. Before the end of the year, a wooden church was erected with no debt to the parish. This first church was known as St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and was welcomed wholeheartedly by the Catholic community. Previously, the closest Catholic church was in Billings, Montana.

It was not long until the needs of the parish had outgrown the little frame church, so in 1888 under the guidance of Rev. E .J. Engelbrecht, work was begun on a new brick church. This church was built on the site of the present stone church, and a mortgage was placed upon the property to secure the debt. The old church was rented as a home for awhile and was finally sold to Jeff McRae who dismantled it and moved it away. Father Engelbrecht was pastor here until December 1888. For the next four years, Sheridan was attended as a mission of Buffalo.

In 1892, the Rev. C. Scollen came to Buffalo to serve as pastor until 1894. During the years from 1897 to 1907, Buffalo was a mission church attended from Sheridan. Because of neglect from non-use, the walls of the pretty little brick church started cracking, and the building was considered unsafe for public use. It was condemned and torn down, the bricks sold to raise funds for a new frame church.

Priests who served the Buffalo parish during the period from 1897-1906 were Fr. G.F. Dillon, Fr. Joseph Accorsini, Fr. Sasse, and Fr. P.F. Murphy.

1907-1949

In 1907, Father John Duffy secured from Gilkey Brothers the four lots, where the present Catholic Hall complex now stands, for \$425. (The title to the old property had become somewhat confused, and it seemed wise to acquire new property at the time.) In response to an appeal by Father Duffy, the sum of \$3000 was subscribed for a new church which would carry the name of "Church of St. John the Baptist." This appeal was ably assisted by Bryan Long who also gave the largest single subscription in the form of \$250. Many non-Catholics contributed to the fund, and only four of the many who were asked declined.

The frame church was begun by Father Pendergast and completed by the Rev. Francis J. Keller who served as pastor from January 1908 to January 1910. With the completion of the building, a debt of only \$600 remained. The new church could house about 125 people and was complete with choir loft for many singers. Msgr. John Meyer recalled offering Mass in this church on several occasions in the 1940s and was impressed with

the number of daily communicants as well as people frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Although it can be assumed that Bishop Lenihan administered confirmation prior to the arrival of Fr. Keller, the first recorded such event occurred on June 5, 1908 when 14 persons were confirmed by Bishop James J. Keane of Cheyenne. (There are no records of marriages, baptisms or deaths prior to the pastorate of Fr. Keller with the exception of one baptism on July 29, 1888.)

Succeeding Father Keller was the Rev. T.D. Lynch who, after a short term, was succeeded by the Rev. Patrick Long. Following his departure, Buffalo was attended by the Rev. Henry Schellinger from Carneyville, and the Rev. John Duffy from Sheridan until the arrival of the Rev. Fridolin Huessle in August, 1912. In his notes, Father Huessle wrote that the church was in bad condition and poorly furnished. A general meeting was held shortly thereafter with John Fenusz, C. Backer and Charles Johnson elected temporary trustees. They immediately went to work cleaning and making necessary repairs to the property.

That fall, a Men's Society was formed to raise money to meet church expenses. Seventeen members attended, Mr. Perl Fisher was appointed president and Mr. John Esponda, vice president. Because there was no money to pay the fire insurance, Rev. Huessle borrowed the necessary \$48.75 with the understanding that he was to be paid back within 12-15 months. He served as pastor until 1914.

It was also in 1914 that St. Francis Altar Society was organized by the women of the congregation, and following Fr. Huessle's departure, they were largely responsible for the temporal affairs of the parish. They organized and implemented many social and religious activities, among which was the annual St. Patrick's Day turkey dinner, one of the community's most anticipated events for years. These ladies were also noted for their bake sales and bazaars.

Through the years, St. Francis Altar Society members offered their time and talents to furnishing the parish house for various priests, cleaning the church, making altar linens and vestments as needed and to such other tasks as they were called upon to perform. This Altar Society remained active until the late 1970s. In 200 the Catholic ladies' organization was called St. John's Council of Catholic Women. affiliated with the State and National Councils of Catholic Women.

From 1914 to 1916, Father Duffy again came over from Sheridan to serve the Buffalo parish on occasion, holding services Sunday evenings and offering Mass Monday mornings. In March of 1916, Buffalo became a mission of Newcastle. Mass was said on the first Sunday of every month by the Rev. James A. Boland and Rev. John O. Laughlin. However, the church continued to function under the guidance of the Trustees, Harley Fischer, John Esponda, Bishop Patrick McGovern and Vicar General Hugh Commiskey (the latter two were represented by proxy by Fr. John T. Nicholson). The Altar Society was in charge of the church finances.

According to church records, 20 persons were confirmed by Bishop Patrick A. McGovern on June 13, 1917. His trip to Buffalo was on a Courtesy Pass issued by C. B. Duffy in behalf of the Wyoming Railway Company.

By 1917, St. John's parish was growing in numbers with the arrival of homesteaders in the community. The League of the Sacred Heart was organized that same year and the result was a noticeable increase in the number of monthly communions.

In September, 1917, Bishop McGovern authorized the Rev. John T. Nicholson to become resident pastor in Buffalo and to serve Gillette, Arvada and Clearmont as missions. On the first Sunday of October, a subscription fund to construct a new rectory was started with approximately \$1,400 subscribed. The largest subscriptions were given by John Esponda (\$500) and Bryan Long (\$200). Father Nicholson arrived in Buffalo the latter part of October and work on the new rectory started in early November. Hackert Bros., came in to work on the building which was ready for occupancy by February, 1918. More than \$3000 had already been collected in the subscription drive.

The old church property (six lots where the present church now stands) was conveyed by warranty deed on June 3, 1918, to St. John the Baptist Church upon payment of all expenses, namely taxes and interest which amounted to \$185. A mortgage, held by Mrs. Joseph Knight of Cheyenne, remained against the property.

During the summer of 1919, the church had a new bell. This bell, which cost \$154, was donated by the Joseph Hakert family in honor of Andrew Hakert who lost his life in France in service of the United States. This bell was moved to the new church in 1950.

With the completion of the rectory in Buffalo and secure in the assurance that the parish was functioning smoothly, Father Nicholson directed his attention to the missions. The Church of St. Mary in Clearmont was built in 1919. The principal donor was Miss Agnes Wynne of New York who gave \$1500 to the church with the request that it be erected in

memory of her sister, Mary Theresa Wynne. Miss Wynne also donated the altar linens and a painting of the crucifixion. A set of Stations of the Cross was donated by Miss Wynne's nephew, George Kerwin. Martin Etchart, Manuel Orneles and Joseph Borges donated the statues; Mr. and Mrs. Stone gave a missal; and Mrs. W. Ward provided the organ. The church was dedicated by Bishop Patrick A. McGovern on Aug. 17, 1919.

The church of St. Catherine was also built in Arvada. The lot was purchased from the Arvada Townsite Company for \$50 and the Catholic Church Extension Society donated \$1000 towards the construction of the church. It was completed that same year and dedicated by Bishop McGovern on Aug. 13, 1919. The total remaining debt of \$600 was paid off on June 4, 1926.

Another mission attended at that time was Kaycee where the first Mass was celebrated on Jan. 30, 1920, by Father Nicholson at the home of Mr. William Loogstyn.

Before the transfer of Father Nicholson in January, 1921, new cement sidewalks had replaced the old boardwalks in front of the church and rectory as well as all approaches to the church. The cost of the project was nearly \$200. Rev. John J. O'Connor was appointed to take the place of Father Nicholson who was called to Laramie to take the position of Vicar General. Father O'Connor was the first priest to offer Mass in the district between Kaycee and Salt Creek. This took place on Aug. 23, 1921 at the home of Patrick O'Connor. The Rev. Edward McDonnell succeeded Father O'Connor who was transferred to Evanston in January, 1923. On Oct. 16, 1923, a class of 11 was confirmed by Bishop McGovern.

The Rev. John Brady was transferred to Buffalo from Newcastle on Jan. 19, 1924. Under Father Brady's direction, a concrete retaining wall was built in the basements of the rectory and the church. Title to the six lots of church property was cleared with payment of \$300 to Mrs. Knight on May 27, 1925.

In October, 1926, the parish of St. John the Baptist was divided when a new parish established at Gillette. Arvada became a mission of that town, as did Rozet, which had formerly been part of that vast area covered by the Newcastle priest.

Father Brady celebrated Mass for the first time in Sussex in April of 1928. Mass was celebrated in the community hall with about 17 persons present, four receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

Diocesan statistics show that Bishop McGovern administered Confirmation in Buffalo in 1928 to a class of 12; in 1931 to a class of 32; in 1934 to a class of 34; and in 1937 to a class of 30. In 1938, there were 15 baptisms and four marriages performed.

The little organ which had been donated to the church eventually wore out and a replacement was provided by the Finney family. However the replacement could not hold a tune as the bellows were leaking air. Mrs. Finney took the organ to Anna Washut who took the instrument apart, and with the help of a local shoemaker, obtained some soft thin leather with which she patched the bellows. For good measure, she gave the organ a good cleaning inside and out, and it served the church well for many years. It was later moved into the new stone church until a new organ was purchased and installed.

In 1936, John Camino and Tom Villnave were appointed Trustees of the church.

After serving as parish priest at St. John's for 19 years, Father Brady was succeeded by the Rev. Alphonsus H. Grannan who arrived here from Casper on March 10, 1943. Father Grannan was zealous regarding Eucharist and frequent Holy Communion. By the fall of that year, attendance at daily Mass and the number of communicants had increased noticeably. Every day, the steeple bell was rung and most often by the faithful sacristan, Henry Schlieff. During the fall and winter seasons of 1943 and 1944, Father Grannan conducted Release Time Religious Education Classes attended by both Catholic and non-Catholic students. When a Federal ruling forbade religious training in connection with public schools, these classes were discontinued.

At this time, Buffalo was small enough that one Mass could be said each Sunday, but as the parish grew, two Masses became necessary. In 1946, Father Grannan obtained special faculties to trinate, that is, to say three Masses in one day. Thereafter, Mass was said on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at Clearmont.

In 1943, two missions were conducted by Father Kenneth Hoffman of the Diocesan Missionaries of Chicago, and there were also 19 baptisms and 1 marriage.

Parish records show that in 1944, 16 baptisms were performed at St. John's along with 2 marriages, and 1 convert was welcomed. In the next 5 years, church records show 154 baptisms, 28 marriages and 38 converts with 31 persons being confirmed in 1945 and 44 in 1949.

Bishop McGovern had dreamed for many years of an artistic brick church for the Buffalo parish, and in 1943 he ordered that building such a church be their goal. The Bishop's policy was to demand at least 50% of the monies to be had and solid plans in place for the eventual payment of the debt.

Endeavoring to fulfill this expectation, members of the parish met and pledged themselves large sums of money towards building a new and better House of God. The first contribution came from Mrs. Richard H. Kennedy, a non-Catholic who died in 1937, leaving a bequest of \$500 to be used towards the building of a new Catholic Church. The John Belus family came forward next with a \$300 donation, inspiring others to give. And so the building fund slowly grew.

March 3, 1944, Count and Countess Thorne-Rider deeded their property on South Main Street to the Catholic Church, hoping the future church could be located at that site. However, because the Thorne-Riders wished to be able to occupy the premises at any time until their death, it was deemed inadvisable to use their property for a new church. The Count and Countess then proposed a contribution of \$25,000 to the building fund.

A building committee, composed of Tom Villnave, John Camino, Dr. W.J. Knebel, Daniel K. Ahern, John Belus, Frank Schmitz, George F. Washut, Bernard Marton and Gaston Irigaray, began an intense campaign which resulted in a large number of donations within a short period of time.

1949-1950

In the spring of 1949, John K. Monroe, an architect who had planned many buildings in the Rocky Mountain area, was asked to draw up a new set of plans for a church. A sketch of the proposed church was hung in the vestibule of the old church, drawing many interesting comments and additional donations. The plans were approved. Shortly thereafter, the ladies of the parish held a bake sale and tea, the proceeds of \$367 deposited into the building fund.

Bids were called for and opened on Aug. 1, 1949, at the former Thorne-Rider home. Low bid of \$105,358 was submitted by Husman Bros., contractors from Sheridan. However, this bid was still too high so a lower bid was sought. Mr. Husman then presented a revised bid of \$70,974. For this amount, his company would build the main body of the church up to the roof. The parish would be responsible for excavating, pouring the footings, foundations, and floor, installing windows, shingling, doing the electrical work, painting; hanging doors, laying tile flooring, and other finish work.

On Aug. 17, 1949, a meeting was again held at the Thorne-Rider home, and after much discussion, it was decided to accept the challenge. The men agreed to furnish labor as needed; the women would keep the men happy with nourishing lunches.

Two days later, Bishop McGovern agreed with the plan and that same afternoon, Father Grannan blessed the ground on which the future church would stand. So, after many years of false starts and set backs, a new church was finally becoming a reality.

New committees formed included:

Building--John Belus, Jack O'Leary, Ralph Perry, Ben Leppink and Tom Villnave

Finance--Bill Perry, John Camino, Dr. W.J. Knebel, William Kirven, Ray Thorburn, John Marton, Martin Camino and Bob Perry

Attorney--William Kirven

Printing--Frank Hicks

The surveying was done by Civil Engineer Clyde Wood, who donated his time and labor, and E.O. Eder, who donated a part of his. Lige Miller, a non-Catholic, donated his dragline and time (the usual cost being \$10 per hour) and dug the basement and foundation, and the trenches for gas and water lines. Plummer McCrady, a local feed merchant, donated his truck which was driven the first day by Father Grannan and the second day by Miller's son, James, who also donated his time.

The first pouring of footings took place on Sept. 17 with a large crew on hand to help with the work. As promised, lunches were served by the ladies of the parish.

The first concentrated financial drive after the building was started took place in November and was considered a success, netting \$8,183.64 in six weeks.

As the new church began to take shape, a parishioner was inspired to write the following poem:

Shadows of the Future

Stone by stone, row by row

I watch the House of God begin to grow

With work from many hands.

As I gaze, I do not see

The jumbled maze, but the church that is to be

How strong and sturdy it stands!

A church to last throughout the years

To share the joys, sorrows, strife and tears
All within the fold
Wherein Christ reigns as King of Kings
Revered and adored above all things as in the days of old.
A stately cross atop the spire--
Slim finger pointing ever higher
To God upon His throne,
The Cross arms outflung so wide--
Entreating all to come inside
And claim Him as their own.
Stained windows wide, through which the sun
Touches the head of everyone.
Like a benediction from above
I see the steps, the oaken door
Through which the people, more and more,
Come to seek God-given love.
As I gaze in reverie
Happy children pass by me
As the bells begin to peal,
And as I silently reflect
I see them enter and genuflect
To a God whose Presence is real.
The heavy door swings back in place,
And once again I'm face to face
With a world of reality.
The half-built church stands there,
Like a silent, unfinished prayer
To the Blessed Trinity.
-- November, 1949

On October 9, 1949, the Daughters of Isabella was formed with 47 charter members. The first officers were: Madeline Harriet, worthy regent; Meriam Hicks, honorary past regent; Doris Smith, vice regent; Mildred Payne, chancellor; Anita Smith, recording secretary; Rosemary Wilcynski, financial secretary; Virginia Knebel, custodian; Marie Buzzell, treasurer; Jacqueline Perry, scribe; Ann Smith, monitor; Nancy Hackert, first guide; Annette Rangunot, second guide; Jean Kern, outer guard; Marilyn Zeiser, inner guard; Mary Louise Curutchet, banner bearer; Mary O'Leary, Grayce Miller and Mildred Ahern, trustees; and Father Grannan, chaplain.

The Daughters of Isabella immediately began to raise funds for the building fund. The most successful event was a benefit auction in February 1950. The John Belus family donated a steer for the raffle, members of the parish donated items for the bake sale and needlework booth; lunches were sold all day; coffee was free. When everything was totaled up, the sum of \$3,940 was deposited into the building fund account.

With the focus on the new church, the needs of the rectory had been neglected, but during Lent of that year, four Daughters of Isabella members, Stella Inchauspe, Minnie Anxo, Dorothy Larramendy and Mildred Payne, using funds allowed by the Diocese, went to work. They painted some of the rooms, laid linoleum, purchased new curtains and had a new cabinet sink installed. That was just a start. A few months later, while Father Grannan was on retreat, some parishioners went together to purchase a new bedroom suite, installed a built-in medicine chest and carpeted the stairway. When the priest returned, the Daughters of Isabella gave him a linen shower which resulted in a good supply of sheets, pillow cases, towels, wash cloths, blankets, etc. The rectory was now ready to welcome the expected influx of visiting priests.

The Daughters of Isabella accomplished much for the church, both socially and spiritually, until it was dropped in the late 1950s and St. John's Altar Society was formed. St. Francis Altar Society also continued to function.

In definite contrast to the devastating winter of 1948-49, the winter of 1949-50 was quite open so work on the church continued to progress. One of the workers was heard to comment "The Good Lord surely knew how badly we needed a new church so He gave us this mild weather."

When the spring of 1950 arrived and it became warm enough for steady work, the corner of Snider Street and Lobban Avenue was bustling with activity. It seemed like anyone with a little spare time put it to good use at the building site, and this included a number of teenagers.

Among those present nearly every day were the two church trustees, John Camino and Dr. W. J. Knebel, and some or all of the building committee. They joined the men pouring cement for the basement, foundation and floor and worked side-by-side with other men running the mixer for the cement that would hold together the rock that rose row upon row. Frank Prosinski, who worked for Husman Bros., recalled that the hand-cut rock came from a quarry south of town in Crazy Woman Canyon. He was involved in mixing the mud and has vivid memories of watching buckets of mud being hauled by rope up to workers on the bell tower.

Father Grannan was a “hands-on” priest who spent as much time as he could work with the labor force at the building site. This dedication, coupled with his natural ability to make friends, resulted in a number of non-Catholics contributing their time and efforts to the construction project. Among these was Emil Hecht who was heard to say, “If the Catholics had more priests like Father Grannan, there’d be new churches all over Wyoming!”

Father Grannan also became close friends with Ray Lawrence who submitted the low bid for the plumbing and heating of the new church. This friendship resulted in Ray being baptized into the Catholic Faith in 1953. He was only one of Father Grannan’s many converts.

As work progressed, different ways were devised to raise additional funds. Among these was a blanket raffle, sponsored by the Junior Choir with Louis Frey donating the blanket, and a series of breakfasts given by the parish ladies.

On June 18, 1950, Father DeSmet Council #3332, Knights of Columbus was organized with 45 charter members. Officers were Frank Hicks, grand knight; Bryon Nelson, deputy grand knight; Dr. W.J. Knebel, chancellor; Bill Perry and Tom Smith, recorders; Ray Thorburn, financial secretary; John Marton, treasurer; Bill Wilcynski, lecturer; Bill Kirven, advocate; John Camino, Tom Villnave and Remy Sturbeaux, Trustees; and Fr. A.H. Grannan, chaplain. Other members included C.B. Belus, M. Camino, L.A. Frey, P.H. Harriet, V.A. Hunter, J. P. Irigaray, C .W. Johnson, J.A. Knebel, B.J. Leppink, J.A. Leppink, R.J. Leppink, C.B. Marton, J. F. Marton, V. Maxwell, D. Wamhoff, A. Anxo, J. P. Belus, J. Curutchet, S. Curutchet, P. Etcheverria, G. Irigaray, P. Larramende, B.A. Leppink, M. Michelena, D.C. O’Leary, R.D. Perry, H. Slief, T.J. Smith, A.W. Verstagen, and G.W. Washut.

Another highlight of that summer of 1950 was a visit by Bishop McGovern who had expressed an ardent desire to see the church, and in spite of having been very ill, he came. The new Coadjutor Bishop of Cheyenne, Hubert M. Newell, drove him up from Cheyenne the first part of August and both were well pleased with the progress. At that time Bishop Newell remarked that “perhaps with the addition of a new roof or two, this church will still be intact in 500 years.”

The next few weeks were spent putting the finishing touches on the church. A few “bobby-soxers” – Nancy Hicks, Georgia and Connie Washut and Theresa Rangunot – along with Mildred Payne, Fr. Grannan and Dr. W.J. Knebel, puttied all the nail holes in the ceiling beams. Remy Sturbeaux and Tom Villnave put in many hours painting and

staining as well as much of the finish carpentry work. One of their projects was to build and finish a new altar railing before which the faithful knelt to receive Communion until the sanctuary was remodeled in the late 1970s.

Considering the number of people who contributed their time and talents towards the construction and finishing of the new church, it could be considered a miracle that no one was seriously injured (although Ray Thorburn remembered a close call when Sturbeaux accidentally dropped a hammer from the bell tower, narrowly missing Villnave who was working below).

The bells that were hung in the bell tower included the one donated by the Hakert family and another given by the Belus family, but the third, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Perry, came about in a rather unorthodox manner. The train, which had run between Buffalo and Clearmont for a number of years, had finally gone bankrupt. The steam engine lay idle and neglected, its bell silent. Father Grannan suggested to Bill that the church tower would make a wonderful home for that bell so Bill, who was involved with settling up the railroad's affairs, enlisted the help of Tom Villnave in dismantling the bell from the engine and transporting it to the church.

As the new church neared completion, a card was placed in the back of the old church stating that now was the time for donations of needed articles and furnishings if anyone cared to do so. The response was overwhelming with most contributions given as memorials to loved ones. These included:

PEWS

Rev. Fr. A.H. Grannan Gabriel Rangunot Family Dr. W.J. Knebel Family Mr. and Mrs. Simon Harriet V.S. Maxwell Family Bernard Marton Family Martin Michelena Family Mrs. Dominica Esponda Herman Kraen Family Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Sarantha Martin Pradere Family & Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Johnson Mr. and Mrs. Peter Urrizaga D.C. O'Leary Family Mrs. Joseph F. Washut & Family John Iberlin Family Mr. and Mrs. Arnaud Curutchet Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Perry Mr. and Mrs. Louis Frey Mr. and Mrs. George F. Washut John Taberna Family John Belus Family (2) Rev. Fr. Herbert Kraus Mr. and Mrs. Russell Miller Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Elsom Mr. and Mrs. Bill Perry & Mike Hakert Family & Mr. Bob Perry W. J. Kirven Family Mrs. L.A. Webb Mrs. John Camino & Mrs. Dean Smith Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hicks

Andrew A. Belus John Arno Family
Rev. Frs. Meyer, Kraus, Hmelovsky, & Mrs. Kate Brown
Grannan & McCormick Martin Camino Family
Antone E. Silva Guy Berry
Peter J. Camino Family

MAIN ALTAR.....Mrs. Angela Silva SIDE ALTARS.....Angela Silva
MAIN ALTAR CRUCIFIX.....Henry Slief Mr & Mrs. Frank Brehl
TABERNACLE.....Arnold Verstagen
CANOPY & BACKDROP....Catherine Marton
STATIONS.....Earl Gresh PATEN.....Mrs. Dominica Esponda
Thomas Villnave BAPTISMAL SET.....Marcel Sanchez
COLLECTIONS BASKETS.....Jean Auzqui SANCTUARY LAMP.....Vernon Hunter
PYX.....Mrs. Gabriel Rangunot MISSAL STAND.....Elizabeth
Horn
STOLES.....John Belus Family ALTAR BOY CASSOCKS.....Henry Slief
ALTAR BOY SURPLICES.....Mr. & Mrs. Roy Smith BURSES.....Mrs. William B.
Long HOLY WATER FONTS.....Janice & Jerrold Payne MISSALS.....Main altar...John
Belus Family
Mr. & Mrs W.J. WilczynskiSide altar...Dominica Esponda
VOTIVE STANDS.....Cyril Belus, John Belus Family
Mrs. Emelia Fischer

CHURCH ARTICLES

Paintings.....Mrs. Les Snow Candlesticks...Main altar...John Belus Family
Statues.....Blessed Virgin.....Mrs. E.A. Hill ..Catafulque..Mrs. Catherine
BrownSt. Joseph..... Mrs. E.A. Hill Ambry.....John Belus Family
..St. John the Baptist.....John Camino Prie Dieu.....Noeline Esponda
..St. Teresa Group.....Virgil Hill John Arthur Esponda
Altar Coverings....main altar.....John Belus Family Organ.....Mr. & Mrs. Santiago
Curuchet
....Ave Maria.....Mrs. William B. Long Junior Curuchet
..Ite Ad Joseph...Mr.& Mrs. Frank Brehl Mr. & Mrs. Jean Curutchet Christmas Crib
Set..... Mr.& Mrs. Pete Etcheverria Frank Arrechea
Bells.....Joseph Hakert, Sr. Mrs. Robert Leath John Belus Family Mrs.
Robert Patch
Mr. & Mrs. William Perry Altar Linens.....Mr. & Mrs. Gaston Irigaray
Communion Railing.....Mr. & Mrs. Remy Sturbeaux Ciborium.....Mrs.
Dominica Esponda

Thomas Villnave Altar Chimes.....Mr. & Mrs. Peter Harriet
Benediction Monstrance.....Mr. & Mrs. Gaston Irigaray
Sanctuary Chairs.....Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Villnave

GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The largest single contribution towards the new church was \$12,500, a gift from Bishop McGovern. Another large contribution was \$6,542.36 from the Belus family. The Belus family not only gave in money, but also in time and labor. Whenever help was needed, they were among the first to volunteer; sometimes just two or three of the boys would appear, but at other times, the entire male part of the family would leave the ranch and appear to help.

BUILDING FUND CONTRIBUTORS

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Abrams Barbara Aegerter Mr & Mrs. Carl Aegerter
Mr. & Mrs. D .K. Ahern John J. Allen Altar & Rosary Society
Refugio Alquin Mrs. Bob Anderson Dorothy Andrada
Mr. & Mrs. Tel Andrada Mr. and Mrs. Albert Anxo Anonymous
Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Archuletta Mr. & Mrs. Pete Ardans Mr. & Mrs. John Arno
Mary Lou Arno Frank Arrechea Mr. & Mrs. Arnaud Auzqui
Mitchell Auzqui Pete Auzqui Mr. & Mrs. Jim Balkenbush Cong. Frank Barrett Mrs C .A.
Bates Mr. & Mrs. Doyle Bates
Kenneth Bates Antone L. Bedaf Andrew A. Belus
Anne Belus Cyril Belus Helen Belus (Sr. St. Luke)
Jacob Belus Mr. & Mrs. John Belus Joseph Belus
Phillip Belus Stephen Belus Tom Belus
Val Belus Louie Benchie Guy Berry
Pierre Berterretche Michael Bereterretche Joseph Bertiz
Bernard Bidabeherre Mr. & Mrs. Baptiste Bidonde Mr. & Mrs. John Bilbao
Joseph Bilbao Ernest Blasik Joseph Bocek
Michael Bonapelts Arnaud Borda Mr. & Mrs. Pete Bordarrampe
Mrs. Marie Borges F. C. Bradley Mrs. Frank Brehl
John Brown Mrs. Kate Brown Francis Budkley
George Buckley John Buckley Mr & Mrs. Pete Buckley
Robert Buckley Eldon Buell Harold Buell
Mrs. Miles Buell Ralph Buell Buffalo Auto Supply
Buffalo Theatre Corp. Buffalo Town Hall Mary Burke
Ernest Bur Enos Butron Mr. & Mrs. George Butler
Mrs. Dale Buzzell Dean Byers Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Byrtus

Mrs. George Calvert Mr. & Mrs. John Camino Mr. & Mrs. Martin Camino
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Camino Pierre Caricaburu Mr. & Mrs. Pat Cavanaugh
Mr. & Mrs. August Chabot Frank Choate H.H.H. Clark
Mrs. Ray Clark Mr. & Mrs. Ramon Colin Mrs. Fred Gray
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Corazza Vincent Corbett Mr. & Mrs. Tony Cortez
G. R. Coulson Mrs. Merle Crews Bing Crosby
Mrs. Josephine Crutchfield Antone Cubialde Joseph Cubialde
Mr. & Mrs. Arnaud Curuchet Mr. & Mrs. Jean Curuchet Pierre Curuchet
Mrs. & Mrs. Santiago Curuchet Clara Daley Estate Daughters of Isabella
Abe DeMoore Jean Denand Diamond Lumber Co.
Mrs. Ray Dixon William G. Dooley J. W. Dorman
Arthur Dow Mr. & Mrs. William Dubois Jean Elgart
Albert Elizalde Mrs. J. D. E Isom Gratien Emateguy
John Emateguy Mr. & Mrs. John A. Esponda Mrs. Dominica Esponda
Noeline Esponda Mr. & Mrs. John Etchemendy Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Etchemendy
Mr & Mrs. Pete Etchemendy Mr. & Mrs. Pete Etcheverria

Louis Falxa Mrs. Martin Falxa Mr. & Mrs. John Ferrell
Antone Fischer Mr. & Mrs. Charles Fischer Mrs. Emelia Fischer
Flint Funeral Home Mr. & Mrs. Don Foltz Mr. & Mrs. Rudy Frankovic
Mr. & Mrs. Lou Frey Frickey's Sheet Metal Robert C. Frison
William Galt Mrs. John Gammon Joe Garber
Jean Gariador Mr. & Mrs. Frank Garro Pete Gastanbide
Mr. & Mrs. James Gatchell Mrs. Pete Georgen Mr. & Mrs. Frank Gleason
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Goryl Mr. & Mrs. Paul Goryl Mr. & Mrs. Tony Goryl
Mrs. Rolla Gosney Domingo Goyhenex Rev. Fr. A. H. Grannan
Mrs. R. L. Greene Mr. & Mrs. Michel Guesanburu Mr. & Mrs. Burton Hakert
Mrs. Frances Hakert George Hakert Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Hakert
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Hakert Mr. & Mrs. William Hakert Robert Hancock
Mrs. Catherine Harriet Mr. & Mrs. Martin Harriet Mr. & Mrs. Pete Harriet
Mr. & Mrs. Simon Harriet Mr. & Mrs. Simon U. Harriet Mr. & Mrs. James Hasquet
Mrs. F. L. Healey Ralph Hepp Vic Herzelle
Mrs. Rosa Hettinger Mr. & Mrs. Frank Hicks Dr. Lee Hileman
Earl Hillard Ernest Hillard Rev. Fr. Cyril Hmelovsky
Mrs. Carl Hoaglan Mr. & Mrs. Leo Hollcroft Mrs. William Holland
Elizabeth Horn Mr. & Mrs. Dan Howells Vernon Hunter
Mr. & Mrs. John Iberlin Mary Louise Iberlin Mrs. E. A. III
Harry Imle Mr. & Mrs. Sauveur Inchauspe Mr. & Mrs. Jean Indart
Mr. & Mrs. Garton Irigaray Jean Irigaray Uncle Joe Irigaray
Mr. & Mrs. Josph Irigaray Mr. & Mrs. C.W. Johnson J. H. Johnstone

Charles R. Jones Mrs. Marvin Jones Mr. & Mrs. Francis Joubert
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Joy D. M. Keliher Mr. & Mrs. E.V. Kelly
Mrs. R. M. Kennedy Mr. & Mrs. John Kern Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Killeen
Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Kirven Dr. & Mrs. W. J. Knebel Knights of Columbus
Joseph Kos Mr. & Mrs. Herman Kraen Mrs. Louis Kraen
Elizabeth Krail Rev. Fr. Herbert Kraus Martin Kumor
Jean LaCosta Jean P. Landa Harold Larkin
Mr. & Mrs. Pete Larramendy Frank Laur Mr. & Mrs. James Laurie
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Lawrence Mrs. Robert Leath Bernard A. Leppink
Alvin Lohse Mrs. Alvin Lohse Mrs. William B. Long
Mr. & Mrs. A. L. Long Pierre Louisanna Fred Luro
Mrs. George Mabbott Mr. & Mrs. John Malli Neil Manning
Mary Maplethorpe Bernard Martirena Domingo Martirena
Joe Marin Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Marton Mr. & Mrs. Charles Marton
James Marton Mr. & Mrs. John Marton Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Maxwell
James McCarthy Mr. & Mrs. John McClusky Rev. Fr. W.J. McCormick
P. G. McCrady Jake Mehalek Lige & Jim Miller
Mrs. Arthur Myers Rev. Fr. John Meyers Candida Michelena
Joseph Michelena Mr. & Mrs. Martin Michelena Mr. & Mrs. Santiago Michelena
Mr. & Mrs. Russell Miller Dr. & Mrs. E.L. Misner Pete Molimos
Mrs. John Mueller Mr. & Mrs. James Murphy Mrs. H. D. Narans
Mr. & Mrs. Byron Nelson Mrs. Marian Nelson Dr. Thomas Nicholas
Mrs. Ray Nix Mr. & Mrs. Paul Nussbacher Pete Nussbacher
Leo J. O'Brien William Olah Mr. & Mrs. D.C. O'Leary
Joseph C. O'Mahoney Roger Otsarango Joe Otaegui
Frank Otheguy Dr. & Mrs. L.B. Otken A.R. Page
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Pannian Mrs. Robert Patch Mrs. Allen Payne
Florence Payseno Mrs. Homer Payseno Robert Payseno
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Pelloux,Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Perry Robert Perry
Mr. & Mrs. William Perry Jean B. Petrau Jean B. Petrissana
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Pradere David Price Mr. & Mrs. Frank Prosinki
Manuel Quevas Nora Quinn Mrs. Gabrial Rangunot
Raymond Rangunot Andy Raycher Mr. & Mrs. Fermin Reculusa
Henry Reinbold James A. Rennie Robert E. Rhinesmith
Louise Robinson Mrs. Robert Robinson C. D. Roehm
C. C. Rollman Mrs. H. P. Rothwell Salt Creek Freighways
Marcel Sanchez Waneta Santistevan Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Sarantha
Frank Schmnitz Estate Mr. & Mrs. Pat Scullen Shell Oil Company
Mrs. Angela Silva Mr. & Mrs. Antone Silva Antonio S. Silva
Manuel Silva Andy Skurok Mrs. Mary Skurok Henry Slief Mrs. Dean H. Smith Mrs.

George Smith

John P. Smith Mrs. J. "Tud" Smith Mrs. Roy W. Smith

Mr. & Mrs. T. J. Smith Raymond Snelling Mr. & Mrs. L. E. Snow

St. Mary's Church, Clearmont Mrs. Catherine Staggs Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Steigleman

Mr. & Mrs. Walter Stewart Mr. & Mrs. Remy Sturbeaux John Taberna

Louis Taberna Mr. & Mrs. C. Tarbet Mr. & Mrs. Leo Tass

Mrs. Robert Thoeming Mrs. John Thorburn Mr. & Mrs. Ray Thorburn

Mrs. Robert Titus Tourist Donation Virgil H. Tout Margaret Tranel G. G. Tristant

Iganatio Uribe Mr & Mrs. Peter Urizaga Bernard Urruty

Mr. & Mrs. Martin Urruty Vincent Urrutia Mrs. Agnes VanAuken

Cynthia VanAuken Jean Van Dyke F. Vaughn

Arnold Verstagen Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Villnave Geroge Viska

O. K. Voiles William Vissers Mr. & Mrs. Dale Wamhoff

Mr. & Mrs. George A. Washut Mr & Mrs. George W. Washut Mr. & Mrs. George F. Washut

Mr. & Mrs. Harry Washut Mr. & Mrs. Joseph B. Washut Joseph F. Washut, Jr.

Mrs. Kate Washut Mrs. B. H. Watson Mrs. Janet M. Webb

Mrs. Welton Mr. & Mrs. Wm. J. Wilcynski Stephen Will

Mary, Frank & Steve Will Wilson Funeral Home Preston Wilson

Amelia Yeggy Mr. & Mrs. James Zeiser Mr. & Mrs. Tom Zeiser

Manuel Zubialde

YOUTH CONTRIBUTORS

Eldon Buell Santiago Curuchet, Jr. Marlene Greene

Nancy Lee Hicks Donald Larkin Larramende Johnson

Bernadette Marton Harry Narans Janice Payne

Jerrold Payne Annette Rangunot Theresa Rangunot

Lorraine Snelling Raymond Snelling Jerry Terry

Patricia Terry Shirley Terry Connie Washut

Deanna Washut Georgia Washut Joan Washut

1950-1963

After thirteen years of hoping, praying and planning plus 14 months of hard work, the dream of Bishop McGovern and the Catholic community was finally realized. The beautiful edifice, the "gem of the Diocese," was complete except for a few finishing touches. It was time to dedicate and celebrate! The Bishop had lived to see the church completed, but he was too ill to take part in the planned celebration. He died a year later on Nov. 8, 1951.

November 8, 1950, was the date chosen, and the day was to feature a Solemn High Mass with music by a volunteer choir directed by Mrs. George W. Washut with Mrs. Martin Camino as organist. A brunch at the Thorne-Rider mansion was planned for visiting priests. A dedication banquet at Buffalo Grade School's new cafeteria would conclude the celebration.

Working committees included the following:

Invitations to Priests: Mrs. George W. Washut, Rev. Fr. A.H. Grannan

Rooms for Visiting Priests: Mrs. Allen Payne

Banquet & Brunch: Mrs. Simon U. Harriet, Mrs. Frank Hicks, Mrs. Jean Curutchet

Banquet Program: Ralph Perry, Mrs. W.J. Knebel

Printing & Advertising: Frank Hicks, Mrs. Allen Payne

Photography: C. W. (Burley) Johnson

In spite of winter weather, the celebration was a big success. Priests from throughout Wyoming were in attendance even though they "ice skated" most of the way from Kaycee to Buffalo. The Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus formed an Honor Guard for the Coadjutor Bishop Hubert M. Newell, who, through the Solemn High Mass and Dedication ceremony transformed the church building into a true House of God with the Glory of God shining through the rose-colored windows. The Knights of Father DeSmet Council #3332 served as ushers.

Ralph Perry was Toastmaster at the dedication banquet with D. C. (Jack) O'Leary as group song leader and Jean Curutchet leading the Basque selections. Father William E. Delaney

was guest soloist. After remarks by Father Grannan, William J. Kirven delivered the main address.

REMARKS, BISHOP NEWELL, November 8, 1950

In his remarks, Bishop Newell had high praise for the architect and the contractors, saying, "It is our considered opinion that this is the most beautiful church (created by the architect), unrivaled by any other in the area. We are appreciative of the honest and conscientious services of Husman Bros., contractors. Their cooperation has been generous and thorough. Not one disagreement has marred the cordial relations between the contractors and the building committee during all the months the structure was in progress."

Bishop Newell also praised the leadership and the people of the parish. "It is appropriate that we acknowledge on this happy occasion the splendid leadership that Fr. Grannan has given the parish in his years as pastor. I know you will agree with me that his own personal efforts have contributed largely to this building, and into it have gone his hopes, his prayers and much physical labor. Father Grannan is a good pastor, as attested not alone by this new church, but by the large number of converts he has gained; by his numerous activities for all of the members of this parish, old and young; and by the esteem with which he is held by all of the members of the community.

"I wish to congratulate all of you, the parishioners of Buffalo, for whom his happy day is the fulfillment of your fondest expectations. Your prayers, your sacrifices and your generous contributions are repaid a thousand times as you look upon your new church, when you realize it is the result of your own good efforts.

"Finally, I would be remiss in my duty if I did not pay a special tribute to the parish trustees, Mr. John Camino and Doctor W. J. Knebel, and the loyal and devoted members of the building committees who have represented the lay members of the parish in these past years when the church was being planned, financed and built.

"There were many trials in the course of this project, days when it seemed the difficulties in building the new church were well-nigh insurmountable, but through it all, the trustees and the building committee members were a tower of strength to their pastor. They refused to admit defeat. They were determined that the church would be built, and it stands now as a monument to their courage, their patience and their perseverance.

"May God reward abundantly all of you who have had a share in this church. You may be sure that each day, for a multitude of years, it will serve your community, bringing blessings upon you and upon all its citizens, reminding people of God, of heaven, of the Christian way of life, which is the gateway to Paradise.

"May I say that Father Grannan has spoken very often of the friendly interest of the non-Catholics of the Buffalo area in the church. A number of them have desired to have a part in the project and have even made contributions to it. Their interest is a source of happiness to the pastor and congregation. We hope that this friendly spirit will continue and even increase through the years."

Father Grannan spearheaded the landscaping efforts and planted many trees around the church, some of which were later cut down but others were still standing in 2000. In

September of 1952, Father Grannan, foreseeing the need for expansion and control, acquired the four lots adjacent to and north of the present church property for the sum of \$2000. He thought this would be a good site for a rectory and even planted two trees between which he envisioned a driveway.

By October 1953, the Church of St. John the Baptist was free of debt! A year later, Father Grannan was assigned to become the first pastor-in-residence at Our Lady of Fatima parish, Casper. Father James Power was transferred from Gillette to succeed him in Buffalo.

Since the mission of Arvada was transferred from the Gillette parish to Buffalo, it became necessary to have an assistant pastor at Buffalo to help serve the missions. The first assistant was Father Patrick McGovern, a newly ordained priest from Ireland. Mass was then offered every Sunday at both Clearmont and Arvada, and in October of 1955, a regular Mass schedule was inaugurated at the Sussex station. When Father McGovern was transferred to Kemmerer in July 1955, he was replaced by Father Thomas L. O'Flannigan, a newly ordained priest from St. Thomas Seminary in Denver and a native of Laramie, Wyoming.

In October, 1955, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with a Solemn Pontifical High Mass celebrated by His Excellency, the Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, with the Right Rev. Msgr. John McDevitt of Laramie preaching the sermon. Following Mass, a banquet was served to some 300 persons at Lodore Resort in Story. At that time, a check for \$500 was presented to Father Power for the Story mission by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Peters, non-Catholic Story residents.

Father Power had made the Thorne-Rider mansion on South Main Street the rectory and delighted in turning it into a showplace and a gracious setting for church meetings and socials. Prior to that, it had been used as a meeting place for the Knights of Columbus, Daughters of Isabella, catechism classes and other church activities. It had also been used one year as a grade school classroom. Shortly after deeding the property over to the church in 1944, Count and Countess Thorne-Rider moved to Sheridan.

This left the way open to fulfill another long-cherished dream of the parish -- that of having a parish hall. The site chosen by the Bishop for this endeavor was the site of the old rectory at the east end of the church property. The rectory was too small to serve its purpose and was sold for \$1000 to Jim Balkenbush who moved it about a half-block to the south where it was still used in 2000 as a private residence. The old church was sold

to Lige & Eva Miller and became a part of their store, Cal's Grocery, which was located nearby on the corner of Hart & Bozeman.

The foundation for the new hall was laid in June of 1956 with Ray Williams of Sheridan as contractor. The original plans called for everything to be on one level, but the Knights of Columbus, who were looking for a new place to meet, were given permission to have basement space excavated if they would be responsible for the finishing work. A private entrance to the room was located on the west side of the building and the finish work was accomplished under the direction of Jack O'Leary and Tom Villnave. Villnave also built the first tables used in the hall while the Knights donated the chairs.

The 96' x 60' hall, constructed under the supervision of Father Power, cost \$46,000. It was formally dedicated in October 1956 by Bishop Newell before a large gathering of parishioners and guests. Father Power also had a grotto for the Blessed Virgin erected at the northeast corner of the church. This grotto was the setting for ceremonies for the crowning of the Blessed Virgin by parish children on Mother's Day for a number of years.

Catholics in Story, Wyoming, began making plans to build a church of their own in 1953. Many hours of labor and many monetary donations brought the plans to reality. An Altar & Rosary Society was formed there in July of 1955 with Mrs. Alvena Zeiser as president. In May of 1956, a 12 1/2 acre tract of land was purchased for \$3000, and on Jan. 30, 1960, the new church, Our Lady of the Pines, was dedicated. In August of that year, one of the small houses next to Holy Name Church in Sheridan was moved to Story as a place for Father Powers to stay. It was renovated a few years later and used for retreats and to house visiting priests. Story remained a mission of St. John the Baptist Church until August of 1968 when it became a part of Holy Name parish, Sheridan. However, it wasn't until the early 1990s that it was officially listed as a Sheridan mission church.

In 1956, Father Power made arrangements for the purchase of a house with three acres of ground adjacent to the church property in Clearmont at a cost of \$2500. The following year, St. Mary's mission church was refurbished inside and out. St. Catherine's Church at Arvada was remodeled and redecorated in the Spring of 1959, and a new set of Stations was erected by Bishop Newell.

A new organ was purchased in 1958 at a cost of \$3600 less the \$1000 given for the old organ.

When Father O'Flannigan was transferred to Kemmerer, he was succeeded by Father Gilbert Callaghan who was, in turn, succeeded by Father Michael Scullion in July of 1958. During this time, the parking area south of the parish hall was paved and improvements made to the sidewalks. Father Scullion was named pastor of Holy Rosary church in Lander in 1959, and Father O'Flannigan returned to Buffalo to again serve as assistant pastor.

In 1960, the Missions of St. John the Baptist church were St. Mary's, Clearmont, and St. Catherine's, Arvada; Mission Stations were Story and Kaycee-Sussex. An Altar and Rosary Society had been organized by 12 ladies of the Kaycee-Sussex mission in December 1959 with Mrs. Robert Taylor as president.

1963 - 2000

The services of Extension Lay Volunteers benefited the parish from 1962 to 1965. Katherine Burke and Katherine Walsh were here from the fall of 1962 through spring of 1965, followed by Lucy Leick and Nelly Van Loon who spent a year here. Their first major project was to establish St. John's Kindergarten for Catholic and non-Catholic children. After the departure of the Extension Lay Volunteers, Miss Angela Welby taught kindergarten classes for two years and she was succeeded by Mrs. Martin Camino who taught for several years.

In January of 1963, Father James Power was transferred to Casper where he was pastor of the new St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and the Rev. James Ruddy, J.C.D., moved to Buffalo. Several changes were made during Father Ruddy's pastorate, one of the first was to arrange for the purchase of Lillian Parson's home at a cost of \$17,500 thus extending the church holdings on the northwest to Hart Street. Her home became the residence of the church's first full time custodian and housekeeper, Francis and Irene Joubert. A few months later in March, 1963, the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Thielen, on the corner of Snider and Lobban, was purchased for \$16,000. The Jouberts soon moved into this house, and the Parsons home was used as a rental until it was eventually torn down.

In order to pay for the improvements in the parish and to help liquidate the parish debt, Father Ruddy initiated a "Debt Liquidation Campaign" in October of 1963. This campaign was highly successful as evidenced by the fact that by the end of 1965, the parish was debt free.

Father Ruddy discontinued offering Mass at St. Catherine's Church in Arvada in 1963 because of declining attendance. Parishioners were encouraged to attend St. Mary's at Clearmont. The church remained a part of diocesan property until 1989 when it was donated to the Arvada Community for use as a non-denominational church.

In May of 1965, Father Ruddy negotiated an exchange of property whereby Mr. and Mrs. Charles Marton would become owners of the Thorne-Rider property, and their home, just west of the church on Lobban Avenue would become the rectory. In addition to their home and lots, the Martons paid an additional \$5000 as part of the exchange which was finalized in May of 1965. It was good for the parish and priests to have the rectory again close to the church.

Perhaps the most beneficial project undertaken during Father Ruddy's pastorate was the addition of a Catechetical Center to the parish hall. Plans for such a Center began with bequests amounting to \$25,000 each from the estates of Emelia E. Fischer and Arnold Verstagen in 1964 and 1965. The bequests carried the stipulation that the monies were to be used for educational purposes only. Substantial donations were also made by John Belus, the Belus brothers, Louis Falxa, Jean Auzqui, and from the estate of Mr. and Mrs. John Camino.

In July of 1967, plans for the Center were submitted by the architectural firm of Goodrich & Wilking of Casper. In August, Atlas Construction Co., Inc., of Cheyenne, submitted the low bid of \$69,771. The building consisted of 4 classrooms, an office, three bathrooms and storage space, as well as a new entryway and an inside door to the Knights meeting room. Because of the additional contracts let for sidewalks, curbs, painting, furnishings, etc., the cost of the completed facility was about \$85,000.

The alcove just east of the main entrance features a statue of the Blessed Mother, donated by Pete and Genevieve Camino in memory of his parents, John & Marie Camino. John Camino, who died in 1968, had served as a Trustee of the church for over 30 years as did W. J. Knebel who continued to serve until 1974. Succeeding Trustees have included William Kirven, Charles Marton, John Iberlin, Pete Camino, Ron Dube, Dave Larkin, Frank Prosinski, Kevin Michelena and Peter John Camino.

With the construction of the Catechetical Center, the church lost a parking area, but in 1968, a new parking lot was constructed on lots situated across the street from the parish hall. These lots had been purchased in 1966 from Mr. and Mrs. Simon U. Harriet for \$2500.

Serving as assistant pastors under Father Ruddy were Father Lewis McKean and Father J. W. Averill, S.J.

Because 30% of the parishioners of St. John's were of Basque ancestry and many of these were young shepherders who spoke only their native unique tongue, Basque priests were sent from the Diocese of Bayonne, France, to tend to their spiritual needs as well as other personal problems, beginning in 1961. These priests served as assistants during the month of August each year so they could celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with all the Basques of the area. A favorite Feast Day for the Basques, the celebration includes Confessions and Mass followed by traditional Basque dinners, dancing and games. For many years, this celebration was held at the Hazelton cabins in the Big Horn Mountains and various other mountain sites and was exclusively for Basques and invited guests. However, in recent years, it has been opened to the public and held in Story, Kaycee, or Buffalo.

During these years, the Church of St. John the Baptist joined other churches throughout the world in adopting the Liturgical Reform as decreed by the Second Vatican Council. Latin was no longer used in the Mass celebration, and the priest now faced the congregation instead of the back altar. There were other changes but these were probably the most radical. The parishioners grumbled loudly, but they soon learned to accept what they could not change, and today, many parishioners have forgotten "the way it used to be."

After Father Ruddy was transferred to St. Matthew's in Gillette in 1970, Father Cornelius O'Connor came to St. John's and remained here as pastor for two years. During this time, Father James Healy served as interim priest for both Father Ruddy and Father O'Connor.

Father Gerald F. Chleborad was the next pastor, serving from 1972 until 1976. He introduced the service of Lay Eucharistic Ministers at Mass.

Under his supervision, the parish hall was extensively remodeled, improving the design and appearance. A new lighting system was installed, and the ceiling was lowered with acoustical tile. Father Chleborad also supervised a celebration of the Holy Year 1975 to coincide with the 110th anniversary [sic, 90th may be meant] of the establishment of St. John's parish and the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church.

Also in 1975, the church purchased the Ben Leppink home south of the parish hall parking lot for \$27,000. This was used as rental property until 1988 when the church

custodian, Bautista Juanicotena, moved into it. Bautista, who had become custodian in 1985, owned this home in 2000. Other custodians who had worked for the church between 1979 and 1985 included Mildred Hanser and Joyce Jarvis.

When Father Chleborad was transferred to Kemmerer in 1976, Msgr. George Stoll served as interim pastor until the arrival of Rev. Cletus Prado in 1977. With funds donated by the parish, Father Prado had the entire sanctuary of the church remodeled to meet the new guidelines which mandated that the priest face the congregation while offering Mass. The old altars and elevated steps were removed, and all new altars, carpeting and other furnishings installed. Many of the old rose-colored windows were replaced with stained glass windows depicting the Church as the People of God. The four phases followed were: 1) the People of God in the Old Testament, Promise and Prophecy; 2) Christ the Head of the People of God in the new Testament; 3) the External Growth of the People of God through the Apostles and Missionaries; and 4) the Inner Growth through the Sacraments (symbolical designs). A re-Dedication of the Church was celebrated on May 18, 1979.

Some of the windows were purchased by parishioners as memorials to: John Arthur Esponda, Simon and Catherine Harriet, Deceased Brother Knights (Father DeSmet Council No. 3332), Edna Stone Vaughn (Joan Mueller), John & Marie Camino (Pete and Genevieve Camino), Gaston & Grace Irigaray (2-Ray and Mary Lawrence), Joseph and Minnie Wilcynski (the W.J. Wilcynski family), and Bernard Marton (John and Charles Marton). Another window was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Leo Hollcroft. The following year, all of the pews in the church were refinished under the direction of Eileen Daley at a cost of \$4800.

The organizational meeting of St. John's Parish Council was held on Dec. 8, 1981. Board members were C. W. (Burley) Johnson, Mary McBride, George Schafer, Florence Camino, Rosemary Wilcynski, Frank Prosinski, John McMahan, Pete Camino, Bernadette Arno and Father Prado. Prosinski was elected president; Mrs. Camino, vice president; and Mrs. Wilcynski, secretary.

Father Prado was also responsible for contracting to purchase a new pipe organ from M. P. Moeller Co., at a cost of \$36,000, but ill health forced him to leave Buffalo and seek medical help before its arrival. The Rev. John F. O'Shea, S.J., was assigned as temporary pastor in September 1982 and initiated a drive to pay for the new organ. He served the parish until February 1983 when Father R. H. MacLellan arrived. By the time Father "Mac" left in June of 1983, the new pipe organ was installed.

The Rev. William Espenshade, who had served various churches in Wyoming since 1972, was assigned pastor of St. John's on June 15, 1983, transferring from St. Mary Magdalene Church in Evanston. Shortly after his arrival, Father Bill had the vestibule of the church remodeled to include a closed entry to the choir loft. Under his pastorate, additional church parking was acquired for \$55,000 from the Knights of Columbus. The Knights, several years previously, had purchased the old Seventh Day Adventist Church and three adjacent lots across the street south of the Catholic church with hopes of establishing a Knights' hall. When this didn't materialize, they tore the old church down in the fall of 1983. The Knights later acquired the house and lot directly south of the rectory. This house was also torn down later and was a vacant lot in 2000.

In 1984, the kitchen in the parish hall was extensively remodeled under the direction of a committee chaired by David Larkin with Wayne Henderson as contractor.

Father Espenshade also had several assistant pastors and a seminarian: Fathers Tom Cronkleton and Tom Kadera, and Candidate Peter Johnson. During his tenure, Mary Ann Cummins was employed as parish religious education director on a full time basis, and a Finance Council was formed in compliance with the New Code of Canon Law revising Parish Councils. Under this revision, the parish priest was to serve as president, so Frank Prosinski became chairman and George Schafer, vice chairman. Others who have served on the Finance Council included William Perry, Rosemary Wilcynski, Frank Rotellini, Betsy Kirven, Dennis Lawrence, and Dave Larkin. Father Espenshade served as parish priest until 1988 when he was transferred to Laramie, leaving behind a host of friends, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

Father Joseph Daley replaced Father Espenshade and was pastor of St. John's until 1993. In 1990, St. John's the Baptist Church Foundation was established with R. Ross Elliot, John Marton, George Schafer, Greg Smith and William Wilcynski making up the Board of Trustees.

Under Father Joe's pastorate, the Miller property, known as Cal's Grocery, was purchased in 1992 for \$45,000. Negotiations for this 100 x 150' lot had been in the works for some time as its acquisition would extend the church property to a full block. The house and store, which stood on the lots, were demolished in early 1993. The empty space was cleaned up that spring and seeded with grass. During his tenure, the Buffalo Basque Club donated a statue of the Good Shepherd which was placed in a garden area easily visible from Hart Street.

In 1993, Father Daley was transferred to Cody, and Father Vernon Clark came to St. John's. Father Clark "woke up" the parish with his rich baritone voice which often resounded from the rafters! He loved the great outdoors and did much to beautify the church grounds. One of his major landscaping projects was the Memorial Garden of Trees to the north of the church hall. He envisioned having a gazebo erected amidst the trees where one could sit and enjoy a pastoral setting, but he was transferred before this could become a reality.

The Memorial trees were provided by:

Rita Cook Carey & Mary Ann Cummins
Ray Clark, Jr. Pete & Genevieve Camino (2)
Bill & Ellen Kirven (2) Pete Dube
Jonesy Smith Jeanne Etchemendy
Dennis Lawrence (5) Jean & Alberta Escoz
Francis Combs Nora King
Elizabeth Panian Jim Long
Diane Williams Charlotte Irigaray
Darleen Huddleston Knights of Columbus
Jim & Mary Hicks (2) Mike & Felicie Harriet
Willy Frank Joe Goryl
Elizabeth Belus Ray Thorburn (2)
Mary Gammon Tom & Nikki Lohse (2)
J. D. Elsom Phil & Janelle Gonzales
Bob Siegoski Jean Zabloudil
Mary Lou Borgialli Bill & Rosemary Wilcynski
Jean Buell (2) Ross Elliot Family
Jim Anderson Joe Goryl
Bill Perry Irene Joubert
Herman & Patty Myers Rick Keith
Coog & Sue Myers Jean & Jeanie Michelena
Don & Vyonne Kraen

Father Clark also introduced a Youth Minister to the parish. Chris Robarge worked closely with both Catholic and non-Catholic youth, using his musical talents and social skills to offer guidance and companionship in a Christian atmosphere. Chris resigned from this position a few months after Father Clark was transferred to Cheyenne in 1998.

Father Charles Taylor was assigned to succeed Father Clark as pastor of the Church of St. John the Baptist in 1998. In May of 1999, a "Memorial to the Unborn" was erected in the church gardens along Hart Street courtesy of an anonymous donor.

The most recent project has been the construction of a new cedar shake roof and the first major roofing project since the church was built, the second of three roofs Bishop Newell alluded to in 1950. A committee, composed of Dave Larkin, Bill Michaelis, Bill Moriarty, Bernie Davis, Kerry Money and Don Kraen, assisted with the planning phase, and Dennis Appelhans served as on-site overseer. Architectural plans and supervision were provided by Roger J. Baalman, diocesan architect. Rocky Mountain Applicators of Riverton were awarded the roofing contract for \$71,000.

Father Taylor continued as pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church at the time of this writing in 2000.