

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS.  
ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING.

## HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Rock Springs, Wyoming.

The pioneer Catholics in Rock Springs were Wm. H. O'Donnell, Dr. B. S. Murray, Messrs. Thos. Lafferty, Dennis Murphy, F. Levesque, Tim Kinney and Michael Quealy.

Priests from Rawlins and Cheyenne attended Rock Springs in the early days. Mass was said at the house of one of the Catholic families, frequently at the house of Mr. Quealy or Dr. Murray, as there was no church until 1888.

In 1888 the present property was purchased, the money being borrowed from Mr. Tim Kinney for the purpose of building the church, which was erected by Rev. John Delahunty, the first pastor of the parish. In the first year 1888, there were sixteen baptisms, one marriage and one funeral from the church. The parish house was also erected by Fr. Delahunty in 1888 and the adjoining property including Dr. Murray's house was purchased by the parish in 1890.

In 1893 Mr. F. J. Quealy donated property for the Catholic Cemetery. The first funeral was that of Joseph Zini, who was buried on March 17, 1893.

During the pastorate of Fr. Delahunty the parish grew to such proportions that he had a mission for the Slavish people in 1899, given by Rev. Cyril Zupan, O. S. B., and in 1901 by Rev. Anton Blahnik, O. S. B.

Fr. Delahunty was pastor until Jan. 1902 and was succeeded by Rev. John Nolan who was in charge of the parish until Aug. 1902 when Fr. Delahunty was reappointed as pastor, remaining until April 26, 1903. Rev. Anton Blahnik was in charge of the parish during May 1903 and in the beginning of June, 1903, Rev. John Nolan returned to the parish and was pastor until Jan. 1904. In March, 1904, the Mariast Fathers of Salt Lake were given charge of the parish by Bishop Keane. Among the priests who attended from Salt Lake were Fathers J. F. Quinn and Joseph Dryer, S. M.

In 1894 the Slavish lodges furnished sufficient money to merge the church to its present dimensions and permission was given to the members of the lodges to hold their meetings in the basement of the church.

In October 1904, the Rev. Chas. O'Connor was appointed pastor and stayed until May, 1906 when he was succeeded by Rev. August Conty who paid off the remainder of the debt on the property and erected the two sacristies. During Fr. Conty's pastorate a mission was given to the Slavish people by Rev. A. Minar. In May, 1907 Fr. Conty resigned and Rev. T. J. Barrett was appointed pastor in June 1907.

By 1909 the parish had grown to such proportions that in

June of that year Rev. James Cerne was appointed as assistant to Fr. Barrett. Fr. Cerne established a mission in Superior. The first Mass being said there on Christmas Day, 1909, in a private house as there was no church at that time. In January 1910, Rev. J. H. Delichola was appointed pastor of Superior and a church was erected by the Union Pacific Coal Co. Fr. Delichola collected \$760.00 among the people in Superior to furnish the church.

Fr. Barrett and Fr. Cerne both left in Feb 1910, and on Feb. 27, 1910 Rev. Francis J. Keller was appointed pastor and Rev. Anton Schiffrer, Assistant. The census of the parish was taken and the number of Catholics was found to be 3,200. Fr. Keller had the church renovated and debts amounting to \$600.00 were paid during his time. Fr. Keller resigned on July 28, 1910.

Fr. Michael J. Kennedy was appointed pastor and took charge of the parish Sept. 1, 1910.

On August 31, 1910 the new Slavish parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius was established and all the Slavish people became members of that parish with Rev. Anton Schiffrer as first pastor.

Fr. Kennedy died on April 25, 1911 and was buried on April 28, in St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery at Rock Springs. His funeral being attended by Rt. Rev. J. J. Keane who preached the funeral sermon, and by many priests of the diocese.

On January 14, 1911 the church was partially burned while Fr. Kellady, S. M., of Salt Lake was in charge of the parish.

On Sept. 15, 1911 Rev. Michael J. Kelly was appointed pastor and stayed until July 7, 1912. During Fr. Kelly's pastorate the damage done by fire was repaired. From June 1912 to Nov. 1912 Rev. Anton Schiffrer was in charge of the parish.

Rev. John A. Mattes was made pastor in Nov., 1912, and at the same time Rev. Ludwig Crymacher was appointed pastor of Superior. Fr. Mattes left on Jan. 31, 1914 and Fr. Schiffrer took charge of the parish until the appointment of Rev. John F. Sagrue as pastor on Feb. 19, 1914.

Fr. Sagrue was born at Valentia, County Kerry, Ireland, on February 7, 1884, made his studies at St. Brendan's Seminary Millarney and Maynooth College in Ireland, was ordained on June 20, 1909 by Archbishop Walshe of Dublin. Came to America in Nov. 1909. Was Assistant for three years at Glenwood Springs, Colo., subsequently was in charge of the parish at Walsenburg, Colo., for some months during the illness of the pastor and assistant at St. Patrick's Church, Denver, Colo.

On October, 5, 1918, the Rev. Sylvester A. Welsh, was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Rock Springs, with Superior as a Mission. After paying outstanding bills against the church, there was a balance in the church treasury of \$2.50, at the end of October, 1918. When Father Welsh took charge there were scarcely one hundred people attending Sunday Mass, and only three practical catholic men in the parish.

In February, 1920, a very successful mission was conducted by the Rev. Thomas Maggerty of the Dominican Order. After the mission there was a noticeable improvement in the attendance at Mass and the Sacraments.

In April, 1920, there was a cash balance in the church treasury of \$1,600.00, and as the church was in much need of improvement, a contract was let to Scott & Craig, for the sum of \$2,750.00, to carry out the necessary work. During the renovation of the church, Mass was celebrated in the North Side Church. On May, 23, 1920, the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D. Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of sixty-two. On November, 1920, the church was reblessed by the Rev. Anton Schifferer, pastor of the North Side Church, Rock Springs.

A great many improvements were carried out on the cemetery in 1921, and the church trustees donated \$270.00, from the church funds, for this purpose.

On Sunday, May, 15, 1921, a week's mission was opened by the Rev. J. J. Gurn, a Redemptorist Father.

In February, 1922, a Council of the Knights of Columbus was established in Rock Springs.

On Sunday, July, 6, 1924, the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of forty-five in Rock Springs, and fifteen in Superior.

In the beginning of 1925, it was considered advisable to renovate the Rectory, and provide extra accommodation for an assistant priest. On March, 15, 1925, the Rev. John Marley, was appointed assistant.

Father Mulloy of the Holy Cross Fathers conducted a week's mission in the first week of June, 1926. As a result of the mission four or five Italian families were brought back to church.

About the middle of November, 1926, the Rev. John Marley was transferred to the charge of Greybull, Wyoming, and was succeeded by the Rev. Daniel O'Sullivan, now deceased.

For twelve years the pastor and people of Our Lady of Sorrows parish worked steadily with the view of providing a suitable house of worship. Great credit is due the Knights of Columbus and the Ladies of the Altar Society for their earnest work in advancing the interests of the parish. There having accumulated in the church treasury the sum of approximately \$35,000.00, the church trustees with the approval of the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, commenced preparations for the building of a church to accommodate the growing congregation. In the Fall of 1931, the services of the renowned firm of architects, Maginnis & Walsh, Boston, were secured. Plans were drawn up for the erection of a new church in the Italian Romanesque style of architecture. In the Spring of 1932, a contract was let to the Kellogg Lumber Co., Rock Springs, for the erection of the building. The corner stone for the new building was blessed and laid by the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, on Sunday, June, 19, 1932, in presence of a large concourse of people and clergy. The church erected cost \$58,000.00, and furnishings \$7,000.00. There is a debt of approximately \$23,000.00 on the building.

On Sunday, December, 11, 1932, the new church of Our Lady of Sorrows was blessed by the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D. Father Walsh, pastor, was celebrant of the Mass, with the Rev. Albin Guidroc, Rock Springs, and Mr Thomas Cullen, Jr., as deacons of honor to His Excellency, Bishop McGovern. The Rev. Henry Schwllinger, Green River, was deacon of the Mass, the Rev. John Sullivan, Rock Springs, was subdeacon, and the Rev. James A. Hartmann of the Cheyenne Cathedral was master of ceremonies. Mr W. Leo Novorka was in charge of the musical program. In honor of the Bishop and visiting clergy, a banquet was held at the Howard dining room in the afternoon, sponsored by the Fourth Degree, Knights of Columbus.

Bishop McGovern gave the sermon at the Mass, speaking on "The Divine Plan of the Church." In the course of his remarks the Bishop said:-

"This morning beloved brethren, we have dedicated to the living God a new temple in which the deposit of faith committed to the Apostles will be expounded to you and to your children after you. In a day long past, Moses struck the rock Horeb in the desert with his rod, /

rod, and springs of sweet water refreshed a famished people. So, likewise, this new rock of Christ's Church, set up in the midst of a desert, will be a source of supernatural strength for those who thirst after the fountains of living water. For here the sacraments, by divine institution efficient causes of grace, will be administered to those rightly disposed, and will sanctify every stage of their earthly pilgrimage.

"You have here a structure of no ordinary type, but rather one of superior beauty, one that constitutes a distinct ornament to Rock Springs. The name of Maginnis & Walsh, outstanding among the ecclesiastical architects of the United States, is a sufficient guarantee that correct canons have been followed, both in the conception and execution of the plans. You were fortunate, indeed, in securing such competent artists for realizing your ideals.

"Worthy of the highest praise is the work of your pastor, Father Sylvester A. Welsh, who throughout his fourteen years of service in your midst has looked forward to the day when he would see this parish provided with a church suitable for its chief function, namely, the renewal of Calvary's sacrifice through the Mass.

"A like message of praise is due to you, the members of this parish, for loyal co-operation in bringing about the consummation for which all of you have so long striven. Deep appreciation must be expressed to the Union Pacific Coal company for the very competent and valued services of James Libby, who so ably superintended the construction of this building; and also to the Kellogg Lumber company, contractor, which conscientiously carried out the terms of the contract in every detail.

"This is a day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice herein". The Diocese of Cheyenne rejoices, because the well being of the individual members of the body contributes to the welfare of the body as a whole. This parish rejoices because it has been privileged to give concrete expression of its gratitude to God for His many favors and benefits. And the city of Rock Springs takes pardonable pride in the possession of the finest specimen of ecclesiastical architecture in the state. That this church dedicated to the honor of God under the patronage of His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Sorrows, may be a fruitful source of divine grace for this community, is the blessing we invoke in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The present pastor, the Rev. Sylvester A. Welsh, was born at South Amboy, N.J., December, 31, 1890, and received his education in the parochial school/

school of his native parish, St. Charles' College, Ellicott City, Md., and Villanova College, Villanova, Penn. Higher studies for the priesthood were pursued at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Md., and Dunwoodie, N.Y.

He was ordained for the diocese of Cheyenne, September, 1, 1918, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, by the Rt. Rev. Thomas Walsh, Bishop of Trenton; and was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Rock Springs, October, 5, 1918.