

WORLAND
History of St Mary Magdalen Parish
1918 1998
Kathleen Gibbons

On July 12, 1918. Fr. Nicholas Endres and trustees met to accept a bid on the first Catholic Church building in Worland. The church was located on Seventh Street. An anonymous donor designated St. Mary Magdalen as the patroness for the Parish. Masses were said once a month in the new mission church with Fr. Endres traveling from Thermopolis. Fr. Endres was pastor until 1933, followed for a short period by Fr. James McBride and succeeded by Fr. Philip Krass in 1934.

In the summer of 1937, the Dominican Order from Detroit began vacation Bible School, and for the first time in history, a Mass was held every Sunday and Holy Day.

On April 14, 1949, a document was received under the signature of Bishop Patrick McGovern, declaring St. Mary Magdalen a parish. On June 15, 1949, Fr. Cyril Hmelovsky was installed as the first resident pastor.

On August 21, 1949. Fr. Hmelovsky performed the first wedding between Joe B. Salzman and Mildred Glenn.

The parish continued to grow and in August of 1953, a Building Fund Campaign kickoff dinner was held for a new church building, which was built and dedicated March 8, 1955.

In 1957, the parish sponsored a refugee family from Hungary, providing them with housing, furnishings and clothing. The family later moved to Minneapolis.

On September 27, 1957, an application was made to the Franciscan Motherhouse in Portland, Oregon, for Sisters to staff a parochial school.

The application was accepted in October, 1960, to staff a school in the fall of 1964. On January 15, 1962, a campaign was conducted for funding for this new parish facility.

The Parish received two downtown rental properties from the estate of Fr. N.J. Endres, in June of 1963. These properties were sold in December 1983.

Father John Corrigan was appointed pastor in 1961 following Fr. Hmelovsky's transfer to Rawlings.

With acceptance of a bid from Johnson Brothers Construction Co., six classrooms were added to the existing church, and school opened August 1964, with 69 students enrolled. Three Franciscan nuns for grades one through six staffed the school.

In 1964, Fr. Hmelovsky was transferred back to Worland, and Fr. Corrigan was transferred to St. Joseph's in Cheyenne.

In 1968, our own native son, Thomas Ogg, was ordained to the Priesthood.

Due to the shortage of Franciscan nuns the school was closed in 1971. The classrooms continue to be used for Religious Education.

A Parish Council was established in May of 1979. Elected to the Council were Jerry Rillahan, Leroy Abbott, Jack Bonham, Ed Schmeltzer, Patricia Moorhouse, Rhonda Schmeltzer, Rita Wichman and Kathleen Gibbons.

Lay readers and Eucharistic Ministers had been established by this time. The first Eucharistic Ministers included John Clare, Joseph Metzger, and Philip Schmeltzer. In 1983, women were installed for the first time in this capacity. They included Jane Johnson, Bernie Johnson, Maxine

Nejedly, Rose Lamb, Marie Engelman and Kathleen Gibbons, along with Joe R. Salzman, Nick and Roger Brookwell.

Upon Fr. Hmelovsky's retirement, due to ill health, following a total of 31 years as pastor, Fr. Joseph Fraher was installed as pastor Dec. 5, 1983, and remained as pastor until July 1990. During this time new windows were installed in the school and hall to make the buildings more energy efficient. In addition, a concrete ramp was built and a chair lift installed for handicapped accessibility.

In July of 1990, Fr. Richard MacLellan became pastor. New carpeting was installed in the church and hall, as well as many repairs made to the parish buildings due to hail damage.

In July, 1995 Fr. MacLellan was transferred to Newcastle, and Fr. Ron Stolcis became pastor. A new organ was purchased and the choir loft was converted into a cry room. The wall was removed between the church restrooms and this area was made into a reconciliation room.

In March of 1998. Fr. Stolcis was transferred to Sheridan as Associate Pastor and Fr. August Koeune became pastor and is, as of this writing. Since March, 1998, a Parish Council was reestablished. Plans are underway for a Prayer Garden; Healing Masses and Forgiveness Workshops are being held; tables and chairs were purchased for the hall, sponsored by the KCs; new church doors were installed as well as a new sound system; new rain gutters were added along with new roofing on the church; wider sidewalks were poured on the east side of the 1 church; the parking lot was resurfaced; handicapped lifts were installed in the church as well as remodeling of the restrooms for handle accessibility.

CCD Educational Boards were established. Sunday Mass in Worland now has Bilingual Mass in English and Spanish. St. Brigid's in Ten Sleep has Mass each Sunday, and Masses are held for all Holy Days.

New furnishings are in place, and St. Brigid's is in the process of adding additional room to accommodate the increase in attendance.

Bob Fox, a seminarian, spent the summer of 1998 in the parish and conducted Scripture Classes as well as other parish functions. Mike Martinson, son of Nancy Martinson, left in August of 1998 for the seminary in Conception, Missouri.