

History of Sacred Heart Church, Baudette Minnesota

The first Catholic settler, James Williams, arrived in Baudette in 1894. Early home Masses were celebrated by Fr. St. Armant who was in charge of a two hundred mile territory along the Rainy River from 1846 to 1907. The parish marks its founding as 1908, the year of the first recorded baptism. In 1909 Fr. August Beyne (1908-1911), whose mission headquarters was in Warroad, purchased an old school house for the first Baudette Catholic Church. This building burned in the 1910 fire which also devastated a large part of county. Under the guidance of Fr. Raoul Dumolin (1912-1913), a new church was dedicated by Bishop Corbett on October 27, 1912, at what is now the southwest corner of 1st Ave NW and 2nd St NW in the city. An initial \$500 loan was provided by the Extension Society. While Fr. Ernest Bossus was pastor (1913-1926) there were missions at Williams, Roosevelt, Warroad, Falun, Badger, Greenbush, Juneberry, Carp and Baudette. He would travel by railroad hand car to Baudette monthly to say Mass. Parishioners would also attend Mass in Rainy River, Ontario

In 1914 a choir loft and steeple were built by J. Morrissette, who was struck and killed by lightning while working on the steeple. There were twenty-three Catholic families in 1918. The number fluctuated with the rise and fall of sawmill industry in town. In 1923, after the floor caved in, the church was raised three feet and a cement basement was built. Fr. William Swanson (1937-1946) began planning for a new church by purchasing lots on Main Ave South, but thoughts of construction would have to wait until after WWII when families, who had left to find jobs during the war, returned. Fr. George Clemens (1952-1959) began the building project soon after his arrival, and on January 13, 1954, the new brick church and rectory were dedicated by Bishop Francis Schenk. The mortgage burning was celebrated 25 years later by Fr. Raymond Palcisko (1971-1977).

Seven Sisters of St. Joseph from Crookston came to Baudette in 1950 to staff the new Baudette Community Hospital. Sr. Jeanne Constance was the first administrator. In 1957 the sisters purchased the hospital, expanded, renovated and renamed it Trinity Hospital. They continued to operate the hospital until 1985 when it was sold to the Franciscan Sisters Health Care, Inc. of Little Falls. Over the years, there have been thirty-three Sisters of St. Joseph who have served in Baudette. Sr. Rose Mary Toenyan, CSJ was the last religious to leave the area when she retired in April 2007.

The second hand pipe organ, still in use today, was purchased in 1963 by Fr. Donald Archer (1963-1971). Fr. Larry Wieseler, who would later serve as pastor (2001-2004), was ordained in Baudette May 31, 1969. Fr. Wieseler's family moved to the area from Nebraska in 1953. The Air Force began construction on the 692d Radar Squadron base in 1959 and the parish served many military families over twenty years. Fr. Joseph Menker OMI (1977-1978), the first of six Oblates of Mary Immaculate priests, served as an auxiliary Chaplain until its closing July 1, 1979.

In 1983 a new front entrance with large glass windows was constructed with help from Fr. Larry Antus OMI (1980-1985). Lake of the Woods Food Shelf, founded in 1984 by Rose Vidas, was located in the church basement until December 2008. Fr. Cyril Foppe OMI (1987-1997) kept very busy! He relocated the organ from the choir loft, installed an electronic bell system, carpeting in basement and church proper, handicap lift, first computer, folding doors for classrooms, storage lofts, and an updated heating system. The sanctuary was redesigned including new altar, ambo and church lighting. He entertained us with guitar music including his original "Ballad of a North Country Pastor" and his pet mongoose.

The church no longer had a resident priest after the last of the Oblates, Fr. Frank Ryan, OMI (1997-2000) retired. Deacon Jim Lukenbill moved into the rectory and began ministry in Baudette and Williams parishes while the pastor resided in Warroad. At present there are 160 households including seasonal residents. Tourists fishing Lake of the Woods often attend Mass. Fr. August Gothman became our pastor July 2011.

Written by Joan Heinrich (parish secretary since 1994)