

A Building 100 Years Old, A Faith Everlasting

A Summary of the History of Sacred Heart Parish 1994

Prior to the year 1874, Holy Mass was said occasionally within the jurisdiction of the present parish of Sacred Heart at Manawa. Despite the difficulty of travel, zealous priests came from the parishes at New London and Lebanon to minister to the spiritual needs of the people of Manawa and vicinity. The early Catholics were eager to lend their homes for the gathering of the faithful whenever the good Fathers came to celebrate Holy Mass. The homes in which it is known with reasonable certainty that Holy Mass was offered, were in the homes of Robert Smith, John Carew, the Davy, Scanlon, and St. George homes. The priests who celebrated Mass in these homes were, Frs. Verwist, Lemagie, Duerr, and Annen.

By 1874, the Catholics of this vicinity were fully aware of the need for a church so that their spiritual needs might better be met. Mrs. Mary Davy, a devout Catholic, offered a parcel of land for this purpose. Under the direction of Fr. Annen of Lebanon, a frame structure measuring 24' X 40' was constructed. As might be expected, the structure was very plain, yet it was comfortable and large enough to accommodate the needs of the Catholics in the area at the time. This church was given the title of Mary Help of Christians and was served by various priests from the area.

The 1894 Structure

Rev. Francis Xavier Steinbrecher was appointed pastor of Lebanon in November 1893, with missions at Waupaca, Northport, Weyauwega, and Manawa. Always an energetic worker to further the honor of God among the people assigned to his ministration, Fr. Steinbrecher soon realized that the original frame church had outlived its usefulness and that a new church was consequently a necessity. As in the case of the first church, a generous donor, Mr. W. H. Hatten, donated a plot of land east of the site of the first church. Early in the spring of 1894, construction began on the present Sacred Heart Church, according to the plans drawn up by Mr. Messmer. The mason contract was awarded to the Bastin Brothers, and the carpenter contractors were Mr. Henry Hoffmann and Mr. William Hoffmann. Much of the labor on excavating the basement and other common labor was donated by the members of the parish, who were eager to worship God in a church edifice which was worthy of the great Sacrifice which was to be offered within its walls. The Sacred Heart Congregation of Manawa was incorporated under the laws of the state of Wisconsin on April 14, 1894. It was with justifiable pride that the people entered their new church for the first services that October Sunday morning. There was plenty of room, as the new structure, 42' X 80', provided a seating capacity of about 300. There they saw the fruits of their labor, made possible for their use through the blessings of God and the sacrifice of their hard earned savings. The parish records bear witness to great financial sacrifices on the part of the early parishioners, who donated the sum of \$2,176.50 for the building fund, \$280 for the windows and \$302 for the bell.

A Resident Pastor

Soon after the completion of the new church the people of Sacred Heart Congregation began to look forward to the day they would have a resident pastor to look after their spiritual needs. The old church standing across the street and a little south of the new edifice was the answer to their problem of supplying a home for their pastor. At a cost of \$665 and much willing labor on the part of the parishioners, the old church was converted into a modest rectory, and was occupied for the first time as a dwelling by Fr. Steinbrecher, who in May of 1895 was transferred from his pastorate at St. Patrick's Church, Lebanon, to become the first resident pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Manawa. Father Steinbrecher continued as pastor of Manawa for about two years and, having labored faithfully for the spiritual and material wellbeing of his faithful flock in Manawa, he was transferred to Kaukauna in January of 1897, where, as at Manawa, his first task was to plan for the building of the new St. Mary's Church.

The New Rectory

Fr. Steinbrecher's immediate successor was the Rev. F. Vollebregt (January, 1897 to January, 1898). During Fr. Vollebregt's brief pastorate, a new pastoral residence was secured in order to afford more comfortable living quarters for the pastor. The old frame church, which had served as a rectory for the past few years and the lots on which it stood were now sold to Thomas Durga for the sum of \$1,150. This venerable building still stands on the spot where it was built, directly west of the present rectory. The building was converted to a convalescent hospital.

Financial Turmoil

Upon the departure of Fr. Vollebregt in 1898, a succession of six priests took over the duties at Sacred Heart. In 1900, Rev. Joseph Darche became pastor. St. Mary Magdalen Parish of Waupaca had been a mission of Manawa and in 1902 was detached from Sacred Heart Congregation. Shortly after this, the parish at Manawa experienced serious financial difficulties. A meeting called by Fr. Darche was held to determine whether or not the congregation could pay its debts and keep a resident pastor. It was suggested that the pastoral residence be moved to Waupaca and Manawa would become a mission. Only 8 out of 55 members of the parish favored the move. The members of the congregation again showed their determination to maintain their parish and to support their pastor. From July 1904 to May 1917, Rev. Peter Grosnick served as our eighth.

Parish Improvements

Fr. Grosnick worked hard to reduce the parish debt and still make improvements. In 1906, the furnace was replaced. A new communion rail, donated by Frank H. Goetz and The Young Ladies Sodality, was placed in church in 1910. The following year, the interior of the church was decorated and the first electric lights were installed. New side altars were erected in 1913 and the next year a new metal roof was placed on the church.

Rev. John R. McGinley became pastor in May of 1917 and remained for 13 years. He succeeded in paying off the debt of \$1,049 in his first two years. The year 1919 marks the first year that the parish was entirely free of debt. At this time a new high altar was placed in the church, thanks to a gift of \$500 from the estate of Mary Flynn. In 1923 the St. Bridget church at Royalton was completed and became a mission of Manawa, with Fr. McGinley in charge.

The New Parish Rectory

The year 1923 marks another great improvement in the property at Manawa, for it was in this year that Fr. McGinley undertook the erection of a new, modern rectory at a cost of \$6,129.47. The old rectory and garage were sold for the sum of \$2,800 and removed to a new location a few blocks southwest of the parish property. In October of 1930, after 13 years of faithful service in Manawa, Fr. McGinley was transferred to St. Augustine's Church in Chilton. Following two lengthy pastorates of Fr. Grosnick and McGinley, two short term pastorates were filled by Rev. Nicholas L. Gross and Rev. Francis McKeough. The Rev. Chester Dionne succeeded Fr. McKeough in 1932. Fr. Dionne added several feet to the garage to accommodate the new car purchased. In 1938, a forced air system was attached to the rectory furnace, under the direction of Fr. Dionne.

Fr. Dionne's successor was Rev. Peter Skell, under whose leadership the interior of the church was redecorated and rewired. A total of \$1,646.50 was raised to cover expenses. In 1942, Rev. Norbert Rank was transferred to Manawa from Florence. Fr. Rank received permission from Bishop Rhode to say two Masses at Manawa and one Mass at Royalton. This was accomplished through the help of the Norbetrine Fathers. The two Mass schedule went into effect in March of 1943 with Rev. G. L. Nolan, a son of the parish, assisting on weekends. This greatly increased attendance and also increased the reception of the Sacraments. In 1942, two hundred hosts were sufficient each month, now the need for Manawa alone grew to 400 hosts each month. In slightly more than 50 years of existence with a resident pastor, the Sacred Heart Congregation recorded 714 baptisms, 619 first communions received by children and adult converts, 504 confirmations, 139 marriages and 308 burials.

It was time once again to update the church basement, to make room for social activities. Plans were made to provide a small chapel with enough space left to hold meetings, card socials, etc. Men of the parish donated their labor and under the direction of Mr. D. J. Griffin labored five nights each week for two months to complete the job.

Late in October 1942, an Altar Society and a C. Y. O. for the youth of Manawa & Royalton were organized. The ladies of the Altar Society worked untiringly to raise funds to purchase altar linens and other items used around the church.

At the parish meeting on January 24, 1943, Mr. Frank H. Goetz was recognized for over 30 years of service as the church treasurer. He resigned because of failing health. He was succeeded by Charles E. Hoffmann. Mr. H. P. Komp, secretary of the parish, also served over 30 years.

On February 1, 1944 the parish was saddened by the news of its first and only casualty of World War 2, when word arrived of the death of Frank Nolan. A Solemn Requiem High Mass was offered for the repose of his soul, by his brother, Rev. Gerald L. Nolan on February 5th, 1944.

The Sacred Heart Choir

Prior to 1942, Mrs. William Allen was the organist for the Sacred Heart choir. Many years ago, when Fr. Steinbrecher was pastor of the congregation, Mrs. Allen, was given her first instruction in the rendition of church music by Fr. Steinbrecher himself. That was somewhere back in the middle 1890's. Except for very short intervals when Anna Garry, Rose Komp, Fern Peterson and Margaret Komp served as organists, Mrs. Allen was most faithful in her position as organist.

In 1942, the choir was reorganized and Mrs. R. L. Loughrin was appointed as choir director. Besides Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Loughrin, the choir membership was composed of the following members of the parish: Mrs. George Krautkammer, Mrs. Clifford Roman, Mrs. Clarence Hoppe, Miss Kathleen Roman, Eleanor Kettelson, Helen Nolan, Frank Binder, Dr. R. L. Loughrin, Clifford Allen, Russell Kostrzak and Dwight Stevens.

Over the years, the style of church music has changed as well as the musicians. A few of the people who have shared the duties are Pat Allen, Carol Kraske, Eileen Squires, Debbie Hoffmann, Mary Hoffmann, Erin Hoffmann, Jeanne Bauer, Pam O'Brien & Nancy Weitzel.

During the next 15 years, many improvements along with remodeling and redecorating were undertaken. This included completely tearing out and rebuilding the entire church basement in 1958. Also at this time, a baptistry 12' X 30' was built into the southeast end of the church at a cost of \$17,579.88.

On June 1, 1963, another son of the parish was ordained to the priesthood, the Rev. Charles G. Hoffmann, son of Mr. & Mrs. Charles E. Hoffmann. Charles E. Hoffmann, who had served as parish treasurer since 1942, died in January of 1964. His office was taken by Leonard Goetz.

In April 1967, Mr. H. P. Komp resigned as parish secretary. He had served since 1912 and was replaced by Leonard Goetz, with Frank Trantow assuming the position of treasurer.

The construction of a new double garage for the rectory began with the old garage being left and becoming part breezeway and storage for mowers and tools.

There were 116 families in 1967 and 48 single adults. Children from infants thru high school age numbered 327. This made a total of 579 souls.

The parish was debt free with several thousand dollars in the general fund as well as the Building Fund and a School Fund. The Cemetery Association has over \$6000 in perpetual care funds.

The Rev. Gerald J. Ilk was pastor from January of 1948 until the Rev. LeRoy Smet assumed the responsibilities in 1969.

Many changes were seen during the reign of Fr. Smet. He was young and people soon grew accustomed to seeing him riding his motorcycle around town. He worked and had a great rapport with the young people of the parish. It was during the early 1970's that the altar on the back wall and the communion rail were replaced by a front facing altar and two pulpits. Fr. Smet was with us for five years and was replaced by Fr. Norman Krutzik in 1975.

It didn't take the people of Sacred Heart long to appreciate the sincere and caring manner of Fr. Krutzik. Under his guidance and the advice of the trustees, a new roof was put on the church, the inside was remodeled and redecorated, and an automatic bell ringer was installed. Fr. Krutzik remained our pastor until 1982, when the Rev. Karl Buresh was sent to us.

Fr. Buresh worked closely with Betty Nolan, who at that time was taking care of the altar needs and setting the mood for liturgical holidays. He contributed many good ideas and was always open to the thoughts of others. Fr. Buresh was very outgoing and dedicated and liked by everyone. Fr. Buresh left us in 1984, when Sacred Heart was privileged to have Rev. Joseph Shinnners grace our parish.

Fr. Shinnners was a joy to work with. Despite his advanced age, he was very much involved in the needs of our parish. It was under his direction that a parish council was again formed. With Dan Bloechl as parish council chairman, our church took on the task of building a much needed parish center.

The dedication of our new Parish Center took place immediately following the 10:15 Mass on Sunday, January 24th, 1988. Auxiliary Bishop Robert F. Morneau officiated. As Fr. Shinnners explained in a newspaper article at the time, "religious education was the main spark plug that prompted the building of the center." At that time, the program utilized 56 teachers, aides, and substitute teachers under the capable guidance of Jackie Wendlandt. Jackie was instrumental in forming our religious education program and worked untiringly for many years to keep it running smoothly.

The building, which cost \$150,000, was built by O'Brien Construction under the direction of General Contractor Pat O'Brien. It houses nine gathering rooms, as well as a small kitchen area. The bookshelves were the work of a single volunteer and the names of very generous donors are placed on room doors. Besides religious education, the center can be used for parish meetings as well as by local groups for their activities. At present, it is being utilized by the school district for the Early Childhood Program.

Fr. Shinnners was our priest until June 1988, and Fr. Gillis was appointed to our parish. The interior of the church was remodeled and redecorated under the guidance of Fr. Gillis and a few parishioners who were willing to donate their time, talent, and treasure. During the remodeling process, Fr. Gillis found the old wooden Stations of the Cross that hung in the church many years ago. He refinished the Stations to a beautiful condition and proudly hung them in church for all to see.

In September of 1992, Sacred Heart was appointed a very jovial priest, the Rev. Cyril Dickrell, SDS, as Administrator. In October of 1992, Leonard & Evelyn Goetz were honored at a potluck for their years of service and dedication to Sacred Heart Parish. Leonard had been a trustee of the church since January of 1964. Throughout the years Evelyn has been extremely active in every facet of Sacred Heart Parish. In a short program before the potluck, the Goetz family was introduced and several parishioners spoke

of the dedication that Leonard & Evelyn have shown to the people of Sacred Heart Parish. One of these people was Mr. Gordon Carew, who worked very closely with Leonard over the years. Mr. Dan Nolan became our treasurer trustee and Mr. Ken Groholski our secretary trustee. Leonard passed away in January of 1994.

Fr. Dickrell helped our struggling Parish Pastoral Council to it's feet. The 1994 Parish Pastoral Council Members are: Jim Quinn, Dan Nolan, Ken Groholski, Dan Bloechl, Bob Conroy, Jerry Kopecky, Susan Way, Mary Hoffmann and Fr. Cyrill Dickrell. We have an active Religious Education Program, a choir, and an Altar Society that oversees the majority of our social events, does mission work and supports the Environment Committee.

The Altar Society along with the Centennial Committee have worked closely in planning our 100 year celebration. It will begin October 9th with Mass followed by reminiscing over coffee and donuts and music by Mr. & Mrs. Merlyn Kons. October 16th includes a Polka Mass by the Hauser's followed by a program & potluck.

Many noteworthy people, as well as important events have no doubt been overlooked. For this we apologize. This is but a thumbnail account, with much of the early history condensed from a more detailed version that Fr. Rank put together in a yellow booklet in 1946.

There are and have been many members of Sacred Heart that have given not only of their time and talents, but have also contributed monetarily to the parish. It would be impossible to list all of the names, but you know who you are and because of you, we have grown and prospered.

It is comparatively easy to measure the tangible aspects of a church, such as the order in which the priests came here and left, and the improvements and repairs that were made during their time spent here. This we have done with a fair amount of accuracy. What we cannot measure, are the intangibles, such as our ever growing faith, our sense of community, the caring and sharing that goes on, and our willingness to pass these things on to succeeding generations.

All of the priests that we have been privileged to know here at Sacred Heart, have helped to bring us closer to God. It is because of their dedicated spirit and the willingness of all the people who have ever been members of Sacred Heart Church, that we are able to celebrate over 100 years plus as a faith community.

With the help of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow in our faith.