

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. BONAVENTURE PARISH

we recall that our history goes back to 1852 when Father Albert Lacombe was appointed to the Alberta area. Father Lacombe was an Oblate of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), and had an Ojibway chief among his ancestors. He won a place in Calgary's history not only through the establishment of the Father Lacombe Old Folks' Home and Orphanage (recently destroyed by fire) but also through his strong influence with the native people, which helped maintain peace in the area during the Riel Rebellion of 1885.

In 1972, St. Patrick's Parish, on the southern outskirts of Calgary, was expanded to include the area between Anderson Road and Fish Creek Park on the north and south, and the Bow River and Canyon Meadows community on the east and west. Between 1972 and 1974, Masses in this parish were celebrated at St. Patrick's Church in Midnapore, St. Boniface School in Lake Bonavista and St. Catherine School in Canyon Meadows. Father McNamee, who later became the founding Pastor of St. Bonaventure Parish, celebrated the first Mass in this expanded parish on August 20, 1972, at St. Boniface School in Lake Bonavista.



*Sod-turning and outdoor mass at new Church site, June 21, 1981, with Father McNamee and Father Kirley. Speaker Father Eugene Cooney on right.*



*Sod-turning at new Church site, June 21, 1981, Parish Council Chairman Gerry Korby and Father McNamee, while Father Kirley supervises.*

Then, on October 1, 1974, St. Bonaventure Parish was canonically erected by Bishop Paul O'Byrne, and the Canyon Meadows area added to St. Gerard's Parish. Father John McNamee of St. Bonaventure Parish and Father Jack Kirley of St. Patrick's Parish were named as co-pastors of this new parish.

In 1974, the new St. Bonaventure Junior High School was opened. The Catholic School Board and St. Bonaventure Parish had made an agreement to include an adjoining Church complex, in which Masses were held beginning in 1974. A census showed there were 650 families in the parish, yet the Church complex could only accommodate 350 people. The Church Bulletin for June 9, 1974 reported that a total of 18 readers, 18 ushers, 14 choir members and 9 communion distributors had volunteered their services to the parish. This Church complex was to be the parish centre for the next eight years, until the present St. Bonaventure Church was built in 1982.

Also in 1974, Father James Jordan was appointed as Assistant Pastor to Fathers McNamee and Kirley. Parish boundaries were established as lying between Anderson Road and Fish Creek, and from MacLeod Trail east to the Bow River.

In 1975, the Catholic Women's League (C.W.L.) formed a branch in the Parish, and in the fall, our first parish Council was installed. Mr. Al Gerritsen designed and carved the Stations of the Cross and relief carvings of the Virgin Mary and St. Bonaventure, all of which are still on display in the present Church.

Because of continued parish growth, a referendum was held in 1976 to decide on whether to stay in the present church complex attached to St. Bonaventure Junior High School, to expand that complex or to build a new church across the street. A total of 678 parishioners cast ballots, with a decisive 65% voting in favour of building a new church. It would be six years before this dream was realized. Funds for construction would have to be raised and design of the new church had to be carefully planned.

Also in 1976, a new rectory was constructed next to the new church site at Lake Lucerne Drive and Acadia Drive. Father Jordan was reassigned and his place was taken by Father Richard Caldwell as assistant to Father McNamee. The next year saw Father Caldwell transferred and the return of Father Kirley for Sunday Masses. Parishioners from that time fondly remember Father Kirley's sermons, which usually began "I just read an interesting book..." He would then proceed to relate the lessons in the book to Church teachings.

Later in 1977, Father Kirley was replaced by Father Rafer, who in turn was replaced in 1978 by Father Michael Browne. Father Rupert McLellan served as Pastor while Father McNamee took a well-deserved sabbatical in Jerusalem, celebrating his Silver Jubilee as a priest.

In 1978, the Church Building Fund was established, but it would take three years before construction began. In the meantime, in February 1979 Father Bill Trienekens was named Assistant Pastor, only to be replaced in September by Father Stan Pietlock. The Knights of Columbus Council #7432 was established in St. Bonaventure Parish on November 7, 1979, and the original Charter graces the Columbian Room in the Parish Centre.



*Father Camille Nicoud and Father John McNamee in gym at St. Bonaventure High School.*



*Original entrance to St. Bonaventure Church before 1997 construction*



*Original St. Bonaventure Church at start of Church expansion.*





*Narthex, information desk and entrance to sacristy in original church.*

With great jubilation, the entire Parish celebrated the sod-turning and blessing of the new church site with an outdoor Mass on June 21, 1981. Construction of the new church, at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million, was started by Newklas Construction and would take just over one year.

During the summer, Father Pietlock was transferred to Sacred Heart Parish in Calgary and was replaced by a priest from Mexico, Father Camille Nicoud. Father Nicoud stayed until March 1982, when he was appointed to minister to the Spanish-speaking Catholics in Calgary but he passed away shortly thereafter.

With Father Nicoud's departure, newly-ordained Father Wayne Poile was appointed as Assistant Pastor and will be

well remembered for his caring and involvement with the youth of the Parish and for his sense of humour. How could we forget his jokes at the end of Mass or the day he appeared at our first parish Stampede breakfast in 1984 dressed as "Black Bart" in an all-black cowboy outfit?

August 1982 saw the completion of the new St. Bonaventure Church, and the first Mass in this new church was celebrated by Father McNamee on August 15, 1982. The official dedication and blessing of the new church was then conducted by Bishop Paul O'Byrne on September 26, 1982.

In 1983, the Knights of Columbus finished the large meeting area and Columbian Room in the church basement. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was also established in the Parish that year.

September 1984 was especially important for Catholics in Canada because of the visit of Pope John Paul II. He made a stopover in Edmonton, and many parishioners from St. Bonaventure Parish attended the outdoor Mass there. The Knights of Columbus Honour Guard contained several members of St. Bonaventure Parish. That same year the 20-foot oak cross and corpus designed by Mr. Al Gerritsen was installed behind the altar. This cross is unique because the corpus is raised slightly above the cross, signifying Christ raised from the dead at Easter.

By 1985, there were 1,650 families in the Parish, and our new church was more than filled to capacity. To alleviate this overcrowding, an agreement was made to hold additional church services at Our Lady of Maria Bistrica, the Croatian Church in Deer Run. These services were continued until 1997 when the original church was expanded.

In the summer of 1986 our founding Pastor, Father John McNamee, as well as his assistant Father Wayne Poile, were both transferred. Father McNamee was assigned to St. Luke's Parish in Calgary, and Father Wayne to St. Patrick's Parish in Medicine Hat. Father McNamee had been the force behind building our church and without him, we likely would not have the magnificent church we have today.



*Choir area in original church*

Father Denis Fleming was appointed as the new Pastor at St. Bonaventure and arrived on June 22, 1986. Father Ignatius Tran, newly-ordained, was named as Assistant Pastor. Father Fleming came from St. James Parish in Calgary and had been ordained in 1952. Father Tran fled the Communists in Vietnam while studying for the priesthood, and completed his studies in Canada.

In 1990, Father Tran was transferred to St. Ambrose Parish in Carstairs and was replaced by Father David Meadows as Assistant Pastor. In 1993 Father Meadows was transferred to St. John's Parish in Calgary and was replaced by Father Alfredo Pereira, newly arrived from Goa, India. A year later in August 1994, Father Denis Fleming, our second Pastor, retired and Father William Stephenson was appointed as the new Pastor at St. Bonaventure. In August 1996, Father Pereira, s.f.x. was reassigned to St. Patrick's Parish in Medicine Hat and Father Josef Perekubka, from Poland, was named as Assistant Pastor.

In the fall of 1998, Father Perekubka was reassigned to St. Joseph's Parish in Vauxhall, and we were briefly left without an Assistant Pastor. But in the spring of 1999, Deacon Tito Ranola was assigned to the Parish, and following his ordination in February became Assistant Pastor. During the interim, Fathers Fleming and McNamee returned from retirement to assist Father Stephenson.

During these years, the Parish continued to grow and use of church facilities increased dramatically as new committees and activities were added. In 1992, our first Parish Pictorial Directory was released. This 1999 issue is the second directory for the Parish. In December 1994, Sister Ernestine Miskolczi, sss, was appointed as a Pastoral Assistant. The previous year, Michelle Garlinski became our first Youth Ministry Coordinator. When Michelle returned to Winnipeg three years later, Denise Wilson continued this important parish ministry.

By 1996 the increased demand for church facilities, meeting rooms, more seating space and a larger narthex, was solved by a major expansion of the church. This expansion began in the spring of 1996, but services continued at the church except for a brief interlude during the summer in which the gym at St. Bonaventure Junior High School was used. The church office and additional meeting rooms were added, with completion in February 1997. Access to the church through the red plywood walkway in the construction area was named the "Red Sea" in memory of Moses who crossed that sea with the Hebrews 4000 years before. Church seating was increased from 660 to 750, and the narthex was expanded to include a baptismal font. A new small chapel was also added, and the crying room and sacristy were both relocated.



*The "Red Sea" temporary walkway into the church during expansion*



*Downstairs Parish Centre in original church before expansion*

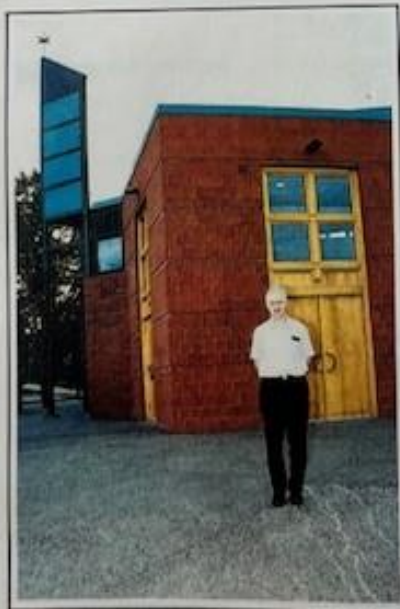
What does the future hold for our parish? With the creation of the new St. Albert the Great Parish in Mackenzie/Douglasdale, some overcrowding might be relieved. Development of a large unfinished room in the lower level is likely our next major project.



Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Jack Donoghue, who provided the original history of the Par from which the above account was compiled. Also to John Buyschaert, Peter Hay, Mary Shaw, J Tipping and Anne Zanewich, who assisted in preparation of this history.



*Excavating for the new Parish office and meeting rooms*



*Proud new "Father" in front of newly completed St. Bonaventure Church expansion*



*New small chapel*