

Saint Paul's Journey of the Nampa Catholic Church started in 1883.

All journeys start long before they begin.

Before his journey began, Paul's name wasn't Paul, and his work wasn't the Lord's work. He was a devoted worker, but his devotion wasn't Christianity based. He was an "enforcer" for the Roman fight against the early church. It was on one of his many "business trips" where the man who would be Paul first saw the light.

In the pioneering days of Idaho it is somehow fitting that the faithful who would one day be "Saint Paul's" were, at first, an unnamed group of far flung, faithful served twice a year by an itinerant priest.

Beginning in 1883 the Reverend Francis Hartleib of Saxony "...adopted the schedule of visiting his large mission field twice a year, spring and fall." "Father Hartleib was the first priest to celebrate Mass at Caldwell and Nampa."

"The Rev. Francis Hartleib, was born in Weimar, Saxony, on March 6, 1854. He was a relative of the famous musician, Franz Liszt... He went to the American College at Louvain with the intention of preparing himself in philosophy and theology for the service of the needy missions of the United States "...[He was] ordained for the Archdiocese of Oregon City, April 13, 1880, at Namur, Belgium, [and] set out for the Great American Northwest shortly after..."

An armchair historian of the Old West would surely picture the disbelief that must have visited the faith filled young priest as he first gazed on the wide, windy, west — sparsely peopled and remote beyond comprehension. Coming from the urban continent of his birth, he can't have possibly imagined the magnitude of the travel it would take to serve the unpeopled ends of his mission.

The pioneering faithful of Nampa, a remote railroad supply station in the Southwestern Idaho territory, were

shepherded by the evolving leadership of the church in the Northwest. Father Hartleib served the Vicariate Apostolic of Idaho under the administration of the Archbishop of Oregon City. The Vicariate would become the Diocese of Boise in 1893.

While a Vicariate, Nampa was served by Rt. Rev. Alphonse John Glorieux, D. D. of Dottignies, West Flanders, Belgium.

"Very shortly after Bishop Glorieux came to Idaho, he assessed the building needs of the Vicariate and began his program of the construction of churches and rectories and the repair of old time worn buildings..." One would wonder how pre recorded time could wear buildings of the west, when surely buildings generations old in Europe were still considered new.

Ten years after the arrival of Father Francis Hartleib, Bishop Glorieux continued the journey of the Nampa faithful toward a parish home. Since 1883 they had gathered in Nampa homes. "When the regular missions did not demand attention, in between services were given to churches in the Basin or in homes at Nampa, Caldwell, Emmettville, Jerusalem, and Garden Valley." Records indicate the Nampa church named "St. Paul's" was built in 1898.

"A Brief History of St. Paul's Church," an article found in a pamphlet created to celebrate Jubilee 2000, tells its readers, "The first Catholic service was held around 1895 in Cottingham Hall. Later a residence on 14th Avenue North was used. In 1900, as the population was increasing, a church was built at 1st Street and 14th Avenue South."

To the casual observer the 14th Avenue North address would appear to be our beginning. But as with any journey, ours began long before the Nampa congregation had a given place to meet.

The Nampa faithful now had a name and its first church home. Our journey was now undertaken in the name of Saint Paul, "the indefatigable Apostle of the Gentiles." So much "journey" of the Nampa faithful had been traveled, yet with

A growing pilgrimage

The nomad days of St. Paul's parish ended with the purchase of property located at the corner of 1st Street South and 14th Avenue South on February 26, 1894. The first official church building was constructed soon after. The property was sold to Bishop A. J. Glorieux on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, Idaho.

The property was later transferred from Bishop Glorieux's name to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise on December 5, 1913, presumably in return for monies to invest in the newly constructed church at the present St. Paul's location. The 1st Street South property was later sold by the Diocese to the Nampa Savings and Loan Association on June 29, 1929.

The property transferred over the years through several different owners. Today the Farm Store can be found on the original St. Paul's Church site.

Just as St. Paul left Judea early in his ministry to venture out into Asia Minor to cultivate the growing community of Christian believers, the blossoming community of St. Paul's Church needed to venture out in search of a new location for a bigger building.

The present site of St. Paul's Church was purchased on May 20, 1909 from E.H. and S.N. Dewey for the reported sum of \$3,500 by The Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, Idaho. The Waterhouse property, as it was called, was to be the new church home. It was located on the outskirts of this small Idaho town; surrounded by fields in every direction. It would expand the limits of Nampa and become one of her most familiar landmarks.

It is interesting to note that the Dewey family, the seller of the property, has a long history in southwestern Idaho through their ownership of the Boise, Nampa and Owyhee Railway Company and the well known Dewey Palace. When the property was sold by A. Hinkey to C.W. Moore in 1896, the proceeds of the sale were to be used to assist in the construction of a railroad between the city of Nampa and Silver City and DeLamar in Owyhee County.

In 1897 the Dewey family purchased the property and held it for nearly 12 years. Is it possible that the site of our existing church and school may have been considered as a possible location for the famed Dewey Palace?

In 1909, the plans for the new St. Paul's Church were designed by B.W. Tourtelotte, a partner in the architecture firm Hummel & Tourtelotte. The same firm that designed the State Capitol and St. John's Cathedral, among other famous buildings in Idaho. Work on the new church began in 1910, as recorded on the cornerstone of the building. In gratitude of his faithful pastoring, the new parish hall would be named in honor of the beloved Marist Father, Alain Dempsey.

Many other memorials were made and the new church truly began to reflect the community it served. The bell from the original church was brought over to the new church and exists today in the present bell tower.

It was during this time in the early 1900s that Basque shepherders emigrating from Bizkaia and Orozko and other regions in Spain began arriving in the west. These men and women settled in southwestern Idaho, south eastern Oregon, and Nevada and established themselves in towns such as Jordan Valley, Elko, and Nampa. Many of those early emigrant families are present members of St. Paul's parish.

Thanks to the efforts of the early parishioners, the emergent community of St. Paul's had a piece of land with room to grow and a sizable new home. One that would serve us well for nearly 100 years.

Educating St. Paul's

Perhaps you have known the pleasure of the acquaintance of one who serves the Lord in all aspects of his life. Such a person seems calm in the face of stress or crisis. He may have a quiet story to share when really he or you should be on task. He is the embodiment of Peace and filled with the Holy Spirit. He is kind to all, smiles easily, and although nobody in town really talks about it much, many of us know he gives most of what he makes to the church. Folks in and outside the church know him to be a decent man.

Such a person must have been Mr. Thomas Quinn. Father Thomas Canning must have known him personally for Thomas Quinn was the original benefactor for Saint Paul's School when Reverend Canning was the church's third pastor. Though little else has survived about Thomas Quinn in our historical records, we know that Fr. Canning is buried in the Mt. Calvary Cemetery, one of only two Marist Fathers forever enshrined there.

The school Mr. Quinn launched by his benevolent generosity began with six classrooms. It was a modest red brick building shaped like a block letter "I", surrounded by trees with a large grassy field in the back. Rt. Rev. Daniel M. Gorman, Second Bishop of the Boise Diocese, dedicated the school in September 1922. The Dominican Sisters, the first teachers of the school, were given the priest's old house, which had been located about where the parish office stands today. A new rectory was built between the church and the school to serve as home to the missionary Marist priests.

Soon the school had an enrollment of 124 students and the parish served a community of roughly 300 families.

The Parish of Saint Paul's would have been familiar with nuns by now. The Sisters of Mercy had been serving the local Hospital since 1917, which was located directly across 16th Street. Theirs was a stereotypical black and white habit. The coif and shoulders were white and the rest was a long black dress and long black veil. The paradigm of nun changed with the arrival of the Dominican Sisters at the school in 1923. They wore long white habits, modest white coifs, and the only black was the veil that fell to the middle of their backs. So much white would have brightened a classroom for certain. They taught at Saint Paul's School until 1929 when the Holy Cross Sisters arrived. Again the nuns

wore mostly black with a round white color, but the coif of a Holy Cross Sister was remarkable. A starched, pleated, round coif like the sheeting of a prairie schooner hid each nun's face in profile and lit it like a sunny day in snow when she faced her students. They taught the youth of the parish until 1939 when the Benedictine Sisters came to the rescue, this time to stay late into the 1970s.

Saint Paul's began to reach out in missionary work too. In 1924 an anonymous donor from Nampa donated the land and house, which is the present site of Saint Joseph's in Melba. The Altar Society began in 1925 with six founding members.

In 1947 Bishop Kelly ordered that St. Paul's church be enlarged to accommodate the ever growing community. The pastor at the time, Father Paulin, did so with great enthusiasm to the extent that the building which previously seated 400 faithful now accommodated 700. Bishop Kelly was pleased and was known to brag to neighboring Bishops that it was "the largest church in the northwest."

The community that began in the little, white church on 14th Avenue was now growing by leaps and bounds. It was the golden age of Mother Church in America. The time of the "Catholic Fortress", when almost every facet of life was served by the parish.

While in captivity, St. Paul wrote most of his epistles in order to encourage the early congregations he established and to "...ensure the doctrinal unity of the church." The educators working in the early St. Paul's parish took seriously this model instituted by St. Paul, both the teaching sisters and the priests charged with the theological formation of the entire community. Through their devotion and hard work, St. Paul's parish became a thriving and well established Catholic community in Idaho.

Tough Times of Change

By the 1950s, St. Paul's sons and daughters had returned from WWII to welcoming arms to pursue the hard fought and precious freedoms they had protected. Some were fighting still in Korea.

Back home at about this time, a new convent was built next to the church. This structure housed the many Benedictine Sisters that guided the youth of the still growing parish. The long, two story, red brick building was completed in 1955 and later became the Rectory and finally the present Parish Office.

Rocky times in the US Catholic Church and tensions in our own community colored the journey of St. Paul's faithful during the 1950's and 1960's. One period of history whose telling is most unpleasant is the period between the second "War to end all wars" and the Vietnam Conflict.

St. Paul's emergent Hispanic community was in a time where they were a quiet minority, socially segregated, and living the life of laborers in the outlying farm camps. Though they insisted their children speak English to become successful, the Anglo and Latino communities formed a collective yet disconnected body of believers.

Antonio "Tony" Rodriguez, proprietor of the locally renowned El Charro restaurant, recalls that he "...fought hard against discrimination and to take down the 'No Jews,' 'No Mexicans,' 'No Negroes,' 'No Indians,' 'No Japanese,' signs in Nampa." He sought the counsel of Archbishop Shriner in Portland. How might he and other Treasure Valley Latino citizens confront the discrimination facing the increasingly diverse population? Their goal was to remove the hate signs from store windows. "I went to the fraternal organizations. At the time, I was a member of the Eagles, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Knights of Columbus.

"We followed with letters to the state senate and house of representatives. [A legislative] bill passed in 1962 and the signs came down."

After that Tony Rodriguez spear headed the celebrations of traditional Mexican holidays throughout Idaho. "Every December 12th, we have a big celebration beginning at 5 a.m. for La Virgen de Guadalupe at St. Paul's Church. We decorate the church with flowers and sing "Las Mananitas" to la Virgen. Sometimes, we take the mariachi to sing at church. This is a very special day that makes everybody happy."

The mid to late 1960's and early 70's also saw the introduction of the post Vatican II changes in the liturgy.

Both the Spanish and English speaking communities watched in silent amazement of Vatican II. Latin had, for centuries, been the universal language of the Mass. With the Mass now in the vernacular it became necessary for the Marists to serve St. Paul's with priests able to celebrate in both languages. Both populations watched, often in bewilderment, with other Catholics throughout the US as the youth of the Church began to hear and understand the liturgy at a younger age than any other previous generation.

Among the notable adaptations brought by the Second Vatican Council were: the removal of the

communion rail, a thigh high barrier that kept the layman in the pews; the Lector, formerly a member of clergy, gradually became a lay Reader from the congregation; he left the company of the altar boys—only boys in those days—and took a seat in the pews with his family.

In Nampa as in many communities around the country, insurance companies and fire departments forced the choir from the choir loft. Soon the liturgy called less for an unseen angel choir and more for a visible choir of the congregation. Fran Pierson remembers that it took until the early 1970's to finally leave the loft for good.

When priests all over the US and in the universal church turned their backs to the altar and the tabernacle, their fronts to the worshipers, with arms raised they faced and embraced the faithful, who were now full participants in the mass.

The Church's old white altar a majestic presence of ornate, white carpentry that filled the arched recess of the dais (see photo), was moved to the mission church at Oreana, Idaho when it left Nampa. Fran Pierson remembers the picture of The Last Supper from the front of the altar going to the Catholic Church in Marsing. In spite of it all, the community of St. Paul's weathered the storms of growth and change. Sometimes together, sometimes apart, but always for the same reason: to build a better Body of Christ.

A Community Reunited

It's unclear what first attracted two Dominican sisters from Racine, Wisconsin to Nampa. They first helped meet the needs of north Nampa's Hispanic community by creating a Food Bank. Soon thereafter they began laying the groundwork of what would eventually be a small diocese parish to which the faithful of north Nampa could walk. In concert with St. Paul's parish council, Sister Janet Ackerman and Sister Jeanne Burg worked with Father Mauricio Medina and Bishop Sylvester Treinen to purchase some property for a new church in 1980. What had been the Peace Lutheran Church in the Lake View Park neighborhood became Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. The new parish began to minister to Spanish speaking Catholics in north Nampa.

Well aware of the imminent lack of space confronting the large parish of St. Paul's, the Marist Fathers dispatched a letter to members of the St. Paul's community who lived in the vicinity of the north Nampa church to consider attending Mass in their neighborhood. The Marists left it to the discretion of parishioners whether or not to make the change.

Many did. Some did not.

In fact, the Marist's and the Diocese had been concerned about overcrowding in the church for many years. In 1966 the Bishop and St. Paul's pastor at the time, Fr. Edward Donze, had the foresight to purchase land for future growth. The property they obtained was a roughly 21 acre parcel of open farmland just over one mile west of the present St. Paul's site. The "Roosevelt" property, as it came to be known, was purchased for a fraction of its present day value and was leased for farming, which provided the parish with a small revenue source for 38 years. Today, the property offers St. Paul's an almost ideal setting for the construction of its new church and school campus.

In the course of the 17 years of the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, attendance blossomed. The English mass was held at 5:00 pm on Saturdays for the Anglo minority of the parish. Two, and later three, Spanish language masses were held each Sunday. All the masses for feast days and important holidays were bilingual masses that became a big highlight for the community. Monthly events and parish activities dotted the social calendar.

A full variety of ministries served the community of Our Lady of Guadalupe—Lectors, altar servers, musicians, catechists for religious education, fellowship, and social justice. Members of the congregation especially recall the Holy Spirit recruiting the Diaspora of the Latino community of Nampa during the service of Father Tom Taylor.

The bilingual Masses brought the readings and music in both Spanish and English. The ministers of music learned the Spanish and English language versions of the Our Father and other necessary songs and responsorials. And, most importantly, the diocese provided priests who spoke Spanish.

Under then Bishop Tod Brown, Our Lady of Guadalupe was required by the diocese to close in 1997. The Marists still served St. Paul's at the time. The Latino community of the Nampa faithful, were again attending the only Roman Catholic parish in town, and again the primary language was English. The readings and homily were provided by a Spanish speaking lay minister. The Latino community, many of whom were now unable to celebrate Mass in their native tongue, were less than filled with the Holy Spirit. The last months of service by the Marist Fathers were difficult for the Guadalupe community who so missed their little church.

After over 95 years of generous leadership and ministering, often through difficult times, the Marists ended their stewardship of the Nampa mission of St. Paul's in the summer of 1998. The holy men

enjoyed a warm farewell at a celebration held in the Columbian Hall. The thankful parish shared a goodbye filled with tears—both from sadness and laughter.

The parish was faced with another difficult transition and an uncertain future lie ahead. Later that same year, the diocese of Boise placed Father Jerry Funke, an Anglo who spoke Spanish, and Father George Gonzales, a Latino who spoke English, at Saint Paul's to serve the full community of Nampa believers in both English and Spanish.

To honor the memory of the north Nampa church, Father Jerry commissioned a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the shrine at the back of St. Paul's. The Spanish language masses began to fill up when word spread that St. Paul's had a priest who spoke Spanish. In a few short months the 10:00 English mass and 12:00 Spanish mass had standing room only. Those who had served the many ministries of Our Lady of Guadalupe began serving St. Paul's. Music groups stayed almost intact. Religious Education ministers and catechists began serving at St. Paul's creating a feeling of continuity.

In spite of the successful reuniting of the two communities, the parish still had one dilemma: the combined congregation cried out for more space.

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