

HISTORY OF ST. AGNES PARISH - KELLOGG MN

The history of St. Agnes Parish has its roots in pre-Civil War days when the Catholic settlers who came to the territory, of which is now Kellogg, attended Mass in the homes of pioneers who lived in the locations of Snake Creek, Indian Creek and Sand Prairie. In the Snake Creek area, Mass was most likely said at the Sullivan or McCarthy homes. The duties of saying Mass and performing the sacraments were shared, whenever possible, by Fathers Felix Tissot and James Trobec, but several months might pass before one of the priests were able to return and minister to the spiritual needs of these early pioneers.

When St. Felix was established in Wabasha, Catholics from Kellogg went there for Mass and other services. Later, the Immaculate Conception parish, Highland Township, was organized and the people of Kellogg were affiliated with that parish. The distance to Wabasha and Conception was great in those days of travel on foot or ox-cart and consequently these pioneers could not attend Mass and receive the sacraments as often as they desired.

Whenever they could get together and discuss their affairs, the chief topic of conversation would be a "Catholic parish in Kellogg." The times were hard and the pioneers were not wealthy. Forced to work hard day and night, working the land and providing for their families, they were accustomed to sacrifice and willing to put much effort into establishing their own church where they might practice their faith and enjoy the spiritual comforts that come with it.

On January 11, 1900 Bishop Cotter in Winona was consulted as to the request that a church be constructed in Kellogg. The plan was approved and Father Maximillian Wurst of St. Felix at Wabasha delegated to aid and direct the people of Kellogg in their efforts. On January 15, a meeting was held for all interested in building a Catholic church. This effort proved to be successful and \$1200 in bankable paper was subscribed toward the building of a church estimated to cost \$4500. By February 8, \$3000 had been subscribed. On February 22, Father Wurst announced that the handsome gift of three lots on which to build the church had been donated by Mr. Miles McDonough. The lots were located across the street from the public school. On March 6, a building committee was elected. J.J. Dady and John Bricher were elected treasurer and secretary. Other board members were Matthias Leisen, Peter Howe and John R. Keating. The contract to quarry the rock was let to Thomas Pratt of Watopa Township and J.H. Evans was awarded the contract to build the foundation as well as the contract for the superstructure of the building. Ground was broken on May 15 and the actual work begun on May 28. Work on the new church progressed daily as well as interest in the project and fundraising socials were held by various groups in the Village to help pay the building costs. Total cost at completion was \$5000.

The date for the Dedication of the new church was set for Tuesday, December 4, 1900 at 10 o'clock. A procession beginning in front of the C.C. McDonough residence was led by the St. Joseph Society and The Women's Catholic Order of Foresters. Leo Grass carried the cross as Bishop Cotter, Pastor Wurst and fourteen other attending clergy were escorted to the new church. Serving Mass were Joseph Maher and Irvin Johnson, wearing new cassocks sewn by Regina and Ramona Saeler.

WABASHA HERALD STANDARD - 6 December 1900

“The church was crowded to the utmost capacity, chairs being placed in the aisles and in every available nook. From the gallery the St. Felix Choir rendered beautiful music. Father I. Sands (LaCrescent) was the celebrant. Father J.A. Comiskey (Winona) preached a magnificent sermon...and at the close of the service Bishop Cotter gave a short address, thanking the people of Kellogg for their very generous gift to the service to God. At the conclusion all wended their way to the Woodman Hall where a splendid dinner was served and where one hundred people could sit down at one time. This commenced at 11:30 o’clock and the tables were crowded until after 3 o’clock...a big undertaking, but it was accomplished in the most skillful manner. The new church is a model of perfection, well equipped with modern seats and has a beautiful high altar. It is heated with furnace and complete in every detail. In the way of furnishings it will yet need many things, among which might be mentioned stations of the cross and statuary and a new organ. We are informed that a choir has been formed and will be ready to provide music for all services in the future.”

The dedication of the St. Agnes Church was a momentous occasion for all the residents of the Kellogg area. St. Agnes remained a mission parish to St. Felix with Father Wurst serving as pastor for both parishes until 1908 when Father James Culliton became the first resident pastor.