

The Progress, October 17, 1985

St. Mary Parish, Anacortes, to mark diamond jubilee October 19-20

This Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 19-20, St. Mary Parish, Anacortes, will mark its Diamond Jubilee. Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen will be the celebrant of the 5pm Mass on Saturday. A dinner will follow in the parish hall. Activities will continue on Sunday, Oct. 20, with Masses at 9 and 11 am, followed by tours and a reception.

Anacortes was already a growing metropolis in 1910, when St. Mary's was founded, and there had been considerable Catholic activity in the community even before then.

Itinerant missionaries had made regular visits since the town's founding in 1877, but the first record of a Mass having been said on Fidalgo Island was not until 1899.

The Benn and Rodgers families and a Ned Cook were the entire congregation. Later, Masses were offered on an irregular basis at the Benn home.

In the early 1900s, Anacortes was a mission served at different times by priests from LaConner and Sedro Woolley. But as the number of Catholics increased, there became a need for a church where services could be held on a regular basis. In 1902, a small wooden church was begun at the corner of 7th and "N" Avenue. It was agreed that the new church would be called St. Mary's. In 1904, the first St. Mary's Church was dedicated by Bishop Edward O'Dea of the then Nesqually Diocese.

Records indicate that the first Catholic children born in Anacortes were baptized in LaConner by Father N.J. Power. With the increasing number of Catholic children, there became a need for religious education classes. The first classes were conducted by Adelaide Davis Kasch in her home. She prepared the children for Holy Communion and Confirmation. On Nov 17, 1895, the first group of youngsters were taken in a hay wagon for the two-and-a-half hour trip to LaConner, where the sacraments were administered by Bishop Aegidius Junger.

Under the direction of Father W.J. Metz, who succeeded Father Power at LaConner, a Rosary Society was organized with Mrs. J.K. Knapp as the first president. Arrangements were also made to conduct religious education classes in the Anacortes Hospital Building. Whenever Father Metz visited Anacortes, he himself taught the classes.

In 1904, Father Matthew Woods became the pastor of the LaConner church and had Anacortes as a mission. Seeing the growth of the Catholic community, he believed a larger church was needed. Near the end of 1909, he ordered the little wooden church moved from the corner of 7th and N Avenue to the location on 7th, near the middle of the block between "N" and "M" Avenues. Fallen plaster, broken siding and dust greeted Father Gustave Treunet, when he first entered the Church to assume his duties as the first resident Pastor in February 1910.

Not wishing to start the construction of a new church immediately, Father Treunet had the little church repaired and replastered and enlarged.

On January 14, 1924, a fire destroyed the sacristy, and the vestments and chalice were a total loss. Services were transferred to the St. Joan of Arc Hall, which had been completed in 1920 as the basement for the new church.

Services continued in the hall until October 20, 1929, when the new church was finished and dedicated by Bishop O'Dea. The altars, designed by Father Treunet, were built in Everett. The original statues, which had been retrieved from the fire, had been refinished and again put into use.

In August 1948, Father Andrew Squier was appointed to assist Fr. Treunet, who was dying of cancer. Fr. Squier continued on as substitute pastor after Fr. Treunet's death on September 7, 1948. In June 1949, he was succeeded by Father Theodore Sullivan. In February 1954, Father Donald Conger was named pastor and a year-and-a-half later Father Paul Auer was appointed.

The following year a parish drive brought in nearly \$12,000, and eight acres of land were purchased for future parish expansion. In 1968, a school, consisting of eight classrooms, a gym and a kitchen was completed on the side. It was dedicated in May of that year.

Because of the lack of Religious to serve as teachers, the school was never used in this capacity. The building is now the parish center with the classrooms given over to catechetical instruction on Sundays and Wednesday evenings. On other evenings, parish organizations, Scripture study classes and prayer groups use the rooms.

From July 1976, until July 1977, Father Jay Shanahan served as pastor. He was succeeded by Father Kenneth Ogradowski. Under Father Ogradowski's leadership, a church and rectory were built next to the school. These buildings were dedicated by Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen on May 13, 1979.

In July 1981, Father George McLean joined Father Ogradowski as co-Pastor. New activities were added and the parish continued to grow.

The little church started 75 years ago has continued to grow slowly along with the town. Today, it is the largest church body in the community, with family memberships of 450 registered households.

The Altar Society, small in the beginning, now has seven guilds and is affiliated with the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women. All are working actively for their parish. More than 60 men are involved in the Father Treunet Council of the Knights of Columbus, which was reestablished about five years ago. Heads of all organizations, a total of 17 including those working in the Catechetical Formation Program, comprise the Coordinating Council, which under the guidance of the co-pastors direct parish activities.

Father Kenneth Ogradowski retired in August, but remains in residence in the parish house. Oblate of Mary Immaculate Father Gerry Clenaghan was appointed co-pastor on August 15.