

The History of St. Rose Catholic Church

Rushville had a small number of Roman Catholics, numbering eight families, as early as 1838 (a fact that is certified by the reports of missionary priests coming from St. Louis, Missouri). Previous to the year 1844, the western part of Illinois was included in the jurisdiction of the bishop of St. Louis, and many prominent priests visited Rushville in that early period. Of these may be mentioned Father Peter Paul LeFevre, later a bishop of Detroit, Michigan, who in 1836 referred to Rushville as a possible out-mission of the old ghost parish at Fountain Green (northwest of Rushville). Father Charles Felix Van Quickenborne, a pioneer missionary of the Society of Jesus and founder of the Missouri Jesuit province; and Father George A. Hamilton, a relative of John Lancaster Spalding (bishop of Peoria), visited Rushville in the 1830's.

Springfield was a mission center as early as 1839. Father Hamilton ranged over the surrounding country, the heart of the present diocese of Springfield. The first brick Catholic church in Mt. Sterling was erected in 1849, and for many years thereafter this was the base of missionary visitations of all the Catholic settlements of Brown county. Rushville was one of the early dependencies of Mt. Sterling. *The Official Catholic Directory* of 1854 states that Father William Feeley, pastor of the Catholic church in Mt. Sterling, occasionally visited Rushville, then in the Chicago diocese.

The Reverend John George Alleman, O.P. visited many isolated Catholic families on both sides of the Mississippi River saying Mass in their homes and administering the sacraments. His travels took him as far east as the Illinois River, so perhaps he visited Rushville in Schuyler County. He built as many as a dozen chapels in western Illinois.

In the early 1860's church services were held in the home of a Patrick Fox, on a more or less regular basis. The Saint Rose church building was started in 1870. Earliest accounts in the *Rushville Times* tell of Father John LaMars from Macomb succeeding in raising \$1,000 (a huge amount in those days!) for the new church building. In what is now the 400 block of W. Adams street. A railroad station one block away made it convenient for visiting priests.

In August of 1872 the structure was ready for the roof. It was a frame building 32 by 50 feet, costing about \$2,000. On August 8, 1872, James G and Anna McCreery deeded to the bishop of Chicago the present church land for \$250. According to one source, the first Mass was not offered in the new building until Sunday, March 22, 1873 at 11 a.m. by Father Thomas Mangan of St. Paul's Macomb. However another old record states that Mass was offered monthly from the time the building was started in 1870. *The Rushville Times* published the schedule of monthly Masses during those years. In any case, the centennial of the parish was celebrated in 1980 anticipating the date of official establishment by three years.

On August 2, 1877 the bishop of Chicago deeded the land and the building to the first bishop of the Peoria diocese, John Lancaster Spalding. The Peoria diocese was formally established in 1877, and Schuyler county was included in its jurisdiction. The volume *The Good Work Begun: Centennial History of Peoria Diocese*, by Alice O'Rourke, O.P. (1977), lists the year 1873 as the date of canonical establishment of St. Rose (page 185). Thus this parish

antedates the establishment of the Peoria diocese by four years! Other references may be found on pages 16, 27 and 126 of that history.

In 1907 St. Bernard's mission in Bushnell became a parish, and St. Rose was designated as an out-mission (which it remained until 1960). According to unofficial reports in the early 1920's there was a Catholic family in Rushville by the name of Purcell. Divine worship was offered in the church once a month until 1927, when it became a regular Sunday celebration. By 1932 there were about 10 Catholic families in Rushville, but only three children. Many official records pertaining to St. Rose were lost in several fires at the Bushnell parish; hence our incomplete knowledge of early events and people. Fathers John Gordon, Michael Van Raes and Heinc Ciesielski were among the Bushnell pastors also serving St. Rose during the 1940's and 1950's.

In 1944 the interior of the church was remodeled, and the old potbelly stove was removed from the center of the church. The first bishop to visit St. Rose was Bishop Joseph Schlarman, on the occasion of conferring the sacrament of Confirmation on 28 candidates (October 21, 1945). In 1952 the church was again remodeled.

On June 15, 1960 with about 30 families in the parish, Bishop John B. Franz of Peoria designated St. Rose as a full parish, under the spiritual patronage of the Dominican, St. Rose of Lima. The bishop appointed Father Louis M. Condon as the first full-time pastor. The bishop made a grant of \$10,000 towards the construction of a rectory on the corner of N. Franklin and W. Adams streets (the former Wendell Ray lot). The one-story rectory with full basement facilities was completed in 1962. Bishop Franz believed that every county seat should have the benefit of a resident pastor, and that the Rushville area would grow in population. In addition to all of Schuyler County, the parish territory includes Astoria and Woodland Townships in Fulton County.

The second pastor was Father Robert E. Reynolds, appointed in June of 1962. In keeping with the revised liturgy mandated by the Second Vatican Council, the interior of the church was completely renovated in the summer of 1963. This pastor also purchased the lot between the church and the rectory and covered both buildings with aluminum siding (1971). Reynolds coordinated the parish centennial celebration on Sunday, October 25, 1970 with Bishop Franz preaching the homily at the special 1 p.m. liturgy. Under the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the parish gradually became more involved in humanitarian, ecumenical and civic endeavors. Christ and the Scriptures became focal points of a dynamic parish life. For a number of years prior to 1970 the Dominican Sisters from Mt. Sterling (Springfield Congregation) assisted with the C.C.D. religion classes at St. Rose.

On June 16, 1971 Father John C. Anderson was appointed pastor. He supervised the addition of the new parish hall-C.C.D. center to the west side of the church, and the addition of a porch to the front (1972). Father William S. Harbert was appointed pastor in 1973. Father Ronald C. Lievens served as interim administrator for a few months in 1974, being succeeded by Father James E. Rickey as administrator the same year. The latter continued to serve the Catholics in Macomb as well. Father Henry M. Schubert was in residence during 1976-77. Father Donnelly J. Fitzpatrick was appointed administrator in 1976, while continuing as pastor of St. Bernard's in Bushnell.

Father Richard E. Trutter, O.P. was appointed pastor effective July 15, 1977. He came to Rushville from Colorado Springs, Colorado where he was involved in campus ministry, as well as assisting in various parishes. He is still a pastor at this writing. In 1980 the parish purchased a lot across Adams street for future use.

Throughout the years various groups have been active in this parish: Altar and Rosary Society (women), Men's Club, Catholic Youth Organization, Bible study, Knights of Columbus members, etc. Members of the parish community are active in many fraternal, patriotic, and business organizations.

The present bishop, Edward W. O'Rourke, has visited the parish a number of times, chiefly in connection with the conferral of the sacrament of Confirmation (1972, 1975, 1978, 1980 and 1983).

As the parish moves well into the second century of service, it is well to recall that the Catholic faith is ever new, yet traditional. It is built upon the Rock of Peter (Matthew 16:18) and the other apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). On the other hand it tries to meet the challenges of the present time, and prepare for the future. *Submitted by Father Richard Trutter*