

To write a history of our parish, the history of Curry County and the city of Clovis must be taken into account. The economy of the State, County and City play an important part in the life of the parishioner and the growth of the parish. Clovis is situated on the far Eastern side of New Mexico. Our land is high, flat, prairie land, almost treeless, no woods, lakes or rivers. We are geographically almost more Texan in culture, economy and growth than we are New Mexican. We are rather far from Santa Fe and the State government.

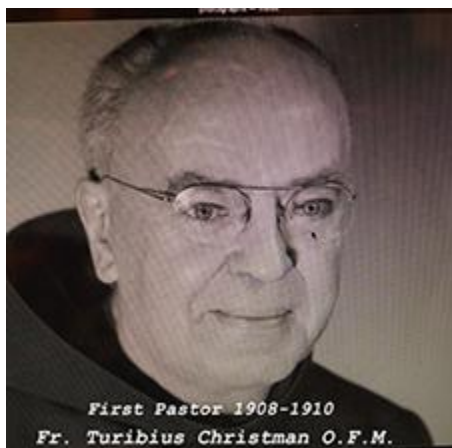
In Church affairs, we are somewhat isolated from Santa Fe, and the vibrant life of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese. In fact, we seem to have been rather orphans not belonging particularly to either New Mexico or Texas. Our parish has been fortunate to be under the guidance and direction of the Franciscan Fathers from Cincinnati and later its Daughter Province of Lady of Guadalupe, Albuquerque, New Mexico, for many years, 81 years until 1989.

Our

The first Mass in Clovis was celebrated in 1908, by Fr. Generose Stronk, O.F.M., who came from St. Peter's in Roswell, New Mexico, in the home of Mrs. Patrick O'Connell, near the train depot. Monthly Mass was also offered on different weekends at the Burns, Hemstreet, and Scheurich homes. At that first Mass Fr. Generose counted 8 persons. In May, 30 attended Mass, in July, 70.



April
from
of



Fr. Turibius Christman, O.F.M. ordained in 1908, was our first pastor from August 1908-December 1910. Archbishop Pifival of Santa Fe ordered the pastor of St. Peter's Church in Roswell to organize a mission in Clovis. Fr. Turibius came from Roswell in a horse drawn buggy and said Mass once a month. The trip was long and arduous. He would stay over-night at the Burns, Sellers, O'Connell, or Scheurich homes. Mass was said in these homes and also in Pat O'Connell's Saloon. Beer bottles were wrapped in white napkins to hold the candles and folding chairs were set up. Later an empty town hall on Main at 3rd St. was used. The railroad laid their southern

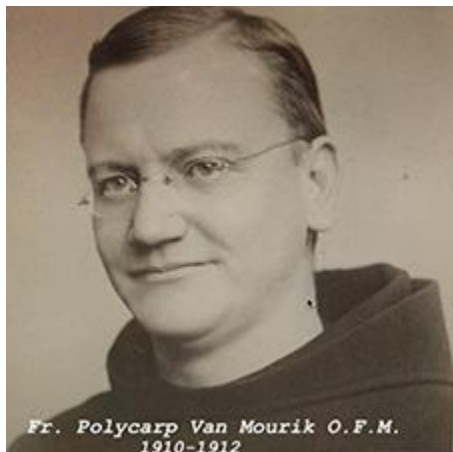
line and Fr. Turibius could leave Roswell at midnight and arrive in Clovis at 3:00AM. He began in earnest the task of organizing a parish.

The following is a letter written by Mr. Frank S. Burns in 1908:

"We, the Catholics of Clovis, NM, hoping to commence the building of a church beginning in the year 1909 would respectfully ask the people of Clovis, especially the Catholics, be as liberal as possible and place the amount they propose to give opposite their names. L.M.Cassidy \$100; Jas. F. Burns \$100; J.H. Barry \$100; F.P. Quinn

(gone from the district); Von Elm Bedstittel (gone); C.A. Scheurich \$100; Robt. Byrnes \$25; P.O'Connell \$50; T.J. Clary \$25; J.E. Houchen \$10; Thos. Doran (gone) Judge Adams (gone); L. Szily (gone); C. A. Clayton (gone); D.W. Steed \$15; A. Lata \$50; First Nat'l Bank \$25; W.J. Hanna (gone); Jas. Leher \$10; G.W. Singleton \$15; A.G. Baley \$5; S.J. Edwards \$10; W.M. Mansell \$15; Conrad Zwisher \$50; Wm. Rothman; H.J. Schmidt & Schultz \$10; American Bank & Trust Co. \$25; C. R. Worral, Memorial stations in memory of her mother (a Catholic); Frank Burke (gone); A.A. Maxwell (gone); Fr. Tiberius Christman \$5; Miss Walsh \$1."

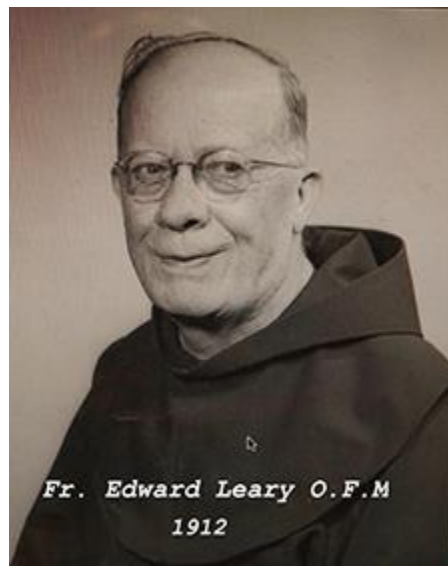
The names given above were pioneers in building Clovis and the surrounding lands. At that time, men were coming to the area and filing on land under the Homestead Act. If a person established a shack dwelling, lived and farmed or broke part of his 160 acres, it was then deeded to them by the US government under a Patent. There were not many Catholics in Curry County. The names with (gone) by them were those who had gone and given up.



Clovis. A little pot-bellied stove sacristy.

The first church was Spring of 1912 on a block of the Liebelt Heiirs in their new

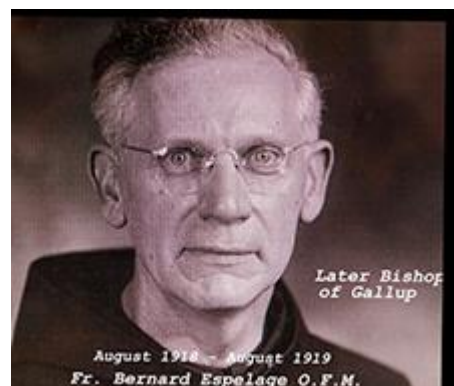
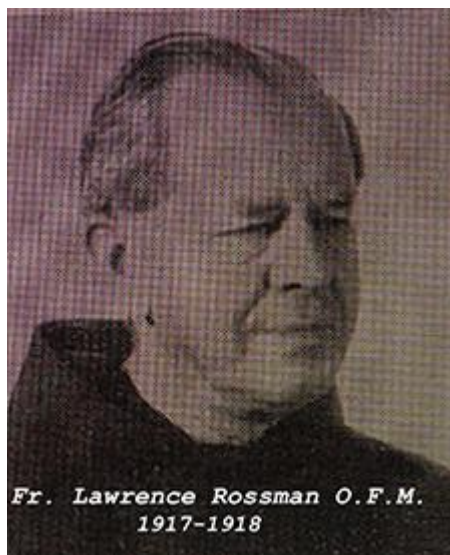
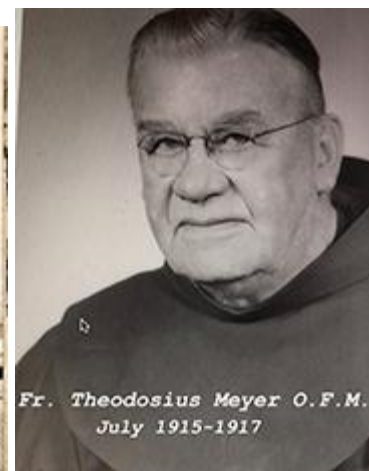
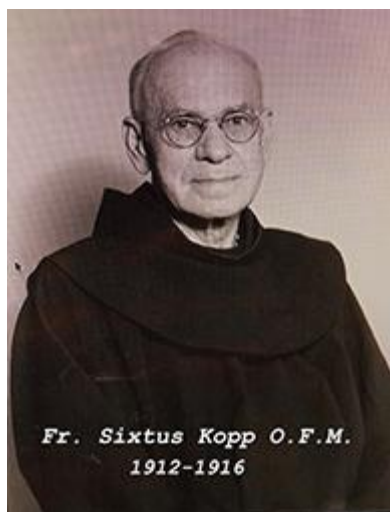
In 1910 Father Polycarp VanMourik, O.F.M. arrived in December and began to build a church. The

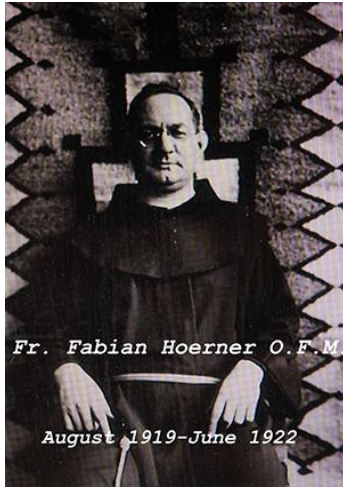


contract was let in the fall of 1911 and the foundation was laid (with aid from Cincinnati). A sacristy was built on the south side of the original Church, and Father had a small steel cot to sleep on during his monthly visit to warmed the

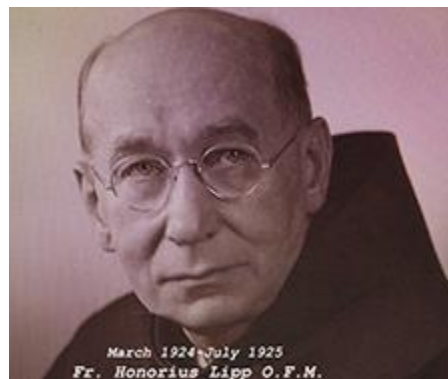
completed in the land donated by additions. In 1912 Fr. Edward Leary, O.F.M. came from Roswell, and he dedicated the new first church.

Fr. Sixtus Kopp, O.F.M. was pastor from August 1912-July 1915. Fr. Theodosius Meyer, O.F.M. was pastor from July 1915-1917. Fr. Lawrence Rossman, O.F.M., 1917-1918; then Most Rev. Bernard Espelage O.F.M, (who later become the first Bishop of Gallup), was pastor from Aug. 1918 - Aug. 1919; and he began having a special mass for the Spanish-speaking congregation of the parish.





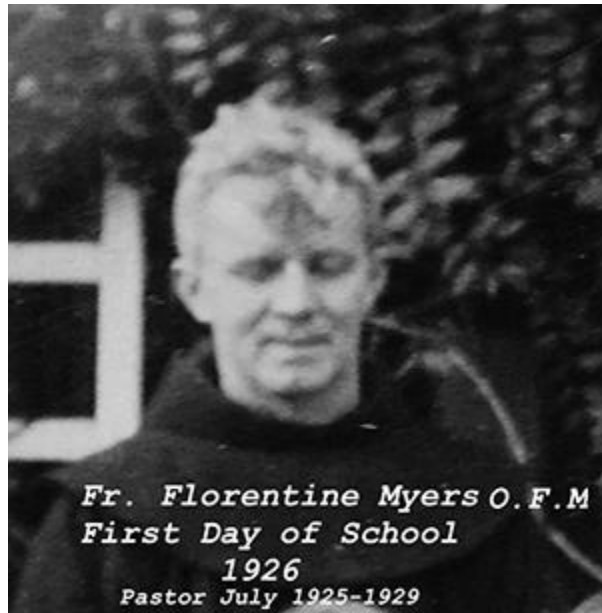
Fr. Fabian Hoerner, O.F.M. was pastor from Aug. 1919 – June 1922. He began in earnest to build a home in Clovis due to the long travel from Roswell. The money was raised, and the first rectory was completed in 1920 for \$10,000. Clovis now had a resident pastor. This building was a very large, comfortable, 2-story home, with a basement and a wide front porch. It was built east of the corner on 9th Street. This rectory was financed in part by generous contributions from Ohio. Sacred Heart parishioners were immensely proud of this structure.



Fr. Turibius George Christman, O.F.M. returned, 10 years after his first pastor ship, from June 22 1922- March 1924.

Fr. Honorius Lipps, O.F.M. was pastor from March 1924-July 1925, gave the following account: "There was a 10 or 12 room house (the first 2 story rectory) and a small church on the property. My salary was \$50 a month. I had to raise chickens and sell eggs in

order to live. There was no school, no janitor, no nothing except myself, and no car. I went by freight train to the mission in Elida. I gave instructions to the children on Saturdays, between cleaning house, cooking and firing furnaces. There were many mixed marriages among the English speaking folk. Cake sales were the means of raising funds and the pastor was supposed to be present and shake hands with the buyers. There were more communions on First Fridays than on Sundays."



Fr. Florentine Meyers,O.F.M., pastor from July 1925-July 1929, saw that the city population was growing but not the Catholic population in proportion. He decided a Catholic school was necessary for the growth of the parish. Archbishop Daeger of Santa Fe came to the aid of the parish in 1926. Assured of Sisters to teach, the Sisters of Mercy from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Fr. Florentine prepared to open the first parochial school in Clovis.

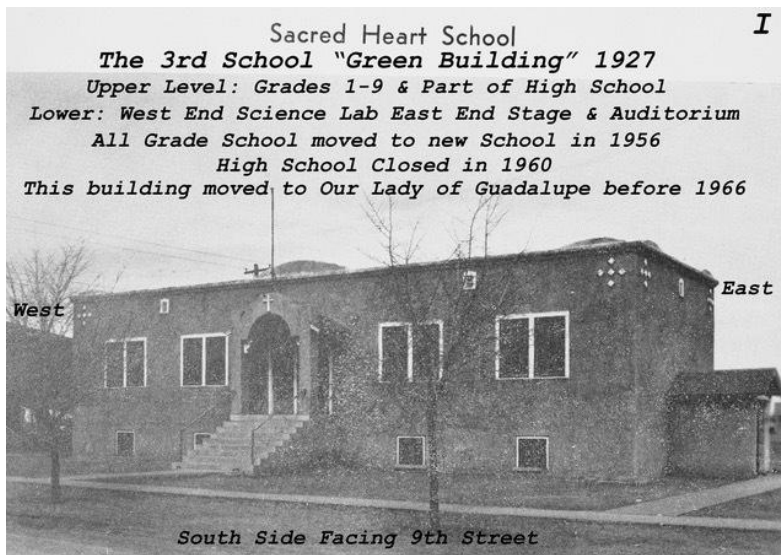
A small house was built for the priest. It was the 2nd rectory, and the large first rectory was converted into a school and home for the sisters. On September 3, 1926 three classrooms were ready for the pupils. Three Sisters were on hand to enroll 83 students on the first day, 40 of whom were Spanish-Americans. The living room of the now Convent was used for the upper grades, which consisted of 12 pupils in the 9th, 10th & 11th grades. Sister M. Claudia Friday taught the high school grades. Sister M. Eugenia Westover was the principal and Sr. Josephine M. Porter was the third original Sister. The long study on the west side of the convent was used for grades 1 through 8.



Spanish speaking and English speaking students were all taught. The number grew and soon more room was needed, as there were over 100 Spanish children to be enrolled. It was decided to build a

Spanish school. Lots were donated by members of the parish, which were secured by the Board of Catholic Missions, the Franciscan Fathers and personal friends of the pastor, Fr. Florentine. The building was soon finished on the south side of 2nd and west side of Davis Streets, and was dedicated on January 23, 1927 by the Archbishop of Santa Fe.

This building could also be used for the celebration of Mass. Enrollment continued to grow rapidly, and a second school was built on Rencher and 9th Streets, consisting of 2 large classrooms up stairs and a large basement hall the length of the building. The basement hall was eventually converted to a stage and auditorium on the east end and a science lab classroom on the west end.



The Convent continued to be used as the school, until this new school, called the "green building" because it was painted green, was built on the southeast corner. It was finished in the fall of 1927, and dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, November 24. The new school was dedicated by the Santa Fe Archbishop Albert T. Dager, O.F.M.,D.D. and 10 visiting priests at this Pontifical Mass with the festive sermon preached by Fr. Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M.(a well known Friar from the Daughter

Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Albuquerque who authored many books and was a very popular missionary from 1921-37). By 1934 enrollment had increased to 260 students and 6 Sisters.

There were many parishioners who came from Melrose, Texico and Elida. Among these were the Kos family who lived north of Clovis. Masses were at 8:30 and 10:00 AM on Sunday with Benediction at 7:00PM. The pioneer altar boys would go to the basement of the church and start the coal furnace on winter mornings. It took stamina to serve the daily 6:00AM weekday Mass!

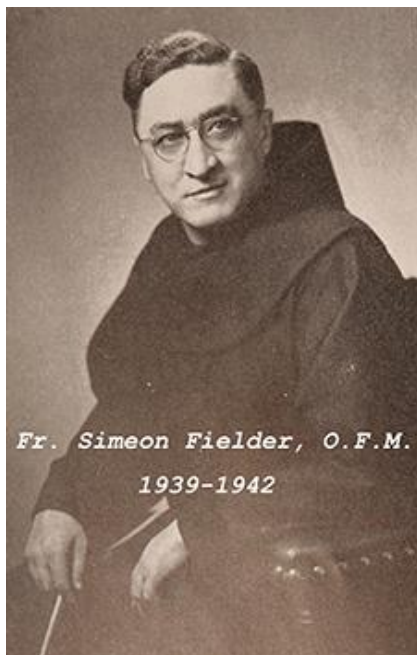
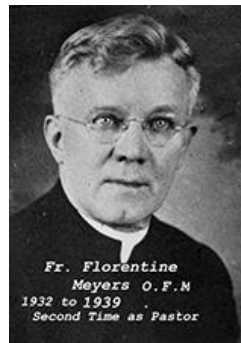
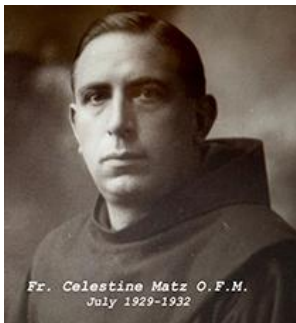
One pioneer parishioner, Maurice O'Neill, who came in 1914, recalled this incident: "One night when our priest was sitting in the sacristy, a knife was thrown through the South window just missing Florentine. The poor priest sought sanctuary with the Hilvers family for the night." In 1915 Maurice's father, John O'Neill and his 2 sisters, Anna (Mrs. P.R.Lyons) and Mae (Mrs. C.L. Eberwein) arrived in Clovis. Agnes LaLondes,



another early family, sang in the choir and played the little pump organ in the Church.

The Altar Society has always been the most active of our groups. In the early days there were Mrs. Edward Manson, Mrs. Smyer, Mrs. Chas. Scheurich, Mrs. Frank Burns, Mrs. Joe Sellers, Mrs. H.A. Miller, Mrs. Sam Carter, Mrs. J.A. Hilvers, Mrs. Bill Peterson, Mrs. A.J. Kiener, Mrs. P.R. Lyons, Mrs. C. L. Eberwein, Mrs. M. J. O'Neill, Mrs. Harry Reisiger, Mrs. Harry Voges, Miss Ann Reisiger, Mrs. Kathryn Barr, Mrs. Ray Harrison and so many others. These women contributed so much to keeping the Altar and church and helping with the finances. If the group made as much as \$35.00 per card party (? gambling? poker?), it was deemed a huge success! Every month a bake sale was held at Barry Hardware Store on Mitchell Street with each lady doing her best, and every parish family went faithfully to buy a delicacy.

In July 1929 Fr. Celestine Matz, O.F.M. was appointed pastor and remained until 1932, when Fr. Florentine Meyers, O.F.M. returned again as pastor from 1932-39. He turned the classroom at 2nd & Davis into a permanent chapel in 1937 (with the first assistant at Sacred Heart, Fr. Julian Hartig, O.F.M. who began in August 1937 and was followed by Fr. Raymond Soper, O.F.M. until July, 1939).

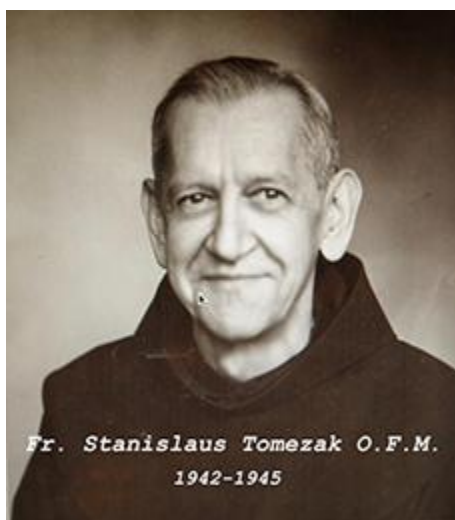


The High School obtained Accreditation in 1933, the year of our first graduating class. In July 1939 Fr. Simeon Fiedler, O.F.M. came until 1942; his assistant was Fr. Fidelius Albrecht, O.F.M. He was replaced by Fr. Conradin William Stark, O.F.M. who

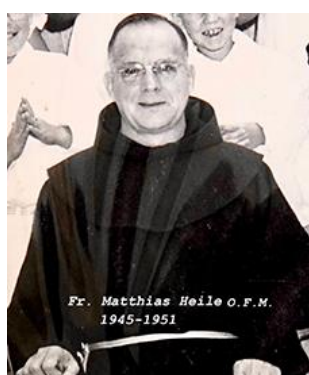
became the first pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe on January 6, 1945.

In 1942 the parish was made up of two Churches, one of which was the school at 2nd and Davis Street, 1050 souls, 2 schools of 226 students, a Sisters' Convent and 7 Sisters of Mercy, and a rectory.

This is where all the histories fail to mention that the first church was remodeled before the photo taken in 1942, which shows the major changes inside, the side balconies, sacristy changes, Jesus statue no longer above the altar and new side altars.



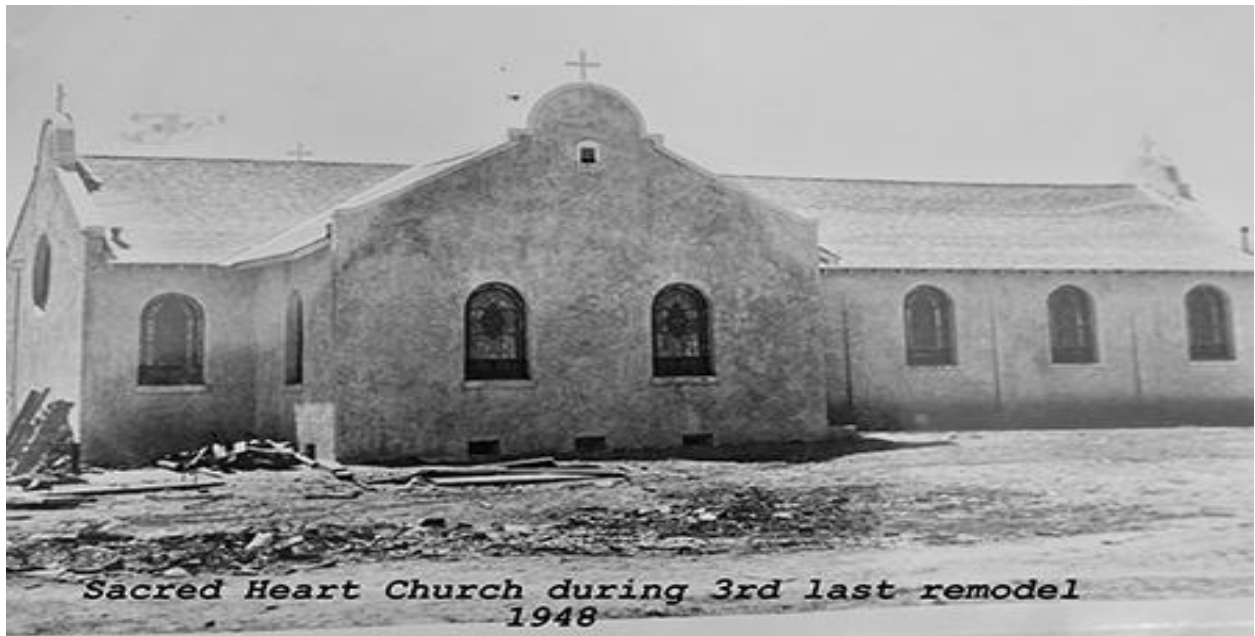
Next came pastor Fr. Stanislaus Tomezak, O.F.M. July 1942 until July 1945. The Sisters of Mercy, who staffed the 2 schools since 1926 left in the Spring of 1944. During their 18 years, 53 different Sisters of Mercy taught in Clovis; the Sisters increased to 5, then 6 then 7 teaching Sisters, but only 4 the last year. In the fall of 1944 The Sisters of St. Casimir of Chicago, Illinois, took up the teaching duties at all Sacred Heart's schools until 1984, serving for 40 years. Our Lady of Guadalupe became an independent parish in January 1946.

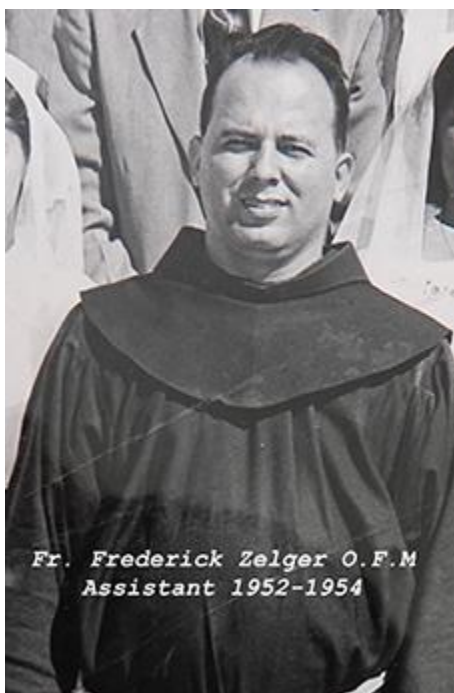
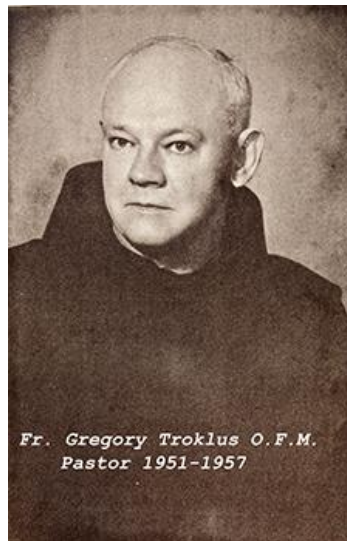
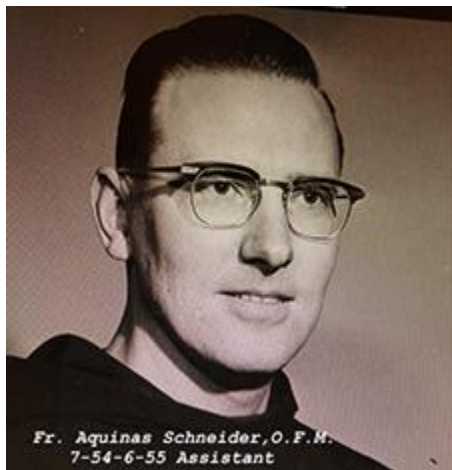


Then Fr. Matthias Heile, O.F.M. became pastor in July 1945 until July 1951. He remodeled the old church two times. In

1946, the bell tower had been removed and the big bell had been placed on the ground outside the back of the Church where altar boys rang it with great enthusiasm until 1966.

He remodeled the church again in 1948 when the big round window was placed behind the altar, the sacristy enlarged and pane glass windows placed on both sides of the sacristy. It was during this time plans were started to build a new school. A building fund was created which grew to a sizable amount. Fr. Gregory Troklus, O.F.M. came in July 1951 until July 1957. His assistant was Fr. Frederick Martin Zelger, O.F.M. 1952-1954. His next assistant was Fr. Aquinas Schneider, O.F.M. 1954-1955.

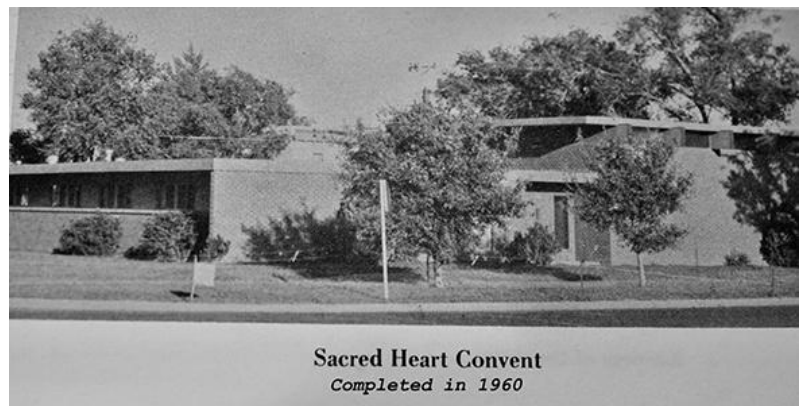
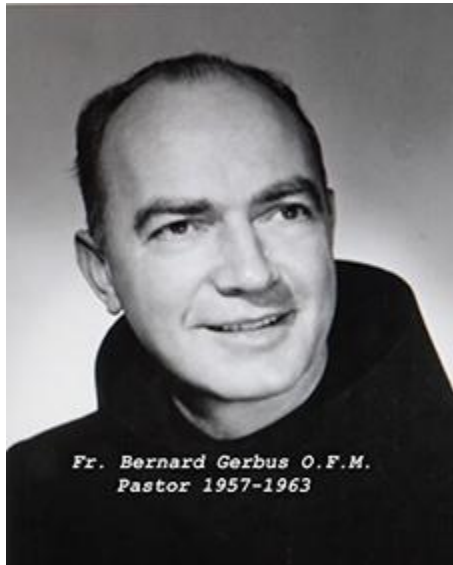




Plans were completed for a new school and multipurpose gym and hall, with ground breaking taking place on May 1, 1955. The building was completed and dedication was held on February 12, 1956 by Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne.



During Fr. Bernard Gerbus', O.F.M. tenure, July 1957 to July 1963, the new Convent was built on the northwest corner of 10th and Rencher and completed in 1960. Fr. Otto Krische, O.F.M., 1955, Assistant Pastor, who had replaced assistant Fr. Aquinas, helped finish the inside of the convent due to his shining abilities as a carpenter, added by the array of power tools in the basement workshop of the dirt floor basement of the church.



Fr. Otto once quipped that he “spent the summer in the Sister’s convent!” The parish now served the Melrose Mission and we had 2 resident priests again and a new wonderful Convent for the Sisters. Fr. Pax R. Schicker, O.F.M. became pastor July 1963 to October 3, 1965.

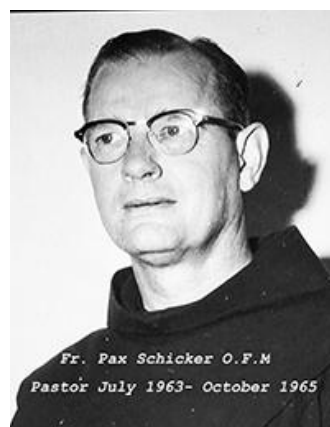


Sacred Heart's
Mission--St. Catherine's Church, Melrose, N. M.

It was Fr. Pax who completed the plans and began construction on the new Church and rectory, but Fr. Pax on October 3rd, 1965, died of a sudden heart attack in Santa Fe while celebrating a marriage for some friends.



Assistant Pastor, Father Sergius Scherpenberg O. F. M.
Then Pastor 1965-1967 Assistant in 1967



Fr. Pax Schicker O.F.M
Pastor July 1963- October 1965



Sacred Heart Rectory
Built 1966

Then Fr. Sergius Scherpenberg, O.F.M. who was Fr. Pax's assistant, who had replaced assistant Fr. Otto, became pastor until July 1967. On March 17, 1966 the Most Reverend James P. Davis, Archbishop of Santa Fe, dedicated the new Sacred Heart Church and rectory.



The stained glass windows from the old church were too tall and the bottom window transoms were removed, which probably had the donors' names on them; the big round window of the crucifixion was unchanged, donated by the Pawol family in 1948, and remains the center piece of Sacred Heart Church.





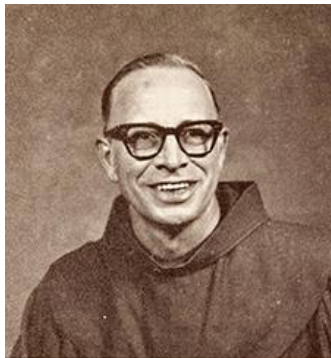


No history could ever

be



found about where the windows were made and who donated them. However, the 5 small stained glass windows of the stations of the cross, that were in the front of the church balcony above the front door that were placed in the new cry room, do have the names of the donors.



1967-1978
Pastor, Father Boniface Sack O. F. M.



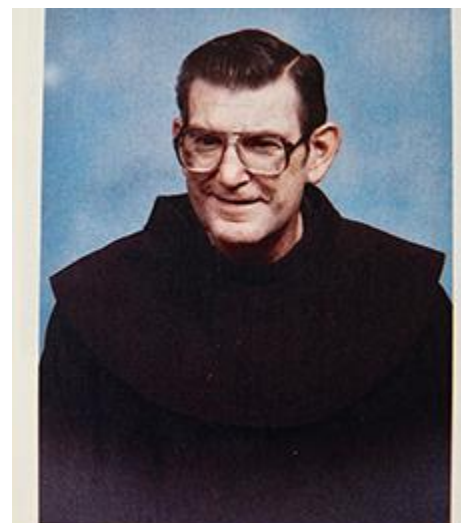
1982-1985
Fr. Frank David, O.F.M.



Fr. Cecil Kleber
First Assistant
Pastor 1978-1982

In July 1967 until 1978, Fr. Boniface E. Sack, O.F.M. joined the parish as our new Pastor with Fr. Sergius becoming his Assistant Pastor. Later his assistant was Fr. Cecil Kleber, O.F.M. who became Pastor in June of 1978 to June 1982. Then Fr. Frank David, O.F.M. became Pastor, June 1982-1985, with his assistant Fr. Bryan Morrow, O.F.M., 1982-1985, the last time Sacred Heart would have 2 priests!

Then our last Franciscan was Fr. Ivo Edwin Zirkelbach, O.F.M. from August 1986 to December 1989, who few parishoners knew was in poor health being

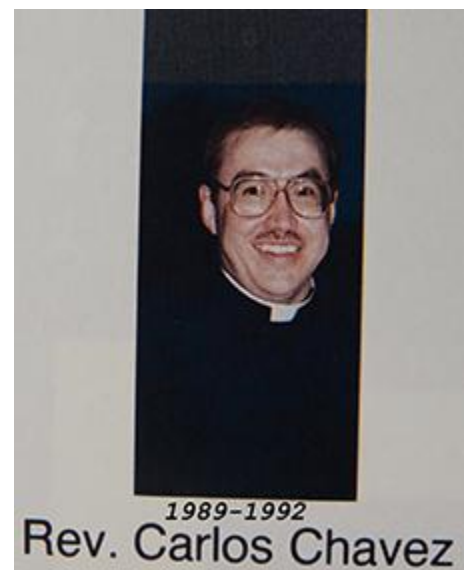


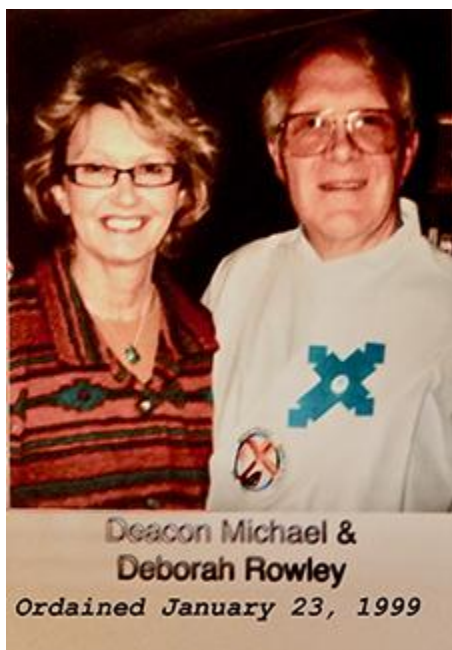
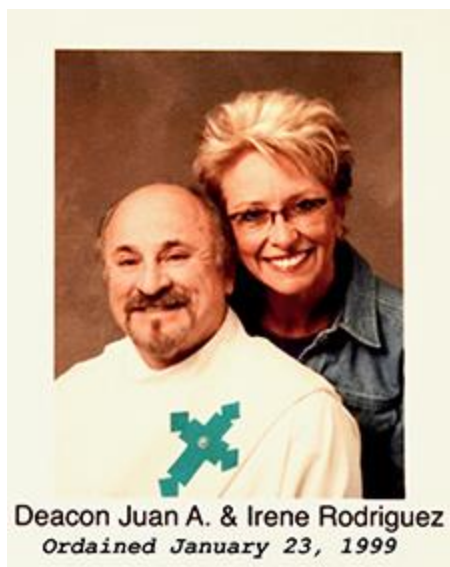
Rev. Ivo Zirkelbach, O.F.M.
Pastor 1986 - 88

treated for leukemia in Lubbock during his time in Clovis. The friars served Sacred Heart for 81 years with 30 priests!

Our next and first diocesan priest was young Fr. Carlos Chavez, also our first Native New Mexican and first Hispanic priest, who came in January 1989. The high school closed in 1960. The school had continued without Sisters after 1984 but closed in 1990 due to financial reasons.

The next pastor was Fr. Mark Flores, June 1992-June 1994, he left and Fr. Carlos returned July 1, 1994 until July 2014, 20 years, our longest serving Pastor in our history! Fr. Carlos over saw the church remodeling, new landscaping, new pews, and new hand crafted wooden doors, with the expenses paid for by many parishioners, with very large donations by Lynell Skarda. During his time the first Deacons at Sacred Heart were ordained in January 1999, Deacons Juan A. Rodriguez and Michael A. Rowley, MD. Our next pastor was Fr. Rick Zerwas, July 2014 to June 2015.







Then Pastor Fr. Simon Carian, June 2015 to 2018 who had new insulating windows, heating and air conditioning built throughout the school and gym, remodeled the church bathrooms, new confessionals, a new super organ, new piano, sound system, and a life size statue of Blessed Virgin Mary made and shipped from Fatima, Portugal.





Then Fr. Leon Vigil came until March 2019. Then Fr. Eulalio Arteaga became our Parish Administrator, until October 2019 when Fr. Michael Niemczak became our new young pastor.



Sacred Heart has always been extremely blessed with all of our wonderful priests, sisters, and caring and faithful parishioners! Hopefully, as we try to preserve our vanishing history and remember it, we will better appreciate all of these beautiful gifts of God and pray for all of these Saints who are no longer physically with us, and thank God for them and all those whom God continues to send to join us and bless us with and continues to help us on our historically wonderful journey of faith!

