



PARISH PROFILE

Marcus parishioners look out for each other, community

By **KATIE BORKOWSKI**
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MARCUS – A strong sense of community keeps Holy Name going after more than 125 years.

The Holy Name family numbers about 300 households and is clustered with Immaculate Conception in Cherokee.

Father Dan Guenther, who has been pastor at Holy Name for four years, noted there hasn't been much fluctuation in the number of households.

"We have had some new families come in, but I think like rural America, we are more and more shrinking," he said. "When we say 300 households, it is a widowed lady living alone, a single person household. A year ago, I buried eight or nine people from this parish. I know I didn't register and baptize that many. We are not replacing. It is an indication of what is happening."

The pastor said the Holy Name parishioners have a "strong sense of community and looking out for each other. If we ever have a parish benefit, they always go very well."

"There is a strong community spirit," Father Guenther added. "The people take on the needs and ministry of the parish pretty well. It isn't all up to me."

Refurbishing church

In 2014, landscaping around the church building and rectory was completed by Ground Effect of Sioux Center. This included adding plants, flowers and shrubs; some diseased trees were taken out.

In the same year, the church hall was in need of modernizing and received new ceiling tile and a new lighting system. Also added in the space were 12 tables and 250 chairs.

The kitchen area was remodeled as well by adding a new freezer, double door refrigerator, a double oven, an island, new cabinet hardware and stainless steel sinks. The walls were painted and the flooring was replaced.

This past year, the outside glass of the stained glass windows was redone – painting, caulking and new protective glass.

"That looks tremendously better," said Father Guenther. "We had our finance council and parish council working together, interviewing companies and overseeing the job. It was easy for me in the sense that people came forth to spearhead and supervise the project."

During the centennial celebration of the church building this past year, a parishioner gave tours explaining the windows, the architecture and the design.

Parish ministries

Parishes of all shapes and sizes have different ministries parishioners can become involved in and Holy Name is no different. These ministries help a parish stay viable, noted Father Guenther.

"When a parish loses their school, they lose a sense of



Holy Name Church, Marcus

parish mission," said the pastor, who noted the school closed more than 40 years ago. "These programs help the parish realize we are still called to ministry and service. It is the mission Jesus calls us to."

According to Father Guenther, the parish has a "very strong" Knights of Columbus council.

"They are very active and in recent years, they have done a lot of growing," he said. "They have been actively recruiting men in the parish, not just putting a blurb in the bulletin, but out there inviting personally. That has made a big difference."

There is also a strong Catholic Daughters, an active Ladies Guild with a number of young women and mothers involved and a Mission Society that raises money and makes quilts for the missions.

"We do share some common things with Immaculate Conception in Cherokee," said Father Guenther. "We have a common RCIA program and baptism prep."

The parishioners contribute to the community-wide food pantry as well.

Religious education

Religious education is provided for about 120 preschool through twelfth graders on Sunday mornings after Mass in the former convent near the church. Sherill Glassmaker has been the director of religious education since 2007.

"We have a good program and good involvement with parents and the parish," said Father Guenther.

Glassmaker acknowledged she tries new things with the religious education program – different studies outside of the basic curriculum, such as, Theology of the Body for middle school and Alteration from Ascension Press.

Currently, sophomores are confirmed each year in the fall. The Chosen program is used with these students.

"We have a good, strong youth group that crosses the line between religious ed and faith formation," said Glassmaker. "In the spring, they put on a carnival for the younger kids. They have a bake sale for the parishioners in the winter and put on a supper in the spring."

On occasion, the entire group of religious education students comes together to pray the rosary or to talk about a saint.



The outside glass on the windows was redone to help protect the stained glass windows. (Globe photos by Katie Borkowski)

As DRE, Glassmaker enjoys "sharing the faith. I am challenged every day to learn something new about my faith. I try to encourage the kids to increase their knowledge, not just get by with the minimum."

History

The history of Holy Name dates back to 1869 after the railroad was completed through Marcus and Irish and German Catholic families settled in the area. Father Herman J. Meis of Le Mars served as a missionary priest and offered Mass in private homes.

In 1876, John Ernster received permission from Father Meis to construct a church. A 16-foot by 24-foot building was built in 1877. It was the first church of any denomination in Marcus.

Father Meis celebrated the first Mass and Father Michael J. Gaffney served as missionary priest from 1877-1883. The congregation soon outgrew the little church and a larger one was built on the southwest corner of Elm and Pine streets. It was dedicated in 1884.

Father Michael Hennessey (1886-1891) and Father John O'Reilly (1891-1903) both served Holy Name in its early years in Marcus. Father O'Reilly started a fund drive to build a parochial school and it opened its doors in September of 1892.

In 1915, when a larger church was needed, the present church, a priest's house and a three-story school were built. A gymnasium was added south of the school in 1950. A convent, designed to house 13 sisters, was completed in April of 1957. A new rectory was completed in 1992, replacing the 1915 structure.

The last high school graduating class from Holy Name was 1964. The grade school continued until 1972 when Holy Name closed its doors. Some families send their children to St. Mary's School in Remsen.

Other priests to serve Holy Name include Msgrs. A. W. Behrens, Leonard Ziegmann, Gerald Lyons and Fathers John F. Phelan, John O'Reilly, George Cook, Dennis K. Hurley, Edward "Leo" McEvoy, Joseph T. Fitzpatrick, Patrick "Leo" McCoy, Robert J. O'Reilly, James Fangman, Richard R. Remmes, Eugene Murray and Armand Bertrand.

Father Gene Murray is retired and lives in Marcus. He helps cover Masses and concelebrates weekday Masses.

There have been six priests to come from Holy Name, one brother, and one deacon – Deacon Gerald Bertrand. In addition, there have been 11 sisters to enter the convent from Marcus.

PARISH INFORMATION

Pastor: Father Dan Guenther

Deacon: Deacon Gerald Bertrand

DRE: Sherill Glassmaker

Secretary/bookkeeper: Debbie Richardson

Janitor: Larry Alesch

Mass Times: Saturday, 6 p.m.; Sunday, 8 a.m.; Wednesday and Friday, 8 a.m.

Confession: Before Mass

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