



THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION Catholic Church in Leoville was completed and dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27, 1923. It replaced the previous brick building which burned on Nov. 12, 1922. Many parishioners (below) gathered for Mass after the first frame church was completed.

Church to celebrate 125th anniversary

By **MARY LOU OLSON**
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Immaculate Conception Catholic Church of Leoville will mark its 125th year with a celebration, beginning with a 4 p.m. Mass on Sunday.

Father Mark Berland will give a talk on church architecture at 5 p.m., followed by a historical presentation by Anthony Gassman, who has traced the history of the early Leoville settlers back to the Louisiana Territory. A potluck supper will be served in the parish hall at 6 p.m. with the meat and potatoes furnished. Others attending are asked to bring a side dish. The public is welcome.



Fr. Berland

Though the church officially began on Dec. 8, 1885, according to a story by Clarence Boor in the 100th anniversary history book, its history really goes back to the year 1862 when Congress passed the Homestead Act, offering to all adult men the opportunity to acquire a quarter-section of land in frontier areas for scarcely more than the asking, which would be known as this homestead.

Of the Kansas population in 1878, 70,000 were Catholic, and although scattered over the entire state, over 82,000 square miles, all belonged to the diocese of Leavenworth under the jurisdiction of Rt. Rev. Louis Mary O. Fink, who was the first bishop of Kansas.

Faced with a scarcity of pastors, Father Augustine Reichert and Father Derick Scalf were assigned to northwest Kansas with Father Reichert choosing the western part of the territory.

During those early winters, the blizzards and snow storms were terrible and sometimes people were found frozen after blinding storms. Trails were completely blown over in a few minutes so many stretched a wire from the house to the barn to use as a guide wire. In summer, the winds were torrid and frequently damaged or destroyed crops. Prairie fires also raised havoc and in the middle '70s, the grasshopper plague completely ruined the harvest.

Poverty was so great among the two missionaries that at one time they didn't have enough cash between them to buy a stamp for a letter.

Father Reichert worked to spread the Word over his territory until one



cold winter night in the fall of 1888 when on a sick call, he contacted the fatal disease that forced him to resign and return to their headquarters in Ohio. He died there on Feb. 13, 1889.

Such was the situation when most of the pioneers came looking for a place to live and worship freely.

By 1885, about 30 pioneers had built their homes in what is now the Leoville area. Among them were Joseph Stauffer, Dochus Dempewolf, Bernard Ravy, Paul Koerperich, William Wolf, John Goscha, John Zodrow, Stanislaus Pankaskie, Mike Campbell, Bartel and Peter Funk, Bernard and George Schroer, Frank Nieberding, John Kitzke, John Wieberding, Frank Heitman, Joseph Reichert, John Schiltz, Peter and John Kaus, John Stegeman, Henry Kruse, Joseph Ritter and Joseph Zimmerman. Most had come from Germany by way of Iowa, Nebraska and eastern Kansas in prairie schooners or on the Rock Island Railroad.

The first Holy Mass was said in April 1885 in a sod house owned by Frank Heitman. The celebrant was Father August Reichert, a missionary stationed at New Almelo. The first Mass in the sod church was celebrated by the Rev. Frank Schrank on Dec. 8, 1885, and the parish was placed under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mr. Heitman donated 10 acres for the first frame church. John Joseph Dempewolf was the architect, Anthony Trommeter the mason, and Joseph Berger the carpenter.

Mr. Dempewolf drove his team of horses to Oberlin and bought the lumber to complete the building, but had to mortgage his team to pay the bill — at 36 percent interest.

The first parish house was finished in 1886 and in 1889 Joseph Berger suggested the name Leoville for the village in honor of Pope Leo Pius XIII.

The first resident pastor was the Rev. John Kratzer, and he appointed the first church committee: Joseph Dempewolf, John Welter and Peter Wernette.

The second priest, the Rev. August P. Heimas, saw the first couple, Henry Kruse and Margaret Schroer, married in the church on Feb. 4, 1889.

After the frame church became too small, work began on the first brick church on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1914. It cost \$69,000. Henry Brinkman of Emporia was the architect and Mr. Albers of Angelus, the main brick layer.

On Nov. 12, 1922, the people saw this church go up in flames in a fire which had started in the furnace room.

Under the leadership of the pastor, Father Schmitt, work was begun to tear down and clear away the debris. Even the Leoville school children helped clean bricks, which were used on the inside walls of the present structure.

The new church was completed and dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27, 1923, with several hundred people in attendance. Cost was \$118,000, despite the meager income of the parishioners.

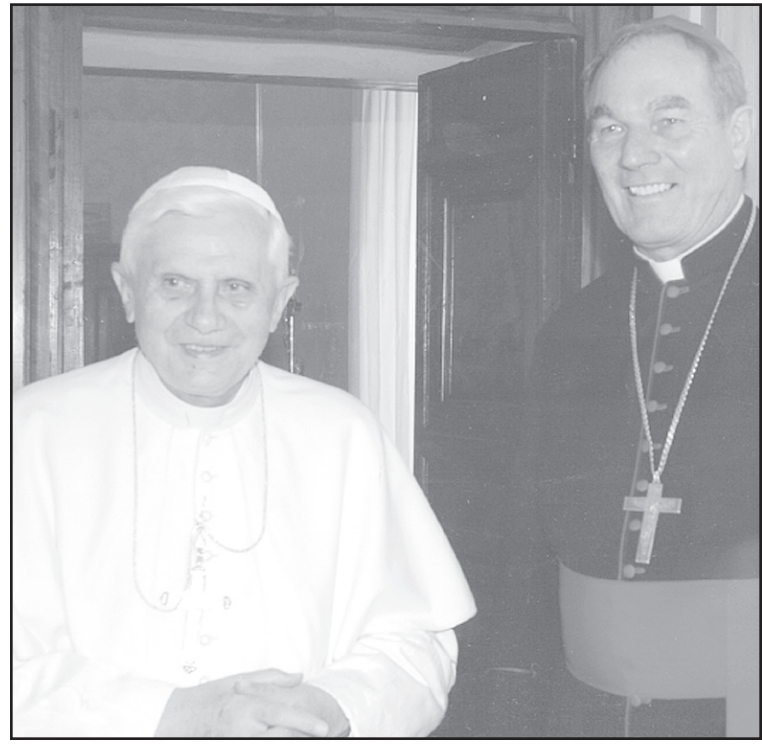
A highlight of the church's history was in 1941 when three sons of the parish were ordained to the priesthood at one time: Clarence Heim, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Heim; Paul Meitl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Meitl, and Clement Kruse, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Kruse.

Father Stephen Reichert, who joined the Capuchin order in 1963 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1969, has served many years as a missionary in Papua, New Guinea. He is a great-grandnephew of Father Augustine Reichert, pioneer Catholic missionary of northwest Kansas, and a brother of Wilbur Reichert of Dresden.

Father Mark Berland presently serves the Leoville, Selden and Oberlin churches.

The Centennial History Book of the parish closed with the following:

"The Immaculate Conception Church is an indication of the faith of its people, a monument of their faith, a tribute of their hope and their children and an expression of their charity, mutual respect and generosity."



POPE BENEDICT XVI, left, has elevated the Most Rev. Stephen Reichert, a native of Leoville, to succeed Archbishop William Kurtz of Madang in Papua, New Guinea. He will be installed as archbishop on Feb. 2 in Holy Spirit Cathedral in Madang.

Leoville native named by pope as archbishop

Pope Benedict XVI has named the Most Rev. Stephen Reichert, a native of Leoville, to succeed Archbishop William Kurtz of Madang in Papua, New Guinea.

A brother of Wilbur Reichert of Dresden, the archbishop-designate is a member of the Capuchin Franciscan order. He has been bishop of the Diocese of Mendi in Papua, New Guinea, since 1995. He will be installed as archbishop on Feb. 2 in Holy Spirit Cathedral in Madang.

Bishop Reichert, 67, is the third of the seven children of the late Arnold and Louise (Zodrow) Reichert of Leoville. He attended Leoville Grade School and graduated from St. Francis Seminary High School in Victoria in 1961, St. Fidelis College in Herman, Pa., in 1965 and Capuchin College in Washington in 1970. He entered the Capuchin Franciscan order in 1963 and was ordained to the priesthood on Sept. 27, 1969, by the Most Rev. Cyril Vogel, bishop of Salina.

After arriving in Papua New Guinea, in 1970, Bishop Reichert served 14 years as a pastor. He directed Capuchin formation and taught for four years at a major seminary and a Catholic college, served on the Capuchins' mission council for 12 years and was superior regular of the mission for another six.

During his time as superior, he served several years as acting president or president of the Papua New Guinea conference of male religious superiors. He also served as vice president and president of the Southeast Asian-Pacific Capuchin Conference and represented the conference at the Capuchins' general chapter in Rome in 1988.

He studied linguistics at Georgetown University and the University of Oklahoma, and during his years in Papua, translated liturgical and scriptural texts into the local languages.

He was president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 1996 to 2001 and has been vice president since 2008.

Madang Archdiocese has an area of about 11,000 square miles with a population of 285,154 and a Catholic population of 142,000. In 2004, there were 14 diocesan priests and 25 religious priests.

Bishop Reichert spent many years serving with three Capuchin prelates: Bishop William Fey, recently ordained Bishop of Kimberley in Papua; Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston; and Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, a Concordia native. At Mendi, he succeeded a fellow Capuchin, Bishop Firmin Schmidt, a native of Catharine.

Another of his predecessors was born in Kansas. A Pfeifer native, Bishop Stephen Appelhans, and a member of the Society of the Divine Word, served in Madang as the vicar apostolic of Eastern New Guinea from 1948 until his death in a plane crash in 1951.

Three other Kansan Capuchins have served for several decades in Papua. Father Don Debes, a native of Odin, is comptroller for the Mendi Diocese, and Father Peter Meis, a native of Russell, and Father Jonathan Williams, a native of Atwood, were elected last week as minister and vice minister of the Capuchin Vice Province of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Archbishop-designate Reichert's great-great-uncle, Father Augustine Reichert, was one of the pioneer missionaries of northwest Kansas, arriving in 1878 just months after the first Capuchins came to the region. He persuaded his brother, Stephen Reichert's great-grandfather, to bring his family to Kansas from Ohio as the first teacher and organizer in Father Reichert's parish in New Almelo.

Archbishop Kurtz, a native of Poland and a member of the Society of the Divine Word, resigned upon turning 75. He has served as a missionary in Papua New Guinea since 1967, was Bishop of Kundia from 1982 to 1999, became coadjutor archbishop of Madang in 1999 and succeeded as archbishop in 2001.

Happy Birthday, Earl!

The Roundup gathered 99 for this corral
THE EXPERIENCED STOCKMAN
that you are, knows the pen can hold more!



Card shower for Earl Brown
99th Birthday, Dec. 18
CARDS AND WISHES MAY BE SENT TO:
108 EAST ASH ST., OBERLIN, KS 67749

Happy 95th Birthday



Lyle & Sharon are having an Open House for Edwin Black's Birthday at Golden Age Center Saturday, Dec. 11 2pm to 4pm.

Come help Celebrate his 85th Birthday!

Happy Birthday Gleason Dryden

4 to 6 pm Monday, Dec. 13 at the Playhouse 812 S. Buffalo
Cake & Ice cream
no gifts please

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