

**Mass of Thanksgiving**  
**St. Francis Church**  
**St. Paul, Kansas**

**April 3, 1977**

**Celebrant**  
**Bishop David M. Maloney D. D.**  
**Diocese of Wichita**

**Pastor**  
**Reverend Wilfrid Flanery C. P.**  
**St. Francis Parish**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
THE ST. FRANCIS CHURCH – OSAGE MISSION  
ST. PAUL, KANSAS

*THE JESUIT MISSION*

*Just as the sun went down, they heard a murmur of  
voices,  
And in a meadow green and broad, by the bank of a  
river,  
Saw the tents of the Christians, the tents of the  
Jesuit Mission.  
Under a towering oak that stood in the midst of the  
village,  
Knelt the Black Robe chief with his children. A  
crucifix fastened  
High on the trunk of a tree, and overshadowed by  
grapevines,  
Looked with agonizing face on the multitude kneel-  
ing beneath it.  
This was their rural chapel.*

—LONGFELLOW.

This was copied from "Early Jesuits At Osage Mission," by W.W. Graves.

The above could very well be the first Catholic services of what is now St. Paul - The year 1828. The Black Robe chief was Father Charles Van Quickenborne, S.J.

The following are excerpts concerning the church, also copied from "Early Jesuits At Osage Mission." A letter postmarked, St. Ignatius College, Chicago, October 28, 1898, to the Editor of the St. Paul Journal.

"It was in April 1847 that the first Roman Catholic Church was opened by Father John Schoenmakers in one of the two log houses the Indian Department had put up for the use of the Osage Mission School, then inaugurated by the same Father. But oh how small it was! Indeed hardly large enough to accommodate the domestics. Father Schoenmakers saw at once the necessity of building a large one, not only for the use of the Mission, but also of the people forming our congregation. As in the woodland close by, one could at that time find a great many very large trees, so the needed logs having been cut down, a building was very soon erected 30x35 feet wide, arising 16 feet from the ground having a roof with a pediment of 10 feet, surmounted by a nice cross. The locality chosen for the church was the spot of ground now standing between the two stone houses, the residence of the Passionist Fathers and the school house.

The size of the Jesuits structure did very well for a few years. But the number of Catholic settlers being still increasing more room was needed in the church, and the Father returning to work erected a large addition in front of it, doubling altogether its area, which now became 70x35 feet. Still more room was needed.

What was to be done? Father Schoenmakers saw that it was useless to make any more additions to it, and that the best would be to start the building of a large stone church.

The excitement created by the news that Father Schoenmakers was going to build a large stone church spreading around, brought us quite a number of Catholic settlers, especially of good mechanics of whom we were very much in need. But whence was the money to come from? The only chance we had for getting any, was by applying to the old system of making collections. The people had not much to spare, but they were of good will and contributed liberally." - Father Paul Ponziglione, S.J.

St. Francis Church, at St. Paul, (Osage Mission) Kansas is one of the most magnificent church edifices in Kansas. As it stood in the early part of the twentieth century, it represented the expenditure of nearly a hundred thousand dollars, and was, and is, the fulfilment of an idea cherished by Fathers Schoenmakers and Ponziglione. Under their direction, Wm. Murphy drew the plans in 1871. That fall the work of quarrying and hauling the stone began. In the spring of 1872, the foundation was laid under the direction of M. Cavanaugh, and on the 23rd of June 1872, the corner stone was laid by Rt. Rev. Bishop L.M. Fink, of Leavenworth, which can still be seen at the lower right hand corner of the front of the church. The church was dedicated May 11th, 1884, by Rev. J.J. Hogan, Bishop of Kansas City.

The outside dimensions of the building are 75x150 feet. The wall at the lowest point is 32 feet and at the gable it is 67 feet above the floor. The belfry tower is also of stone, 24x24 feet and 73 feet to the top of the masonry, on which three bells rest. The upper part of the tower is iron clad. The total height of the tower is 134 feet.

A better idea of the vastness of the St. Francis church may be conceived when it is known that it required 140,000 shingles to cover the roof and 100 car loads of sand to prepare the mortar with which the stone was laid in the walls, and twenty car loads more for the plaster. The total cost of the lime and sand used in the building was \$3,980, of the lumber for the tower and the inside work \$6,700, nails and hardware used \$1,600. The foundation on which the church stands cost \$7,000, a sum sufficient in itself to erect rather a large building. \$16,576 was paid out for the masons' wages, \$4,500 for carpenters' wages, and \$2,370 for plasterers' wages. The doors and windows alone cost \$5,800.

Forgive us if we claim for St. Francis Church, the first parish in the diocese of Wichita, the title of Metropolitan Church, because from the year 1847 to 1886 it was a prolific mother of churches and missionary stations all together amounting to 108; of these 87 in southern Kansas, and 21 in the Indian Territory.

Most of this was done by Rev. Paul Ponziglione, S.J., a very zealous missionary who left Italy as an Italian Nobleman to become a missionary.

Now we may have wrote of the past too long, but surely it inspires the present. We are thankful to the builders who finished the church in 1884. It is hard to realize what effort they extended. Likewise, we are so thankful for the writings of W.W. Graves. In a small way, we are beginning to realize how much effort and time he spent in recording these happenings. It is a privilege for some of us to remember him. It is difficult for us to understand how he wrote and recorded so much in his easy and frail manner. If interested, you may find more information in his books.

Father Raymond O'Keefe, CP, was the first Passionist Pastor in the year 1895. The Passionists kept the fires of Catholicity burning. Thus, they have been here some 81 years, nearly twice as long as the 46 years of the Jesuits. As caretakers of the physical structure of the church itself since its original dedication in May, 1884, the Passionists have watched over it 81 of its 92 years. Somehow their records are not as easily found. Mr. Graves did not follow up; he wrote about history then, which was the Jesuits, and the church. We might say nobody followed up. Looking through the annuals of St. Paul, we remember our folks talking of Rev. Raymond O'Keefe, CP, and Rev. Eugene, CP, and also Father Luke, CP.

Our own memory takes us to Rev. Alban Hickson, CP, in the 1920's. In 1932, Rev. Joseph Gartland, CP, came here. He was here during and immediately after the depression, and later during the trying years of the 2nd World War. In our minds there was never a more dedicated leader of the parish and the school. He was a Father to all and a true patron of the parish. Father Christopher Link, CP, was and is a very gifted builder. It was he who had the convent building built. Not only did he supervise it, but did much of the finish work himself. We all remember the good work of the Assistant Pastor, and Rector, Father Robert Berger, CP, in the 30's, in the 40's, and is now the Pastor of Erie. Also our own Father Connell Dowd, C.P. who was Rector here. Not to forget any of the Pastors, a list is included.

Getting back to the church building, it was in 1909, the third time Rev. Raymond O'Keefe returned to St. Paul, that the massive project of raising the church three feet and building the basement took place. There were two carloads of screw jacks used in the process. Then, in the twentys, a massive crack in the front west side was successfully repaired by a local contractor, by pouring a foundation that tipped the wall back in.

However, it was Rev. Joachim Gemperline, CP, who was really concerned about the large crack in the wall of the northeast corner of the church. An attempt was made to pin it together with large bolts at the top side of the wall, but the constant terrific pull would either break the bolts or would pull their moorings even though they ran nearly the length of the church.

In February of 1974, not long after Father Wilfrid Flanery, CP, came here, he, after consulting with building advisors, state architect, insurance men, and his church committee, deemed it necessary to vacate the large church and hold Mass and services in the east side of the hall.

Just as the decision and question came to Father Schoenmaker in the 1870's, it was before Father Wilfrid Flanery, CP, in the 1970's. What was to be done? He, like his predecessor of a century before, saw that it was useless to prop or tie the old church together and found from an architect's appraisal, that to hold it, by pinning it to solid rock forty feet below, redoing the inside and outside, would cost more than a new modern church. He was aided in the decision by a meeting of the parish and a vote of 80% in favor of rebuilding the stone church.

Again, as a century before, the excitement created by this news of rebuilding the stone church, which will hopefully, take it well through the twenty-first century, went through the countryside.

The church property belonged to the Passionist congregation. As they were leaving St. Paul, it was stipulated by Father Paul M. Boyle, CP, now Superior General of the Passionist in Rome, that either the church and the nearby garden, or the ground to erect another church would be available to the Parish. Thus, the church was deeded by the Passionists to the Parish, in reality to the Diocese of Wichita, and accepted by Bishop David Maloney, DD, who presented the Parish with a donation of \$10,000, and so with \$50,000 in savings, Father Wilfrid was on his way.

The response from Father's appeal from the countryside was heart warming, not only from the Parish, but also from other Parishes mothered by Osage Mission, and so many friends of other faiths.

In the summer of 1974, a contract was awarded to Grant Renee and Sons of Kansas City, Kansas, to stabilize the church with thirty-four piers going down to solid rock. It was Grant Renee who raised the church in 1909.

Listed below are the names of the contractors, the cities they are from, the work done, and the amount:

<u>Name &amp; City</u>	<u>Work</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Grant Renee & Sons Knasas City, Ks.	Underpinning	\$ 94,000
Mid-Continent Const. Ft. Scott, Ks.	Tucking Windows Steeple Work Outside Work	24,600
LaForge & Budd Parsons, Ks.	Interior Work Heating & Air Conditioning Levelling Floor Carpeting, Plastering & Repainting	214,713
N. American Art Glass Service Manhattan, Ks.	Stain Glass Windows	8,000
Howard Fatjo Houston, Tx.	Repainting & Repairing Statues	3,215
Megdonio & Seidler Pittsburg, Ks.	Architect	<u>13,000</u> \$357,528

Thus here we are renewing the dedication of this grand old church of nearly a century ago. It is useless for us to attempt to conseal our pride. Our minds go back to the days when our parents and loved ones were buried from this church, and many were baptized and married here. Many of us realize our bodies will spend their last hours above ground here. In our pride and reverence toward this edifice, let us not regard it as a golden calf like the Romans. The light shines on the beautiful landmark but the source of the light is from God. The real glory of it is up to the people that use it.

We realize it was our ancestors that established the faith in this community, it is up to us to keep it. May the pillars resting on solid rock be a symbol of our faith. Therefore, let us face the future showing a sincere love for all, especially for the poor and those in need. May this love spread through out the countryside as the early Jesuit's church did. We have worked together to show our love and glory to God, which was Christ's first request, let us turn to His second request of showing love and charity toward our neighbor and continue working toward helping mankind.

Reverend John Schoenmaker, S.J. - 1847-1876

Reverend Adrian Sweere, S.J. - 1876-1880

Reverend John T. Kuhlam, S.J. - 1880-1887

Reverend J.R. Rosswinkle, S.J. - 1887-1889

Reverend Roman A. Shaffel, S.J. - 1889-1891

Reverend Masterson, S.J. - 1891-1892

Reverend E. Bononcini, Sec. - 1892-1895

Reverend Raymond O'Keefe, C.P. - 1895-1899

Reverend Henry Miller, C.P. - 1899-1901

Reverend Raymond O'Keefe, C.P. 1901-1902

Reverend Daniel McGuire, C.P. - 1902-1905

Reverend Raymond O'Keefe, C.P. - 1905-1911

Reverend Daniel McGuire, C.P. - 1911-1913

*Jesuits*

*Secular*

*Parsons*

Reverend Roger Aul, C.P. - 1913-1916  
Reverend Calisita S. C.P. - 1916-1919  
Reverend Alexis Quinlan, C.P. - 1919-1920  
Reverend David Ferland, C.P. - 1920-1923  
Reverend Alban Hickson, C.P. - 1923-1928  
Reverend Fabian Kelly, C.P. - 1928-Jan. 1929  
Reverend Raymond Waters, C.P. - Jan. 1929-1932  
Reverend Joseph Gartland, C.P. - 1932-1944  
Reverend Christopher Link, C.P. - 1944-1950  
Reverend Brenden McConnell, C.P. - 1950-1956  
Reverend Nilus Goggin, C.P. - 1956-1960  
Reverend William Steil, C.P. - 1960-1966  
Reverend Joachim Gemperline, C.P. - 1966-1973  
Reverend Wilfrid Flanery, C.P. - 1973-

*Context written and assembled by:*  
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*References:*  
W.W. Graves Publications