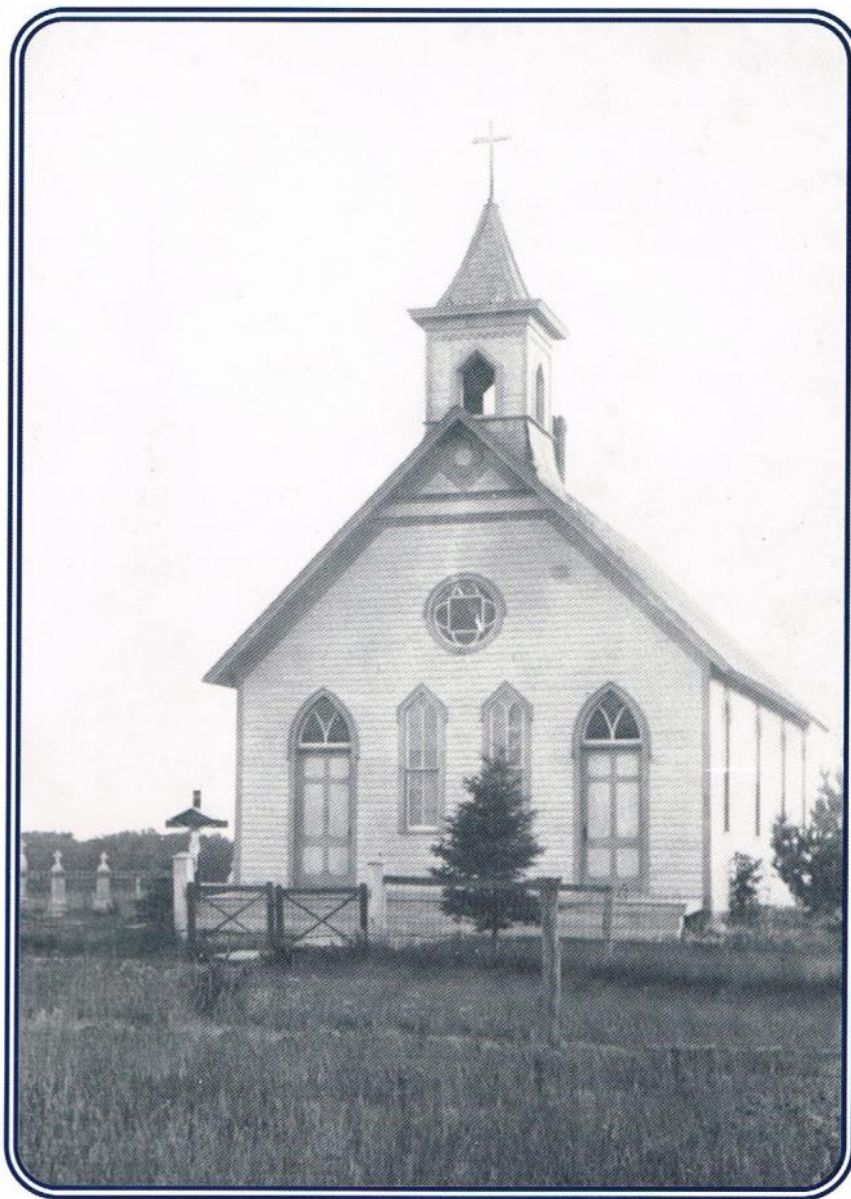


*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Catholic Church
Little Turkey, Iowa*



Celebrating 100 Years of Our History

The Beginning of Assumption Parish

The first settlers in the Little Turkey area were Methodists. In the late 1800s they built a small frame church measuring 50 x 25 feet on the site of the present St. Mary's cemetery.

In 1888, J.J. Novotny was the first Bohemian settler in Utica Township. The early Bohemian pioneers were members of the neighboring Catholic parishes of Spillville, Protivin and Fort Atkinson. Within a few years the Catholic population outnumbered the Methodist population. Upon the advice of the Rev. Joseph Dostal of Spillville, and the Rev. Frank Kopecky of Fort Atkinson, the founders of the parish, J.J. Novotny, Joe Barloon, Ignatz Dostal, Frank Landa, W.A. Busta, W.A. Jirak, Alois Kopecky, Frank Pecinovsky and Dr. H. Dostal purchased the church from the Methodists for \$500 in 1902. The land was purchased for \$40 from John Koudelka Sr. and a fence around the church and cemetery was donated by L.A. Jirak. The Mission Parish of 125 members was first cared for by Father Dostal and other priests from neighboring parishes.

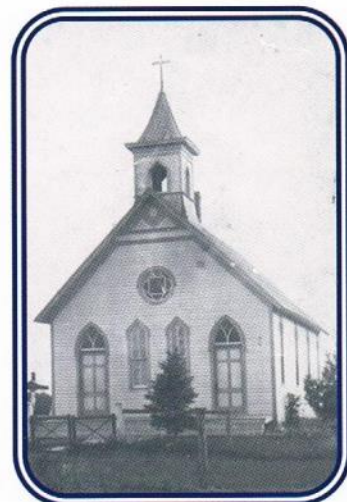
The Rev. Joseph Dostal, pastor of Spillville, celebrated the first Mass in the church on March 19, 1903. He also officiated over the first baptism in the Little Turkey Catholic Church, that of Philomena Landa, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Landa.

The Rev. Godfrey Kramolis (also known as the Rev. Bohumil Kramolis) was appointed the first resident pastor in 1903 and officiated at the first marriage in the church between John Privosnik and Rose Krall. The first burial took place in 1904 and was that of Francis Pecinovsky, aged 3 years 1 month, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pecinovsky.

In 1904 the Rev. Kramolis directed the building of the rectory across the road from the church and cemetery at a cost of \$2,000. He lived with the W.A. Busta family for about a year while the new rectory was being built and served the parish for eight years.

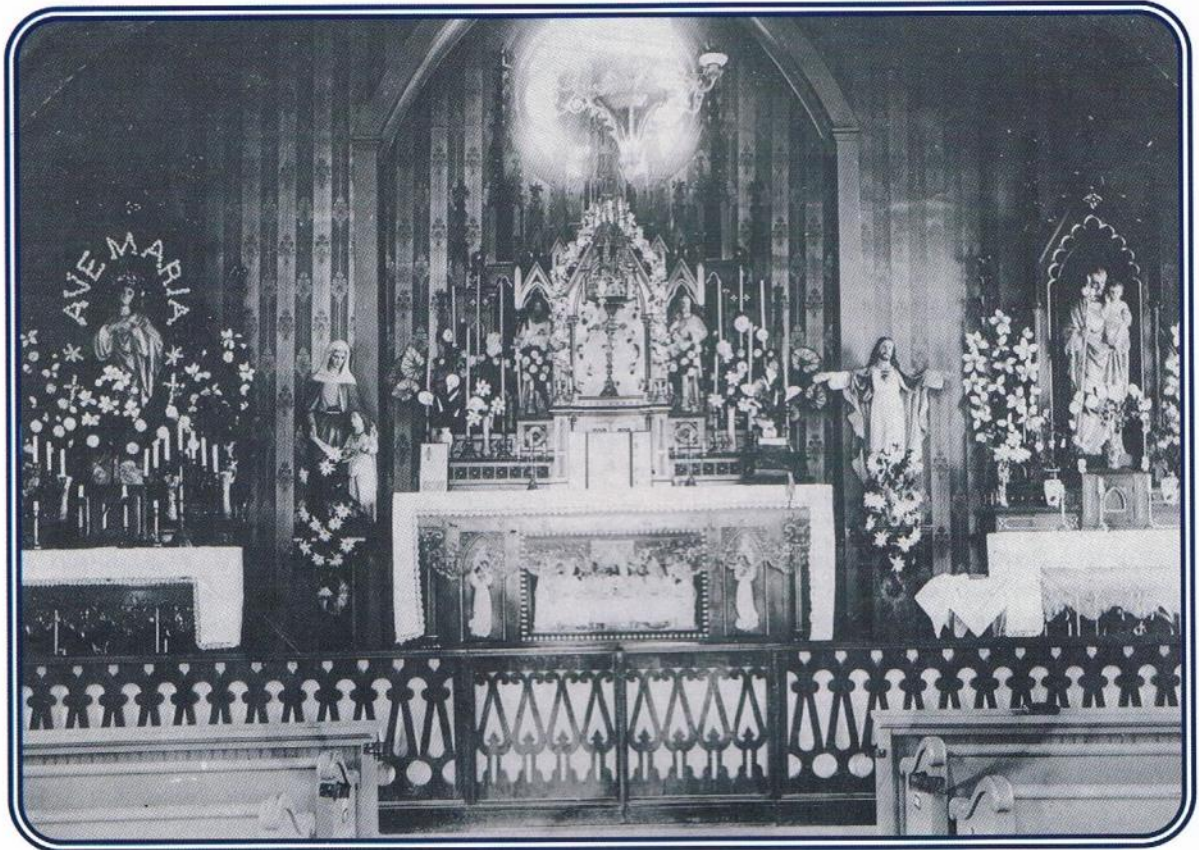


The first rectory across from the cemetery built in 1904, still stands today. Rev. G. Kramolis was the first resident pastor.



The first Assumption Church that was purchased from the Methodists in 1902.

Increasing Membership Necessitates New Church

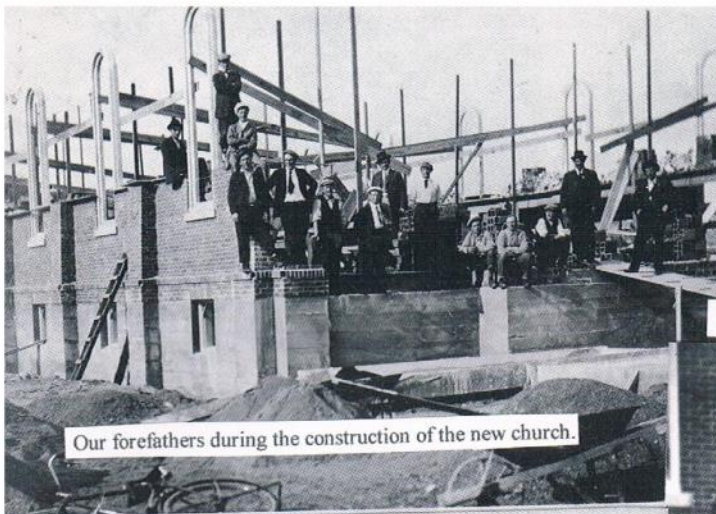


The photo above shows the original interior of the church built in 1915.

The next two pastors, both serving short terms were the Rev. Thomas Ballon (1911) and the Rev. Joseph Vytisk (1913). The parish was incorporated as Assumption Church of Little Turkey on December 28, 1911. The Rev. Vytisk made plans for a larger church as the old church was too small for the rapidly increasing population.

In 1914 under the direction of the Rev. Vincent Opava (1914-1921) the new church was built on a site northeast of the cemetery, measuring about one acre. Cost of construction was \$12,000. Land for the new church was donated by Ignatz Dostal. It was consecrated by Bishop Joseph Koudelka of Superior, Wisconsin, on September 8, 1915. That day the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession from the old church to the new church. The parish consisted of 55 families.

Donations for the new church were: the Way of the Cross by Father Kopecky, the main altar by Mrs. Wenzel Jirak, the Eternal Light by Joe Pechota and Frank Tupy, the cross on the church by Joe and Anna Barloon Sr., the sanctuary bells by J.J. Novotny Sr., the cross on the cemetery and the St. Joseph statue by Joseph and Frances Jirak, the side altars and the Queen of Heaven statue by the parish.



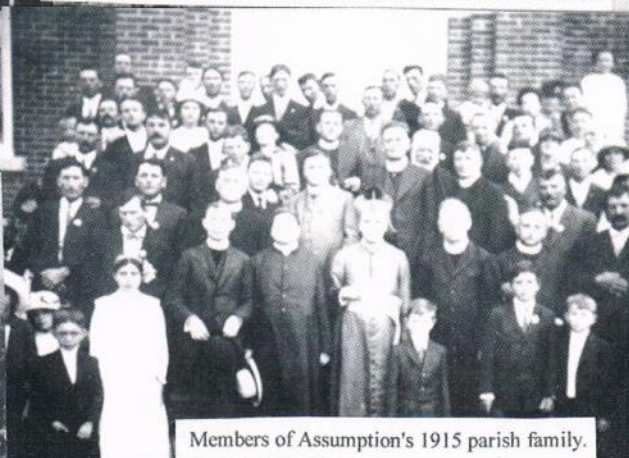
Our forefathers during the construction of the new church.



Looking east: Cars parked in front of the site of the new church.



Looking south: Parishioners begin to gather on September 8, 1915 in front of the original rectory to celebrate the blessing of the new church.



Members of Assumption's 1915 parish family.



Procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the old church to the new church.



Parishioners in front of the new church with the old church in the background.

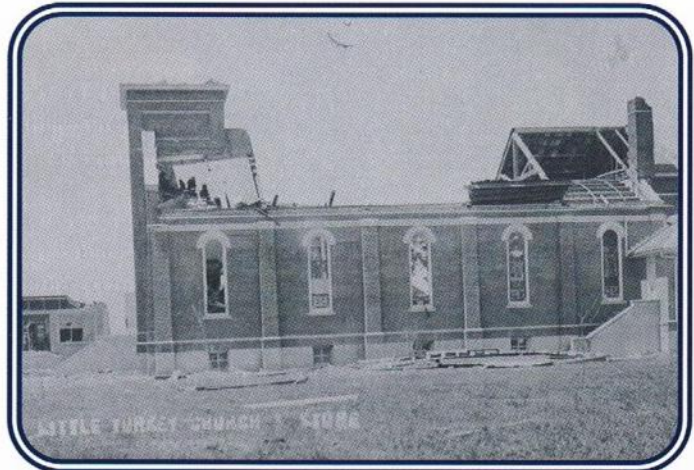


The newly completed Assumption Church in 1915.

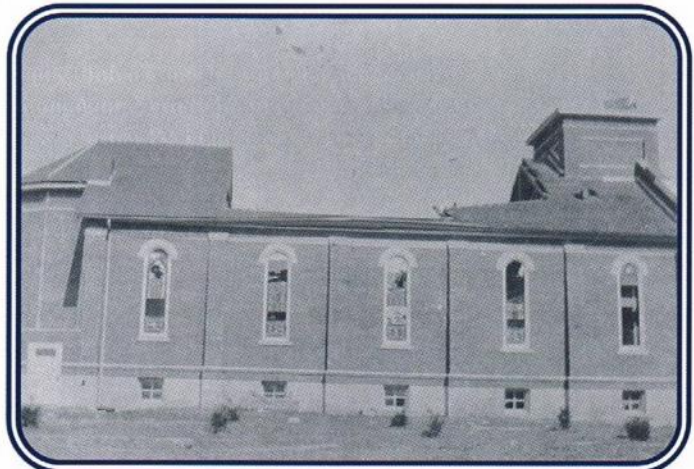
Tornado Strikes Little Turkey May 9, 1918



On Ascension Thursday evening around 5:30, the new church was struck by a tornado. The old church on the cemetery site was completely destroyed.



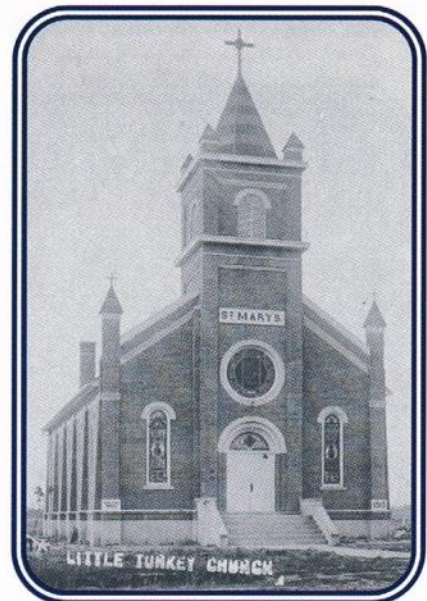
A section of the church roof lies on the ground on the east side of the church. The top floor of Joe Koudelka's store (the dance hall) was blown off.



A view of the west side of the church with severe roof and window damage. The newly planted pine trees appear to be unharmed.

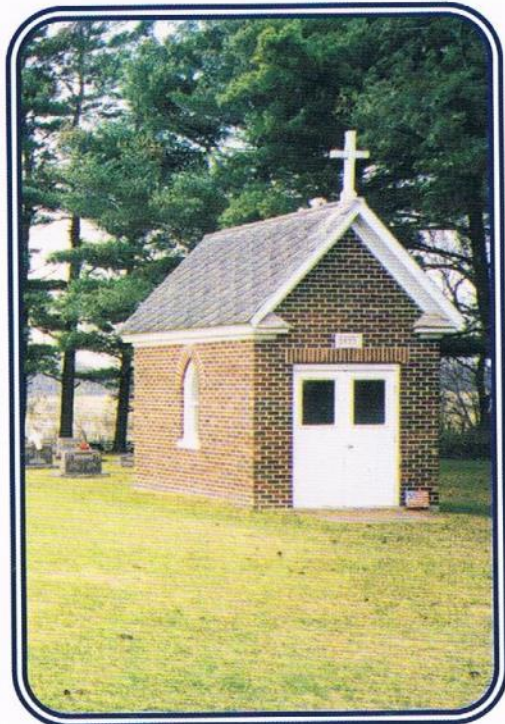


The interior of the church was heavily damaged with the bell falling through the roof and into the basement. Reconstruction included the walls being reinforced with heavy steel rods reaching across the church and covered by a box frame. The wood stained altars were later painted white.



Reconstruction of the church began immediately, which included a new roof, bell tower, steeple and spires, giving the church a new look.

The Twenties



The cemetery chapel, donated by Joseph and Frances Jirak, was erected in 1933.

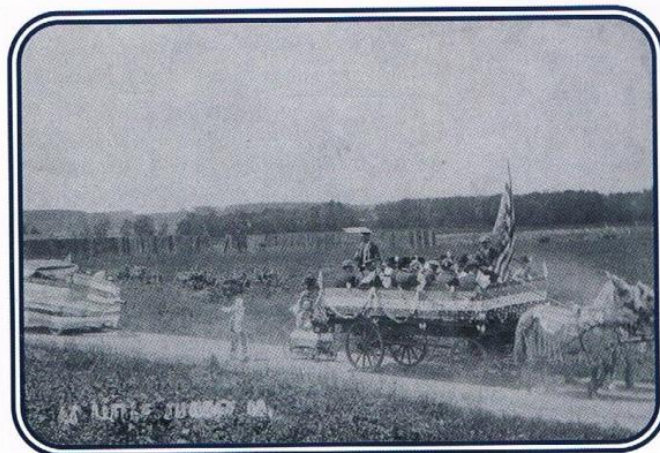
From 1921-1924 the pastor was the Rev. Wenceslaus A. Dostal, younger brother of the Rev. Joseph Dostal. He was the author of "The Hand of God" and "Tomorrow and Tomorrow," short stories, essays and historical papers. He served as editor of the Catholic Workman and associate editor of the Iowa Catholic Historical Review.

The Rev. F. Suesser served the parish as a missionary priest from Lincoln, Nebraska for two months in 1924 until Rev. Joseph Gregor came to Little Turkey. In 1927, the dance hall was moved to Little Turkey. The parish observed its Silver Jubilee in 1928. Archbishop James J. Keane designated the main altar, "Altare Privilegium." (A privileged altar was one where a plenary indulgence can be gained for a soul in purgatory by the fact that a Mass was offered for that intention at that altar).

In 1931 the Rev. Joseph Badura began 14 years as pastor. Religion classes were conducted every summer by the Sisters of Notre Dame, Spillville. Parents of the church took turns bringing the Sisters to Little Turkey and returning them to Spillville.

In 1933 the cemetery chapel was erected by Joseph and Frances Jirak. The Rosary Society was reorganized in 1936. A new tabernacle was placed on the main altar and an oil furnace was installed in 1939.

and the Thirties



A Corpus Christi Procession.

The Rev. Francis J. Ruzicka served as pastor from 1945-1946 and was followed by the Rev. Valentine J. Hlubek (1946-1953), who had returned from a military chaplaincy. He was the last priest to preach in Czech and in English. In 1951, the present rectory was built at a cost of \$26,500.

In July 1953 the Rev. Ludvik (Louis) M. Urbanek was assigned to the parish. Father Urbanek had been a priest in Czechoslovakia and had been forced to leave that country because of communist domination. He had been in the United States for 21 months before coming to Assumption Parish.

The parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee on August 15, 1953, with a 7:30 a.m. Mass and 10 a.m. High Mass with a Czech sermon. A chicken and ham supper was served, followed by a dance.

The Holy Name Society was organized for the men of the parish in 1954. In 1955 the sanctuary was remodeled, and the church was rewired. In 1956 new cupboards were built in the sacristy and the basement, and new sidewalks were laid on the grounds. The church was repainted and redecorated in 1957. Kneeling pads were installed on the kneelers. In 1959 a new electric organ was purchased and a water system was installed in the basement kitchen.

The Rev. Louis Trzil (1960-1962) started the parish library. On August 17, 1961 the last payment of the parish debt was paid. At this time the parish had about 61 families, two-thirds of Czech origin and one-third of German origin. The community was about 99 percent Catholic and strictly employed in farming, except for the two small stores and six retired families.

The Rev. Clarence Frana (1962-1967) next served the parish. In 1962, the cross on the steeple was gilded, tuck pointing was completed on the entire church, and outside painting of doors and windows took place. Majella Koudelka donated one half acre of land for additional cemetery space. Sacred Heart Parish of Reilly Ridge came under the care of the Little Turkey pastor in 1964. A public address system was installed in the church. New restrooms were built, and a new entrance to the basement was installed on the east side of the church in 1965.

The Rev. Norman White served as pastor for three weeks in 1967, the Rev. Charles Kruse for nine months until July 1968 when the Rev. John Karal became pastor. In 1968 Sisters Therese and Denise lived in Little Turkey, coordinating the Valley Area Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Program and training parish members to become CCD instructors. The church and rectory basements were used as classrooms. A duplicator was purchased, and Sunday bulletins were printed. In 1969 the parking lot was surfaced with asphalt.

In 1970 a wall furnace was installed, Saturday evening masses began, and lay lectors were recruited.

The Rev. John Ptacek served as pastor from 1971 - 1976. The Fatima Home Pilgrim Virgin statue arrived at Assumption Church in 1973 and traveled from home to home in the parish. New doors were installed on the front of the church in 1975.

The Rev. Raphael Ludwig was installed as pastor in 1976. A reconciliation room was built in the back of the church in 1977. The first eucharistic ministers were commissioned in November 1977. Parishioners voted to remove the old garage across the street and put a new metal roof on the parish hall. In 1978 the Diamond Jubilee was celebrated with an outdoor polka Mass and a potluck dinner. Father Ludwig organized a bus trip for parishioners to Des Moines to see Pope John Paul II in 1979.

In 1980 some brick and roof repair was done on the church costing just about \$7,000.

The Rev. Kenneth Gehling served as pastor 1981-1984. In 1983 the church was completely redecorated for \$14,000. A new plaster wall replaced the fiberboard blocks behind the altar. New lights, a lectern and a baptistery were donated. The sacristy was refurbished. A parish pictorial directory was published that same year, listing 70 families. The parish celebrated the Holy Year with a pilgrimage Mass at St. Mary's, New Hampton, on November 27, 1983.

The Rev. Dennis Cain was appointed pastor in 1984. A new public address system was donated. In 1985 the shingles on the church were replaced for \$5,300. In 1986 a new organ was purchased, and the rectory was redecorated. The Rosary Society groups reorganized and were given the saints names of Angela, Bridget, Catherine and Dorothy. They published a cookbook of which 2,000 copies were sold.

In 1987 the Rev. Mark McGovern, the last resident pastor, came to Little Turkey. The 150th Anniversary of the Archdiocese of Dubuque was celebrated at Luther College in Decorah. In July 1987, RAGBRAI traveled through Little Turkey. Tuck pointing on the church was completed.

In July 1989 the Rev. J. David Pepper become pastor of Little Turkey. He resided at Lawler as he was also pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The furnishings from the rectory were sold at an auction, and the rectory was used for CCD classes. Sacred Heart Church, Reilly Ridge, was designated an "Oratory."

In 1991 a parish pictorial directory was published with Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Assumption parish had 92 households with about 230 members. Assumption parishioners celebrated the 90th anniversary of the first Mass on March 21, 1993. In July the church floor was refinished for \$500. Carpeting was put on the front steps and indoor basement steps. On February 2, 1994, Father Pepper suffered a stroke so no masses were celebrated at Assumption from February through July.

In July 1994 the Rev. Allen M. Schmitt, pastor of Protivin, was also named pastor of Assumption. In 1997 he was also named pastor of St. John's Parish, Fort Atkinson. In 1998 new steps were poured on the front of the church, and new sidewalks were put in.

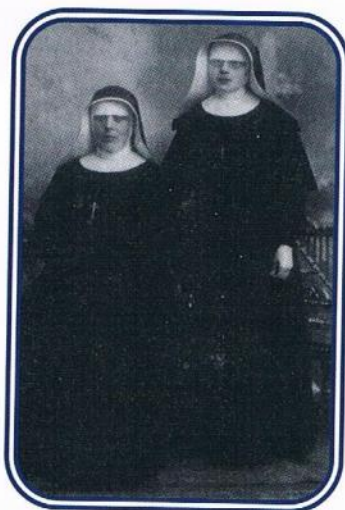


Children from Assumption and Sacred Heart parishes participate in liturgical dance at Sister Laura's ceremony.



Sister Laura Reicks, R.S.M. recites her final vows on August 1, 1981, with her family in attendance.

July 2000 brought the Rev. John Moser to Assumption Parish. In September 2000 the rectory/CCD building was reshingled. A new sound system was installed in the church, and central air was added in 2001. The parish was blessed with a Sunday morning visit by Archbishop Jerome Hanus and his family. In 2002 a Madonna statue replaced the deteriorating crucifix in the cemetery. A new pictorial directory was published.



Sister Ignatius Dostal and
Sister Emmanuella Dostal

Antonette Dostal, Sister Ignatius and **Mary Dostal**, Sister Emmanuella, were the daughters of Ignatz and Mary (Gabrial) Dostal. They served in the Charity House of the Holy Cross. Both were teachers and talented musicians. They left Prague on April 20, 1920, to come to America. They worked in the Hessoun Orphanage in St. Louis. Neither spoke English. Their sister, Sister Ignatia never came to America.



Sister Corbiana Pechota



Sister Mary Grata Panos and
Cecilia Panos



Sister Joyce Ann Panos

Stella Pechota, Sister Corbiana was born April 1, 1890. She was the daughter of Frank and Mary Pechota. She had a twin sister, Lena Pechota Shileny. She entered the convent on April 25, 1906. She served as Housekeeper in Protivin for many years. She died June 2, 1984.

Anna Panos, Sister Mary Grata, was born July 26, 1890. She was the daughter of Albert Sr. and Barbara Panos. She entered the St. Francis Convent on June 13, 1906. She died at St. Joseph Convent, Campbellsport, Wisconsin, in 1977. **Cecilia Panos**, a niece of Sister Grata, was the daughter of Albert Jr. and Edith Panos. She later left the convent to marry Henry Schwamman in 1929.



Sister Laura Reicks

Choosing Religious Vocation

Joyce Ann Panos was born April 21, 1944, and was baptized April 30, 1944, by the Rev. Joseph Badura at Assumption Church, Little Turkey. She lived with her parents, Leonard and Margaret (Vsetecka) Panos, on a farm one mile north of Little Turkey, until her mother died when she was 16 months old. She then lived with her grandparents, Albert and Barbara Panos in Little Turkey. She started school at the Little Turkey School with Madonna Kacher as her teacher. She received her first Holy Communion at Assumption Church in 1951 with classmates, Elaine Soukup, Rose Mary Wenthold, Norbert Busta, Mary Ann Busta and Ruth Panos.

Her father remarried and the family eventually moved to Protivin where she attended Holy Trinity School graduating from Rudolphium High School in 1962. She then entered the St. Joseph's Convent in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was given the name Sister Dennis Ann but later was able to use her baptismal name, Sister Joyce Ann. She started as a homemaker in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She spent one year in Crofton, Nebraska as a teacher and the next eighteen years in Howells, Nebraska, as a teacher and principal. She spent her summers in Walls, Mississippi, where she worked in a Cultural Recreational program.

In 1990 Sister Joyce Ann moved back to Milwaukee and has been working at the Elderly Home for Sisters. She is a wheelchair van driver and transports sisters to and from appointments. She is also in charge of finances for the convent and assists with the personal needs of the Sisters. She is known as the "Cowboy Sister" and continues her love of horses. She stated, "I love my life as a School Sister of St. Francis" and "I consider myself to be a native of Little Turkey." She celebrated her 20th Jubilee at Assumption Church, Little Turkey and her 25th jubilee at Holy Trinity Church, Protivin. She will celebrate her 40th jubilee in June 2003.

Laura Mary Reicks never dreamed that by choosing a religious life, her spiritual journey would lead her to a national position in Washington, DC. Yet, in 1992 she was appointed associate director for the National Religious Retirement Office.

The organization formed when it became apparent that the cost of providing for those members who were retiring could not be supported by fewer, younger members. She served in the St. Louis finance office for the Sisters of Mercy from 1998-1999, and then headed back to Washington, DC. In 1999 she was named executive director of the National Association for Treasurers of Religious Institutes.

Sister Laura is the second of 11 children of Francis and Lucille (Gebel) Reicks. She first thought about choosing a religious life as an eighth-grader, but the idea didn't crystallize until her college years. "For me, I just knew," said Sister Laura. She was twenty years old when she entered the community of the Sisters of Mercy in 1974. She took her final vows August 1, 1981 in Little Turkey.

Her first assignment was a teaching position at St. Matthew in Kalispell, Montana. She enjoyed living in Big Sky country, but she thought about returning home when a Decorah math teaching position opened. Destiny intervened. Her Major Superior took Sister Laura's abilities and desire to work with numbers and formed other plans for her. In 1983 she was back in Iowa-but as business manager of her community in Cedar Rapids, while also earning a MBA at the University of Iowa. She held that position until accepting assignment in Washington, DC.

Through it all, Sister Laura's rural upbringing has stayed close to her heart, giving a voice to small, country parishes. "This faith community walks with me in DC," said Sister Laura, "I get a lot of energy from my home experience."

The native from Little Turkey sees an enduring, strong sense of community present when she is home and able to attend Mass at Assumption. She noted the parish has the ability to share not only the bread and wine, but also "who you are."

A religious life has been a rewarding and challenging life choice for Sister Laura. She said she is thankful for 29 years of opportunities to help communities and to achieve spiritual growth. "If it comes from your heart, it's a 'yes' to religious life-not a 'no' to something else."



Rev. Joseph Dostal
1903



Rev. Godfrey Kramolis
1903-1911



Rev. Rudolph Lakomy
1911



Rev. Thomas Ballon
1911-1913



Rev. Joseph Vytisk
1913-1914

The Priesthood

To live in the midst of the world
with no desire for its pleasures;
To be a member of every family,
yet belong to none;
To go daily from men to God to offer
Him their homage and petition;
To return from God to men to bring
them His pardon and His hope;
To teach and instruct;
To pardon and console;
To bless and be blessed forever!
O God! what a life and tis thine,
O Priest of Jesus Christ.

Lacordaire



Rev. Vincent Opava
1914-1921



Rev. Wencelsaus Dostal
1921-1924



Rev. Joseph Gregor
1924-1931



Rev. Joseph Badura
1931-1945



Rev. Francis J. Ruzicka
1945-1946



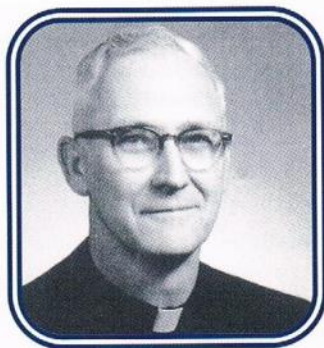
Rev. Valentine J. Hlubek
1946-1953



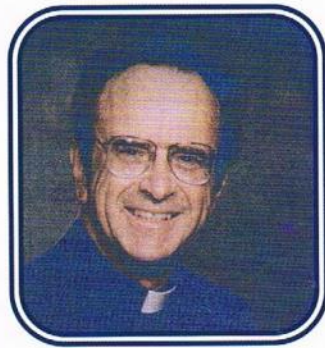
Rev. Louis Urbanek
1953-1960



Rev. Louis Trzil
1960-1962



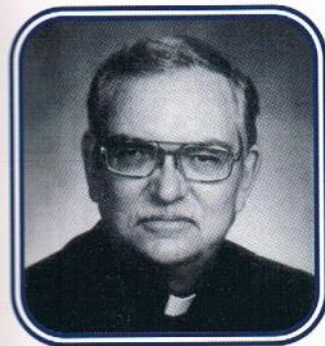
Rev. Clarence Frana
1962-1967



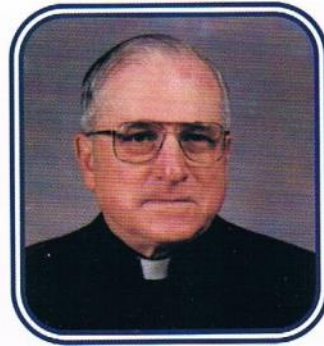
Rev. Norman White
1967 - 3 Weeks



Rev. Charles Kruse
1967-1968



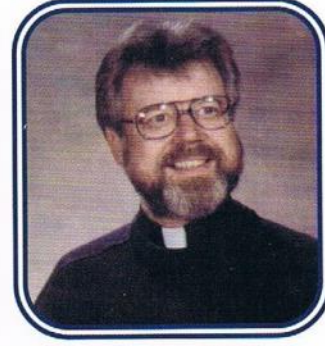
Rev. John Karal
1968-1971



Rev. John Ptacek
1971-1976



Rev. Raphael Ludwig
1976-1981



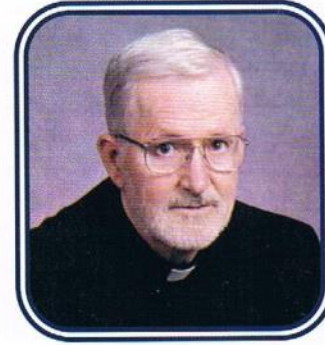
Rev. Kenneth Gehling
1981-1984



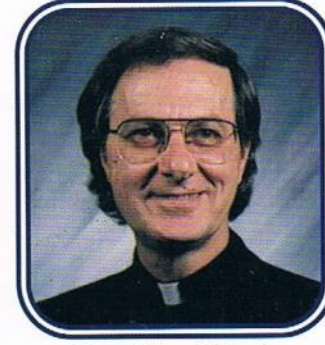
Rev. Dennis Cain
1984-1987



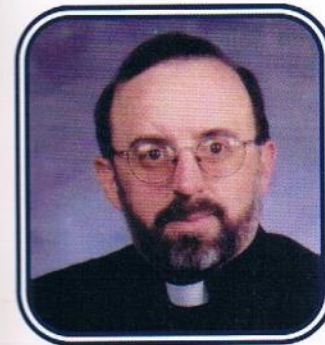
Rev. Mark McGovern
1987-1989



Rev. J. David Pepper
1989-1994



Rev. Allen Schmitt
1994-2000



Rev. John Moser
2000-Present

"We are thankful to all the priests who have served our parish so faithfully throughout the past century. We admire the sacrifice and faith of former parishioners who built and maintained this parish; we are grateful for the sacrifice and commitment of those who have gone before us."

Father John Moser - 2003