

Reflection for the 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Celebrates its 75th Anniversary, 1946-2021

By the 1800's a Hispanic settlement was located in the Los Alamos area and by the turn of the century the area had been settled by homesteaders. In 1916 Ashley Pond a wealthy businessman from Detroit, opened a dude ranch and established the Los Alamos School for Boys. The school continued to educate young men until the United States Army took over the area for the Manhattan Project in 1943.

From 1941 to 1946, Los Alamos was listed as a Mission of the Parish of Santa Cruz de la Canada. During most of this time the Rev. Clarence Schoeppner from the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Santa Fe and the Franciscan Priests from St. Francis Cathedral ministered to the Catholics on the Army Base.

The Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Alamos was established by Archbishop Byrne on September 6, 1946. The Rev. Bernard Burns was the first Pastor. Because the Parish did not have a building of its own Mass was celebrated in the theater, and Father Burns lived in a dormitory room. By 1948, Mass was being celebrated in the Chapel of Burns hospital which had been moved to Los Alamos from Santa Fe. In 1950, land was leased from the government for the construction of a new Catholic Church. Army barracks were placed on the property and renovated for use as a Church and rectory.

In 1967 construction of the present Church began in 1967, and in 1968 the Church was completed and was dedicated in. In 1974, St. Joseph's Hall in White Rock was built to serve the people living there. A new rectory was built in 1979 and the old Church building and rectory were sold in 1992. It was 1989 that renovations were made to St. Joseph Hall in White Rock, providing a permit place for the celebration of Sunday Mass. In September, 1992 the St. Thomas More, Religious Education Center was dedicated. In 1996, the bronze statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the patroness of our Parish was installed in front of the Church and was dedicated on December 8. Next followed the building of the bell tower that hold chimes to call the faithful to worship.

In May of 2000, the inner strength of all the residents in Los Alamos was tested. It was the time of the Cerro Grande Fire, which destroyed 48,000 acres, with 429 families in Los Alamos losing their homes. The community came together and helped one another, and help came from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and from parishes and monasteries throughout the country. In this challenging time the members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish and all the citizens of Los Alamos were reminded of the very best that can be found in the hearts of all mankind.

On April 13, 2008, the IHM Chapel was dedicated to the Divine Mercy, it is in this Chapel that the Parish has had Perpetual Adoration since 2006. In 2007 the St. John Paul the Great Center was added to the IHM campus and is used by the youth of our Parish. On May 1, 2011, the John Paul II memorial was dedicated, the statue was created in Poland the artist who created this memorial were able to come for the dedication.

In March of 2020, the state of New Mexico went into a lockdown due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Due to the Pandemic and the related health concerns our Parish has found new ways to worship together and support each other. The Pandemic has been a difficult time for people all over the world and here in Los Alamos is no exception. As a community of believers, we have been able to draw strength for God and each other as we look forward to better days.

As one looks at this brief history of our Parish we can look with pride at the 75 years of faith in our Parish, but we can see that this brief history does not tell the full story. None of the buildings would have been needed if we were not a people of faith. None of these buildings would have been built if it was not for dedicated Priests, Deacons, Parish Staff, and parishioners. The story of our Parish comes alive through the faith of all of us, and the grace of God.

This Sunday in our Gospel Reading we hear of a miracle that Jesus performs in the district of the Decapolis. A deaf man is brought to Jesus and as Jesus enables this man to hear and speak Christ says the Aramaic word "*Ephphatha*", which means "be open." This word *Ephphatha* is only mentioned one time in the whole Bible. Even though this Aramaic word is only mentioned one time in the Bible it can and should have a profound impact on us. May we be open to God working in our daily lives. As we think of the 75 years our Parish, we can think of many examples of the people of our Parish being open to God and His will. As we take time next Sunday, September 12, 2021, to gather for our Parish picnic after the 11:30 PM Mass, may we remember the wonderful people of our Parish who have over the last 75 years been open to God working in and through them. May we and others be inspired by their example so that in the next 75 years may our Parish continue to be open to God working in and through us.