

## THE HISTORY OF ST. AGNES PARISH - PINCONNING

In 1916 His Holiness Pope Benedict XV gloriously reigned as Vicar of Christ. Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States. Woodbridge N. Ferris was Governor of Michigan. It was in this year that St. Agnes Church of Pinconning, Michigan had its humble beginning.

Prior to this time the Polish people of Pinconning attended services at St. Florian Church, Standish, Michigan or St. Mary Church at Nine Mile, Michigan. Travelling conditions, however, were poor and so the small community of Poles organized and began to make plans for a church in Pinconning.

This small but determined parish got its start with a contribution of \$150.00 from the treasury of the defunct Society of Fraternal Aid. With this money the present property of St. Agnes Parish was purchased excluding the parking area west of the Church.

The first organizational meeting was held in November, 1916 at the request of Father Podlaszewski, pastor of St. Florian Church, Standish. The first Church Committee included the following gentlemen: Michael Piekos, Anthony Sulkowski, Wenceslaus Romanik, Wenceslaus Gramacki and Blaze Bis. These ambitious gentlemen collected \$500.00 for a Building Fund starter. Another \$1,500 was loaned and within a month the Polish settlers of Pinconning had a small Church of their own.

The first services in the new Church were held January 1, 1917. The Church was blessed by Bishop Kelly of Grand Rapids, June 13, 1917 and placed under the patronage of St. Agnes, Martyr. The new St. Agnes Church was made a mission parish of St. Florian, Standish. Although, Mass was only offered twice each month, nonetheless the people were proud of their new Church.

On May 15, 1917, Father Podlaszewski was transferred and Fr. Stanley Sikorski succeeded him as pastor of St. Florian's with St. Agnes as his mission. He served both parishes until February 2, 1922. During his pastorate the debt on the original building was paid in full.

Fr. Andrew Bieniawski replaced Fr. Sikorski and served St. Agnes parishioners until about March of 1928. It was during his pastorate that disaster struck St. Agnes Parish. On May 8, 1922 the church was totally destroyed by fire. The small building had only served the even smaller congregation about 5 years but it was a devastating loss for St. Agnes Church. We can rightly imagine how disheartened the people were to see their hard of five years in ashes.

Fortunately, the Church had been insured for \$3,000.00. Even more fortunately, more Poles had settled in the area so plans were immediately begun to build another Church and a larger one at that. True to form, the people heartily endorsed the rebuilding plans. They gathered \$2,000.00 in a special fund raising campaign. This amount along with the insurance payment gave a good start to the second St. Agnes Church. A larger Church was built at a total cost of \$15,000.00. Upon completion the parish was indebted in the amount of \$10,000.00 which eventually was paid in 1936 under the pastorate of Fr. Louis Wodecki.

In 1923 four acres of land were purchased on East Pinconning Road. At the present time this still serves as St. Agnes Cemetery. March 15, 1928 was a historical day for St. Agnes Church. On that day Bishop Joseph Pinten of Grand Rapids, in a formal decree, removed St. Agnes and St. Mary of Nine Mile from the jurisdiction of St. Florian Church, Standish. Bishop Pinten in his decree formally established St. Agnes Church with full Parish status

and made St. Mary of Nine Mile its mission.

Fr. Casimir Szyper was named to be first resident Pastor. He lived temporarily with the Michael Przybylski Family across from the Church. In 1928 St. Agnes Church was still indebted in the amount of \$6,800.00. Nevertheless Bishop Pinten gave permission for the building of a Rectory. Toward the end of July, 1928 construction began and the new residence for the pastor was completed in November at a total cost of \$6,130.00. Fr. Szyper was transferred soon to Posen, Michigan August 27, 1935. Fr. Louis Wodecki succeeded him on October 30, 1935. In the interim, Fr. Francis Kupinski administered the parish.

In 1935 the parish debt was still \$1,200.00, this however, was paid in full during the pastorate of Fr. Wodecki. Because of ill health Fr. Wodecki relinquished his pastorate of St. Agnes Church, June 23, 1950 and he was succeeded by Fr. Ignatius Woloszyk who immediately began making improvements on the Church and the Rectory.

June 23, 1953 brought the transfer of Fr. Woloszyk to Parisville and in a rather unusual circumstance Fr. Szyper returned again to serve as pastor. During his pastorate it was his great joy to see St. Agnes only Priest-Son ordained to the priesthood, June 1, 1957. Fr. Ramon Matuszewski was ordained at St. Hyacinth Church, Bay City, Michigan and offered his First Solemn Mass in the presence of his family and many long-time friends at St. Agnes Church June 2, 1957. The only other vocation at this time is Mary Ann Duranczyk, daughter of John Duranczyk and Ann Nabozny, who at present is an Aspirant with the Felician Sisters of Livonia. Father Matuszewski is the son of Mitchell Matuszewski and Donna Pudlik.

Fr. Szyper shepherded the flock of St. Agnes faithfully until his sudden death, July 25th, 1964. Fr. Szyper was laid to rest, July 29th, 1964 in St. Agnes Cemetery ~~at the foot of the Sacred Heart Shrine~~ at the foot of the Sacred Heart Shrine. During the summer months the Franciscan Fathers of St. Leonard's Friary cared for the parish until September, 1964 when Fr. Aloysius Lacki was appointed pastor. With the ~~aid~~ aid of the men of the parish the Social Hall was renovated during the winter of 1965. During Father Lacki's pastorate the parking area west of the Church was also purchased. In addition other improvements around the Church and Rectory were made.

Fr. Lacki's pastorate was short-lived for in May of 1965 he was transferred to St. Hedwig's of Bay City. Fr. Richard Jozwiak was appointed the new pastor of St. Agnes and was installed May 13, 1965. Fr. Jozwiak has continued the Improvement Program begun by his predecessor. Work crews of volunteer parishioners aided in the installation of water at the cemetery and a general clean-up of the parish grounds.

In the summer of 1965 the Archetural Firm of Morris & Wesolek of Bay City as engaged to draw up plans for the complete renovation and modernization of St. Agnes Church to bring it in line with the recent pronouncements of the 2dn Vatican Council. The Parishioners enthusiastically supported this project with special contributions amounting to almost \$10,000.00 in addition to \$7,400.00 in special contributions for Electrical Fixtures and stained glass windows. Work began early in January, 1966 while His Holiness Pope Paul VI reigns as Vicar of Christ, Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States; and George Romney, Governor of the State of Michigan. When completed the total cost will exceed \$50,000.00 with the new furnishings.

The Church Committee appointed by Bishop Woznicki who are presently serving in that capacity are the following gentlemen: Stanley Switek, Stanley Resmer, Frank Duranczyk, Frank Bandyk, and Gerald Trudell.

Given at Pinconning, Michigan, at St. Agnes Rectory this 31st day of March, 1966