

# History of St. Joseph Parish, continued.

1925-2003

## Father Dennis J. O'Keefe 1923 - 1926



As the city grew, so did the number of Catholics. In the nine years from 1914 until 1923, the parish had outgrown the original Methodist building and the need for a new building was clear. The little church was too small for the growing Catholic population and plans were drawn for a new Spanish-type church, which would seat three to four hundred people. Building was delayed while more property on Avenue K was purchased for the church building, a hall, and parking space. The first order of business became finding a rectory for Fr/O'Keefe in the latter part of 1924. A



The church exterior.

A small house was purchased on Avenue K northwest and 7<sup>th</sup> Street behind what is now St. Paul Episcopal Church. By 1925, the new Spanish-type church was completed on Avenue K close to 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Fr. O'Keefe celebrated the first Mass there on Christmas Day, 1925.

The Church had a tabernacle and a beautiful carved altar. The altar was paid for by Joe Tobin and built by the Langenhorst brothers, Joe and Frank who were carpenters. The altar was decorated with candlesticks carved by Matt Smith. Some of these are now in the homes of a few parishioners. There were statues of Mary and Joseph beside the altar. In

the rear of the church on either side of the main aisle were a confessional, a shrine to St. Therese of Lisieux, and a baptismal font.

The Langerhorst brothers also built the altar rail as a surprise for Father and the parishioners. It was another year before pews were built. The men of the parish built the pews themselves. Mentioned among the builders are Charles O. Emry, Matt Smith, Will Keefe, William Der, Jesse Roberts and LaVerne Schneider. Meanwhile, since at first there was no meeting hall, a large curtain was installed to hang before the sanctuary when parishioners met for social or business affairs. Ads, which were sold to local merchants, decorated the curtain. One large ad mentioned the Joe Bassing Plumbing Company. If there was a power failure, Matt Smith would drive his car up to the door of the church to provide some light other than the candles.



**Church interior**