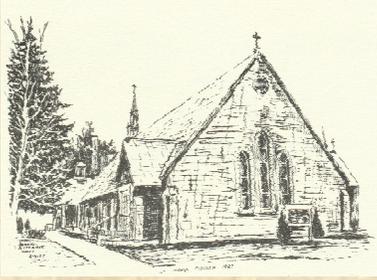


# The History of Saint Mary's Parish



In the spring of 1937, the late Bishop Edward J. Kelly and his advisors determined that a new parish was needed in Boise to serve the 200 Catholic families west of Fifteenth Street. The only parish at the time was Saint John's Cathedral. Bishop Kelly created the new parish on May 1, 1937, with the formal title of *SAINT MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION*. The bishop divided the parish of Saint John's Cathedral with the border at Fifteenth Street. The new parish stretched south across the river all the way to the Ada county line. It included most of what is now Sacred Heart parish, all of what is now Saint Mark's parish, and much of what is now Holy Apostles parish. Bishop Kelly's first site choice was at Sixteenth and State but a grocer, Joe Albertson, bought the land before the bishop could do so. Albertson built his first grocery store there.

The new church was Old English style, with two entrances facing each other and with seating for 400. Both interior and exterior walls were of uncovered red clinker brick. There were many wooden details throughout and no basement. The cost of the new church was \$34,000. Father J. A. Jentges, was chosen to serve as Saint Mary's first pastor, but he had to resign on Oct. 25, 1937, because of ill health. The Bishop named Father John J. Creegan, later Msgr. Creegan (1966), to succeed Father Jentges. Msgr. Creegan was pastor for 37 years until his death in 1974.

The new church was dedicated Dec. 19, 1937. A quotation from the dedication program states: *"Saint Mary's Church stands completed, stately and magnificent in its construction, attractive and inviting in its finish – a grand new home reared to the honor and glory of the King of Kings."*

In 1962, the parish's Silver Jubilee, 500 families were members of Saint Mary's. Saint Mary's School, built in 1948 and opened in 1949 and was staffed by Benedictine Sisters from the Priory of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, had an enrollment of 396.

In 1957, to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parish, the church sanctuary was remodeled and re-furnished. By 1962, the Vatican II instruction was for parishes to move the altar so that the priest could face the people. In 1975 this was done, with the communion rail removed, new carpet installed, and the choir loft becoming the cry room. After Vatican II, Saint Mary's laity accepted their responsibilities in the church as lay ministers. Today they continue to serve as Eucharistic ministers, lectors and greeters. The first Saint Mary's Parish Council met on April 20, 1967, the first parish council in Idaho.

Today, over 1,200 families are members of Saint Mary's Parish. More than fifty priests have served Saint Mary's over the years and many Sisters have worked in the parish as principals at the school, teachers, religious education coordinators, and pastoral associates.

Two "Crown Jewels" of Saint Mary's are the Food Bank and the school. The third "Crown Jewel" is the multi-cultural focus of the parish. The parish has worked hard to be one community with a vibrant English-speaking part of the community and a vibrant Spanish-speaking part of the community.

As far back as the 1960s, the people of St. Mary's were aware of an increasing need for meeting rooms, restrooms and a better liturgical space in their church. In 1968 Msgr. Creegan appointed a building committee. For many years, a variety of plans were examined.

Finally, in 2003, after a series of parish meetings, it was clear that parishioners agreed that some change was necessary, but they did not want to move their church building. The final plan was to expand and renovate Saint Mary's Church, to provide seating for 700, to bring the church into accordance with Vatican II standards, and to have, for the first time in 70 years, functioning restrooms.

Dedicated in 2009, the renovated church is now nationally and internationally known for its outstanding art. The church remains *"a grand new home reared to the honor and glory of the King of Kings"* and His mother, Mary.

