

# A HISTORY

## From St. Columba Parish in Swan River, Manitoba, to St. Agnes Parish in Waterloo, Ontario

**Our Social Justice Committee has been presented with the opportunity to help support the Catholic Missions of Canada. You have seen a presentation from Fr. David Reilander back in November 2018 at all the Masses regarding Canadian Missions.**

**We, the Committee, are excited to take up this cause and provide help.**

***Read the following to see why the Swan River Missions have such an interesting background and how they tie in with the history of our St. Agnes Parish***

### **ST. COLUMBA CHURCH-SWAN RIVER, MANITOBA:**

The Parish of St. Columba and its missions was founded as a Mission of St. Viator's of Dauphin in 1902.

In 1921 it was established as a Parish and guided by various Diocesan and Religious priests.

**Fr. Boenke, the American Region in Milwaukee found himself in charge of a number of German Pallottines who were sent as civilian internees from Great Britain to Canada. In August 1944, Fr. Boenke called these priests together for a retreat at Camp Morton, Manitoba. Archbishop Alfred Sinnott of Winnipeg had heard of these priests and told them he wanted all of them in his Diocese.**

Fr. Soemer was the first to arrive. Many of the mission churches and the rectory in Swan River are fruits of his labour. Reminiscing about the first years he writes *"from the beginning the people of Swan River were very kind to us. They looked at us as their priests, not as Germans. It was no easy time. We had to forgo many comforts, as money was scarce and many things were needed not only spiritual but physical as well. No water, no sewer, inadequate heating, not to speak of the snow storms in winter to make roads almost impassable."*

**After the first ground work had been laid, a new post-war generation of Pallottines came to Swan River in May of 1952.**

Under the leadership of Fr. Alois Justen as pastor, a new church was built in Swan River, Manitoba.

The following years were marked by the great event of the Vatican II Council.

This was the time when Fr. Joe Dephoff spent most of his priestly life in Swan River. He was also the Provincial Delegate of the Pallottine Fathers in Canada.

Regular catechetical classes were now held in some missions as well, due to the work of the Sisters and Fr. Josef Schmelz.

### **PALLOTTINE FATHERS**

#### **AT SWAN RIVER, MANITOBA      AND      ST. AGNES PARISH, WATERLOO**

Fr. Alois Justen	1952-1967	Fr. Alois Justen	1967-1971
Fr. Joachim Gringel	1965-1968	Fr. Joachim Gringel	1968-1972
Fr. Alois Mutert	1954-1965	Fr. Alois Mutert	1972-1974
Fr. Theodor Gerharz	1952-1954	Fr. Theodor Gerharz	1974-1990
Fr. Josef Lassenga	1967-1974	Fr. Josef Lassenga	1974-1980
Fr. Josef Schmelz	1972-1974	Fr. Josef Schmelz	1974-1981
Fr. Gottfreid Seifert	1985-1986	Fr. Gottfreid Seifert	1990-1993
Fr. Joseph. Dephoff	1966-1971 1974-1983	Fr. Joseph Dephoff	1990-2003

## **ST. AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH, WATERLOO, ON**

**Many of the priests who were called to serve as Pastors of St. Columba, Swan River, Manitoba also became pastors here at St. Agnes. Our histories are intertwined.**

At the request of His Excellency Bishop Ryan, the Pallottine Fathers were invited in August of 1967 to establish the new parish of St. Agnes, Waterloo. The Rectory was a house on Vermont Street. Fr. Justen celebrated his first Mass for his new parishioners of St. Agnes on the first Sunday of September, 1967, in St. Agnes School gym. With approximately 450 families to care for, five Masses were scheduled for each Sunday. The donation of property by the John Kieswetter family paved the way for an early construction start of our present church. The lowest of five tenders was awarded to Karley-Kroetsch Construction at a cost of \$444,000.00. The sod turning ceremony was held on Nov. 24, 1968 and construction began the next day.

***The blessing and dedication of St. Agnes took place on November 2, 1969.***

*The Pallottine Fathers follow the teaching of St. Vincent Pallotti, who was born in Rome in 1795. Vincent Pallotti's idea of enlisting the laity in the apostolic work of the Church was, for that time, very unusual and progressive since it had always been considered to be the exclusive task of the priesthood.*

**Fr. Alois Justen, SAC, was the first pastor of St. Agnes- (the same pastor who built the first church in Swan River in 1952!)**

Fr. Justen brought with him 15 years of untiring service in Swan River and surrounding missions where he directed the improvement of many mission chapels. He also helped build a new church there, which was beneficial to the building of our parish, St. Agnes.

In 1969, Fr. Joachim Gringel arrived at St. Agnes to assist Fr. Alois Justen in his pastoral duties. Since then we have been guided and cared for by ten Pallottine Fathers including Fr. Josef Schmelz, Fr. Joseph Lassenga, Fr. Theodor Gerharz, Fr. Gregory Roetker and Fr. Joseph Dephoff.

### **HERE IS AN INTERESTING FACT!**

Fr. Alois Justen, Fr. Joachim Gringel, Fr. Theodor Gerharz, Fr. Joseph Lassenga, Fr. Josef Schmelz and Fr. Joseph Dephoff were all priests in Swan River who also became pastors here at St. Agnes.

In 2000, the German Pallottines decided to consolidate their group in Alberta where they already took care of several parishes. It meant giving up St. Agnes as well as St. Mary's, Kitchener.

The Polish Pallottines, who did not have any priests in North America, agreed to take on the leadership of St. Agnes, Waterloo and St. Mary's, Kitchener..

### **ST. AGNES PARISH, WATERLOO**

#### **German Pallottine Fathers**

Fr. Alois Justen, 1967-1971

Fr. Joachim Gringel 1968-1972

Fr. Wilhelm Kroell 1971-1972

Fr. Alois Mutert 1972-1974

Fr. Josef Schmelz 1972-1974

Fr. Joseph Lassenga 1974-1980

Fr. Theodor Gerharz 1974-1990

Fr. Gregory Roekter 1981-1985

Fr. Gottfreid. Seifert 1985-1986

Fr. Alois Mutert 1985-1986

Fr. Ludwig Hens 1987-1990

Fr. Joseph Dephoff 1990-2002

#### **Polish Pallottine Fathers**

Fr. Piotr Machnacki 2002-2013

Fr. Irek Koziak 2002-2013

Fr. Aleksander Mazur 2013

***Our current pastor, Fr. Aleks, in concert with the Social Justice Committee here at St. Agnes Parish, has suggested the parish community of Swan River, Manitoba, as our next Social Justice Initiative. With such a rich history between us, it feels like we have come full circle.***