

**Sacred Heart
Catholic Church
Hallettsville, Texas
1882-2019**



A HISTORY OF THE SACRED HEART PARISH

1882 – 2019

Sacred Heart Parish, Hallettsville, emerged from the history of nearby St. Mary's in 1882 when the stone church was completed at a cost of about \$35,000.00, and Father John Anthony Forest took up his residence here, and henceforth made this the headquarters of missionary activity, attending also to old St. Mary's. Construction of the church began in 1873 on an acre of land donated in 1869 for that purpose just outside the original townsite of Hallettsville by C. B. Ballard and his wife, Mary Jane, nee Hallett. The donation was made to Father G. B. Gaillet in the name of Bishop Dubuis of Galveston. Before the church was ready, Mass was said in various homes: Kahanek's, Clark's, Henneke's, Fahrenthold's, Klimitchek's, and possibly others. A stone cross on the old Henneke place records a mission preached there in 1876, most likely by Father F. X. Weninger. The mission in 1879 was preached by Father F. P. Garesche, S. J. of Seguin, in the Oddfellows Hall on an acre plot just south of the uncompleted church. The Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament bought about 3 ½ acres of land east of the church plot in 1877, a small convent building was built in 1879, and the Sisters came from the Victoria Convent in 1882. That year a small rectory was built and land was bought for the first parish cemetery beyond the Oddfellows property.

Father Forest was consecrated third bishop of San Antonio on October 28, 1895. Under Father Forest's administration, out of Hallettsville, the various missions were developed as follows: St. Mary's Church was enlarged in 1884, Koerth built its present church in 1888, Moulton built its first church the same year and attained a resident pastor in 1890, Shiner built its first church in 1891 and was attended out of Hallettsville until February 1892, when it became a mission of Moulton. Nada or Vox Populi was attended from Hallettsville in 1891, Sweet Home acquired a building for its first church in 1895 and soon after became a mission of Yoakum, and Yoakum or Brushy had just obtained its first resident pastor that year. Further

developments in Hallettsville were the purchase in 1890 of almost four acres of land for the new Sacred Heart Cemetery; building of a two-story frame parish hall on the street corner by the church, the birthplace of the "Novy Domov," March 1895, the oldest Czech Catholic newspaper in Texas, and its home for about eleven years; and great progress of the convent and its school. There is record also of a separate parish school here in 1887 conducted by Ferdinand Pribyla, a lay teacher.

The convent, headed by Mother Mary Louise Murray until 1900, one of the foundresses, later included a motherhouse, novitiate, a boarding school for girls, and a day school attended by boys and girls, of all denominations. A three-story frame building was added in 1883, another in 1891, and later they were connected into one, Sacred Heart School, and replaced by a modern building in 1950. Part of the old convent was used as the priest's dining room and another section as separate boys' school. A new boys' school was erected on the convent premises southeast of the present school in 1892. There were three classrooms separating the boys, not by grades but by origin: Czech, German, and English-speaking.

In December 1895, Father Louis P. Netardus succeeded Father Forest and was pastor here until the end of 1901 when he exchanged places with Father Julius V. Vrana of Praha, Texas. Under Father Netardus the present church was erected at St. Mary's to replace a much smaller one. The first church was built at Nada in 1897-1898, also the second, after the first was destroyed by a storm in 1900. At Hallettsville he had the old rectory moved to a location south of the present school and the front part added at the end of 1899. The convent bought its last parcel of land, almost an acre consisting of two strips between their property and the street on the east, in 1897 and 1898, and erected another three-story building, their last one, known as Sacred Heart Academy or the Music Hall.

Father Vrana was pastor here until March, 1905. Early in his administration, Nada received a resident pastor and ceased to be a mission of Hallettsville.

Father Hugh A. Milmo substituted for Father Vrana from May to August, 1904. Father Wm. G. Henderson was next pastor from March, 1905 to February, 1907. St. Mary's again received a resident pastor in Father Chas. J. Benes, April, 1905, leaving Hallettsville with only Koerth as a mission. Father John Sheehan was the next pastor serving until January, 1909. Early in 1909, Koerth received its first resident pastor, and Hallettsville was left without a mission.

Father M. J. Mertes was pastor here from January, 1909 until his death from tuberculosis, May 11, 1914. He is the first priest to be buried here. His plans for enlarging the church and starting a high school for boys did not materialize. Father Alphonse Mathis became pastor in July, 1914. Father Mathis administered the still extensive parish alone, except for occasional help from his neighbors, Fathers Daniel Sykora and Kuratko, until September, 1934. Father Anthony F. Drozd became assistant priest here, continuing under the next pastor until the end of July, 1941, and acting the first two years as administrator of St. Mary's, orphaned by the death of Father Sykora. Father Kuratko acted as administrator of Hallettsville from April to July, 1937 while Father Drozd was administrator at Sweet Home. Under Father Mathis' administration the land on which the present parish hall stands was purchased in three parcels in 1925 and 1928. Father Mathis' term of nearly 24 years as pastor here ended by his death from cancer, April 28, 1938. He is the second pastor to be buried here.

Renger Hospital in Hallettsville employed Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament on its staff from 1924 to 1947. In 1926, the Sisters transferred their motherhouse to San Antonio, continuing only a grammar school in Hallettsville. In 1928 the parish bought the entire property of the convent for \$8,000.00. The old boys' school was soon sold and removed. In 1932 the church was thoroughly repaired, somewhat enlarged, a sacristy added, and the venerable old walls stuccoed. In 1936 the Sacred Heart Academy building or Music Hall and the old parish hall were torn down and the present parish hall was built from the old lumber.

Father Frederick O. Beck succeeded Father Mathis in May, 1938, and was pastor here until the

end of July, 1941. He eliminated pew rent, started the envelope system, initiated the school building fund, reorganized the church music and the school staff and its teaching methods, especially in the Junior High School, which was again introduced shortly before Father Beck's time.

Father Beck was succeeded by Father Alois J. Morkovsky. Under Father Morkovsky's administration, additional land was purchased in 1947 to enlarge the cemetery by one-half its size. The last two grades of high school were added and the school staff was enlarged from eight to ten Nuns. Two classrooms and a music room were added in the old building which was razed the following year. After ten years of saving for that purpose, a new Sacred Heart School and Convent were built at a cost of \$217,604.00 (mostly on the one-acre site bought from the Oddfellows for \$6,000.00 in 1947). It was completed in 1950. The school staff was again enlarged, this time to thirteen Nuns, three full-time lay teachers and two part-time. Sacred Heart School is accredited by the Texas Education Agency since 1953.

The old school was finally demolished in November, 1956, and the bottom floor was changed to a better location and remodeled into a cafeteria and two temporary classrooms, all by a vast amount of volunteer labor.

In 1957, the parish celebrated its Diamond Jubilee honoring all the Priests and Religious who served the parish. Father Morkovsky was elevated to Monsignor, August 27, 1957. In 1960, a new Rectory and the Bishop Forest Annex to the school was built. The annex added six classrooms to Sacred Heart School. The total cost of these two buildings as \$120,000.00. Monsignor Morkovsky served this parish until 1967, when he exchanged places with Father Lambert Laskowski of Hostyn.

Under Father Laskowski's administration, a Parish Advisory Board was organized, consisting of five committees; elected members serve for a two-year term. In 1968, a drive for funds was started for a new church. Upon approval of the church plans by the Chancery office, demolition of the old church was completed in January, 1969. Construction of the new church followed immediately. During construction of the new church, the present Parish Hall served as a temporary church. Father Stanley J.

Petru became pastor here in 1969, and is our present pastor. Under his supervision, construction of the new church was completed in October at a cost of approximately \$200,000.00. The parish now has one assistant, Father Thomas McQuade.

In 1969, the old Sacred Heart Catholic Church was taken apart and the current Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built by Bohlmann Construction of Schulenburg at a cost of \$200,000.00, and was dedicated on November 23, 1969, by Archbishop Francis J. Furey. The new church, constructed on the same site where the old church stood, seats 600 in a semi-circle around the altar. The church was fully paid for even prior to its dedication.

The old Crucifix, the Stations of the Cross, the Baptismal Font, two Sacred Heart Statues and the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph were used in the new church, and the old bells of Sacred Heart Church that bear the date of 1883 were installed in the new Bell Tower.

The new buildings are but a physical representative of the sacrifice and earnestness of purpose of the parishioners of Sacred Heart.

Pastors throughout its history contributed in great measure to the success of the church and the school. Their vision and effort made possible the many advances.

Msgr. Stanley Joseph Petru served as Pastor at Sacred Heart from May 1969 through January 1980. While in Hallettsville, he completed the building of the new church which was started by Father Lambert Laskowski, his predecessor at Sacred Heart. Many other accomplishments occurred during his tenure, among them the first family ministry course to be completed in the United States. It was taught by the Oblates. He was the pastor during the construction of the Band Hall, funded by the Brom Family. He also initiated the first Stewardship Program and information about the parish was computerized. Sacred Heart Parish was granted the privilege of first Saturday evening Mass on June 28, 1969.

A new church sign was erected by the church bell tower in August, 1971. The back of the sign contains the cornerstone of the old church, together with the historical mission cross which was made in 1876 by Fritz Schulte. The inscription on the cross

stating in German, "Save your soul, a remembrance of the Holy Mission, 1876." Behind the sign is also a piece of the original stone and the original step from the old Church.

Father Patrick Marron served as Pastor from January 1980 through September 1981. During his years as Pastor of Sacred Heart, the Vocational Arts building was constructed, and work began on the Parish Center and Gymnasium. Adult religious education courses were taught for the first time in many years and were well attended by the parishioners.

Msgr. Thomas C. McLaughlin served as Pastor from October 19, 1981, through February 6, 1982. Msgr. McLaughlin introduced Sacred Heart's first \$50.00 per plate fund raising dinner.

Rev. Celestino Say was installed as the fourteenth Pastor of Sacred Heart from February 7, 1982, through August 3, 1994. Father Say came to Sacred Heart as associate pastor on June 11, 1975, where he remained until he was called to be the pastor on February 7, 1982. His years of experience in the parish gave him the special ability to interpret the needs of the parishioners. Many of the accomplishments of the later years occurred with his assistance. Also, under Father Say, the SHHS Scholarship Program began in 1983, and the Sacred Heart School Endowment Fund was established in 1982. SHS participated in their first Youth Spectacular in Victoria in 1984. The statues in the Church, Stations of the Cross, and the Jesus Statue beneath the Bell Tower were painted. The area Churches Organized the "Manna Food Pantry," which Msgr. John Peters has been President of the Board since 2004.

Father Say also established The First SH Annual Reunion, additional Donation Funds—SHS Alumni, SHS Band, SH Parish Center and Computer in 1990. Also, Visitors of SH—a group of parishioners who visit the sick or homebound was formed. A Texas Historical Marker for Sacred Heart Church was erected. Manna Food Pantry and Clothing Shop was renamed L.A.M.B. (Lavaca Assistance Ministry Body).

Rev. Msgr. John C. Peters has been serving as the fifteenth Pastor since August 3, 1994 to the present. He officially took over his duties as Pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and St. Mary's on

August 3, 1994, and later, in 2001, also the pastorship responsibilities of St. John the Baptist, St. John, and Ascension of Our Lord, Moravia. He was installed as pastor of Sacred Heart and St. Mary's in Hallettsville by Bishop David E. Fellhauer on August 17, 1994.

Much has been accomplished during his time at Sacred Heart. In 1994, Children's Bulletins, as well as the Annual School Teacher Appreciation Banquet (Extravaganza) were begun. In 1995, the following were established: Radio Broadcast of the Mass on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. (*Msgr. John does a daily reflection to begin the local radio station every morning at 6:00 a.m. Monday through Friday and 7:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday*); Grotto rebuilt; Quilting Circle started, land bought for Cemetery. In 1996, the Serra Club was started; a monthly Spanish Mass began, the Bereavement Committee formed, Baptism Preparation Classes began; Pre-K (4 years old) enrollment started; Altar Society started; 24-Hour Adoration for First Friday of the Month; and Junior Catholic Daughters started. In 1998, the Family Center/Cafeteria was dedicated, Children's Collection was begun; beginning of ACTS Retreats; and the new sound system in Church. The Art House was purchased for Art classes to be taught at Sacred Heart, and Mary's House was donated for meetings.

In the year 2000—Jubilee Year – Opening Wide the Doors, new High School Library/Media Center was dedicated. In 2001-2007, the Day Care was established; the new Elementary School Library/Media Center was dedicated. The Parish also purchased a rent house, known now as Sacred Heart Youth House along with the parking lot. The Mausoleum was built and glass doors added to the foyer of church. The Perpetual Adoration Chapel was established in January of 2006. In 2008 there was renovation of the Weight Room; and 2009 renovation of the Band Hall; in 2012 a lighted Cross for the top of the Church was donated by Victor Roeber; 2014 renovation of the school, Pre-K 3 was established. In 2015 offices were added to the gym, as was a concession area; also, in 2015 the school property added fencing for safety concerns, in 2016 a new bus was purchased for the school by Frank & Elrose Migl. The Gym was completely renovated in 2018. The church purchased a new organ in 2018

with donations and memorials from the parishioners, also in 2018 Eddie & Catherine Kosh purchased new kneelers for the church. In 2019 the front of the school had new energy efficient windows put in thanks to the generosity of Eddie Kosh. 2019 Frank & Elrose Migl purchased a mini bus for the school.

Added during this latter part of the history of Sacred Heart Church—padded pew cushions were installed, St. Ludmila and Our Lady of Guadalupe statues were donated, an Outside Nativity set was donated, 2019 a new home was given to the parish for the use of the Sisters as a convent on Dowling Street, security cameras and security doors were also added in the school.

Fourteen priests were from Sacred Heart or ordained from Sacred Heart, including three bishops. Bishop John L. Morkovsky (deceased) was ordained in 1933; Bishop Antonio Nepomuceno (deceased) in 1953; Bishop Charles V. Grahmann (deceased) in 1956. Msgr. James Henke (retired) in 1966. Our present Associate, Father Scott Hill, attended Sacred Heart in his Senior year. Caleb Krischke, another alumnus, is presently in the Seminary. Also, there is one Religious Brother— Brother James Nicholas Grahmann (retired).

Two parishioners became Permanent Deacons— Deacon Sonny Rogers (deceased) and Deacon Michael Tankersley. Thirty-three Sisters came from Sacred Heart Parish or just outside the parish boundaries and attended Sacred Heart School. Presently Cherise Klekar, daughter of Robert and Margaret Klekar, will be taking her vows with the Apostles of the Interior Life this December.

Presently serving:

Msgr. John C. Peters (25 years)

Rev. Scott Hill

Deacons: Linard Harper, Joey Targac, and Michael Tankersley

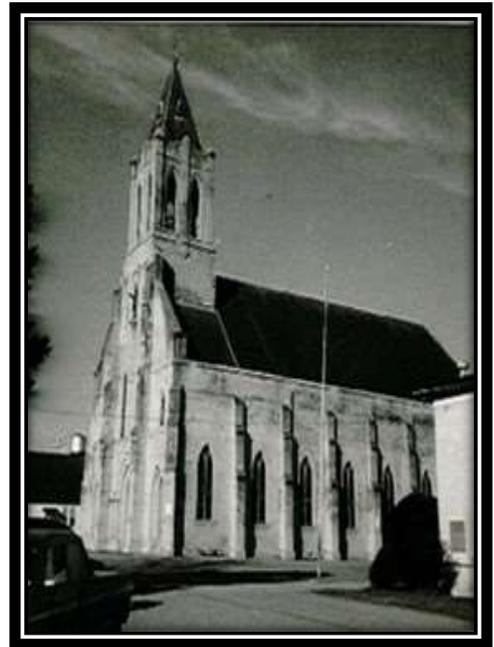
Sisters: Emiliana Grafe (I.W.B.S.) and Colette Kouba (I.W.B.S.) (both alumni).

Dorothy Holik Jansky – Secretary for 48 and still part time

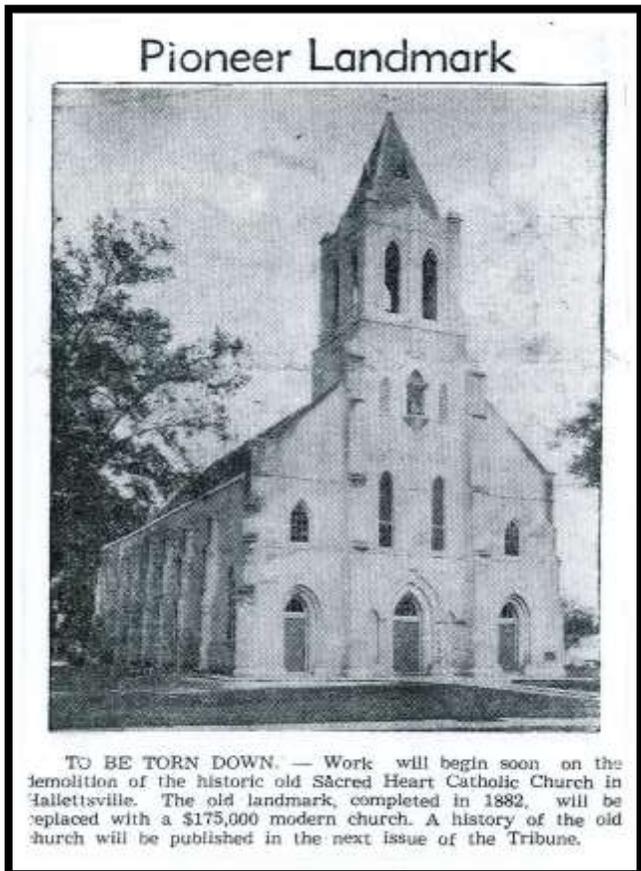
The Sacred Heart Congregation numbers approximately 1,150 households. The Sunday 8:00 a.m. Mass is broadcast live every Sunday morning over local radio station KHLT 1520 AM; KYKM-94.3 FM and KTXM-99.9 FM.



ORIGINAL SACRED HEART CHURCH – Above is the original Sacred Heart Church 1882



OLD SACRED HEART CHURCH
Above is the old Sacred Heart Church after the old church was enlarged and remodeled in 1932.



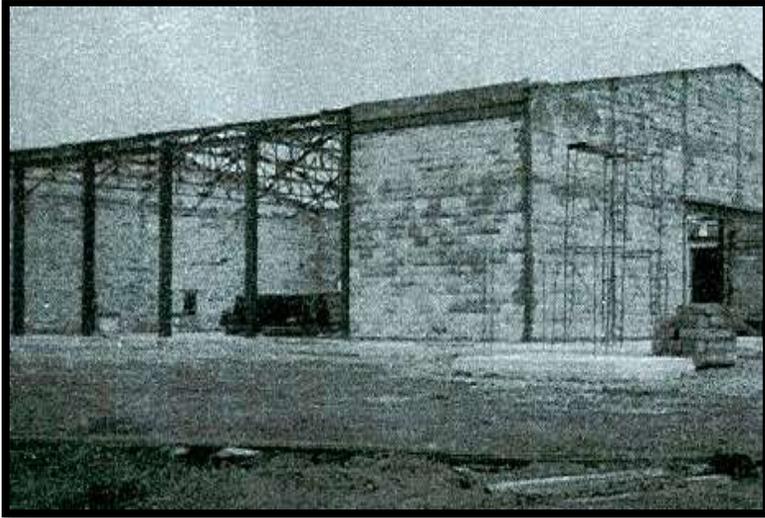
Newspaper article about the old church being torn down.



Inside of the old Church.



Old Church being torn down.



Construction of the new Church 1969.



New Church November, 1969.



**New Church completed November, 1969.
Church Dedication on November 23, 1969**

Current View of Sacred Heart 2019





**Annette (Matula) and Paul Henke
November 29, 1969
First Couple Married in the new
Sacred Heart Catholic Church.**



**Kay Lynne (Pavliska) Fawbush
Baptized in new Sacred Heart
Catholic Church
November 30, 1969**



**Lisa Marie (Matejek) Etzler
Baptized in new Sacred Heart
Catholic Church
November 30, 1969**