

Sacred Heart Parish Marked 135th Anniversary

Sacred Heart Parish in Cedar Hill, NE, marked its 135th anniversary in June 2014, and parishioners are now enjoying the completion of the restoration of the church windows. The church's windows, originally installed in 1879, were recently restored to their original beauty and reinstalled in the church.

"We are proud that this is the original church," said parishioner Cecilia Hall, Branch W055 President, noting the church was added onto in 1924.

The parish comprises only 26 families. But it has a unique place in the history of the Diocese of Lincoln. Msgr. Joseph Nemeč, pastor of St. Teresa Parish in Lincoln, claims Sacred Heart as his home parish. Many Sacred Heart parishioners also "claim" Father Ernest Sloup (ordained in 1953) as a parish native. His family were parishioners of Sacred Heart until Father Ernest was 10 years old, when they moved to a farm near Prague. Parishioner Nathan Hall is currently in Theology 3 studies at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. Hall said the entire community is reveling in the newly completed windows. "People would inquire after driving by, hoping the church hadn't been vandalized or robbed," she said. "It's amazing how uplifting the windows are." The need for the windows' repair was well known to many parishioners.

Louise Bauer joined Sacred Heart Parish

in 1982 when she married her husband Jeff. More than 30 years ago, Louise noticed a small hole in the stained glass window to the right of the high altar. Time and again, for three decades, she would think to herself, "We really need to get that repaired." The hole is now repaired. The windows had other defects that went unnoticed. Hall said a "patch" of 6-inch tin squares with a bolt through them was in the arched window above the entry doors.

"Parishioners were so immune to that eyesore we didn't even notice anymore," she said. "But (Pastor Father Jeremy Hazuka) happened to be at our home when our kids were looking at our wedding pictures taken 50 years ago, and he exclaimed, 'That patch was there 50 years ago!'"

Conversations like that had led Father Hazuka to notice the need for improvements. He said he started visiting with trustees about restoring the windows in late 2010. "After getting three estimates, we decided to go with Architectural Glassarts (from Lincoln) in March of this year," he said, and they started in the mid-spring. The same company is restoring the windows of the diocesan Cathedral of the Risen Christ in Lincoln. Architectural Glassarts removed half the windows from Sacred Heart Church and took them to their studio in Lincoln. They removed all the glass from the lead, soaked the glass to clean off the years of

accumulated grime, and then re-leaded all of the windows and restored the wooden frames. After half were completed, they worked on the other half.

During the work, Rod Scott of Architectural Glassarts made a unique discovery. "When he took the half-moon shaped window above the entry doors back to the shop, he noticed faint letters that had disappeared over the years," Hall recounted. "He said it was fortunate that the light hit it just right and that he was there to notice!" Scott restored the words that translate from Czech: "The Most Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus."

Branch W055 of Sacred Heart began the fundraising effort for the project last year with a cookout in conjunction with the feast of the Sacred Heart, and matching grants from the district and national offices. People raised in the parish who have moved away were also generous in their support. During the fundraiser cookout, for example, the parish had a "drive-by" donation, Hall said.

Along with gifts like these, the meal, and the FCSLA, Father Hazuka said funds came from window-specific gifts comprising approximately a quarter of the cost of the windows, and from what the small parish has been "tucking away" in savings for the past few years from parish collections.

In the meantime, the parish is enjoying the finished product. Hall called the Scotts' work on the windows "outstanding."

