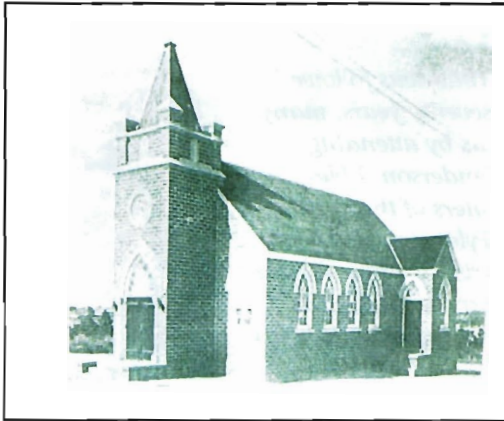


70 YEARS OF OUR JOURNEY IN FAITH.....



1934-1955



1956-

First Phase of the History (1909-1949)

The first Catholic family in Henderson was Mr. J.T. Reynolds' family who moved from Palestine in 1909. They Attended church at Palestine on Christmas and Easter to assist at Mass and receive the Sacraments. This continued until the Jesuit fathers came to Henderson occasionally and offered Mass at the Court House. Later, during the oil boom, Fr. S. Samperi came regularly from Immaculate Conception Church, Tyler and said Mass at the Palace Theater (now Western Auto on Jackson St.). He was assisted by the La Salette fathers of Lufkin, Fr. E. Veillard, M.S., Fr. G. Haylen M.S. and neighboring priests. As the Catholic families moved into Henderson the need for the church was felt by the members. Thus the site for the Church at Morningside Drive was donated by Mr. E. Crim, President of First National Bank at that time. The site of St. Jude's Church was blessed January 28th, 1934. With the effort of Mr. Frank Markey, who had recorded the presence of the Catholic Church at the Kilgore Oil Museum in his interview for the Museum, which is still there according to his daughter Barbara Crim, and others the funds were raised from local donors, and the church was completed. The first Mass was said in the new church on May 13th, 1934, and officially dedicated on June 17th, 1934 by Most Rev. Joseph P. Lynch, Bishop of Dallas. "When the first Church was built, said Joan Modisette one of the long term parishioners, it was small but it was big enough for the few Catholics in this area. Everyone worked together and did their part to help, build, grow and maintain. Each family would take a turn at a cleaning, decorating and doing what they thought would help the growth of our community." Fr. S. Samperi , who was known as "the priest of the oil fields", was the first resident priest. lived at 209 Alta Vista, in 1934. Fr. G.E. Groeneger and Fr. Michael Collins were his assistants. In May 1938. the church was raised to the status of a parish and entrusted to the care of the La Salette fathers. Fr. Harold Clossey, M.S. was the first resident Pastor. The Rectory, which was purchased from Mr. P.J. Hacker at 409 Alta Vista, was moved to the present location at the time of Fr. Clossey. As for the census of 1941. there were 45 catholic families in Henderson. St. Jude's Parish also had three missions, Carthage with 6 families, Longbranch with 6 families and Ragley with 2 families.

Fr. S.A. Samperi 1934-1938. Fr. Harold Clossey, M.S. 1938-1942

Fr. Thomas Leary, M.S. 1942-1945. Fr. George Hoylen, M.S. 1945-1949

Second Phase of the History (1949-1987)

Fr. Eugene Lynch, who is in the sweet memory of the people, took charge of St. Jude's in 1949. His arrival brought a new look of the Catholic presence in Henderson. In 1952 he built what was then considered a spacious Parish Hall, to minister the needs of the congregation as a place for meetings of church organizations. By mistake the building was built a couple of feet in other property behind the building. Mr. J.F. Gaaney helped Fr. Lynch, in purchasing the property on which the Activity Center is built. May 13th 1955 was the dark day of St. Jude's history, for the church caught fire because of electric storm and was completely burnt. Until the new church was built, the Mass was celebrated at the Parish Hall. Fr. Lynch, with the help of the Catholic Extension Society started the construction of the present church building. The ground breaking was on April 16, 1956. At the completion of the new church, the first Mass was celebrated in the new church by Fr. Lynch on September 16, 1956. The church was officially dedicated by Bishop Thomas K. Gorman, Bishop of Dallas-Fort Worth, on Sunday May 19th, 1957. Another mile stone in the pastorate of Fr. Lynch was "The Shrine of Our Lady of the Assumption" on the church lawn. The statue of the shrine is a reproduction of the famous masterpiece by Murillo. It was donated by Mrs. Rose Hacker family. Fr. Lynch was the long served pastor at St. Jude's.

Fr. Eugene Lynch, M.S. 1949-1960; Fr. Gerald Bowen, M.S. 1960-1965; Fr. David Hennessy, M.S. 1965-1968; Fr. Clarenc Wheeler, M.S. 1968-1970; Fr. William P. O'Brein, M.S. 1970-1972; Fr. John Nally, M.S. 1972-1974; Fr. Theodore Brandley, M.S. 1974-1977; Fr. John Blumm, M.S. 1977-1980; Fr. Gerard Masse, M.S. 1980-1985.

Fr. Gerard Masse was the last La Salette priest served at St. Jude's. He died at St. Jude's of a heart attack at the age of 69 on November 4th, 1985. Then the Diocese of Dallas appointed Fr. Jerome Jayasuriya, a SriLankan priest as Pastor.

Third Phase of the History (1987-2004)

On February 24, 1987, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tyler erected and Most Rev. Charles E. Herzig became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler. With the erection of the new Diocese, St. Jude's became under the jurisdiction of Diocese of Tyler. Fr. Jerome Jayasuriya, priest of Diocese of Dallas got transferred to St. Elizabeth's church, bonham in the Diocese of Dallas on August 9, 1988. For eight months there was no resident priest and priests from neighboring parish came for the weekend Masses, Fr. Shopka from St. Anthony's - Longview with the help of deacon Joe Pippak managed the administration for the parish. Bishop Charles E. Herzig appointed Fr. Ron Diegel as administrator of St. Jude's on April 7, 1989 and asked him to take care of the spiritual needs of Tatum. By now St. Williams, Carthage had resident priest. Fr. Ron Diegel's arrival was like the arrival of the spring for he brightened this community by his various talents, especially in beautifying the property. He also encouraged various activities in both at the community and at the parish. He also purchased the lot next to the rectory with duplex for the use of CCD classes. Fr. Gavin Vaverrek succeeded Fr. Ron, and he renovated the church and the parish hall. He was succeeded by Fr. Octovio Suarez, who built the Activity center, which was opened by his successor Fr. Darius Pawlowski in 1996, and blessed by Bishop Carmody on February 22nd 1996.

Fr. Ron Diegel 1989-1992; Fr. Gavin Vaverrek 1992-1994; Fr. Octavio Suarez 1994-1996; Fr. Darius Pawlowski 1996-1998; Fr. Efren B. Nano 1998-1999; Fr. Thomas Mathew Knadathil 1999-2001; Fr. Ben Smyle 2001-2002; Fr. Devaraj Arulappa 2002-2003. Besides Hispanic priests from New Summerfield and Tatum served this parish with Hispanic ministry: Fr. Rube Figueroa, Fr. Jose Marin R, Fr. Julian Villegas and Fr. Jose Cortez. At present Fr. Jayaseelanraj Lucas, who was appointed as administrator on October 9th, 2003 and Fr. Marco Tulio Lopez, who was appointed as parochial vicar on November 22nd, 2003 serve the people as resident priests.