

# **A History of St. George's Catholic Parish, Assiniboia, Saskatchewan**

## **Beginnings of Faith on the Prairie**

The history of St. George's Catholic Parish is closely tied to the settlement and growth of the town of Assiniboia itself. As pioneers arrived in south-central Saskatchewan in the early 1900s, they brought with them not only hopes for farmland and prosperity, but also a deep faith that would help shape their families and communities.

Assiniboia officially began to grow in 1912 when the Canadian Pacific Railway expanded through the region and the townsite was established. Catholic settlers quickly recognized the need for a parish where families could gather for worship, prayer, and community life.

In August of 1912, settlers from the Leeville district met at the home of Francois Curratt to discuss the formation of a Roman Catholic parish in the growing community. From those humble beginnings, St. George's Parish was born.

## **Building the First Church**

The parish trustees met in February 1913 and immediately began plans to build both a church and a rectory. Under the direction of Charles Rozon and with the hard work of local parishioners, the first St. George's Church was completed in time for Easter Sunday in 1913.

Father Faucher celebrated the first Masses for the parish and ministered to the spiritual needs of the growing Catholic population. In those pioneer years, the church became more than simply a place of worship. It was a gathering place where families supported one another through difficult prairie winters, droughts, hardships, and celebrations.

In March of 1914, Bishop Mathieu visited Assiniboia and consecrated the church bell during a parish retreat. During the same visit, the parish received a relic of its patron saint, St. George.

St. George, known for courage, faithfulness, and perseverance, became a fitting patron for a prairie parish built through sacrifice and determination.

## **Growth of the Parish**

As Assiniboia grew through the 1920s and 1930s, so too did St. George's Parish. The parish became part of the Diocese of Gravelbourg in 1930 and continued serving Catholics throughout the surrounding rural districts.

The church records from 1913 to 1955 reveal the important role the parish played in the lives of local families:

- 983 baptisms
- 569 confirmations
- 235 weddings
- 176 burials

These milestones tell the story of generations who were baptized, married, and remembered within the walls of St. George's.

Priests serving the parish travelled great distances to minister to rural families, celebrate Mass in outlying communities, and bring the sacraments to the sick and elderly. Faith remained central to everyday life.

## **Catholic Education and the Sisters**

In 1956, the Oblate Sisters arrived in Assiniboia to assist with Catholic education and parish ministry. Their contribution to the community was significant.

The Sisters taught children in the parish school and were involved in religious instruction, music, choir leadership, and French language education. They helped nurture not only academic learning but also faith formation and service to others.

The Catholic school became an important part of parish life for many years. However, changing demographics and increasing costs eventually made it difficult to continue operating independently. In 1974, the school was sold to the Assiniboia School Unit.

Even after the school closed, the legacy of the Sisters and Catholic education remained an important part of parish memory.

## **Parish Organizations and Community Life**

Throughout its history, St. George's Parish has been strengthened by dedicated volunteers and parish organizations.

During the pastorate of Father Paul Boudreau from 1944 to 1950, both the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Women's League became active in the parish. These organizations provided opportunities for fellowship, charitable work, faith formation, and service to the wider community.

The Catholic Women's League, in particular, became known for its dedication to parish life, hospitality, fundraising, and outreach. Generations of women helped support church activities, parish suppers, community events, and charitable causes.

The Knights of Columbus also played an important role in supporting parish projects, assisting families in need, and strengthening Catholic family life.

## **Construction of the Present Church**

By the 1950s and early 1960s, the original church building was no longer adequate for the growing congregation.

Father Vachon, who served the parish from 1950 to 1969, envisioned a new church and rectory that would better serve future generations. Through years of planning, fundraising, donations, and volunteer labour, construction moved forward.

The present St. George's Church was completed in the autumn of 1963 at a cost of nearly \$170,000 — a major undertaking for the community at the time.

The new church became a visible sign of faith and hope in Assiniboia. Its construction reflected the generosity and commitment of parishioners who worked together to build a spiritual home for future generations.

## **A Parish of Faith and Service**

Over the decades, St. George's Parish has remained a place of prayer, worship, and community.

The parish has celebrated countless First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, and community gatherings. It has supported families through joyful and difficult moments alike.

Like many rural parishes across Saskatchewan, St. George's has experienced change over the years as populations shifted and church life evolved. Yet the faith and dedication of parishioners have continued to sustain the parish.

Ecumenical cooperation has also become an important part of community life. In recent years, St. George's Parish has participated in shared worship opportunities and community events with other Christian churches in Assiniboia, reflecting a spirit of unity and mutual respect.

## Looking Ahead

Today, St. George's Catholic Parish continues to stand as an important part of Assiniboia's spiritual and community history.

More than a century after the first settlers gathered to discuss forming a parish, St. George's remains a witness to the enduring faith of prairie Catholics.

The story of the parish is ultimately the story of its people — the families, priests, religious sisters, volunteers, and parishioners who built a community rooted in faith, prayer, generosity, and service.

As future generations continue the work begun by those early pioneers in 1912, St. George's Parish remains a reminder that faith communities are built not only with bricks and mortar, but with devotion, sacrifice, and hope.

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## Sources

Information for this history was compiled from local historical articles, parish recollections, and community records, including:

- SaskToday article: “St. George's Catholic Church was Assiniboia's first place of worship” (2020)
- Historical information from the Town of Assiniboia
- Catholic Women's League parish historical notes