



The Alaskan Shepherd

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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL PARISH IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Editor's Note: This article is indebted to writings contained in *Alaskana Catholica* by Father Louis L. Renner, S.J. --Patty Walter

If you have been receiving The Alaskan Shepherd newsletter since its first publication in 1960, your initial contribution may have been instrumental in the building and furnishing of Sacred Heart Cathedral--dedicated on June 17, 1966.

True--with a seating capacity of only 550--the building is relatively small for a cathedral. Yet the 40-year history of the Cathedral in Fairbanks is rich in historical firsts and lined with moments of great significance. Bishops, deacons, and priests have been ordained in it. Sisters, Brothers, and lay people have taken vows in it. Baptisms and funeral Masses, Masses of Resurrection, have been celebrated in it. Though not a "mission" parish, since it is supported completely by its parishioners, it is in a sense the Diocesan beacon--calling missionaries "in" and offering them a place large enough to celebrate milestones and accomplishments. It is the "family" home of the whole Diocese of Fairbanks.

It is impossible to know whether the Cathedral was even a thought on July 1, 1904, when Father Francis M. Monroe, S.J., first arrived in Fairbanks. Standing alone on the banks of the Chena River that day, he found himself, in the words of one historian, "penniless, landless and forlorn." But he wasted no time on self-pity. The day after his arrival, he offered the first Mass celebrated in Fairbanks, in "a private house." On the 3rd, a Sunday, he offered the first public Mass celebrated in Fairbanks, in the District Court building. No sooner was he in Fairbanks, than he set about raising money and acquiring land suitable as a church site. On the south side of the Chena, at Front and Dunkel Streets, he found what he was looking for. Gifted with architectural drawing and carpentry skills, he himself set about building what today still stands as Immaculate Conception Church. The first public Mass to be offered in the structure, measuring 30 x 65 feet, was celebrated on the Feast of All Saints, November 1, 1904. The year 1904 marks the founding of Immaculate Conception parish, Fairbanks.

August 8, 1962, is a date of major significance for the whole of Alaska, but especially for Fairbanks. On that day the Diocese



Father Edward J. Hartmann, current pastor of Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish.
--Photo by Patty Walter

of Fairbanks was officially established. Being directly under Rome's Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, it is a "missionary diocese." Francis D. Gleeson, S.J., Vicar Apostolic of Alaska prior to that date, became the first Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks. Spatially, the Diocese of Fairbanks comprises 409,849 square miles. This includes all the area of the State of Alaska north of the Alaska Range from the Canadian border on the east to the Bering and Chukchi Seas on the west. Out of a total population of around 155,224, the diocese serves almost 20,000 people, distributed throughout 49 Catholic communities of varying sizes. Only nine of these are accessible by road. Forty to 45 percent of the membership of the Diocese of Fairbanks is Alaska Native groups, either Eskimo or Indian. The people in the western part of the diocese are served also by the diocese-owned radio station, KNOM, and by the diocesan Native Ministry Training Program located at St. Mary's Mission on the Andreafsky River. The communities along the middle Yukon

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On Sacred Heart Cathedral's north side is its main entrance. The steeple, added in 1994, rises above the birch trees. --Photo by PattyWalter

River are served by the Kateri Tekakwitha Center, located at Galena.

Succeeding Bishop Gleeson as Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks have been Bishops Robert L. Whelan, S.J., November 30, 1968, to July 28, 1985; Michael J. Kaniecki, July 28, 1985, to the day of his death, August 6, 2000; and Donald J. Kettler, August 22, 2002, to the present. With Sister Eileen Brown, S.N.J.M., as Diocesan Chancellor, from 1985-1992, the Diocese of Fairbanks was one of the very first dioceses in the country to have a woman Chancellor.

The Mission Statement of the Diocese of Fairbanks reads: *"We are people of God in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks. Blessed with a rich variety of backgrounds and talents, we strive to be a living reflection of the Universal Church. Through our baptism we continue Christ's mission to further the kingdom of God through the human family. We share our living faith by proclaiming the Gospel in word and example. Together we celebrate Christ's presence in worship and sacraments. In a spirit of justice, mercy and love, we dedicate ourselves not only to minister to the people in the urban and rural areas of our Diocese, but also to minister to the world community."*

Though Fairbanks was a See city as of August 8, 1962, it had no cathedral church. Till such was built, Immaculate Conception Church—often, and fondly, referred to as "the little church"—had to serve as the pro-cathedral of the Fairbanks diocese.

In 1954, Immaculate Conception parish, still the only Catholic parish in the Fairbanks area, celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding. By then, its church had already become much too small for the number of its parishioners. As many as eight Masses a weekend had to be offered in it to accommodate them. Eight years later, as mentioned, the Diocese of Fairbanks was established, bringing with it the need for a cathedral worthy of the name. Both of these considerations made the construction of a new church building urgent.

Official ground breaking ceremonies for the new church edifice, "the Farthest North Cathedral," took place in May 1962 at the corner of Airport Way and Peger Road. The building took shape slowly, according to available finances and the supply of volunteer labor. Father James C. Spils, S.J., was the designer of the 55 x 170' building and the construction superintendent. To help him with the project, he brought with him some of the

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CATHOLIC FAIRBANKS

1779

First Mass ever celebrated in Alaska, near present-day Craig in Southeastern Alaska on May 13.

1847

Modeste Demers is consecrated Bishop of Vancouver Island and given jurisdiction over that island and over all British and Russian possessions as far north as the "glacial sea."

1867

The United States purchases Alaska from Russia. It takes possession on October 18.

1880

The 1880 U.S. census of Alaska shows a population of 33, 426 people with only 430 of them being non-Alaskan Natives.

1892-93

Father Paschal Tosi, S.J., is in Europe to recruit priests for Alaska, and in Rome to visit Pope Leo XIII.

1894

Alaska becomes a Prefecture Apostolic, in July, with Father Tosi as its first Prefect Apostolic.

1895

Alaska is separated from the Diocese of Vancouver Island.

1904

Father Joseph Crimont, S.J., becomes Prefect Apostolic of Alaska in May. The first Mass ever offered in Fairbanks is celebrated in the District Court House by Father Francis Monroe, S.J., on July 2, before he goes on to establish Immaculate Conception parish and build a church. The first Mass offered in the newly built Immaculate Conception Church, Fairbanks, is celebrated on November 1.

1906

In Fairbanks, St. Joseph's Hospital is dedicated on November 25.

1909

Seven Sisters of St. Benedict temporarily staff St. Joseph's Hospital in Fairbanks.

1910

The Sisters of Providence begin to staff St. Joseph's Hospital, Fairbanks, in October.

1911

Immaculate Conception Church, Fairbanks, is relocated across the Chena River in November.

1916

Alaska becomes a Vicariate Apostolic on December 22.

1917

Father Crimont is consecrated a bishop and becomes Alaska's first Vicar Apostolic on July 25.

1925

St. Therese of Lisieux is declared patroness of the Alaska Mission by Bishop Crimont.

1939

Father Walter Fitzgerald, S.J., is consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of the Vicariate of Alaska on February 24.

1945

Bishop Crimont dies in Juneau on May 20; Bishop Fitzgerald automatically succeeds him as Vicar Apostolic of Alaska.

1946

Immaculate Conception Grade School opens in Fairbanks.

1948

Father Francis Gleeson, S.J., is appointed Vicar Apostolic of Alaska on January 8, consecrated bishop in Spokane, Washington, on April 5, and installed in Juneau on May 30.

1951

The new addition to St. Joseph's Hospital in Fairbanks is blessed on March 18. The new Immaculate Conception Grade School building in Fairbanks is blessed on September 3.

1955

Monroe Catholic High School opens in Fairbanks.

1956

The missions of northern Alaska become quasi-parishes. Monroe Catholic High School in Fairbanks is dedicated on September 2.

1959

Alaska becomes the 49th state of the union on January 3. Monroe Catholic High School in Fairbanks graduates its first senior class in May.

1960

The first Alaskan Shepherd newsletter is published by Father Edmund Anable, S.J.

1962

The Diocese of Fairbanks is established and Bishop Gleeson appointed its first Ordinary on August 8.

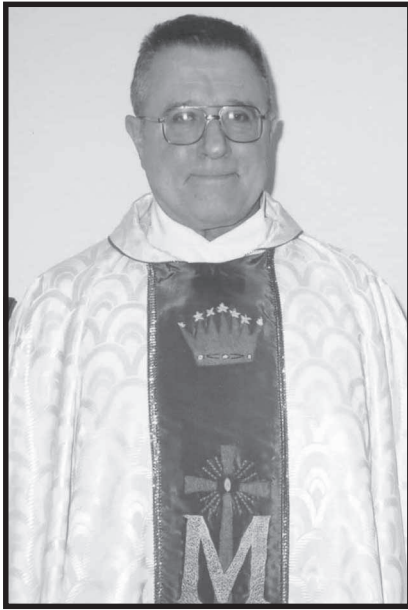
1963

Bishop Gleeson is installed as the first Bishop of Fairbanks on February 21.

1964

The "Good Friday" earthquake strikes Alaska on March 27. Father George Boileau, S.J., is consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Fairbanks at Copper Valley School on July 31.

Meet Father Edward J. Hartmann



Edward J. Hartmann was born to Edward J. and Wanda M. Janicki Hartmann on December 25, 1946, in Brooklyn, New York. He received his elementary education at St. Thomas the Apostle Grade School in Woodhaven, Queens, New York, and his secondary at St. John's Prep in Brooklyn, New York. In 1969, he graduated from Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, with a B.A. degree in philosophy. On June 2nd of that year, he joined the U.S. Army. He received his Basic Training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and his Advance Infantry Training at Fort Polk, Louisiana. After attending Field Artillery Officers Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Lieutenant Hartmann went on to fight in the war in Vietnam with the 5th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery.

Once back again in civilian life after having been honorably discharged from the Army, Edward, in September 1972, enrolled in St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, New York. He was ordained a priest on December 11, 1976, by Terence Cardinal Cook for the Archdiocese of New York. He had first begun thinking about becoming a priest, when he was a Mass server in grade school. For his first assignment as a priest, he was named to St. Aedan's parish, Pearl River, New York. After three years there, he asked Cardinal Cook for permission to serve in the U.S. Army as a chaplain. Permission was granted, and Chaplain Hartmann went on to see service in the Academy of Health Sciences at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. When he was assigned to Fort Greely, Alaska, Chaplain Hartmann met Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., Bishop of Fairbanks. He asked him about the possibilities of his ministering in the Diocese of Fairbanks. Bishop Kaniecki's reaction was favorable.

In 1992, Chaplain Hartmann was transferred to Fort Drum, New York, for his last assignment in the military. During this time, as a member of the 10th Mountain Division, he assisted the victims of Hurricane Andrew in southern Florida, and saw service in Somalia and Haiti. Upon returning from Haiti, he asked his Ordinary, John Cardinal O'Connor, for permission to be assigned to the Diocese of Fairbanks after his retirement from the U.S. Army. Permission was granted.

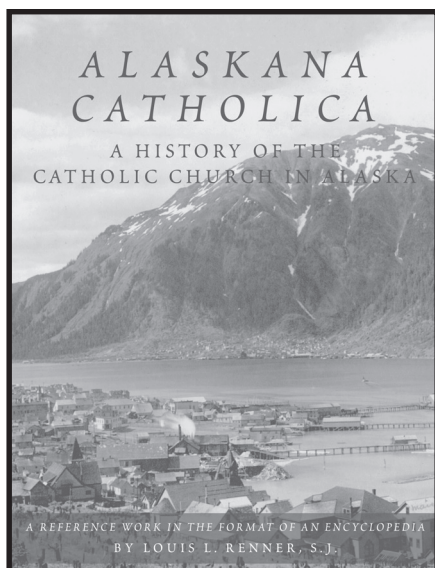
Father Hartmann's first assignment in the Diocese of Fairbanks was that of pastor of St. John Berchmans parish in Galena and visiting priest to St. Francis Regis mission in Huslia. He served in that capacity from 1995-97. He found working with the Koyukon Athabaskan Indian people a rewarding, learning experience, and was soon at home with their customs and way of life. Having strong ties with the men of the village, he learned how to hunt, fish, and trap.

In the summer of 1997, Father Hartmann was appointed Rector of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks. He is still a member of the Archdiocese of New York, but on indefinite loan to the Diocese of Fairbanks.

Among his hobbies, Father Hartmann listed: "hunting, fishing, woodworking, building, plumbing, electricity, gardening, etc." Another "little know fact"--Father Ed is fond of rabbits, especially those personally fed by him on the rectory lawn. Among his special devotions: "Immaculate Conception, Blessed Sacrament, and the Pope."



Garden plots flank the Cathedral's south side taking full advantage of the sun to grow corn, squash, tomatoes, and a variety of other plants. A portion of the harvest benefits Immaculate Conception's Soup Kitchen.



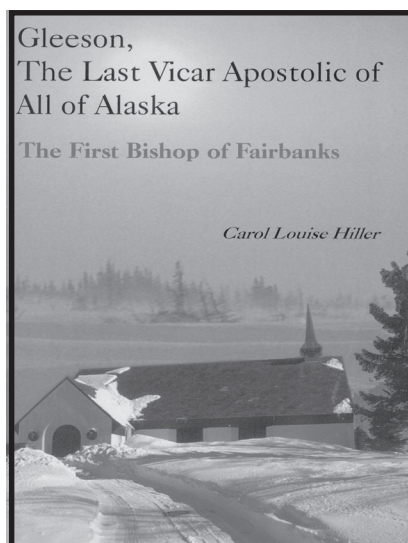
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Alaskana Catholica (“a unique gift, whether to give or to receive”) is a reference work in the format of an encyclopedia. It offers its readers something more than mere bare-bones reference data and Who’s Who-s. Moreover, some entries have a story about the given entry’s subject attached to them. Some have a “tapestry” woven out of a series of quotations from the mission diary of the given place attached to them. These stories and tapestries give readers a kind of “you are there” experience, of being present at an event of the past or at a place remote to them. Close to 400 images illustrate ***Alaskana Catholica***.

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Gleeson, The Last Vicar Apostolic of All of Alaska may be ordered from
The Alaskan Shepherd, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5199
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This personal story of Bishop Gleeson unfolds against the backdrop of early American growth and expansion, with special focus on Alaska as it evolved from a territory, was purchased by the United States and then achieved statehood. This part of the globe is explored from the earliest introduction of Christianity into the territory by the Russian Orthodox priests until the growth leads to division into three dioceses by the Catholic Church along with scattered Protestant development within the frigid climes.

The life of Bishop Gleeson and his insights into the future of Alaska are woven together into a fabric that lets readers see a metamorphosis of Alaskan Natives from hunters and gatherers toward a cultural subgroup that can cope with the demands of today’s world. Gleeson served as the Last Vicar of All of Alaska, and one can capture a glimpse of a man with a servant-heart who was a Joyful Frontiersman for God.



Sacred Heart Cathedral's interior as it was in 1966.

--Photo courtesy of CBNA Archives

work crew that had assisted him so ably when he built Copper Valley School. While the building did take shape slowly, it did reach the stage, where it was ready for the Palm Sunday Mass on April 3, 1966. The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was formally dedicated by Bishop Gleeson on the feast of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, June 17, 1966. It was dedicated to the Sacred Heart, in keeping with the wishes of Bishop Gleeson.

During the summer of 1994, the Cathedral received a new roof; and, in October, a steeple. New entry ways were built onto it at the east and south entrances in 1999.

Father Anable was the first Rector of the Cathedral parish, 1966-67. At this time, there was still only one parish in Fairbanks, but now with two churches, Immaculate Conception Church and Sacred Heart Cathedral. During the year 1967-68, Father John E. Gurr, S.J., served as Rector of the Cathedral, and Father John P. McBride, S.J., as pastor of Immaculate Conception. During the latter part of 1968, Bishop Whelan, Coadjutor Bishop of Fairbanks at the time, served as pastor of Immaculate Conception parish and as Rector of the Cathedral. On January 1, 1969, the Fairbanks parish was canonically divided into Immaculate Conception and Sacred Heart Cathedral parishes. Father Francis E. Mueller, S.J., was appointed administrator of the latter parish, until August of 1969, when Father Francis W. McGuigan, S.J., became its Rector.

Jesuit priests served the Cathedral parish for a little longer than the first decade of its existence as such. They were Fathers: McGuigan, 1969-71; Joseph E. Grady, 1971-73; Cornelius K. Murphy, 1973-74; William C. Dibb, 1974-79; and Eugene P. Delmore, 1979-82.

Diocesan priests next served as pastors of the Sacred Heart Cathedral parish. They were Fathers: J. Albert Levitre and David M. Fitz-Patrick, co-pastors, 1982-83; Fitz-Patrick, 1983-88; Levitre, 1988-95; Patrick D. Bergquist, 1995-97; and Edward J. Hartmann, 1997 to the present. At various times, the parish was served also by priests in the role of associate pastors. They were: Father Angus R. McDonald, Steven C. Moore, Levitre, James Miller, Michael Murray, Gerhard J. Wallner, and Don M. Balquin. Jesuit Fathers Richard L. McCaffrey, George E. Carroll, and Delmore also were associate pastors at Sacred Heart.

Deacons, too, have been part of the Cathedral ministerial staff: Paul V. Perreault, 1986-99; Alvin K. Mazonna, 1999 to 2003;

1965

Bishop Boileau dies on February 25. Angus McDonald is ordained a priest by Bishop Gleeson on April 24. He is the first priest to be ordained in and for the Diocese of Fairbanks, and the only priest to be ordained in Immaculate Conception Church, Fairbanks.

1966

The Archdiocese of Anchorage is established on February 9. Father Joseph Ryan, its first archbishop, is consecrated bishop on March 25. **Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks is dedicated on June 17.**

1967

Fairbanks is severely flooded in mid-August.

1968

Father Robert Whelan, S.J., is consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Fairbanks on February 22. St. Joseph's Hospital in Fairbanks closes at midnight on June 30. Bishop Whelan becomes Bishop of Fairbanks on November 30.

1969

The diocesan chancery building in Fairbanks is completed.

1971

Radio station KNOM goes on the air on July 14.

1975

St. Nicholas parish in North Pole is established on September 28.

1976

Immaculate Conception Church in Fairbanks is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

1978

The new St. Nicholas Church in North Pole is dedicated by Bishop Whelan on December 3.

1979

In Fairbanks, the new two-story Immaculate Conception Grade School is built.

1984

Father Michael Kaniecki, S.J., is ordained Coadjutor Bishop of Fairbanks on May 1. Pope John Paul II visits Fairbanks on May 2.

1985

Bishop Kaniecki becomes Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks on July 28. In Fairbanks, the Monroe Foundation, Inc. is created.

1986

The House of Prayer in Fairbanks opens on April 20. The Franciscan Friars begin ministry along the middle Yukon River.

1987

The oratorio, "Obedient Unto Death," composed by Father Normand Pepin, S.J., is premiered in Fairbanks on April 12.

1988

The Little Sisters of Jesus close their Fraternity in Fairbanks and establish a new one in Anchorage.

1991

The new St. Raphael's Church near Fairbanks is dedicated on May 12.

1992

Bishop Kaniecki blesses the new Monroe Junior High School.

1994

Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks receives a new roof during the summer and a new steeple on October 12.

1995

A new rectory is built at St. Nicholas parish, North Pole. The Paulist Fathers leave North Pole.

1998

A new chapel, housed within Sacred Heart Cathedral, is built and dedicated to The Immaculate Conception.

1999

New entry ways are built onto the east and south entrances of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks. The Construction of a school chapel and major renovations at the Catholic schools complex in Fairbanks are begun and are carried well along.

2000

Holy Family Chapel at the Catholic schools complex in Fairbanks is dedicated by Bishop Kaniecki on April 14. Bishop Kaniecki dies at Emmonak on August 6. The Great Jubilee 2000 celebrations take place in the Carlson Center, Fairbanks, on August 26-27.

2001

In St. Joseph's Church, Nome, Ross Tozzi is ordained a priest on July 14. This is the first ordination to the priesthood to take place in Nome.

2002

Msgr. Donald Kettler is ordained and installed as Bishop of Fairbanks on August 22.

2004

Immaculate Conception Church in Fairbanks celebrates its 100th Anniversary.

2006

Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks celebrates its 40th Anniversary.

and William G. Dourte, III, 1999 to the present. Diocesan Seminarian Robert Fath was ordained to the transitional Diaconate on June 9th of this year, in his parish home, Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The Sacred Heart Parish Mission Statement reads: "As a community of Christian faithful established within the Diocese of Fairbanks, Sacred Heart Cathedral parish exists to carry forward the work of the Catholic Church which is the mission of Jesus Christ. In order to do the work of the Church, and to support the spiritual growth of its members, the parish will continue to direct its spiritual and personal resources, its various God-given gifts, toward the following broad goals: worship of God and proclamation of the Word; building community among and beyond its members; serving all of God's people; and creating and maintaining a place of worship, spiritual growth, and social fellowship."

Fr. Ed Hartmann comments on the 40th Anniversary celebration, ***"I am grateful to be part of the growth process. As the needs of the missions develop and constantly evolve we (Cathedral) are fortunate to be able to play a role of support and assistance and to serve our own parishioners as well as our Native family in the villages. This celebration, these forty years, are about past accomplishments, future endeavors, and gratitude for being involved in the journey."***

In conjunction with Sacred Heart Cathedral, should be mentioned also the Diocese of Fairbanks Chancery building. This stands on the same grounds as the Cathedral. It was built in 1968-69 by a crew consisting mostly of Jesuit Lay Brothers.



Built by Jesuit lay brothers in 1968, the Chancery building at 1316 Peger Road, (above), serves as headquarters for the Diocese of Fairbanks. The top floor houses the Bishop's office, the Resource Library, a chapel, the Children and Family Life Center, the Office of Worship, Religious Education, Engineering and the Stephen Ministry office. The main floor is occupied by the Bishop's Special Assistant, the Marriage Tribunal office, the Finance offices, Computer Services, Native Communication Liaison office, and the chancery receptionist. The kitchen, the dining room, and a conference room are also on this floor. One wing of the basement is the home of The Alaskan Shepherd. The other wing has four rooms, a small lounge, a shared bathroom, a kitchen, and a laundry for visiting priests and Religious. The building is located across the parking lot from Sacred Heart Cathedral.

--Photo by Patty Walter

Again we assure you that we never, under any circumstances, sell, exchange, or give out the names of our benefactors. This has been and continues to be our sacred pledge.



The House of Prayer opened on April 20, 1986. The building hosts a variety of weekly meetings as well as a Monday-Saturday 7:30 AM Mass and a 10:00 AM Sunday Tridentine Mass--celebrated by Father Normand Pepin, S.J.

--Photo by Patty Walter

A little to the west of Sacred Heart Cathedral, but on the same grounds, stands the House of Prayer. This "spiritual fitness center for the Diocese of Fairbanks," originally served as a military barracks on another site, then a variety of other purposes on its present site. Dedicated to St. Therese of Lisieux, the House of Prayer was formally opened on April 20, 1986. Retired Bishop Whelan was its first director. When he left Alaska in 1995, Father Normand A. Pepin, S.J., became its director. Bishop Whelan was ably assisted by Sister Marie Teresa Boulet, O.P. She assisted also Father Pepin, until the year 2000. Sister Ann Sabol, C.S.J., served as his assistant until her retirement this year.

On the same "campus" as the House of Prayer, through the woods to the west of it, stands what was called from 1987, the year it was ready for occupancy, till the year 2002, the year it was vacated, "Jesuit House." (It was subsequently referred to as "Kobuk Center," after the street on which it is located.) During those 15 years, this large building served as a residence for the Fairbanks area Jesuits, including those serving at Immaculate Conception parish. Many out-of-town guests of all kinds found hospitality at Jesuit House. The building now serves as residence for Bishop Donald Kettler, Fr. Vincent Chimezie, S.M.M.M., Fr. Sean Thomson, Fr. Miroslaw (Mirek) Woznica. The building hosts conferences, meetings, retreats, and houses Missionaries on their trips in from the villages.

Sacred Heart Cathedral celebrated the start of its 40th Anniversary year on the Feast of the Sacred Heart--June 23, 2006. On August 27, the Cathedral in conjunction with all nine road parishes, will celebrate the anniversary together at the Diocese's 11th annual Family Fireweed Festival on the Cathedral grounds.

Visitors to the Cathedral during the summer may admire the building's simplicity and warm parish family. But many will likely remember Fr. Ed Hartmann's favorite greeting to tourists:

"Welcome to Heaven! We know we are in Heaven because God has given us a sign. Thanks to our frozen rivers and access to glaciers, God has blessed us with the ability to walk on water all year!"

--Patty Walter

Special thanks to those of you who have sent stamps! These 39¢ first class gifts are of great use to the Alaskan Shepherd.