

Watford City church to celebrate diamond jubilee

By KATHY NOLL LEOM
Tribune Correspondent

WATFORD CITY — Despite constantly changing priests, Watford City Catholics have maintained a strong faith.

The 180 families of Epiphany parish, who have had over 20 priests in 75 years, will celebrate the church's diamond jubilee on Sunday.

Bishop John F. Kinney, Bismarck, will celebrate Mass at 10:45 a.m. and a parish reception will be held in the church parlors.



The Rev. John Pfeifer is the current pastor at Epiphany.

Open house follows at the parish rectory, the home of present pastor, Rev. John Pfeifer.

There will be a 4 p.m. program, including a reading of the church's history, singing and a reminiscing by the clergy.

A dinner in the church parlors will conclude the celebration.

Epiphany Church, once known as Blessed Trinity, has a colorful history.

Watford City built Blessed Trinity Church in 1914 under Rev. Michael Dougherty's direction. He holds the distinction of being the priest to serve the parish longest — 22 years.

The church has been enlarged, remodeled, relocated and rebuilt over the years. The present structure was completed in 1963 under the direction of the Rev. Aloysius Simon, 64, now of San Louis Obispo, Calif. Simon, who served McKenzie County for nine years, says he "will never retire or stop working."

Simon and other former pastors plan to return to help the parish celebrate the jubilee.

The rectory was built in 1970 when the Rev. Willibrord

Bachmeier made Epiphany Church the mother parish, establishing a mission at Grassy Butte and Alexander. In 1976, the Rev. Ed Korte reopened the mission at Grassy Butte, which had been closed in 1972. Korte, now at Mohall, said he traveled 15,000 to 30,000 miles a year through the badlands and sometimes dangerous winter weather to serve all three parishes.

Epiphany Church was enlarged four years ago to accommodate the families pouring in during the oil

boom. Funding for the addition came from the estate of former parishioner, Mrs. Leona Zeller.

Pfeifer, who is no stranger to the area, having been the pastor at St. Luke's Catholic Church, Noonan and associate pastor at St. Joseph's, Williston, serves about 25 families in Grassy Butte and up to 30 in Alexander.

"This is a young parish, with a strong faith, handed down from generations, so I see much hope for the future, here," he said.