

C E N T E N N I A L

St. John the Baptist Church

Doniphan, Kansas

1867 - 1967

MISSALETTE - July 2, 1967

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Communion hymn	Sons of God hear his holy Word Gather round the table of the Lord Eat his Body Drink his Blood And we'll sing a song of love: Allela, Allelu, Allelua, Alleluia! STANZA 1) Brothers, Sisters, we are one, And our life has just begun In the Spirit we are young We can live forever. STANZA 2) Shout together to the Lord, Who has promised our reward Happiness a hundred fold and we'll live forever. STANZA 3) Make the world a unity, Make all men one family Till we meet the Trinity (and) live with them forever. STANZA 6) With the Church we celebrate, Jesus' coming we await So we make a holiday So we'll live forever.
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## St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

Doniphan, Kansas

When Bishop Miede visited Doniphan in the summer of 1855, a group of Catholics approached him to send a priest and they promised to donate property for a church. But the Bishop had no priest to send to Doniphan until Father Henry Lemke happened to come to Leavenworth early in 1856. The Bishop appointed Father Lemke to Doniphan. He furnished a chalice, vestments and a Jesuit Breviary, and promised to give \$500 to help build a church. On July 4, 1856, Father Henry made preparations to take his mission.

Shortly after his arrival in Doniphan Father Lemke wrote to Abbot Wimmer: "I arrived here in the beginning of July. They have started a town which must develop into an important place if the progress made to date continues, perhaps another Cincinnati or St. Louis .... Our dear Bishop strives with praise-worthy foresight to get a firm foothold wherever settlements are made. He had bought three lots here. When I came here, he gave me a recommendation to one of the members of the town company, in which he praised me as a man who could draw many new settlers and contribute much to the growth of the city. Thereupon he donated three additional lots to me. I purchased six more lots at the original price of \$50 as a special favor. I own therefore, a full block of twelve lots with a frontage of 308 X 264 feet, in the most beautiful part of the town, at an elevation of a hundred feet above the river. I immediately started building on this ground so that I might have a roof over my head before winter sets in."

Father Lemke celebrated Mass at the Doniphan House and later in a wooden hut originally intended for a carpenter shop. The Doniphan parish extended north to the Nebraska line, west to the Rocky Mountains and south, part way to Leavenworth. His parishioners were in many settlements throughout the area. The distances were great, roads were bad and many times he walked miles to care for the people. A man, at the age of sixty, could easily become despondent with all the hardships and work in pioneer surroundings. But Father Lemke had dreams that more confreres would join him and eventually found a monastery. He wrote his Abbot that it would be a shame to give up the place since the community had many Catholics. He asked for more priests to come and help with the mission. The Abbot sent Father Augustine Wirth and Frater Casimir Seitz to Kansas. On Easter

Sunday, April 12, 1857, Father Lemke went to Leavenworth to meet the two confreres. The Bishop appointed Father Augustine in charge of the Doniphan Church. Frater Casimir remained at Leavenworth until his ordination on April 26, 1857. Father Casimir Seitz was the first priest ordained in Kansas. He said his first Mass at Doniphan on the following Sunday.

By June the attendance at Doniphan had grown so that the little chapel was already too small. The fathers had located other mission stations at Bendena, Atchison and St. Parick's and Father Augustine made a circuit of the river towns as far north as Omaha. The staff was so small that the people only received occasional visits from the missionaries. When the missionaries were at home in their little priory they lived a simple life with frugal furnishings. The combination chapel and residence was 72 feet long and 16 feet wide with a porch running its full length. Half of this was used for a church and the remainder was divided into rooms. "We have the nicest view from the hill .... We can look down the Missouri River and see steamboats coming at a distance of eight miles," wrote Father Augustine.

Abbot Wimmer visited the priory November 4, 1857. He visited the missions and stayed with the fathers four days. Father Lemke left Doniphan on November 24, 1857.

Exploring the missionary field to the north and south of Doniphan, Fathers Augustine and Casimir, on every occasion were blessed with favorable results. There were about 150 Catholic families in Doniphan County and about sixty families in Atchison County. Father Edmund Langenfelder came in 1858 and gradually more help came for care of the missions which numbered twenty-three stations by 1860.

By the end of 1858 Prior Augustine decided to move the priory to Atchison. The cornerstone of the Atchison building was laid on May 29, 1859. Brother Francis wrote: "Three of us walked down from Doniphan that morning. There was a terrible rain the night before, but the morning was beautiful and we picked an armful of wild flowers on the road, which to deck the altar." On September 1, 1859, the little community abandoned Doniphan.

The little chapel and house at Doniphan burned on the night of October 28, 1863. A handsome brick church 26 X 50 feet was constructed on a new site in the west part of the town by Father Timothy Luber in the year 1867. The whole block on which the church stands, comprising about two acres, and one of the finest sites in the city, was donated to St. John's by the Mayor, Honorable Adam Brenner of the city of Doniphan. Adam Brenner built the first grain elevator in Kansas and also started the Doniphan vineyards. His brother, Jacob Brenner, started the central vineyards and Jacob's son, George, had the Bellevue vineyards. The Brennens had over 100 acres in grapes. This family was the leading support and mainstay of Doniphan and St. John's Church.

In 1891 the Reverend Herman Mengwasser, O.S.B., undertook to build a new addition, 24 X 36 feet, to the church which was to serve as sanctuary and sacristy. In 1892 Father John Stader, O.S.B., had stained glass windows installed. In 1909, under the pastorate of Father Alphonse Filian, the church was frescoed and adorned with large paintings. In 1962 Father Placidus Kiefer redecorated the church interior. In 1965 new pews, altar and lecturn were added and an electric heating system was installed by the present pastor.

In 1912, with the aid of Thomas Flannigan who attended the first church, the original site of the priory was located by a group of St. Benedict's College students under the supervision of Father Lambert Burton. Only a hedge of osage orange marked the location where the early fathers started their missionary work. In 1952 Father William Maat and a group of Brothers from St. Benedict's Abbey erected a nice marker on the site of the excavated foundation.

After the Benedictines moved from Doniphan to Atchison in 1859 almost every priest in the monastery had an opportunity to supply at Doniphan. Fathers Henry Lemke, Augustine Wirth, Edmund Langenfelder, Casimir Seitz, Philip Vogg, Emmanuel Hartig and Thomas Bartel served at the original church building. Fathers Timothy Luber, Placidus McKeever, Pirmire Koumly, Theodore Majerus, Peter Kasseus, Boniface Verheyen, William Rettele, Herman Mengwasser, Colman Zwinger, Edwin Kasseus, John Stader, Luke Blahnek, Benno Feser, Anthony Barr, George Kern, James Petz, Martin Veth, Gregory Neumayer and Stephen Wise served until 1907 when Father Alphonse Filian was appointed pastor. Father Alphonse served from 1907 - 1932. He was succeeded by Father Cyprian Nordhus 1932 - 1937. Father Angelus Lingenfelser had charge 1937 - 1938. Father Cyprian returned 1938 - 1946, Father Colman Farrell served 1946 - 1948. Father Otho Sullivan 1948 - 50 and Father Colman returned 1951 - 1952. Father Placidus Kieffer was serving 1953 - 1963. Father Angelus Lingenfelser was appointed in 1963 and has the pastorate at the present time.

In recent years the parish has conducted a vacation school each summer for the children who attend public schools. Three students from the CCD unit of Mount St. Scholastica College devote Saturday afternoon during the school year to teach catechism at the church.

The members of the Church Committee are Carl Tharman, Joseph Anderson, John Neuman, Jr., and Howard Miller.

The Altar Society members are: president, Mrs. Leonard Scholz; vice-president, Marie Anderson; secretary, Mrs. Patrick Hegarty.

The choir consists of: Mrs. Ed Ford, organist; Mrs. Omer Miller, director and members, Mrs. Maynard Scholz, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Scholz, Sheila and Michael Hegarty, Lynette Ernzen, Margie, Ruth and Howard Miller.