

**OUR LADY OF TEARS CATHOLIC CHURCH**OUTLINE OF HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SILVER CITY IDAHO.

## WELCOME TO OUR LADY OF TEARS CATHOLIC CHURCH!

THE PRESENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SILVER CITY DATES BACK TO 1868, WHEN FATHER TOUSSAINT MESPLIE (pronounced: 'MES-PLIE-AY) CAME TO TOWN AND RAISED CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT CHURCH IN SILVER CITY. ON JULY 18 1868, FATHER ANDRE POULIN PURCHASED THE SMALL, ABANDONED, METHODIST CHURCH IN SLAUGHTERHOUSE GULCH, RE-DEDICATING IT AS ST. ANDREW'S CATHOLIC CHURCH. ON NOVEMBER 1, 1868, FATHER KILLIAN COLL WAS APPOINTED RESIDENT PASTOR OF ST. ANDREW'S. IN MAY, 1869, FATHER POULIN WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE PASTORATE OF ST. ANDREW'S, REPLACING FATHER COLL, WHO DEPARTED FOR CALIFORNIA. THAT SMALL CHURCH SERVED SILVER CITY CATHOLICS TILL 1873 WHEN IT WAS SOLD FOR \$300 DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE CATHOLIC POPULATION OF SILVER CITY HAD DWINDLED AND THE CHURCH WAS CONSIDERED TO BE "TOO FAR OUT OF TOWN" FOR CONVENIENT ACCESS. FATHER POULIN SERVED HIS PEOPLE IN THEIR CABINS FOR SEVERAL YEARS. BY 1882 THE POPULATION HAD INCREASED ENOUGH TO WARRANT ACQUIRING A LARGER BUILDING. IN 1882, A LARGE 2-STORY COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE CALLED THE "GRAHAM BUILDING", LOCATED ON JORDAN STREET OPPOSITE THE IDAHO HOTEL, WAS PURCHASED BY FATHER EMANUEL NATTINI. THE UPSTAIRS FLOOR WAS REMOVED TO PROVIDE A MORE OPEN SPACE FOR THE SANCTUARY, AND THE BUILDING WAS FITTED WITH FURNISHINGS SUITABLE FOR A CHURCH OF THAT PERIOD. THAT CHURCH WAS CALLED "OUR LADY OF SORROWS". UNFORTUNATELY, THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING WAS COMPROMISED BY THE REMODELING, AND BY THE 1920'S, THE CHURCH WAS COLLAPSING AFTER YEARS OF WINTER SNOWS AND WIND STORMS. THE DECISION WAS MADE TO TEAR DOWN THE BUILDING, AND MOST OF IT'S FURNISHINGS WERE PUT INTO STORAGE AT THE JOYCE RANCH ON SINKER CREEK. IN 1943, SINKER DAM GAVE WAY AND THE ENTIRE RESERVOIR WASHED DOWN THE CANYON, CARRYING AWAY EVERYTHING IN IT'S PATH. ALL THE CHURCH FURNISHINGS WERE LOST. THE BELL WAS FOUND AND REPAIRED. IT NOW HANGS IN THE BELFRY OF THE LITTLE MISSION CHURCH OF "OUR LADY QUEEN OF HEAVEN" AT OREANA.

THE PRESENT CHURCH OF "OUR LADY OF TEARS" DATES BACK TO 1898. THE BUILDING STARTED OUT AS "ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH". THE PRESENCE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SILVER CITY DATES BACK TO 1866.

FOR MANY YEARS, SERVICES WERE HELD IN PRIVATE HOMES AND OTHER VARIOUS PLACES AROUND TOWN. BY THE 1890'S, THE EPISCOPAL LADIES GUILD HAD RAISED ENOUGH MONEY TO BUILD A PERMANENT CHURCH. AND IN 1898, CONSTRUCTION WAS BEGUN ON THE BUILDING YOU ARE IN TODAY. ST. JAMES SERVED THE EPISCOPAL CONGREGATION IN SILVER CITY UNTIL THE 1920'S. BY THAT TIME THE MINING OPERATIONS HAD WOUND DOWN, MOST OF THE CONGREGATION HAD MOVED AWAY, AND THE BUILDING SAT ALONE ON THE HILL, UNUSED. A GROUP OF SPECULATORS FROM NAMPA ATTEMPTED TO PURCHASE THE CHURCH TO CONVERT IT INTO A "ROAD HOUSE", OR DANCE HALL. THIS DID NOT SIT WELL WITH THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION. A DECISION WAS MADE TO SELL THE BUILDING TO THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE SO THAT IT WOULD REMAIN A CHURCH. IN 1928 THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BOISE TOOK POSSESSION OF THE BUILDING AND IT WAS DEDICATED AS "OUR LADY OF TEARS CATHOLIC CHURCH".

FOR MANY YEARS THE CHURCH REMAINED OPEN TO THE ELEMENTS AND VANDALS. ALL OF THE BEAUTIFUL LEADED GLASS WINDOWS WERE BROKEN OUT AND THE FEW FURNISHINGS THAT REMAINED WERE CARRIED OFF. THE ONLY THINGS STILL HERE THAT ARE ORIGINAL TO THE BUILDING ARE THE STOVE AND THE SMALL ALTAR IN THE SANCTUARY. BY THE 1950'S THE BUILDING WAS IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE.

HOWARD AND JUNE DAVIES ARRIVED IN THE LATE 50'S AND TOOK AN INTEREST IN SAVING THE BUILDING, DOING SOME REPAIRS TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION. IN THE EARLY 1970'S, FATHER MORSE LATER AND 60 TO 70 KIDS FROM THE ST. MARKS PARISH C.Y.O., CAME UP AND PAINTED THE CHURCH, PROPPED UP THE SAGGING FLOOR WITH WOODEN POSTS, AND REPLACED THE MISSING WINDOW GLASS. THEY ALSO PURCHASED THE TWO CHAIRS IN THE SANCTUARY AND DONATED THEM TO THE CHURCH, AND DID SOME WORK TO THE ALTAR.

IN LATER YEARS, DEL AND EVELYN EYCHISON TOOK OVER THE DUTIES OF CARETAKER, AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE INTERIOR RESTORATION THAT WAS DONE TO THE CHURCH. THE LARGE, ORNATE HIGH ALTAR IN THE BACK OF THE SANCTUARY, CAME FROM THE OLD CHURCH THAT WAS TORN DOWN IN THE 1920'S. IT SURVIVED THE SINKER CREEK FLOOD BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN STORED IN THE BACK ROOM OF THIS CHURCH RATHER THAN AT THE JOYCE RANCH. DEL REASSEMBLED IT AND PLACED IT IN THE SANCTUARY WHERE IT STANDS TODAY. THE PUMP ORGAN TO THE LEFT OF THE SANCTUARY WAS ALSO STORED HERE IN THE CHURCH. THROUGH THE YEARS WE'VE HAD MANY THINGS DONATED TO COMPLETE THE FURNISHINGS FOR A TYPICAL MISSION CHURCH OF THAT PERIOD AROUND THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

IN RECENT YEARS, THE CHURCH HAS BEEN RESTORED AS AN ACTIVE MISSION PARISH. WHILE ATTACHED TO ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH IN EAGLE, IDAHO, WITH FATHER DENNIS DAY AS PASTOR, THE CHURCH AGAIN BECAME AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE COMMUNITY. FATHER DAY ESTABLISHED THE ORGANIZATION OF "THE FRIENDS OF OUR LADY OF TEARS" TO PROMOTE THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF THE CHURCH FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. DURING FATHER DAY'S PASTORATE, THE CURRENT PHASE OF RESTORATION WAS BEGUN. IN 1996, FATHER DAY WAS TRANSFERRED AND OUR LADY OF TEARS WAS ATTACHED TO ST. HUBERT'S PARISH IN HOMEDALE. FATHER DON FRASER SERVED AS PASTOR FOR ONLY ONE YEAR BEFORE BEING TRANSFERRED TO McCALL. WE ARE CURRENTLY WITHOUT A PASTOR, BUT ARE STILL ATTACHED TO THE HOMEDALE PARISH. WE ARE CURRENTLY INVOLVED WITH REPLACING THE FOUNDATION AND JACKING THE BUILDING BACK UP TO LEVEL. THIS IS THE MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT THAT HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED SINCE THE CHURCH WAS BUILT. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO ALL THOSE UNSELFISH PEOPLE WHO HAVE ASSISTED US THROUGH THE YEARS IN OUR ON-GOING EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THE 3rd OLDEST SURVIVING CATHOLIC PARISH IN THE STATE OF IDAHO.

MASS IS NORMALLY CELEBRATED ONCE A MONTH DURING THE SUMMER, FROM MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND THROUGH LABOR DAY. THE CHURCH IS AVAILABLE FOR WEDDINGS AND PROTESTANT SERVICES FOR A SMALL DONATION. GUIDED TOURS ARE AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT. THE CURRENT CARETAKER IS DAVE WILPER. HE IS USUALLY UP HERE ON WEEKENDS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS, AND TRIES TO OPEN THE CHURCH FOR A FEW HOURS EACH SUNDAY FOR THE BENEFIT OF VISITORS.

*INFORMATION REGARDING SPECIFIC NAMES AND DATES WAS OBTAINED, IN PART, FROM: "THE HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE OF BOISE" BY: RT. REV. CYPRIAN BRADLEY, O.S.B. AND THE MOST REV. EDWARD KELLY D.D. , PH.D.*

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