

## History of St. Joseph Church

The Czech and Slovak Catholics of the Owosso area gathered in 1920 at the Z.C.B.J. Lodge where the need for an ethnic parish was first discussed. The Catholic lodge members organized a committee to present their plea for a national parish to Bishop Michael J. Gallagher in Detroit. Mr. John Klapko chaired the committee. When Mr. Klapko went to Detroit he had a list of 102 Czech and Slovak households. Among the names were: Stasa, Nemecek, Krhovsky, Kuchar, Janik, Gregoricka, Mialik, Czech and Dubovsky. The steering committee first tried to purchase land in Corunna. When that failed six lots and a brick house were purchased in 1922 on East Oliver Street in Owosso.

The congregation's first liturgy was held in June, 1922 in the Corey building above a laundry business. Rev. Joseph E. Nimrichter of St. Cyril's parish in Bannister celebrated the Mass. The costs for the first Eucharist were \$3 to rent the hall; \$2 to rent the chairs; and \$5 for the priest. A church was begun that fall. It was completed about the time the first resident pastor, Rev. John Plavcan was appointed to St. Joseph Parish in April 1923.

During the pastorate (1934-1939) of Rev. John A. Blasko a two-room school was opened in the basement of the church in 1937. The Dominican Sisters from Oxford staffed the school. The Sisters lived in a house recently purchased for them. Two lots for a playground were also purchased.

The long pastorate (1941-1972) of Rev. John S. Daniel was a period of great growth. A new convent was purchased in 1948. The five-room school was opened in the fall of 1949. Bishop Joseph H. Albers dedicated it on October third. Several lots had to be acquired before ground could be broken for a new church and rectory. The new church was dedicated by Bishop Albers in May 1955. The school was further expanded in 1961.

The 60th anniversary of the parish was celebrated in 1983 while Monsignor Raymond J. Goehring was pastor. A preschool and daycare program were opened in 1989 during the pastorate of Rev. Denis R. Spitzley. Fr. Spitzley oversaw plans to construct a childcare wing to the school. This wing was dedicated by Bishop Kenneth J. Povish in August 1992. Father David Fisher was appointed Pastor on June 24, 1992, and retired from St. Joseph Parish on June 24, 2015, after serving 23 years.

Upon Fr. Fisher's retirement the Bishop of Lansing, Earl Boyea asked Father Michael O'Brien to oversee the merger of St. Joseph Parish and St. Paul Parish and become pastor of both.