Church Point parish prepares for centennial celebration

By Kathleen Toups

Church Point

Historically, Church Point had its beginnings as "La Chapelle a la Pointe" (The chapel at Plaquemine Brule). Eventually the title was shortened to "L'Eglise a la Pointe," or "La Pointe de l'Eglise" which of course translates to Church Pointe, or "La Chapelle a la Pointe de Plaquemine Brule". Eventually the title was shortened to "L'Eglise a la Pointe" (The chapel at Plaquemine Brule) which of course translates to Church Point, as it is known today.

The Jesuit priests from Grand Coteau were the first to serve the area from 1847. The first chapel was dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and was built with the help of Jesuit lay brothers and, ironically, slaves from St. Charles College at Grand Coteau.

When the parish was formally erected in 1883, it was designated "L'Eglise du Sacre Cœur de Marie" (The church of the Sacred Heart of Mary), with Father Vincent Eby as the first diocesan pastor.

Almost 100 years have gone by since the establishment of the church parish in this year of 1982 parishioners are beginning to anticipate the centennial of its founding in 1983.

According to Father Gene Tremie, pastor, a number of committees have been appointed under Kermit David, general chairman, to make recommendations and plans for the centennial observance.

Subcommittee chairmen include Doris Matte, liturgy; Paco Bourne, finance; Mrs. Anita Guidry and Mrs. James Fontenot, history; Mrs. Charles Franques, apostolic; Robert Nellams, church repair and renovation; Reggie Matte, new public address system.

Several proposals have been made for the celebration, including setting aside a week for special prayers of thanksgiving, adopting a missionary parish as a special project, a historical display, renewing the Come, Lord Jesus, Jesuit lay brothers and, ironically, slaves from St. Charles College at Grand Coteau.

A recent successful program in the parish was concerned with helping inactive Catholics to return to the church. Redemptorist Father William McKee conducted six weekly sessions. Names of inactive Catholics were obtained from friends and relatives and invited to attend Father McKee's talks. A number of those attending did decide to become active Catholics once again, Father Tremie pointed out.

Father Tremie has been teaching a course on revelation and he has also conducted one on scripture. Deacon Thibodeaux conducts Bible classes, including one in French.

Over 500 children are enrolled in CCD classes in grades one to twelve. The ninth graders are preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in December.

Sister Tonie Ardoin, O.Carm., new religion coordinator for Our Mother of Peace Elementary School, has been planning special activities for each grade, such as Bible services and school Masses.

Deacon Thibodeaux holds a communion service once a week and priests of the parish celebrate Mass once a month for the school. Enrollment is up at the school, headed by principal Phillip Bacilla. A dance is planned in November to raise money for school expenses.

The parish recently hosted a live-in of Bishop Gerard L. Frey of Lafayette. Leaders of parish organizations were invited to a reception for the bishop after the 4 p.m. Saturday anticipated Mass. He also celebrated the 9 a.m. children's Mass on Sunday morning. After the Sunday Masses, Bishop Frey went out to the Lewisbourg mission and had his Sunday dinner at the benefit barbecue being held to pay off the debt on the renovated parish hall. Mr. and Mrs. Alden Thibodeaux were co-chairmen of this event.

The annual retreat for the aged was held during the summer under the sponsorship of the Catholic Daughter court. Father Gayle Nunez conducted the talks in French and English.

Father Tremie says the parish population has remained about the same. There are between 1500 and 1600 families, including the Lewisbourg area south of Church Point. This is the only mission of four formerly served from Church Point. Branch now belongs to St. Leo, Robert's Cove; St. Edward, Richard, has become an independent parish; and the Pitreville chapel has been closed.

Parish groups are active: The charismatic group meets on Tuesdays and there are 12 rosary groups which meet weekly to pray the rosary. Some of these have been meeting weekly since during World War II, Father Tremie Pointed out.

"The Legion of Mary does a fine job," Father Tremie says of this service organization headed by Mrs. Daisy Gardiner who is also president of the parish council.

Other parish organizations include Knights of Columbus with Tommy Murrell, grand knight; Catholic Daughters, Mrs. Earl Fontenot, regent; Mrs. Bonnie Miller, heads the Ladies Altar Society; George Brouillette, school board, and Bernice Guidry, Parents Support Club.

Father Jean F. Paradis is in charge of the ministry to the sick and elderly. There are also lay ministers who bring Communion to the sick.

Training sessions have been held for lectors and lay ministers. Father Ben Drapeau, c.j.m., Rayne, has spoken to the lectors and Father Rob Robicheaux, of Iota, will speak in November. A holy hour is also held four times a year for these lay ministers and lectors.

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