As the years roll by, may we continue as a “Singing Church”, finding comfort and strength in the old, majestic hymns of our forefathers.

**ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Over the Pembina Trail, which opened in 1838, immigrants began to arrive at what was then called Fisher’s Landing, but after 1881, was called Fisher. Ox carts forded the Red Lake River along what was known as the Old Trail in the years 1884 to 1856, about a mile west of present day Fisher.

In “History and Biography of Polk County, Minnesota,” page 64, published in 1916, it is related that several Irish families came about 1872 to reside in what is called the Irish Settlement, along the Red River of the North some miles west of Fisher’s Landing. Among them were the Catholic families of Peter Genaw, Barney Haggerty, Mike Quirk, Patrick Quigley, Tom and John Logan, John Garrety and Matthew Martin. A few years later the John Conneran family came, settling closer to the Fisher’s Landing. These Catholic families sadly missed the services of a priest; but they clung to their religion.

From 1876 to 1879 Fisher’s Landing was attended by priests periodically from White Earth and Red Lake, Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota. Happily, in 1880 Father J. Fortier, O.M.I. called. In 1881, Father Pierre Champagne from Red Lake Falls offered monthly Mass in the school house.

In 1881 a church building was erected and on Christmas Day that year, Father James Shirra of Grand Forks offered the first Mass in it, the first St. Francis Church. He continued to celebrate Mass twice a month until March, 1883 when he became the first resident priest of Fisher.

After July, 1883, Fisher became a mission attended from Crookston by Father Paschal Brunelle. Father Edward J. Lawler lived in Fisher from 1885 to 1887, when he moved to Crookston and attended Fisher as a mission. From 1891 until 1915 a priest was attended from Crookston, East Grand Forks and Stephen by Fathers John Walsh, P. Hendricks, Michael Senger, Philip Murphy, Francis Hufnagel, James Green and Claude Missionat. Father Missionat stayed at the home of Thomas Logan for several weeks at a time while he instructed the Catholic children in preparation for the reception of the sacraments.

Occasionally on weekdays a priest would celebrate Mass in one of the homes. A private spot in the house would serve as a confessional. After the Mass in which the Catholics in the community participated, there was a celebration—a banquet, games, dancing, and singing. The home Masses were always gala occasions!

From 1911 to 1915 Fisher was served from Ada, East Grand Forks and Crookston by Fathers Charles Deshais, D. G. Dorval, William Klinkhammer, J. B. Fonmosse and John P. Funk; but there was no permanent pastor. Mass was offered at only irregular intervals and the church building was deteriorating.

At this time Mrs. Tom Logan said to her husband, “Tom, please write to Bishop McGollrick and beg for a permanent pastor.” Bishop James McGollrick was the Bishop of the Duluth Diocese and Fisher was located in that diocese at that time. The Bishop’s reply came promptly: “As soon as you have your church renovated and rectory built, I’ll send a resident pastor.” Tom showed the letter to his wife with the remark, “Half of our people might be in hell by that time!” However, “Mr. Logan” got busy with the project.

The long awaited rectory came closer to actuality in 1915 when the basement for it was constructed under the supervision of Father Fonmosse. Under the supervision of his successor, Father J. H. Perrin-Laurent, a rectory, a hall beneath the church, and a sacristy onto the church were built in 1916. All this was made possible by a gift of $4,000 from the estate of Miss Ann Cox.

From the spring of 1918 to the spring of 1930, St. Francis Parish was served by a resident pastor. During that time Fathers Edward Grimprez, Stanislaus Beaulieu, F. J. Deschenes, Victor Miller and Patrick Lyons were the pastors. In those days when few sick stayed in hospitals, priests administered to them in their homes, even remaining at times all through the night; as is related about Father Grimprez, thus...