

## History of Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Mission

In the 1980's Shingletown was coming into it's own as a retirement destination. Retirees from various professional and blue collar jobs moved up the hill joining local ranchers, crafts people and retired lumber workers as residents of this tiny community. As they got to know each other, the Catholics, who had been traveling to Anderson for Mass, talked the Anderson pastor into coming up to celebrate Mass on Sunday.

Father Michael Kiernan, born in Ireland, was in the beginning of his pastorship of Sacred Heart, Anderson. This young priest drove up to Shingletown every Sunday (when the snow wasn't too deep) and celebrated Mass at the local Volunteer Fire Hall.

Snow was a problem at the high elevation of the Volunteer Fire Hall. The principal of Black Butte Elementary was contacted and Masses were then held in the school Library which is at a much lower elevation than the Fire Hall.

The group was small in those days...about ten to fifteen people. But word got around and the numbers began to slowly swell as more and more people found out about the local Mass, and as the Shingletown population grew.

By the early 90's the Catholics of Shingletown had to move from the tiny library into the gym where fifty or so people set up the folding chairs and the cafeteria-table altar. Altar cloths, vessels, candles and the like were kept in a second-hand tan leather suitcase. This was housed and transported on a rotating basis by "parishoners". Of course only enough wine and hosts were consecrated and consumed at each Mass.

By early 1990 more than retirees attended Mass. Families with young children began to eliminate the drive to either Redding or Anderson for Sunday Mass, and instead attended Mass in the school gym. Realizing the necessity of further religious education, various parishioners opened their homes after school and taught basic Catholic doctrine and prayers to these youngsters.

"Parishioners" always talked about having their own church; and in 1991 John Frank donated 5 beautiful wooded acres on Shingletown Ridge Road adjacent to his mobile home. That was enough to get started, get the Bishop's permission and start fund-raising. Our young pastor was a real motivator getting pledges! In early 1992 ground was broken on the project. By August 15<sup>th</sup> of that same year an outdoor Mass was held on the site; attended by all those with the vision and those who had heard about the "new" church.

Paid contractors and volunteer "parishioner" labor had the church up and the landscaping started by December of 1992. Besides Father Michael Kiernan, and Shingletown Catholics, Deacon Michael Evans of Sacred Heart Church Anderson had many building related responsibilities i.e., procuring seating, sacramentals and the like.

Our altar, ambo and credence table were designed by architects, Eric Sandoval and James Theirmer of Trilogy Architecture; and built by Shingletown craftsman, Tony Plasier.

A snowless December 13<sup>th</sup> dedication was held with then Bishop Frances Quinn officiating. Mary, Queen of Peace became the official mission church of the parish of Sacred Heart, Anderson. The Knights of Columbus from Anderson and all the “movers and shakers” of Catholic Shingletown were given responsibilities during the service. A large choir from Anderson Sacred Heart provided the music. People came not only from Anderson but also from St. Joseph’s and Our Lady of Mercy churches in Redding. A huge banquet reception followed as the chairs were pushed back in the church interior and tables set out.

A few days later, December 16<sup>th</sup>, the very first Sunday Mass was celebrated by Father Kiernan at 10:00AM. The tradition of coffee and goodies after Mass started at this time.

Upon the retirement of Bishop Quinn the new diocesan administrator, Bishop William Weigand reassigned Fr. Kiernan to a diocesan position and Father Eric Lofgren became our pastor. A few years later Bishop Weigand assigned our Mission Church to be in the parish of Our Lady of Mercy, Redding. Sacred Heart Parish, Anderson would only have the responsibility of St. Anne’s mission church in Cottonwood.

In 2007 our new pastor was Father Michael Hebda. Our Mass time had to be changed to 12 noon to accommodate the many Masses held at Our Lady of Mercy.

The original donor of the church property died in 2008 leaving the 15 acres surrounding the church up for sale. Father Hebda jumped at this chance to purchase the beautiful wooded acres which he envisioned as the Corpus Christi Retreat Center. The diocese loaned the money and a funding drive was initiated to pay off the debt.

Much work was needed to gain access to the wooded area. Again eager volunteers stepped forward. Unwanted materials were hauled away, large Stations of the Cross were positioned along new forest paths, and an outdoor Mass setting was put in place. This consists of tree-slab benches and a cement sanctuary slab. In summer 2011, our present pastor, Father Jonathan Molina, celebrated Sunday Masses in the forest setting

Although many of the “movers and shakers” from the original group are no longer with us, we remember them and their efforts to realize the dream of a Shingletown Catholic church.

The beautiful mountains of Shingletown and the peaceful setting continue to draw new people to the area. Our little church has been enriched by their active and enthusiastic participation in carrying on the dream that in the future Mary, Queen of Peace will be a parish in its own right with its own resident priest.