Past, present and future . . .

Holy Trinity Catholic Church of Corn Hill is celebrating its 125th year as a parish and 100th year anniversary of the existing twin-spired, Gothic church.

The history of our parish and church began in the 1880s. The parish was established in 1889 by ancestors of some of our current parishioners, mostly from Moravia and Bohemia. Over time, they came to be most often identified as Czechs, but included other ethnic groups such as Germans and Irish.

Under the spiritual guidance of the Diocese of Galveston, Rev. Jacob Lauth was the first pastor in Corn Hill. With the help of parishioners, he built the first church here in 1889, which was named Immaculate Conception. It was actually a small chapel and had only room for the priest at the altar and Mass servers while parishioners stood outside.

In 1891, Rev. Joseph Chromcik arrived to serve as pastor, and a second, larger church was constructed with a high steeple and bell. The new church was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity and was named Holy Trinity Catholic Church after the church in Ostravice, Moravia, which was the former home of many Corn Hill residents.

Several priests served the young parish over the next nine-year period, including Rev. Joseph Pelnar, Rev. F.G. Sebik, Rev. V. Chlapik, Rev. Frank Pridal and Rev. Frank Machan. The first school was built in 1899. In 1901, a larger three-room school was built with two rooms for school and a third room for the priest's residence. A four-room residence for the Sisters of Providence, who taught the children, was also built in 1901. The first rectory was built in 1911.

In 1912, Holy Trinity's first resident priest, Rev. William Skocek, along with the parishioners began work on the current church. The sanctuary was dedicated by Most Rev. Nicholas Gallagher, Bishop of Galveston, in 1914. Father Skocek served until 1922.

Becoming the longest-serving pastor, Rev. Msgr. Ignatius J. Valenta, a native of Corn Hill, served from 1922-1957. During his tenure, a two-story school, a new residence for the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, who now taught the children of Holy Trinity, and the present rectory were built.

In November 1947, the Diocese of Austin was founded, bringing the Church leadership much closer to home.

In 1957, Rev. George Doskocil came to Corn Hill and served as pastor until October 1963. He was followed by Rev. Thomas Matl, who served until his death in October 1966. Rev. George Bonhard was named his successor in 1967 and served until 1969.

During the next 16 years, Holy Trinity saw eight different pastors. Rev. Royce Hughes came to Corn Hill in June 1969, and his brother, Rev. Harold Hughes, joined him as an assistant pastor until their departure in 1972.

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Rev. Edward Jordan served from December 1972 to June 1973, followed by Rev. Mike Leary serving from June 1973 to January 1974, Rev. Henry Gottschalk serving from August 1974 to February 1975, Rev. Gideon Stram serving from July 1975 to July 1979, Msgr. George Tydlacka serving from July 1979 to February 1980 and Rev. Charles Michalka serving from February 1980 to April 1985.

Rev. Joe Van Anh Nguyen served as pastor from April 1985 to August 1987. Under Father Joe, Holy Trinity built a religious education/parish hall in 1986. Today, that same building continues to serve as the religious education building and is home to the parish offices.

In 1987, Rev. James O'Connor was appointed as pastor of Holy Trinity, followed by the return of Msgr. Gideon Stram in September 1988. Msgr. Stram served as pastor for two more years before retiring.

Msgr. Arthur Michalka was assigned pastor in June 1990 and served Holy Trinity parishioners for 16 years. He oversaw the building of the Parish Activity Center, which became the new home for many events, meetings, reunions, weddings and church bazaars. In April 2004, Deacon Gene Davis was assigned by the bishop to Holy Trinity and served as deacon until his retirement in September 2013.
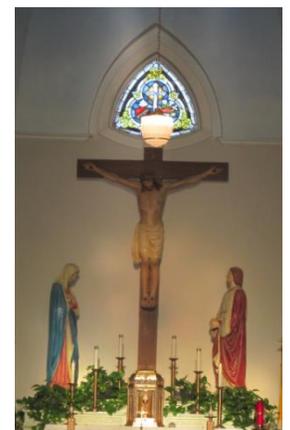
In February 2006, Msgr. Emilian Foltyn, also a native of Corn Hill, became pastor of Holy Trinity. Being extremely proud of his heritage, Msgr. Foltyn brought back the Czech Mass celebrated each year on February 14, the feast day of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who are the patron saints of the Slavic people. After Msgr. Foltyn died unexpectedly in September 2012, parishioners worked together to keep the church strong and active for the next 10 months without a fulltime pastor.

Bishop Joe Vasquez named Father Stephen Nesrsta pastor of Holy Trinity in July 2013. Father Stephen, who is also of Czech descent, displays his vibrant love of God, respect for life and commitment to the traditions of the Catholic Church.

Holy Trinity Parish had six parishioners who answered the call to the priesthood. They were Msgr. Joseph A. Valenta, Msgr. Ignatius J. Valenta, Msgr. Tim Valenta (all brothers), Rev. Paul Nemec, Rev. Alois Pavelka and Msgr. Emilian Foltyn.

Holy Trinity also had six parishioners become nuns. They were Sr. Rose Kajs, Sr. James Huff, Sr. Angela Martinka, Sr. Mary Ann Martinka, Sr. Cyrilla Wolf and Sr. Emil Schlesinger (Slesinger).

With approximately 240 families, Holy Trinity parish draws residents from all over Central Texas. The core values brought by those first parishioners – love of God and family, and the willingness to work hard – are still evident today among the Holy Trinity community.

May God bless us and our endeavors as we strive to grow in faith, hope and love.