

## **The Catholic Presence in Sweet Home**

Since about 1860, the pioneers of Old Sweet Home and later those of the present town on the S.A.& A.P. Railway, which came through here in 1887, attended the churches at Koerth, Yoakum, Hallettsville and St. Mary's.

In 1895 a dance hall was remodeled into a church here under Father Forest who shortly afterwards dedicated it as Bishop under the title of Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Rev. Father Method Vaculik came here twice a month from Yoakum, and after 1900, his successor, Father Heffernan, who arranged for the purchase of three acres of land for a parish cemetery. From 1906 to 1910 Father Benes attended this mission from St. Mary's and from 1911 Father Kopp from Koerth.

From June 1916, the Rev Godfrey Kuratko continued attending Sweet Home from Koerth, had the new brick church built here, Bishop Shaw blessing the cornerstone in 1918 and Bishop Drossaerts the Church on June 3, 1919, under the title of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace. A rectory was built in 1928 and Father Kuratko (Father K) took up his residence at Sweet Home while continuing to serve Koerth until it got its own pastor again in 1937. Only in the first half of 1937 Father Drozd was administrator while Father Kuratko administered the Hallettsville parish during the last illness of Father Mathis. In 1966 Father Kuratko officially retired after serving the parish fifty years. He was succeeded by Fr. Vaclav Bily and then Father Alphonse Padalecki. Father Charles Sonnier followed in 1988 and served until his death in 2016.

The parish of Sweet Home has given four son to the priesthood: Reverend Fathers Marcus Valenta, Henry Herbst, Leo Pesek and Matthew Huehlefeld. Nine daughters of the parish have entered religious life

## **The Catholic Presence in Koerth**

The Koerth community has been variously known as Yellow Bank, Antioch, and Karney and has been settled since about 1833.

About 1865 the first small church was built of logs and covered with handmade solid oak shingles. The settlers were Irish, German and Czech. An old mission cross is evidence that a famous Jesuit, Father F. X. Weninger, gave a mission here in 1876 bringing a number of lapsed Catholics back into the fold. The log church was replaced by a frame building in 1878-79. The present church, also of frame construction, was built in 1888 at a cost of \$1,424.36, and dedicated under the title of St. John the Baptist. During all of its early years and until 1909 the church as served as a mission by priests residing at St. Mary's and later, Hallettsville. Two Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament from Hallettsville conducted a public school from 1905-1911. The rectory (now parish hall) was built in 1908.

From 1909 until 1937 St. John the Baptist was linked closely with Queen of Peace Parish in Sweet Home, with succeeding pastors shifting residence from one parish to the other. For the next thirty-three years the parish was served exclusively by resident pastors, with Father Emmet Kolodzie occupying the pastorate for more than two decades until his retirement in 1970. In 1970 the parish was officially connected to Queen of Peace as its mission parish. Father Vaclav Bily, Father Alphonse Padalecki and Father Charles Sonnier followed as pastors. Father Sonnier spent almost 27 years as the pastor of Koerth until his death.

The parish has given one son to the priesthood and four daughters to religious life.