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'Television has a real problem. They have no page two.'

Friday, September 5, 2008



Photo by CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY

St. Monica's Mission has been unofficially closed for a few years now. It was once the center of religious worship for Brimfield, Holland and Wales.

St. Monica's Mission complete

CHURCH'S FINAL MASS TO BE SAID SUNDAY

BY CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY
NEWS STAFF WRITER

WALES — For generations St. Monica's Mission served the needs of the Catholic faithful in Brimfield, Holland and Wales.

Now, 107 years after its consecration, the Main Street mission in Wales will see its final service delivered and a transfer of its religious icons to St. Christopher's Church in Brimfield.

The final Service of the Word will be said on Sunday, Sept. 7 at St. Monica's at 2 p.m., immediately followed by the transfer of items to St. Christopher's.

"The Knights of Columbus are going to be handling the

transfer of the items," explained St. Christopher's parishioner and volunteer Bridget Zakowski.

Zakowski said that the Knights of Council 4794 will escort a number of items from the mission to the church, including stations of the cross, a president's chair; and "five different statues that will be brought over."

At a later date Zakowski said, the Knights will also bring to St. Christopher's a stained glass window that was once donated to St. Monica's from St. Patrick's Church in Monson.

"There will be a reception after the mass," Zakowski said. "That will be at St.

Christopher's Parish Center," and will feature light refreshments.

The Rev. Eugene J. Plasse, Pastor of St. Thomas' in Palmer, was ordained at St. Christopher's in 1972. A long time Wales resident, Plasse remembers St. Monica's very fondly.

"It was the church I went to every Sunday," since 1948 he said. "That was where I had my religious upbringing."

Plasse recalled the 1950s when he said people would rent cabins in Wales and spend their summers in the rural country, attending weekly masses at St. Monica's.

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St. Monica's to close, send artifacts to St. Christopher's

ST. MONICA'S

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"In the summer time it was great because it was always the coolest church," he said, explaining that a natural spring running underneath the church helped to keep the temperature down, even on days when the congregation would extend out the door and onto the front lawn of the mission.

Plasse explained that St. Monica's was established in 1901 as the Mission of Monson, and offered religious services once a month for residents of Brimfield, Holland and Wales who could not travel all the way to Green Street in Monson

to attend Mass.

Plasse also pointed out that descendents of one of the founding members of the congregation are still active in the St. Christopher's community today.

"It has been a very important part of that community for years and years and years... in fact for the whole area," he said.

"In a sense, it was kind of like a mother church because it served Brimfield, Holland and Wales."

Prior to that, Plasse said that local religious services were only offered in the upstairs room of a Wales doctor, located across the street from the present day Baptist Church.

In 1931, another mission church

of Monson, which had been established to serve migrant workers employed by the granite quarry, was closed. A section of that building was dismantled and transported to Wales and added to St. Monica's, giving the building its signature L shape that is seen today.

A further expansion was in the works for St. Monica's in the early 1950s until plans for an adjoining rectory were put on hold because of water flowing through the desired building site.

In 1953 St. Christopher's parish was established in Brimfield, drawing many of St. Monica's attendees to the newer, larger church.

Plasse said that approximately

nine years ago "the pastor at the time just thought it was more convenient for him to offer services in Brimfield, so in the winter he didn't have liturgies in Wales, they would only have them in the summer time."

The schedule of only being open for half of the year did not last too long Plasse said. About three years ago, St. Monica's ceased offering services all together, sending its congregation to neighboring St. Christopher's 52 weeks a year.

The decision to close St. Monica's and put the land up for sale is not one that has been taken lightly by parishioners.

"It's a very tender issue to talk about it right now," Plasse said.

"People don't like the idea of disbanding the church completely anyway because it's been a viable church for a hundred years or more."

"It will be charged," Plasse said of the transfer of items on the seventh, "because, well let's face it, the faith nourishment of that whole area, Brimfield Holland and Wales, has been through Wales up until the founding of the parish in Brimfield."

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