

## **St. Lawrence centennial celebration Sunday in Raymond**

### **Local News**

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RAYMOND, Wash. - St. Lawrence Catholic Church will celebrate its centennial year with a bilingual mass scheduled at 11:00 a.m., Sunday, September 29th. Immediately following the service, a catered luncheon will be served in the social hall of the church. The church is located at 1112 Blake Street in Raymond. The Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain, archbishop of Seattle, will be the principle celebrant. Current Pastor, Fr. P.A. Kaech, and former pastors will concelebrate at the centennial mass. Sr. Virginia Miller, of the Sisters of Providence, who served as pastoral assistant (along with Sr. Elizabeth Joyce, Sp., since deceased) will be in attendance and will bring the gifts forward for the offertory procession.

In 1979, Fr. Tom Suss was assigned to the church in Raymond (Immaculate Conception), and the mission in South Bend (St. Lawrence). With years of history behind them, both parishes had always strongly resisted merging. Within four-months of his arrival in the area, Fr. Tom announced that they would be building a new church. He said, "Oh, you could have heard a pin drop on the carpet!" He assured the congregation that he was not independently wealthy, nor did he rob banks. He handed out envelopes with three choices, and it was a surprise to most that an overwhelmingly percentage chose to be in favor of the building project. The rest is history. The last mass celebrated in the old Raymond church was on December 8, 1980. By that time there was no heat in the church and it was cold. However, at the end of the mass, Fr. Tom suggested that as folks left the church, they should take something with them to the area indicated for storage during the time of demolition and construction. Within an hour, or so, the church that had stood for more than 70-years, serving its congregation by providing physical and spiritual shelter, was stripped and everything but the carpet and pews were gone. The congregation met at South Bend's St. Lawrence Catholic Church while the new church was under construction. With the support of the majority of the two-church communities, the actual construction of the newly proposed facility was contracted out. Church members Ken Green, Bob Inglin, George Inglin and fellow parishioners (many of the men working were members of the Willapa Harbor Knights of Columbus #1606) spent many hours working together on projects that needed special attention and extra effort. They were selfless in their generosity of time and talent on behalf of the new church. All of the electrical work was done by Jack Ford, owner and operator of Ford Electric, Inc. and his crew. Jack is also a member of the Knights of Columbus. The ladies formed a calling committee and provided food and beverages until the project was completed. After the last service at St. Lawrence in South Bend, the statues and the stained glass windows were placed in the sanctuary of the newly constructed church building. The stained glass windows from the old Immaculate Conception Church were used to enhance the day-chapel; creating a sense of beauty, as well as a spiritual atmosphere. Longtime parishioner, Robert "Shorty" Remington recalls hearing, as a youngster, that Charles Muller designed and crafted an altar at his home. When completed, it was dismantled; then placed on a barge and taken down the river to be placed in the south bend church. This original creation now serves as a background altar; a place of honor reserved for the tabernacle. George and Robert Inglin, built a mahogany altar, which serves as the main altar. Efforts were made to have the picturesque church in South Bend included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Unfortunately, this never came about. Sadly, the church was demolished. Oral tradition, stories passed down from one generation to the next, play a significant role in the history of the Catholic church. One such story, the poignant story of the "Basil Bell" that dates back to 1918, resurfaced after the death of Jim Weathers. Jim, longtime friend of Joseph Basil, asked his children before he died to have the "Basil Bell" put in a place of honor, as it deserves. Jim's daughters, Patti Bridgewater and Toni Glazier have been scurrying to get the project completed in time for the centennial. The worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918-19 didn't miss Pacific County. Many people in Raymond, South Bend and other local towns fell ill, and there was a high death rate for those who contracted it. One of those who fell ill was Doumina Basil, young daughter of A. G. Basil. Fearing for her life, he prayed, telling God that if Doumina recovered, he would donate a bell to the local church, which didn't have a bell. Doumina did recover, and true to his word, A. G. Basil had a bell made and donated it to the Catholic Church in Raymond, which at that time was St. Mary's. That bell hung in the bell tower of the newly constructed church, along with the old bell from St. Lawrence in South Bend until the weight of the bells caused the tower to start separating from the building. The South Bend bell is currently located near the church entrance. Sunday, after mass, when the festivities begin in the church social hall, this story will be retold. Fr. Kaech is looking forward to hearing others' stories, as well!