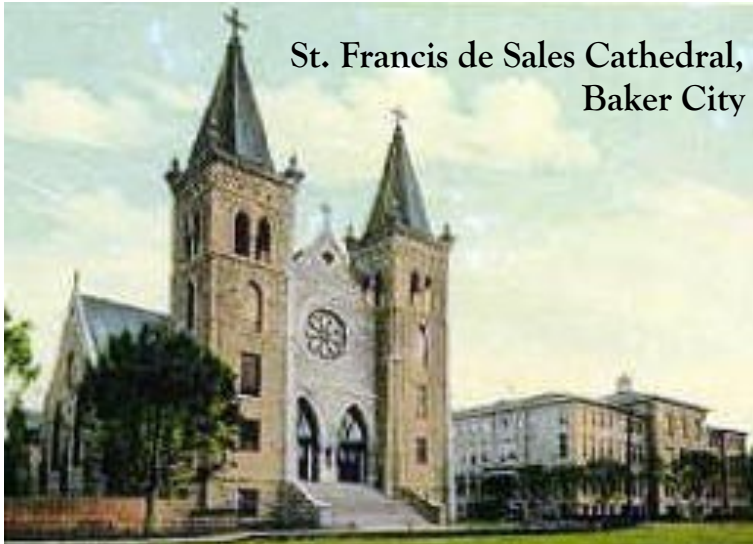


News of the Diocese of Baker

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THE DIOCESAN CHRONICLE

The McGrath Era 1918—1950



St. Francis de Sales Cathedral,
Baker City



Most Reverend
Joseph F. McGrath,
Second Bishop of Baker City,
served during the recession
and the turbulent years
of World War II

Joseph Francis McGrath was born in Kilmacow, County Kilkenny, in 1871 and made his theological studies at the Grande Seminaire in Montreal in Quebec, Canada.

He was ordained to the priesthood on December 21, 1895. He served as a curate in the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, before doing missionary work among the Native Americans in Northern Michigan for two years. He then went to Washington, where he served as a curate at the Cathedral of Seattle and afterwards as rector of St. Patrick's Church in Tacoma.

On December 21, 1918, McGrath was appointed the second Bishop of Baker City, Oregon, by Pope Benedict XV. He received his episcopal consecration on March 25, 1919, from Bishop Edward John O'Dea, with Bishops Mathias Clement Lenihan and John Patrick Carroll serving as co-consecrators.

He headed the diocese for thirty-one years and two weeks, making him the longest-serving bishop in diocesan history. Bishop McGrath died at age 79.

As we continue our journey of the History of the Cathedral (which we began last January) we continue Monsignor William S. Stone's narrative on the legacy of Bishop Joseph Francis McGrath.

... "The regular gathering of a number of priests of the diocese for Christmas Dinner with Bishop McGrath was an example of the spirit of fraternity which he fostered among his clergy during the years of his episcopate. He was always delighted when the priests from the neighboring parishes (usually LaGrande, Enterprise, Ontario and John Day) could gather at his home or at the Cathedral Rectory on a Sunday evening or on holidays for a little priestly "R and R." Because of Bishop McGrath's promotion of such gatherings, the clergy of the Diocese of Baker acquired a reputation among their confrères of the Northwest for their fraternal spirit." (*Priests' Retreats have continued throughout the decades for our clergy and provide a spiritual and restful week each year after Easter.*)

THE THIRTIES — DEPRESSION YEARS

"The decade following the coming of Bishop McGrath appears to have been a time of rather low key activity in the diocese, in comparison with the two decades that followed. Despite the fact that the 1930s were a time of economic hardship in Eastern Oregon, as well as everywhere else in the country, the diocese seemed to blossom. . . . The additions to the ranks of the clergy between 1930 and 1940... (24 ordinations in 10 years) ...were to signal a change in the rate of growth in the diocese that one might justifiably label a "coming of age" of the Church in Eastern Oregon. At least from 1930 on, Baker could certainly be said to have an identity of its own as a diocese. For the ensuing twenty years the newly-ordained priests were almost entirely either natives of the diocese or Irish-born priests who elected to join the diocese at the outset of their studies for the priesthood."

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

"During the Bishop's "Ad Limina" visit to the Vatican in 1934, Pope Pius XI had questioned him closely on what the diocese was doing about the religious education of children and youths who did not have the opportunity of

The McGrath Era continued

attending Catholic schools, and in particular those who lived in remote areas of the diocese. McGrath was so impressed with the Pope's concern that this became the highest priority on his agenda as he returned to the diocese. On February 11, 1935, he mandated that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) be established in every parish and mission of the diocese and personally visited each parish to formally bless its inauguration.

Bishop McGrath inaugurated his plan with a flourish and obtained the services of Miriam Marks, the executive secretary of the National Center of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in Washington, D.C., and accompanied her on a visitation of every parish in the diocese, formally establishing the Confraternity in each. Miss Marks conducted seminars on the structure and function of the Confraternity for the clergy, religious and lay persons who would constitute the nucleus of a new teaching force throughout the diocese. The program was so successful that other dioceses throughout the U.S. and Canada latched on to the CCD materials developed in Eastern Oregon, and many sought help and guidance from the diocesan office.

THE 1940'S — ERA OF WAR AND PEACE

"Virtually every aspect of American life in the decade of the Forties was influenced by World War II, its peacetime aftermath, and the Korean conflict. This was true even in the Diocese of Baker, but these were not the only events of note. Five new parishes were established despite restrictions on construction imposed because of the war, and ten new priests were ordained for the diocese."

EDUCATOR, 1918–1950

Early in 1948, Bishop McGrath, now 77 years of age and handicapped by frequently recurring illnesses, concluded that the time had come to seek assistance in the administration of the diocese. Many were stunned when capable Oregon clergy were bypassed and Fr. Leo Fabian Fahey from Mississippi was named Coadjutor.

Although Bishop McGrath officially turned over the administration of the diocese to him, Fahey never felt that he was completely in charge. During a trip to Rome, on his first "Ad Limina" visit, in the Fall of 1949, he became ill and after returning to the States underwent serious surgery. He never fully recovered from this experience and died suddenly at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Baker, on March 31, 1950. During his brief sojourn in the diocese, Bishop Fahey's personality and talent made a memorable impression on both clergy and laity.

The children who lived along the streets between his

home and the Chancery Office were accustomed to having him visit them as he made his way to and fro, his tall frame, now gaunt and stooped, ambling along, his eyes missing nothing. He was an "old-time" bishop; he loved the episcopal ceremonies but conducted them with an informal dignity. He loved to tease the younger priests and he loved children. Most of all, he loved the company of his priests at dinner or over a "friendly game." Like Bishop O'Reilly, he was the right man for the job at the right time.

Bishop McGrath died peacefully on April 12, 1950, less than two weeks after the man who was supposed to succeed him. Bishop Kelly of Boise was called upon to be the celebrant at a Pontifical Requiem Mass for a bishop of his former diocese, this time for his old mentor and long-time friend, on April 18th. He spoke of Bishop McGrath as "blazing a trail for his brother Bishops in a diocese with difficulties similar to but greater than theirs."

Following the Pontifical Requiem Mass and burial the Diocesan Consultors met at the Chancery Office and elected Father Michael J. McMahon, pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Parish, LaGrande, Administrator of the Diocese pending the appointment of a new bishop.

CATHOLIC CHURCH EXTENSION SOCIETY

The ambitious building program undertaken in the Diocese of Baker during the McGrath years would have been impossible without the help of Catholic Church Extension Society. The genial president of the Society, Bishop William D. O'Brien, became a familiar figure around the Diocese as his interest in Eastern Oregon were balanced by the numerous appearances of Bishop McGrath at meetings of the Board of Directors of the Extension Society, where he was warmly received and where he acquired the good-humored title of the "beggar from Baker."

McGrath expressed his appreciation for this assistance in a Pastoral Letter which he addressed to the people of the diocese, in which he said, in part:

"Like many other dioceses of the West and South, Baker City is under everlasting obligation to the Catholic Church Extension Society. Without its timely aid and generous cooperation, the work of erecting and furnishing mission chapels in our outlying districts would have been a hopeless task. Indeed we can say without exaggeration that Extension Society has been the one great sustaining force of missionary activity in this diocese ever since its inception. Its generous and continued benefactions to our poor missions and to the priests in charge are too many to enumerate. For all these we are deeply grateful and shall continue to pray the good Lord to bless our benefactors."

When Bishop McGrath arrived in Baker in 1919

there were 16 parishes with resident priests, and 37 other church buildings, mostly in smaller towns, where Mass was offered on Sundays and Holy Days once or twice monthly. At that time, it should be remembered, the clergy were not permitted to offer Mass more than twice on any day. To staff these parishes he had 15 diocesan and 10 priests of religious orders. The total Catholic population of Eastern Oregon was 6,819.

Thirty-one years later, at the time of his death in 1950, there were 23 parishes with resident priests, who also served 27 mission churches. The number of priests had increased to 31 diocesan and eight religious, and the total Catholic population of the diocese was now 14,729, an increase of 46 percent. Although at his death the diocese was still not self-supporting, Bishop McGrath had successfully consolidated the foundation laid by his predecessor in the Church of Eastern Oregon.

This article can be found in *The Cross In The Middle Of Nowhere, the History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Oregon* written by Monsignor William S. Stone. Published 1993. Other excerpts were taken from *Celebrating 100 years, The Catholic Church of Eastern Oregon* by Loretta Pastva, SND. Published 2003.



**Saint Francis de Sales,
Bishop,
Doctor of the Church**
B. 1567 – D. 1622

St. Francis de Sales was born to a noble family at Chateau de Sales in the Kingdom of Savoy near Geneva, Switzerland on August 21, 1567. Francis was both intelligent and gentle. From a very early age, he desired to serve God. He knew for years he had a vocation to the priesthood, but kept it from his family. His father wanted him to enter a career in law and politics. In 1580, Francis attended the University of Paris, and at 24-years-old, he received his doctorate in law at the University of Padua. All the time, he never lost his passion for God. He studied theology and practiced mental prayers, but kept quiet about his devotion. To please his father, he also studied fencing and riding. Finally, after much discussion and disagreement, Francis was ordained to the priesthood in 1593.

Francis gave spiritual direction to lay people who were living real lives in the real world. He had proven with his own life that people could grow in holiness while involved in a very active occupation. He also recognized that Christian marriage and family life is itself a call to holiness.

For Francis, the love of God was like romantic love. He said, *"The thoughts of those moved by natural human love are almost completely fastened on the beloved, their hearts are filled with passion for it, and their mouths full of its praises. When it is gone, they express their feelings in letters, and can't pass by a tree without carving the name of their beloved in its*

bark. Thus, those who love God can never stop thinking about him, longing for him, aspiring to him, and speaking about him. If they could, they would engrave the name of Jesus on the hearts of all humankind."

–*"By turning your eyes on God in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with God. Begin all your prayers in the presence of God."*

–For busy people living in the world, he advised, *"Retire at various times into the solitude of your own heart, even while outwardly engaged in discussions or transactions with others and talk to God."*

–*"To be an angel in prayer and a beast in one's relations with people is to go lame on both legs."*

–He believed the worst sin was to judge someone or to gossip about them. *"Even if we say we do it out of love we're still doing it to look better ourselves. We should be as gentle and forgiving with ourselves as we should be with others."*

–The key to love of God was prayer. The test of prayer was a person's actions.

As he became older and more ill he said, *"I have to drive myself but the more I try the slower I go."*

He died on December 28, 1622, after giving a nun his last word of advice: *"Humility"*.

St. Francis de Sales was beatified on 8 January 1661, and canonized on 19 April 1665, by Pope Alexander VII.

Excerpts in this article are from Catholic on Online

Cathedral Conservation Prayer

God, our loving Father,
we thank You for this house of prayer.
It is in this sacred space that Your presence
is revealed to us through sacramental signs.
Here You build Your temple of living stones
and bring the Church to its full stature
as the Body of Christ.

It is to Your greater glory as parish and Cathedral,
servants and disciples, that we strive to
restore and renew this holy place.

In communion with the saints in heaven
and all on earth may we never cease
to bless and praise Your greatness.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son who lives and reigns with You and
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

BISHOP CARY'S SCHEDULE

Feb 28 Oregon Catholic Press Meeting, Portland
Feb 1-8 "Ad Limina" Visit, Rome
Feb 9-16 Region XII Bishop's Retreat, Siena, Italy



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES CATHEDRAL

"It's the mother church
of the diocese . . .
it belongs to you!"

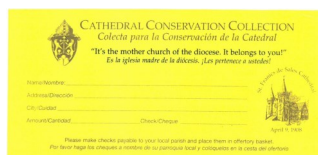
*Es la iglesia madre
de la diócesis. . .*

¡Les pertenece a ustedes!



Please join us in supporting
our Cathedral by using the
yellow envelope provided in
your pews and parish office.

*Por favor acompáñenos a apoyar a su
Catedral usando el sobre proporcionado
en sus bancas y en la oficina parroquial.*



2020 Focused Capital Repairs:

- Boiler replacement
- Ongoing repointing,
repair, and replacement
of stonework
- Concrete repair/replacement
of stairs and sidewalks

2020 Enfoque de las Reparaciones Capitales:

- Reemplazo del boiler
- Reprogramación continua,
reparación y reemplazo de la cantería
- Reparación de concreto/reemplazo de
escaleras y aceras

2nd annual Cathedral Conservation Collection

