

## **HOLY GHOST CHURCH**

The first Slovak Catholic Church in the Scranton area came into being around 1886. During the first few years, clergy from Hazleton and Plymouth ministered to the needs of the people. Early Holy Ghost parishioners were immigrants from Spis, Nitra, Saris, Orava, Zemplin and surrounding counties of what was then Hungary. It ranks as the third Slovak parish in the diocese.

Twenty-one dedicated Slovak families pioneered the effort to establish a parish. During the summer of 1888, they, along with Slovak families from Forest City to Taylor, spearheaded a combined effort to solicit funds for a church.

The little frame church was erected by the strength and sweat of men after their regular day's work. This group dug with picks and shovel, often well beyond midnight, until the excavation was completed and the stone foundation placed. The cornerstone was blessed on Sunday, October 14, 1888, and Rev. Francis Januscek, appointed Holy Ghost's first pastor by Bishop William O'Hara, celebrated the first High Mass on Christmas Day, 1888.

During the following years, the parish grew with progress being marked by the erection of the parish elementary school in 1903. The Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius staffed the school and their convent was built in 1913. In later years, lay teachers from Holy Ghost Parish were added to the teaching staff. The rectory was built in 1923.

Another giant step in the growth of the parish came in 1928 when the parish purchased land opposite the church, which included a two-story brick building with yielded space for classrooms and a library. It was dedicated as "Father Dulik Memorial Hall."

Because of the increase in the size of the parish, a larger church was needed and the contract was awarded to Alaimo Brothers, Pittston for a cost of \$200,000. Construction was started March 16, 1930, and Bishop Thomas C. O'Reilly, who officiated at the dedication on July 18, 1931, blessed the cornerstone on October 3, 1930. The old church was moved across the street and refurbished to serve as an auditorium and recreation hall with bowling alleys in the basement. It was destroyed by fire in 1945.

Because of dwindling enrollment and the high cost of repairs to meet state school standards, the school was closed in 1976. A large amount of usable parking space was gained when the school building was razed.

Since its establishment, Holy Ghost Church has been served by sixteen pastors or administrators and thirty members have entered the religious life, eight ordained to the priesthood and twenty-two professed as nuns.

The pastors initiated many improvements over the years. Rev. Robert J. Gardzalla who renovated the sanctuary carried out the most recent major change, in compliance with the Second Vatican Council. Rev. James Fedor established Perpetual Care at the parish cemetery. Rev. John V. Polednak, who was named pastor in September 1986 by Bishop James C. Timlin, currently serves the parish.

