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MANY HAVE HELD THE REINS AT ST. HELEN



Through the years, St. Helen Roman Catholic Church has had many administrators and two pastors.

St. Helen began first as a mission that started in the mid 1930's by Father Joseph Berberich, associate pastor of St. Mary Church in Orange. He along with his brother, the Rev. George Berberich, who was the pastor at St. Mary, looked after the small flock in Orangefield. "Fr. Joe" not only started St. Helen, but also formed missions in Bridge City and Vidor. He was responsible for building the little white church on FM 105 next to the Orangefield High School in 1938, 70 years ago.

In 1946, St. Helen became a mission of St. Henry Church in Bridge City, under the care of the Rev. Timothy Cronin. The Rev. Herman Vincent took the reins as administrator in 1951, followed by the Revs. Joseph Dazio in 1969 and Frank Schanzer in 1970.

The Rev. William Kennelly became the first resident administrator in 1973. The Rev. Michael A. Jamail took the reins temporarily, during Kennelly's term. The Rev. Thomas Roland Maarrchalkerweed, OFM, affectionately known as "Fr. Roland" followed Kennelly. The Rev. Thomas E. Phelan became temporary administrator in June of 1979. It was the Phelan family that donated the altar that is still in use today.

In 1980 we received the status of a full fledged parish, and the Rev. Patrick Arthur Turner was assigned as our first parish priest. St. Helen also happened to be "Fr. Pat's" first parish assignment as pastor. The Rev. Jude Sivoski became temporary administrator during a period of illness for Turner.

The Rev. Timothy E. Deeter took the reins as administrator in 1987 and became St. Helen Church's second pastor in 1989.

From 1996-1997 the day to day job of overseeing the parish was handled by the Revs. Art Morgan and Lewis Delarue.

In June of 1997, Turner returned as pastor until his death in March of 2003.

The Rev. Jim McClintock, St. Henry pastor, stepped in until the Rev. Philip Neri Payyappillia was assigned to the Parish. "Fr. Philip," as he was known, oversaw the church's operation until 2007, when he returned to India and was replaced by the Rev. George Kidangen, CMI, who administers the Parish