



Faith, hope, and ethnicity : St. Marys Parish in Butte
by William Patrick Fischer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History
Montana State University

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Abstract:

This thesis studies the interplay between religion and society in the Roman Catholic parish of St. Mary's in Butte, Montana. The parish life of St. Mary's reveals in many ways the values parishioners and priests held, which were manifested in their parish ethnic and religious identity. Priests and parishioners alike incorporated ethnicity into the St. Mary's world of religion—the parish life. This led to the development of a parish ethnic identity. The parish community also developed a parish religious identity based on its cultural values. Thus, discernable ethnic and religious identities defined St. Mary's parish between 1916-1928.

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

William Patrick Fischer

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Raymond A. Mentzer Jr.

Raymond A. Mentzer Jr.
(Signature)

4-14-97
Date

Approved for the Department of History

Thomas R. Wessel

Thomas R. Wessel
(Signature)

4/14/97
Date

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

Robert L. Brown

Robert L. Brown
(Signature)

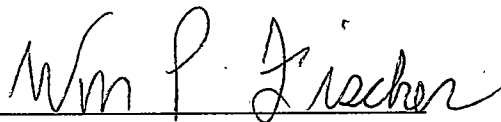
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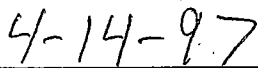


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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the interplay between religion and society in the Roman Catholic parish of St. Mary's in Butte, Montana. The parish life of St. Mary's reveals in many ways the values parishioners and priests held, which were manifested in their parish ethnic and religious identity. Priests and parishioners alike incorporated ethnicity into the St. Mary's world of religion—the parish life. This led to the development of a parish ethnic identity. The parish community also developed a parish religious identity based on its cultural values. Thus, discernable ethnic and religious identities defined St. Mary's parish between 1916-1928.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In September 1995, I listened to Bishop Alexander Brunett of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena deliver what I considered to be an inspirational homily at the opening mass for the Montana Ancient Order of Hibernians' state convention. Bishop Brunett's homily addressed the Irish within the context of their religious faith, in this case, those Irish professing faith in Roman Catholicism. Bishop Brunett invited the men and women of the Ancient Order of Hibernians to honor the faith that their ancestors cherished and passed on to them. This calling resonated with my personal beliefs, and also with my professional dreams.

I was in my first month of the master's program in history at Montana State University-Bozeman, when I heard Bishop Brunett's homily. I entered the program with the intention of pursuing my lifelong interests in the Irish and Catholicism as my research specialties; however, I lacked the necessary vision to usefully employ this interest. Bishop Brunett's homily message clarified the angle that I was searching for in a historical study of the Irish and Catholicism. His message centered on the intersection of faith and ethnicity, yes, but more importantly it spoke to the deeper issues of values and identity. It

would take slightly more than a year and the help of many to refine this topic, but I start now at the point where Bishop Brunett left off.

The heart of this project emanates from an alternative vision of American Catholic history, one that moves beyond the traditional limits of the subject. The traditional approach to American Catholic history in this century revolved around "institutional, biographical, apologetical, and promotional" studies. America's leading historian of American Catholicism in the early twentieth century, Peter Guilday, established this methodological tradition, which was perpetuated with slight variations by other noted American Catholic historians, John Tracy Ellis and Timothy McAvoy, until mid-century. The historical tradition of Guilday, Ellis, and McAvoy, centered "on the clergy (specifically the hierarchy), and their influence was such that all of American Catholic history at this time took on this quality."¹

The Second Vatican Council and American social changes during the 1960s inspired a new outlook for American Catholic history. Vatican II "encouraged...intellectual exploration and creativity" in Catholic scholarship, which when applied to history undermined the traditional methodology. Many newer historians of American Catholicism embraced non-traditional concerns in the post-Vatican II era, which would also prove complementary to the popular "'bottom up'" approach of the "new social history" of the 1960s and 1970s. The resulting approach to American Catholic history, defined by reoriented Catholic and American thought, emphasized common



people and communities, and downplayed apologetics and ecclesiastical approval. These changes positioned the historical profession to study "the people who have been Christian and why and how they have done it, the institutions they shaped, [and] their relations with the worlds in which they have lived."²

The new outlook among historians launched a new era in American Catholic historical studies. For instance, studies of gender and ethnicity appeared, as indicated by an edited volume of Karen Kennelly's, *American Catholic Women: A Historical Exploration*, by Dolores Liptak's, *Immigrants and Their Church*, and by Jay Dolan's, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865*. A later enterprise of Dolan's, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*, a self-proclaimed "first step in the writing of a new social and religious history of American Catholicism," more holistically embodied the new approach. Historians Robert Orsi, Ann Taves, and Joseph Chinnici further stretched the possibilities of contemporary American Catholic history in their respective books on popular piety: *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, and *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States*.³

¹ Jay P. Dolan, "New Directions in American Catholic History," in *New Dimensions in American Religious History: Essays in Honor of Martin E. Marty*, eds. Jay P. Dolan and James P. Wind (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 154, 156-58, 161.

² Dolan, "New Directions," 162-163, 167, 169; James Hennesey, "No More Than 'Footprints in Time'?" *Church History and Catholic Christianity*, *The Catholic Historical Review* 73, no. 2 (April 1987): 194.

³ Karen Kennelly, ed., *American Catholic Women: A Historical Exploration* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989); Dolores Ann Liptak, *Immigrants and Their Church* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989); Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); Jay P. Dolan, *The*

The history of Catholicism in Montana reflected the traditional historiography and continues to do so. Lawrence Palladino's groundbreaking book, *Indian and White in the Northwest: A History of Catholicity in Montana, 1831 to 1891*, was the first major study of Montana's Catholic history, and it set the historiographical precedent. Cornelia Flaherty continued in the tradition of Palladino, in *Go With Haste Into the Mountains: A History of the Diocese of Helena*. Although Flaherty's work essentially reflected a traditional model of American Catholic history, new historical understandings of American Catholicism are present in the book. William Greytak, author of a recent interpretation of Montana Catholic history, "The Roman Catholic Dioceses of Montana: An Abbreviated History," also proceeded along a traditional course, and furthered the work of Palladino and Flaherty. The traditional character of Montana Catholic history can also be found at the local level, as in Butte's case.⁴

A tradition of parish history stands out as the primary record of Butte's Catholic past. Michael Hannan's *History of St. Mary's Parish*, parish histories found in *The Register: A Century of Catholicity in Montana, 1841-1941*, *St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana, 1902-1952*, and Christopher Daly's *St. Patrick's Parish, 1881-1981: The First*

American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985), 11; Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Joseph P. Chinnici, *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989).

⁴ L.B. Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest: A History of Catholicity in Montana, 1831 to 1891*, 2ed., rev. and enl. (Lancaster, Pa.: Wickersham Publishing Company, 1922); Cornelia M. Flaherty, *Go With Haste Into the Mountains: A History of the Diocese of Helena* (Helena, Mont.: Falcon Press Publishing Co., Inc., [1984]); William Greytak, "The Roman Catholic Dioceses of Montana: An Abbreviated History," in vol. 2 of *Religion in Montana: Pathways to the Present*, ed. Lawrence F. Small (Billings, Mont.: Rocky Mountain College, 1995).

Hundred Years represent the Butte tradition, and traditional parish history in general, as "they tend to celebrate the glories of the parish and its clerical leaders...." More recent histories of other parishes provide models for what can be done with a study of Butte. Stephen Shaw's, *The Catholic Parish as a Way-Station of Ethnicity and Americanization: Chicago's Germans and Italians, 1903-1939* and the collected work found in *The American Catholic Parish: A History from 1850 to the Present*, "offer a history of American Catholicism using the parish, rather than the bishop, as a key organizing principle" to understand the American Catholic past.⁵

Butte's Catholic history, apart from scattered parish histories, is largely missing in the legend-dominated body of Butte history. C.B. Glasscock's popular history, *The War of the Copper Kings: Builders of Butte and Wolves of Wall Street*, characterized the tendency in Butte history to emphasize a glorified, heroic, rough & rowdy frontier past centered on Butte's early history and distinguished by amateurism. Joe Duffy's, *Butte Was Like That*, continued in the mythic and amateur tradition of Glasscock. The Work Projects Administration attempted a reoriented approach to Butte history in *Copper Camp: Stories of the World's Greatest Mining Town, Butte, Montana*; however, it simply replaced one set of mythic historical characters with another. Traditional Butte history,

⁵ Michael J. Hannan, *History of St. Mary's Parish* (Butte, Mont.: Butte Independent Print, 1917); Souvenir Centenary Edition, *The Register: A Century of Catholicity in Montana, 1841-1941*, 27 August 1941; Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, *St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana, 1902-1952* (1952; reprint, with a foreword by the Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, n.p., n.d.); Christopher Daly, *St. Patrick's Parish, 1881-1981: The First Hundred Years* (Butte, Mont.: n.p., 1981); Dolan, "New Directions," 168; Jay P. Dolan, "The Local Church," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 1; Stephen Joseph Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Way-Station of Ethnicity and Americanization: Chicago's Germans and Italians, 1903-1939* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1991); Jay P. Dolan, ed., *The American Catholic Parish: A History from 1850 to the Present* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

while entertaining and revealing in many respects, requires a sense of diversity, professionalism, and critical inquiry to enhance it.⁶

Michael Malone met the challenge of Butte historiography in *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906*, and established a new era in Butte history. Jerry Calvert's, *The Gibraltar: Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920*, and David Emmons's, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925*, both furthered the body of new Butte history. These authors explored pieces of Butte's economic, political, and ethnic past using approaches characterized by professionalism and critical inquiry. This new era in Butte history continues to provide countless topical opportunities to study Butte's past. A religious understanding of Butte's history is one of many topics deserving exploration.⁷

This project reflects a contemporary vision of American Catholic history, while recognizing the value of traditional insights. It appeals to the color of the city's history, while owing allegiance to the new body of Butte history. This project then, is not a traditional American Catholic history set in a mythical frontier mining town, but rather a study of people and concerns revealed through parish life. It is a story about the people of St. Mary's parish, but more importantly, it is a story about what they considered valuable

⁶ C.B. Glasscock, *The War of the Copper Kings: Builders of Butte and Wolves of Wall Street* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1935); Joe H. Duffy, *Butte Was Like That* (Butte, Mont.: Tom Greenfield, Inc., 1941); Work Projects Administration, *Copper Camp: Stories of the World's Greatest mining Town, Butte, Montana* (New York: Hasting House, 1943).

⁷ Michael P. Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Jerry Calvert, *The Gibraltar: Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920* (Helena, Mont.: Montana Historical Society Press, 1988); David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

in their lives and how they manifested those beliefs. This story then, views "religion as a cultural system, a system of shared beliefs and values." This understanding of religion allows one "to uncover the culture of Catholicism at a particular moment [and place] in time," by recapturing the religion of the people and avoiding a strictly "institutional focus." In this case, the concept of religion as a cultural system and as a religion of the people are to be understood within the Church's "human and historical" tradition, not from the Church's position as "mystery." This study begins with the premise that "the historian's role is to aid in the discernment of the authentic [Church] tradition, not to make the ultimate judgment" on it.⁸

The Roman Catholic faith of the first three decades of the twentieth century was in many ways characterized by hierarchism, devotionism, and conservatism. The Church "tenaciously" adhered to "the principle of [hierarchical] authority in dogma and morals..." in the era following the First Vatican Council of 1870. Hierarchism referred to a "centralization of [Church] authority," controlled by the clergy. The Church's position following Vatican I and the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 was that of a supreme hierarchy in Church affairs. The hierarchical model of Church governance overwhelmed competing models that granted the laity a larger role in governing the Church. The hierarchical model was vigorously supported and implemented in the United States by the numerically dominant and philosophically predisposed Irish clerics in the American clergy. "Clericalism had become the standard" of the American Catholic

Church in the early twentieth century, and reigned supreme until the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.⁹

Devotional Catholicism, a style of religious practice that gained influence in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, flourished alongside hierarchism during the early twentieth century. Religious devotions are "practices of piety that give concrete expression to the will to serve and worship God by directing it to some particular object, such as a divine mystery, person, [or] attribute..." Devotionalism "nurtured a church-centered form of piety and a sense of communal solidarity" that complemented the hierarchical vision of the Church. Devotionalism "was the exercise of piety, or what was called a devotion." Catholics constantly encountered devotional themes, such as the life of a saint, in their religious life which encouraged and reinforced this style of worship. The Catholic press spread devotional messages. Church architecture and interior design through the use of objects such as statues, stained glass, and altars created a devotional environment. Catholic schools provided daily devotional reminders to children through their decorations and the events they celebrated. Catholic prayer books and religious societies offered Catholics devotional styled spiritual direction. Parish religious celebrations further grounded parishioners in a devotional milieu. Devotionalism also distinguished Catholics from non-Catholics, which provided them with "a specifically Catholic identity in a Protestant society." Regardless of the devotion, whether it be to a particular saint, the

⁸ Jay P. Dolan, "The Search for an American Catholicism," *The Catholic Historical Review* 82, no.2 (April 1996): 171, 186; Hennessey, "Footprints in Time," 187, 194.

⁹ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 2nd ed., rev. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 115; New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Devotions, Religious"; Dolan, *The American Catholic*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, or the Virgin Mary, devotionism was "a demonstrative, emotion-packed religion distinguished by its emphasis on the practice of external rituals of devotion...mediated through a sacramental system controlled by the clergy."¹⁰

At the dawn of the twentieth century, conservative thought exerted its dominion over the American and worldwide Catholic Church. Conservatism complemented hierarchism and devotionism; however, it also represented the anti-modernist school of thought in the Church. A struggle between conservatives and their opponents in the late nineteenth century centered on the conservative vision of the Church as a supernatural timeless authority in contrast to a historical Church grounded in the times. Conservatives rightly believed modernist philosophy and its grounding in the times posed an extremely serious threat to the Church, and therefore viewed any acceptance of it as a "capitulation to values that were contrary to the Catholic tradition." Pope Leo XIII agreed that modernism posed a serious threat and responded with the anti-modernist papal encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae* in 1899, which established an era of official Church conservatism. Pope Pius X followed Leo XIII's example with his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* in 1907, which reinforced and bolstered the Church's conservative position. Pius X's encyclical clearly and boldly condemned modernism and insured a conservative Church until the Second Vatican Council.¹¹

Experience, 180-81, 172, 189, 192; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "Baltimore, councils of."

¹⁰ Taves, *The Household of Faith*, 132; Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 211, 215, 238, 218-19.

¹¹ Patrick M. Carey, "Catholic Religious Thought in the U.S.A.," in *Perspectives on the American Catholic Church*, eds., Stephen J. Vicchio and Virginia Geiger (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, Inc., 1989), 156-57; Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 311, 319; James Hennesey, *American*

American Catholics in the early twentieth century shared additional experiences beyond their religious life. American Catholics generally belonged to the working class and tended to be urban dwellers until the late 1940s. The religious bonds that linked and shaped people as Catholics during the post Vatican I and pre-Vatican II era also inspired a powerful sense of self-confidence among American Catholics. One dimension of this self-confidence was manifested in an era of extraordinary institutional construction. Between 1920 and 1960, Catholics witnessed "brick-and-mortar Catholicism," as the American Church demonstrated its self-confidence in structural growth. Individual Catholics shared many secular experiences with their co-religionists to complement their religious experience in the first thirty years of the twentieth century.¹²

The local parish presents the ideal setting to recover the historic Catholic culture of belief, because the parish "is a window in the wall, through which Catholic life can be observed." As the place where American Catholics practiced their religion, the parish reveals the dynamics of faith life. The parish "was [no less than] the hinge on which their religious world turned." For Catholics of any neighborhood, the parish "was the most enduring and important cultural institution" to be found. The parish functioned in dual capacities. As a social organization, it "brought people together" and provided a "sense of community" to the Catholics of a neighborhood, and "as a religious organization, it brought the presence of God to the neighborhood...." The parish bound the Catholic people of a neighborhood together more closely than any other social and religious outlet.

Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 202-3, 217.

The parish meant different things to different people; however, the parish provides the necessary vantage to witness Catholic life unfold. Without a doubt, "to understand the religion of the people, it is necessary to penetrate the religious [and social] world of the parish."¹³

The institutional framework inherent in American Catholic parish life of the early twentieth century undoubtedly characterized St. Mary's parish; however, parish life at St. Mary's encompassed and represented far more than routine practices. Parish life at St. Mary's reflected the cultural values of the parishioners and facilitated the development of their cultural identities. Ethnic, religious, educational and social dimensions of parish life demonstrated parish values in terms of Irish and Catholic identity. The substance of and practices present in parish life at St. Mary's represented the parishioners' own unique way of being Irish and Catholic.

The activities, events, exercises, and groups that characterized parish life can be informative in an institutional sense; however, from a more critical perspective one can examine the various elements of parish life in an effort to distinguish the values and identity parishioners supported. It is self-evident that structural and cultural boundaries restricted the possibilities of parish life, but it is also quite clear that the parishioners enjoyed the freedom to exercise and emphasize their Catholicism as they desired. Yes, they were bound by certain requirements, but within these they could determine their own

¹² Hennessey, *American Catholics*, 175; Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 350-52.

¹³ Dolan, ed., introduction to *American Catholic Parish*, 3; Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 159, 204, 207-08; Dolan, "Local Church," 1.

flavor of Catholicism. The members of St. Mary's developed their own Catholic and Irish identities within the context of both the parish's religious and social environment.

Catholicism's impact on Butte represents a neglected piece of the city's history that this study of St. Mary's begins to rectify. A simple numerical consideration of Catholicism's impact on Butte illustrates the relevancy of this matter. Silver Bow County, equitable to Butte, had a population of 47,635 in 1900, with a Catholic population of at least 25,000 in only four of the five Catholic parishes in 1901. Twenty years later in 1921, Butte and Silver Bow County claimed ten Catholic parishes and two missions, despite the fact that the county population had only grown by 12,678 as of 1920. Catholics undoubtedly enjoyed a special status in Butte, and the parish is the natural place to examine this population.¹⁴

While St. Mary's is only one of many parishes, it represents one of the most vital dimensions of the Butte Church—the Irish. The Irish dominated the clerical and lay ranks of the Butte Church. This project signifies the first step towards fully exposing this overlooked, yet significant piece of Butte's past. The Irish could be found in most Butte parishes, and even as a significant population in some. But only St. Mary's exhibited its Irish ethnicity in a noticeably triumphant way. The parish distinguished itself among Butte parishes outside of ethnicity also, through its religious societies, its school, and other various facets of parish life. St. Mary's distinguished itself as an Irish and Catholic parish,

¹⁴ Ellis Waldron and Paul B. Wilson, *Atlas of Montana Elections: 1889-1976* (Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana Publications in History, 1978), 7; Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 95; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 48-49, 69-71.

and set an example for all other parishes to follow in their own way. St. Mary's significantly contributed to Butte's Irish and Catholic past.

CHAPTER 2

ST. MARY'S PARISH

Jim and Kate O'Shea welcomed their first daughter, Mary Ann, the eldest of twelve children, into this world in March 1870. Mary Ann was raised on her parents' farm on the remote Beara peninsula of southwest County Cork, Ireland. Her childhood home was located a short distance from the small village of Castletownbere, which owed much of its existence to the nearby Beara copper mines at Allihies. It is quite likely that Jim and Kate expected some of their children to emigrate from Ireland, but it is equally as unlikely that they would have predicted that seven of them would emigrate to Butte, Montana rather than places like Massachusetts and New York. It is even more unlikely that they could have envisioned a connection between their remote home in Ireland, the copper mines west of them at Allihies, the people of the Beara peninsula, and what would become Butte, Montana. Fifteen years later the absurdity of those thoughts disappeared, as unemployed copper miners at Allihies began to develop the link between the Beara peninsula and Butte.¹

¹ Riobard O'Dwyer, *Who Were My Ancestors? Genealogy (Family Trees) of the Castletownbere Parish, County Cork, Ireland* (Astoria, Ill.: K.K. Stevens Publishing Co., 1989), 92; Daniel M. O'Brien, *Beara: A Journey Through History* (Castletownbere, Co. Cork, Ireland: Beara Historical Society, 1991), 8, 39, 67; R.A. Williams, *The Berehaven Copper Mines: Allihies, County Cork, Southwest Ireland* (Sheffield, United Kingdom: The Northern Mine Research Society, 1991; reprint, Kenmare, Co. Kerry, Ireland: Kenmare Book Shop, 1993), 173 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Mary Ann was raised in a traditional Irish Catholic setting characterized by close kinship networks, which permeated the remote Beara peninsula. Mary Ann and six of her siblings, as well as many others from Beara, transplanted their traditional mindset thousands of miles from Beara in Butte. Mary Ann's first destination in the United States was Park City, Utah, although the year of her emigration from Ireland is unknown. Mary Ann sought out Park City, because her maternal uncle Paddy Holland resided there. However, Park City failed to hold her, and by 1899 she was in Butte where she would spend the rest of her life. There she would be joined by her siblings John, Dennis, Dan, Jim, Jeremiah, and Kate. Also joining Mary Ann in Butte were several maternal cousins, such as Julia Holland, who appeared as a witness at Mary Ann's wedding. The presence of extended family members simply multiplied the Beara kinship web in Butte. If Mary Ann's example provides an indication of the Beara kinship network in Butte, then the "seventy-seven different Sullivan (or O'Sullivan) families [that] left Castletownbere for Butte" offer an even more dramatic example.²

Mary Ann's life represented the common "cycle of emigration, work, marriage, and, ...[unfortunately] widowhood," that characterized so many of Butte's Irish women's experiences. She married Tom Johnson in 1899, despite his non-Irish pedigree. They eventually settled at 440 Anaconda Road in Butte's Dublin Gulch, which would place

² Janet A. Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 27; Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 54-55; Helen Lavelle, conversation with author, Butte, Mont., 29 November 1996; Riobard O'Dwyer, *Who Were My Ancestors? Genealogy (Family Trees) of the Eyeries Parish, Castletownbere, County Cork, Ireland* (Astoria, Ill.: Stevens Publishing Co., 1976), 182; Silver Bow County, Clerk of the District Court, Marriage license no. 3280, Thomas Johnson and Mary Ann Shea; O'Dwyer, *Castletownbere Parish*, 92; Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 15.

them in St. Mary's parish after 1902. Tom and Mary Ann welcomed six children into their family over the first eleven years of marriage. As was too often the experience of Butte's Irish women, Tom died in 1913 at the age of forty-two of a mining related illness, leaving Mary Ann a widow with six young children ranging in age from thirteen to two. Mary Ann and her children would only too realistically know the common Dublin Gulch quip, "many a Gulch kid raised his mother." Mary Ann's situation united her with many other St. Mary's parishioners, and true to her culture she found security in her family. Her brothers John, Dennis, Dan, and Jim, all single, moved in with her, and shared the responsibilities of survival as a family.³

Mary Ann was a devout Catholic and she closely identified family with the Church. Mary Ann developed her family's Catholic identification beginning with her own marriage at St. Lawrence O'Toole's church in Butte. The founding of St. Mary's parish in 1902 provided Mary Ann and her family with the primary setting for their religious life. Mary Ann demonstrated her commitment to faith and parish through her children's early education and their sacramental life. All six of the children attended St. Mary's school, and the entire family participated in the various facets of parish life. One daughter, Sarah, received the sacrament of confirmation in 1913, and the youngest child,

³ Mary Murphy, "A Place of Greater Opportunity: Irish Women's Search for Home, Family, and Leisure in Butte, Montana," *Journal of the West* 31, no.2 (April 1992):77; Silver Bow County, Marriage license, Johnson and Shea; Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 76; O'Dwyer, *Castletownbere Parish*, 92; Lavelle, conversation with author; St. Mary's Parish Census, [1922?], 225-St. Mary's Parish File, Butte, Montana, Diocese of Helena Archives, Helena, Montana; St. Mary's Parish Map, [1914?], 225-St. Mary's Parish File, Butte, Montana, Diocese of Helena Archives, Helena, Montana; Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 71; Contributors to Sisters' House, St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana, [1919], 225-St. Mary's Parish File, Butte, Montana, Diocese of Helena Archives, Helena, Montana; Julia McHugh, "The Gulch and I," 1986, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, p. 12.

Tom, attended St. Mary's school as late as 1924. Mary Ann also manifested her commitment to faith and parish financially. She contributed to special projects such as a new house for the religious sisters of the parish. The complete extent of the families' involvement in parish life is unknown, but judged from what we do know of the family, one might characterize Mary Ann and her family as reasonably typical parishioners at St. Mary's.⁴

Twelve years before St. Mary's was founded in 1902, its host city, Butte had already made its name known to the world. After all, St. Mary's belonged to a city that one source in 1889 claimed was "without a shadow of doubt...the largest mining camp on earth...[with] scores of large mines that have no equal in any other part of the world." The fact that Butte's population doubled from approximately 24,000 to 48,000 between 1890 and 1900 and then climbed to approximately 60,000 by 1920 lends credence to these flattering claims in respect to Butte's rise in the world. Snuggled into the Rocky Mountains of southwest Montana, Butte's location was as one observer noted, on the site of "the greatest deposit of mineral wealth ever discovered on this earth." Butte capitalized on mineral wealth in a way that all other Montana mining camps could only dream of and that insured the city's rise to prominence. Butte survived the boom and bust era of Montana gold mining in the 1860s, then went on to triumph in the wake of

⁴ Silver Bow County, Marriage license, Johnson and Shea; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 5; "Catholic Church Notes," *The Butte Daily Post*, 26 April 1913, p. 5; "Sunday Collections, February, St. Mary's School," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2 (March 1924): III; Contributors to Sisters' House.

silver depreciation following that metal's boom in the 1870s and 1880s, only to gain its greatest prosperity beginning in the 1880s with copper.⁵

The significance of Butte's copper reserves and the primary factor behind the city's rise to glory can be attributed to Thomas Edison's successful transmission of electrical power in 1882. Copper earned a new and coveted status as a metal due to its role as an electrical conductor in the new revolutionary age of electrical energy. One Butte producer, the Anaconda Mining Company, reflected the rise of copper in its own growth. By the early 1890s, Anaconda's industrial machine employed 3,000 men and "consumed 75,000 tons of coal and 15 million board feet of lumber every year" to produce the red metal. Butte earned its place as America's and the world's leading copper producer during the 1890s, and indeed did lead the world in 1900. Although Butte faced competition from Michigan, Arizona, and Utah copper producers, it managed to produce "5.4 billion pounds of copper" totaling "31 per cent of all copper mined in the United States" between 1895 and 1916. Butte's position as a world class mineral producer fueled the substantial growth within its own borders, that included a diverse ethnic community, a largely manual and unionized workforce, and the rise of an influential Catholic community.⁶

⁵ G.C. Swallow and J.B. Trevarthen, *Reports of the Inspector of Mines and Deputy Inspector of Mines for the Six Months ending November 30th., 1889* (Helena, Mont.: Journal Publishing Co., 1890), 81; Waldron and Wilson, *Atlas of Montana Elections*, 7; Isaac Marcossion, *Anaconda* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., 1957), 11; Malone, *Battle for Butte*, 3, 8-10, 32-33.

⁶ Marcossion, *Anaconda*, 5-6; Malone, *Battle for Butte*, 34-35, 41, 53; Calvert, *The Gibraltar*, 3.

Immigrants and their children accounted for two-thirds of Butte's population in 1910. Europeans, such as the Irish, Cornish, Italians, Germans, Scandinavians, and Slavs, dominated Butte's ethnic mosaic, while small Chinese and African-American populations added to the diversity of the community. Nearly two-thirds of all Butte men occupied manual positions in the Butte economy of 1910 and most belonged to labor unions. Among Butte's workingmen, "two out of every three" worked directly in mining or one of its related industries. One final characteristic of Butte residents was Catholicism, which bound most immigrant and American born Butte residents and could transcend all other bonds. The Catholic faith had the ability to unite diverse European ethnics and divide Butte's formidable working class in unexpected ways. Whether united as Catholics at Butte's annual Catholic Field Day celebration in 1915 or as apparent obstacles to Socialist candidate successes in the local elections of 1912, Catholics wielded power in the community.⁷

The Catholic population of Montana entered the twentieth century as a well established community despite its young age. The institutional Church was officially established in Montana a mere fifty-nine years earlier in 1841. Catholics traveled and lived in Montana territory before 1841; however, the establishment of St. Mary's Mission by members of the Jesuit order in that year signaled the birth of the institutional Church in the state. The Jesuits labored as missionaries among the Native Americans, initially the Flatheads, and essentially defined the mission of the early Church in Montana. The

⁷ Calvert, *The Gibraltar*, 3-4, 58, 60-61, 66-69; Malone, *Battle for Butte*, 61-64; "Catholics Enjoy Pleasant Outing," *The Butte Daily Post*, 13 July 1915, p. 5.

early Church in Montana continued to develop as a missionary Church devoted to Native American ministry until significant numbers of white Catholics arrived in the territory during the 1860s.⁸

The lure of mining in the 1860s attracted the first sizable migration of whites to the territory. The arrival of white Catholics overwhelmed the original Jesuit mission in Montana, and challenged the Church to enlarge its ministerial scope in the territory. White settlers inspired a new era in the Montana Church. Religious sisters and secular priests arrived in the 1860s and 1870s to reinforce the overextended Jesuits. The combined efforts of the Jesuits, religious sisters, and secular priests was needed to satisfy the requests of a growing white population, while continuing to support Native American ministry. A short lived institutional presence developed in the well known mining camps like Virginia City, while other newly founded settlements such as Missoula, Helena, and Butte developed permanent Catholic institutional and community presences.⁹

Pope Leo XIII created the Diocese of Helena, which included the entire territory of Montana, on March 7, 1884 at the request of Bishop John Baptist Brondel. Bishop Brondel based his request on Montana's population growth. By 1884, Catholics comprised one-fourth of the Montana population, and the outlook for continued increase appeared positive. Bishop Brondel led the diocese during its formative years before his death in 1903. During his years as bishop, the number of churches increased by forty-nine and the Catholic population of Montana increased by 35,000. Bishop Brondel faced

⁸ Greytak, "The Roman Catholic Dioceses of Montana," 32, 34; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 5.

⁹ Greytak, "Roman Catholic Dioceses of Montana," 34-39; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 16-17, 19-23, 25.

a priest shortage in his growing diocese, which inspired an arrangement with Irish Archbishop Thomas Croke to supply the Diocese of Helena with a limited number of Irish priests. The arrangement benefited the diocese during Bishop Brondel's episcopacy and resulted in the arrival of twenty-five additional Irish priests during the episcopacy of his successor, which would have a profound impact upon the state, and Butte in particular.¹⁰

The discovery of gold near present day Butte in 1864 would lead to many things, but to the few and overextended priests in Montana territory at the time it was no more than another remote mining camp in need of ministry. Traveling Jesuits faithfully responded to the needs of Butte area Catholics during the initial settlement of the area in the 1860s. Due to the early instability of the mining camp, a permanent parish church failed to materialize until 1879. The new church, St. Patrick's, received its first resident priest in 1881; the same year five Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth established St. James' hospital in Butte. By 1883, the Catholic community had outgrown the existing church, and St. Patrick's parish built a new and bigger edifice to handle the growing Catholic population. This growth though, was only a sign of what awaited the Church in Butte.¹¹

A new era of development awaited the Butte Catholic community at the turn of the century. A rapidly increasing population overwhelmingly driven by European

¹⁰ Greytak, "Roman Catholic Dioceses of Montana," 40-41, 44-45; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 32-33, 45-51, 53, 83.

¹¹ Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 25.

Catholic immigrants and their children strained the Church's infrastructure in Butte. Between 1896 and 1903, the parishes of St. Lawrence O'Toole, Sacred Heart, St. Joseph's, St. Mary's, and Holy Savior, and three parish schools were added to meet the demands of Butte's growing Catholic population. Ethnic Catholic groups generally dominated entire parishes. For example, St. Mary's was populated with the Irish, while Italians initially dominated Holy Savior. The Butte Catholic community relished a position of denominational and institutional strength at the turn of the century. St. Patrick's parish boasted a population of 7,000 in 1889 compared to the 145 members of Butte's largest Protestant congregation. Despite the addition of parishes by 1901, St. Patrick's claimed 10,000 members. At the same time, the largest Protestant congregation had less than 800 members. Butte was an "overwhelmingly Catholic" town at the turn of the century, and it had still not seen the peak of its institutional development.¹²

Butte's Catholic community had reached a very impressive level of institutional growth indeed by 1925. Despite the laudatory achievements in the first decade of the new century, the Butte Church continued to grow. Schools were built, others were enlarged, and new parishes continued to appear in the city. Fr. Patrick Brosnan noted in early 1917, that "Butte is a great city. We have seven fine catholic parishes all Irish. We have seventeen priests in Butte city and a big bunch of convents. We have a high school, etc.." Apart from an exaggerated Irish presence, Brosnan's account was accurate. Immaculate Conception parish had joined the litany of existing parishes in 1906, to be

¹² Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 48-49; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 95.

followed by St. Ann's parish and St. John the Evangelist in 1917 and St. Helena's in 1921. Despite Holy Savior's original identification with Italian Catholics, it became increasingly dominated by Slavic Catholics. This change in parish ethnic identification inspired the formation of St. Helena's parish to meet the needs of Butte's Italian Catholic population. St. Helena's also had two missions attached to it, St. Patrick's and St. Jude Thaddeus, which serviced the Catholics in Butte's outlying areas. A coeducational Catholic high school was opened in 1908, to be closed in favor of separate schools for boys and girls in the early 1920s. By the mid-1920s, Butte's Catholic community could proudly claim ten parishes, two missions, nine elementary and two high schools with a combined enrollment of 3,380, and one hospital.¹³

The individual Butte parishes formed the core of Butte's Catholic community. Fr. James English, St. Mary's first pastor, oversaw the parish's initial institutional development beginning with the construction of a parish church completed during the fall of 1903. A parish school followed the new church as the next institutional item considered necessary to the new parish. A school was opened in the church basement for children in the "infant class to the fourth grade" in September, 1904, only to be expanded to include children in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades a year later. Interested parties recognized that the church basement was clearly inadequate to handle an increasing enrollment, which led to the construction of a three-story school building completed in

¹³ Patrick Brosnan to his father, 18 February 1917, Patrick Brosnan Papers, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 69-73.

1906. By 1907, St. Mary's possessed the two pillars of Butte's turn-of-the-century Catholic infrastructure, a church and a school.¹⁴

Although the Church welcomed this growth, it heightened the need for additional priests to serve the diocese. St. Mary's fortunately escaped the vocation shortage because of Bishop Brondel's fortuitous recruitment of Irish priests. Fr. James English, a product of the Irish seminary at Thurles, County Tipperary, was "the first Irish priest ordained for the diocese of Helena...." Fr. English and his Irish successors at St. Mary's provided the parish with its primary clerical staff for the first twenty-six years of the parish's existence. Continuing the tradition established by Fr. English were two Irish born and seminary trained priests, Fr. Michael McCormack and Fr. Michael Hannan, who served as pastors and assistants in the early years of the parish. Many other Irish priests also served in the parish during the early decades of the century. Irish priests were entrusted with the care and guidance of St. Mary's through its formative years as a parish.¹⁵

The boundaries of St. Mary's parish encompassed the well known Dublin Gulch and Corktown areas of Butte at the parish's founding. St. Lawrence parish bordered it to the north, and St. Patrick's bordered it to the southwest. The original boundaries also included a hill popularly known as Hungry Hill. The title of this natural feature gains

¹⁴ Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 48-49; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 5-11; "1st Pastor of St. Mary's was 'Apostle' of Poor," Souvenir Centenary Edition, *The Register: A Century of Catholicity in Montana, 1841-1941*, 27 August 1941, 12-14.

¹⁵ Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 53; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's Parish*, 6-7, 13, 22, 29-31, 34-35; "Father Hannan Passes On To His Reward," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6(August 1928): 33; "In Memoriam," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6(July 1928): 1.

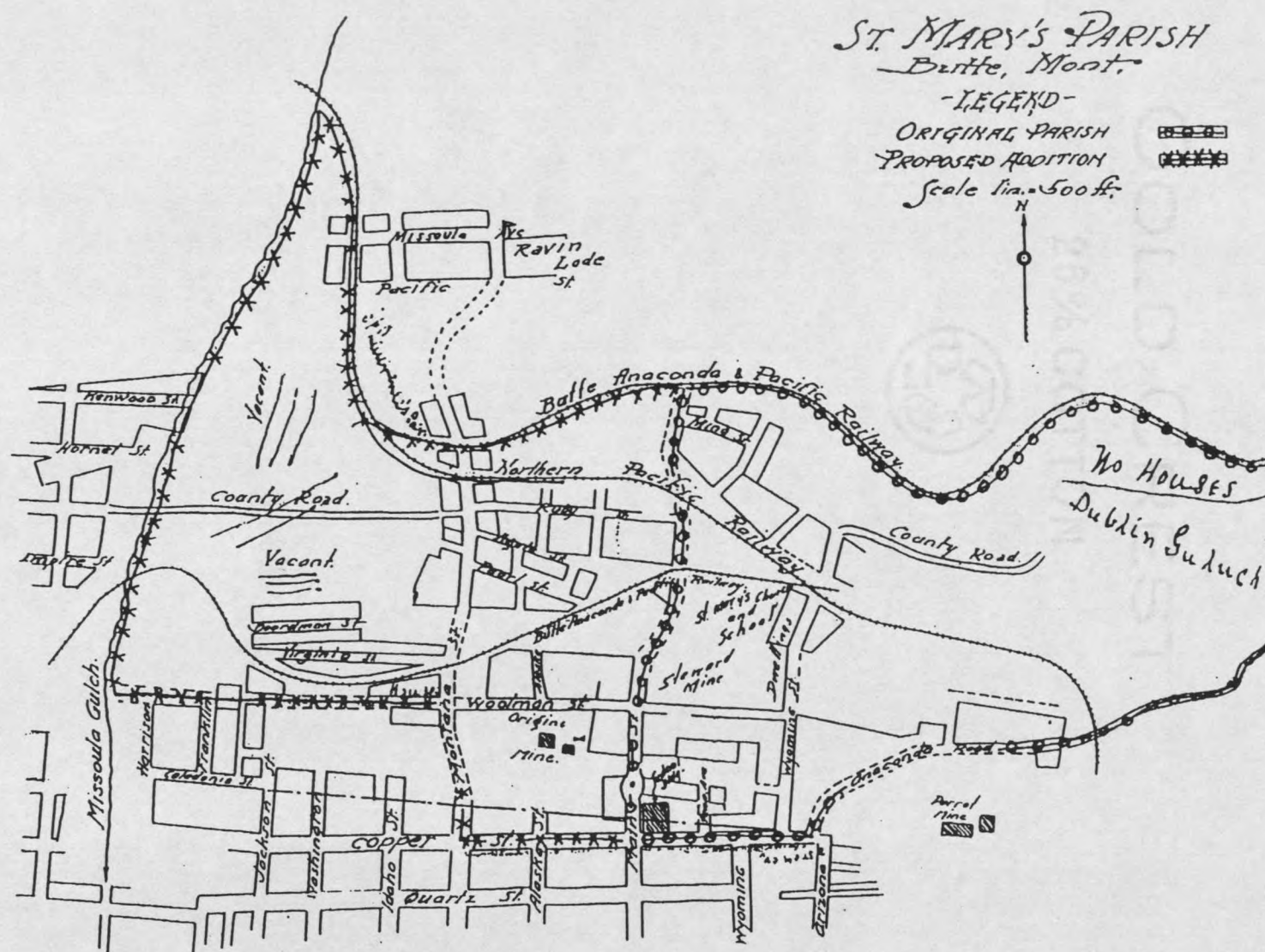


Figure 1. St. Mary's Parish Map, 1914. (Courtesy of the Diocese of Helena)

greater importance when examined from the Beara emigrant experience. Hungry Hill in Dublin Gulch had an Irish counterpart by that name, which was the highest peak found on the Beara peninsula. Additional neighborhoods were added to the parish in 1914. The expanded parish boundaries included the neighborhoods west of Main Street bounded by Copper Street and Woolman Street on the south, Missoula Gulch on the west, and the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway (B.A.&P.) tracks on the north. This annexation of a portion of St. Patrick's parish in 1914 brought the people living along Boardman, Virginia, North Montana, Ruby, Agate, and Pearl Streets into St. Mary's parish.¹⁶

The area of town that St. Mary's parish encompassed shared in the environmental extremes found throughout Butte during the parish's early years. At the time of the parish's founding, it suffered with the entire community "the devastating effects of the smeltersmoke," that "contain[ed] arsenical and sulphurous gases, which destroy[ed] even the vegetation artificially started by the residents of Butte...." In some respects though, St. Mary's offered even worse living conditions than those found elsewhere in Butte. County health inspectors claimed in a survey of Butte's sanitary conditions in 1912 that the 700 block of North Wyoming street was "one of the dirtiest and most insanitary places inspected." This claim is perhaps even more startling when one considers that St. Mary's church, the institutional heart of the parish, was located at 713 N. Wyoming

¹⁶ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 5, 36; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 96-97; Catherine Hoy, interview by Caroline Smithson and Ray F. Calkins, 11 May 1979, p. 13; Williams, *Berehaven Copper Mines*, 18-19; St. Mary's Parish Map, [1914?], 225-St.Mary's Parish File.

street. Still, health inspectors described other prominent areas of the parish such as the Anaconda Road and Clear Grit Terrace as "not very dirty" and "fairly clean." The people of St. Mary's knew graphically the sharp environmental contrasts found in their city and parish.¹⁷

Industrial features dominated the parish landscape. Various lines of the B.A.&P. traversed the parish; however, the mining landscape overpowered all else in a sensory respect. The West Stewart mine, located near the school and church, must have visually overshadowed both structures, with its forty foot high ore bin, steel gallows frame, hoist house, machine shop, and other assorted buildings. The sounds of the mining landscape were pervasive. One evening in 1922, as the parish pastor, Fr. Michael Hannan, prepared for bed, he noted that "the street is unusually quiet this evening. But the mine engines keep up their infernal & perpetual noise." On another date he noted, that "every thing is as silent around as in the tomb except now & again the horrible noise of that mine engine." In addition to the continual noise of the mine engines, mine whistles sounded daily to indicate different things, such as a shift change or perhaps an accident. A former parishioner recalled her childhood in the parish during the late teens and early 1920s as being "sort of bounded by the [mine] whistles." In addition to keeping time for people, the whistles also alerted them to mine accidents. This practice was apparently

¹⁷ John Byrne, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines of the State of Montana* (Helena, Mt.: Independent Publishing Company, 1902), 26-27; Silver Bow County Board of Health, "Report on Sanitary Conditions in the Mines and Community, Silver Bow County, December, 1908-April, 1912," p. 27; D.A. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Fire Insurance Map of Butte, Montana, 1916* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916), 8.

discontinued, because it terrified everyone who “had someone working on the hill,” as most parishioners did. The cover illustration for a St. Mary’s parish history published in 1952 reveals mining’s continued legacy in the parish’s identity. Prominently displayed under the aegis of a towering Virgin Mary and alongside a representation of the church, school, and worker’s homes is a gallus frame.¹⁸

For better or worse, the mines provided the lifeblood of St. Mary’s. The title of a 1917 parish history, *The Miners Catholic Church and Parish*, clearly identified the parishioners of St. Mary’s with the mining industry. The occupational base of the parish in 1917 was so homogenous that Fr. Michael Hannan could state that “all the men of the parish work in the mines....” In addition, while making reference to the hardships parishioners endured during downturns in the mining industry, Hannan commented that “every family with the exception of two, depends on the mines for a living.” In a more general sense, Hannan explained that “in a parish like St. Mary’s, where all belong to the working class there is not far to go for a sign of the times.” One needed only to go so far as the church vestibule early on Sunday morning to witness the parish’s relationship to the mining industry. Nuns who had served in the parish remembered that the “vestibule of the church would be filled with miners buckets” during the 5:30 A.M. Mass. The “men put their buckets there, and then went in to Mass before going to work.” The Speculator mine disaster in 1917 and the ten funerals held at St. Mary’s for parish

¹⁸ St. Mary’s Parish Map, [1914?], 225-St. Mary’s Parish File; D.A. Sanborn, *Fire Insurance Map*, 8, 98; Hannan, *History of St. Mary’s Parish*, 33; Michael J. Hannan diary, 13 February, 11 March 1922, Michael J. Hannan Papers, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives; Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, interview by author, tape recording, 14 October 1996, p. 2-3; Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, *St. Mary’s Parish*.

victims of the disaster vividly demonstrated the intimate nature of the parish's relationship to mining. In October, 1920, special arrangements were made for "men whose shift at the mines" interfered with the scheduling of a parish mission, so all could attend. Regardless of the form, mining permeated the life of the parish.¹⁹

Dependence on the mining industry posed problems for the parishioners though too. The industry provided employment, yet it also represented values that occasionally conflicted with parish values. Fr. Michael Hannan likely represented his working class parish well, with his viewpoints that clearly challenged the dominant economic order. Hannan described "capitalist[s]" as "brute[s]" and "the worst sort of a vulture," which certainly placed him in opposition to the dominant American economic ideal. Despite his opinion of the individual capitalist though, he recognized "the impracticability of Socialism." This merely tempered his opinion of economic and political authority. He considered it fitting to classify the Butte power structure as "the tyrants & rogues who control[led] this town!" This, because those same "tyrants & rogues" classified parishioners such as Sean O Sullivan to be "radical[s]"— radical in the sense that he and others like him were unwilling to bow down to the "tyrants & rogues who control[led]" Butte.²⁰

¹⁹ Michael J. Hannan, *Father English and St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana: The Miners Catholic Church and Parish* (Butte, 1917), This history is the same as the *History of St. Mary's Parish*, that I commonly cite throughout the paper. Hannan apparently issued the history under two different titles, for reasons unknown.; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 13, 19, 35; Sheehan, interview, 5; Patrick Brosnan to his mother, 19 June 1917, Brosnan Papers; Calvert, *The Gibraltar*, 104; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 4 October 1920, p. 3.

²⁰ Hannan diary, 13 February, 1 April, 3 April 1922.

Families constituted the primary social unit among St. Mary's parishioners. Fr. Michael Hannan defined the family as "husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters"; however, the people of St. Mary's understood a broader definition of family. Fr. Patrick Brosnan, a product of Ireland and assistant priest at St. Mary's in 1917, mentioned in a letter to his father that "everyone here is from Castletownbere," a reference to the Beara peninsula in southwest County Cork, Ireland. It is apparent that the definition of family included friends and extended family members from Ireland. The example of Mary Ann O'Shea's life illustrated that bond, while her life also revealed the tragically common parish definition of family as a widow and her children. In addition to Mary Ann, at least nineteen additional widows with an unknown number of children shared the Anaconda Road with her in 1919. Virtually every street in the parish resembled the Anaconda Road's situation to some degree. The contrast appeared even more startling on tiny Bell street, where five of ten families were headed by widows. The example of parishioner John Walsh, who "was killed in [a] mine by a timber slipping from [a] chain as it was being lowered in chute," and left a wife and three "young children" behind graphically illuminates the threat which loomed over most parish families. St. Mary's was a community of faith bound together by men and women who shared class and occupation, nuclear and extended families, pain and joy, friendships and, in a very important way, ethnicity.²¹

²¹ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 50, 35; Patrick Brosnan to his father, 18 February 1917, Brosnan Papers; O'Brien, *Beara*, 8; This particular page bears a "sketch-map of [the] Beara peninsula"; Contributors to Sisters' House, St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana, [1919], 225-St. Mary's Parish File; Fr. Hannan stated in relation to the aforementioned document that "every Catholic home in St. Mary's parish is represented on

St. Mary's belonged to the much larger Irish community of Butte itself. In 1900, Butte's Irish community accounted for twenty-five percent of the total county population. Ten years later in 1910, the Irish represented nearly one-third of Silver Bow County's registered voters. The Irish asserted their size in more ways than numbers alone. Whether as miners, union leaders, mine foremen, mine owners, or as prosperous businessmen, the Irish permeated and in many ways controlled Butte's world of work. The Irish also controlled Butte's political system. Butte's Irish women asserted their influence in the community, too. For example, Irish women controlled Butte's all female culinary and domestic servants' union, the Women's Protective Union, for many years. Without a doubt, the Irish were easily recognizable as the dominant force in many facets of Butte life.²²

Irish ethnicity asserted itself as a defining characteristic at St. Mary's from the parish's beginning. Fr. Michael Hannan partially credited the parish's smooth establishment to the parishioners whom he described as the "children whose ancestors never lowered the flag of the faith from the days of St. Patrick unto now...." He also

this list, and it is practically an adult census of the parish." Michael Hannan to Father Willging, 24 February 1919, 225-St. Mary's Parish File, Butte, Montana, Diocese of Helena Archives, Helena, Montana; Hannan diary, 10 April 1922. Although mining was directly and indirectly responsible for many parish deaths, it is understood that other causes were also responsible for parish deaths. Therefore, the high rate of widowhood does not exclusively correspond to mining.

²² Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 13; Calvert, *The Gibraltar*, 58; David Emmons, "The Orange and the Green in Montana: A Reconsideration of the Clark-Daly Feud," in *The Montana Heritage: An Anthology of Historical Essays*, eds. Robert R. Swartout, Jr., and Harry W. Fritz (Helena, Mont.: Montana Historical Society Press, 1992), 159-162; Malone, *The Battle for Butte*, 64-65; David Emmons, "Ethnic Cohesion and Advancement: Irish Worker Conservatism in Butte, 1876-1906," *Journal of the West* 31, no. 2 (April 1992): 63; Murphy, "A Place of Greater Opportunity," 75. I use the term Irish to denote those people who were born in Ireland, later emigrated, and settled in Butte, as well as those people who were children of Irish immigrants and were born in the United States or elsewhere and represent the first generation born outside of Ireland to Irish parents.

recounted in reference to the parish's first pastor, Irish born Fr. James English, that "the vast majority of the people wanted...a priest of their own race and blood...." St. Mary's was Irish and Irish-American in terms of its pastors and parishioners alike. The areas of Dublin Gulch and Corktown were known to be "the home of the Irish and the most Catholic district[s] in Butte" at one time. Although St. Mary's witnessed a decline in Irish families by 1917, a survey of common and uncommon Irish surnames enumerated in a parish census and another list of parishioners suggests that the Irish continued to predominate the parish. Neither indicate any short supply of Sullivans, Harringtons, or Murphys among the parishioners.²³

Fr. Michael Hannan and the parishioners of St. Mary's first encountered one another in 1906, when he served the parish as an assistant parish priest, a position he held until 1910. After a brief departure, Hannan returned in 1912 to serve as pastor of St. Mary's for the remaining sixteen years of his life. Fr. Hannan was born in Ireland, he attended the Irish seminary at Thurles, and was ordained to the priesthood for service in the Diocese of Helena, Montana in 1906. A former parishioner recalled that Fr. Hannan "took...a great interest in the parishioners...[and] he knew every child...[and] family in the parish." While at St. Mary's, he also developed a true concern for the poor, and a reputation as "a militant champion of the cause of freedom for his native land and...[for his] tireless...efforts to achieve independence for Ireland." Hannan brought more than his

²³ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 8, 36; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 96-97; St. Mary's Parish Census, [1922?]; Contributors to Sisters' House, [1919].

training as a priest to St. Mary's, he also brought his dedication to the cause of Irish independence.²⁴

On the surface, St. Mary's appeared similar to many other American Catholic parishes. By 1917, the parish offered "five masses every Sunday and all of them crowded." Of the five Masses, two were solely scheduled to accommodate the work schedule of parish miners. During the 1920s, the parish continued to provide the standard Sunday Catholic spiritual exercises: a Low Mass, a Communion Mass, a children's Mass, a High Mass, baptisms, and evening services. During the week, Mass was offered every morning at 8:00 A.M., with confession preceding it. Saturday afternoon and evening, Fr. Hannan allotted additional time for confessions. One former parishioner remembered that on Saturday afternoons as a child, "you came in from wherever you were playing" at a designated time to prepare yourself for your weekly "examination of conscience."²⁵

Beyond the standard weekly routines, the changing seasons brought such things as Confirmation in the spring and All Saints Day in the fall. Looming much larger in the yearly calendar of events were events such as Holy Week: starting with the blessing of palms on the Sunday before Easter, then on to Wednesday evening for the office of Tenebrae, next to Holy Thursday and the commemoration of the Blessed Sacrament,

²⁴ "Father Hannan Passes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine*, 33; Sheehan, interview, 6; "In Memoriam," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine*, 1.

²⁵ Patrick Brosnan to his mother, 18 February 1917, Brosnan papers; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 13; "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1 (January 1923): 36; Sheehan, interview, 5.

Friday passed with a Mass of the Presanctified and Stations of the Cross, and the last day before Easter Sunday, Holy Saturday, the time for the blessing of the font and paschal candle. Other special days, such as the blessing of candles on Candlemas and the blessing of throats on St. Blaise's day, interrupted the late winter pace of early February. Special devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary during the month of October signaled yet another special period in the yearly Church calendar. The devotions normally consisted of a daily rosary, or at least a weekly rosary, recited at the church. Regardless of the season or month, parishioners could count on special occasions to bring them together.²⁶

The parish offered additional spiritual and social activities too, including a chapter of the Holy Name Society, the League of the Sacred Heart, a Young Ladies' Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Married Women's Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, three children's sodalities, and a Ladies Aid and Altar Society. Fr. English organized the Altar Society in 1903 and the Ladies Aid in 1904, making them the first societies in the parish. These were the only societies in the parish until a Young Ladies' Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary was organized in 1912 by Fr. Michael McCormack. A junior Sodality of the Children of Mary was also organized in 1912, while another sodality, the Holy Angels' Sodality was organized in 1913. A branch of the League of the Sacred Heart was organized in 1916, and a chapter of the Holy Name Society was

²⁶ Hannan diary, 12 May, 1 November 1922, 2 February, 3 February 1923; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6 (April 1928): 2; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Candlemas," "Blaise of Sebaste, St."; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "October devotions"; "Catholic Church Services," *The Anaconda Standard*, 30 September 1918, p. 5; "October Devotions Held at Churches," *The Butte Miner*, 17 October 1921, p. 5; Sheehan, interview, 5.

organized in 1917. Each society limited membership to certain individuals and implored a particular cause, but taken as a whole, they offered nearly every parishioner ranging from the very young to the very old, regardless of gender, an opportunity to practice a form of extracurricular spiritual exercise.²⁷

A contentious element of parish life existed at St. Mary's too. Fr. Hannan despised the blatant disregard to cultural history some parishioners practiced when naming their children. Particularly disturbing to Fr. Hannan were the Irish families who went "far afield...for saints' names" for their children. This, of course, subordinated "the saints' names of their own race," in favor of names selected from non-Irish saints or worse from no saint at all. In addition to this, any parish boy associated with the Boy Scouts of America could have testified to another dimension of Hannan's cultural prejudice. Hannan was "thoroughly convinced that the Boy Scout movement in...[the United States] is a British move to capture this country." According to him, the fact that "every Protestant minister & non-Catholic sect are for them," and that "every spineless Respectable (?) & 'shoneen' Catholic in the land wants them," was sufficient grounds to avoid and discredit the group. The Christian zealotry of some parishioners disturbed Fr. Hannan, as well. The disrespect given to religious details, like failing to genuflect while "passing through the sanctuary," by "the second generation" displeased him occasionally, as did the carelessness Irish emigrants displayed on occasion. The carefree observance of "Little Xmas Day?" in January, 1923, "by those who are but a couple

²⁷ "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(January 1923): 36; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 37-48.

years from the country [Ireland] where the Feast is observed like Christmas in" the United States riled his opinion of some parishioners for the day.²⁸

The people of St. Mary's, like the O'Sheas and the Johnsons, belonged to a Church, city, state, and nation, but most intimately to their parish. Their community of faith, St. Mary's, had its own personality, exhibited through its environment, class, families, ethnicity, and religious practice. In addition to the standard rituals, activities, and organizations that characterized American Catholic parish life, there existed at St. Mary's another notable dimension of parish life. Fr. Hannan and the parishioners of St. Mary's incorporated the cause of Irish independence into their world of religion. Irish nationalism played a central role in the religious world of St. Mary's parish through the efforts of priest and parishioners alike. Although this element of parish life existed throughout the early years of the parish, it claimed an even greater share of parish life during the years 1916-1928. In numerous entries, Fr. Hannan's personal diary reveals the interrelationship between himself, the parish, and the Irish cause. Other sources, such as daily newspapers and parish magazines, also reveal the prominence of Irish nationalism in parish life. Irish nationalism like other elements of parish life represented more than its face value. Below the surface, it represented the parish's cultural values and a dominant piece of the parish's cultural identity. The historic link between Irish nationalism and Catholicism surfaced in powerful ways at St. Mary's.

²⁸ Hannan diary, 26 March, 30 May, 12 February, 6 January 1922.

CHAPTER 3

THE IRISH CAUSE

Poor Pat Doyle...fought for Ireland & came to Butte from Co[.] Galway or May[o] 6 mos. ago. got caught with ore car and had head fractur[e] from which he suffers paralys[is] of one side. Compound fracture of collar bone, jaw broken, chin-bone fractured[,] infection & pneumonia on top of it all. Still I think he is going to pull through. [He] asks for me all the time [and] I go to see him[,] he cannot se[e] me as eyes are closed[.] Pat is only one of thousand[s] who fought for Ire[l]and whose luck is almost as hard. A million curses on t[he] Freak State & a million of them again on the traitor[s] who are trying to sell the[ir] country! The greatest traitors in the world ar[e] I think belonging to my rac[e] of people at home & abroa[d][.].¹

Fr. Michael Hannan leaves little room for imagination in this particularly descriptive entry from his personal diary in June, 1924. This diary provides an intimate view of Irish and Catholic life in early 1920s Butte. It reveals aspects of the community's past once governed solely by speculation and oral tradition. As an example, the preceding entry reveals Fr. Hannan's vocational obligations to the sick, the industrial hazards experienced by Butte's miners, and for the purposes of this chapter, Hannan's unmistakable position on questions of Irish independence. The concept of Irishness in St. Mary's parish clearly meant a number of things. On one level, it referred to a non-political sense of ethnicity, while on another it referred to a highly politicized

¹ Hannan diary, 30 June 1924.

sense of ethnicity. The politicized concept of Irishness was based on an uncompromising position on the issue of Irish independence, that can best be defined as the Irish cause. The Irish cause permeated the religious and secular worlds of St. Mary's parish, and played a significant role in the parish life. Irish issues in parish life reaffirmed the cultural values of many parishioners, and shaped a powerful identity for the parish and parishioners alike. During Fr. Michael Hannan's pastorate, 1912-1928, Irish themes in parish life were often linked to a vision of Irish independence. Fr. Hannan constantly exerted his tremendous influence as parish pastor in support of Irish issues in parish life. There were a variety of activities in parish life related to the Irish cause, but they all championed Irish pride and independence at their most basic level. The Irish cause defined a powerful identity among the members of St. Mary's parish. And as one former parishioner stated, "we were very ardent [Irish] patriots because at that time Ireland was striving for her freedom...."²

The tumultuous era in Irish history during the years 1916-1924, beginning with the Easter Uprising, followed by the Anglo-Irish War, culminating in the Irish Free State, and ending in the Irish Civil War was unsurprisingly the era that the Irish cause enjoyed its greatest status in parish life. Yet, the Irish cause and the non-political sense of Irishness existed in parish life before and after these pivotal years. The Irish Volunteers of Butte, an organization dedicated to armed conflict with England, entertained an audience at the 1914 St. Mary's school commencement exercises with a "military drill"

² Sheehan, interview, 6.

and their fife and drum corps. At a special event in 1913, the young women of the parish were encouraged to emulate the virtuous Irish saint Brigid, because her example provided an ideal for the parish women to follow. Some parishioners, such as the Hickey's of North Wyoming street, apparently revered Irish nationalism to such a degree, that they named a son Thomas Francis Meagher in honor of Montana's Irish nationalist hero of that name. The annual citywide St. Patrick's day mass held at St. Mary's in 1915 provided the parish an opportunity for a high profile public demonstration of its values and identity. Parish entertainment included various activities of which parish plays with Irish themes were a special attraction. A presentation of *Kathleen Mavourneen* in 1914 and *Inchavogue* in 1915 kept Irish entertainment at the forefront in parish life. Parish familiarity with and acceptance of the Irish cause underscored the impending status of Irish nationalism in parish life between 1916-1924 and beyond.³

The Thomas Ashe council was a parish organization of men and women, unmentioned among St. Mary's parish histories, yet one that elicited favorable sympathy in the parish as indicated by Fr. Hannan's diary and local newspapers. The Thomas Ashe council was initially an affiliate branch of the Irish-American Friends of Irish Freedom (F.O.I.F.) organization founded in 1916. Political disagreements between Irish politician, Eamon De Valera, and the American leadership of the Friends of Irish Freedom caused

³ "Catholic Church Notes," *The Butte Daily Post*, 6 June 1914, p. 5; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 310-11, 118; "Irish Women in World's History," *The Butte Daily Post*, 4 February 1913, p. 10; "Catholic Church Notes," *The Butte Daily Post*, 21 February 1914, p. 4; "St. Patrick's Celebration Aided by a Glorious Day is Unqualified Success," *The Butte Daily Post*, 17 March 1915, p. 1, 11; "'Kathleen Mavourneen' By St. Mary's Society," *The Butte Daily Post*, 21 November 1914, p. 3; "In Catholic Churches," *The Butte Daily Post*, 1 May 1915, p. 9.

an internal organizational division, which resulted in the formation of a new and rival organization, the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (A.A.R.I.R.). De Valera organized the Irish-American A.A.R.I.R. in November, 1920 and the Thomas Ashe council responded by severing its ties to the F.O.I.F. and aligning itself with the newly created A.A.R.I.R. in December, 1920. The A.A.R.I.R.'s constitution declared its mission "to uphold the existing Republic of Ireland and to co-operate with the Irish people and their accredited representatives in their efforts to secure official recognition by the Government of the United States." A statement found in a report of the proceedings of the 1921 Montana A.A.R.I.R. state convention clearly described the motivation behind the organization: "Not to recognize the Irish government in Ireland is equivalent to recognizing the British government in Ireland, and thus becoming a party to the criminality, brutality and tyranny exercised by Great Britain over these helpless people." The outlook and character of the group was far from ambiguous.⁴

Seven councils of the A.A.R.I.R. existed in Butte in 1921; the Thomas Ashe council was St. Mary's parish affiliate. At least three other Butte councils, the West Side

⁴ Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, *St. Mary's Parish*; "1st Pastor of St. Mary's was 'Apostle' of Poor," Souvenir Centenary Edition, 12-14; "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine*; Hannan diary, 26 December 1922; Francis M. Carroll, "American Association For The Recognition Of The Irish Republic," in *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*, ed. Michael Funchion (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 9-12; Francis M. Carroll, "Friends Of Irish Freedom," in *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*, ed. Michael Funchion (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 120; "Two Branches for Irish Recognition are Formed," *The Anaconda Standard*, 29 December 1920, p. 1, 3; A.A.R.I.R. Const, Art II, American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, Miscellany, 1921-1922, World Museum of Mining, Butte, Mont.; Report of First Annual State Convention of American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, 12 February 1921, A.A.R.I.R., miscellany.

council, the Wendell Phillips council, and the Kossuth council, were associated with other Catholic parishes in Butte. Classic American heroes, such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, rounded out the list of names taken by Butte councils; however, the St. Mary's affiliate council chose instead an Irish martyr as its namesake. Thomas Ashe participated as an officer in the 1916 Irish uprising and was recognized as a recruiter for the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Ashe was arrested in Ireland for Irish republican activities in 1917, and died while incarcerated during a hunger strike on September 25 of that year. Ashe's funeral procession attracted "some thirty thousand people" and his death "stirred the heart of every patriotic Irishman to fresh endeavor in the struggle against the English." The name Thomas Ashe undoubtedly served as a passionate reminder of the sympathies shared by the members of the A.A.R.I.R. council bearing his name. A statement made at the 1922 Montana A.A.R.I.R. state convention confirmed the resolve of the Thomas Ashe council; "there is not another body of Irishmen in the City of Butte who would dare to go out on the streets of our city...[or] who would be more willing to go to jail then [sic] are the people of the Thomas Ashe Council" for the cause of Ireland.⁵

⁵ Report of First Annual State Convention of American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, 12 February 1921, A.A.R.I.R., miscellany; "Two Branches for Irish Recognition are Formed," *The Anaconda Standard*, 29 December 1920, p. 1, 3; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 7 February 1921, p. 6; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 21 February 1921, p. 3; Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Niwot, Colo.: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1993), 17; Tim Pat Coogan, *The Man Who Made Ireland: The Life and Death of Michael Collins* (Niwot, Colo.: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1992), 73-74; John Waldron, *Ireland: An Historical Review* (Dublin, Ireland: James Duffy and Co., Limited, 1958), 73-74; Report of Second Annual State Convention of American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, 12 February 1922, A.A.R.I.R., miscellany.

The Thomas Ashe council enjoyed official parish endorsement if judged by selected parish announcements. St. Mary's parish bulletins published in Butte newspapers during 1919-1921 routinely included information regarding the group. Notes claiming the group "held a large and successful meeting at St. Mary's auditorium," and simple routine reminders such as "the Thomas Ashe branch...will meet at St. Mary's school auditorium," or "The Thomas Ashe branch...will hold its regular weekly session Tuesday evening" suggested that the organization was firmly entrenched in parish life. In other instances, parish announcements mentioned groups such as the Junior Holy Angels sodality on one line, and in the next sentence notified parishioners of "a special meeting of the Thomas Ashe council...in the basement of the church Tuesday evening." On other occasions, notices for the group appeared alone, without any other parish news. Announcements also elicited positive expectations on occasion, such as "the Thomas Ashe branch...will meet in special session Tuesday evening...and a well-attended gathering is anticipated." Clearly, the group was popular in the parish, and apparently enjoyed the same benefits as any other group, albeit one of a different character and not necessarily associated with official Catholic life.⁶

The Thomas Ashe council blended into the parish calendar creating a secular niche among the spiritual outlets of parish life. During the early 1920s, parish groups

⁶ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 November 1919, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 November 1919, p. 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 12 January 1920, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 9 August 1920, p. 3; "Friday Devotions at Butte Churches," *The Butte Miner*, 1 August 1921, p. 6; "Novena Will Begin in Local Churches," *The Butte Miner*, 23 May 1921, p. 6; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 24 January 1921, p. 5; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 24 November 1919, p. 10.

such as the Men's Holy Name Society met on "the Tuesday following their Communion Sunday, at 7:30 P.M.," the Young Ladies' sodality had rights to the first Monday each month, the Ladies' Aid and the Altar Society met on the Thursday following the first Friday, and the children's sodalities received Communion as a group on respective Sundays of the month. Additional groups had other days reserved to them, while the Thomas Ashe council had rights to Tuesdays at 8:00 P.M. As of early 1919, they met "every Sunday evening in St. Mary's school hall immediately after devotions," but by late 1919 had switched to Tuesday evenings. Tuesday entries found in Fr. Hannan's personal diary reveal the regularity of group meetings throughout the early 1920s.⁷

The group grappled with typical issues such as administration, membership, participation, and fundraising like any other organization. It annually elected officers to lead the group, and as in 1919 followed the election with "a social program." The survival of the organization, like any other, relied on among other things the recruitment of new members. Initiations such as the one held in April, 1921 allowed the group to boast that "a number of new members were...added." The organization also needed the continued support of existing members as indicated by the approving tone of Fr. Hannan's comment in late 1922, that "quite a no. re-enrolled for 1923." In addition to simply having numbers, strength also required an active membership. Meetings were

⁷ "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(January 1923); "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 31 March 1919, p. 12; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 November 1919, p. 7; Hannan diary, 27 March, 20 June, 26 September, 24 October, 19 December 1922, 20 February 1923, 17 August 1924; These random entries are used to demonstrate the frequency of meetings.

apparently well attended. For instance, sixteen members attended a meeting in October, 1922, while forty-six members attended a meeting in January, 1923. An active organization also required a solvent treasury and on certain occasions the female members contributed through fundraisers such as a "social and card party" organized in April, 1921. These issues while important from an organizational standpoint only reveal a limited view of the organization's total character.⁸

Unquestionably, Irish independence, the Irish Civil War, and issues generally associated with the A.A.R.I.R.'s mission occupied the better part of the group's meetings; however, the organization also satisfied what could be interpreted as more personal or inner needs on occasion. For instance, at a meeting in March, 1922, Fr. Hannan read a letter that "was much enjoyed by the Corkonian[s]." Fr. Hannan described the letter as "a condensed & yet detailed chronicle of events in C[astle]town, Allihies, Ardgroom, Adrigole, Laurach etc for 1920 & 1921." The enthusiasm for the letter can be even better understood given the fact that the places mentioned are all found on the Beara peninsula of Co. Cork; the area that supplied so many of St. Mary's Irish. The topic of this meeting evidently nourished the needs of at least the "Corkonian[s]" in the crowd. The members maintained their positive disposition long into 1922, despite the outbreak

⁸ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 22 December 1919, p. 3; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 April 1921, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 12 April 1920, p. 2; Hannan diary, 19 December, 10 October, 31 October 1922, 16 January 1923.

of civil war in Ireland. Fr. Hannan claimed in October, 1922, that "dark as is the out look they are a jovial & hopeful bunch."⁹

The group also unofficially encouraged and promoted Irish culture among its members. On one occasion, following an initiation of new members at St. Mary's school hall, members took in Irish entertainment which included singing, dancing, and orations. On another occasion, Fr. Hannan simply noted the meeting included a "Fine social," of which "79 members [were] present." Another entry of Fr. Hannan's reveals the unofficial activities of the group. He recorded that "after [one particular] meeting...[the members] danced & sang in their own Irish way until 10-15 P.M." He then went on to say that he, "like[d] to see them & listen to them - [and he described it as] spontaneo[us] joy where nature has its play." It appears that beyond the official life of the organization lay some of its deeper value. It nourished Irish souls as any other parish organization might.¹⁰

Still, the heart of the organization revolved around the question of Irish independence. The group demonstrated its commitment to the cause in a variety of ways. Although based in a working class parish, the group managed to support the cause financially. Responding to a plea from the national board of the Friends of Irish Freedom to assist the struggle against England, the Thomas Ashe council publicly contributed \$240 to a local F.O.I.F. fundraiser in 1919. This donation ranked sixth among individual

⁹ Hannan diary, 27 March 1922; O'Brien, *Beara*, 8; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 15; Hannan diary, 17 October 1922.

¹⁰ Hannan diary, 2 January, 23 January, 30 January 1923.

Butte contributions, of which only four were \$10 more. At a Butte fundraiser in May, 1922, intended for the benefit of anti-treaty Irish Republican forces during the Irish Civil War, the group publicly donated another \$200, third in a list of \$500 and \$300 donations. In addition to financial support, the group employed the local media to forward Ireland's cause, as in 1920. In this case, an anti-English resolution passed by the local council was later published in a local newspaper. Regardless of the outlet, the group devoted a great deal of its energy to spreading the word and supporting the cause of Irish independence.¹¹

The council also used its resources to commemorate prominent figures in the history of Irish nationalism. At a regular meeting in May, 1920 the group planned to honor "those who died for [Irish] freedom during the year 1916." The meeting was scheduled to include a tribute delivered by Fr. O'Malley, the parish assistant, and music by the parish choir. Later in 1920, it planned a commemoration of the Manchester martyrs, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, to be held in the church hall. These three men were considered martyrs because of their execution at Manchester, England in 1867 due to alleged involvement in an Irish republican jail break that had turned violent. The club expected "a well filled hall" for the occasion. They likely exceeded all expectations as they later reported the meeting to be "one of the largest gatherings in the history of the order." Irish heroes from an earlier era in Irish history provided additional sources of

¹¹ "Thousands Given For Irish Freedom at Mass Meeting," *The Anaconda Standard*, 14 April 1919, p. 2; "Butte Raises Five Thousand for Republic," *The Anaconda Standard*, 1 May 1922, p. 2; "Thomas Ashe Branch Passes Resolutions," *The Anaconda Standard*, 24 November 1920, p. 5.

inspiration to complement the organizations periodic historical validation of Irish republicanism. Dan Harrington, Jr. delivered "a brilliant address on Owen Roe O'Neil...the De Valeria [*sic*] of Ireland of the Seventeenth century" at a Meeting in July, 1923 and connected Ireland's older nationalist tradition to its modern counterpart. True to their ideals, members continued to commemorate those who died during the 1916 uprising with glowing tributes as late as 1928.¹²

Prominent figures in the Irish nationalist movement who visited Butte provided yet more opportunities for the organization to identify with the cause. It planned a welcome for Eamon De Valera during his second trip to Butte in 1919. A visit to Butte by Mary MacSwiney, the sister of Irish martyr Terence MacSwiney, in March, 1921 provided a highlight on the Thomas Ashe council's yearly calendar. Fr. Hannan, representing the Thomas Ashe council, proudly welcomed Ms. MacSwiney to Butte in Gaelic, and presented her with a copy of the statement he read. The printed version of the statement was addressed from the Thomas Ashe Council and signed by Fr. Hannan, Fr. O'Malley, John O'Sullivan, Mrs. John Kennedy, and Mrs. Jerry Harrington. The *Anaconda Standard* apparently considered it such an honorable gesture that it printed a copy of the original statement and its English translation on its front page the day of her arrival. Ms. MacSwiney agreed with the newspaper's assessment and she extended her

¹² "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 May 1920, p. 10; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 22 November 1920, p. 2; Waldron, *Ireland*, 39; "Thomas Ashe Branch Passes Resolutions," *The Anaconda Standard*, 24 November 1920, p. 5; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1 (August 1923): III; "Irish Republican Meeting in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 9 April 1928, p. 3.

gratitude "to the Thomas Ashe council...for their resolution of sympathy and pledges of support." Not to be outdone by their elders, children from the parish presented her with a rendition of the song "Irish Freedom" before she addressed a crowd gathered at the county courthouse. The Thomas Ashe council considered Ms. MacSwiney and the memory of her brother to be extremely important in the Irish republican movement, and welcomed her to Butte in the finest fashion possible. The council extended an equally hearty yet less publicized welcome to Miss Kathleen Barry, the sister of yet another Irish republican martyr Kevin Barry, during her visit to Butte in late April, 1922. The council honored Miss Barry with a printed statement of support at a reception held for her at St. Mary's parish hall, which was also printed in *The Butte Miner*.¹³

Not surprisingly, additional expressions of Irish nationalism appeared in the parish. In fact, elements of Irish nationalism could be found at a much higher level of parish life. For instance, Fr. Hannan invoked Ireland's patroness, St. Brigid, to aid the Irish at home and abroad at the celebration of mass on her feast day. He offered a special mass on her feast day in 1921 "for the intention of the sons and daughters of Ireland...and those in sympathy with the Green Isle are urged to be present." Two years later, Hannan celebrated another special mass in honor of St. Brigid and the Irish cause. He reflected that "poor Eire needs help of hers...never in history more so than at present." While

¹³ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 3 November 1919, p. 6; Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 300; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 14 March 1921, p. 2; "Thousand Welcomes for Miss Mary MacSwiney," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1921, p. 1; "Ireland's Real Story To Be Told in Her Address," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1921, p. 2; "Butte Extends to Miss MacSwiney a Warm and Characteristic Welcome," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1921, p. 2; "Address Presented to Kathleen Barry," *The Butte Miner*, 1 May 1922, p. 5.

outlets for Irish expression such as the Thomas Ashe council existed at a peripheral level in terms of the parish's religious life, dominant figures in the Irish nationalist movement or more correctly their spirit, were directly incorporated into the sacred life of the parish through the Mass. This added another dimension to the spiritual aid sought for the cause rather than completely relying on the assistance of saints such as Brigid. The Mass occupied a central position in the religious life of the parish; therefore, incorporation of Irish nationalism into the Mass equated the endorsement of this cause at the highest level of spiritual exercise present in the parish.¹⁴

Fr. Hannan honored the lives of deceased Irish nationalists with funeral Masses. In doing so though, he chose the Solemn Requiem High Mass, rather than a simpler Requiem or funeral Mass. The Solemn High Mass was the highest mode of the Tridentine Mass, "which was sung and required the presence of a deacon and a subdeacon." The parish chose to honor its heroes with the best ceremonies available. Fr. Hannan and others extended the honors of a solemn requiem high mass to high profile Irish nationalists Cathal Brugha and Harry Boland in 1922. A visiting priest named "O'F[lanagan] said it & preached[, while the parish assistant] Fr. O'M[alley, and Fr. Hannan served as] Deacon & Sub-deacon Respective[ly.]" Fr. Hannan honored another noted Irish nationalist, Liam Lynch, with a solemn requiem high mass in 1923. Brugha, Boland, and Lynch fought the English during the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-1921, rejected the Irish Free State established in December, 1921, and subsequently died fighting fellow

¹⁴ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Brigid of Ireland, St."; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 31 January 1921, p. 3; Hannan diary, 1 February 1923.

Irishmen in the name of a united Ireland during the Irish Civil War of 1922-1923. These men represented a particular dimension of Irish nationalism warmly embraced by Fr. Hannan and the parish, and acknowledged in the ritual life of the congregation.¹⁵

Perhaps the highest profile memorial held at St. Mary's Church for an Irish patriot occurred in late October, 1920. Honoring a request by the national board of the Friends of Irish Freedom, a request that in all likelihood was unnecessary, St. Mary's Church was chosen as the Butte site to commemorate the death of Terence MacSwiney and to protest "British rule in Ireland." MacSwiney, an Irish nationalist and Lord Mayor of Cork, was arrested for Irish republican activities in August, 1920. MacSwiney protested his incarceration with a hunger strike that ended in his death after seventy-four days on October 25, 1920. MacSwiney's political status and commitment to the cause of Irish independence through self-starvation captured the sympathy of the world and provided Irish nationalism with a welcomed boost of popular support. Although part of a national effort and the Butte representative in that effort, the services further reinforced the religious nature of Irish nationalism in parish life. A procession of mourners accompanying a caisson carrying a mock casket draped with the Irish flag made its way to St. Mary's Church for a solemn high mass and prayers for the repose of MacSwiney's soul. The popularity of the event overwhelmed the size of the church forcing many to stand outside during the ceremony. Following the ceremony and a slight interlude, a

¹⁵ *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "High Mass," "Tridentine Mass"; Hannan diary, 4 September, 2 September 1922, 16 April 1923; Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 386-388; Coogan, *The IRA*, 22-23, 30; Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 452-453.

group estimated at 2,000 reassembled at St. Mary's Church to participate in a mock funeral procession through Butte's uptown business district. St. Mary's as the host of this event further elevated the Irish cause in the parish's sacred life as well as reinforced the parish's Irish identity.¹⁶

Masses for the living also reinforced the bond between Irish nationalism and parish life. A Solemn Requiem High Mass offered parishioners an opportunity to pay respect to fallen heroes and a cause, while a Mass for the living offered parishioners an opportunity to endorse and encourage the actions of the living. Fr. Hannan offered a "Mass for Mary MacSwiney," while she was on hunger strike in 1922. Fr. Hannan subsequently linked the mass he offered to the end of her hunger strike and release from jail.¹⁷ Fr. Hannan also used the Mass to affirm parish allegiance to Eamon DeValera, perhaps the most well known Irish nationalist of the day. As a clear indication of the parish's position on the Irish Civil War, Hannan offered a "Missa Cantata for De Valera," on the first Friday of December, 1922. The Missa Cantata was a sung Mass or a High Mass, which meant an elevated stature. The choice of the first Friday of the month for the mass also added a higher degree of rank to the celebration. After all, Fr. Hannan claimed in 1916, that "hundreds" attended parish First Friday services. First Fridays were a special day to attend Mass on the church calendar because of their association with devotion to the Sacred Heart, and parishioners would likely draw a connection between a

¹⁶ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 155-56; "Public Funeral for MacSwiney in Butte Sunday," *The Anaconda Standard*, 26 October 1920, p. 1, 5; "Irish Martyrs Honored Church and Funeral Services Held in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 1 November 1920, p. 1, 3.

¹⁷ Hannan diary, 27 November 1922; Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 300.

special Mass, a special religious day, and from the parish's perspective, a special man. On other occasions, the Mass was used to forward the cause in a more general sense. The parish offered "a mass for the success of the Irish cause" in October, 1920 along with the other Butte parishes, but only St. Mary's and Immaculate Conception parish offered special talks for the occasion. Fr. Hannan and the parishioners alike developed strong links between their religious world and the secular interests they believed in.¹⁸

While a Mass for the living and the dead provided a powerful religious outlet to channel Irish nationalist sympathy in parish life, it could only be surpassed by the actual attendance of well known Irish nationalist figures at Mass. And this is exactly what occurred at St. Mary's. Thomas Hardy, a self-described "fighting soldier of the Irish race" visited Butte and St. Mary's parish in March, 1920. Hardy's visit to Butte coincided with St. Patrick's day and although a guest of St. Mary's, his primary purpose for visiting Butte was to present a citywide lecture on Irish independence on St. Patrick's eve. This he accomplished and apparently to a capacity crowd, but his visit held meaning for St. Mary's alone too. Although Hardy's message was for all Butte to hear, it was at St. Mary's parish rectory that he stayed; it was at the request of Fr. Hannan that he came; and of the highest religious significance, it was at St. Mary's St. Patrick's day high mass

¹⁸ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 452-453; Hannan diary, 1 December 1922; Fr. Robert Beaulieu, telephone conversation with author, 20 September 1996; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "First Fridays"; Hannan, *St. Mary's Parish*, 48; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 11 October 1920, p. 3; "Celebrate Mass for Irish Cause," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 October 1920, p. 6.

that Hardy would be present. Hardy was only one of many living icons who continually reinstalled the personal touch of Irish nationalism into parish life at St. Mary's.¹⁹

While a parish visit by Thomas Hardy undoubtedly excited the parish, a later visit by Kathleen Barry and Countess Constance Markievicz likely enthralled the parish. Barry represented her martyred brother Kevin and Markievicz was a high-profile Irish nationalist. Kevin Barry, an eighteen year old student and an Irish Republican Army volunteer, was arrested in connection to a raid on a British Army unit, and executed for his part the day after Terence MacSwiney's burial. Barry's age, character, and the timing of his execution elicited enormous press coverage, which immortalized him in the minds of Irish nationalists. Markievicz, while obviously not a martyr, was a high-profile fighter. She was a leading member of the Irish nationalist political party, Sinn Fein, and participated in the 1916 Irish uprising. Later, she sided with Eamon De Valera on the issue of the Irish Free State, retaining her position as a staunch Irish republican, which then meant an anti-treaty Irish republican.²⁰

The Countess and Kathleen arrived in Butte on a Thursday, were paraded around, and then apparently "stayed up till 3 30 Fri[day] morning," in the company of at least Fr. Hannan. Despite the late night, the two were "'received' Fri[day] morning in St Mary's Church at 8 30 Mass," and they joined Fr. Hannan for breakfast afterwards. On Saturday night, Kathleen was an honored guest at a reception held at the parish hall. While the

¹⁹ "Hardy Tells of Sufferings of Irish People," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1920, p. 7; "All Power in Ireland Now Vested in One Man He Says," *The Anaconda Standard*, 16 March 1920, p. 9; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 March 1920, p. 7.

²⁰ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 154-56, 90-91, 300.

entire visit was significant, Sunday was quite possibly the most notable day of their visit from a religious perspective. The Countess and Kathleen reappeared on Sunday "in [the] sanctuary" at St. Mary's during the 11:00 mass. The presence of these two ladies in the most sacred area of the church, an area usually reserved for men, separated from the congregation by the altar rail, and during one of the central Masses of the week could only have reassured parishioners that Irish nationalism reigned triumphant in parish life.²¹

Others of lesser notoriety, yet in many respects important to the cause also visited the parish. Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, a former vice president of Sinn Fein and the chaplain to the 1919 Irish parliament (Dail Eireann), visited St. Mary's in September, 1922. O'Flanagan, an uncompromising Irish nationalist, found a sympathetic reception at St. Mary's. Unlike other parish visitors who were honored at the Mass, Fr. O'Flanagan said the Mass. Despite the "mediocre" sermon he delivered at Sunday mass, this was a relatively important priest in respect to Irish nationalism. This priest was not just any other Irish nationalist priest, but rather the man formerly attached to the first Dail Eireann, the parliament considered by Irish nationalists to be the first legitimate government in Ireland in years. Fr. O'Flanagan fulfilled the customary speaking obligations associated with his tour while in Butte and Anaconda, but before leaving Butte he found time to celebrate a final mass at St. Mary's the day he departed.²²

²¹ Hannan diary, 28 April 1922; "Address Presented to Kathleen Barry," *The Butte Miner*, 1 May 1922, p. 5; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "Sanctuary".

²² Tim Pat Coogan, *Eamon De Valera: The Man Who Was Ireland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 203, 382-83; Waldron, *Ireland*, 80-81; "Irish Republic Advocates Heard," *The Anaconda Standard*, 11

Others followed and joined in the sacred life of the parish. Miss Linda Mary Kearns, Miss Kathleen Boland, and Mrs. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington all visited the parish and Butte in general in February, 1923. Their visit to Butte during the Irish Civil War was part of an American tour to solicit funds for the impoverished families of anti-treaty Irish soldiers. As with past visitors, at least one of these women and likely all three, possessed impressive Irish nationalist credentials. Sheehy-Skeffington was the "Republican-minded" widow of a civilian pacifist killed by a British army officer in 1916, and an active worker on behalf of jailed republicans. Despite apparently solid nationalist credentials, Fr. Hannan found it necessary to state that "they impressed me as clever sincere women with a story worth listening to[—]We shall see." While in Butte they made their presentations and overcame any doubts Fr. Hannan may have had, as he could claim after one engagement that "all three spoke well." Although in Butte to speak and raise money, the "Irish delegate[s]" made their way to the 11:00 Sunday mass at St. Mary's. Like others they occupied a privileged position in the sanctuary, and a "Big crowd[d]" attended mass to witness it. Once again, Irish nationalism was fused with the sacred life of the parish. As if to dispel any languishing doubts regarding the character of these women, Fr. Hannan's final comment on them was that "they are wonderful."²³

The feast day of St. Patrick, March 17, presented itself as yet another opportunity for parishioners to proclaim their cultural values and identity. Parishioners celebrated

December 1922, p. 2; Sarsfield O Sullivan, conversation with author, Butte, Mont., 19 October 1996; Hannan diary, 3 September, 4 September, 5 September, 6 September 1922.

²³ "Irish Women will Speak Here Tonight," *The Butte Miner*, 18 February 1923, p. 5; Coogan, *De Valera*, 411; Hannan diary, 16 February, 17 February, 20 February 1923.

this holiday in many ways; however, a few activities bound people together in the holiday through the parish. Parishioners publicly celebrated the holiday reaffirming their culture and identity for all the world to see through the Mass and parades. The Mass allowed parishioners to reaffirm publicly their values to one another, while a parade allowed them to present their identity to the larger community. St. Patrick's day celebrations in Butte transcended the boundaries of St. Mary's parish to be sure, but St. Mary's participated in a way unique enough to claim an individual identity among the crowd.

St. Patrick's day began with mass at St. Mary's. In years such as 1919 and 1920 the parish offered two masses for the celebration, although the parish usually managed with one. The parish routinely invited various city wide Irish organizations to attend the parish mass in honor of the holiday; however, the societies invited always bore impeccable Irish nationalist credentials. In 1917, the local working class Irish nationalist Pearce-Connolly club attended mass at the parish, in 1920 the Friends of Irish Freedom "and kindred organizations" were invited, and in 1924 the intensely nationalist Sarsfield Social club, two councils of the A.A.R.I.R. in addition to the Thomas Ashe council, and a Butte chapter of the women's auxiliary to the Irish Republican Army, *Cumann na mBan*, attended mass. The story of Ireland's Christian conversion under the direction of St. Patrick dominated the usual sermon topics for the day, but the occasion presented other opportunities as well.²⁴

²⁴ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1919, p. 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 March 1920, p. 7; "St. Patrick's Day Gets Glad Welcome," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1917, p. 11; "Irish Societies to Attend Mass," *The Anaconda Standard*, 16 March 1924, p. 1, Part II; "St. Patrick's Day Observed in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1924, p. 1;

According to a former parishioner, a "Fr. O'Connor preached in Gaelic and the church was filled" on one particular St. Patrick's day. During the brief yet peaceful interlude in early 1922 before the opening of the Irish Civil War, politics entered the St. Patrick's day sermon. A visiting priest, Fr. Murnane, who delivered the sermon, used the second half of his sermon to explain the tense situation in Ireland. According to Fr. Hannan, the sermon "discussed the present sit[uation] between Treatyites & Republicans -[and] It was a brief & impartial exposé of the situation...." Quite surprisingly, or perhaps not, based on its impartiality, Hannan concluded that he "thought it was out of place in the sanctuary & on the occasion." Despite his disapproval of the sermon, patriotism was evident in the "green, white and gold" color scheme, similar to the colors of the Irish republic's flag, adorning the "sanctuary and nave of the church." On this particular St. Patrick's day, as on past holidays, the children of the parish added their talent to the celebration. "A choir of 150" sang during the 9:00 A.M. mass in 1919 accompanied by the parish school's thirty piece orchestra, and in 1922 "children from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades" augmented the choir for the day's mass. Despite the outbreak of civil war in Ireland and Fr. Hannan's disgust with the situation, he remained loyal to his St. Patrick's day sermon comments of 1922, and devoted his 1923 St. Patrick's day sermon to St. Patrick's positive characteristics. Although the sermon

"Old-Time Parade Lacking But Church Services and Dances Make up Program," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1924, p. 7; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 359-60; Hannan diary, 15 February 1922; Coogan, *The IRA*, 21.

apparently lacked a political message the entire service did not, for the "mass...[was] for the I[rish] R[epublic] & her President DeValera."²⁵

A second feature of St. Patrick's day celebrations in respect to parish life were parades. Parishioners identified themselves in the citywide celebration as representatives of St. Mary's in a number of ways. The St. Mary's Boy's band represented the parish as it marched behind the Pearce-Connolly Club's fife and drum band at the head of the 1917 parade. The 1920 parade demonstrated the parish's zeal in a much larger way. As announced in a parish bulletin, "the members of the Thomas Ashe branch,...St. Mary's Boys' band, and other organizations of the parish will assemble..." for the upcoming parade. These groups were actually designated the "St. Mary's division of the parade," and the "other organizations" included "kindred organizations friendly to the cause of Ireland" as well as "the women of the parish." Leading the delegation would be the Boys' band consisting of "44 children dressed in white with prettily draped sash[es], singing the hymns of the Irish republic." St. Mary's distinguished itself as the only parish formally represented in the parade, and Fr. Hannan leading the delegation proudly proclaimed that "you can see where St. Mary's parish stands on the Irish question,"...with a wave of his hand toward the hundreds in line behind him." St. Mary's again distinguished itself in the 1922 parade. The General Committee in charge of the parade, while not exclusively comprised of St. Mary's parishioners, nonetheless

²⁵ Sheehan, interview, 6; Hannan diary, 17 March 1922; "Ireland Under Present Status," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1922, p. 8; "Hundreds in Butte Do Honor to St. Patrick, Marching in Parade Vivid With Colors of America and the Irish Free State," *The Butte Miner*, 18 March 1922, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1919, p. 7; Hannan diary, 17 March 1923.

contained some prominent Irish nationalists from the parish, including Fr. Hannan and Sean O Sullivan. As usual, the Thomas Ashe club paraded along with "a long line of marching girls and boys, pupils of St. Mary's parish...." When the day had finished, Fr. Hannan simply remarked, "Parade—fine." Parishioners and outsiders alike undoubtedly recognized St. Mary's as a bastion of sympathy for the Irish cause.²⁶

Another yearly Butte event captured the attention of many in the parish. The annual anniversary of the 1916 Easter uprising entered parish life on several occasions. The Easter uprising in 1916 was a failure from a military perspective; however, the Irish scored a major publicity victory at the close of the uprising. Widespread public opinion turned in favor of the rebels upon the execution of their leaders after their surrender to British forces. The names Patrick Pearse and James Connolly as well as the others executed would forever be ingrained and revered in the minds of Irish nationalists. The Butte Irish reacted as expected and echoed the general condemnation of Britain and proclaimed their support for the uprising and the ideals of Pearse and Connolly. Butte celebrated the anniversary of the uprising with parades, mass meetings, and religious ceremonies of which St. Mary's could always be distinguished among the celebrants. Slightly more than a month after the failed uprising, St. Mary's hosted a citywide memorial mass in honor of the 1916 "Irish martyrs." Within a few weeks of the mass, Fr.

²⁶ "Butte Irishmen Honor Patron Saint by Parades and Services," *The Butte Miner*, 18 March 1917, p. 6; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 March 1920, p. 7; "Greatest of All St. Patrick's Day Celebrations Aids Cause of Independence for Ireland," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1920, p. 1, 7; "General Committee on St. Patrick's Day Celebrations," *The Anaconda Standard*, 17 March 1922, p. 8; "Snow and Slush Fail to Affect Program of Irish for Annual Celebration," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1922, p. 1, 8; Hannan diary, 17 March 1922.

Hannan lead a citywide rally in support of the uprising accompanied by the music of the St. Mary's Boys' band. In 1919, the Pearce-Connolly club organized a citywide parade honoring the uprising which was followed in the evening by a memorial service in St. Mary's hall. The parish distinguished itself as in other parades at the commemoration parade in 1920. St. Mary's entered a parish parade delegation, the only parish specified in the parade, consisting of the St. Mary's Boys' band, the Thomas Ashe group, and the "women and children of the...parish [who] loyally marched with their husbands, fathers and brothers." "The slush-filled streets" the marchers encountered failed to deter them. Perhaps the grandest Easter uprising celebration took place in 1923 during the Irish Civil War. Fr. Hannan described the parade as the "largest of [its] kind ever held in Butte," when according to him an estimated four or five thousand people marched. Following this apparently enormous parade was a rally at the St. Mary's school hall, which overflowed into the school yard. The parishioners of St. Mary's always participated during Easter uprising anniversaries, whether as parade participants or simply as observers to the activities unfolding at their parish buildings. The celebrations only added to the body of Irish nationalist activities endorsed in parish life.²⁷

Politics spread beyond the areas of parish life already mentioned into additional realms such as parish recreation. Parish plays, a popular form of parish entertainment,

²⁷ Waldron, *Ireland*, 61-66; "Teutons Are Invited to March With Irish," *The Anaconda Standard*, 29 May 1916, p. 5; "Honors and Dollars for Irish Martyrs," *The Anaconda Standard*, 12 June 1916, p. 7; "Easter Uprising is Kept in Mind," *The Anaconda Standard*, 21 April 1919, p. 7; "Easter Revolt is Observed in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 5 April 1920, p. 3; Hannan diary, 1 April 1923; "Irish Societies Parade in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 2 April 1923, p. 5.

spread the Irish cause on the stage. The St. Mary's dramatic club planned and performed Irish comedies, dramas, and political performances such as the *Trial scene and Vindication of Robert Emmett*. Regardless of the character, the subject always touched the parish's Irish heart. A highly successful *St. Enda* was performed a few days before St. Patrick's day in 1925 to the delight of Irish cultural pride. *St. Enda* "drew capacity houses" to the parish school hall for its inspiring portrayal of ancient Irish nobles and saints. A performance of "an all-American pageant for the recognition of the Republic of Ireland" captivated large audiences in April, 1923. Although the parish presented this play as a benefit for the parish school, the choice of subjects ensured the play would benefit more than the school alone. As in other dimensions of parish life, Irish themes satisfied cultural appetites and invigorated the development and sustenance of a powerful parish identity.²⁸

An assortment of additional activities, events, and personalities rounded out the already mentioned arenas for Irish nationalist expression available in the parish. Events ranged from a special talk given by Fr. Hannan for parishioners in June, 1918 on "the real story" of Ireland. There were bulletins, such as one found in the "Parish Notes" of August, 1923, which urged parishioners to support "the Irish Republican treasury" so "that the Irish Republicans are supplied with money to contest seats in the parliament

²⁸ "Two Churches are Rehearsing Plays," *The Anaconda Standard*, 2 October 1916, p. 5; "Day Featured by Song and Oratory Feature Program," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 March 1918, p. 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 February 1919, p. 8; "Play," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 3(April 1925): XIII; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(May 1923): III.

against Free State[r]s and other British Empire men." Irish figures, such as Peter MacSwiney and Margaret Pearce, continued the well established tradition of visiting the parish. MacSwiney, Terence's brother, delivered a presentation to the parish on Easter Sunday night in 1924, while Margaret Pearce, the mother of the 1916 hero Patrick Pearce, "spent the last two weeks of July at the parish house" during the same year. Whatever the occasion, Irish nationalism found its way into parish life.²⁹

Despite the status that Irishness enjoyed in the parish, tensions occasionally surfaced between the parish's dual role as Irish and American. The most notable example of this cross cultural tension took place during World War I. The Irish patriots of St. Mary's parish found themselves at risk of treason to their adopted land or in alliance with their age old enemy, England, after the United States entered the war. St. Mary's welcomed not only Irish societies, but "German and Austrian societies" to its 1916 Easter uprising memorial in an apparent gesture of sympathy to the German cause against England. Late in 1916, the Young Ladies' Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary even went so far as to organize a debate on the merits of President Woodrow Wilson. This debate appeared harmless enough, unless understood from the perspective of Butte's Irish nationalist community. A statement made at an Irish rally in May, 1916 that "President Wilson is not American in any sense of the word...[and that] the United States has an English president and England will not suffer" undoubtedly resonated with

²⁹ "Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 June 1918, p. 2; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1 (August 1923): III; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2 (May 1924): III; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2 (August 1924): III.

Butte's Irish nationalists. Given the climate, the "two to one" margin by which the parish audience disfavored Wilson in the debate could have hardly surprised many. Things changed in early 1917 with American entrance in the war. The suppressive political climate of the war years encouraged political silence on Ireland and American patriotism. By 1918, with the encouragement of Bishop Carroll, the parish priests were promoting war savings certificates in the parish school, and parish assistant, Fr. Brosnan, delivered a Sunday sermon in October, 1918 on "the absolute necessity of winning the war." Gone were any references to a German victory or American neutrality in the war. The parish apparently endured the political climate until the war ended.³⁰

Irishness permeated parish life at St. Mary's for many years. Although an interest in ethnicity existed prior to Fr. Hannan's pastorate and would continue long after his, his pastorate and particularly the years 1916-1924 witnessed an awe inspiring infusion of Irish issues in parish life. Being Irish in St. Mary's parish meant something throughout the calendar year, not simply an annual performance staged on St. Patrick's day. Irishness in St. Mary's parish nurtured the cultural values held by the parishioners, and allowed them to create a unique Irish identity well known in the community and among themselves. They were not merely Irish men and women, they were committed Irish nationalists who proved themselves with their time, talent, and treasure. Such an intense

³⁰ Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 360-364; "Teutons Are Invited to March With Irish," *The Anaconda Standard*, 29 May 1916, p. 5; "More Money Coming in for Revolution," *The Anaconda Standard*, 8 May 1916, p. 7; "'College Chap' is Scoring Success," *The Anaconda Standard*, 16 October 1916, p. 5; "Catholics to Have Masses Two Days," *The Anaconda Standard*, 30 October 1916, p. 5; "Parochial Scholars to Buy War Stamps," *The Anaconda Standard*, 21 January 1918, p. 6; "Catholic Church Services," *The Anaconda Standard*, 7 October 1918, p. 3.

commitment to their culture naturally led to its inclusion in parish life. Catholicism and Irishness meant one and the same for many parishioners. The fusion that took place at St. Mary's validated what the parishioners desired and quite possibly needed, and allowed them to establish a value laden identity in a usually hostile world. They, after all, were a family of many things including ethnicity, although ethnicity failed to define them totally. They too were simply Catholics, but of their own character indeed. For St. Mary's was at heart a Roman Catholic parish regardless of ethnicity, and as a community of worldwide believers it found the outlet to offer its own Catholic character to the world.

CHAPTER 4

CATHOLIC LIFE

There was sadness, there were deaths, early deaths of parents and we knew that there were deaths from the mines, there were deaths from pneumonia, there were children's deaths, but [in] general it seems to me it was a safe childhood. It was hard, it was rugged, because the weather itself created a certain hardship, but there was a warmth in the neighborliness of people, [and] in the kindness of our priests and sisters.¹

The Roman Catholic community of St. Mary's professed its faith in a number of identity laden exercises. Practicing the faith nurtured and developed a parish view of appropriate Catholic life. This vision of appropriate Catholic life developed a parish religious identity recognizable by parishioners and outsiders alike. As with parish ethnic identity, religious identity manifested itself most clearly in parish life. Parish organizations, the role of children in parish life, and assorted events reveal the spirit of a Catholic identity at work in the parish. The parish's response to perennial religious questions such as group solidarity in faith, passing on the faith, and witnessing the faith provided fertile ground for the creation of a Catholic identity at St. Mary's.

One of the many benefits realized through membership in a religious society was the sense of communal belonging a member experienced. Therefore, a parish religious society bound parishioners closer together, and became an important factor in developing

parish religious identity. Consciously or unconsciously, Father Michael McCormack, triggered this experience when he organized the St. Mary's Young Ladies' Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1912. This bound parish girls together, but also joined those same girls to a worldwide family of sodalists dedicated to the same principles. A Jesuit priest named John Leunis founded the first sodality devoted to the Virgin Mary in 1563. At its most basic level, the sodality was "an association of Catholics [designed] to promote the spiritual life of its members, apostolic works of evangelization, and aid to those in need." As a benefit to members, devotion to the Virgin Mary through the sodality would better insure "a pure Christian life" and "a happy death." The sodality offered the young women of the parish a group opportunity to strengthen their personal and communal faith life. The sodalists could also take comfort knowing the parish supported them as stated by Fr. Hannan in October, 1924: "St. Mary's parish is very proud of its sodalities, especially those of the B.[lessed] V.[irgin] M.[ary]."²

Young women qualified for membership in the St. Mary's Young Ladies' Sodality upon passage of the eighth grade and most joined. Indeed, Fr. Hannan believed "that every young lady in the parish ought to belong to it." Although completion of the eighth grade qualified girls for admittance to the group, they also had to be formally accepted by the membership. The candidate entered a probationary period after the formal acceptance, which ended with an initiation ceremony. Formal initiations occurred at least three times

¹ Sheehan, interview, 7-8.

² *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "Sodality"; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Sodalities of Our Lady, National Federation of"; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 41; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(October 1924): III.

annually on Holy Days dedicated to the Virgin Mary: The Annunciation of the Lord, The Immaculate Conception, and the Birth of Mary. The organization distinguished itself in the parish through a number of routine activities. Perhaps the most visible feature of the sodality in parish life was the monthly mass members attended as a group "on the first Sunday of each month at the 8:00 o'clock Mass." The 150 sodalists who received Holy Communion on the first Sunday of October, 1922 demonstrated its place in parish life.³

In addition to a monthly mass, the sodality reaffirmed its principles on a weekly basis. The group gathered on Friday evenings at the parish rectory for a weekly business meeting and social gathering as of 1917, but was meeting on Monday evenings in the church basement by 1927. The meetings generally consisted of a "business session" and "a social session," which opened and closed in prayer. The type of activities common to the social session ranged from oral presentations "on some pertinent topic," to "prepared instrumental and vocal programme[s]," or on some occasions "all engage[d] in fancy work of one kind or other." Still on other occasions, the group along with other parish sodalities hosted special guest speakers, such as the Bishop, who planned to be with them on Ascension Thursday in 1923. The regular gathering of the group on at least a weekly basis undoubtedly fostered a powerful sense of solidarity and identity among the members.⁴

³ "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6(June 1928): 2; Sheehan, interview, 7; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Marian Feasts"; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 42-44; Hannan diary, 1 October 1922.

⁴ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 42; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 5(November 1927): 1; Hannan diary, 9 April 1923.

The sodality also distinguished itself beyond its monthly Communion mass and weekly meetings. In fact, the sodality earned a praiseworthy parish reputation for successful fundraising, the proceeds of which were used to finance special parish projects. As of 1917, the sodality had financed "an altar for the Blessed Virgin; an altar for the Sacred Heart and expensive brass candlesticks for the high altar" placed in the sanctuary of the Church. The linoleum flooring found in selected areas of the Church was also underwritten by these girls. According to Fr. Hannan, in 1922 at his "urgent solicitation & request...the members of the young Ladies Sodality" acquired and placed a "little lamp before the stature of Our Lady of Victory," which was "the most gratifying thing" he ever did. While the idea pleased Fr. Hannan, the actual credit belonged to the sodality's dedicated members. The sodality distinguished itself once again in 1924 when it joined forces with "the Married Ladies" and "collected more than sufficient funds to renovate the church and supply long needed necessities." Later still, in January, 1925 the girls espoused the cause of a parish library "as a special feature of their activities." They planned monthly "social[s]" to finance the project along with special parishioner contributions, and they hoped to have it opened in early April, 1925. Regardless of the cause, the young women of the sodality continually contributed to the parish's material needs.⁵

⁵ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 44; Hannan diary, 13 February 1922; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(August 1924): III; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 3(February 1925): III; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 3(March 1925): XIII.

The sodality defied careless stereotypes one might mistakenly apply to the group. The question of leisure stands out as a contrast to the sodality's serious commitment to duty. A lighter side to the serious business of the sodality occupied an important position in the group's character. Events such as sodality sponsored dances offer a glimpse of the recreational nature of sodality life. During the winter of 1919, the sodalists indulged in the spirit of Valentine's day, as they planned a dance for the occasion "to eclipse any former attempts" at such an event. Nearly a year later, in January, 1920, the girls planned another dance to break the winter monotony. The dance "was a successful affair in every way." In fact, the dance attracted a larger crowd than the hall could accommodate. At any rate, dances provided a leisurely dimension to the life of the sodality.⁶

Another recreational outlet familiar to the members was the sodality's annual summer picnic. The site for the picnic varied, but regardless of the exact location, it presented an opportunity for the members to socialize with one another in an environment foreign to most sodality activities. In July, 1916 the girls chose the Basin creek reservoir south of Butte as the site for their annual outing. They did so again in August, 1919, and an estimated seventy-five or eighty young women journeyed to the reservoir for the picnic. In addition to the routine socializing that undoubtedly took place, the girls also participated in "various contests" of an unknown nature. Perhaps they included relay races, sack races, a baseball game, or any other well known picnic activity. On other

⁶ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 20 January 1919, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 5 January 1920, p. 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 19 January 1920, p. 6.

years, such as 1923, the girls chose the Columbia Gardens as the annual picnic site. The Butte amusement park offered special attractions all of its own to entertain them.⁷

Despite the regular portion of each meeting devoted to socializing, on some occasions more time was taken. Members welcomed new initiates into the sodality at a meeting in April, 1924 with four talks pertaining to membership such as one entitled, "What is Required of a Member." Following this seemingly routine agenda, the sodality turned to "songs and dancing [that] were enjoyed by all." New members apparently offered the sodality good reason to behave in slightly different ways. For once again, following a regular meeting in November, 1927 the sodality members closed their evening with "an entertainment," although "rendered by all new members." Duty involved a lighter side that in return carved a special niche, which included leisure, for the sodality in parish life.⁸

The survival of the sodality depended on those new members who occasioned entertaining nights. Membership declined as sodalists aged or married, which meant continuity required a steady supply of new members. The group enrolled initiates as full members of the sodality at special ceremonies, which occurred throughout the year. The initiation ceremonies corresponded to special days on the liturgical calendar associated with the sodality's patron, the Virgin Mary. A routine initiation ceremony, such as one

⁷ "Parish Schools Close Teachers Leave Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, 19 June 1916, p. 7; "St. Joseph to Erect new Sisters' House," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 July 1916, p. 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 18 August 1919, p. 6; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(August 1923): III.

⁸ "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(May 1924): III; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 5(December 1927): 4.

held on the Annunciation of the Lord in March, 1928, began with the formal enrollment of the probationary members into the sodality, followed by a sermon delivered by Fr. Hannan, in this case on the Virgin Mary and the benefits of sodality membership, and ended with "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament." A similar initiation occurred on the same Holy Day years earlier in 1922, which only realized four new members. The group enrolled twelve new members at the March, 1923 initiation. These numbers distort the true number of yearly initiates though, because the March initiation merely represented one initiation during the entire year. In fact, October initiations attracted much more fanfare and more numbers for a variety of reasons.⁹

October stood out as a very special month indeed for the parish and the Young Ladies' Sodality. Fr. James English blessed St. Mary's Church on the Feast of the Holy Rosary, the first Sunday in October, 1903. Therefore, the parish celebrated its yearly anniversary in October on a feast day centered on Marian devotion, which in all likelihood explains the naming of the church. This signaled the beginning of an entire month dedicated to Marian devotion by the Roman Catholic Church. The heightened awareness of Marian devotion during this time of year lent itself well to high profile sodality activities. The sodality responded with perhaps its largest annual religious celebration on the evening of the Feast of the Holy Rosary. The celebration included an initiation of new

⁹ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 43; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 6 September 1920, p. 12; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Marian Feasts"; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6(April 1928): 2; Hannan diary, 25 March 1922, 25 March 1923.

members along with a most impressive "procession in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary," and all of this on the parish anniversary as an added bonus.¹⁰

This impressive activity to honor the Virgin Mary on the Feast of the Holy Rosary occurred throughout the 1920s. The sodality expected to initiate nearly forty new members and expected 160 members to walk in the procession, which would end with a "crowning with flowers of the statue of the Blessed Mother of God" at the 1920 ceremony. Fr. Hannan "preached on-devotion to [the] Mother of God" at the 1922 ceremony, and simply noted "big procession" in reference to the annual event. The 1924 event was dubbed "a red-letter day in St. Mary's parish." The parish celebrated its twenty-first anniversary and the Young Ladies' Sodality celebrated its thirteenth birthday. The Young Ladies' Sodality joined forces with the Married Women's Sodality for their evening procession and initiation. The procession took place in the church and featured "four young ladies dressed in white with wreaths and veils" who "carried a small statue of the Blessed Virgin...." A group of thirty altar boys led by a "cross-bearer" began the procession, and the participating priests took up the rear. A visiting priest, Fr. Pirnat from Holy Savior parish, delivered a sermon, and the other standard events of an initiation took place.¹¹

The 1926 celebration offered an impressive procession for all to witness. It included "two flower girls," "three girls carrying the banner of the Blessed Virgin,"

¹⁰ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 9; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "Rosary," "October devotions"; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Marian Feasts"; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(September 1924): III.

"eighteen little girls in white with veils, carrying flowers and flower baskets," altar boys, girls "carrying the statue of the Blessed Virgin," members of both the Young Ladies' and Married Women's sodalities, three women carrying a "banner of the Blessed Virgin," and three priests. Following the procession, a statue of the Virgin Mary was crowned, and a visiting priest from Mount St. Charles College in Helena delivered a sermon on the Virgin Mary. A similar ceremony occurred in 1927. It included the usual entourage of altar boys, flower girls, girls and women carrying banners and statues, members of the sodalities, and priests. New members were enrolled in the respective sodalities, the parish assistant delivered a sermon, and "Father Hannan gave Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament" to close the ceremony. Throughout it all, behind the ceremonies, existed a religious force that bound the participants together in something greater. This event helped solidify parishioners as a tight knit community of Catholics.¹²

Religious societies in addition to the Young Ladies' Sodality flourished in the parish, as well. The Men's Holy Name Society offered parish men and older boys an opportunity to belong to a parish religious society. Like the Young Ladies' Sodality, membership in the Holy Name Society linked members to a worldwide family of Holy Name members. A Spanish Dominican friar founded the society in the fifteenth century, which was dedicated to "devotion to the name of Jesus and the sanctification of its members." Fr. Hannan organized a St. Mary's council of the organization in January,

¹¹ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 27 September 1920, p. 5; Hannan diary, 1 October 1922; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(October 1924): III.

1917. The group accepted "all high school boys, boys out of school and men." One hundred men came forward and "pledg[ed] to refrain from...improper language and...to purge the language of others" at the group's first meeting, and according to a former parishioner "many of the men belonged and the older boys [too]...." Like the female sodalities, the Holy Name Society provided parish men an opportunity to improve personal and group piety with the support of others, while also strengthening religious identity.¹³

The Holy Name Society, like other parish organizations, encouraged its members to reaffirm their organizational values at regularly scheduled functions. The central activities of the organization which required monthly membership participation consisted of a mass when members received "communion in a body," and a business meeting on the Tuesday evening following the Communion Sunday. Attendance at the Communion Sunday services ranged from ninety-four in March, 1919, to ninety in April, 1920, to a rather small forty-five in August, 1920. Although outside of the group's defined schedule, many members apparently went to Confession the day before a Communion Sunday. Parish priests evidently prepared for an onslaught of members seeking the confessional in

¹² "St. Mary's Parish Notes For Month of September, 1926," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 4(October 1926): 3; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 5(November 1927): 1.

¹³ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 45; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Holy Name Society"; *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "Holy Name Society"; "Form Society to Prevent Profanity," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 January 1917, p. 7; Sheehan, interview, 6.

July, 1919, as was indicated by a parish bulletin advertising "Saturday afternoon and evening [Confession for] members of the Men's Holy Name society."¹⁴

Like other organizations, the Holy Name Society sought out new members to reinforce and sustain the group. The organization welcomed its new recruits at an annual ceremony held in January, to correspond with the annual Feast of the Holy Name. In January, 1920, the group gathered on the evening of its Communion Sunday for an initiation that added thirty-five new members to the society. Initiation services generally included induction of the new members, a sermon, and benediction. The January, 1923 ceremony gained an additional thirty-one new members, and a visiting priest provided a sermon on the society to the new and old members. The January, 1924 initiation stands apart from the previously mentioned services for a few reasons. The number of new recruits declined to fifteen; however, there is no indication of gloom attached to this. As on other occasions, a visiting priest delivered the sermon, which "was highly pleasing to both young and old." The noticeable difference between this initiation and the others, based on the reporting, was the large attendance of non-members. New and old members received support from one another as well as from a church "well nigh filled with the parishioners." The membership could take great satisfaction knowing that they belonged to the only branch "in the city...[that was] so great and...flourishing...."¹⁵

¹⁴ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 45; "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(January 1923): 36; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 March 1919, p. 3; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 12 April 1920, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 9 August 1920, p. 3; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 7 July 1919, p. 6.

¹⁵ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 45; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 12 January 1920, p. 2; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana*

The group reached beyond a strictly spiritual agenda by seeking not only "the spiritual but also the physical welfare of its members." In fact, members engaged in a number of organization sponsored activities of a non-religious nature. Basketball and physical exercise ranked high among society activities. The club secured "the High School gymnasium," presumably from the Catholic high school, on Sunday evenings for the group's use. Much more publicized was the society's basketball league. Four teams were chosen from participating members to compete against one another in a St. Mary's Holy Name Society winter basketball league. The champion of the St. Mary's Holy Name Society league then entered a citywide basketball championship competition. A St. Mary's team claimed the city title in its division for 1923. Although athletics were popular, other activities also interested the group.¹⁶

The group found plenty of artistic talent among its members to further develop its recreational resources. Members entertained themselves and the parish with their acting, musical talent, and public speaking. An entertaining episode followed a business meeting in January, 1927. The meeting included the installation of officers for 1927, and the club apparently decided to begin the year with a bang. Following the installation, members such as Thomas Calpin, John Waldron, and John Sullivan offered "orchestra selections"; John Lowney, William McCarthy, and John McDermott sang for the crowd; two members jiggled, while Richard Grace played the hornpipe; and John Boyle, Jack Sheehan, and

1(January 1923): 30; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(February 1924): viii.

¹⁶ "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(February 1924): viii; "Holy Names Basketball League," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte,*

Patrick O'Leary entertained with their orations. A month later, the club planned "an entertainment and vaudeville" at the parish school hall. The members claimed it would be "very unique, as no girls are to take part, the boys promising to fill their places." Whether of an athletic or an artistic nature, the Holy Name Society rounded out its religious purpose with social activities that further bonded the members to one another in their journey through life. Parish organizations though, were only one piece of a larger tapestry of religious values and identity present in the parish.¹⁷

Passing on the faith represented another defining element of parish life. The parish addressed this issue to a large degree with a parish school and the incorporation of children into the official religious life of the parish. The school constituted the primary transmitter of faith outside of the home in the parish. Besides the school's obvious role as an institution of education, it also represented a focal point for parishioners. The school commanded an exalted position in the parish because of its role in passing on the faith. The school taught the children the parish vision of Catholicism, and in so doing nurtured yet another piece of the parish's religious identity. The school taught more than English, mathematics, and religion; it taught the parishioners about themselves.

Priest and parishioner alike recognized the importance of education early in the parish's existence. With the help of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the parish began educating children in 1904. The school opened as a very modest enterprise, but

Montana 2(January 1924): III; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(April 1923): III.

¹⁷ "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 5(February 1927): 46.

soon outgrew its humble origins. From its beginning in the church basement with four grades and three sisters as teachers, the school expanded into a three-story building of its own consisting of eight grades and taught by "nine Sisters and one lay-teacher" in 1906. School enrollment naturally increased in the early years of parish growth, and then peaked and leveled out in a pattern broadly related to Butte's population. An impressive 525 students entered the school in 1906 during a decade of substantial population growth in Butte, only to be overshadowed by later enrollments. Enrollment peaked for the school around 1916, when approximately 700 students attended the school. This occurred after an equally staggering student enrollment of 675 for 1915. A former parishioner, Julia Harrington McHugh, remembered the days of 700 students, when 78 kids were in her grade alone. The numbers continued to decline after 1916, although a formidable 600 students enrolled for the school in 1919. During the decade of the 1920s, the school enrollment dipped much lower than the heights reached in 1916, but this can possibly be better understood within the context of an overall 5.5 percent population decrease for Butte during the decade. During a decade of population decrease, the parish boasted an enrollment more reminiscent of the school's early years, as the 400 students enrolled for the 1926 school year testified.¹⁸

The school was a "big frame building" with "large classes," but it was even more than that. It was a home of sorts. One former parishioner described it as "a comfortable

¹⁸ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 10-12; "Prospect big for Catholic Schools," *The Anaconda Standard*, 11 September 1916, p. 7; Julia McHugh, "The Gulch and I," 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 15 September 1919, p. 6; Waldron and Wilson, *Atlas of Montana Elections*, 7; "St. Mary's

old building," that "was toasty warm" during the cold winter months. Like any school, it persistently "smelled of chalk and some kind of oil that they used on the floor," but something far more powerful emanated from the school. Fr. Hannan recognized the deeper meaning behind the everyday facade of the school. His discernment persuaded him to identify the school as "the pulse of the parish." Fr. Hannan clearly understood the vital link the school provided in the transmission of Catholic values and identity. Fr. Hannan cherished the school and the students. A visit to the school with the "cheerful faces" of the students and their "cheery welcome" offered, as Fr. Hannan explained, "a cure for our real or imaginary troubles."¹⁹

Among the subjects taught at the school, the teachers placed a heavy emphasis on reading and writing. The teachers, primarily religious sisters, "had been educated in the classical mode and they surely did know how to teach school," according to a former student. An appreciation for reading developed early through the efforts of teachers who read to their young students, and through those who "encouraged...[students] to get library cards" and then use them. Many students accepted their teachers' advice, and "faithfully went down to the public library" to check out books. Another former student, Julia Harrington McHugh, claimed an emphasis on writing resulted in "many good writers" among the students. The school taught other things as well. In fact, the school found time to incorporate Irish history into the eighth grade curriculum, a subject that was perhaps more familiar to them than American history. One former student described the

Parish Notes for Month of September, 1926," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 4(October 1926): 3.

education at St. Mary's as an experience that "gifted...[students] with a love of reading, of poetry, [and] of music."²⁰

Religion always maintained a dominant place in school life, as students could attest with the beginning of each new school year. The school year opened as one might expect, with an emphasis on the faith that gathered the students in the first place. The first day of school began at the parish church with a high mass, rather than with instruction in grammar or reading. The opening high mass in 1922 featured a special guest, the visiting Irish patriot, Fr. O'Flanagan, who co-celebrated the mass. Ending a school year in a celebration of faith also reflected the religious orientation of the education. The graduation ceremony of the eighth grade class of 1924 included a mass before anyone received a diploma. Religion though, occupied a much larger share of school life than that of one mass at the start and finish of each school year.²¹

As one former student phrased it, "church was almost inseparable from school...." Unsurprisingly, the school devoted considerable time to religious education as well as to non-religious subjects. Or perhaps, the distinction between the sacred and the secular raised a moot point, because a sense of religion existed in everything the school did. In certain things though, one could clearly discern activities of a purely religious nature. In doing so, one easily noticed the fundamental value of a parish school. Sacramental

¹⁹ Sheehan, interview, 4; Hannan diary, 12 March 1923, 16 February 1922.

²⁰ Sheehan, interview, 4-5; McHugh, "The Gulch and I," 4. Sheehan and McHugh both attended St. Mary's grade school during the period roughly spanning the years 1915-1925.

²¹ "Prospect Big for Catholic Schools," *The Anaconda Standard*, 11 September 1916, p. 7; "Catholic Church Services," *The Anaconda Standard*, 9 September 1918, p. 7; "Catholic Schools to Open Tuesday," *The Butte Miner*, 5 September 1921, p. 5; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's*

preparation was an important function in the school's role as a transmitter of Catholicism. A former student recalled her class's First Communion preparation in the first grade, and its Confirmation preparation in the fifth grade. The parish priest, Fr. Hannan, assisted in these duties. In March, 1922, Fr. Hannan "taught Catechism for 45" in grade 5 which...[was] preparing for Confirmation." He returned to follow up on his instruction later in the month. In May of the same year, he could be found working with a First Communion class. Religious education included far more than sacramental preparation to be sure. Religious education included additional facets of Catholic life. The children learned early to be active participants in the Mass. The sisters taught them hymns in English and later in Latin for use during Mass. In addition, they learned the Latin hymns for prayer services such as vespers and Eucharistic ceremonies such as Benediction. On at least one occasion, the students demonstrated their talent before the Bishop at mass and vespers. The children easily applied their religious instruction outside of the school.²²

The parish took special measures to incorporate the children into the religious life of the parish outside of official school functions. The parish dedicated the weekly Sunday 9:30 a.m. mass to the children. "You could sit with your parents ...at that mass, but most of the children...sat together...." The religious sisters of the parish monitored the situation "to be sure...[the pews] were filled." Fr. Hannan also took great care to make sure the children were situated properly for the mass. "Before...[the] mass...[he] made...rounds to see if all of the children had prayer books or beads." The children apparently heeded his

Parish, Butte, Montana 2(September 1924): III; Hannan diary, 6 September 1922; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(July 1924): III.

advice, because he claimed "good head way with the use of prayer books & Rosary beads at mass." The children also impressed him with their "attention to the Gospel." He claimed they could recite it "verbatim [the] next day in school-even the smallest of them" as proof of their devotion. At another mass, Fr. Hannan offered "a few words to the children about wearing religious emblems," such as "scapulars, badges etc.," to protect them in times of danger. These things represented devotional items typically dedicated to the Virgin Mary or a particular saint.²³

Children actively participated in the celebration of the Mass as sacristans, altar boys, and members of the choir. Regardless of the role, children found themselves in highly respected and valued positions before and during the centerpiece activity of their religion: the Mass. Sacristans oversaw "the care and maintenance of sacred vessels, vestments, altar linens, candles, oils, holy water, and other liturgical items" used during the Mass. The position claimed such a degree of respect in the Church, that only those of "requisite honesty, good reputation, piety, prudence, zeal, and competence," were generally considered for the position. The parish altar boys served as assistants to the priest during the Mass, and the choir sang the music of the Mass. All of these roles were indispensable, and accorded the participants a level of prestige in the religious life of the

²² Sheehan, interview, 5; Hannan diary, 13 March, 22 March, 16 May, 1922.

²³ "St. Mary's Parish," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 1(January 1923); Sheehan, interview, 5; Hannan diary, 12 March, 12 February 1922.

community. They also provided the children a visible level of involvement to strengthen their faith and elicit respect among the congregation.²⁴

The summer months provided the older girls of the parish their primary season as sacristans, because the religious sisters who normally filled the position left the parish during the summer. Many girls welcomed the opportunity and considered it "an honor if...asked to help take care of the church during the summer...." The job entailed the standard duties, as well as notifying individual altar boys who served the entire year of their scheduled dates to serve. As the girls entered high school, they generally moved on to choir duty. The choir included a range of parish children. The work of the children did not go unnoticed by their pastor. On a "fiercely cold" Saturday morning in February, 1922, as four altar boys went "about their little duties with spirit" at the daily mass, apparently impervious to the cold, Fr. Hannan mentally noted his pride and respect for them. Equally endearing to Hannan were "the faithful Choir children who...[were] in their places near the organ waiting to sing mass" for him on the miserable day. He physically rewarded his dedicated assistants on occasion. Fr. Hannan honored "the boys who serve and the girls who sing during weekday Mass" with a social in September, 1924. As the parish invited children to actively participate in the religious life of the parish, it simultaneously assured the continuance and identity of the faith.²⁵

²⁴ *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, s.v. "sacristan," "server, altar"; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "sacristan."

²⁵ Sheehan, interview, 7; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 3 February 1919, p. 2; Hannan diary, 18 February 1922; "Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 2(September 1924): III.

Other features of parish life involved the entire parish regardless of age or gender, bringing the parishioners together as an entire community to witness the faith and grow stronger in it. Parish entertainment occasionally provided the scene for this process. The St. Mary's Dramatic Club, a parish acting group, featured live acting performances that brought people together to hear a unifying message. Many of the plays the group staged were held on the third floor of the school. It had "a fairly large stage and the classrooms had folding doors, [so] that once opened and [with] the desks pushed back created a large auditorium." A former parishioner recalled "entertainment[s] at least twice a year in the auditorium in the school." Adults were generally the actors, although "grade school children...were part of the act too." The club generally featured plays with religious themes, such as, *The Parish Priest*, staged in May, 1916. The drama club turned to the Butte High School auditorium for a showing of *The Confession*, which presented "the Catholic confessional in a reverent manner" in November, 1922. Despite being staged outside of the parish, presumably to draw a larger audience, the play upheld and transmitted the parish's religious standards. Besides entertainment, other parish events solidified parishioners in common cause.²⁶

Parishioners witnessed the faith by honoring the institution. In this case, parishioners bestowed honor on former parish priests. They reserved this distinction for those priests considered to be true pastors in the parish. This act memorialized the noteworthy service of the deceased priests, while also binding parishioners together in

²⁶ Sheehan, interview, 6-7; "St. Mary's Dramatic Club to Give Play," *The Anaconda Standard*, 28 August 1916, p. 7; "Catholic Churches," *The Butte Daily Post*, 14 October 1922, p. 3.

solidarity with their clergy and their institution. This solidarity simply reinforced the parish vision of Catholicism. Two priests, Fr. James English and Fr. Patrick Brosnan, both earned distinction during their tenure at St. Mary's. Parishioners sympathetically identified Fr. English with the erection of the church and school, but he was better remembered as a pastor "who labored unceasingly for the welfare of the parishioners...." The parish honored the memory of their late pastor with an annual memorial Mass. Parishioners and priests alike honored his memory. In 1920, "a large congregation" was expected at the memorial mass. In 1921, three priests celebrated a solemn requiem high mass in his honor, with the "priests of the city...[present] in the sanctuary." On other occasions, as in 1918, parish bulletins simply called "all...to attend" the memorial. Fr. Hannan also remembered the occasion in a 1924 diary entry with a simple "anniversary (14th) mass for Fr. English."²⁷

Fr. Patrick Brosnan, a priest from Ireland, was assigned to St. Mary's as an assistant priest in February, 1917, shortly after his arrival in Montana. Far from home, he optimistically wrote to his father in Ireland, that he "received an appointment in Butte city to a very good parish." All apparently continued to be fine until the Spanish Influenza ravaged Butte in October, November, and December, 1918. Fr. Brosnan ministered to "the sick and the needy...during the flu year," and handled many funerals of those who died. His service eventually cost him his life; in mid-November, 1918, he, too, succumbed to the dreaded flu. The parishioners recognized the valiant service he provided them

²⁷ "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 16 August 1920, p. 10; Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 20-26; "Week's Program in Catholic Churches," *The Butte Miner*, 8 August 1921, p. 5; "Catholic

during the outbreak, and like Fr. English, honored him with an annual memorial mass on the anniversary of his death. Nearly ten years after his death, in 1926, his memorial continued to attract "a large number of the parishioners." Memorializing Brosnan melded parishioners together in yet another way in their identity as Catholics.²⁸

St. Mary's represented far more to its parishioners and outsiders alike than a cursory scan of the parish provides. Behind the scenes and beyond the edifice of church, school, or rectory, existed the heart and soul of the parish. The institution brought them together in a common journey with Catholics throughout the world, which they then transformed into their particular community of faith. Their community of faith responded to the questions faced by the Church everywhere, in a way that created an identity of the good life in the parish. Parishioners envisioned an appropriate identity based on their faith, and they developed it in all of their parish activities. As with their ethnic identity, their religious identity granted them power, community, pride, and purpose in an often hostile world. Parish life provided the stage to share this, pass it on, and display it for all the world to see.

Church Services," *The Anaconda Standard*, 19 August 1918, p. 7; Hannan diary, 25 August 1924.

²⁸ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 35; Patrick Brosnan to his Father, 18 February 1917, Brosnan Papers; Silver Bow County Board of Health, Minutes of Meetings, 9 October, 8 November, 19 November, 18 December 1918, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives; Sheehan, interview, 7; O Sullivan, interview; "Bishop Conducts Last Services for Priest," *The Anaconda Standard*, 14 November 1918, p. 2; "Butte Catholic Churches," *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 November 1919, p. 7; "Will Honor Dead on Armistice Day," *The Butte Miner*, 7 November 1921, p. 5; Hannan diary, 27 November 1922; "St. Mary's Parish Notes," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 4(December 1926): 3.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

All honor to the people of St. Mary's Parish! Taken as a whole they uphold the best traditions of their race. Like their forefathers they may be slandered, despised, unappreciated; but to know them is to love them and prize them. And to the priest whose good fortune it is to live amongst them, and to minister to them, their golden hearts, clean lives, and uncompromising faith must ever be an example for good and a stimulus for a better life in himself. They have their faults, too, but with all their faults the writer would rather be of them and with them than any others.¹

Fr. Michael Hannan's death on July 2, 1928 ended an era at St. Mary's parish; an era in the parish's history defined by its intertwined ethnic and religious identity. Hannan's death symbolically closed a chapter. The parishioners did not lose their ethnicity and it is doubtful that they lost their zeal for the Irish cause, but the intensity by which they furthered the cause in parish life declined in the late 1920s. In a real sense, Hannan's death did end one element of the parish's ethnic and religious identity. Hannan's successor as parish pastor, the American born Fr. James Nolan, represented the first non-Irish born priest to lead the parish in its history. The Irish born clerical tradition ended and a new era opened.²

¹ Hannan, *History of St. Mary's*, 37.

² "Father Hannan Passes On To His Reward," *The Catholic Monthly Magazine: St. Mary's Parish, Butte, Montana* 6(August 1928): 33-34; Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, *St. Mary's Parish*, 27.

Families, like the one started by Mary Ann O'Shea and Thomas Johnson, continued to define the parish's identity in their lifetime and in the lifetime of their descendants. In fact, families like theirs remained in the parish until its closure. The parishioners experienced many changes in the years following Hannan's pastorate. A fire destroyed the original church and six nearby homes in August, 1931. A new church was built at a different location, forever changing the institutional landscape of the parish. The new church, which still stands on North Main Street, exhibited some of the everlasting values of the parish. True to its identity with the Butte mines, Butte copper was used in the ceiling dome above the sanctuary and in the iconography of the Stations of the Cross found in the church. The parish continued to reconfigure the institutional landscape with the construction of a new school building in 1952. The parish also gained a new reputation in addition to its older identities. By the 1950s, the parish would also be known as "the parish of vocations." The parish proudly claimed twenty priests, five religious brothers, and twenty-four religious sisters as products of the parish as of 1952. Despite the faith of the parishioners, changing demographics eroded the parish population base. Shifting demographics, such as population declines in older Butte neighborhoods caused irreparable harm to older Butte parishes such as St. Mary's beginning as early as the 1960s. The parish continued to minister and nourish its members until these changes forced its closure in June, 1986.³

³ Our Lady of the Rockies Foundation, *St. Mary's Parish*, introduction, 31, 58, 43, 53; Flaherty, *Go With Haste*, 106, 129, 166-67.

Parish life at St. Mary's in the early 1920s reveals the multi-dimensional nature of early twentieth century Roman Catholic life in Butte. Clearly, priest and parishioners alike nourished their spiritual needs in a variety of ways. Parish life represented far more than a static religious life founded on structural uniformity. In fact, parish life at St. Mary's presents a much richer, dynamic, and diverse picture of Catholic life. The role of ethnic and religious societies in parish life, such as the Thomas Ashe council and the Young Ladies Sodality, illuminates the diversity of issues and outlets available in the parish. It also identifies the values parishioners and priest shared, and the need to extend the boundaries of spiritual and secular nourishment provided through the parish. Officially endorsing Irish nationalism through the sacred rituals of the church offers another view of the dynamic inner character of St. Mary's. The function of public ritual in respect to St. Patrick's day and Easter Monday celebrations further clarifies the role of Irish nationalism. Parish sponsored entertainment relied on a different cultural medium, acting, to define parish perspectives on ethnic and religious questions. Teaching the faith to parish children outside of the home demonstrates the emphasis parishioners placed on perpetuating the faith. The culmination of all the various facets of parish life presents a colorful and richly human perspective to the experience. Parish life represented a multitude of spiritual exercises, secular concerns, and a variety of values that only emerge after one moves beyond the institutional veneer of Roman Catholic parish life.

The cultural values that defined parish life at St. Mary's represented what its parishioners, priests, and nuns found meaningful in their lives. The parish community expressed its values in its Irish and Catholic identities. The parish found the meaning and

truth behind these identities in its Irish heritage, its Roman Catholic faith, its families, the parish community, and undoubtedly in the solidarity the community expressed among its members as they faced the joys and sorrows of living in an industrial mining town. The Irish and Catholic identities created in St. Mary's parish also impacted those outside of its boundaries. St. Mary's Irish identity clearly influenced Butte's Irish nationalist reputation after 1916 and into the 1920s. The parish's religious identity surely influenced Butte's collective Catholic identity as well, through the migration of its members into different sections of the city. Butte and beyond were also touched in a very significant way by the large number of men and women who entered the religious life from St. Mary's. Butte owes a portion of its reputation as an Irish and a Catholic town to the people of St. Mary's, their values, and lifestyles. The people of St. Mary's created an Irish and Catholic identity for themselves, and in the process helped shape Butte's identity. The values that guided St. Mary's in the early twentieth century continue to hold meaning in the present, and the spirit of the parish lives still despite its closure in 1986.

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