

August 10, 1936

Father William Chawke



Father Chawke was born Dec. 14, 1883, in Granagh, Ballingarry, County Limerick, Ireland. He was ordained June 13, 1909 by the Rt. Rev. Patrick Foley, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, at St. Patrick's College, Carlow. He spent several months as an assistant at St. Aloysius Pro-Cathedral where he was introduced to parish and pastoral life in the United States.

Father Chawke was assigned "temporarily" to St. Mary's, McCracken. This assignment, however, lasted for a decade (1909-19) and his pastorate is recorded in parish history as "the Golden Age of St. Mary of the Fields."

He worked with Rush County Catholics in establishing a parish at La Crosse. On Sept. 19, 1911, Bishop Hennessy dedicated the new church there to St. Michael.

Father Chawke served the La Crosse congregation as a mission from McCracken. In the beginning he would travel on the Missouri Pacific Railroad and celebrate Mass once a month during the week. In 1912, however, this changed to one Sunday a month. The McCracken congregation gave up Mass on the second Sunday of each month for the La Crosse congregation.

Father Chawke served in only one other pastorate: St. Patrick, Kingman (1919-36).

On Aug. 10, 1936, he traveled to Immaculate Conception Convent in Great Bend to attend the reception of a class of novices. He collapsed and died just as the ceremony was about to begin. He was 52.

Bishop Schwertner celebrated the funeral at St. Patrick Church. Burial was in the parish cemetery at Kingman.