

February 21, 1959

Father Thomas McKernan



Father McKernan was born June 16, 1881 in St. Louis, Mo. He was ordained for the Wichita diocese at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis on June 11, 1907.

He spent a short time as assistant pastor at St. Aloysius Pro-Cathedral in Wichita. He was chaplain on the St. Anthony Chapel Car visiting towns along the railroad tracks in western Kansas from June to October in 1907.

During this time the chapel car made stops in the following towns in the Dodge City diocese: Liberal, Meade, Bucklin, Pratt, Kinsley, Hanston, Dodge City, Ingalls, Offerle, Belpre, and Lewis.

He was pastor at St. Aloysius, Greenbush (1908-12) and briefly at St. Joseph, Wichita, before taking a leave of absence due to illness. During this time he resided in Great Bend.

Father McKernan was chaplain on the St. Peter Chapel Car in April and May of 1914 when it stopped in the western Kansas towns of Hugoton, Copeland, Hanston, Bazine, Ness City, Dighton and Scott City.

He served as chaplain at St. Rose Hospital in Great Bend from 1914 to 1921. He was chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Parsons from 1921 until he retired 1956. He continued to reside at the hospital until he died on Feb. 21, 1959, at the age of 78.

Bishop Carroll celebrated the funeral at St. Patrick's Church in Parsons. Burial was in Mt. Olivet cemetery.

Father McKernan was sometimes called "the Poet Priest of Kansas," or the "Poet Laureate of the Wichita diocese." He published many of his poems in a volume entitled "Musings."