

Diocese of Cheyenne established in 1887

A brief history of the Diocese of Cheyenne

The Diocese of Cheyenne was established by Pope Leo XIII on August 2, 1887.

Bishop Maurice Francis Burke was the first bishop of Cheyenne (1887-1897). Upon his arrival in Wyoming, Bishop Burke found a Diocese about the size of Great Britain, with 4 diocesan priests, a Jesuit priest and brother, 8 churches and 28 missions (soon to be 43), for about 450 families, or 7,500 widely scattered Catholics. There were 21 religious women: Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, who conducted an academy and school in Cheyenne, and Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, who staffed a hospital and school in Laramie. He was followed by

Bishop Thomas M. Lenihan served the Diocese from 1897-1902 and was the second Bishop of Cheyenne. Bishop Burke's successor appointed after almost four years, was born in Ireland and a priest of Dubuque, whose poor health, exacerbated by the high altitude and dry-

For more information on the diocesan history, see the web site www.dioceseofcheyenne.org

ness, severely restricted his activity and finally compelled him to return to Iowa where he passed away.

Bishop James J. Keane served the Diocese from 1902 – 1911). He was the third Bishop of Cheyenne, and undertook the task of bringing order to the diocesan administration and incorporated the Diocese according to the laws of the State of Wyoming. Pastors were instructed to incorporate the parishes, each to have a board, which included the bishop, the pastor and two lay trustees. Soon after its foundation in 1905, Bishop Keane appealed to the Catholic Church Extension Society which became a generous and never failing channel of funds for the benefit of the Church in Wyoming. Bishop Keane directed the building of a residence and a Cathedral in Cheyenne, laying the cornerstone of the Cathedral July 7, 1907.

Bishop Patrick McGovern (1912 – 1951), fourth Bishop of Cheyenne, was very much concerned about the plight of orphans in

Wyoming, and worked tirelessly to establish St. Joseph's Children's Home in 1930. He built the current official bishop's residence in Cheyenne.

Bishop Herbert Newell (1951-1978), fifth Bishop of Cheyenne, began publication of the Wyoming Catholic Register (April 11, 1952). In 1953, he persuaded the ladies of the long-existing altar and rosary societies to form the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women, a chapter of the national organization, with similar aims and functions as the Knights of Columbus. Bishop Newell promoted the Catholic Youth Organization, holding its first State convention in 1959.

Bishop Joseph Hart was the sixth Bishop of Cheyenne and served from 1978-2001. During his time as bishop, he has served on the administrative board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, as a member of the Bishops' committee for Priestly Life and Ministry, along with other assignments. Bishop

Hart currently serves as a member of the administrative board of the Conference of Catholic Bishops. During Bishop Hart's tenure as ordinary of the Diocese of Cheyenne, the annual Bishop's Appeal was begun to fund programs of the diocese. He is retired.

Bishop David L. Ricken was the seventh Bishop of Cheyenne and served from 2001-2008. Bishop Ricken is currently a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism and is on the Editorial Oversight Board for the National Directory of Catechesis (2001). He was President of the National Rural Life Committee. (2001) He was elected to the Episcopal Board of Governors of the Pontifical North American College in 2001. During his service as Bishop of Cheyenne, Bishop Ricken was instrumental in establishing the Wyoming Catholic College, located in Lander, began the diocesan pastoral planning process in keeping with the apostolic letter *Novo millenio inuente* and wrote a pastoral letter on families. He is now the bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wis.

Statistics on the diocese

The diocese comprises the State of Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park, which covers an area of 97,548 total square miles. There are approximately 50,000 Catholics in our State.

There are 36 parishes and 36 missions. There are 31 Diocesan priests, 17 retired priests, 11 Religious Priests, 9 Extern Priests, 3 Priests outside the Diocese, 20 deacons, and 20 sisters.

The diocese currently has 10 seminarians in studies and 24 men in the Diocesan Diaconate Formation Program.

There are seven Catholic elementary schools educating students from kindergarten through 8th grade. Nearly 1,050 children attend our schools.

The Saint Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington, was founded in 1930 and is a private, non-profit, residential treatment facility for youth ages six to eighteen. There is a fully accredited K-12 school on campus that provides a full range of academic and vocational classes.

Chancery and Bishop's Residence

The three story Georgian-style brick residence was commissioned by Bishop Patrick A. McGovern (1912 – 1951) and completed in 1939. Bishop McGovern was the first resident in the home, and lived there from 1939 – 1951.

Bishop Hubert M. Newell occupied the home from 1951 – 1978. The landscaping was completed in 1954, and the elevator was installed in 1961, following a heart attack suffered by Bishop Newell.

Bishop Joseph Hart lived in the home from 1978 – 2000. The entire interior of the house was painted in 1986 – the first time in 25 years. New carpeting was installed on the ground floor.

Bishop David L. Ricken resided in the home from 2000 – 2008. In Bishop Ricken's tenure, the kitchen and Chapel were updated and remodeled.

Fellow priests say Wyoming good match for new bishop

continued from page 7 known Bishop Etienne for nearly eight years. He also worked with him while the new bishop was vice-rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Indianapolis.

"He's wonderful. He's kind and compassionate, but also he has very good common sense and is very practical. He has a very good sense of what is best. The most striking thing about him is his prayerfulness; he has a prayerful approach to life. He is very focused on the Eucharist and serving Christ and others," Father Robeson said.

While at the seminary, Bishop Etienne was very helpful in some of the administrative tasks

with regard to managing the facility. He helped the school make a transition from its previous location at a local university to the current site, a former Carmelite monastery located on 19 acres. There were a lot of issues surrounding the management of the facility and setting up a master plan which would accommodate growth, Father Robeson explained.

"His administrative abilities are very strong. He is very good with financial management," Father Robeson said.

As a pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Albany, Bishop Etienne "placed the parish on good financial footing for the long term," Father Robeson said.

"He strengthened

their position to be a good strong parish in terms of the financial situation. He will be able to help the diocese in that sense as well."

During his time at the seminary, Bishop Etienne also made an impact on the students with whom he worked, bringing "spiritual depth" to their formation.

"He has been good with the students, challenging them when they need to be challenged, and helping them in living their lives more completely with Christ," Father Robeson said.

"My hope for him is that he will continue to help the people deepen their love for Christ and to live a Christian

life as Christ has called them to live; he will do that. He has always been a strong herald of the Gospel wherever he has gone. Most of all, he loves and cares about the people he serves. Regardless of where he is or what God is calling him to do, he gives himself to that ministry. I think he will give himself in a very strong way. He will help them (the people of the diocese) grow in their sincerity to serve Christ."

As Spiritual Director at St. Meinrad School of Theology, Bishop Etienne worked with Father Moriarty. The two men have known each other since they were both seminarians for the archdiocese, nearly 24 years ago.

"I have been in a

priest support group with him for 14 years, and I would want the priests there (in Wyoming) to know that in every way he is a man of God and a priest's priest. He is easy to talk to and easy to relate to, and I hope they will find that in him," Father Moriarty said.

Father Robeson agrees that Bishop Etienne will be deeply committed to the priests. "He will be able to show his love for them and his support. He will work hard to try to encourage young men to priesthood and work hard to foster the spiritual lives of the priests of the diocese."

Bishop Etienne is an outdoorsman and Father Moriarty believes Wyoming will be a good fit

for him. "People come there to be in God's creation, whether they are coming to see Yellowstone or other natural sites, they seek solitude with God outdoors, and that is true with Bishop Etienne," Father Moriarty said.

"He enjoys hunting and working the land. He finds God in creation and he will bring that to the diocese."

Like Father Moriarty, Father Robeson says Bishop Etienne's appreciation for nature and his being a "small town guy who is familiar with rural life," makes Wyoming, with its wide open spaces and its mountainous beauty, a perfect match.