

St. Michael's Parish, Palmer, celebrated its golden jubilee on Sunday, June 9. The parish was founded at the time of the establishment of the Matanuska Colony in 1935.

Archbishop Francis T. Hurley was the principal celebrant of the jubilee Mass. Msgr. Francis A. Murphy, pastor of St. Benedict's Church, Anchorage, and pastor of St. Michael's from

1967-70 preached the homily. Cocreating the Mass with Archbishop Hurley and Msgr. Murphy was Father Gerard T. Ryan, the parish pastor; Father Harry W.

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of the Colony and later general manager, along with priests of the Archdiocese of Anchorage.

A reception was held in the parish hall following the Mass.

A hard-cover memorial book of the golden jubilee of the parish is available from the parish.

The establishment of the Matanuska Colony and St. Michael's parish go hand in hand.

Colonists from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan arrived by boat in Seward during May of 1935 and traveled by rail 150 miles to Palmer. There the colonists lived in tents until homes were built.

The first Mass was said in a tent in Palmer on Sunday, May 26, 1935, by Father Merrill Sulzman, the founding pastor who came from Sacred Heart Parish, Seward, with the colonists.

The actual building of the first St. Michael's church did not begin until June 2, 1936. The site for the church was called the Civic Center. There along with St. Michael's, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches were built. The first

The present St. Michael's Church and rectory were built in 1966-67, by Msgr. John A. Lunney, now pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Anchorage. Msgr. Lunney also built the church at Big Lake in the summer of 1966.

The church in the past two years has undergone renovations which include a new entrance, rest rooms, kitchen and belfry.

St. Michael's has had a dozen pastors over the past 50 years. Msgr. James P. Snead served for 27 years from 1939-1966. Father Gerard T. Ryan, C.S.Sp., an Irish Holy Ghost Father, came to Alaska in November of 1971. Prior to becoming pastor at St. Michael's, Father Ryan was pastor of St. Bernard's, Talkeetna from 1974-79. He became an American citizen on January 28, 1983.

Other priests currently serving in the Archdiocese of Anchorage who were pastors of St. Michael's include Father Ernest H. Muellerleile, 1972-74, pastor of Holy Cross Parish, Anchorage; and Father John Marx, 1974-77, living in Seattle.