



The Catholic
Archdiocese
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Joy in Christ
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Jubilee 100 Biography Project

Biography of Rev. Joseph Hamor SDB

Submitted by St. Emeric Parish, Edmonton

Father Joseph Hamor SDB arrived in Edmonton on April 13, 1957, following the request of his Superior in Turin, Italy, to move to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to serve the newly arrived Hungarian refugees. At that time there was no Hungarian Catholic Parish in Edmonton, so Father Hamor lived at St. Mary's boys home. The first Sunday mass was celebrated in the basement of the Sacred Heart Church. For a while Father Hamor shared an office with the German and Dutch priests at the Catholic Information Center and from there he looked after the spiritual needs of the newly arrived Hungarian refugees. With the help of Father Joseph Balazskovi, a local Hungarian Salesian, who was attached to St. Mary's boy's home, the Hungarian Catholic Community formed the Catholic Hungarian Association in 1957. Within the organization there was a strong commitment to raise funds for the purchase of a building to give some permanency for the Hungarian Catholics. In the fall of 1957, the Norwood Legion Hall, located at 98th Street and 106th Avenue, came up for sale. By this time with careful management, Father Hamor saved up \$2,000 towards the down payment. Another \$1,000 was needed to cover the 10% of the cost of the building as required by the seller. This \$1,000 came from those funds that the Archdiocese collected for the Hungarian refugees. Father Hamor signed the contract in the presence of the Secretary of the Archdiocese on November 5, 1957. This is the feast day of St. Emeric, so the parish received its name.

Renovations started immediately and by Christmas the same year, Father Hamor and the parishioners celebrated the birth of the Christ Child in the newly consecrated church. Early in 1958, the Archbishop officially recognized the newly formed Hungarian Catholic Parish of St. Emeric.

Shortly after his arrival to Edmonton, Father Hamor started the Hungarian School for the refugee children. He personally picked up the children who had no way of getting to school every Sunday morning and delivered them home after school. The principal of the Sacred Heart School was kind enough to allow the use of some of the classrooms on Saturdays. As soon as the building was ready, the school was transferred to the basement of St. Emeric Church.

Working as a full time priest, part time teacher, scout master, music teacher, and conductor of his newly formed chamber orchestra, took a toll on Father Hamor's health. In 1970, at the age of 56, he asked his Salesian Superior to temporarily relieve him of his duties to recuperate. He stayed in the parish to help out Father Michael Gombosh, who was brought to Edmonton to take over Rev. Hamor's duties.

In 1980, Rev. Hamor was asked to return to his full duties as the parish priest. At this time, the church needed major renovations, so it was decided that instead, the parish council would look for a new site and build a new church. With Fr. Hamor at the helm, fundraising started on a large scale. As well, the building committee began to look for a buyer for the old church. The Chinese Catholics expressed interest, so negotiations started. On June 15, the feast of Mary Help of Christians, the Chinese parishioners and the Hungarian parishioners united in celebrating Holy Mass for the first time for the Chinese in their new church and the last time for the Hungarians in their old church.

Now the Hungarian Catholics found themselves without a church of their own while the new church was being built. For one year, St. Emeric parishioners attended mass at the Salesian Community Chapel, where Father Hamor was kindly allowed to celebrate mass every Sunday or Feast day, and preside at weddings and funerals.

On August 22, 1987, Archbishop MacNeil officially dedicated and blessed the new St. Emeric Church. Father Hamor continued his services to the parishioners with total dedication. He was proud of the new church complex that housed classrooms for his school as well as space for the scouts, a rectory and office. As in the old church he taught school every Saturday, took the scouts camping, directed the choir, and visited the families and the sick.

After serving the parishioners of St. Emeric for nearly 40 years, in August of 1996 Father Hamor retired from active duty. On February 13, 1999, he passed away quietly. A life well lived.