

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PARISH

When the Son of God came to earth, He selected as His childhood home the small town of Nazareth, near the awe-inspiring mountains and the fertile valleys surrounding the Sea of Galilee, which received the waters from the heights and poured them forth into the Jordan. And it was among those humble, prayerful, hardworking people of Galilee, in the midst of their strong families and outdoor life, that He first proclaimed the Kingdom of God, performed most of His miracles, and called together His small band of disciples whom He would send forth to transform the world. Jesus not only walked the earth 2000 years ago. Through His people and His Church, He is among us now, sending us into every town and village as new witnesses to the Gospel for all people. For 66 years, here among the ancient mountains and the fresh fields of the Shenandoah Valley, the humble, prayerful, hardworking people of Our Lady of the Valley parish have received and shared grace of God and the light of Christ with the world.

The first Masses in this area were held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Cole in 1876. For the next 75 years, priests would come from Winchester and Front Royal to offer the faith, the sacraments and the service of the Church to the good people of Page County. In 1951, the Redemptorist Fathers began their ministry to this area and established Our Lady of the Valley as a mission of Holy Infant Parish in Elkton. With Fr. Raymond Govern and then Fr. James Clancy as the first pastors, they celebrated Masses at the Mimslyn Inn and taught classes at the Page County Bank. Sisters from the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity likewise served this mission from 1952 until the 1990s. Due to the great generosity of the local Catholics, the Redemptorists, and the Diocese of Richmond, and with land purchased by Maurice Waters, the people were able to build our church in 1954 and add the church annex and hall in 1960.

In 1968, the Diocesan priests of Richmond began serving at the parish, starting with the pastor Fr. Robert Hickman and his associate pastor Fr. Thomas Schutte. The Diocese of Arlington was founded in 1974; and shortly thereafter Our Lady of the Valley became its own independent parish and built the current rectory. Diocesan pastors included Fr. Charles Ryan, Fr. Eugene Neyer, Fr. James Gould, and Fr. Joseph Loftus. In 1992, the Third Order Regular friars of the Franciscan Order began serving in the parish. They continued their ministry here until 2016 with Fr. Gervase Cain, Fr. Andrew Draper and Fr. Christopher Lemme as pastors and many Franciscan friars as assistants. The parish returned to the ministry of Diocesan priests in 2016 when Bishop Paul Loverde appointed Fr. Edward Horkan as the parochial administrator.

The parish has grown from 186 Catholics in 1951 to over 400 today. And the apostolates of the original parish groups (i.e. the Holy Name Society, The Ladies Altar Society, the Catholic Youth Council and the Confraternity of Catholic Doctrine) continue to flourish with our Ladies Council, Council 8393 of the Knights of Columbus, the Morning Star praesidium of the Legion of Mary, our wise and faithful catechists for religious education, the youth group, the pastoral council and finance assistants, the charitable programs, and the musicians, singers, lectors, ushers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, altar boys, and the whole congregation that makes the liturgies here a glorious and joyful reflection of our faith. We ask the Almighty God to make our land a new Galilee. We continue to receive Jesus into our lives, to advance and sons and daughters of God through the ministry of the Church and, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill to Gospel calling, "Go forth and make disciples of all nations."