

A Brief History of St. Bridget's Parish in Copake Falls, NY; Holy Cross Parish in Taghkanic, NY and Sacred Heart Parish in Philmont, NY

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1. About St. Bridget's Church in Copake Falls

There are differing dates as to the origins of St. Bridget's – 1865 or 1866. Based on several sources with slightly differing details, here is the best estimate of the origin of St. Bridget's:

In 1866, Bishop Conroy approved of folks organizing as a congregation called St. Bridget's in Copake Iron-Works; families had previously been gathering for Masses at area homes and other gathering spaces. The church building was completed in 1867. It was constructed on land donated by Michael Herley/Herlihy; the parish was named St. Bridget's at his request – his wife's name was Bridget. Rev. Sullivan, pastor of St. Mary's in Hudson, attended both St. Bridget's in Copake Iron-Works and St. Patrick's in Chatham (later re-named St. James in 1899). Both St. Bridget's and St. James were missions of St. Mary's in Hudson.

When St. James was elevated to its own parish in the late 1860s, the mission of St. Bridget's was moved from the care of St. Mary's to St. James.

In 1875, St. Bridget's was dedicated by Bishop McNeirney. It is unclear whether this was just a dedication of the building or some intermediate step in going from mission to parish.

In 1881, the mission church of Sacred Heart, Philmont, was elevated to a parish, and St. Bridget's was transferred to its care shortly thereafter.

On March 19, 1958, Bishop Scully elevated the mission of St. Bridget's to parish; he approved the new rectory and church, and the new rectory was built first. In 1959, the new church was built at Rte. 22 & Rte. 344.

2. About Sacred Heart Church in Philmont, NY

There is very little information about Sacred Heart in the archives. Again, there are slightly differing dates on the origin of Sacred Heart in Philmont, depending on the source: August 23, 1881 or the year 1882 (no date); incorporation papers were filed in 1895. The church was described as having seating for 260, and a congregation of 340 people. In a 1922 Evangelist publication, the parish was described as having an "out mission" at St. Bridget's.

The *Columbia Republican* reported in its October 17, 1922 issue that Sacred Heart received a gift of bells from the Knights of Columbus.

3. About Holy Cross Church in Taghkanic, NY (on Rte. 82)

Based on the files in the Archives, it seems that the earliest Masses in the area were said in the 1920s, in homes and gathering areas, and the earliest name given to the congregation was Holy Cross.

The Archives has a typed homily by Rev. Vincent J. Gorski with a handwritten date of June 30, 1956 across the top; however, document refers to Easter Sunday as “today” (which in 1956 was April 1) so the handwritten date might be the day someone else received it. It is not clear whether this homily was actually ever delivered, although I assume it was because the homily refers to the dedication of Holy Cross Church. It has a great description of how the parishes in Germantown, Linlithgo, and West Taghkanic were suggested by him to Bishop Gibbons.

Rev. Gorski describes Holy Cross as the temporary “title” of the church that was used during worship in private homes that began in the area in 1922. He recalled how Bishop Gibbons sent him to southern Columbia County to serve, where Catholics among several hundred square miles were without a church or mission. Rev. Gorski recommended churches be established in Germantown and Linlithgo, with one to come in the future, in this (West Taghkanic) area.

Rev. Gorski remembered that he said the first Mass in this area on October 7, 1922 at Central House in Germantown. That date was the Feast Day of the Holy Rosary. This was his inspiration to recommend to the Bishop church names for the three churches to come in this area, based on the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries – birth, death, and resurrection: Nativity in Linlithgo, Holy Cross (informally at that time) in Taghkanic, and Resurrection in Germantown. Resurrection was established first, in 1922, with Nativity in Linlithgo as its mission. Of Holy Cross, Rev. Gorski said, “the name existed only in the hope that a church would be built.”

In 1956, the Grange Hall was purchased in West Taghkanic to meet the needs of Roman Catholics in Gallatin, Taghkanic, and parts of Livingston. The church was originally a mission of Resurrection in Germantown.

A 1960 *Register-Herald* (Pine Plains) newspaper article described Rev. Bernard Alford as pastor of three churches: Resurrection, Nativity, and Holy Cross.

A 1970 *Leader-Herald* (Gloversville-Johnstown) newspaper article stated that two new parishes were being established in the diocese, one of which was Holy Cross in West Taghkanic, formerly a mission of Resurrection in Germantown.