

## St. Michael Church Is Honored for Its History

**CHURCH continued from front page**

Archdiocese has filed for bankruptcy because of the child abuse scandal, and of course, in times past, the church played a very destructive role in the lives of Natives. Still, the people of St. Michael and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde have found great value in the church, the community it nurtured, and together, they see a future for it here in Grand Ronde.

In addition to the \$10,000 matching fund — a little more than \$2,600 have so far been contributed by members of the mission — the Church received in January a \$25,000 gift from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund. Both target construction

and remodeling projects.

St. Michael is one of three small missions that together today make up St. James Church of McMinnville — also including St. Martin de Porres mission in Dayton and the Good Shephard mission in Sheridan. One hundred and forty five years after Reverend Adrien-Joseph Croquet (aka Crockett) arrived in Grand Ronde and established St. Michael Church to minister to the Indian community, the mission here was honored with a celebration hosted by the Oregon Catholic Historical Society (see sidebar below). St. Michael has long been an in-



Photo by Toby McClary

**Traditional Site** — St. Michael Church, which began as a mission to the Indian community in Grand Ronde, has seen three church buildings in its 145 years. Beautiful stained glass windows honor the Church's saints and community members, including one of the Patron Saint Blessed Kateri Tekakwetha, known as the Lily of the Mohawks, the only Native American to have been named a Catholic Saint (below).



Photos by Ron Karten

**Community Effort** — Loyal Hamilton, front, and Kyle Headings of Cross Cut Construction in Willamina work on the gym floor that has long been a community magnet at St. Michael Church. Generations of Indians have skated on this floor, and many of the early community memories started here.

valuable source of community history. Births, weddings, deaths, they all are recorded here.

The church has run a school here since 1864, a few years after the mission began, according to Father Gregory Moys, a parish priest in Grants Pass who also is a former President and now a Trustee of the society.

Time and the economy scattered the community far and wide. Although Indians were once the predominant parishioners, their attendance fell before the school closed, and fell again after the closure.

"When the school went away," said Sandi DeMaster, lay pastoral associate for St. Michael "that seriously affected the sense of community." Add to that changes in Oregon's logging and fishing industries, and the many Native Americans who moved away to find new jobs, and you see some of the reasons the community had scattered in recent years.

"But with the casino, families are

moving back home," said DeMaster. "Unfortunately, things are never quite as we left them, and they found a changed community. People come back yearning for what was but it's changed. Now, it is a parish that is not largely Native American anymore."

Today, the church may be host each Sunday to no more than half a dozen regulars from the Indian community.

At the same time, she added, "there is a desire to not see the church go away. They feel that very deeply, both Native Americans and Caucasians."

Still, the memories speak of community, a role that in part, the Tribe has assumed today, and while nobody is yet sure that the Church can survive alongside the growing Tribal community, the efforts to make that happen are on-going.

The current church, the third St. Michael, went up in 1938. ■



## Catholic Historical Society Features St. Michael Church

By Ron Karten

This year's annual spring event for the Oregon Catholic Historical Society was the biggest ever, according to the Reverend Greg Moys. On April 16 this year, the group honored St. Michael Church here in Grand Ronde as one of the oldest Catholic missions in the Northwest, hailing from before Oregon became a state.

Some 60 people, including few Indians, attended the four-hour event midday Saturday at the church. Stories came from church and Indian perspectives.

Trappist Father Martinus Cawley, a monk from the Trappist Abbey, Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Lafayette, described church efforts to bridge the gap between cultures. He told how Portland Archbishop Francis Blanchet, a priest at the time, created the original "Catholic Ladder." It started as a pole in the 1840s or 50s with simple notches referring to God's intervention on historical events. Pictures were put on parchment later, and most recently at this event, the audience saw a pole on the dais that was created for the Siletz Centennial, according to Moys. Father Martinus described it as a Christian totem pole which did for Christian history what Native totem poles do for Indian history.

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison told the story of one trip back to the nation's capital during the Tribe's Restoration effort. Led by future Congresswoman Elisabeth Furse and with her daughter, Karen, then 16, she described how her daughter told the Congressional committee, "All my life, all I've ever known is termination."

At pow-wows, she continued, kids from other Tribes would ask about her Tribe, and when she'd tell them about termination, that she had no Tribe, no reservation, that her Tribe had been terminated, she felt lost. The actual testimony is on display in the Hall Of Legends between the casino and the lodge.

Though the day aimed at the church's historical significance, the church's shrinking enrollment served as an important backdrop.



**Gratitude** — Tribal member Wink Soderberg and his wife, Kathy, thanked Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison following her talk about Tribal history and the St. Michael Church.

Photos by Ron Karten



"What happened to spirituality?" asked Harrison. "We used to go up to Spirit Mountain to find this spirituality. We need that today." ■