

Happy 200th Birthday Archbishop Lamy!

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, People of God, October 2014

The founding bishop of Santa Fe was Jean-Baptiste Lamy. He was born on October 11, 1814 in Lempdes, Puy-de-Dôme, in the Auvergne region of France. The Archdiocese of Clermont in France is celebrating his 200th birthday with several events this month. I have appointed Msgr. Bennett J. Voorhies, pastor of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Albuquerque (he is also dean of Albuquerque Deanery B) as my representative as he is fluent in French.

Archbishop Lamy completed his classical studies in the Minor Seminary at Clermont and theological coursework in the Major Seminary at Montferrand, where he was trained by the Sulpician fathers. He was ordained a priest at the age of 24 on December 22, 1838; he asked for and obtained permission to serve as a missionary for Bishop John Baptist Purcell, of Cincinnati, Ohio. As a missionary, he served at several missions in Ohio and Kentucky.

Pope Pius IX appointed him as bishop of the recently created Apostolic Vicariate of New Mexico on July 23, 1850; he was only 36 years old. He was consecrated as a bishop on November 24, 1850 by Archbishop Martin Spalding of Louisville; Bishops Jacques-Maurice De Saint Palais of Vincennes and Louis Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland served as co-consecrators. After a long and dangerous journey by horse and wagon train, he finally reached Santa Fe.

He entered Santa Fe on August 9, 1851 and was welcomed by Governor James S. Calhoun and many citizens. The seeds of Catholicism were planted in 1598, when Don Juan de Oñate, leader of an expedition of Spanish colonists, including eight Franciscan Friars. The territory had been served by priests from the then Diocese of Durango, Mexico. Bishop Lamy was not accepted by Fr. Juan Felipe Ortiz, a Spanish priest who was responsible for administration of the Catholic Church in New Mexico. Fr. Ortiz told Bishop Lamy that he and the local clergy did not recognize his authority and would remain loyal to Bishop José Antonio Laureano de Zubiría of the Diocese of Durango, Mexico who had assigned them to the territory. Bishop Lamy wrote to Archbishop Zubiría asking him to explain the change of responsibility to the New Mexico priests, but it was unanswered. Bishop Lamy traveled, again by horse and wagon, to Durango, Mexico to meet with Archbishop Zubiría, and showed him the papal document that appointed Bishop Lamy over the vicariate. Archbishop Zubiría agreed to inform the priests of the change (No email, fax, or media in those days!).

The vicariate of New Mexico was raised to the Diocese of Santa Fe on July 23, 1853 and Bishop Lamy was appointed its first bishop. Needless to say, he had to be a man of strong faith and endurance. The Diocese of Santa Fe then would cover what we know today to include the States of New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, and Colorado! He would travel by horse to celebrate confirmations. He participated in the First Vatican Council from 1869-1870.

The Diocese of Santa Fe was elevated to an Archdiocese on February 12, 1875, and Lamy was appointed its first archbishop at the age of 61. Archbishop Lamy resigned in 1885 at the age of 71. He died of pneumonia in 1888 and is buried under the sanctuary floor of the Cathedral Basilica in Santa Fe. A bronze statue, dedicated in 1925, stands in his memory outside the front

entrance of the Cathedral Basilica. The Village of Lamy, New Mexico was named after him near the source of the sandstone used to build the cathedral. The American writer Willa Cather's novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, is based on his life and career.

Archbishop Lamy served as a priest for 49 years and as a bishop for 37 years. All 37 years of his episcopacy was in Santa Fe. We have much for which to be grateful to him. Archbishop Lamy traveled many times to Europe to implore the help of priests and religious sisters. He started several parishes, schools and hospitals throughout the extensive territory with the dedication of the sisters and priests who left family and friends to minister to the people in the massive territory (No cars or airplanes then!).

He was responsible for the construction of the St. Francis Cathedral and Loretto Chapel, both in Santa Fe (On June 15, 2005, I announced Pope Benedict XVI had designated the Cathedral a Basilica. The Cathedral was officially elevated on October 4, 2005. Its full name, the Cathedral of Saint Francis of Assisi, was consequently changed to the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi. The Loretto Chapel, unfortunately, was sold by the Loretto Sisters to a private organization and it is now runs as a museum for profit and holds non-Catholic religious services for weddings and such.).

Archbishop Lamy purchased 152.8 acres for \$80 in the late 1860s or early 1870s. He oversaw the building of his private retreat home complete with a private chapel. He was an experienced gardener and planted several fruit trees, bushes, flower and vegetables in his garden. On November 11, 1909 Archbishop John B. Pitaval conveyed the 152.8 acres to Carl Stephan for \$1,300.16. Four days later on November 15, 1909, Stephan sold it to Harper S. Cunningham for \$1,800.17. Both deeds contained a phrase protecting the Chapel which said, "... the Chapel is to be kept in good condition and repair by the grantee at his own expense for the use and benefit of the Catholics of that vicinity and who shall be permitted to enter said premises for the purpose of worship in said chapel." Two years later, on December 23, 1911, Evalina C. Cunningham, widow of Harper S. Cunningham, signed a warranty deed, which still contained the restrictive clause concerning the chapel, to May B. Woodford who deeded it to family members of the famous Pulitzer Publishing Company. Two residences, later known as the south and north lodges were built, as well as a carriage house, and later incorporated into the present main structure of The Bishop's Lodge in Santa Fe.