

Jose Munoz

Founder of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
1886-1941

by Susan Jezak Ford

Father Jose Munoz arrived in Kansas City in 1914, a penniless refugee of the Mexican Revolution and was welcomed into the city's Mexican community as the only Spanish speaking priest for miles. Soon after his arrival, he founded the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 23rd Street, a foundation for Kansas City's Hispanic community.

Jose Munoz was born in Salamanca Province, Spain. He was ordained as a priest in 1910 and was sent to serve Morelia, Mexico. Members of the Catholic faith, especially the clergy, were severely persecuted after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Munoz was one of hundreds that fled the country, arriving in Kansas City with no money and few clothes, but no worse off than the community he began to serve.

A vacant house was found at 2341 Holly Street where Munoz and other priests could live and hold Masses. A chapel was blessed in the house and the Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish was founded. Within five months, attendance at Masses each Sunday reached more than 200 people. These services formed a strong base for Kansas City's Mexican community, as Spanish speaking residents began relocating to the area.

Working as the only Spanish speaking priest in the area, Munoz often baptized more than 300 babies and witnessed more than 50 marriages a year. The parish grew and, in 1919, purchased a former Swedish church at 23rd and Madison Streets. Every person attending the opening service on October 5, 1919 carried a candle into the church.

Munoz wished to continue his work as a missionary to Mexicans living in the United States, so he submitted his resignation as pastor of the church in 1926. He moved to Flint, Michigan, where he lived between his trips to Mexican communities. He died in 1941 in Newton, Kansas.

Sources

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