

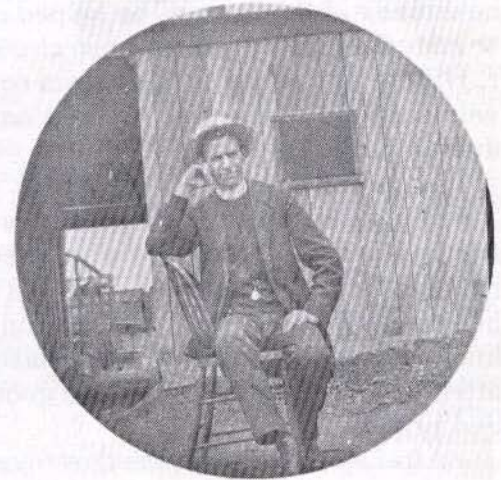
# Father Hilary Hernandez

Father Grajales continued to work in the Mexican community in Dodge City until 1920 when he returned to Mexico. Father Hilary Hernandez was then appointed pastor of the Mexican parish.

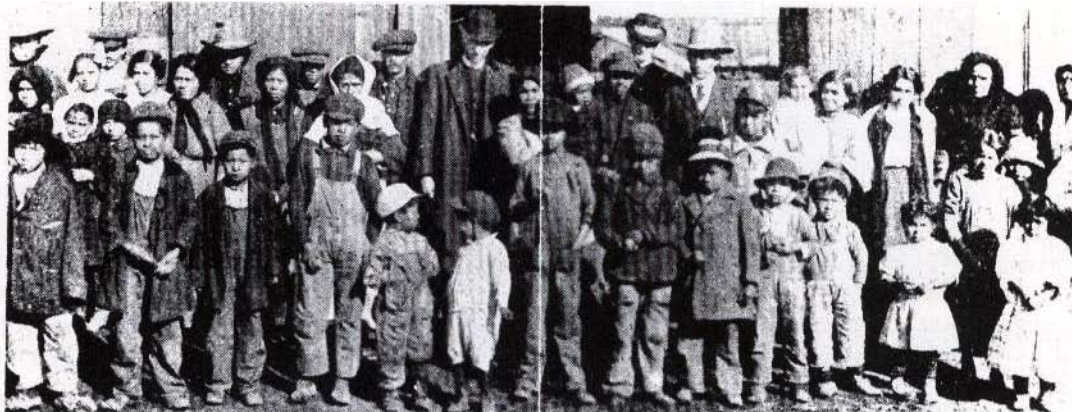
Father Hernandez was no stranger to the community. He had been a resident of Dodge City since 1914 and celebrated the first Mass in the chapel in the railroad yard that year on Ascension Thursday. Father Hernandez came to Dodge City after being appointed chaplain at Saint Mary of the Plains Academy. He was an exiled priest from Mexico and came to work in the Wichita Diocese after talking with Bishop Hennessy.

Father Hernandez was born in Pedroso, Salamanca, Spain on February 11, 1881. He received his education in the seminary and Pontifical University at Salamanca. On September 22, 1906, he was ordained to the priesthood. He served the Diocese of Salamanca until December 1910, when he moved to Mexico to work for the Diocese of Monterey.

Msgr. George A. Hussman, present rector at Sacred Heart Cathedral, recalls Father Hernandez speaking about the persecutions in Mexico in 1914.



Father Hernandez poses in the Village



Father Hilary Hernandez (center), and the Village people

“It seems the priests in Monterey had a boys’ school of some sort and when the persecution came, some of the young soldiers were graduates of the school in which these fathers taught. He (Father Hernandez) told about them coming there as soldiers, eating with the priests and then later these same soldiers being in the firing squad that shot some of the priests.” Because Father Hernandez was a Spanish citizen, he was not harmed. However, he was made very unwelcome in that country. According to Msgr. Hussman, it was the United States consul living in Monterey that helped him flee the country. He traveled to San Antonio, Texas and there he met Bishop Hennessy. The bishop welcomed him to the Diocese of Wichita.

Father Hernandez offered Mass every day at Saint Mary of the Plains Academy where he also taught Spanish classes. On Sundays, he would take some of the Academy girls to the Village to sing during the Mass there. Later when Father Hernandez was chaplain at St. Anthony Hospital, he would be accompanied by Sister Adeline Andra and Sister Pius Alering, who would sing and play the organ.

Father Hernandez was many things to many people. Sister Edwina Williams, who was a student at the Academy, remembers him “as a perfect gentleman, stately, with a military stride, always friendly, yet never too familiar and very punctual.” Another student, Sister Celeste Overby,



recalls him as "a very spiritual man; he possessed that deep-seated spirituality without any show or ostentation. He loved the Mexican people, and they seemed to love and respect him. Only God knows how many of 'his people' he helped over a spiritual or material problem, sometimes at a great sacrifice . . . His power seemed to come from some great reservoir of spiritual life, else it could not have been so universal and so powerful."

Msgr. Arnold Weller, present pastor at St. Theresa's Church in Dighton, remembers his good friend this way. "Anyone who knew Father Hernandez learned to love him. He was a perfect host, he knew and liked the sisters and they liked him. He knew every student well and that meant forever after. The nuns knew him to be a good religious man and priest."

After the Academy was destroyed by a tornado on May 10, 1942, Father Hernandez was appointed chaplain at St. Anthony Hospital. He lived in a house on the hospital grounds.



Sister Adeline Andra and Sister Pius Alering