



DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

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Episcopal Statement

Regarding the Fire at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Poplar, MT

August 25, 2026

I am deeply saddened to announce that, sometime early this morning, the parish church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Poplar, Montana caught fire. Despite the heroic efforts of several volunteer fire departments from around the area, the building was not able to be saved. Thankfully, no one was hurt in the fire, for which we praise the Lord even amidst this terrible tragedy.

Upon hearing of the fire, I called Fr. Akama, the pastor, and drove to Poplar to be with the people in this time of grief and to assess the situation. It goes without saying that this is a terrible blow, not only to the pastor and people of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, but to the entire community of Poplar and to our Diocesan family.

At this time, we do not know the cause of the fire. Civil authorities are working with us as they investigate what happened.

I ask that you please keep the pastor and people of this parish in your prayers during this most painful time. In a special way I ask that you join me in placing them under the mantle of their patron, Our Lady of Lourdes, through her holy rosary. As Mary has protected and guided millions of Christians down through the ages, we trust that she will continue to do so in a particular way for the people of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Jeffrey Fleming