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**EXPLORING PARISH CHURCHES**

# Blessed Sacrament: a thriving parish

The second-oldest parish has served the faithful for more than 150 years.

AMY M. FERRARA | FLORIDA CATHOLIC STAFF



In this article, the second in a series on historic parishes in the Diocese of Pensacola - Tallahassee, the Florida Catholic reviews the history of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Tallahassee. For the first of this series, see St. Michael the Archangel Church [HERE](#).

**TALLAHASSEE** | After the establishment of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Pensacola in 1781, it took more

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than 60 years for Catholic residents to build another sanctuary in northwest Florida. The result was Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Tallahassee, whose roots began in 1845 as St. John the Evangelist.

Although the Catholic population was small, the building of St. John carried with it an element of newsworthiness in the Tallahassee area. On May 27, 1845, the Florida Sentinel noted, "Plans and specifications are already made, and the lumber is now being sawed. The church is to be built in old English Gothic style in the 14th century, and its estimated cost is about \$2,000."

Such was the mission of the congregation that included 63 adults and 42 children under their first pastor, Father A. Desgualtieres. The parish worshipped together for one year in the new church while also serving missions in Lake City, Madison, Monticello, St. Marks, Newport, Quincy and Chattahoochee. Then flames engulfed the structure, sparing only the bell and a few small objects.

"The church just destroyed was a more than ordinary achievement of the handful who profess this faith in Tallahassee," stated the Jan. 5, 1847, Florida Sentinel. "They are few and generally poor; but the Church they had built would have been deemed an ornament to any village in this country."

Though it was several years until they could gather the funds to build a new church on the same property, parishioners persevered. In 1854, builders completed the new sanctuary, this time called Church of St. Mary, Mater Dolorosa or Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

The name Blessed Sacrament wasn't bestowed on the parish until 1898 when Father Joseph L. Hugon, pastor, oversaw the construction of yet another replacement church on the corner of Monroe and Carolina streets for the growing Tallahassee Catholic population. The architecture was Romanesque, and it featured stained-glass windows and intricately designed altars, at least one of which Father Hugon crafted. This church served parishioners for 54 years.

In November 1952, builders constructed another Blessed Sacrament church at the corner of Miccosukee Road and Brevard Street. More than 20 years later, in 1979, the congregation built one more church next to this 1952 building, installing stained-glass windows depicting the timeline of Christianity.

Parishioners designated the older structure the parish hall; the new church is the one the congregation uses today.

Msgr. John V. O'Sullivan is pastor of the parish, which includes 1,200 active families. Blessed Sacrament offers daily Mass Monday through Friday at 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., and on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. A Saturday 5 p.m. vigil Mass is held along with Sunday Masses at 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 7 p.m.

To contact the parish office, call 850-222-1321. Sources for this story included *From Mission Bells to Cathedral Chimes*, self-published in 1983 by Francis and Mary Margaret Rhodes, and diocesan archives. Carlisle Semmes, diocesan archivist, helped research this article.

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