

April 28, 2008

EXPLORING PARISH CHURCHES

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

AMY FERRARA SMITH | FLORIDA CATHOLIC STAFF

Published: 04.25.08

In this article, the seventh in a series on historic parishes in the Diocese of Pensacola - Tallahassee, the *Florida Catholic* reviews the history of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1212 East Moreno St, Pensacola.

Mass is celebrated Monday-Thursday: 6:30 a.m., 8 a.m.; Friday: 6:30 a.m., 8:15 a.m.; Saturday: 8 a.m., 4 p.m.; Sunday: 8 a.m., 11 a.m., 5:30 p.m.

Courtesy Photo



PENSACOLA | In an area of the city that was once more forest than paved roads, what is now Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Parish sprang

St. Michael the Archangel

[REFER THIS ARTICLE TO A FRIEND](#)

Other Stories

Florida Catholic Apostolic Journey Coverage

Seven embark on path to become Lay Carmelites

Christ Our Redeemer Parish dedicates new church

A tale of two spring breaks

Women of Faith: Taylor Fralix

Exploring Churches: Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

Executions to resume; question is when

Jacquelyn Horkan: Capitol Report

Editorial: What a lift the pope's visit brought

News Briefs

Good For You Pensacola-Tallahassee

Previous Edition of Florida Catholic Online

Advertisement

up in 1907 as Pensacola's third Catholic church.

Although most people still lived farther downtown, both North and East Hill were slowly becoming residential destinations for locals looking to build on higher plots of land. It was believed that the distance from the port would lessen their chances of contracting yellow fever. East Hill, in particular, set such a pattern for steady growth that it was necessary for the diocese to build another Catholic church to serve residents.

It was Father Robert Fullerton, pastor of St. Michael Parish in downtown Pensacola, who encouraged Mobile (Ala.) Bishop Edward P. Allen to build a church in East Hill. He got his wish in 1905, but because of a hurricane in 1906 that challenged progress, it wasn't until 1907 that parishioners could attend Mass at the new church located at the corner of Ninth Avenue and Jackson Street. In 1907, there were about 25 families registered as parishioners in the parish.

As the church's first pastor, Father Patrick Turner was busy overseeing the growing parish. It wasn't long before he established a school for Sacred Heart's boys and girls in two East Hill houses, requesting the services of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (Blessed Sacrament Sisters) from his hometown of New Orleans. In 1907, the same year that the parish completed the church, Sacred Heart Academy opened. By 1911, the school population had outgrown both the boys' and girls' houses. The sisters oversaw the building of a three-story stone school and convent on the corner of LaRua Street and 10th Avenue.

When Father Thomas Kennedy took over in 1911 as pastor, he worked with Rabbi William C. Ackerman, several doctors and prominent businessmen to establish a hospital. In 1915, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul opened the Pensacola Hospital, located on 12th Avenue, as the first Catholic hospital in Florida. Renamed Sacred Heart Hospital in 1948, the hospital moved to its current campus on the corner of 9th and Bayou in 1965.

In 1914, Father Kennedy also purchased nine square blocks on North 13th Avenue with plans to establish a parish cemetery. It wasn't until the 1930s that Mobile Bishop Thomas J. Toolen claimed the land for the diocese and established Holy Cross Cemetery.

After Father Kennedy left Sacred Heart, many priests followed his lead as pastor, but the two who stayed the longest were Father George A. Callahan and Msgr. Michael Daly.

In 1945, the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration left Pensacola and Msgr. Daly purchased Sacred Heart Academy for the parish. During the following school year, the Sisters of St. Benedict in Cullman, Ala., operated the school



until the Sisters of St. Dominic arrived in the fall of 1946.

Around the same time, parishioners decided that Sacred Heart Church and Academy needed to be relocated to a more central location in East Hill with new buildings. As a result, the parish now is at 12th Avenue and East Moreno Street.

It took some time, however, for the parish to build the new church and school. It began in 1951 with the school auditorium, which was supposed to be used as a temporary church building. Fifteen years later, Sacred Heart parishioners were still celebrating Mass in the auditorium. Because of Msgr. Daly's illness and an increasing debt, the parish entered a challenging period. Bishop Toolen then appointed Father Alexander McKeon as the parish administrator. In the mid-1960s, Msgr. Leo M. Byrnes, former Mobile diocesan superintendent of schools, became pastor, and two years later, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph G. Vath blessed the new church's cornerstone. In May of 1967, the current Spanish-style Cathedral of the Sacred Heart opened.

In 1968, Pensacola was transferred from the Diocese of Mobile to the Diocese of St. Augustine. After only seven years of this arrangement, the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee was established. Sacred Heart Church became the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Today, Msgr. Michael Reed serves as rector, with Vincentian Father James Thoyalil as parochial vicar. Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Sister Elizabeth Knight is the current school principal. The parish life center, completed in 2003, serves as a gathering place for parish, diocesan and community functions. In 2007, the parish celebrated its centennial with a yearlong calendar of events.

Sources: "Sacred Heart Parish: 1907-1975," by Mary Merritt Dawkins, Nov. 12, 1996. Other information provided by Renie Warfield.

[**Return to Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee Front Page**](#)

[Archdiocese of Miami](#) | [Diocese of Orlando](#) | [Diocese of Palm Beach](#) | [Diocese of Pensacola - Tallahassee](#) | [Diocese of St. Petersburg](#) | [Diocese of Venice](#)

Advertisement



*Reach more than 375,000
Catholic readers by advertising
Advertise Today Click Here!*

Copyright © 2007 - 2008 (except stories and photos by CNS) | All Rights Reserved | The Florida Catholic, Inc. | 50 E. Robinson Street | Orlando, FL 32801 |

(407) 373-0075