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August 26, 2008

EXPLORING PARISH CHURCHES

Port St. Joe parish is rich in Catholic history

One in an occasional series detailing the history of parishes in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

AMY FERRARA SMITH | FLORIDA CATHOLIC STAFF

Published: 08.25.08

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Courtesy Photo

St. Joseph Parish is located at 202 S. 20th St., Port St. Joe. Mass schedule: Saturdays, 4 p.m.; Sundays, 9:30 a.m.; Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, 9:30 a.m.; and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

PORT ST. JOE | On St. Joseph's feast day, March 19, 1513, Spanish explorers named a newfound waterway near the Gulf of Mexico the Bay of St. Joseph. When a town was established years later, it, too, was named for the saint and became Port St. Joe. Even though the area has a rich Catholic history, it took more than 400 years from that first sighting by Spanish Catholics before Catholic residents of the small beach town would celebrate Mass in their own Catholic church.

Before the 1925 establishment of a church in Port St. Joe, a visiting priest mounted railroad wheels to his Cadillac in order to ride the railroad tracks from Apalachicola to the small, rural community, where he celebrated Mass at a local home. The only other roadway from one town to the next was a horse path.

Finally, in 1920, the local Catholic community raised enough funds with the organization of dances, picnics and other events to purchase land for their new church.

Five years later, parishioners built the Catholic mission, naming it St. Joseph in honor of Jesus' foster father and, of course, the patron of the town.

In 1957, the mission built a larger church on seven acres of land. Two years later, it gained its first administrator and, thus, shed mission status to become St. Joseph Catholic Parish.

The pastor of the parish community of 148 families is Father Philip Fortin. The parish also currently serves San Blas Mission, which is at the entrance to St. Joseph Peninsula State Park (Cape San Blas), and St. Lawrence Mission in Wewahitchka.

St. Michael the Archangel
Blessed Sacrament
St. Patrick Parish
St. John The Evangelist
St. Dominic Church
St. Joseph Church
Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
St. Mary Catholic Church

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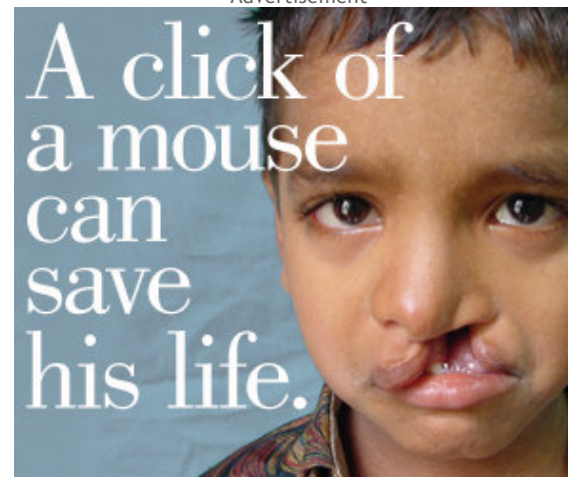
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