

SOME HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH HISTORY

Holy Family Catholic Church is located at 17353 NE 27A in Williston, Florida 32696. St. Anthony the Abbot is the mission church located on U.S. 19 and C-40A in Inglis, Florida 34449.

The Holy Family Catholic Mission, Williston, Florida, was established in 1968. The pastor of Blessed Trinity in Ocala, Florida, was sent to Williston to look into the number of Catholics in the area to determine the need for a mission here. There were 26 Catholics who attended Knauff's Funeral Home Chapel for the first liturgy in Williston.

Bishop Paul Tanner, of St. Augustine, Florida assigned Father Richard Altenbaugh of Saint Madeline Sophie Parish, High Springs, Florida, to the Williston Mission.

The first mass was held in the Women's Club of Williston. After a few months, through the graciousness of the Saint Barnabas Episcopal Church members, mass was held on Sunday evenings at Saint Barnabas, with religion classes for school children taught in an adjacent facility.

After three years, the membership had grown large enough to necessitate building a church of our own. Ten acres were purchased 2 ½ miles west of Williston on Highway 27 Alternate. On December 13, 1970, groundbreaking ceremonies were held on that parcel of land. The faithful attending the groundbreaking were Fr. Richard Altenbaugh; Walter & Hazel Anderson; John & Jean Bastanzi and daughter Robin; James & Kay Clark; Walter & Marguerite Collins & family; William & Suzanne Dees and daughter, DeAnn; Eugenia LaMothe; Rudolph & Martha Leisch; Harrison & Margaret Mackey; and Robert & Helen Poupard; sons Mark & Tommy and daughter, Gail.

In June of 1971, Bishop Paul Tanner blessed the church and dedicated it as the "Holy Family", a name chosen by the members themselves.

Succeeding missionary priests were Father Michael Williams, 1971; Father Paul Hogarty, 1973; and Father Roland Julien, 1974.

The first resident pastor was Father John Gillespie who was assigned on October 1, 1975. During his leadership, Holy Family Catholic Church was designated a parish with a mission at Inglis, Florida. Shortly thereafter, a Chiefland mission was added to the parish, which was then referred to in the St. Augustine diocese as the Tri-County Church of Levy County. In July, 1987, the Chiefland mission was dedicated as a parish and became St. John the Baptist Catholic Church.

December 5, 1979, Rev. John Snyder became the eighth bishop of the St. Augustine Diocese.

January, 1979, Father Anthony Sebra was installed as pastor.

January, 1980, brought Father Patrick Foley as spiritual leader of the parish. There were about 124 families by then. Father Foley re-designed the interior of the church with a forty foot extension plus addition of a social hall. It was a 40' X 80' addition to the church. Two classrooms were also constructed at the direction of Fr. Foley.

Three years later, 1983, Father Foley hired the first nun, Sister Caroline Kearney. Sr. Caroline was from the order of Sisters of Mercy whose motherhouse is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She served the community for five years covering much of rural Levy County.

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Deacon Al Ward began assisting Fr. Foley in June 1981. (Deacon Ward passed on to his heavenly reward in 2008.) Rosemary was the Deacon's wife; they had a family of 10 children.

June 14, 1981, during Fr. Pat Foley's tenure, Holy Family celebrated its tenth anniversary. All former pastors were invited to a special "Homecoming" along with parishioners and their guests for dinner on the grounds.

Fr. Foley became ill during 1981 and Fr. Paul Kayjen assisted as administrative assistant until Fr. Foley could recover from temporary blindness.

In 1982, the first pictorial directory was completed for the parish.

On Sunday, May 17, 1987, Fr. Michael Dubriel was ordained the first priest from Holy Family Catholic Church. Fr. Dubriel was provided a Mass Kit and a set of homemade vestments from the Holy Family Ladies Guild.

May 29, 1983, Monsignor R. Joseph James celebrated his first mass as pastor. Msg. James lived in a mobile home on the church property. Parishioners enjoyed the monsignor's peaceful manner, bible studies and quick dry wit.

Then on August 18, 1987, Father Nicholas J. Glisson assumed the office of Pastor. During this time from 1989-90, Deacon Bob Napier was assigned to assist Fr. Glisson. Deacon Napier was ordained a priest on May 1990, and celebrated his first mass at Holy Family, Williston. Fr. Glisson departed in 1991, for California to study church design.

Rev. John Pollard served as pastor for two years, August 1, 1991, to June 17, 1993 all while battling severe medical problems. He was a gentle soul and well liked for his efforts.

On April 13, 1993, pews were installed in the church in place of folding chairs.

Fr. James Moss was assigned pastor to replace Fr. Pollard. During Fr. Moss' tenure, Sunday, June 6, 1993, the 25th Jubilee Anniversary was celebrated with a program and covered dish. Of course, a good time was had by all.

Under the direction of Fr. Moss, March 12, 1995, a ground breaking ceremony was held for a rectory, classrooms (2nd phase) and a chapel. In June 1997, a northwest church entrance and stained glass windows (by Sister Diane) were added to the church.

In August 18, 1997, Sisters Nicole Cayer and Laboure Brusnahan came to work as Director of Religious Education and assistant, respectively. A few years later Sister Charlotte Tremoulet replaced Sister Laboure who traveled south for a teaching assignment.

Father Paul Donnelly was transferred to Holy Family as pastor June 15, 1999, and Father Grover Tipton was assigned as his administrative assistant January 23, 2001. (Fr. Tipton was a convert from the Episcopal Church, married with children. He was a practicing priest in our diocese of St. Augustine.) Holy Family parishioners loved both Frs. Donnelly and Tipton; however their tenure was not long. Both priests died within four months of each other; Father Tipton from a heart attack March 23, 2001; Father Donnelly from cancer July 16, 2001.

August 21, 2001, Rev. Victor Galeone was ordained ninth bishop of St. Augustine Diocese, Florida.

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Father Alan Bower was appointed as pastor and remained until he was transferred to Jacksonville on December 2004. Father Bower instituted a Hispanic Mass on Saturday nights at 7:00 pm.

Bishop Victor Galeone assigned Father Rodolfo Godinez, the first Mexican priest in our parish, to assume pastoral responsibilities on January 1, 2005. Father Rodolfo continued the Spanish Mass and brought many Hispanics into the church. Also during his tenure, a 5,000 square foot parish hall was constructed north of the church building.

Father Robert (Rob) Trujillo was sent to replace Father Godinez in 2012. He continued working with Hispanics and the church membership grew close to 400 families. Father Rob renovated the Chapel including the purchase of an adoration tabernacle, matching set of two candle holders, two candelabras, altar bells and holy water font. The confessional was moved to the rear of the church with behind-the-screen confessions. Father Rob was reassigned in the spring of 2015 to Lake City where he had served prior to Williston.

Father Manny Lopez is our present pastor of Holy Family having been assigned February 2015. Fr. Manny has accomplished many renovations in these short months including new roofs on campus buildings, updates on air conditionings, septic system etc.