



## Divine Mercy Sunday C April 28, 2019

- ◆ Celebrating 60 Years as a Parish
- ◆ Giving Thanks for Sr. Immaculata and Sr. Joseph

This weekend our parish family

- ◆ celebrates 60 years of Love and Mercy as a parish, and
- ◆ gives thanks to God for the decades of blessings our parish has received through the ministries of Sr. Immaculata and Sr. Joseph.

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### Key People, Dates and Events in our Parish Story

Our Universal Church story began on *Pentecost Sunday* when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he commissioned his disciples to “*Go Forth*” and “*Make Disciples*” of all nations. It would take more than 1,500 years before some of Jesus’ disciples would reach the shores of what is now the United States of America.

On September 8, 1565, the *first Catholic Mass in America* was celebrated in *St. Augustine*.

*In 1870, St. Augustine became a Diocese* and, for over a century, has been serving the spiritual needs of Catholics in the state of Florida.

*In 1940, Joseph Patrick Hurley was appointed bishop of St. Augustine* and went on to found numerous parishes, schools and hospitals throughout the state.

*In 1958, Miami became a diocese serving Catholics in the southern part of Florida.*

*In 1968, the central part of the state was designated the Diocese of Orlando.* On October 23, 2010, John Noonan was appointed as the fifth bishop of our Diocese.

When the *Space Program* started in Cape Canaveral in the 50s, several new parishes were established in Brevard County. In *November 1959, Archbishop Joseph Hurley founded Ascension Parish.* In those early days, the parish served about 300 families, most of whom had young children. Before our first church was built, founding parishioners attended Mass in a building that was next to the current Eau Gallie Library on Pineapple Avenue.

Our founding parishioners, led by our *Founding Pastor, Father Martin Powers*, sacrificed to build our first church (1960) and first school (1961). During our parish’s early decades, the *Council of Catholic Women and the Men’s Holy Name Society* played a very important part in the development of our parish. In recent years, the *Knights of Columbus* have continued the work of the Holy Name Society. Our Council is called Monsignor Martin B. Power, Council 14573, after our Founding Pastor.

*In 1961, at the invitation of Father Powers, three Sisters of Mercy came from Ireland to lead our school: Sister Monica Ryan (first Principal), Sister Assumpta Finn and Sister Immaculata Knox.* Sister Immaculata went on to teach in a variety of grades for 45 years, but mostly in Kindergarten. For 40+ years, Sister also prepared hundreds of Religious Education students for their First Communion. In the 70s and 80s, Sister, an accomplished artist herself, taught Art to Middle School students. After retiring from our school, Sister was “recycled” (her words) to undertake Pastoral Care ministry, bringing the Eucharist, hope and plenty of laughter to all she visited.

In 1966, *Sister Joseph Barden* came to America and taught sixth grade at Holy Name of Jesus Elementary School for five years. In 1971, she was appointed *Principal of Ascension School.* During those early years, Sister also taught Math, Science and Religion in grades 6, 7, and 8. Slowly but surely, our school became recognized as one of the best, if not the best elementary school in Brevard County. *In 1986, our school received the “School of Excellence Award” at*

the White House. Following her retirement as Principal in 2000, Sister Joseph assumed the responsibilities of *Director of Development* for our school, a position she held until June 2018.

**Father Edward Condren** was our *second Pastor* (1963-1973). Father Ned was always very supportive of the school and other parish ministries.

**Father Val Sheedy** served as our *third Pastor* (1973-1989). It was during his time that our *current Church* was built (1986). In 1980, our current *Parish Office* was built as a Rectory for priests and as an office for parish administration. Father Sheedy introduced the *Renew Program* to Ascension parishioners. This was the first time many Catholics had the opportunity to gather together in small groups to share their faith. Father Sheedy had a wonderful gift for teaching and preaching. He had a great passion for Catholic education and was also very supportive of Sisters Joseph and Immaculata at the school.

In 1978, **Eddie Berrios** became Head of Maintenance, a position he held for 31 years. **Flo Downey** joined the staff as parish Receptionist in 1984, and served in that position for the next 25 years. In 1985, **Richard Storum** became our *first Permanent Deacon*. In 1991 **Maria Sittig** joined our staff as parish Secretary.

**In 1989, Father Frank Smith** became our *fourth Pastor*, a position he held until 2001. Under Father Frank's leadership, Phase One (1993-94) and Phase Two (1997) of our current school were built. Our current Vice Principal, **Donna Violi**, is now in her 44<sup>th</sup> year of teaching math in our school. Our current Principal, **Anita Best Brady**, is now in her 35<sup>th</sup> year in our school. Anita was in first grade when our school was opened in September 1961.

During Father Smith's time as pastor, ministries in our parish grew from strength to strength. Four significant developments included the building of *Ascension Manor* in partnership with HUD, the opening of our *Social Concerns Office* and *Thrift Store*, and the introduction of the *Christ Renews His Parish Spiritual Renewal Program*. **Deacon Michael McElwee** oversaw this Renewal Program and was also coordinator of our parish ministries for 23 years. Ascension Manor currently has 76 residents. Our Social Concerns Office and Thrift Store touch the lives of thousands of people every year. Since its introduction into our parish 25 years ago, CRHP has

touched the spiritual lives of thousands of men and women.

**On 9/11/2001, I became the fifth Pastor** of our parish. I am the third priest from Kilkenny, Ireland, to serve as pastor.

On my first weekend here, I expressed my desire to have an *Adoration Chapel* in the parish. The Chapel was opened and dedicated in July 2002. Currently, over 400 Parishioners help us to have prayer on our campus 24/7. Shortly after that, parishioners were invited to bring food items to Mass on the first Sunday of each month for our Food Pantry. We started to set aside *\$100,000 of our Annual Budget as a form of outreach to the poor at home and abroad*. Currently, our Thrift Store raises about \$375,000 a year. Nearly all of that money goes to our Social Concerns Office which provides assistance to some 15,000 men and women in our area annually. In 2001, under the leadership of Sister Joseph, our *School Gym* was added. In 2013, the *Buescher Center* was built to accommodate the growing number of ministries. In 2003, under the leadership of Principal **Pauline Rowan**, our school was again recognized as a *U.S. Department of Education School of Excellence*.

In 2003, **Mary Birmingham** joined our staff as Director of Music and Liturgy as well as the RCIA process. During her 15 years at the parish, Mary greatly enhanced both of these important parish ministries. **Katie Gander** is now our Director of Music and Liturgy. **Ashley Breaux** leads our Contemporary Music program and the music for our Edge (Junior High) and Teen Ministry. **Laura Dodson** coordinates our RCIA process and oversees the *Small Christian Communities* that gather weekly to listen and share on the Sunday Readings. Laura is also Katie Gander's assistant in the Music and Liturgy Department. In 2004, **Mary Russo** became our parish Bookkeeper and is now also our Business Manager. **Anne Dorros** joined our staff in 2005 as Mary Russo's assistant. **Betsy Glasenapp** joined our staff in 2008 as *Director of Faith Formation*. **Shelly Wackley** is Betsy's assistant. In 2009, **Teresa Romano** became our parish receptionist. Teresa and her husband Dan also oversee our CRHP process. In 2013, **Monica Sutton** joined our staff as Coordinator of Newcomers and Coordinator of Ministries. We currently have 85 ministries. In the summer of 2017, **Cara Giuliano** became our Middle/High School Youth Minister. **Brian Carley** is the head of Special Projects. Our maintenance staff consists of **Jeff Blair**, **Chris Sittig**,

***Chips Conrad, Sharlene Tate and Edel Roche Calandra.*** In 2016, ***Rosanna Harris*** joined our staff as Food Manager. In addition to our dedicated staff, our parish is very blessed with ***hundreds of dedicated volunteers***, many of whom head up our many ministries.

Our parish is also blessed with the dedication and ministry of four Deacons: ***Deacon Sergio Colon, Deacon Tom Stauffacher, Deacon Bill Terneus and Deacon Chris Meehan.*** After spending 28 years serving our church and country as an Air Force Chaplain, ***Fr. Martin Fitzgerald*** joined our parish team in 2017.

Looking back over the past 60 years as a parish and 50+ years of having the Sisters of Mercy, we know we have many reasons to celebrate. As we remember and give thanks for the multitude of blessings in the past, we can look forward with much hope and confidence for a blessed future for our parish and school.

Our beloved Sisters depart for Ireland on June 15. If you wish to send them a farewell card and financial gift, you can mail or bring them to the parish office or else place them in the Sunday collection basket. The Sisters ask they not receive physical gifts that they will need to take home in their suitcases.



Have a blessed week,

*Fr. Sean*