

150 YEARS
OF SERVICE TO THE
ROMAN CATHOLICS



1853

2003

CORPUS CHRISTI CATHEDRAL

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

AND
COMMUNITY OF
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

THE BEGINNING

- 1827-28: Roman Catholic families including the Rivas and Beldens settled in area. They were served by priests from Laredo and Victoria.
- 1839: Kinney's Trading Post was established, the beginnings of Corpus Christi.
- 1848: Fr. James Fitzgerald visited Corpus Christi regularly to celebrate Mass and administer Sacraments. Mass was said at the homes of Richard Powers and Cornelius Cahill, where Fr. Fitzgerald stayed while in town. He began a collection and plans for building a church.
- 1849: Fr. Fitzgerald died of yellow fever at the age of 28.

1st ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH

- 1853: Fr. Bernard O'Reilly became the first resident priest, assigned by Bishop Odin of the Galveston Diocese (whole state of Texas). He completed Fr. Fitzgerald's plans to build a church.

Parish records began with the baptism of Elizabeth Clark, daughter of William and Mary Anne Clark on June 14, 1853 by Fr. Bernard O'Reilly

- 1855: First Mass celebrated in small adobe "St. Patrick's" church located on Tancahua and Antelope.
- 1861: Fr. John McGee arrived in town and began the building of a rectory on Antelope St. behind the church.
- 1863: Fr. John Gonnard built a boys' boarding school next to church and later a day-school for girls, headed by Mother St. Claude.
- 1866: Catherine Bray sold two acres of land for \$1 to Fr. Gonnard to serve as consecrated burial ground, now Holy Cross Cemetery.
- 1867: Yellow Fever epidemic took lives of about 1/3 of the city's population including Fr.

Gonnard, who worked to the last trying to help everyone in this great trial, regardless of their faith

1871: Four Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament come from Brownsville to run the girls' school, Incarnate Word Academy.

2nd ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH

1874-82: Most Reverend Dominic Manucy was consecrated Bishop of the new Vicariate of Brownsville, however, he shortly moved to Corpus Christi, where he began plans and fund raising for a new St. Patrick's Church.

Capt. Mifflin Kenedy aided Bishop Manucy by donating the funds to complete the new St. Patrick's Church as well as 3 bells, an organ and a fresco painting for the ceiling.

The new St. Patrick's Church was designed by the architect-builder Charles Carroll, who donated much time and labor to keep costs down.

1882: First services were held in new St. Patrick's Church which was located on the corner of Caranchua and Antelope streets.

1884: Fr. Claude Jaillet arrived. He would be in residence for about 45 years. He did so much for the parish and the diocese that it fills a book.

1886: Mary Margaret Healy Murphy established hospital for sick and poor of the city.

1912: Pope Pius X created the Diocese of Corpus Christi & St. Patrick's Church became St. Patrick's Cathedral. He appointed the Most Reverend Paul Nussbaum, C.P. as the first bishop of the diocese.

1916: Major hurricane caused many deaths and much loss of property. Cathedral parishioners drove a car through high winds to move women and children to safety.

1919: A virulent influenza epidemic hit the city killing many, including both priests of the Cathedral.

On Sept. 14th that year the deadliest storm ever to hit the city struck. Many lost their lives trying to save others including Sr. Thais, as she tried to rescue patients at Spohn Hospital, then on North Beach. Fr. Malachy O'Leary, pastor of the Cathedral, opened a relief center with a soup kitchen for survivors. The Knights of Columbus helped serve food and provide clothing and other supplies.

1920: Charles J. Taylor became the first parishioner to be ordained to the priesthood.

1921: Emmanuel B. Ledvina was appointed to replace Bishop Nussbaum as the head of the Corpus Christi Diocese. During his time the Catholic community suffered persecution at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, and World War II started.

1928-47: Fr. John Lannon (later Right Reverend Monsignor) was pastor of St. Patrick's Cathedral and would assist with the building of the third church.

3rd Church: Corpus Christi Cathedral

1938: Bishop Mariano Garriga became Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese. He was the first Hispanic, native-born Texan to be elevated to the hierarchy.

Shortly after he arrived, fire spread through the belfries of St. Patrick's Cathedral. That plus the growth of the congregation necessitated a new building.

1940: July 17th the new Corpus Christi Cathedral was dedicated. Pope Pius XII had indicated to Bishop Ledvina his preference for the name "Corpus Christi Cathedral." St. Patrick's Parish on S. Alameda would be started later to preserve the name of the original church in Corpus Christi.

- 1949: Bishop Ledvina retired and Bishop Garriga took over full responsibility for the diocese.
- 1952: Murals, stained glass windows, etc. in the new Corpus Christi Cathedral were finished and the debt was paid in full, so Bishop Garriga consecrated the building.
- The old St. Patrick's Cathedral minus its bell towers was moved to North Beach where it became Our Lady Star of the Sea.
- 1953: Msgr. Albert Schmitt became pastor of the Cathedral and helped to celebrate the centennial of the parish's establishment. Sr. Mary Xavier Holworthy, IWBS, published the parish history, A Century of Sacrifice—A History of Cathedral Parish 1853-1953
- 1965: Bishop Garriga passed away and was entombed in the crypt chapel, where Bishop Ledvina had already been laid to rest.
- Later that year the Most Reverend Thomas J. Drury became the new Bishop of the Corpus Christi Diocese. To him would fall the task of implementing the initial Vatican II reforms.
- 1970: Hurricane Celia struck, and the Cathedral basement became Red Cross headquarters to provide relief for those affected by the storm.
- 1976: Msgr. Richard Shirley became pastor of the Cathedral parish. He expanded the musical and liturgical ministries and began the Cathedral Concert Series, which is still providing quality concerts for the entire city at no cost. He also joined in ecumenical out-reach ministries, such as Metro-Ministries' Loaves and Fishes.
- 1978: Cathedral was vandalized by a man who was mentally ill. Damage estimates were \$50,000; repairs were made where possible.
- 1979: A new rectory designed by John Wright, parish architect, was built and dedicated.

- 1983: Following the retirement of Bishop Drury, Bishop Rene H. Gracida assumed episcopal duties for the diocese.
- 1985: The crypt chapel was redesigned and enlarged by parish architect James Rome and artist Michael Tracy to provide an appropriate space for daily Mass. It was re-named "Emmanuel Chapel" in memory of Bishop Emmanuel B. Ledvina.
- 1985: In November through a grant from the Kenedy Memorial Foundation the 9:30 a.m. Mass began to be broadcast live on TV for the sake of the shut-ins and sick, and for the purpose of evangelizing.
- 1988: The Blessed Sacrament Chapel, James Rome architect, was added onto the Lipan St. side of the Cathedral nave.
- 1995: Bishop Roberto Gonzalez became Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese, as Bishop Gracida prepared for retirement.
- 1996: Christus Spohn Health System began sponsorship of the live-televised Cathedral Mass recognizing the vital role it plays in the health of the sick, elderly and shut-ins.
- 1997: Bishop Gonzalez assumed full responsibility for the diocese, and began a revision of the Chancery offices. He appointed Msgr. Michael Howell as rector of the Cathedral, a position he still holds.
- 2000: Bishop Edmond Carmody became the 7th bishop for the Diocese; he was installed on St. Patrick's Day (March 17), the patronal feast day of the original parish.
- 2001: The Cathedral bell towers were repaired due to major deterioration caused by the salt air.