

## Our Story

The story of St. James Major Parish began on October 3, 1911, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Bernard, where, at that time, Fr. Conrad Rebesch, SSJ, who was pastor at Most Pure Heart of Mary Parish in Mobile, would celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist with black Catholics in the area we now know as St. James Major Catholic Parish.

In 1912, a school was built and staffed at first with lay personnel before the Holy Family Sisters from New Orleans came to take charge. The Holy Ghost Sisters came in 1930, then, in 1943, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth came and remained till 1954 after which lay staff took over until 1964. The daughters of Charity staffed the school until 2002.

However, April 27, 1913, saw the dedication of the first church by Most Reverend Edward H. Allen, which was destroyed by the storm of 1916.

In 1926, St. James had its first resident pastor, Fr. Michael Neary, SSJ. His first winter in the parish was not one to be envied, but it also showed the spirit of a true devotion. He rented a house that had no doors and no glass in the windows, God was with him. His first mission was to reclaim lost Catholics. He built a school for converts which still survives to this date. From 1928 through 1936, Fr. Joseph Schmutz was pastor and helped the people through the Great Depression.

With the appointment of Fr. Cornelius Sexton, SSJ, the Parish had its Constitution and By-Laws in print. She also celebrated her Golden Anniversary in 1975. The parish grew, both physically and spiritually.

A new rectory was built in 1982 and the parish center in 1989, both under the pastoral leadership of Fr. William Danahy, SSJ.

In 2000, during the pastorate of Fr. Henry Dickson, the Parish celebrated its 75th Anniversary. The parish used the celebration to initiate their campaign to raise funds for a new church. On March 4, 2003, the new church was dedicated by Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb. In his remarks, the Archbishop called St. James Major a "beacon of light to the Prichard community." In 2004, the parish school closed due to a decline of students and increasing costs.

In 2007, Fr. Robert Kearns, SSJ was appointed pastor. His vision is the "new evangelization." Our parishioners are being challenged to grow in love with the Word of God and to give witness to their faith. The school is being recycled to serve the poor, homeless women, tutoring and health needs.

The parish has come a long way; from the cradle of a private home liturgy to a vibrant community of over 340 families and numerous organizations and ministries. To say that God has been watching over us would be an understatement.

To God give the glory!