

## **A History of St. Mary of the Pines**



In spring 1973, a group of Catholics residing in the Shreveport areas of Summer Grove, Southern Hills, and Keithville undertook a study to determine the need and feasibility of establishing a new parish to serve those areas. The results of the study were compiled, and a petition was drafted. The study results were presented to the Most Reverend Charles P. Greco, Bishop of Alexandria, along with the petition asking that a new parish be established in South Shreveport. Bishop Greco agreed and issued the proclamation establishing the new parish on June 7, 1973 and appointed Father Hugh Biggar as first pastor.

The new parish was homeless. Arrangements were made with the Caddo Parish School Board to use the auditoriums, first at Summerfield Elementary School and later at Ridgewood Junior High School. Also, friends at Christ United Methodist Church and Our Savior Lutheran Church made their buildings available to the new parish on many occasions. An ecumenical relationship and Christian brotherhood were established and continue to this day.

Holy Trinity Church in downtown Shreveport made a gift of a beautifully wooded tract of land, slightly more than eight acres, to the new parish. The site was to be the permanent home for the new parish. There was one stipulation: in some manner, the new parish to be built must be named after Mary, the Mother of God; hence the name: *St. Mary of the Pines*. According to the liturgical calendar, the parish Feast Day is celebrated on September 8, Mary's birthday.

As the parish grew, so too did the need to provide a permanent home. By that time, Bishop Lawrence P. Graves was Bishop of Alexandria. An urgent appeal was made to him, and he was presented with the plans for a Parish Building program.

Phase I of the program envisioned a Multi-Purpose Building. Approval was given, and work began in late 1974. The building was ready for occupancy in September 1975. The Multi-Purpose building combined under one roof an assembly room (for church services and other large gatherings), Parish Offices, a kitchen, and four (4) rooms for multi-use: activity rooms, classrooms, or small meeting rooms.

Eventually, the large assembly room became the Parish Hall. It was dedicated as Vandegaer Hall on October 7, 1975 bearing the name of Monsignor John. C. Vandegaer. He was pastor of Holy Trinity Church and was responsible for donating the land on which the new parish of St. Mary of the Pines would be built. Bishop Graves dedicated Vandegaer Hall "to the glory of God and His Holy Mother."

The new parish fulfilled its expectations. The members were active, and the community flourished. Vandegaer Hall became a place of worship, a game room, a theater for stage productions and movies, and a dance hall. It often served several functions in one day.

The Founding Parishioners had the continuing goals of building a more fitting place for Mass and of providing more space for religious education. On April 10, 1979 Bishop Graves forwarded to Father Hugh Bigger a letter confirming the Diocesan Consulters' recommendation that the next phase of St. Mary's building program should begin. The letter also approved a request that the Parish approach the Knights of Columbus to secure a loan to cover the expense of Phase II. Phase II included erecting a church building and seven (7) new classrooms.

At the time the parish was established in 1973, a temporary Rectory was set up in a rented house on Blom Blvd. The following year a home was purchased on Mountainbrook Road and served as the Rectory until October 14, 1984.

Father J. Carson LaCaze was appointed Pastor October 7, 1983. The new Rectory was built on parish property and was dedicated on October 14, 1984 by Bishop William B. Friend of Alexandria-Shreveport.

St. Ann Mission in Stonewall was removed from St. Joseph Church, Mansfield, and attached to St. Mary of the Pines in 1974. The parish and Mission together totaled 1,100 families in 1998.

On July 30, 1987, the Diocese of Alexandria-Shreveport was divided into the Diocese of Alexandria and the Diocese of Shreveport. St. Mary of the Pines, with St. Ann Mission, became part of the Diocese of Shreveport under the leadership of Bishop William B. Friend, D.D.

A change of pastoral appointments in 1999 brought about a realignment of some parishes and missions. St. Ann Mission was re-attached to St. Joseph Church in Mansfield. St. Mary of the Pines' parish census was corrected to reflect the actual number of 697 families.

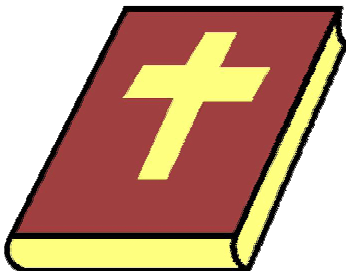
In July, 2005, Our Lady of Holy Rosary Parish merged with St. Mary of the Pines Parish, bringing with them an endowment fund to be used for the education of needy children in Catholic schools.

Also, in July, 2005, Sacred Heart was made a mission to St. Mary of the Pines.

From the time of foundation to 2010, twenty priests have served at St. Mary of the Pines as Pastors, Assistant Pastors or in residence. They are:

# **ST. MARY OF THE PINES**

## **PASTORS, ASSOCIATE PASTORS & PRIESTS IN RESIDENCE**



- 1973-1980(?): Rev. Hugh Biggar – Founding Pastor  
(+) 1974: Rev. John Vandegaer – Assisted during Parish foundation  
1978-1979: Rev. Ron Matthews – Associate Pastor  
(+) Rev. William L. UpdeGraff, O.P. – Associate Pastor  
1979–1980: Rev. Roger McMullen – Associate Pastor/Retired  
Rev. Bernard Zagst – Temporary Administrator  
1980-1983: Rev. Robert Inzina – Pastor  
1980-1982: Rev. Patrick Madden – Associate Pastor  
1982-1983: Rev. Ken Roy – Associate Pastor  
1983-1993: Rev. Msgr. J. Carson LaCaze – Pastor  
1983-1987: Rev. Stephen Wright – Associate Pastor  
(+)1987-1988: Rev. Daniel Walsh - in residence  
1988-1990: Rev. Rothell Price – Associate Pastor  
1991-1993: Rev. Peter Mangum – Associate Pastor  
1994-1995: Rev. Curtis Woods – Associate Pastor  
1993-1999: Rev. Philip F. Michiels – Pastor  
1995-1997: Rev. Joseph Howard – Associate Pastor  
1997-2000: Rev. Andre' McGrath, O.F.M. – in residence  
1999-2005: Rev. Edmund A. "Larry" Niehoff – Pastor  
2005-2010: Rev. Rothel Price - Pastor  
2010- : Rev. Francis Kamau - Pastor  
2010- : Rev. Henry Kiggundu – Associate Pastor

*(+) Indicates a priest who has died.*