

# SAINT JOHN VIANNEY PARISH

ST. PETE BEACH FLORIDA



## HISTORY OF SAINT JOHN VIANNEY

### 1937

St. John's Parish began in 1937 as a mission church, belonging to St. Joseph's of St. Petersburg; to serve the string of beach communities on the barrier islands. Although there were only about 50 Catholic families, they wanted their own place to worship.

When the little church opened, the cost of pork chops was 23 cents a pound, fresh shrimp was 18 cents a pound, cigarettes cost 11-½ cents a pack, a Kenmore washer sold for \$39.95, a 1937 Packard sedan went for \$1,025 and a breakfast special at Webb's City for 9 cents.

### 1939

*Pope Pius XI dies and is replaced by Pope Pius XII.*

### 1940

The original St. John's Church, however, was not located at its present site. The first little mission church was located at 87<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Blind Pass Road, but in 1940 was moved to 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue; the present site of Sweetbay Supermarket. It had the look of a little New England Church, with knotty pine walls, plain windows and a piano located in the rear.

There was a small altar, and Gussie Hannon could be counted on to take care of the candles and altar linens. The building held about 150 people. Fr. John Mullins, from St. Joseph's, would come out to the beach on Sunday morning for two Masses and to hear confessions.

In 1940, Fr. John Murphy (not to be confused with Fr. John C. Murphy) was named pastor. He was a big man, and many parishioners said, "The little church would shake when he walked in!"

### 1949

During the 1949-50 winter tourist season, Fr. Patrick O'Donoghue, pastor, arranged to purchase a circus tent from Ringling Brother to accommodate the growing numbers. The little church could no longer hold everyone. The tent attracted attention and the people crowded in!

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That year, the tent made Christmas Midnight Mass very special. Palms, hibiscus and poinsettias were planted in the ground surrounding the altar. A balmy, starry-perfect night helped create the perfect atmosphere. However, the tent was not immune to strong winds. On one windy Sunday morning, Fr. O'Donoghue calmed a nervous congregation with prayers that God would not allow the tent to collapse during Mass.

The tent not only served as a church, but also as the bingo tent. Kneelers used for Mass were stacked outside and replaced by wooden bingo tables. For years after the tent was gone, beans and black-eye peas, used for bingo markers, popped up where the tent had stood.

### 1950

Until this time, St. Petersburg had only one Catholic school. Seventy-five children from the beaches traveled the ten miles daily to St. Paul's. Fr. O'Donoghue wanted a school with eight classrooms, a kitchen, cafeteria, a convent and a rectory.

Ground was broken for this new building project in the spring of 1951. Some of the notable people who came to this ceremony were: State Senator Henry Baynard, St. Petersburg Mayor Stanley Minshall, County Commissioner Edward LaVoie, St. Pete Beach Mayor J. E. Stambaugh, Superintendent of Schools Floyd Christian, President of Gulf Beach Bank Lee Ballard and many other officials of state, county and city.

Fr. O'Donoghue was a very creative fundraiser. In an effort to raise funds for a new organ, he sold pledges to buy individual keys. He also devised gimmicks to earn money for the new school classrooms. When he had determined the cost of each classroom, he divided the amount by the number of students per room and ended up by selling "squares" of the classrooms for \$250 each.

A major fund-raising event of the 1950's was the Isles Mardi Gras. There were game booths, rides and food stands. It required the cooperation and effort of practically every member of the parish. On March 17, 1954, Governor Charles Johns officially opened the Mardi Gras festivities and joined in the traditional corned beef and cabbage dinner that followed. These Mardi Gras were held every year from 1951 through 1959.

### 1951

St. John's School opened its doors in September 1951, with 300 students, Sister M. Thomasine as principal and four other sisters of the order of School Sisters of Notre Dame of Baltimore. As St. John's grew, it attracted

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more Catholics to the area. Parishioner and local realtor/historian Frank Hurley said that St. John's was the "catalyst for this whole area to develop."

Many families looking for a home in Pinellas County wanted to live near a Catholic School. A classified ad, run by Upham Realtors in the April 10, 1950 issue of the *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, advertised a four-bedroom, two-bath, two-car garage St. Pete Beach house (for \$19,999) as being close to the new Catholic School.

### 1953

In November 1953, Fr. O'Donoghue was transferred to St. Mary's Church in Miami. More than a thousand parishioners gathered in the Church Auditorium to say good-bye. Fr. Patrick Trainor succeeded him, coming to St. John's from St. Patrick's in Gainesville.

### 1956

In 1956, two new parish organizations—the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and the St. Vincent de Paul Society—were added to the existing organizations, which included the Men's Club, Holy Name Society and Ladies Auxiliary (previously called the Altar Society and more recently the Ladies Club).

On November 19, 1956, the third wing of the school—consisting of four classrooms for the cost of \$64,000—was dedicated by Auxiliary Bishop McDonough.

### 1958

*Pope Pius XII died and was replaced by Pope John XXIII.*

Sr. Thomasine, the school's first principal, left in 1958 and Sister Mary Adelama took her place.

### 1959

The fourth and last wing of the school was completed and dedicated by Archbishop Hurley in October of 1959. Under the direction of Fr. Trainor, the eight-year dream of Fr. O'Donoghue came true. The school was completely furnished with the latest school equipment.



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The final wing of the school building provided rooms for science, music, visual aids and a library. Also finished about this time were locker rooms and showers for both boys and girls.

In December 1959, Fr. Trainor received the news he had been raised to the rank of Domestic Prelate (Monsignor) by Pope John XXIII. After the major building programs of the 1950's, which involved the Church Auditorium and the school, it wasn't long before another major project had to be needed—construction of a new church. With an ever-increasing number of families establishing permanent homes on the islands, and with the influx of winter visitors, a larger church is needed.

### 1962

In 1962, Msgr. Trainor announced that a drive should be started to finance the \$442,000 project. It would provide a 23,000 square foot church seating 1,550 people. Barry and Kay of Chicago designed the church under the local supervision of Bruce and Parrish, Architects.

The I.C. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, handled the installation of an electronic Sicilian Carillon in the bell tower. The pews came from Page Church Furniture Company of Albemarle, North Carolina.

Under Msgr. Trainor's direction, an ambitious fund-raising drive began to meet the cost of the project. His appeal asked people to pledge a "fair share" of a day's pay once a month for 24 months. This amounted to about 41 cents a day, according to the fund appeal flier. One year later the beautiful new church building was dedicated by Archbishop Joseph Hurley.

*The Second Vatican Council, the 21<sup>st</sup> ecumenical council, is opened.*

### 1963

*Pope John XXIII died and replaced by Pope Paul VI.*

### 1965

*After being reopened by Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council was closed.*

### 1966

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*In March, Vatican Council II changes were instituted in our Mass and prayers were said in English for the first time.*

### 1968

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Most Reverend Charles B. McLaughlin was appointed the First Bishop of St. Petersburg and installed on June 17. With the installation of Bishop McLaughlin, St. Petersburg officially became its own diocese.

### 1969

The new sanctuary was completed in November.

### 1972

The Adult Choir was formed, the school board established, the first issue of the monthly newspaper was published and the first fundraiser flea market was held.

### 1978

*Pope Paul VI died and is replaced by Pope John Paul I. Pope John Paul I only lives for about a month as Pope before he dies and is replaced by Pope John Paul II.*

On December 14, 1978, the Most Reverend Charles B. McLaughlin died in office as Bishop of St. Petersburg.

### 1979

The Most Reverend Thomas Larkin was ordained Bishop of St. Petersburg on May 27, 1979.

### 1988

On November 28, 1988, the Most Reverend Thomas Larkin retired from his office of Bishop of St. Petersburg.

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### 1989

March 17, 1989, the Most Reverend John C. Favalora was appointed Third Bishop of St. Petersburg and installed on May 16.

At the age of 72, Msgr. Trainor retired as pastor and Fr. John C. Murphy was appointed pastor. Msgr. Trainor continued to live at St. John's, as Pastor Emeritus.

### 1990

Sr. Joan Brennan of the Sisters of Charity become principal; only three Sisters of Notre Dame remain teaching in the school.

### 1991

The Bell Choir began under the direction of Music Director Richard Dale.

### 1992

A building on the corner of 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Blind Pass Road was purchased to serve as the parish business office.

### 1993

March—the first Frontier Days, a western-themed carnival was held; but after opening on Friday, March 12, the “Storm of the Century” spoiled the weekend.

### 1994

March—the second annual Frontier Days was a great success.

On November 3, the Most Rev. John C. Favalora, third Bishop of St. Petersburg, was appointed the third Archbishop of Miami. He was installed on December 20.

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### 1995

On December 5, the most Reverend Robert N. Lynch was appointed the Fourth Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

### 1996

The Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch was ordained and installed as Fourth Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

The seriously rundown athletic field of St. John's school was remodeled. The end result was two full-size sports fields; soccer and baseball, each with the proper turf for the sport and not a sand spur in sight.

On July 4, 1996, Fr. John Murphy carried the Olympic Torch as it made its way up to Atlanta for the '96 Olympic Games.

### 1997

There were continued improvements to the athletic field, including new fencing, backstops, tennis/basketball courts and finally a new pavilion to protect the children during inclement weather.

### 1998

The parish celebrated its Golden Anniversary:

February: School reunion for all alumni and teachers.

February 21: Anniversary Mass, followed by a gala anniversary dinner and dance.

May: A special pilgrimage was planned to France to visit the city of Ars—the town of the parish patron, St. John Vianney.

### 2005



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*Pope John Paul II died and was replaced by Pope Benedict XVI.*

Fr. Robert Morris was named pastor and Fr. Bob Gangolu, Parochial Vicar, of St. John Vianney.

### 2006

Seminarian student Keith Fitzsimmons, of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, was assigned to St. John Vianney for a ten-week pastoral assignment during the summer.

On November 4, 2006, Bishop Emeritus, the Most Reverend Thomas Larkin, died of cancer.

### 2007

On Sunday, July 1, 2007, a transitional Mass was celebrated—to say goodbye to Fr. Robert Morris and Fr. Robert Gangolu; and, at the same time, welcome the new Pastor, Fr. John Blum and Parochial Vicar, Fr. Allan Tupa.

Deacon Tim Cummings, a transitional deacon and seminarian of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, was assigned to St. John Vianney for a ten-week pastoral assignment during the summer.

*On July 7, 2007, Pope Benedict issued the moto proprio: Summorum Pontificum. This document clarifies the proper use of the ordinary form (in the language of the people, for us, English) and the extraordinary form (in Latin) of the Roman Rite of the Mass.*

In September, the Parish Office moved to the old convent house. The old office—the house on the corner of Blind Pass Road and 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue—became the new “Vianney House;” which expanded the capacities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the parish. This move also consolidated all the parish offices into one building.

### 2008

Deacon Karl “Buster” Melchior, a transitional deacon and seminarian of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, was assigned to St. John Vianney for a ten-week pastoral assignment during the summer.

November 16, 2008, the parish celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, with an Anniversary Mass, followed by a parish-wide picnic.



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### 2009

Msgr. Patrick Trainor, Pastor Emeritus, died on February 7, 2009.

Jonathan Emery, a seminarian of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, was assigned to St. John Vianney, for a ten-week pastoral assignment during the summer.