

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Time Line; Catholicism in Biloxi

1699 Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville and French forces land in present day Biloxi. Two priest who made the journey or Father Bordenave, Father Paul Du Ru, S.J. and Father Anastasius Douay. Recollect Father Anastasius Douay would return to France. Catholic missionary Father Bordenave would become Chaplain for Fort Maurepas and d'Iberville French forces. Father Bordenave would be the first priest to say mass on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Father Du Ru, a Jesuit, would begin missionary work among the coastal tribes in present day Mississippi and tribes in present day Louisiana.

Early 1700s Father Davion, Father de Montigny and Father St. Cosme would become frequent visitors to coastal Mississippi.

By 1717 Capuchins, Carmelites and Jesuits priest were assigned as chaplains to land grants in Mississippi. Among them were Father Richard, Abbe de Brabant, Abbe Juif, Father Prothais Boyer, Abbe Darquevaux and many more.

1720 Father Paulin, a ship chaplain, officiated as pastor pro tem of Biloxi.

1721 February Father Charles, Discalced Carmelite, served as pastor of Biloxi.

1721late February Father Richard, a French secular priest, became pastor of Biloxi. He was assisted from time to time by Father LeBreton, Father Le Monier and Abbe Darquevaux.

1722 January Father Dorez serves as pastor at Biloxi. Late 1722 Late 1722 Father Jean Matthieu de Sainte Anne, the superior of the Carmelite Fathers, served as pastor of Biloxi.

1723 Father Dorez, who had been a missionary priest at Biloxi departs for New Orleans. This would leave no priest stationed at Biloxi.

1723 to 1842 Priest from Mobile and New Orleans would continue to visit and offer service to the people of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

1798 April 1st fourteen persons on Deer Island were confirmed by the Bishop Francisco Penalver y Cardenas of the Diocese of New Orleans. Among the confirmed was 100-year-old Louis Christian Ladner as well as other Ladners, Cueves, Carquottes and other early gulf coast settlers.

1840 Father Gerin, a Catholic priest from Biloxi, would visit Deer Island about once a month.



1842 Bishop John Joseph Mary Benedict Chanche, the first bishop of Natchez, notes that there are roughly 2,000 Catholics of French decent on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He appoints Reverend Monsieur G. Labbe as missionary priest for the area. In the fall of 1842 Monsieur Labbe establishes his headquarters at Pass Christian. He is determined to establish three missionary churches at the three main centers of the coast. These were Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian and Biloxi.

1843 August 6, Monsieur Labbe blesses and lays the corner stone for the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The church will be a brick structure 50 feet in length and 25 feet in width. The building committee of the new church was Arbault Louis Cailavet, Augustine Fayard, Pierre Gerod, Francois Fizaine, Jean Marie Pradat and A. Rennois.

1844 Monsieur Labbe took up residence in Biloxi.

1844 May 26 Pentecost Sunday the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary opened its doors.

1846 Father Symphorian Guinand succeeded Monsieur Labbe and takes charge of the missions on the Gulf Coast from his headquarters in Biloxi. Which include Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian and Pascagoula.

1846 to 1856 Nativity BVM Church building is enlarged and a parochial residence was erected.

1846 the First Baptist Church of Biloxi is organized.

1853 the first Episcopal Church is organized in Biloxi.



1857 September, Bishop William Henry Elder, the 3rd Bishop of Natchez, visits the Gulf Coast and Nativity Church in Biloxi.

1858 March Father Guinand retires and Father R.B. Hardy is appointed temporary pastor of Nativity BVM.

1858 During the last part of the year Father Henry Gorget, a young French Priest, is appointed Pastor of Nativity BVM.

1859 January 23 Bishop Elder grants Father Gorget permission to celebrate two mass due to the increase in congregation.

1860 March Father Gorget opens a school with 45 pupils. Due to a lack of local business support the school closed.

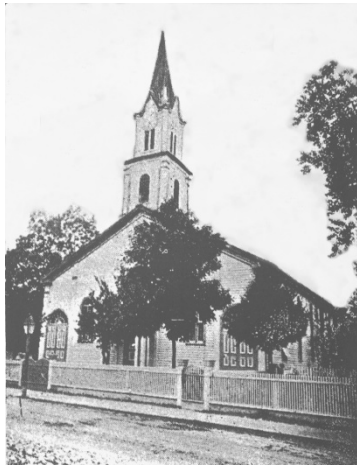
1861 to 1866 Civil War had adverse effects on Nativity BVM congregation. During and after the war Father Gorget became ill and poverty prevailed in Biloxi.

1867 Father Gorget was appointed pastor at Pass Christian and Father van de Moere was appointed temporary pastor of Nativity BVM.



1869 January newly ordained Father Chevalier was appointed pastor of Nativity BVM.

1869 November 16 Nativity BVM Church was destroyed by a hurricane. The rectory was also damaged. The same day Father Chevalier had men clearing the land for a new church. One week later the land was cleared.



1870 May the new church was completed. It was 75 x 35 feet. It was larger and stronger than the first church. The new church cost \$3,000 in 1870 dollars versus \$53,935.94 in 2017.

1871 a Catholic school opened its doors. Mr. and Mrs. Browning, young educators took charge. Mr. Browning was a convent.

1872 Seashore Methodist Campground organizes and opens with year round revivals, activities, dormitories and cottages.

1874 Mother M Austin Carroll, superior of the Sisters of Mercy, New Orleans was given permission by Bishop Elder to establish a new school at Biloxi.

1874 the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer is built.

1875 May the Sister of Mercy arrived and opened a new school building behind Nativity BV M.

1878 yellow fever epidemic struck Biloxi.

1884 October 22, the new Sacred Heart Mission Church was dedicated in present day D'Iberville. It was Nativity BVM mission from 1884 to 1888. Mission church of Ocean Springs from 1899 to 1905 and from 1906 until 1921 it was once again Nativity BVM mission.

1886 once again the yellow fever epidemic struck Biloxi. Father Chevalier was ill for two months. His health undermined and the labors in the ministry took its toll. Doctors advised him to take an ocean voyage.

1888 April yellow fever breaks out along the Gulf Coast. Temporary pastor Father Blanc attends to the sick and is stricken by the fever but recovers.

1890 August 20 Father Chevalier dies in Auvergne, France.



1890 September 22 a Pontifical Mass was offered for the repose of his soul by Bishop Heslin, the 5th Bishop of Natchez, at Nativity BVM Biloxi. The same day Father Florimond Joseph Blanc was appointed pastor of Nativity BVM.

1890 to 1897 during Father Blanc leadership there were two Catholic schools. The one for the white children had an enrollment of 171 while the one for the Colored children had an enrollment of 54 pupils.

1891 the first Methodist Church is organized and located on Lameuse Street near Division Street.

1891 May 17 First Presbyterian Church is organized in Biloxi.



1893 December 10 was the dedication of a stone grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes. The grotto was erected in memory of Father Chevalier.

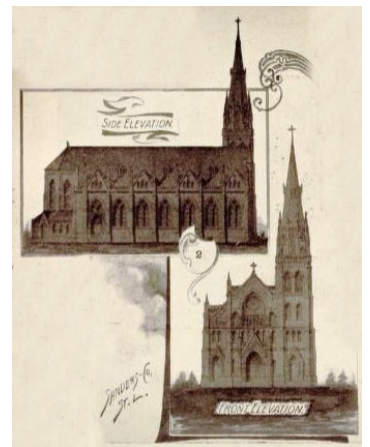
1897 November 30 Father Alphonse Ketels becomes pastor of Nativity BVM.

1900 November 9 Biloxi suffered a destructive fire. Nativity Church, the schools, convent and rectory were burned to the ground.

1901 November 4 Bishop Heslin visited Biloxi where a new Catholic school has been constructed. He examined the plans for the new church and convent. The architect will be Theo Brune of New Orleans. During this time mass was being celebrated in the hall of the Biloxi Fire Brigade.



1902 February 7 contract and construction of the new Nativity BVM Church begins. The parish building committee was Ernest Desporte, W.K.M. Dukate, L. Lopez, Sr., Phil McCabe, Ed Glennan and Louis Gill. The new gothic styled church will be 132 x 55 feet and a height of 60 feet. The tower when completed will be 140 feet high. The contractor is J.F. Barnes & Company of Greenville.



1902 September 14 Bishop Heslin dedicates the new brick Nativity BVM church.

1903 the Nativity BVM congregation number 1,728 souls. The new Sisters of Mercy's school had 120 boys and 128 girls in attendance.

1903 June 14 former pastor Father F. Blanc dies in New Orleans.

1904 the Nativity BVM congregation increase to 1,962 souls.

1905 November 1 Father G.A. Doherty was appointed assistant to Father Ketels.

1906 January 9 stain glass windows given by Mrs. Julia Lopez are installed in the sanctuary by Frederick Thornley an expert from New York. Four of the windows are memorials to Mrs. Lopez's husband L, "The Crucifixion"; Lopez, daughters Josephine Lopez, "The Infant Jesus"; and Clara Lopez, "The Annunciation"; and Julia Lopez parents Mr. and Mrs Arnaud Dulion, "The Ascension". Another large window to the "Agony in the Garden" and two smaller windows complete the Lopez donation. The two small window represents St. Anthony's vision and the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin and child to St. Dominic. The windows are the work of artists named Rice a father and son of Munich Germany.



1906 April 21 the pews and altar railing were the gift of Mr. & Mrs. W.K.M. Dukate. The bell and clock were donated by Mr. and Mrs. L. Lopez Sr. The Stations of the Cross were donated by the family of Dr. Maloney. The main altar was donated by Miss Stephenie Levert. The Blessed Virgin's altar was donated by Children of Mary organization. The St. Anthony altar was donated

by the Friends of Father Alphonse Ketels. Charitable funding by Mrs. Austin, Mrs. W.G. Henderson, Mrs. Katie Coyle, Mrs. E. Glennan, Mrs. Cora Bachino, Miss Alethia Clemens, Miss Bealah Clemens, and Miss Mary Arguellas purchased the organ.

1906 September 26 and 27 a hurricane damaged the roof of the new church to the extent of \$2,000.

1907 Bishop Gunn urges Father Ketels to open a mission church on Point Cadet. Father Ketels opens Our Lady of Good Counsel mission on Point Cadet. Nativity BVM priest would continue serving this mission until 1917 when the church was dedicated as St. Michael parish.

1909 the Sister of Mercy of New Orleans were recalled. Father Ketels petitioned Rev. Mother Angela Fedon who sends the Sisters of Mercy of Vicksburg to Biloxi.

1909 The follow Sister of Mercy Vicksburg journeyed to Biloxi under leadership of Rev. Mother Angela Fedon, Sisters Clementine Phelan, Teresa Dobyns, Stephane Gallagher, Agata Stewart and Emerentia Frohne. The school now dedicated to the Sacret Heart.

1909 January 8 W.K.M. Dukate donates \$2,000 to be use to complete the inside of the church.

1910 January 4 the Daily Herald reported that a new stain glass window was installed at Nativity BVM. The window depicts The Child Jesus visiting the temple talking the elders was donated by Michael F. Murphy in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Murphy (himself). The stain glass is the work of Reiss, the famous artist of Munich.

1912 Father H. Spengler was appointed assistant to Father Ketels.

1913 the Evangelical Lutheran Church is organized in Biloxi.

1914 July 28 World War I begins in Europe.

1914 Our Lady of Sorrows Church opens on Division Street.

1916 July 8 the Daily Herald reported that a hurricane caused several thousand of dollars in damage to Nativity BVM. Damage to roof, windows, altars and other parts of the structure.

1917 April 6 the United States declares war on German Empire.

1918 influenza epidemic causes many deaths in Nativity BVM.

1918 November 11 World War I ended.

1921 during the early part of year Sacred Heart Church D'Iberville became a parish.

1921 July Father Ketels dies at Biloxi.

1921 October Father Peter Keenan is installed as pastor of Nativity BVM.

1921 December 18 St. John Church is dedicated on the north east corner of Bay View Avenue and Main Street. A large frame building on the property was remodeled into a church.

1922 Father Keenan is made dean of the Gulf Coast.

1926 during the summer the Nativity rectory is remodeled.

1927 February 3 two new stained glass windows are installed. One is Mary Magdalena at the feet of Jesus and the Little Flower of Jesus. The window were given by Mrs. Feliciane V. Schaub of Biloxi in memory of her parents Mr. and Mrs. N. Voidevich Sr.

1929 September the interior of Nativity BVM was repainted. A donation was made by Alfred E. Smith, governor of New York who visited Nativity in 1928.

1930 December Ten radiators for heating are installed. A new stained glass window "The Good Shepherd" is installed. The window was donated by Mrs. Louise Winters to the Glory of God and in memory of Lucy, Lavers Reilly and Adelaide Lavers.

1931 October 25-26 Nativity hosted the National Council of Catholic Women.

1933 construction of a new Sacred Heart school begins. Then on September 14, 1933 Most Reverend Bishop R.O. Gerow, 7th Bishop of Natchez, dedicated the new school.

1934 January 25 Nativity hosted the second Diocesan Eucharistic Congress presided over by Bishop Gerow.

1934 May 7 new stained glass window is installed. This is the window ordered November 28 1933 The new stained glass window "Saint Dominic Receiving the Rosary from the Blessed Virgin" is ordered. A woman parish member was the donor and wanted to remain anonymous.

1935 September 19 New stained glass window installed "Christ Blessing Little Children." This window was donated by A.B. Austin in memory of his mother Mrs A.E. Austin. It is reported at there are now 12 stained glass windows with 5 more to go.



1937 Monsieur William J. Leech becomes pastor of Nativity BVM

1942 a new floor is laid by 30 Keesler Field Army personnel.

1942 Monsieur Geoffrey O'Connell becomes pastor of Nativity BVM.



1943 May 6 the Daily Herald reports three marble alters made of Ross pink marble from Tennessee replaces wooden alters. Church indicates three pearl beige Italian marble altars were installed. All the windows in Nativity BVM are now stained glass. One of the new windows is the Rose Window. Vestibule doors now have colored glass. A new mahogany altar rail was installed. Addition work was a new roof, remodeling the sanctuary with a new floor and painting walls and ceiling. Ceiling has been painted light blue. Kneeling pads have been added to the pews.

1967 Monsieur T. Fullam becomes pastor of Nativity BVM

1968 Monsieur Kevin Bambrick becomes pastor of Nativity BVM

1969 August 17 Hurricane Camille damages Nativity BVM.

1977 March 1 the Diocese of Biloxi is created.

1977 June 6 Bishop Joseph Lawson Howze is installed as the 1st Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi.

1978 Monsieur Kevin Bambrick is first rector for Nativity BVM.

1985 September 28 Hurricane Elena damages Nativity BVM.

1986 Monsieur Jim Russell becomes rector of Nativity BVM.

1989 Nativity BVM begins a renovation project.

1990 the Nativity BVM Cathedral is re-dedicated and the Marina Chapel is dedicated.

1998 Father Anthony Arguelles becomes rector of Nativity BVM.

2001 Bishop Howze announces his retirement.

2001 July 2, Bishop Thomas J. Rodi becomes the 2nd Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi.

2005 June 10 the Nativity Sacred Heart Center is dedicated.

2005 August 29 Hurricane Katrina the most destructive storm to ever hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast damages Nativity BVM

2009 April 27 Bishop Roger Morin is installed as the 3rd Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi

2010 Monsieur J. McGrath becomes rector of Nativity BVM

2012 Very Rev. Dennis Carver becomes rector of Nativity BVM

2017 April 28 Bishop Louis F. Kihneman is ordained and installed as the 4th Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi.

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