



**ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE  
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**Press Release**

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**San Juan Bautista Parish, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo to Celebrate 415th Year Anniversary  
First and Oldest Parish in the USA**

*San Juan Bautista Parish will also celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the current church.*

**Sunday, June 23, 4:00 pm**

*Dedication ceremony and blessing of new doors and relief sculpture*

*Ring of 100 year-old bell, Maria Immaculata*

*Proclamation by NM State Representative, Nick Salazar*

*Blessing and Vespers by Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan*

**Monday, June 24, 7:00 am**

*Blessing of the Rio Grande followed by Feast Day Mass in Honor of San Juan Bautista*

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Wednesday, June 19, 2013 - IMMEDIATE RELEASE-- On Sunday, June 23, 4:00 pm, San Juan Parish Bautista celebrates two significant historical events: four hundred and fifteen years of the parish's existence; and, one hundred years since the current church was built. It is important to note, the current church is the fourth for the parish, a tribute to the region's rich and lengthy history.

San Juan Bautista Parish, located at 185 Popaye Ave, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, was the first, and is the oldest, parish established in the United States. The parish was founded by the Spanish Franciscan Friars in 1598. San Juan is the oldest center of Christianity in the Southwest region of the USA. Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo is the site of New Mexico's first capitol, established in 1598 by Juan De Oñate.

San Juan parish is a robust community today. Rev. Larry Brito, Pastor, along with Rev. Denis Kaggwa, Parochial Vicar, minister Sunday Mass to an average of 1,159 parishioners.

**BACKGROUND: St. John the Baptist Parish, San Juan Pueblo**

On September 9, 1598, the Franciscan Friars who came with Oñate were sent to various areas on New Mexico to establish missions and evangelize the Pueblo people. Fray Alonso Martínez, who was Commissary of the group, stayed at San Juan and established the mission there. During the 1680 revolt, the mission at the Pueblo of San Juan along with other missions of New Mexico, was destroyed. With the return of the Spanish in 1692-93 many of the missions were re-established, and early records indicate that Fray Geronimo Prieto was sent to San Juan in 1695. Parish registers, however, do not begin until 1726; the first entries are signed by Fray Francisco Antonio Pérez.

In 1889, Rev. Camille Seux who served as pastor from 1868 to 1922 built a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes directly across the road from the church; that chapel has been designated as an official shrine of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. Rev. Seux built the present church of San Juan Bautista in San Juan Pueblo in 1913, bearing the expenses for it himself because he wanted to build a church similar to those in his native France. The building replaced an eighteenth century adobe which was dynamited before the new church was built. Rev. Suex is buried at the Lourdes chapel.

A new parish hall and parish center was started by Rev. Joseph E. LaVoie, pastor, in 1997 and was blessed by Archbishop Sheehan on Sunday, February 22, 1998 Contact: 505.852.4179.--END