



History

St. Joseph's in Biddeford ME was established as a parish on May 13, 1870 by a decree from Bishop Bacon, Bishop of Portland. The parish was founded to meet the spiritual needs of the many French Canadians who were migrating from Quebec to the Biddeford area at the end of the 19th century. The first building to house St. Joseph Church was the former Methodist church, located at the corners of Alfred and Bacon streets (the present sight of the Biddeford Police Department). In 1873 having outgrown its first facility, the parish purchased land on Emery's Court (present site of the church on Elm Street). Construction of this imposing and superb neo-Gothic structure began. In 1883, with ceremonies never before seen this great temple dedicated to the glory of God. For almost one hundred years St. Joseph's church was the tallest building in the state of Maine.

Among the recognized treasures housed in this grand building is a classic Hook and Hastings tracker organ (c.1880) and stained glass windows designed by the famous Mayer studio in Munich, Germany.

At the end of the 19th century the parish knew phenomenal growth - a parochial school was built (with 1200 students in grades K to 8 by 1896). A convent was added to house the Good Shepherd Sisters of Quebec who were teachers in the school. In 1892 the rectory (still in use) was built and at the beginning of the 20th century a high school was added, with a parish hall to follow. By 1899 the parish had grown so much that another parish was needed to serve the needs of the ever-growing presence of this French speaking community. Thus the foundation was laid for St. Andre's Parish.

St. Joseph has kept pace with the changing times, from the demands of Vatican II to the multi-cultural evolution of the post war years. Today St. Joseph counts 1,800 households. The Parish continues to welcome families and individuals who seek a warm, loving community within a church rich in tradition and culture.

In 2004, and through the generous support of its parishioners and friends, the exterior of the building was restored from its steeple to its granite foundation. The interior of the church was repainted and the rose window in the choir loft was restored. A marble floor was added to the sanctuary area and the original wooden doors were copied and installed.

St. Joseph church merged with other local parishes on July 1, 2008 to become part of Good Shepherd Parish.



Ste. Anne's chapel, in the lower part of St. Joseph Church, was dedicated and blessed by Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, OSB on July 6, 1994, the feast of St. Ann. Daily Mass is celebrated at Ste. Anne's (the French spelling purposely chosen to highlight the French Canadian roots of the parish) Monday through Saturday at 7:00 a.m. for all Catholics in the Biddeford and Saco communities.

Every Tuesday, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar of the chapel from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., welcoming those who wish

to spend some time in quiet prayer and slow the pace in a busy world.

The chapel is open year round and is handicapped accessible. There is well lit parking lot adjoining the chapel. The chapel may be booked for special events by calling the parish office at 282-3321, Monday - Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.