Nome is located on the southern shore of the Seward Peninsula on Norton Sound. The area has been settled by both Caucasian and Eskimo populations.

Nome and vicinity has a rich and varied history beginning with gold discovery at Anvil Creek and the beaches of Nome. While the lust for gold proliferated with the arrival of twenty or so thousand prospectors, Fr. John, S.J., followed them to then tent city in 1899 staying for a short time while possibly assessing the needs of a newly formed community. Fr. Joseph Treca, S.J., followed Fr. John into Nome that same year and began establishing a Catholic presence by organizing a small Catholic nucleus of parishioners. After Fr. Treca, two Jesuits, Fr. Louis Jacquet, a Belgian, and Fr. John Van der Pol, a Hollander, arrived in Nome in April, 1901, just shortly after the city was incorporated. The two Jesuits officially established a church on July 4, 1901 and dedicated it to Saint Joseph on November 17. It became the westernmost Roman Catholic church in the United States. The first Nome Catholic church made an impressive silhouette dominating the town skyline. It had a tall steeple with large cross lined with rows of electric lights which could be seen for miles around. The Eskimo people called it “white man's star” because the lighted cross often served as the only beacon for travelers during blizzards, a common occurrence along Alaska's coast.

Fr. Joseph Bernard, S.J., arrived in Nome in 1906 and continued the newly established mission work and used Nome as base for further outreach in the Norton Sound region. Fr. John Forhan, another pioneer Jesuit who served from 1908 to 1917, developed quite a reputation for his homilies. According to Fr. Segundo Llorente, S.J., “Fr. Forham packed the church with his mix of sharp wit and wisdom. People waited all week to listen to his Sunday sermons.”

The first Catholic church building at Nome was sold in 1945 to the U.S. Smelting and Mining Co. by Fr. Edmund Anable, S.J. It was then converted into a warehouse. Fr. Anable subsequently built a second Saint Joseph two blocks south of the old location. It was dedicated on Easter Sunday in 1946. This church was replaced in 1993, with the new and modern facility at the corner of Steadman and West King Place. The third and present Saint Joseph church at was dedicated by Bishop Michael Kaniecki, S.J., March 19, 1994.

As part of Nome’s centennial celebration, a grant was obtained to refurbish and relocate the Old St Joseph Church to Anvil City Square. Now the historic Old St Joe’s sits just two blocks away from St Joseph Catholic Church.

The Sisters of Providence operated the local Catholic hospital for many years until 1918. The Little Sisters of Jesus were permanent residents, according to Fr. Llorente, “in the heart of Eskimo quarters one mile Southeast of Nome.” Several of the Little Sisters of Jesus still serve the Nome community.