

**ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
CECILIA, LOUISIANA**

1891 - 1976

85th ANNIVERSARY





L'EGLISE DE LA GRANDE POINTE

1891 - 1976

A History of St. Joseph's Church

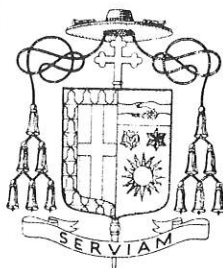
Cecilia, Louisiana

by

Rev. Donald J. Hebert, Pastor



MOST REV. GERARD L. FREY
Bishop of Lafayette



DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE

P. O. BOX 3387

LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

70501

March 19, 1976

My dear People:

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the People of God on the occasion of the eighty-fifth anniversary of St. Joseph's Parish in Cecilia.

Eighty-five years of dedicated service to God and His people constitute a golden record of which any Church community can be justly proud. In the name of the Diocese, I commend you on reaching this significant milestone in your history.

May God continue to bless you and give you the grace to achieve much in His name in the years ahead.

With every best wish, I remain

Sincerely in our Divine Savior,

+ Gerard L. Frey
+Gerard L. Frey
Bishop of Lafayette



MOST REV. MAURICE SCHEXNAYDER
Former Bishop of Lafayette

BISHOP'S HOUSE
P. O. Box 3387
LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA 70502

April 6, 1976

My dear Parishioners of St. Joseph:

There is reason to be grateful for the blessings of 85 years.

When I was still in the Seminary, a young man preparing for the priesthood for this Diocese wrote: "Sooner will the waters of the Teche run dry than the Faith disappear from the hearts of the Acadians." The history of your Parish proves that the seminarian's prediction was not the idle dream of a zealous young man.

St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "stay firm in the Faith". (1 Cor. 16,13). This is my prayer for each of you and may you continue, both by word and your daily lives, to strengthen the Faith of your children.

With a blessing, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

+ M. Schexnayder

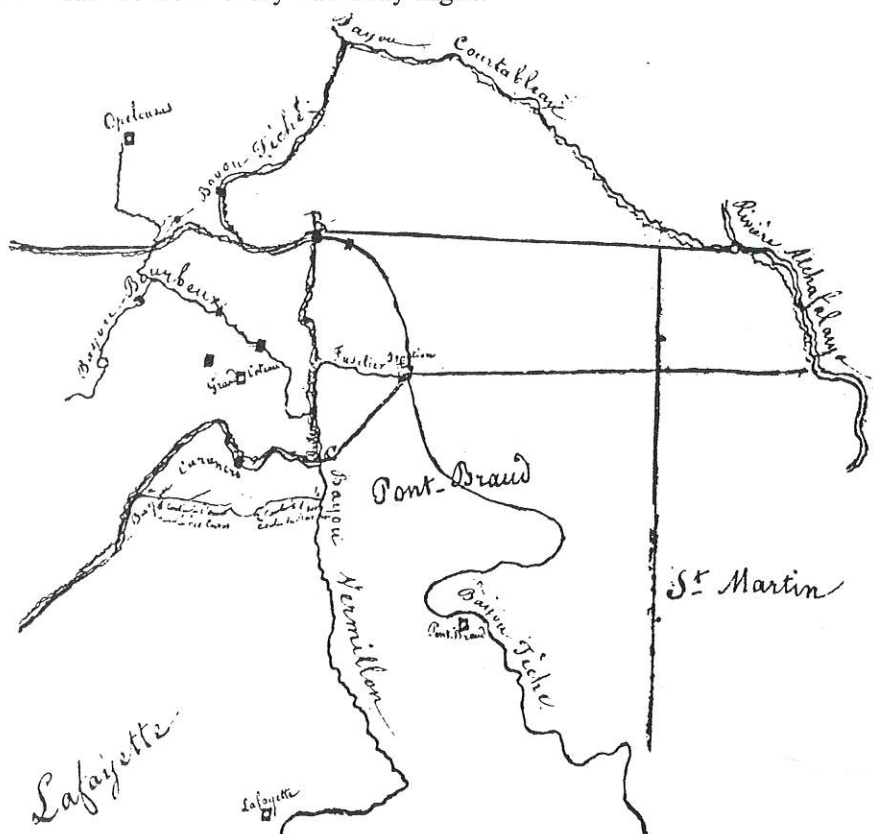
Maurice Schexnayder
Former Bishop of Lafayette

L'EGLISE DE LA GRANDE POINTE

The year 1976 will be remembered as our Nation's Bicentennial - as well as the 85th Anniversary of St. Joseph's Church Parish. The Parish was founded in 1891.

In 1891 Fr. Augustin Blanc left Breaux Bridge to begin his new assignment as Pastor of the new Parish at Grande Pointe (Cecilia). He had been vicaire (assistant) to Fr. Antoine Borias at St. Bernard's Church in Breaux Bridge.

This small community along Bayou Teche, now called Cecilia, was then known as La Grande Pointe. Fr. F. Legrand, the first pastor of Breaux Bridge, mentions the chapel at Grande Pointe, for in the 1840's he states that, "dancing at Pont-Breaux was more than popular and that the Grande Pointe vicinity had its 'fais do-do's' every Saturday night."



This map depicts the communities along Bayou Teche in the early 1800's. Grande Pointe (Cecilia) is that bulge or point that juts out between Pont-Breaux and La Jonction (Arnaudville).

In a letter to Archbishop Perche of New Orleans, Fr. Y. Rivoallen, the pastor of La Jonction (Arnaudville) writes in January of 1874 about his difficulties "in meeting the parish debts". He finds that matters are worse now that Fr. Antoine Borias of Breaux Bridge wants to build a chapel on the parish limits of both churches and a great number of people from Arnaudville live in the area called Grande Pointe. He writes, "Le Cure de Pont Breaux se propose de batir une chapelle sur les limites meme de la paroisse de La Jonction, environ a 6 ou 7 milles de mon eglise Une grande partie des habitants de ma paroisse qui se trouve dans les environs de cet endroit appele Grande Pointe."

This chapel was evidently built sometime after 1874, and it was the first chapel to serve the people in Cecilia. Some sources say that it was called St. Etienne, but this is uncertain. In January of 1889, Fr. Borias of Breaux Bridge says that "there is one station (chapel) visited twice a month....la chapelle de la Grande Pointe." Even back in 1884 Fr. Gonellaz of Breaux Bridge says of his parish which numbered 3,500 Catholics, "there is a chapel of no value and the land for it is not given (une a sans valeur....le terrain ou elle est n'a pas ete donne.)"

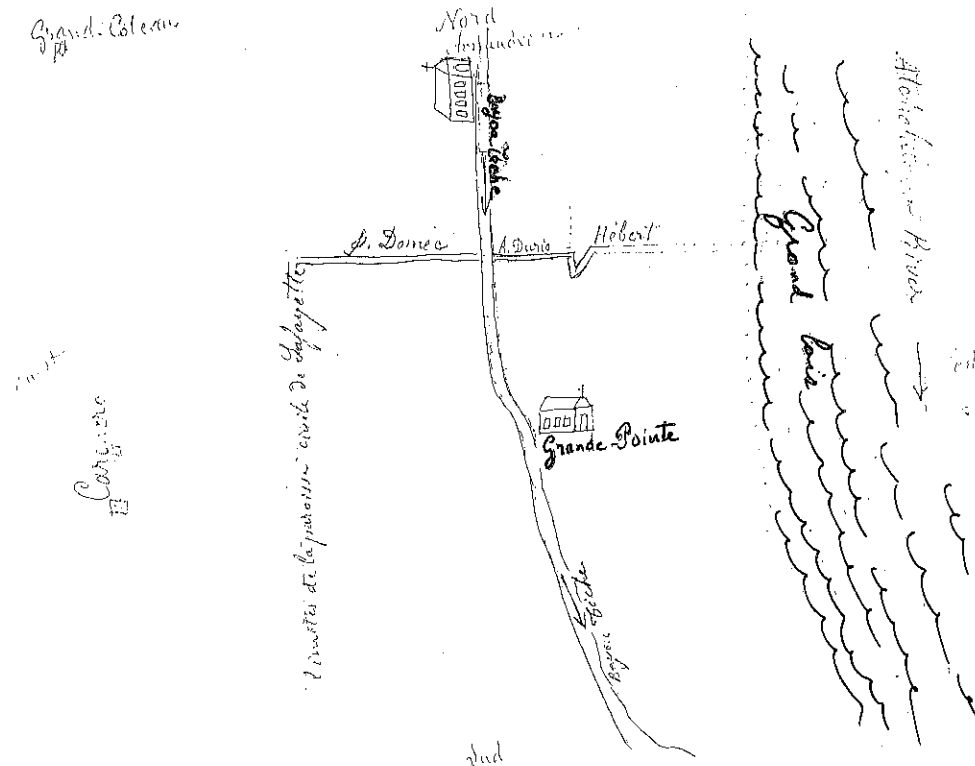


FR. AUGUSTIN BLANC, First Pastor of Cecilia

In 1890 Fr. Augustin Blanc was assisting Fr. Antoine Borias in Breaux Bridge. He was also serving the Grande Pointe area on the other side of the Bayou. In his diary, Archbishop Janssens writes on December 29, 1890, "Rev. Borias of Breaux Bridge as well as Rev. Denoyel of Arnaudville desire a new parish at Grande Pointe. On this day I appointed Rev. Blanc, the assistant of Rev. Borias, pastor "provisoirement" (temporarily) and if he does well, "definitivement" (permanently)."

In April of 1891 he adds another entry in his diary, in which he gives the boundaries of the parish of Grande Pointe. The Catholic population figures for Breaux Bridge dropped from 5,500 in 1890 to only 4,000 in 1891, when Grande Pointe became an independent parish with its own pastor.

In 1891 the land was given to the Church. Mr. Placide LeBlanc and Mr. Onezime Calais gave the 6 arpents of land for the Church in Cecilia. This Donation of Property is recorded in the St. Martin Parish Courthouse and is dated January 9, 1891.



This map depicts the area of St. Joseph Parish at Grande Pointe (Cecilia). BELOW: The Act of Donation of the Church property in 1891.

TRANSFERT DU TERRAIN SUR LEQUEL SE TROUVE L'EGLISE CATHOLIQUE DE ST. JOSEPH, CECILIA (Grande Pointe), LOUISIANE, ET SON CIMITIERE.

Qu'il soit connu que ce trois janvier de l'an de Notre Seigneur Mil huit cent quatre-vingt onze,.....ont comparu Placide LeBlanc et Onezime Callais...declarent faire par les presentes acte de donation pure, simple et irrevocable a Sa Grandeur, Monseigneur Francois Janssens...etant ici represente par le Rev. Antoine Borias, cure de Pont-Breaux, ici present et acceptant la sur-dite donation....Un lot de terre, situe sur le Bayou Teche, a La Grande Pointe, et mesurant six arpents....borne du cote d'en haut, par James Calais, du cote d'en bas par Placide LeBlanc....trois arpents de ce lot de terre sont donnees par Placide LeBlanc et trois par James Calais. Cette donation est faites dans le but d'aider la propagation du culte de l'eglise Catholique a la Grande Pointe. Dont acte est fait et paye a la residence de Placide LeBlanc a la Grande Pointe, paroisse de St. Martin, Louisiane, en presence de J.C. Guilbeau et Albert Bernard.

Fr. Louis Perronnet copied this Act of Donation from the St. Martin Parish Archives in St. Martinville. Then in August of 1931 he adds this supplementary note. From a conversation with Mr. Onesime Calais, Sr., one of the donors, "These six arpents were taken from land belonging to Placide LeBlanc and Mr. Onesime Calais paid Placide LeBlanc \$30.00 for three arpents which he in turn gave to the Church.". Therefore they were able to be the co-donors of the Church property.



FR. AUGUSTIN BLANC
FIRST PASTOR
 Jan. 1891 - May 1927

Fr. Augustin Blanc was born on September 19, 1863 at St. Angel Puy-de-Dome, France. He was only 28 years old when he became the first pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Cecilia (Grande Pointe). Fr. Blanc made his theological studies for the priesthood in Baltimore, Maryland, the first Seminary in the U. S., being founded in 1791. He was ordained on June 22, 1890 by Archbishop Janssens in New Orleans, La. His first assignment was a brief stay in New Orleans and then as assistant pastor in Breau Bridge, La. In 1891 this area was under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

In the earliest entries of 1891, Fr. Blanc simply writes that he is "Cure de La Grande Pointe". He had formerly served this parish while he was assistant in Breau Bridge. In his first Parish Report to the Archbishop in January of 1892, he states that in June of 1891 he had to borrow \$1195, for a rectory, kitchen and stables. He signs himself at times as the "Cure de LaPlace" - perhaps an older name for Cecilia. This report of 1892 gives the population as 1600 people with annual communions at 1100. The total income for the year was \$568.00 and he had to borrow \$600.00 for the rectory.

The report of January 1894 indicated that the population had grown to 2,000 and the annual communions numbered 1200. Income for that year was \$615.00 and the parish owed \$200.00 to a Mrs. Bernard of Arnaudville on the new rectory.



Fr. Augustin Blanc - in Baltimore,
Maryland in about 1890.

In about 1895, the Church Bell was baptized. The parrain was Mr. Onezime Calais, Jr. and the marraine was Mrs. Anna Armentine Fangui who was represented by Caroline Lastrapes. The 1896 Parish Report indicates that there was no debt and the yearly income was \$512.00. In fact, Fr. Blanc lists the sources of income for that year: \$170.00 from marriages, \$125.00 from Baptisms, \$60.00 from Funerals, \$150.00 from pew rent and \$7.00 from church collections (quetes).

In the January, 1898 report, Fr. Blanc writes, "The Diocese owes me \$2,000.00 that I borrowed to build the rectory, of my personal money. The Church was paid for (l'église ne doit rien). However, in January of 1902, there was still not enough income to pay for past expenses and Fr. Blanc writes, "Le presbytere, la cuisine et les ecuries (house, kitchen and stables) belong to me - except for the church."



This picture was taken in front of the old church in Cecilia on November 29, 1909. The rectory is seen in the rear, at the left of the church.

On June 17, 1911, Fr. Blanc became an American citizen. He was now 48 years old and had been ordained a priest for 21 years. From courthouse records we find that Fr. Blanc was able to buy some land for himself in and around Cecilia. His land was farmed by local people. The flood of 1912

devastated much of the farmland in this area. Fr. Blanc wrote the Archbishop of New Orleans on March 26, 1912, "My parishioners are in deep misery (la misere noir); it is actually famine which exists. I beg you...through your influence to obtain bread for my parishioners who suffer from hunger....we need bread until the corn ripens. Some people are eating acorns (des glandes) to keep from starving; others are driven to steal or risk getting killed."

Then in 1918, the Diocese of Lafayette was formed out of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Thirteen civil parishes were placed under the jurisdiction of a new bishop- - Bishop Jules B. Jeanmard, a native of Breaux Bridge, La. So Cecilia now belonged to the new Diocese and had a new Bishop.

The Parish Report of November 2, 1923 gives the population as 3,000 of which 500 were negroes. The Parish Trustees were Ernest Naquin and Wilfred Naquin. In May of 1927, Fr. Blanc left Cecilia after the great flood---"l'eau de '27", and went to Leroy and served there until 1929. He resigned his pastorate there on July 15, 1929 because of ill health and returned to France. There he lived in retirement until his death in 1945. In a letter addressed to Fr. Blanc on August 10, 1928, funds for food and clothing were made available for all flood victims in Cecilia. Fr. Louis Perronnet was actually pastor then.

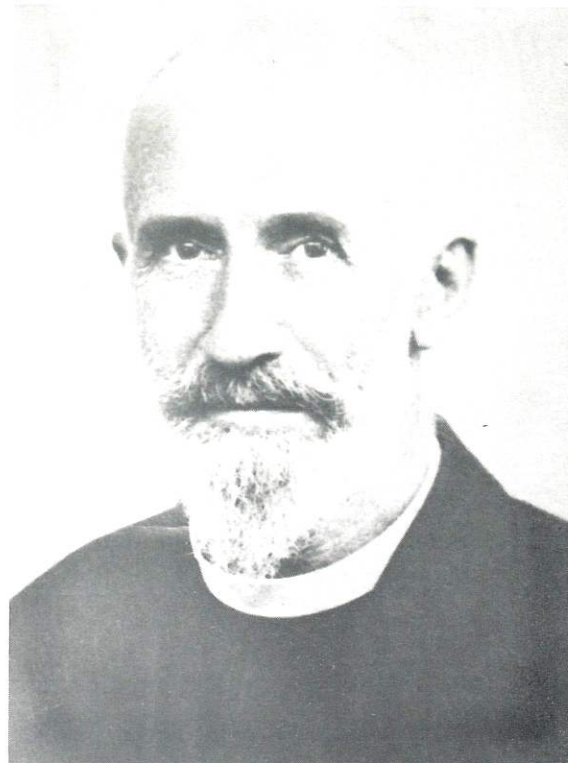


Fr. Blanc standing on the front steps
of the old rectory



Mrs. Simon Gautreaux (nee Angelina
Malbrough), housekeeper to Fr. Blanc
in Cecilia.

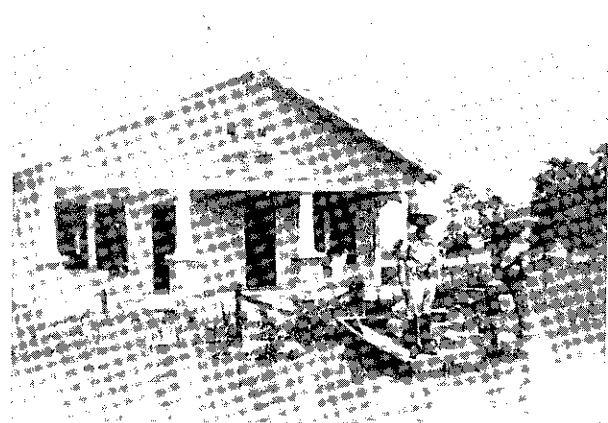
On July 1, 1945, we read in a letter from Fr. Blanc to an old friend, Fr. Monteillard, about his stay in France. Fr. Blanc had left the United States and retired to live with his sister at Charbonniere-les-Treiller, France. He was now 82, a very old and sick man. For six years he could no longer say Mass because of poor eye-sight. All that he was able to do was walk next door to the Church for a visit. Fr. Augustin Blanc died almost two months later, on August 23, 1945. He had served the people of Grande Pointe (Cecilia) for over 38 years.



FR. LOUIS PERRONNET
SECOND PASTOR
July 1927 - June 1938

We first learn about Fr. Louis Perronnet from a letter written by the Archbishop of Bourge, France. Fr. Perronnet wished to become a missionary priest in America and the Archbishop granted him the request on June 28, 1906. Upon leaving France he began his work in Canada, after which he worked in the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama. He also worked in a small settlement in Florida for a while. Then in 1922 he was a missionary in the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota. Then around 1925 he began work in the Diocese of Lafayette.

As a priest in our Diocese, Fr. Perronnet served as pastor of Cameron, La. from 1925 to 1927. In a letter dated October 30, 1925, he relates a very unusual and yet dangerous incident which happened to him. He writes to the Bishop that on October 27, 1925, at 10:00 A.M., he was returning home in his small Ford coupe, after attending to the missions of Grande Cheniere and Cow Island. At the ferry over the Mermentau River at Grande Cheniere, his car fell into the River. After climbing out of a window and standing on the top of the car, he realized that he was still under water. "Mon auto alla donc au fond d'aplomb sur ses quatres roues...je fus, du coup, dans le bouillon...Je passai a travers la fenetre ouverte a l'arriere du cote droit monta sur le top de l'auto, et debout, je levai le bras, esperant de cette maniere montrer au passeur du ferry ou j'etais". He was able to survive this incident and continued to labor in Cameron until early July of 1927, when Bishop Jeanmard asked him to accept the parish at La Grande Pointe made vacant by Fr. Blanc's appointment to Leroy. In his letter of appointment, Bishop Jeanmard adds, "Cecilia was in the path of the flood and it's people suffered severe losses. The Church and Rectory escaped damage by water."



Cecilia streets during the flood of 1927. This is the home of Mr. Onezime Calais, Jr.

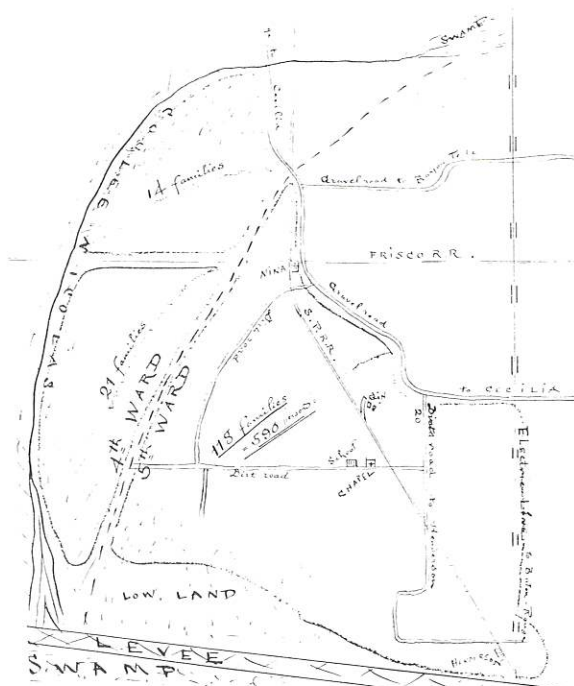
On July 28, 1927, Fr. Louis Perronnet wrote the bishop to inform him of the following. "I left Cameron on July 20, 1927, and found a bare rectory in Cecilia. Need money to furnish the rectory". Upon his arrival, his first night was spent in an old dilapidated chapel which stood in front of the Church, and had formerly served as a chapel for Fr. Blanc to say Mass in the early days. On January 26, 1928, Fr. Perronnet distributed \$500.00 worth of corn, cotton and potato seed as well as clothing and food....sent here by Pope Pius XI for the flood victims. Then again on January 25, 1929, Bishop Jeanmard was able to send him \$800.00 for the rectory, \$200.00 for fencing the property and \$50.00 for the mission preached by Fr. Rochard of Breaux Bridge in 1929. On July 10, 1929 he again received \$500.00 for distributing seed, clothing and food. These were difficult times for Fr. Perronnet as well as for the people of Cecilia.

Then in June and July of 1929 talk began on the possibility of building a mission chapel at Nina. On March 18, 1929 Fr. Perronnet sent Bishop Jeanmard a petition signed by 118 families asking for a chapel at Nina. The location suggested was to be near the school, "que la site de la chapelle soit pres de l'ecole Beauregard, sur le terrain offert par Alice Melancon, veuve de John Hayes". It was centrally located for all the families in the area.

On March 19, 1929, they decided to build the chapel, and on October 29, 1930, the blessing of the chapel at Nina took place at 2:00 P.M. The First Mass in the chapel was on November 9, 1930.

Beginning in January of 1933 until the time he left Cecilia in 1938, Fr. Perronnet kept a weekly diary and Mass Announcement book. This is a valuable record for us today in retracing the history of Cecilia and the entire Grande Pointe area. A few examples taken from the book may be of interest to the reader. On January 1, 1933, for example, we find this entry: "Good ice this morning, sun is shining. Beautiful day. Clear and calm. Roads were good. Communions - 0; Church attendance $\frac{1}{4}$; collection - .90 for pews and \$2.56 in collection. Pews will be rented next week after mass. Either

rent a whole pew or share one with someone else.” Or again we read in an entry dated June 16, 1934, of a great storm that hit Cecilia, “de 12:15 a 5:30 P.M. Tempete de vent et pluie venant de l’est....l’église est deplombée d’environ 10 pouces....Cette tempete serait de memoire d’homme, la plus longue qui ait été subie par Cecilia”. (This storm which pushed the Church 10 inches off its foundation will be remembered as the worst to ever hit Cecilia.)



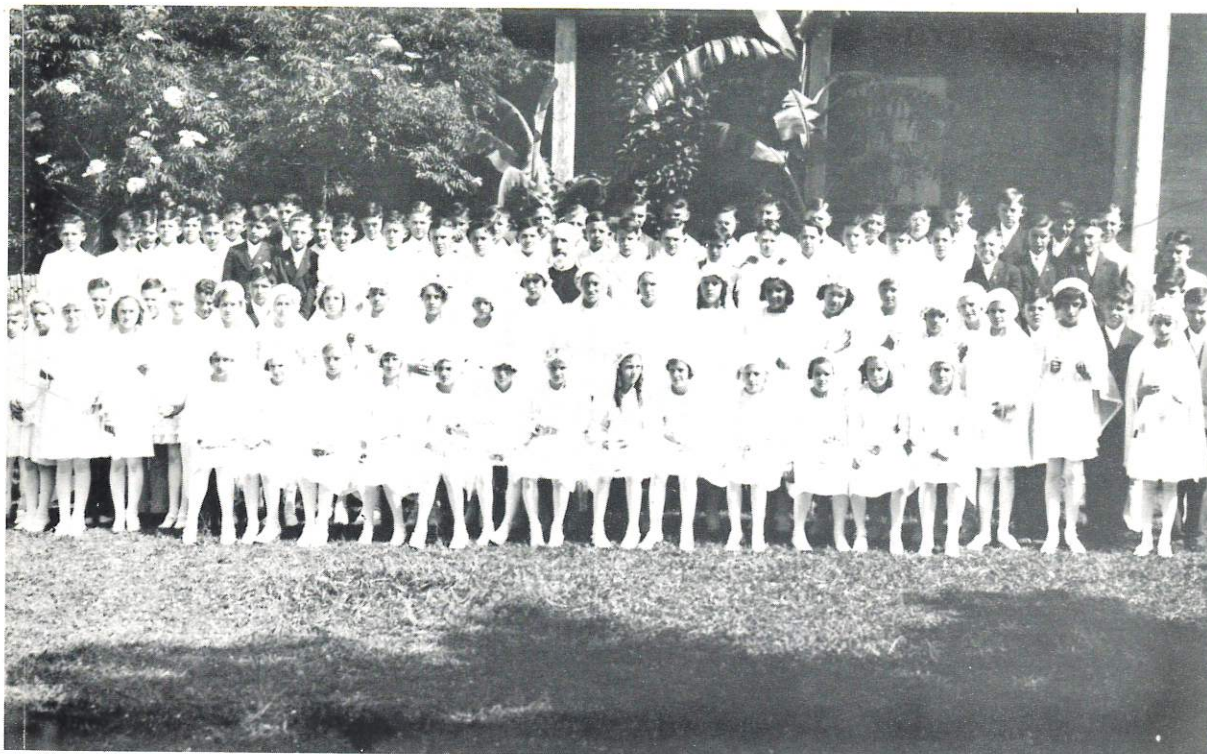
Map drawn by Fr. Perronnet to determine the number of Catholic families that would be served by a Chapel at Nina.



Miss Annette Desroches feeding Fr. Perronnet's chickens and cows behind the old church. She was born on October 29, 1887 in Houma, La. She also served Fr. Baudizzone in Eunice and Fr. Armand Hamel in Charenton and Melville. She died in New Iberia on November 20, 1974. She is buried in Cecilia.

In 1934, talk began on the building of a new Church. On July 10, 1934, a meeting of 34 men met and decided to build a new church rather than repair the old one. A committee was to visit the churches of Arnaudville, Leonville, and later those of Loreauville, New Iberia, Delcambre, Erath, Abbeville, Maurice and Kaplan.

On November 5, 1936, the Parish Report indicates the Catholic population was 3,000 with 600 to 700 negroes. The Church property was 6 arpents and the Trustees were Nicholas Decoux and Evans Calais.



Fr. Louis Perronnet posing with the First Communion class of May 26, 1938. The group is standing next to the old rectory. Below are the names of boys and girls listed in the Parish Register, of First Communion for that year.

BOYS: Adey Angelle, Alfred Angelle, Wilburg Remi Angelle, Dieudonne Augelle, Jesse Angelle, Jim Angelle, Early Bijot, Floyd Calais, Ray Calais, Lloyd Carlisle, Ed Paul Champagne, Joseph Cotterel, Adey Courville, Leroy Dauphine, Moise Dauphine, Asa Dupuy, Gory Dupuy, Leroy Dupuy, John Allen Green, Amilcar Guidry, Joseph Malvin Guidry, John Allen Green, Paul Chester Guidry, John Melvin Hardy, George Hebert, Jacques Herbert, James Hebert, Louis Pershing Hebert, Elinor Huval, John Barney Huval, Lester Huval, Paul Fred Huval, Robin Huval, Russell Huval, Simon Huval, Webster Johnson, Aurelien Latiolais, Clayborn Latiolais, Clifton Latiolais, Claude LeBlanc, Linos LeBlanc, Ray LeBlanc, Travis LeBlanc, Dewey Melancon, Dieudonne Miller, Elmer Naquin, Andrew Patin, George Patin, Jean Perez, Joseph Adley Scrantz, Harry Stoute, Denis Talais, Willis Talais, Adley Theriot, Roosevelt Trahan, Ray Zeringue.

GIRLS: Italia Angelle, Lina Angelle, Vesta Angelle, Leola Arnaud, Marie May Brasseux, Inez Broussard, Georgia Norma Calais, Liliane Dauphine, Ella May Dugas, Eunice Dupuis, Verna Mae Fruge, Rita Audrey Guidry, Victoria Guidry, Virginie Guidry, Vandale Guilbeau, Elsa Hamilton, Adele Hebert, Mildred Hebert, Therese Hebert, Ernestine LeBlanc, Marie Nelly LeBlanc, Rena LeBlanc, Tresaimée LeBlanc, Marie Legrand, Cecile Melancon, Uranie Melancon, Verly Montet, Hazel Usey, Catherine Louelle Weber, Agnes Wiltz.

In May of 1938 Fr. Perronnet was at Hotel Dieu hospital in New Orleans under the doctor's care-- a very sick man. He was finally able to find a home in Lafayette, on St. Patrick Street when Fr. Alexander Chasles decided to replace him in Cecilia.

Fr. Louis Perronnet died on September 1, 1950 at Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette. He was buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Cecilia, where he had labored during some very difficult conditions for 11 years. These had been trying years -- years of floods and disasters, depression and poverty, years just prior to a great World War.



FR. ALEXANDER J. CHASLES
THIRD PASTOR
June 1938 - June 1941

Fr. Alexander J. Chasles was born in Evirgiuet, Trinite Porhoet, Morbihan, France in 1883. From 1907 to 1911 he was pastor in Kenner, Louisiana. Then in November of 1911, Archbishop Blenk appointed him pastor of a new parish in New Orleans, Our Lady Star of the Sea. In a letter dated December 18, 1911, Archbishop Blenk writes the reason for Fr. Chasles' appointment, "....the motives that impelled me to call you for this important work were the proofs that you have already given of marked administrative and executive ability combined with a true zeal for souls. The difficulties you may have to contend with in the upbuilding of this new parish will only serve to bring out those qualities in a clearer light, and I have no doubt that your energy and determination will overcome them all". Fr. Chasles had proven that he was the man equal to the task in many instances. On Christmas Day, 1911, he offered their First Mass there. He built a new church in 1912 only to be levelled to the ground by the great storm of 1915. Within six months a new church had been built.

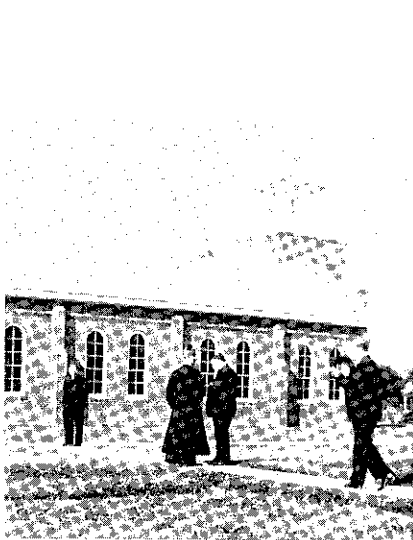
Then rather than become pastor in Golden Meadows in 1917, Fr. Chasles chose to go to Leonville. He served the people of St. Leo's Church in Leonville, La. from July 1917 to August 1929. Here too, he served the people well and became very close to the people.

In 1929, Bishop Jeanmard called him to leave Leonville and go to Scott, La. to replace Fr. J.V. Monteillard. He served in Scott for a few years and then decided to retire. So in mid 1937, Fr. Chasles asked the bishop to resign on account of continued ill health. But on June 10, 1938, Bishop Jeanmard asked him to take charge of the parish in Cecilia, because Fr. Perronnet was physically unable to continue and could find no one to replace him. So, in spite of ill health, he did come to Cecilia and served the people of St. Joseph's Parish extremely well. He did some marvelous work in such a short time, building the parish church and bringing people back to church.



The new St. Joseph Church, built in 1939 by Fr. Chasles, who is seen here at about the time the church was blessed.

Fr. Alexander J. Chasles came to Cecilia on June 16, 1938, when the Church only had \$1,694.24 on hand. On March 9, 1939, he borrowed \$10,500.00 at 5% interest to build a new church for Cecilia. The old church lumber was used to build a Parish Hall. On August 18, 1941, Mr. Alcide Bonin was appointed Parish Trustee to replace Mr. Nicholas Decous who was deceased. Mr. Bonin served until November of 1975 (for 35 years) and was replaced by Mr. C. D. Guilbeau.



Bishop Jeanmard (in center) with other priests present for the Church's blessing.

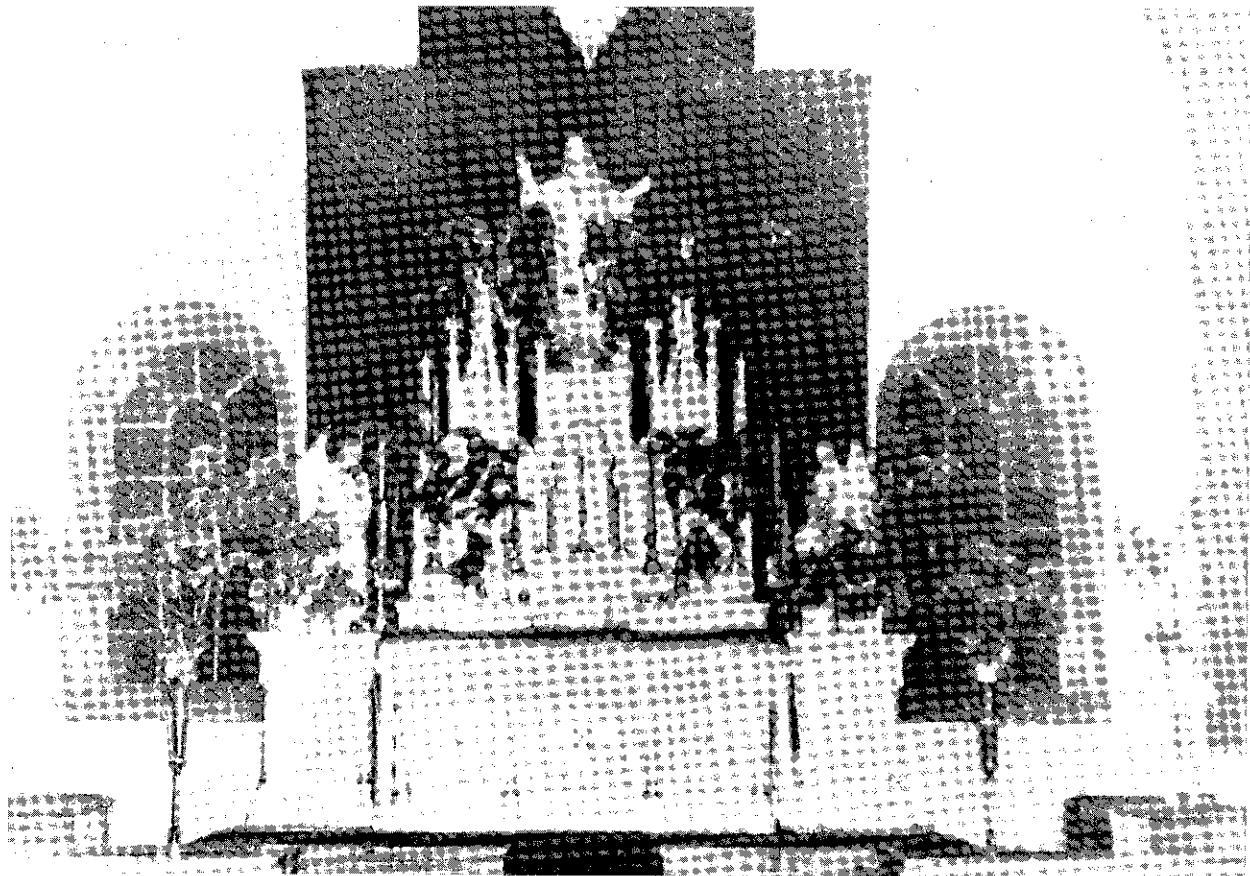


The new St. Joseph Church built in 1939

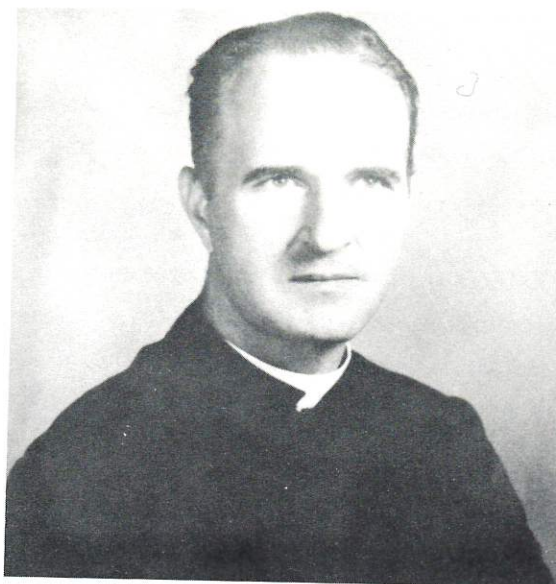


Fr. Alexander Chasles with a group of altar boys in front of the new church. Pictured are : Jackie Landry (band director in Kaplan) who is holding the cross; on his left is James Hamilton (manager of a Savings Co.); second row from left: J.C. Angelle (bus driver); Lenny Angelle (Cecilia water district manager); George LeBlanc (deceased); Simon Huval (deceased); Rene Calais (at U.S.L.); Louis LeBlanc (Cecilia farmer); Gene Rees (Lafayette doctor); back row from left: Fr. Floyd Calais (Abbeville pastor); Mike LeBlanc (St. Martin parish tax assessor); Fr. Chasles (deceased); L.D. Dupuis (retired school teacher), Lewelyn Hebert (deceased)

Fr. Chasles left Cecilia in 1941. He retired upon leaving Cecilia, but died shortly afterwards. On September 14, 1941, he died at the age of 65. He is buried in the St. Joseph Cemetery. He served Cecilia and its people for only three short years, but these were profitable years for the people and the Church in Cecilia.



The main altar of St. Joseph Church as it was built by Fr. Chasles in 1939.



FR. GEORGE BRAQUET
FOURTH PASTOR

September 1941 - September 1954

Fr. George Braquet was born in Loreauville, La. on November 16, 1909. He entered St. Joseph Seminary in Covington, La. in September of 1922 and was ordained a priest on June 10, 1933. He was assistant pastor at St. Michael's in Crowley from 1933 to 1941.

After his appointment as Pastor of St. Joseph's in Cecilia in 1941, Fr. Braquet continued the fine work begun by Fr. Chasles, that of giving the people service and bringing people back to Church and to the sacraments. He was responsible for organizing youth groups, especially the Sodality of Mary, Boy Scouts, Adult Softball teams, etc. He left Cecilia in 1954, to become Pastor of St. Bernard's Church in Breaux Bridge. Then in 1970, he was assigned as pastor of St. John's Church in Henry, Louisiana.

When Fr. Braquet arrived in Cecilia in 1941 there was a great need for a new rectory. The bazaars were very popular then as a means of raising money for the needs of the Church. In 1941, the colored bazaar made \$202.23 and the bazaar of the whites made \$930.60. Then in 1942 the War brought about many more problems. These were War years and people collected scrap paper, rubber and iron for the country's war needs. Early in 1942, Fr. Braquet began printing the Sunday Bulletin, (the first one in St. Martin parish). These old bulletins are still a source of historical documentation for a history of Cecilia. It was one of the chief means of communication for a vast number of people in the area.

In three years the bazaars paid the \$10,000.00 debt on the new church, so that on April 2, 1944, Fr. Braquet was able to announce that the debt was paid out. Then in 1942 Fr. Raymond Gobeil, the Atchafalaya missionary priest and pastor of Charenton, asked Fr. Braquet to take over his mission at the chapel at Henderson on the levee. Fr. Gobeil had missions at Bayou Chene, Butte LaRose and at Henderson.

After World War II, this chapel of Henderson was hauled from the levee to the lot in Henderson and was enlarged to meet the needs of the people. The Jesuits from Grand Coteau also helped serve this mission until 1950.

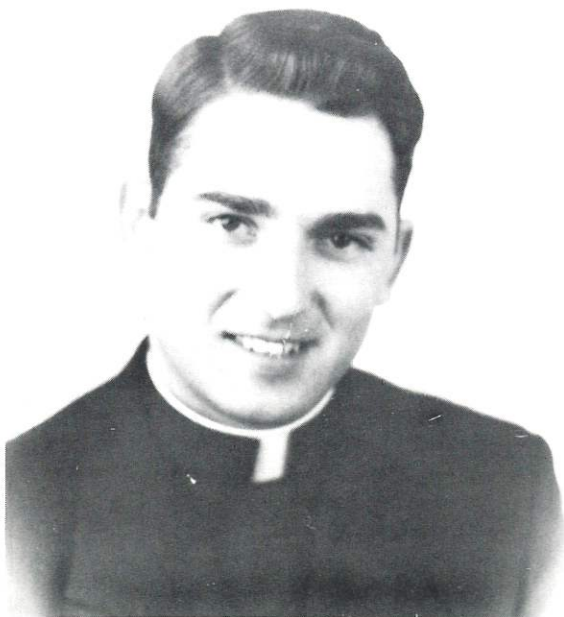
In 1944 the Josephite Fathers realized that there were enough Catholic Negroes in Cecilia for their own parish church. The colored bazaar of 1944 was for the benefit of their new church, St. Rose of Lima. The first Pastor of St. Rose of Lima was Fr. Roderick Auclair who stayed with Fr. Braquet for a short while. He was most active in the building and construction of St. Rose of Lima Church.



St. Joseph's Cemetery in the 1940's

On January 26, 1947, Fr. Braquet could report the following figures: Of a Catholic population numbering 3,100 people there were 900 at Sunday Mass and 10,400 yearly communions. There were also 36 boy scouts. The financial report of 1947 indicates that receipts were \$15,851.77 while the expenses were \$11,180.02. He had accumulated \$15,633.49 in the Building Fund from the last three bazaars. On August 24, 1947, he was finally successful in getting two sisters for CCD work and to live here in early October.

On June 12, 1949, Fr. Theard James (T.J.) Hebert, the son of Theard Hebert and Mabel Guidry, said his first mass here in Cecilia. Fr. T.J. Hebert was born on February 2, 1923. He entered the Seminary in 1940 and was ordained a priest on June 11, 1949.



Fr. T. J. Hebert, Ordained on
June 11, 1949

On June 23, 1949 the old rectory was torn down and on July 6, 1949, they poured the foundation for the new rectory. The same year, a Lithuanian refugee priest, Fr. Moktus, was assigned assistant and stayed for about a year, then left for the Diocese of Albany, New York. On February 5, 1950, Fr. Braquet could report a Catholic population of 3,500 people with 1200 people attending Sunday Mass. The number of annual communions had increased to 17,900.



Fr. George Braquet with friends.

These were happy days for Fr. Braquet, as well as for the people of Cecilia. Much was accomplished when people and pastor were able to work together for the needs of the Church.

Fr. Floyd Calais, the son of Theard Calais and Aline LeBlanc was ordained on June 3, 1950. He is presently Pastor in Abbeville, Louisiana.

On Tuesday, September 14, 1954, the entire parish assembled on the Cecilia football field to say farewell to Fr. Braquet who had been recently appointed Pastor of St. Bernard's in Breaux Bridge, La. He was the first native priest to serve Cecilia.



Fr. Floyd Calais, ordained on June 3, 1950



FR. WILTON JAMES "BUD" LABBE
FIFTH PASTOR
September 1954 - June 1961

Fr. Bud Labbe was born on April 25, 1913 and was from Broussard, Louisiana. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 22, 1937. On March 20, 1953, he became assistant to Fr. George Braquet in Cecilia. He had served as assistant pastor in Church Point, Gueydan and Kaplan. He also served as pastor in Mementau, Lake Arthur, and Lafayette before serving in Cecilia.

On September 8, 1954 he was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's in Cecilia.

His years in Cecilia were also spent in beautifying the church grounds and making necessary improvements for the parish facilities.

The interior of St. Joseph Church
at the time of Fr. Bud Labbe.



On June 18, 1961, Fr. Bud Labbe bid farewell to his parishioners in Cecilia. His last Parish Report states that in 1954 when he became pastor of Cecilia there were 33,000 annual communions. Now in 1960 there were 62,000 annual communions. This is an indication of the spiritual growth of the parish. It indicates some of the work Fr. Labbe and others before him had accomplished in Cecilia. Henderson had just had a new chapel built by Fr. Labbe. It is the present Church of Our Lady of Mercy in Henderson.

On June 15, 1966, Fr. Bud Labbe died. He was buried in Cecilia on June 17th.



St. Joseph's Church as it appeared at the time of Fr. Bud Labbe. The grotto of Our Lady is on the right.



MSGR. ALBERT J. BACQUE
SIXTH PASTOR
June 1961 - June 1966

Fr. Albert Bacque was born in Maurice, Louisiana on September 13, 1909. He entered the Seminary on September 13, 1922 and was ordained on June 10, 1933. His first assignment in 1933 was as assistant pastor at St. Peter's in New Iberia, La. In 1943-1945 he became superintendent of the Lafayette Diocesan Catholic Schools. Then in 1947 to 1954 he was pastor of St. Peter's in New Iberia, and built the new St. Peter's church during his pastorate.

While he was pastor in New Iberia he was made domestic prelate (Rt. Rev. Msgr.) in December of 1948. Then in 1954 to 1961 he was pastor of St. John's Cathedral in Lafayette. Here he built a new High School, the Brother's Home and the new Cathedral rectory.

In 1961, Fr. Bacque became pastor of St. Joseph's in Cecilia. Here he did much work in repairing and renovating the Church, repairing the Church Hall, building the first Mausoleum and illuminating the church steeple and backyard with color lights.

Some of the activities in the parish were the enjoyable outings with the Altar Society ladies on their various trips and sight-seeing tours. He also re-organized the choir.

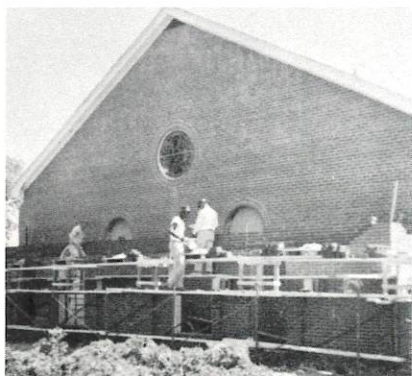
On August 6, 1961, the parish bulletin mentions the fact that Sr. Marceline had been here for 14 years and Sr. Conception for 12 years. They were both teaching religion and caring for the altar and vestments in Church. Sr. Raphael came here in January of 1962.

The 1961 Parish Report indicates that annual communions numbered 63,000. The parish income was \$37,675.86 while expenses were at \$43,993.94.

On July 1, 1962 work began on beautifying the Cemetery and the Bayou bank area of the cemetery. The census of 1962 found 612 families numbering 2,142 people. On September 9, 1962 the parish welcomed Sr. Tarcisia who came to work with Sr. Conception. On March 24, 1963, Fr. Bacque began to repair and paint the Church.

On May 26, 1963, Fr. Daniel Schexnayder, son of Daniel Schexnayder and Manola Calais, celebrated his First Mass in Cecilia. He was born in Cecilia on March 22, 1936 and ordained to the priesthood on May 25, 1963. On June 16, 1963, Fr. Lawrence Mallette served as assistant until October 1963. On November 3, 1963 plans to build a Mausoleum in the Cemetery were begun.

Church renovation began in early 1964 under Msgr. Albert J. Bacque. Some of the improvements were beautifying the front of the church, a new baptistry and cry-room and enlarging the sacristy area.

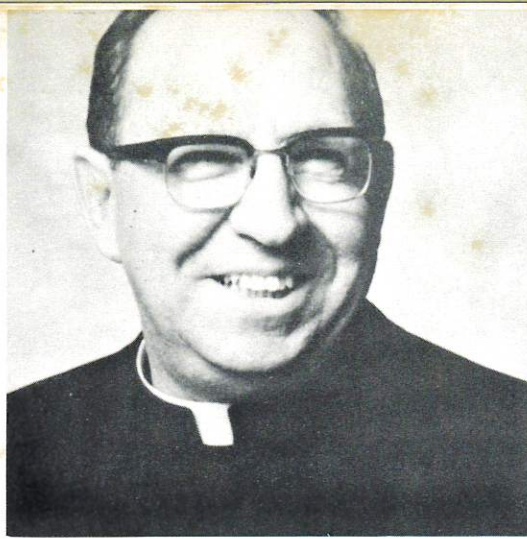


On August 26, 1964 Bishop Maurice Schexnayder blessed the renovated church, Mausoleum and shrine. These had been very busy years for Fr. Bacque, and they were years well spent. The people of Cecilia would be very grateful for these improvements. These were the 60's - - the years of Vatican Council II - - and they were difficult years for many priests and people.

On May 29, 1966, it was announced that a new pastor was coming to Cecilia. Fr. Bacque described him as follows, "you can expect to find him to be kind, considerate and a very devoted pastor". So in June of 1966, Fr. Paul Thibodeaux replaced Fr. Bacque as pastor of St. Joseph's.



St. Joseph's Church - - after the renovation
done by Msgr. Bacque in 1963 - 64.



FR. PAUL THIBODEAUX
SEVENTH PASTOR
 June 1966 - October 1975

Fr. Paul Thibodeaux was born on March 1, 1923 in the Richard Community near Church Point, Louisiana. He attended St. Joseph's Seminary in Covington, La. and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, La. His ordination to the priesthood was on May 22, 1948. Among his priestly assignments were Gueydan, Opelousas, and Abbeville as assistant. He also served as Pastor in Cow Island, Cankton, Cecilia and Iota.

On June 19, 1966, Fr. Paul Thibodeaux took over the parish of St. Joseph's in Cecilia. One of his first duties was to care for the burial arrangements for Fr. Bud Labbe, who had died on June 15th. Fr. Bud was a close friend to Fr. Thibodeaux, as he was to many of his fellow priests.

On December 7, 1966, Fr. Alcus Trahan, son of Claude Trahan, Sr. and Leontine Berard, was ordained to the priesthood. He was a native of Cecilia and celebrated his first mass here at St. Joseph's Church.

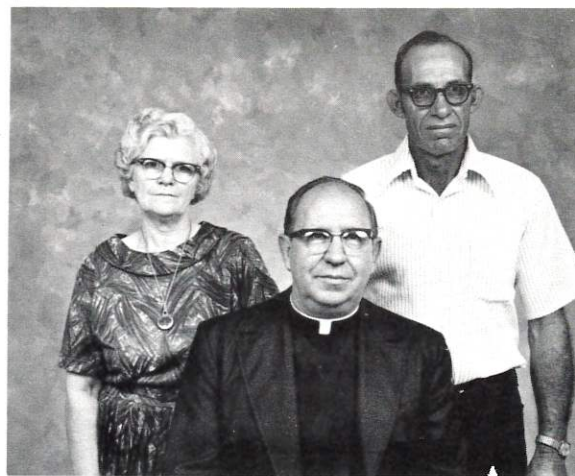


Parish Trustees - - Mr. Florent Hardy with
 Mr. Alcide Bonin on the right. Mr. Bonin
 served at Trustee for 35 years.

On August 25, 1968, Fr. Thibodeaux purchased 2.57 acres of property which was adjacent to the church cemetery. Among the other improvements in the parish were the reduction of the church debt, surfacing the parking lot and driveways, improving the drainage of all cemetery property, repairs on the Church and Hall; and improvements on the rectory.

On December 17, 1969, Mr. Evans Calais died after serving as Trustee of the Parish for 42 years.

On May 5 - 6, 1973, Fr. Thibodeaux celebrated 25 years as a priest. Later that year photographs were taken of many of the families for this pictorial book of the parish. Among Fr. Thibodeaux' interests were the Boy Scouts, Altar Boys, etc. Pictured below are groups of Scouts and Altar Boys with Fr. Thibodeaux.



Fr. Paul Thibodeaux, Miss Leandre Guillot (Fr. Thibodeaux's housekeeper) and Clarence Melancon (church maintenance man).



On October 19, 1975, Fr. Thibodeaux announced that he was to become the new pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Iota, Louisiana. After serving the people of Cecilia for 9 years, he was leaving. His replacement was Fr. Donald J. Hebert, then assistant in Eunice, La.



FR. DONALD J. HEBERT
EIGHTH PASTOR
 October 1975

Fr. Donald J. Hebert was born in Lafayette, La. on April 8, 1942. His parents are Louis Hebert and Marie L. Mire, both from the Mire (Bosco) community. In 1956 he entered Immaculata Seminary in Lafayette; then St. John's Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1962; and finally Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in 1967. On June 1, 1968 he was ordained in Lafayette and celebrated his first mass in Mire on June 2, 1968.

His First assignment in June of 1968 was as assistant pastor to Fr. Lawrence Fournet in Arnaudville, La. After spending two years there, his next assignment was as assistant pastor at St. Anthony's in Eunice, La. There he served until coming to Cecilia as pastor on Oct. 29, 1975.

Since 1974, one of Fr. Hebert's most interesting hobbies has been doing family histories and genealogy. Since then he has published several books on Church history and genealogical records. This parish history of Cecilia is his eighth publication.



Fr. Douglas Courville with priests who joined him in celebrating his First Mass in Cecilia on January 4, 1976.

On January 3, 1976, Fr. Douglas Courville was ordained to the priesthood. His First Mass was celebrated here in Cecilia on January 4, 1976.

This was another important event for Cecilia as well as for Fr. Donald Hebert. Fr. Douglas was an old time friend of Fr. Hebert from their Seminary days.

Since the parish of St. Joseph's has had several native priests ordained in the past few years, perhaps this parish should feel justly proud that God has chosen her young men to serve Him in the priestly ministry --- as so many others left their homes in Europe (especially France) in order to serve the people of Cecilia.



Fr. Douglas Courville concelebrated his First Mass on January 4, 1976 with his fellow priests here at St. Joseph's in Cecilia. (Seen here are Msgr. Albert Bacque, Fr. Courville, Fr. Gary Schexnayder, Fr. Harry Greig, and Fr. Donald Hebert).

The organization of a Parish Council was one of the new undertakings in the parish. On March 23, 1976, the St. Joseph Parish Council was formally begun. These twelve men represent different areas of our parish and help advise the pastor and make recommendations about parish life. The Parish Council members are: Clarence Angelle, Holden Calais, Ray Calais, Wade Calais, Alcide Dupre, Jr., George Dupuis, Harold Melancon, Clarence Olivier, Bob Ray and George Taylor, including the two Trustees - Mr. Florent Hardy and Mr. C. D. Guilbeau.

The summer of 1976 also saw a new type of program for religious education and formation for the children of the parish. Tommy Calais and Louis Richard, two Seminarians, organized a HI - GOD program geared for small children ages 5 to 12. This first summer, the program saw about 90 children participate.



Children singing with guitarist, Greg Gautreaux, Tommy Calais and Louis Richard during the HI - GOD - June 1976.

ASSISTANT PRIESTS WHO SERVED ST. JOSEPH'S IN CECILIA



Fr. Francis Xavier Hamel, S. J. was born in Princeville, Canada in February of 1893. He was ordained in Montreal, Canada in August of 1928. He spent 22 years as a priest in Canada before coming to Cecilia in 1950.

He was assistant pastor in Cecilia from June 30, 1950 until March 12, 1953, when he died here. He is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery.



Fr. William "Bill" Van Straaten was born in Holland in 1916. He was ordained in the Netherlands on July 2, 1952. He was assistant in Gueydan, and Eunice before he came to Cecilia on December 30, 1955 until May 1958. He then served in St. Martinville and was named pastor in 1963 in Oberlin, La. where he died on October 23, 1974. He is buried in Oberlin, La.

Fr. Michael Bakowski is from Poland. He was assistant in Cecilia from June 21, 1958 until June 24, 1962, when he was made the founding pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Henderson, La. In 1975, Fr. Mike retired and went to serve in semi-retirement in Lewisburg (a small mission of Church Point). (La.)



We end this Pictorial and History of St. Joseph Church with a listing of the marriages performed here at Grande Pointe (Cecilia) by Fr. Augustin Blanc during his first five years as pastor. We see here the names of the earliest families who settled along the Bayou Teche area called LA GRANDE POINTE --- 85 Years ago.

MARRIAGES PERFORMED BY FR. AUGUSTIN BLANC — 1891 - 1895

from

L'EGLISE DE LA GRANDE POINTE (Cecilia)

ANGELLE, Artus m. 19 Jan. 1895 Clemence GUILBEAU
 * ANGELLE, Drauzin m. 19 March 1892 Aminte GUIDRY
 * ANGELLE, Drauzin m. 26 March 1894 Agnes GUIDRY
 ANGELLE, Elie m. 26 Nov. 1895 Marie PATIN
 ANGELLE, Leed m. 19 Dec. 1893 Midora HAMILTON
 ANGELLE, Leonce m. 10 Jan. 1893 Azema GUILBEAU
 * ANGELLE, Paul m. 15 Dec. 1891 Adelaide GUILBEAU

 BENOIT, Emile m. 20 May 1891 Adelaide PATIN
 BOUTIN, Paul m. 26 April 1894 Rosita PATIN
 BREAUX, Noe m. 6 April 1894 Ophelia GUILBEAU
 BROUSSARD, Alexis m. 22 Jan. 1895 Celiza MOUTON

 CALAIS, Dorcilie m. 22 Nov. 1893 Corine GUIDRY
 * CALAIS, Eugene m. 24 Sept. 1891 Rose Eta WALTERS *
 CASTILLE, Emard m. 29 Nov. 1892 Josephine NAQUIN
 CHAMPAGNE, Alcee m. 14 June 1893 Arthemise BAUDIER
 CHAMPAGNE, Anatole m. 2 Feb. 1893 Uraïne LEBLANC
 CHARLES, Fernesh m. 16 May 1893 Marie CLOSE
 CHEVALIER, Armand m. 23 Dec. 1895 Marie SEMMER
 CHEVALIER, Eusebe m. 19 Feb. 1895 Leontine ROSSIGNOL
 CHEVALIER, Oscar m. 26 Sept. 1893 Emerite SEMERE
 COTTEREL, Joseph m. 10 Jan. 1893 Matilde DAIGLE
 COURVILLE, Francois m. 24 April 1891 Elizabeth KIDDER
 COURVILLE, Olivier m. 15 Oct. 1891 Marie Oliva DUPUIS
 COURVILLE, Onezime m. 25 Feb. 1892 Celestine GUIDRY

 DAVIS, Oscar m. 30 Jan. 1894 Fanelle WILLIAM
 DAVIS, Toney m. 31 Jan. 1895 Pauline WILLIAM
 DAVIS, Whit m. April 1894 Aspasia JEAN BAPTISTE
 DICKSON, Pierre m. 26 Feb. 1895 Ophelia DUGAS
 DEVILLIER, Oscar m. 10 Nov. 1891 Odile CAYER
 DUGAS, Gabriel m. 12 Jan. 1892 Louison MELANCON
 DUGAS, Rene m. 2 Sept. 1891 Angele HEBERT
 DUPUIS, Arthur m. 27 Nov. 1895 Mesille BERARD
 DUPUIS, Charles m. 10 May 1895 Isabelle CASTAGNIER
 DUPUIS, Ferand m. 12 Sept. 1893 Louise WEBRE
 DURAL, Arthur m. 8 Oct. 1891 Azema LEWIS

 FANGUY, Charles m. 20 Feb. 1895 Alcide DUGAS
 FREDERIC, Oresse m. 30 Oct. 1893 Colastie DAUPHINE
 FREDERIC, Sevigne m. 4 April 1893 Josette DAUPHINE
 FREDERIC, Tranquillin m. 11 Feb. 1892 Ardalie BROUSSARD

 GAUDY, Joseph m. 30 Jan. 1893 Julia ALFRED
 GUIDRY, Adam m. 25 Nov. 1891 Acelia STELLY
 GUIDRY, Adolphe M. 25 Nov. 1891 Oliva COURVILLE
 GUIDRY, Adrien m. 28 July 1892 Marie MELANCON
 GUIDRY, Clesme m. 25 Feb. 1895 Armance GUIDRY
 GUIDRY, Joseph m. 10 Sept. 1895 Evella GUIDRY

 HAMILTON, Alexandre m. 27 June 1895 Armance GUIDRY
 HEBERT, Joseph m. 26 Nov. 1895 Belzire RIGOT
 HUVAL, Clesme m. 15 Nov. 1892 Noelle BROUSSARD
 HUVAL, Galbert m. 8 July 1891 Malvina NAQUIN

 JEANSONNE, Osmin m. 4 Jan. 1894 Josephine Belzire DUPUIS

LATIOLAIS, Adam m. 8 June 1891 Adeline COURVILLE
 LATIOLAIS, Adonis m. 26 Dec. 1892 Marcelite THIBODEAUX
 LEBLANC, Hypolite m. 29 March 1894 Celeste RIDEAU
 LEBLANC, Julien m. 19 May 1891 Julia TALHEY
 LEBLANC, Meonce m. 12 Jan. 1893 Milda ZERINGUE
 LEBLANC, Overne m. 23 Jan. 1894 Antilia GUIDRY
 LEONARD, Emilcar m. 28 Dec. 1893 Herminie GUIDRY

 MARTIN, Charles m. 16 April 1891 Clementine DAVID
 MASON, Homere m. 16 Jan. 1894 Celina DEVILLIER
 MAYER, Nemesie m. 16 March 1891 Josette POTHIER
 MELANCON, Ignace m. 10 Jan. 1894 Cecilia LANDRY
 MELANCON, Joseph Arvillien m. 5 Jan. 1895 Marie Alix LAVIOLETTE

 NAQUIN, Arthur m. 5 Feb. 1894 Lumina ANGELLE
 NOEL, Pascal m. 24 Nov. 1891 Arthemise FONTENET

 OLIVER, William m. 11 March 1895 Caroline LASTRAPES

 PATIN, Auguste m. 8 April 1891 Ernestine DUPUIS
 PATIN, Etienne m. 10 June 1891 Marie COURVILLE
 PICARD, Valerie m. 31 Oct. 1893 Noemie MATHIEW
 POTHIER, Adam m. 21 Nov. 1893 Marie ZERINGUE
 POTHIER, Berkman m. 12 Jan. 1892 Arthemise MAYER

 RAMAGOSA, Frederic m. 15 Oct. 1894 Corine ZERINGUE
 ROBERT, Henry m. 27 June 1892 Ophelia ROY
 ROBICHAUD, Fil m. 19 Sept. 1892 Melitte GORDON
 ROY, A. Darneval m. 16 March 1895 Louise LASTRAPES
 ROY, Lastie m. 24 April 1894 Elizabeth COMEAU

 SAM, Julien m. 26 Jan 1892 Edmonia CHRETIEN
 * SCRANTZ, Joseph m. 1 Dec. 1891 Celeste GUIDRY
 STELLY, Lucain m. 2 Jan. 1894 Celina LANGLOS

 THIBODEAUX, Alphonse m. 18 May 1892 Idea HEBERT
 THIBODEAUX, Leonard m. 19 Nov. 1891 CAYER
 THOMAS, Joseph m. 19 May 1894 Marie HAMILTON

 VICTOR, Louis m. 14 April 1891 Alicia SEM

 WASHINGTON, Joseph m. 20 Dec. 1894 Virginia VALERE
 WILLIAM, Valmont m. 1 Feb. 1894 Ozea MOUTON
 WILSE, Vincent m. 3 Dec. 1894 Alexina USA
 WOOD, Arthur Darneval m. 17 April 1895 Louise Armide CHAMPAGNE

THE CHURCH

As come and go the nights and days,
Have come and gone the years.
And through them all
Always stood tall
His House that quells all fears.

Beckoning to all in its surround
"Come ! Fill me with your love!"
You'll forget all sin
When you enter in
This House of lasting love.

Through years of lean
Much hardships were seen
By the flock this House did serve.
But strong faith made glad
Overcome the sad
And from right only few did swerve.

This House has braved storm and war,
Poverty, grief and pain.
To rise each time ever greater still
The source of new hope again.

So rise ever toward heaven your mighty steeple
Withstand the elements and man.
Be there always to guide
Pray we may abide
'Till this world He chooses to end.

Pope Huval

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Mr. Clarence Calais
Mr. & Mrs. George Calais
Mrs. Theard Calais
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Courville
Mr. & Mrs. Daly Dalfrey

Mrs. Felix Duhon
Mr. A. A. Dupre, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Emile Dupuis
Mrs. Theard Hebert
Mr. Leo "Pope" Huval
Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred Landry
Mr. & Mrs. Essie LeBlanc
Mrs. Mike LeBlanc
Mrs. Edgar Mouton, Sr.
Fr. Paul Thibodeaux