



Sacred Heart History

A Timeline of our Beloved Priests

1883 - Present



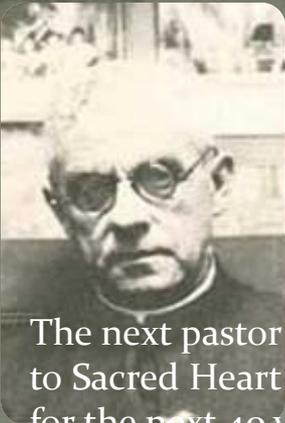
Fr. Thomas A. Smith

1883 - 1895

In 1883, Fr. Thomas Alphonse Smith was appointed as pastor of St. Clothilde Church. Not long after his arrival, Fr. Smith enlarged the existing church and on August 15, 1885, the Feast of the Assumption, blessed and renamed the church, placing it under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In December of 1885, Fr. Smith blessed the "new bell" which now hangs in the baptistery.

Fr. Smith aided by a group of ladies from the parish sought permission and was granted to establish a convent and school for Morgan City. The new convent was blessed on July 23, 1893 and placed under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In September of the same year, five sisters and Mother Mary of St. Cesari arrived to prepare for the opening of the school which took place on September 4th, 1893. Fr. Smith retired in 1895 at the age of 76 and died shortly after retiring.



Fr. Andrew W. Souby

1898 – 1938

The next pastor to bless Sacred Heart was Fr. Andrew Souby. In June of 1898, Fr. Souby was assigned to Sacred Heart parish, his being the longest pastorate of any priest assigned here - serving our parish for the next 40 years. His contribution to our church was extraordinary to say the least. A man of enormous energy and curiosity that would remain with him all of his life. He recorded his history of both his time with Sacred Heart and of Morgan City through writings. He endured through World War I and the Great Depression by prayer and persistence. Working with the Catholic War Department keeping the records of those who served from St. Mary Parish to feeding the hungry during the depression going so far as to help in the baking of bread down at the Bakery.

June 6, 1902, the old church was declared "unfit for divine worship" and Fr. Souby would break ground for the church we now call Sacred Heart. In November, the corner stone was laid and was blessed but the foundation remained untouched for the next 2 years for lack of funds.

Fr. Souby had purchased the statue of the dead Christ and stored it in a box in the sacristy. It was carried out by men of the congregation every Good Friday and placed before the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

Completion of the church happened in 1922 On September 14, 1924 the church was dedicated with Bishop Laval presiding. And in 1926, the bells were officially blessed. With Fr. Souby's efforts, Morgan City's Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court Massabielle No. 1134 was established.

Fr. Andrew W. Souby (Cont'd)

And so after the establishment of the Catholic Daughters, Fr. Souby turned his attention to designing. Ground broke on July 21, 1931 for Dalton Hall. Although an architect was hired for this work, Fr. Souby was the designer.

October 1938, sadness envelopes Sacred Heart. Fr. Andrew Souby passes away and is laid to rest on October 14, 1938. He is entombed in the baptistery.

The most notable and visual contribution Fr. Souby left for us are the stained glass windows. A walk through Sacred Heart Church reveal the story of our faith. The stained glass in the baptistery too are memorials to his beloved family.

A unique feature of Sacred Heart church's baptistery is that it is apart from the main church. The building served 4 purposes for Fr. Souby - a baptistery, a memorial to his family (each stained glass window is in memory of family members), the grotto is a shrine of the miracles he witnessed at Lourdes and lastly, his final resting place.



Fr. Jules Toups

1939 - 1953

Our next priest at Sacred Heart was Fr. Jules Toups. A native of Lockport, was assigned to Sacred Heart in 1939. He came to Morgan City from his very successful service in Pierre Part.

He began a \$50,000.00 renovation to Sacred Heart. It started with the roof changing the valleys from lead to copper. The window frames were re-caulked and painted. The entire interior was refinished.

Artisans from New York were brought in to do the stenciling, painting and gold leaf applications. Pews and lighting fixtures were installed. The cypress doors were replaced with metal ones and the white plaster altar and columns were painted to give the effect of marble.



Fr. Ouellette, Asst. Pastor

1942

Tragedy struck during Fr. Toups stay. In 1942, his assistant pastor, Fr. Ouellette along with two altar servers were struck by a train in Amelia. It was the first time Sacred Heart had 2 assistants to be assigned during the same time.



Fr. Henry Holleman

1953 - 1962

Following Fr. Toups was Fr. Henry Holleman. He arrived in October of 1953 and immediately began a building program. By 1945, \$430,000 dollars of pledges were given to Fr. Holleman by the congregation. He spoke of building a new church, convent and school with an estimated cost of \$1,075,000. 17 acres were purchased in Elliott subdivision and the new Sacred Heart School and convent were built.

Today it is home to Holy Cross Church, Holy Cross Elementary, Central Catholic High School and the Sam Siracusa Community Center. It was under Fr. Holleman's pastorate that Sacred Heart purchased and installed air conditioning in the church. But in 1962, due to illness Fr. Holleman had to resign his pastorate. But the progress of Sacred Heart church was well on its way.



Fr. Leon Cau

1962 - 1968

Fr. Leon Cau was then assigned to Sacred Heart. Morgan City was his first pastorate and he was the first Catholic priest to be elected president of the Ministerial Alliance. During his time here, Pope John Paul XXIII saw a new vision for the church and called the Second Vatican Council. The Council was to address renewal in the church in the light of the modern age.

The changes that were to take place were dramatic to say the least. Fr. Cau began to institute the required changes - Mass was now said in English, the new altar of sacrifice was before the old one facing the congregation, missals were published, statues were removed from the church giving total focus upon the sanctuary and Christ. The baptistery was closed and all baptisms took place in the church.

Fr. Leon Cau (Cont'd)

Another feat Fr. Cau took on was to re-open the school facilities at Sacred Heart. Persistent pleading with the Bishop in New Orleans, Fr. Cau was able to secure 3 sisters from the Reverend Mother of the Sisters of St. Joseph in France. On September 11, 1964, the school doors were opened to 130 children in grades Kindergarten-3. Enrollment increased with a grade added each year. To accommodate the increase in students, Dalton Hall Auditorium was used as classrooms and Cau Hall and cafeteria were built. Fr. Cau's final renovation to Sacred Heart was the rectory. The old rectory was removed and the new one was built and completed in September of 1965.



Fr. J. Alcide Clement

1968 - 1971

In 1968, Fr. Cau was assigned to St. Ann Shrine in New Orleans and Sacred Heart welcomed Fr. Alcide Clement to the parish. An avid LSU fan, Fr. Clement, not with us very long, exchanged assignments with Fr. Phillip Whitney. Fr. Clement was tragically murdered in 1975 along with a nun and his housekeeper during a theft from his rectory.



Fr. Phillip Whitney

1971 - 1979

Fr. Phillip Whitney came to Sacred Heart in 1971 serving here until 1979. It was during his pastorate that the 2nd floor of Dalton Hall was converted into classrooms and a library. The school was increasing in size and the nuns were in need of a new home. Changes were needed. The nuns received a new home and the old convent they lived in was converted into a school playground.

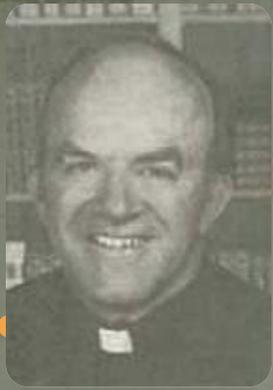
During Fr. Whitney's time here at Sacred Heart, the foundation work for St. Joseph's Hall was laid. The hall was named in honor of the Sisters of St. Joseph who served Sacred Heart School. It was also under Fr. Whitney that he encouraged his assistant, Fr. Guy Zeringue to renovate the baptistery. The baptistery had turned into a storage facility and was in terrible disrepair. Headed by Fr. Guy, the baptistery was restored to its beauty. Fr. Whitney then switched parishes with Fr. Anthony Rousso and so Sacred Heart had now a new priest.



Fr. Anthony Rousso

1979 - 1980

In 1979, Fr. Anthony Rousso came to Sacred Heart. He was to be our first native of Morgan City to be ordained which occurred on December 18, 1943 and at which time he celebrated his first Mass here at Sacred Heart on December 26, 1943. Fr. Rousso served our parish for a year but due to illness, he was required to retire.



Fr. John Gallen

1980 - 1998

1980 brings to Sacred Heart Fr. John Gallen. He ushered in the most drastic restoration. It was under his leadership that Sacred Heart underwent an extensive renovation that resulted in this glorious place of worship we now have. But it came with a price. For years and years our parish struggled with an enormous debt. After 18 years of service to Sacred Heart, Fr. Gallen is transferred to a new parish and in comes Fr. Sabino Rebosura or Fr. Benie.



Fr. Sabino "Benie"

Rebosura

1998 - 2007

Undeterred by the debt facing him, Fr. Benie rallied the parish and in 2 short years, the debt was cancelled. Not becoming complacent with the debt resolved, Fr. Benie assured the beauty of Sacred Heart with the Maintenance Fund. Using the funds received through this collection, necessary repairs to the church and surrounding buildings were made. The church has new sound system, additional altar furnishings, carpet and ceramic tile as well as new liturgy books. The light fixtures were reconditioned and the circuit panel and breakers were replaced along with the brick pavers on the front steps and landing.



Fr. Greg Fratt

2007 - Present

With Fr. Benie back in the Philippines, Sacred Heart is blessed with yet another extraordinary pastor. Fr. Greg Fratt is now appointed to our parish after serving at St. Andrews in Amelia. It is with our faith in God that we receive him into our community of faith as a messenger of our Lord. We are blessed to have him here in our parish and to also have the opportunity to present to him our needs and concerns through this parish assembly.

As the history of our church has shown, Sacred Heart has withstood many challenges but manages to grow stronger as a community of faith united and guided by our love for our Lord Jesus Christ. Sacred Heart plays a great role and impact in the faith-life of the people here in Morgan City. And so it continues on today with Sacred Heart and us as parishioners to live out the challenge of Christian formation. And as we do so, let us not forget the long line of priests and parishioners who have dedicated their lives to serving God. Thank you.