

On All Saint's Day, November 1, 1933, groundbreaking for the Proposed Church took place. The Very Reverend Bonaventure Hanes, O.S.B., performed the ceremony. The contractor was R.H. Erskine assisted by Thomas Dean.

Father Bonaventure Hansen celebrated the first Mass on January 28th, 1934. The first two Altar Servers were Theodore Richardson and William Elliott who later became the first Choir Director and Organist. Mrs. Justina Boyd-Dean was the instructor of the new members. She also prepared the children for First Communion and Confirmation and took charge of the Bazaar.

When the congregation of the Blessed Martin de Porres was founded in 1937, Polhemus House, which was used as a school, was given over to the new community. The present St. Francis Joseph School - formerly St. Joseph's School - was erected at this time on the spacious grounds of the Church.

The Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto was built on the Church grounds between, February 11th to March 25th 1936. The Legion of Mary recites the Rosary here during the months of May and October.

During the 1940's the school grew rapidly under the guidance of the Sisters of Charity and the first Parish Organizations were formed. Among them were the Ladies Sodality, the Holy Name Society, the Junior Children of Mary and the Boys Scouts. In this decade the Parish developed under the leadership of Father Ferdinand Schriefels, O.S.B.

The decade of the 1950's was an outstanding one in the life of the Church. The church grew by leaps and bounds under the direction of its vibrant and dynamic pastor, Father Marcian Peters, O.S.B. - better known as the "Sporting Priest." Apart from being a very concerned priest, he was largely responsible for the development of sports in The Bahamas, and in 1947, founded the St. Bernard's Sporting Club and Auxiliary. He was also responsible for the construction of St. Bernard's Park. Now partly occupied by the Parish Centre and parking lot.

The rapid growth of the Parish made it necessary to extend the Church. The new extension, built in 1959, doubled the size of the existing Church. Other organizations such as the Credit Union - founded by Messrs', A. Leon McKinney and Peter V. I. Coakley, the Catholic Benevolent Association and the Legion of Mary were formed.

In 1959 the Rectory was built and the Parish Priest, Father Marcian, was able to live among his parishioners.

Because of the development of the surrounding areas and the increased membership of the Parish, it became apparent that the assistance of another priest was needed. The parishioners were elated and rejoiced at the announcement that Father Preston Moss would be assigned to St. Joseph and the attendance at Mass increased tremendously.

During the decade of the 1960's the Mass changed from Latin to English and the Folk Mass was introduced to the Parish. Mr. Paul Richardson served as the first organist for the Folk Mass. The Benedictine Sisters took over the school in this decade. It is interesting to note that St. Joseph's students were among the best in the Diocesan Spelling Contest and won the first two contests. Later the school came under the supervision of the Bahamian Benedictines, Sisters Bernard Coakley and Rosella Harvey.

More involvement of lay people was encouraged and thus the Parish Council was established. Mr. Theodore Richardson was elected the first Chairman of the Council. Patricia Coakley and Christopher Richardson were the Youth Representatives on the Council. Parishioners began to socialize and interact more as a parish family.

In the 1970's the responsibility of the Parish was assumed by the Sacred Heart Fathers. The first priests to be assigned were Fathers John Sullivan and Michael Kelly and later Father Benedict Folger. The new team of priests encouraged organizations and parish activities that allowed lay people to become more involved.

In March 1977 Father Michael Kelly succeeded Father John Sullivan and as pastor continued to work untiringly for the welfare of the Parish. He dreamed of great things and through his dedication and hard work, he achieved many goals. We owe a debt of gratitude to Father Kelly for his ability to organize in so many ways. He was responsible for making the Parish financially viable and because of his persistence the Annual Parish Bazaar was one of the most successful in the Diocese. Father Kelly dreamt about a new rectory, new offices and a new modern kitchen and today we enjoy the fruits of his labour.

In 1979 much to the displeasure of the parishioners, the parish school was amalgamated with St. Francis and was relocated to the priory grounds.

During the 1980's, Sts. Francis/Joseph School was placed under the leadership of Sister Annie Thompson, O.S.B.

The 1980's saw the appointment of the second Bahamian priest to serve the Parish, Father (now Monsignor) Simeon Roberts. We said goodbye to Father Michael Kelly in August 1983 and welcomed Father Martin Gomes, SS.CC. His warm personality endeared him to the community of St. Joseph.

In 1983 under the leadership of Father Roberts, Eucharistic Ministers were commissioned for the first time in our Parish. Their role is significant not only because they assist the priest, but because this allows greater lay involvement. Concerning the school, the pendulum made a full swing and in September 1984 the school moved back to St. Joseph's grounds.

Under the spiritual guidance of Father Gomes more Parish Ministries were fostered. Parishioners were encouraged to pursue the Lay Leadership Course for a duration of two years. The one Mass on a Sunday was first introduced, whereby all parishioners share Eucharist and

socialized afterwards. Seminars/Workshops were sponsored to enhance parishioners participation in celebrating the Mass. Missions with appropriate themes were given.

RCIA, Care of the Needy and other Social Outreach Programs were revitalized. The Church was renovated - the Altar beautified with ironworks and tiling, windows and doors were replaced, which improved the “worship environment.” Father Gomes was ably assisted by Sisters Kathleen, Connie and later Sister Pauline of the St. Joseph’s Sisters from Canada.

The Parish Council with its other duties was given the task to write a Constitution Booklet based on Diocesan Guidelines for Parish councils. Persons instrumental in the booklets formation were Pamrica Ferguson, Catherine Brown, Chester Bynoe, Maxwell Daniels, Natalie Higgs and other members.

Father Gomes departed and Father Stanley Kolasa arrived in the summer of 1988. The Church and Rectory became more decorative due to Father Stan’s artistic ability. The Church resembled a flower garden at Eastertime.

Sister Pauline worked diligently to improve the religious Education Program. Catechists were called from the laity and commissioned. The first Catechist to assist Sister Pauline was Catherine Brown in the R.C.I.A. Program.

From 1985 to 1990 the Parish Council selected twelve deserving parishioners annually to be honoured. Our Parish held its first Mission under the tent in November 1989. Many visitors attended and expressed a feeling of renewal. In 1990 after serving the Church for eighteen months, Father Stan was transferred to Abaco. Sister Kathleen returned to Canada and Sister Noreen arrived.

In 1990 Father Kelly returned for the second time as our pastor. During this time more parishioners participated in ministries/organizations. In 1996 Father Kelly was assigned to Our Lady’s Parish. He was succeeded at St. Joseph by Father Gomes for the second time. During this tenure, Father Gomes experienced the fruition of his “dreams”. A new Youth Ministry was established, Lifeteen. Formal training occurred in Arizona. Teens involved made a valuable contribution to the faith community.

On October 10th, 1999 our New Church building was dedicated. In October 2004, our Adult Day Care Centre (formally our first Church) was dedicated. The last project of Father Gomes was the Parish Centre. At his departure from the Bahamas in October 2011, the Hall was dedicated in his name. This also marked the end of almost fifty years of service to our Archdiocese by the Sacred Heart Community.

Deacon Gregory Taylor “one of St. Joseph’s children” served our Parish faithfully from 2000 to 2014. He was assigned to San Salvador. We are blessed to have Deacon Peter Jones join the Pastoral Team.

Our present pastor, Monsignor Alfred Culmer, is a tower of strength and motivating spiritually. He is an excellent leader of Pilgrimages. In June 2013 he led a group of 43 Pilgrims to Rome, which was very historic because it was when the Church welcomed a New Pope. It was very enriching for all who journeyed to Rome.

St. Joseph's membership reflects many professions and many achievements. But of great significance St. Joseph has nurtured a number of vocations, to the Priesthood and the Religious Life.

We are grateful to Bishop Bernard Kevenhoerster, O.S.B., Bishop Leonard Hagarty, O.S.B. and Archbishop Lawrence Burke, many priests, religious lay teachers and other benefactors for their prayers, support and perseverance. St. Joseph has come a long way.

We cannot forget some of the people who also served, especially leadership roles: Choir Directors Christopher Richardson, Hubert Dean and Eric Wilmott. Former Chairpersons Parish Council: Theodore Richardson, Agnes Richardson, Constance Joseph, Pamrica Ferguson, Violet Rodgers, Christopher Richardson, William Zack Patton and Dr. P. Samuel Bain. Some Vice-Chairpersons were: Doris Bullard and Catherine Brown. Men working faithfully included Joseph Symonette, Lawrence Ferguson, Dr. Samuel P. Bain, Abraham Woodside, Timothy Dames, Michael Stubbs and many others.

First Pastor:	Fr. Cornelius OSendorf, O.S.B.
Organist:	William Elliott
Choir Director:	Theodore Richardson
School Principals:	Sister Angela Rosaire Jerghers Sister Maria Elizabeth Donovan
Early Marriage:	John Alfred Wallace and Rosalie Wallace April 12, 1935
First Baptism:	Catherine Louise Johnson January 29, 1934
Current Pastor:	Monsignor Alfred Culmer
Organists:	Cyril Baker and Kenneth Beckford
Choir Directors:	Sister Annie Thompson Stephen Ramsay Valentine Maura
School Principal:	Tiffany Glass
Parish Council President:	Sandra Christie

The 85th Anniversary Banquet will be held on November 30, 2019 in the Fr. Martin Gomes Hall. The Closing Masses will be celebrated on Sunday, December 1, 2019 at 6:30am and 10:00am.

