

History informs us that prior to 1955, a group of neighbors from the Heights area formed a petition asking the Bishop of Manchester to consider having a small Catholic church or chapel built in their area. The people who lived on the Heights, East Concord, Loudon and other nearby communities were registered at St. John the Evangelist. The Rev. Richard Boner was assigned to investigate the possibilities.

An offer by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Langevin of 28 Canterbury Rd. for use of land to build a church was declined due to the size of the lot. Land for the church was purchased on August 15, 1955 from Mr. and Mrs. Dan Cusano. The permit for construction was obtained on October 25, 1955. Construction of the church was completed on June 14, 1956. The total cost including landscaping, furnishings, fees, etc. was \$105,000.

The first pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary was the Rev. Richard Boner. The Rev. Richard Smith served as associate pastor. The blessing of the church was given on September 16, 1956, by Bishop Matthew Brady. The first Mass was said by the Rt. Rev. Jeremiah Buckley. There were 175 families registered at the time of the church's opening. This number grew to 350 within the first three years. Currently in October 2003 we have more than 1,000 families registered.

A house at 15 Gate Street was purchased and served as a temporary rectory for two years. Frank Faucher a local realtor bought a piece of land next to the church and donated it for the site of the rectory. The land next to the rectory was then purchased and the convent, (now the Parish House) was constructed next.

The Mission of the Immaculate Heart of Mary opened on October 5, 1959. The first Sisters to live and teach at the new convent were Sr. Alix, Sr. Reparta and Sr. Hildegard. Classes were held in private homes in the Eastman School area with about forty children attending. Children attending Dame School came to the Convent every Tuesday afternoon for one hour of instruction. There were seventy five students in grades 3 to 6. Two Sisters drove to Loudon on Wednesdays and conducted classes in the Loudon Hall hired by Father Boner. About twenty children attended these classes. On Thursdays similar classes were held in the Center for forty children from Pembroke and Epsom. Classes for the C.Y.O. students grades 7 to 12 were held on Monday evenings in the church hall, convent, and rectory. Father Smith was very active in this ministry helping to teach approximately eighty students.

Significant dates and events:

August 5, 1956 □ The first Baptism.

April 6, 1957 □ □ The first, First Communion 15 children.

May 22, 1958 □ □ The first Confirmation Celebration, Bishop Matthew Brady

June 1959 □ □ Rosary Altar and Women's Society formed. □

May 1960 □ □ Bishop Ernest Primeau blesses Convent Chapel.

January 1961 □ □ Holy Name Society formed.

April 1976 □ □ The first Parish Show.

After Vatican II circa 1965, the interior of the church was dramatically changed. The main Altar was removed from the back wall of the sanctuary and replaced with a full size altar that was turned facing the congregation. The communion rail was removed as well as the wrought iron gates at the back of the church. The baptismal font was brought into the nave (main part) of the church next to the sanctuary. The Tabernacle was moved to the altar of St. Joseph. This was in keeping with the idea that we can't focus on the active and static presence of Christ in the same place at the same time.

The church was dramatically renovated again in 1994-95 when the yellow pebble glass windows were removed and stained glass windows were installed. The cinder block walls were studded, insulated, sheetrocked, and then trimmed with oak. The Eucharistic Chapel was created for reservation of the Holy Eucharist and as a quiet prayer space. The foyer was created by installing a new wall and balcony at the rear of the church. The fabulous window that you see on our web page depicting the Immaculate Heart of Mary was donated by Mrs. Rena Constant. The sacristy was expanded and updated along with adding two storage rooms upstairs. The sanctuary was raised by adding another level. A new altar and ambo were custom built to suit our church. Tim Lewis who supervised the volunteer crew known as the "Choir Boys Construction Crew" built the beautiful oak cross that hangs over the altar. Many of the old pews were reworked and used as trim or as panels in the renovations. Tile floors under the pews and carpet in the aisles were installed to complete the project.

An opportunity to purchase the house behind the rectory was presented to us in 1998. We purchased it and used it as meeting space until 2003. Fr. Paul Gousse and the staff recognizing the need for more space for Religious Education classes assessed the current uses of the facilities and decided to renovate the house and create a Perpetual Adoration Chapel and a residence for the Pastor. This has freed up much needed space in the old rectory for classrooms and offices. The "Choir Boys" were called into action once again and have nearly completed this project. New signs have been added to our facilities to help identify the Children's Center, the Bookstore and the Padre Pio Adoration Chapel.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Children's Center has also become a "Faith Based Program" where the children are introduced to Jesus at an early age. The center serves more than 110 families through early childhood education including "Little Hearts Pre-school."