

A HISTORY OF SAINT PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

GRENADA, MS
1941-2016



Catholics in the Grenada area were served several times a year by priests from various parts of the Diocese of Natchez (comprised of the entire state of Mississippi) until 1874 when Grenada was made part of the Water Valley Missionary District and was a mission station served from Holly Springs, Sardis and Water Valley. Grenada, along with Holly Springs, eventually became missions of St. Patrick Parish, Water Valley.

Prior to the building of a church In Grenada, Mass was offered once a month in private homes. Robert and Mamie Marino, who lived above the present Jeffry's Interiors store (67 First St) and Joseph and Mary Enderlin, who lived above the former Garrett Furniture store (223 First St.). These two couples shared their homes for the celebration of Mass and the religious instruction of children. The city community house (the old Elizabeth Jones Library on the corner of 3rd and Line St.) was later used. Some Catholics from Grenada traveled to Water Valley or Winona to attend Mass on weekends when there was no Mass in Grenada. Fathers Thomas McNamara, P.J. Ahern, George Doherty, Joseph Marie Digny, Matthew Fitzpatrick, Joseph McGlade, J. Patrick McAlpine and Cietus Manon served the Catholics in Grenada from Water Valley during the mission years from 1905-1943.

With the passing of time and its decline as a mission headquarters, St. Patrick Parish in Water Valley was divided into three parishes: St. Peter's, Grenada; St. Joseph's, Holly Springs and St. John's, Oxford. On May 1, 1943, St. Patrick's in Water Valley became a mission of St. John's in Oxford.

In January, 1940, Fr. Cletus Manon, the pastor of St. Patrick's Water Valley, began a fund-raising drive to purchase land for a Catholic church in Grenada. On March 2, 1940, the lot on the corner of Mound and College was purchased from the Mississippi Methodist Education Commission for \$1,600.

Next, funds were raised to build and furnish the church. A bank loan, a donation from the Catholic Church Extension Society and the contributions of local Catholics provided the needed money. A local architect, Mr. Carl Day, drafted the plans for the church. The contractor for the project was his father, Mr. H.M. Day of H.M. Day & Son contracting company. Ground-breaking took place on May 10, 1941.

On the afternoon of June 9, 1941, the cornerstone of St. Peter Catholic Church was laid by Most Rev. Bishop Richard O. Gerow. Also present were Rev. Fr. John Clerico of Greenwood and Fr. Cletus Manon of Water Valley and the Catholics of Grenada. The church

was completed and furnished at a cost of approximately \$13,955.00 St. Peter's, the first Catholic Church in Grenada, was solemnly dedicated on Sunday, October 19, 1941, at 10:30 A.M. Most Rev. Bishop James A. Griffin of Springfield, Illinois officiated at the dedication ceremonies. Most Rev. Bishop Richard O. Gerow was celebrant of the solemn Pontifical Mass. After the ceremonies, there was a dinner at the Grenada Hotel and in the evening the Catholic ladies held a spaghetti supper.

The first rectory, a white frame house on Poplar Street, was purchased on February 24, 1943 from Mrs. Carl Day for \$2,800.

At noon on Friday, April 30, 1943, Fr. Clifford E. Meador arrived as the first pastor of St. Peter parish which was given parochial status effective May 1, 1943. Fr. Manon met Fr. Meador at the church and welcomed him to Grenada. His congregation numbered 20 families, 18 Italian and 2 non-Italian. Fr. Meador energetically and conscientiously fulfilled his responsibilities as pastor of St. Peter Parish and its missions in Winona and Scobey. The parish included Grenada, Montgomery, Webster and parts of Choctaw and Yalobusha counties. Fr. Meador's early ministry in Grenada also included service personnel at Grenada Air Field and the soldiers and P.O.W.'s at Camp McCain during World War II.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered for the first time in St. Peter on September 19, 1943 when Bishop Gerow confirmed a class of 20 soldiers and converts from Grenada Air Field and Camp McCain. It is interesting to note that the first baptism in St. Peter church took place on January 11, 1942 when Fr. Cletus Manon baptized Jacqueline Yvonne Badders, daughter of Stanford and Violet Badders. The first baptism recorded by Fr. Meador after St. Peter became a parish was on Sunday, October 17, 1943. Fr. Meador baptized James Alan and Joseph Henry Sheeler, twin sons born to Lt. and Mrs. James R. Sheeler. The first wedding recorded took place on May 10, 1943. The couple married that morning was Arthur Ray Mullinix of Corbin, Indiana, a soldier at Camp McCain, and Mary Jane Brunett of Brazil, Indiana.

The overflow of Catholic army personnel and their families living in and around Grenada made 1943-1944 a busy year for Fr. Meador and two Trinitarian priests, Frs. Loyola O'Leary and Louis Leuthe, who assisted him during the summer months of 1944. It was during the same summer while Fr. Meador was on vacation that Fr. O'Leary and Fr. Leuthe conducted the first religious vacation school for one month with ten boys, nine girls and one adult. In subsequent years, groups of sisters--Sisters of Christian Charity or Ursulines--

came to conduct that annual event. When the Grenada Air Field closed in June, 1944 and the 94th Division at Camp McCain moved out later in the summer, the work load lessened greatly.

The life of the new parish flourished. The Holy Name Society was established on March 11, 1945. After the vacation religious school in July, 1945, four girls from Grenada received their First Communion. The first nuptial to take place in St. Peter church was on June 19, 1946 between Donie Marie Marascalco of Grenada and Anthony D. Liberto of Shreveport, Louisiana. The Sodality of Our Lady was affiliated June 29, 1946. In July, 1946, a class of seventeen boys and girls received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Three stained glass windows were donated in December 1946: Jesus, Savior of the World by Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Marascalco in memory of their son T. Joseph; Immaculate Heart of Mary by Miss Mary Marascalco and St. Peter by Mrs. L.D. Boone, Sr. in memory of her son, Owen James. Two more windows were donated in fall, 1947: St. Theresa by Charles J. Marascalco and St. Anthony by Vincent Barranco.

The first May crowning took place on May 30, 1948. Easter egg hunts at Bledsoe Place are recorded as early as 1948. On August 22, 1948, St. Peter Parish was dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Fr. Meador and parishioners. Six days later, on August 28, the new parish of St. Joseph's, Starkville, was formed from Webster and Choctaw counties, formerly territory included in St. Peter Parish.

On Sunday, March 20, Fr. Meador appointed Mrs. L.D. (Clara) Boone, Sr. to teach religious education to the little children, Mrs. Gus (Rose Marie) Hodges to teach intermediate-age children and Dr. A.T. Nadeau to teach high school students. The first high school graduates honored with a baccalaureate Mass at St. on Sunday, May 22, 1949 were Johnny Marascalco, John C. Marascalco and Joe Messina. It was followed by dinner at the Monte Cristo restaurant.

Ground-breaking for a new rectory adjacent to the church took place on May 24, 1951. The contractor was Mr. Joseph Matassa. The plumbing and electrical wiring were done by Mr. Sidney Jackson of Jackson Plumbing & Heating Company. It was ready for occupancy by October 2nd. On December 4, 1951 Bishop Gerow came to bless the new rectory.

The last three stained glass windows were donated early in 1952: St. Elizabeth of Hungary by Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Kornman of Biloxi, who were relatives of Fr. Meador; St. Frances Cabrini by the children of Anthony Marascalco and St. Joseph by the Sam Testa family. The church was air conditioned in December, 1955. The

Catholic Youth Organization in St. Peter parish was organized on October 11, 1959 with the following officers: Helen Daly, Chairperson; Rosa Messina, president; Catherine Marascalco, vice-president and Anna Marascalco, secretary-treasurer.

After a number of years of talking and planning, ground-breaking for the parish hall took place In June, 1961, with work beginning on June 14. Mr. E.J. Henry was the contractor for the project. On May 19, 1963, St. Peter Parish observed its twentieth anniversary. Bishop Gerow administered the Sacrament of Confirmation, followed by Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament and then a banquet in the parish hall at which 200 people were served. Late in 1964, to comply with the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, necessary changes were made in the sanctuary of St. Peter's. These included a new table altar facing the people, two ambos (lecterns), the altar rail was removed, new carpet was installed and the furniture was arranged according to directives.

On May 29, 1965, Samuel J. Messina, son of Mrs. Mary T. Messina and the late Mr. John V. Messina, received the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the chapel of the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio. He is the first priest from St. Peter Parish. Fr. Messina said Mass for the first time in St. Peter Church on Pentecost Sunday, 1965. In the latter part of 1965, Fr. Nicholas Filipich came to assist Fr. Meador for a short time.

The people of St. Peter gave Fr. Meador a farewell party on Saturday, May 20, 1967. On May 31, 1967, Fr. Clifford Meador retired after 24 years as pastor. He was succeeded by Fr. Liam Pentony, Fr. Martin Joyce and Fr. Patrick Grant.

In the early 1970's, while Fr. Grant was pastor, changes were once again made in St. Peter church. Fr. Grant and Dr. Nadeau flew to Louisville, Kentucky where Dr. Nadeau's son-in-law, Tom Nolan, an architect, re-designed the sanctuary. The original altars and statues were removed, with the main altar being moved down to replace the table altar. Mr. Joseph S. Messina donated the large crucifix behind the altar. Glass doors replaced solid wooden doors between the vestibule and the main church. The sanctuary was recarpeted and the church repainted.

Fr. James Carroll became pastor in September, 1975. St. Peter parish continued to develop and further changes and improvements in the church were made. New front doors had been installed and in 1978 new pews were added. The entire church was carpeted. A new tabernacle was placed in the sanctuary and new Stations of the Cross were put up. The cry room was added and the confessional

was re-designed, with the stairs to the balcony changed to their present location. The house adjacent to the rectory was purchased on December 31, 1982 from Mr. James G. Martin to provide more space for religious education classes.

Fr. Carroll was succeeded by Fr. Thomas Delaney in January, 1986. St. Peter parish then numbered 112 active families. Ninety-five children were enrolled in religious education classes during the 1990-1991 school year. On May 10, 1989, a class of sixteen high school students and four adults was confirmed by Most Rev. William R. Houck, Bishop of the Diocese of Jackson. Each year the First Communion class numbered six to ten children. The Fr. Clifford E. Meador Council of the Knights of Columbus was formed July 12, 1990 with thirty charter members. Easter egg hunts, summer Bible School and the May crowning continued to be annual parish events. The C.Y.O. was active with thirty members. St. Peter church changed little since 1978. In spring, 1988 a new ramp for the handicapped was built and the front steps were reworked and faced with brick.

Fr. Thomas Delaney was succeeded by Fr. Meryl Schmit on January 15, 1998. Fr. Meryl Schmit was succeeded by Fr. John Brock. Fr. John Brock who died in 2010 was succeeded by Fr. James Gammon for about 6 months. Fr. Brock was well remembered for taking parishioners on tours to Rome and other historical European cities. Fr. Gammon was succeeded by Fr. Martin Ruane on January 2006.

Fr. Ruane dedicated the new Family Life Center in 2008. Also during that time, the wooden cross on top of the church was repainted. New church pew cushions and kneelers were installed. The old parish hall underwent a renovation and is now the parish CCD/education building. Other functions include RCIA meetings on Tuesday evenings, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on the 1st Monday, annual family Christmas supper, bi-annual reconciliation services, bi-monthly Knights of Columbus meetings, CYO meetings, and weekly Sunday (CCD) school. The parish is also involved in the WHY CATHOLIC discussion program which meets 12 times per year. There are about 145 families and approximately 300 parishioners at St. Peter as of 2011. Fr. Ruane died May 15, 2015 after serving the church for nine years.

Fr. Arokia Stanislaus Savio succeeded Fr. Martin Ruane on February 2016. A rosary garden was added behind the family life center in 2016.

**St Peter Catholic Church Building
Program Recap--April 10, 2016
Recap of Major Completed Projects 2000-2015**

2000-2003

*Church Interior Painted / New Flooring
Stain Glass Protection / Pew Renovations
First Rectory Renovation
All Projects paid in full from Building Funds*

2003-2004

*Sunday School Bldg (Former Parish Hall) renovated
Step 1 of Master Plan for new Family Life Center
2200 SqFt Renovation
Demolition of existing Sunday School House
All Projects paid in full from Building Funds*

2006-New Family Life Center

*5100 SqFt New Facility
New Parking Lot / Demolition of Cab Building
Note and all Interest paid in full from 2007-Sept. 2013 (6
Years)*

2015 Rectory Renovation

*Complete renovation of Rectory for second time
Paid in full from Building Funds*

EARLY CATHOLIC FAMILIES

* Grenada, Mississippi * 1940-41

Mrs. L.D. (Clara) Boone, Sr. & Family
Lucien Pierre & Verna Mistrot & Family
John V. & Mary Messina & Family
Joseph (d.) & Catherine Messina
Joseph S. & Concettina Messina & Family
Frank (d.) & Rose Portera & Family
Charlie & Mamie Michele & Family
Sam & Rose Testa & Family
Jim & Frances Fonte & Family
Joseph & Angelina *Matassa* & Family
Vincent & Mary Skettino & Family
Sam & Rose Barranco & Family
Vincent & Mary (Concetta) Barranco & Family
Joseph & Rose Curro & Family
Joseph L. & Mary Marascalco & Family
Vincent & Virginia Marascalco & Family
Charlie & *Sarah* (d.) Marascalco & Family
Anthony & Rose Marascalco & Family
Frank & Grace Marascalco & Family
Joe John & Charlie Marascalco
(Big) Joe & Era Dell Marascalco & Family

Note: (d.) indicates deceased prior to 1940-41

Grateful acknowledgement to the following for information contained in this history:

-Fr. Clifford E. Meador (who collected the history of St. Peter parish in scrapbooks until his retirement on May 31, 1967)

-Members of St. Peter Parish

-Fr. Meryl Schmit, St. John Catholic Church, Oxford (where records for Grenada prior to 1943 are kept)

-Office of the Chancery Clerk, Grenada County Courthouse

-Ellington, Clela, Christ: The Living Water, The Catholic Church in Mississippi,

-"St. Peter Parish, Grenada", pp. 157-161, 1989.

-Mrs. Frances Boeckman, Archivist for the Diocese of Jackson

The history of a parish traces external events, expansions and changes that occurred over the years. However, external developments alone are *not an index* of progress. External events and activities proceed from and reflect the dynamic spiritual life of people gathered into a Eucharistic community. Through Word and Sacrament, the people of that community share the very life of *Jesus Christ*, our Risen Lord and Savior.

Jesus is the cornerstone and the sure foundation of an edifice of spirit and the people so intimately united with Him are the living stones which form that spiritual edifice. They are God's People who offer worship and praise to Him in all times. (Acts 4:11; Is. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:4ff)

Special Acknowledgement to:

- Past and present parishioners
- Peter C. Burns, Julius Zahra, and Josephine Zahra in whose memories generous donations were made to St. Peter through the Catholic Church Extension Society of the USA.

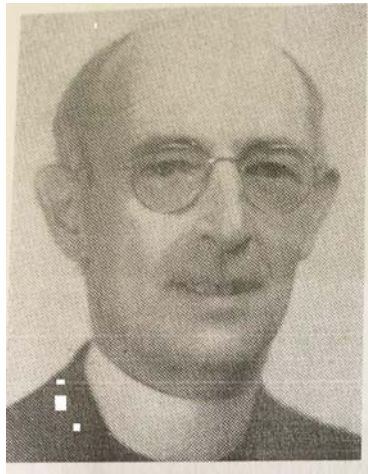
~The occasion of the 75th Jubilee of St. Peter Catholic Church is a special moment to gratefully remember the past, to joyfully celebrate the present, and with prayerful anticipation to embrace the future.



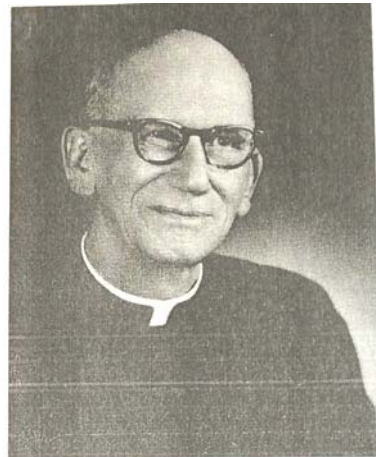
Church Dedication 1941

Group taking part in the ceremonies of dedication:

Rev. Andrew J. Gmelch, V. Rev. John H. Gasper, S.V.D., V. Rev. Joseph F. Eckort, S.V.D., Rev. Pius Leabel, C.P., Rev. Fabian Hoffman, O.S.B., Bishops Wm. O'Brien, R.O. Gerow, James Griffin, Rt. Rev. Boniface, O.S.B., Father Manon



**Fr. Cletus Manon
Pastor Water Valley 1939**



**Fr. Clifford E. Meador
Pastor 5/1/43 – 5/31/67**



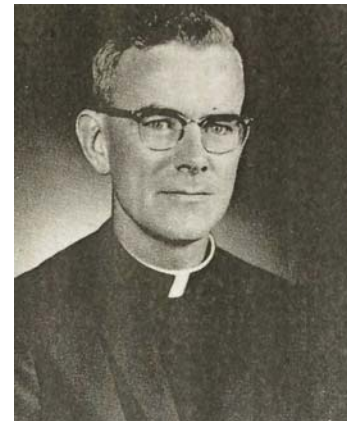
Fr. Liam Pentony
Pastor 6/1/67 – 1/14/69



Fr. Martin Joyce
Pastor 1/15/69 – 3/14/69



Fr. Patrick Grant
Pastor 3/15/69 – 8/31/75



Fr. James Carroll
Pastor 9/1/75 -1/14/86



Fr. Thomas Delaney
1/15/86-1/15/98



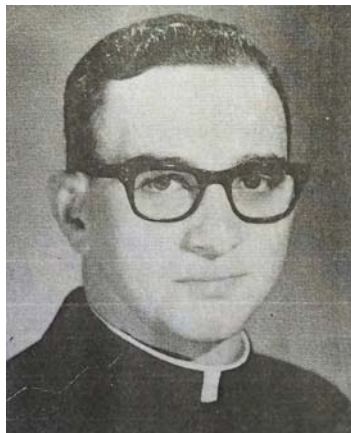
Fr. John Brock
1/xx/01



Fr. Martin Ruane
x/x/xx-x/x/xx



Fr. Arokia Savio
Pastor 2/9/16



Fr. Samuel J. Messina
First Priest from St. Peter

PASTORS & DATES

Name	Service Years		Death
Fr. Clifford E. Meador	5-1-1943	5- 31-1967	4-13-1989
Fr. Louis Lenthy	(A.Pastor)	1944	
Fr. Loyola O'Leary	(A.Pastor)	1944-1945	
Fr. Celestine Pfanneastiel	(A.Pastor)	1945-1946	
Fr. Liam Pentony	6-1-1967	6- 14-1969	
Fr. Martin Joyce	1-15-1969	3- 14-1969	12- 3-1973
Fr. Patrick Grant	3-15-1969	8- 31-1975	8- 9-1991
Fr. James Carroll	9-1-1975	1- 14-1986	2- 17-2008
Fr. Thomas Delaney	1-15-1986	1- 14-1998	
Fr. Meryl E. Schmit	1-15-1998	2000	
Fr. John Brock	1-xx-2000	9-xx-2005	7- 8-2010
Fr. James Gannon	2005	2006	
Fr. Martin Ruane	1-xx-2006	3-xx-2015	3- 2015
Fr. Arokia S. Savio	2-xx-2016		



Breaking ground for new Rectory.
Vincent Barranco, Joe Barranco, Vincent Barranco, Jr.
Father Meador, Joseph L. Marascalco, Dr. A.T. Nadeau



L to R: Ross Liberto, John V. Messina, Joseph S. Messina,
Father Meador, Samuel Messina (seminarian);
Vincent Barranco.



Church interior 1943



The city community house
(the old Elizabeth Jones Library
on the corner of 3rd and Line St.)
was used for mass prior to 1941.



St. Peter Rectory 2016



St. Peter Family Life Center 2016



St. Peter Education Center 2016



Rosary Walk installed in 2016