

Corpus Christi Church History

The Corpus Christi Parish was founded in 1929 as part of what was then the archdiocese of San Francisco. Reverend Francis D. Ahern was appointed pastor effective November 4, 1929. He formally opened the parish on Sunday, November 24 when Holy Mass was celebrated for the first time.

Until 1931, the new parish operated from a rented cottage at 222 St. James Drive. In 1930, the archdiocese purchased the property at St. James Drive and Park Boulevard where the parish plant stands today. Construction of a combined church and rectory commenced in September of 1930. On Sunday, January 11, 1931, Archbishop Hanna blessed the new church and rectory. The church seated 160 parishioners.

On November 17, 1933, Father Edwin J. Keller began his three-decade tenure as pastor of the Corpus Christi Parish. There were now 250 families in the parish, and Father Keller immediately began planning for the construction of our present day church. The new church was dedicated on Sunday March 8, 1936. The church building is often thought to represent California Mission architecture, but, in a gesture to our home city, is actually based on the ecclesiastical architecture of the Piedmont hills in 10th century Italy.

The parish continued to flourish and we opened the Corpus Christi School on September 28, 1956. In 1961, we started a drive to raise funds to enlarge the church to its present day size, and work began in 1962. The church was completely renovated and extended by 55 feet, effectively doubling its size. Seating capacity increased to 1000 parishioners. Construction of the rectory commenced in August 1966 and was completed in May 1967. Thirty-seven years after its founding Corpus Christi Parish finally had a complete parish complex, church, school and rectory.

In 1997, the city of Piedmont required a seismic retrofit of the church building. Under the stewardship of Father Albano Oliveira, we formulated a Master Plan. The plan included the retrofit of the church building, necessary renovations and improvements of the school building, and renovation and improvement of the church building. In June 1997, the parishioners moved to the school auditorium, where masses were celebrated until December when we were able to return to the church. The finished church, which is the church you see today, was dedicated on Sunday, March 29, 1998. Finally, the Gibson Center and Plaza were constructed between June and December of 1998. On December 27, Father Oliveira officially opened the Center and dedicated it to the parish. To our great sorrow, Father Oliveira died unexpectedly on December 29. His legacy is the parish complex we see today.

Today Corpus Christi continues to be a vital Catholic Christian community. The parish membership is 1182 families. Last year, we baptized 107 new or returning Catholics, and celebrated 10 weddings. There are 281 students attending Corpus Christi School, which is one facet of a Faith Formation program that extends from baptismal preparation to adult ministries. Corpus Christi currently has nine Ministries and sponsors nine parish groups, all of which are described elsewhere in this website. Programs and events occur throughout the year.