

## The History of St. Margaret Mary

In 1886, Orlando, then in the Diocese of St. Augustine, received its first resident priest and Winter Park became one of his missions.

For many years, Winter Park Catholics attended Mass at St. James Church in Orlando. The first Mass celebrated in Winter Park was in 1900 at Crane Cottage, the winter residence of John H. LaMontague, a Rollins professor. During the winter sessions from 1921 to 1924, Mass was celebrated at the H.W. Barnum home on Knowles Avenue.

In 1924, the Diocese purchased a site for a church at the corner of Knowles and Canton. The cornerstone was laid on October 17th, the feast of Saint Margaret Mary. The first Mass was celebrated in the new church on December 28th, 1924.

The church was dedicated on January 30, 1927 by Bishop Patrick Barry. It remained under the care of pastors from St. James Church until 1947 when Reverend Daniel Hegarty was named the first pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish.

In 1953, a wing was added to the church and a house on Park Avenue was purchased as a convent. In addition to providing increased seating capacity, the new wing housed classes for St. Margaret Mary School when it began in the fall of 1954.

The present school building was built in 1958, under the direction of Father John Lawler and dedicated in 1960 by Archbishop Joseph Hurley.

By 1969, the parish, with over a thousand families, had outgrown the old building and new construction was underway. The new church building was dedicated in November of that year by Bishop William Borders, the first Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Orlando.

The 1970's saw the number of families in the parish more than double. Lay leadership was developed in the form of boards, committees and full-time staff and an office building and rectory were added.

The chapel was built in 1983 and blessed by Bishop Thomas Grady in November of that year. Father Richard Walsh became pastor in 1985 and, under his guidance, many needed renovations have occurred. The school has received two new wings to house offices, the media center, as well as music, art, and kindergarten rooms. The church has been remodeled and the Parish Hall expanded to provide additional classrooms for pre-school and junior high students. A new Family Life Center was dedicated in October 2002. Today, St. Margaret Mary Parish, with a membership of 3,850 families, continues its commitment to: **"Community, Celebration, Compassion"**