



St. Mary's Church and Parsonage, Biddeford, Maine.

HISTORY

St. Mary Parish in Biddeford, Maine began shortly after the Portland Diocese was established in 1853. In 1855, Fr. Thomas Kenney was ordained and served as first pastor of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, ministering to a largely-Irish community in Biddeford and

areas nearby. He purchased land for a church complex and a separate cemetery. Sadly he died a year before the first church was opened and dedicated in 1858.

A steady procession of pastors followed, the name of the parish was changed to "St. Mary of the Assumption", but one thread remained common in the energy and enthusiasm of priests and people to build up their parish. During Fr. Brady's time 1870-1890 a rectory (1886) and school (1894) staffed by the Sisters of Mercy were built. The Sisters would remain an integral part of parish life for over 100 years. A convent was built for them next to the school.



In 1879, the French-Canadians formed their parish of St. Joseph, and St. Mary's would become the mother church of St. Margaret (Old Orchard Beach 1897), Most Holy Trinity (Saco 1915) and St. Brendan (Biddeford Pool 1916). The last major building occurred in the early 1920's with the demolition of the old church and the new building on the same site. The stained glass windows installed in the 1930's are spectacular. St Mary of the Assumption merged with other local parishes on July 1, 2008 to become Good Shepherd Parish.

The parish was known through the years for the welcome it gave to the many immigrants and for its care for the poor of the community – and the Irish flavor of its celebrations. The Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of Mary was the last Mass celebrated at St. Mary of the Assumption on December 31, 2009.