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Saint Mary's Catholic Church, 205 Eastport Street, P.O. Box 651, Iuka, Mississippi 38852
This brief history was compiled by Sister Bernadette Engelhaupt in November 2005.

Catholics have been part of the population of Tishomingo County since the 1860s. Evidence of this is a letter written 1861 to Bishop William Henry Elder by Michael Ferro asking that a Catholic Church be built in Iuka. The civil War intervened. By October 1869, land, lumber, gravel, and \$500 were available to build a frame church with brick columns. In March 1871, the church was destroyed by a storm.



A second Catholic Church was built in Iuka and dedicated in 1950 with the generosity of the Catholic Extension Society and Webster Price. The church was beyond repair and in need of demolition by 1956.

In late 1978, several Catholics from Iuka met with Mrs. Brinkley to begin the process to allow the Catholics in the area use the Episcopal Church in Iuka on Sundays for Mass. On February 25, 1979, Father Kenneth Stoll SCJ, said the first of weekly Sunday masses in the Episcopal Church. He and Father George Pinger SCJ were both at the parish in Corinth; nonetheless, they served Iuka as well. The relationship with the Episcopal Church was short lived, and the Catholics began using a house at 113 E. Eastport Street for worship, socials, and office space.

During the tenure of S. Dolores Partsch, Sacred Heart Southern Missions bought the property at 205 E. Eastport Street and remodeled it into a sanctuary, fellowship hall, and offices. The building was dedicated November 21, 1999. The worship area seats at least 80 people in a warm

and welcoming environment. The office space serves both the parish and the Social Service ministry provided through Sacred Heart Southern Missions.

In 1983, St. Mary's Catholic Church of Iuka became a mission of Booneville, Mississippi, and the relationship is still progressing to this day. The parish has ranged in size from 11 parishioners to about 40 and is growing.

St. Mary's Parish was instrumental in establishing the Helpful Samaritan Food Pantry which has volunteers from many of the local churches. These volunteers donate time, money, and non-perishable food items to individuals and families in times of emergency. The church also helped establish the Hospital Chaplaincy Program in 2002.

Many priests have served the Catholic population of Tishomingo County. Notes and names of these priests are as follows:

- During the 19th and early 20th century, the Catholics in and around Iuka were served by priests from as far away as Meridian, Mississippi.
- In 1919, Father Robert Reitmeier O.S.B. from the Benedictine Abbey in Cullman, Alabama, was appointed pastor of St. James Catholic Church in Tupelo, and he had several missions. Even though Prentiss and Tishomingo Counties were part of his territory, he was not able to serve them well since he was already saying mass in eight towns on a regular basis.
- Between 1936 and 1938, Father Francis McVeigh, a Benedictine Priest from Tuscumbia, Alabama, traveled to Iuka to conduct mass for the five adults and six children there. He was paid a nickel a mile for his travel by the Bishop.
- From 1938 through 1943, the Catholics of the Iuka area traveled to Sheffield or Florence, Alabama, for Sunday mass. No priest came to Iuka.
- The relationship with Tuscumbia was reinstated in 1943. Gas rationing made it difficult for people to travel to Alabama for mass.
- In the late 1940s, Father Fabian Hoffman OSB was the priest of Tuscumbia, Alabama. He took an interest in Iuka, and Bishop Gerow gave him faculties in the diocese. Therefore, he was able to celebrate mass in the Webster Price home in Iuka.
- From February 1979 to 1981, Father Ken Stoll SCJ and Father George Pinger SCJ served St. Mary's from Corinth.
- There was a Father Joseph who served for a brief six weeks in 1981.
- In 1981, Father Charles Flood SCJ became pastor of Corinth with sacramental responsibilities for Iuka.
- Beginning in 1982, Father Richard Zelonis SCJ, who lived in Booneville, Mississippi, served the Catholics in Tishomingo County.
- On August 29, 1986, Father Leonard Tadyszak SCJ was appointed pastor of the church in Booneville with additional responsibilities to serve the Catholics at St. Mary's Church.
- Father Tom Lind SCJ served Corinth, Booneville, and Iuka from 1988 to 1989.
- Father John Young SCJ served the area from 1989 to 1993.
- Since July 1993, Father Tom Burns SCJ has been coming from Corinth to Iuka to serve weekly mass.

Beginning in the late 1980s, there were Sisters who served the Catholic Church in Iuka as pastoral ministers. They include:

- Sister Jane Eschweiler SDS served as pastoral minister of Booneville, Mississippi, with Iuka as a mission from 1987 to '90. Beginning in the summer of 1988 and continuing until the summer of 1990, Sister Lorene Schuster SNJM served with her.
- Sister Kathleen Dede SP served in the same capacity from September 1, 1989 to December 1994.
- Sister Aileen Flynn RSM served as pastoral minister to St. Mary's Parish with Sister Kathleen Dede. Sister Aileen then served alone from September 1993 to 1995.
- Sister Marian Jochum OSF arrived in 1994 and served until July 1996.
- Sister Sandra DeMann PM arrived in 1993 as part of the Sacred Heart Southern Missions to begin Iuka Catholic Social Services and to work as the resident pastoral minister of St. Mary's in Iuka. She stayed until May 1996.
- In August 1996, Sister Dolores Patsch CSJ arrived to serve the community of Iuka as the resident pastoral minister of St. Mary's. Her responsibilities included the Iuka Catholic Social Service office.
- Sister Dolores left the area at the end of June 2001. Sister Bernadette Engelhaupt OSF arrived and began duties on February 1, 2002. She is currently still serving as the resident pastoral minister of St. Mary's Catholic Church.