



BRIEF HISTORY OF CRISTO REY CHURCH

EARLY YEARS

- 1954 The Spanish-speaking Apostolate was established in 1954, with Father Julio Cesar Rivera assigned to St. Mary Cathedral to work with the Mexican population.
- 1957 The Mexican Apostolate was placed under the direction of the Reverend William J. McKeon, who was assigned to work with the Spanish-speaking population in Lansing. Fr. McKeon invited people who were interested in the Apostolate to two organizational meetings and gain permission from Bishop Joseph Albers to officially name this group the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish Speaking of the Diocese of Lansing.
- 1960 In October, Fr. McKeon formally organized the Bishop's Committee by appointing officers and committee chairs. Each subcommittee had specific functions in order to provide services to the migrant workers.
- 1961 In August, they also organized the first Training Institute for parishioners that was held at the Church of Resurrection. Its purpose was to train lay persons to assist the two to three thousand migrants who passed through the area during the agricultural season. Fr. Donald McDonnell and Fr. Kenneth Faiver, president of the Bishop's Committee, were two of the speakers. Fr. McKeon traveled to the Center for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. During that time, he was temporarily replaced by Fr. Donald McDonnell, Fr. John Walsh and Fr. Edward Doheny, priests who have experience as missionaries in Spanish-speaking countries. Fr. John Walsh became the first pastor of Cristo Rey Church when it was established in October, 1961.

MAIN STREET

- 1961 As the Latino population continued to grow, Fr. McKeon convinced Bishop Albers of the need for a church for the growing Spanish-speaking population, and on October 6, 1961, Bishop Albers purchased a Methodist church located on the first block of East Main St.

- 1961 On October 29, 1961, Reverend Msgr. Herman P. Fedewa, consecrated the church under the name of Cristo Rey on the feast day of Christ the King.
- 1962 Fr. Kenneth L. Favier became the first pastor of the parish, serving from 1962 until 1968, developing catechism classes, strengthening parish societies and bringing the Cursillo Movement to Michigan. The Society of St. Vincent of Paul was one of the first ministries created with Ubaldo Patiño as the first president. The second Cursillo in Spanish in Lansing took place in Cristo Rey Church.
- 1962 A third Cursillo was held in Lansing this time conducted by a Lansing team.
- 1964 Fr. Faiver developed plans for expanding outreach in migrant ministries and pastoral services in the far western part of the diocese. In order to accomplish he recruited several Cuban seminarians to Lansing for the summer who carried out pastoral work at the church and in the migrant camps.
- 1965 Fr. Faiver assumed the position as head of the National Office of Cursillo, with headquarters at Cristo Rey Church.
- 1966 It was announced that Interstate 496 would cut through downtown Lansing and its continued construction would require that the Church be torn down that summer. Cristo Rey parishioners were forced to disperse and attend other churches in Lansing.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES

- 1968 A new Cristo Rey facility was built; the Cristo Rey Community Center (CRCC), that would function as a spiritual center for the Latino community with social programs also. Ben Canady was the first director. Fr. Favier left the priesthood and the Center hired a new director who would resign later.
- 1969 On October 20, Antonio "Tony Benavides" became the Director of CRCC and served in that capacity for many years (1969 until 2003) Cristo Rey Church acquired the status of chapel and was part of St. Therese Parish. Fr. McKeon served as chaplain at the Cristo Rey chapel. The two areas of focus of the facility, as a chapel

and a social service unit, soon began to clash over space and primary issues.

- 1972 First Hispanic National Encuentro held in Washington D.C.
- 1974 Fr. McKeon resigned his position as chaplain in October and a group of parishioners went to speak to Bishop Alexander M. Zaleski about arranging the relocation of the traditionally spiritual programs held at Cristo Rey.
- 1976 Fr. Thomas McCloskey came in July and was a major advocate for the reestablishment of a parish church.

THE PARISH ON SOUTH WASHINGTON

- 1978 On June 30, the "Parish Council of Cristo Rey" signed and approve the purchase of Capital City Baptist Church located at 5430 S. Washington. Bishop Kenneth Povish assisted parishioners with the financial arrangements.
- 1979 Dedication of the new church in Washington on May 4. Parishioners took the Blessed Sacrament to its new home. New activities were organized, like Lenten Fish Fry, Marriage Encounter, the Charismatic Movement, and RENEW.
- 1980 On September, four Passionist Sisters from Mexico arrived to work with the Hispanic Ministry. The sisters assisted with the pastoral life of the parish, particularly in the area of catechism and religious education.
- 1986 Fr. McCloskey left and Fr. William McKeon came back to Cristo Rey for a third time. Fr. Thomas J. Smith followed Fr. McKeon from 1989 until July 1993, when Fr. Frederick L. Thelen became the pastoral leader of Cristo Rey (until his retirement recently on June 2019).
- 1993 The Council held a retreat to formulate a mission statement for the parish as well as goal statements.
- 1996 The Church experienced growing numbers of families and once again the congregation outgrew its facilities. After a lengthy process of gathering data and receiving input from members of the parish took place including a Parish Assembly hold on October 27 it was decided to purchase a new building on Miller Rd.

DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH ON MILLER ROAD

- 1998** On Sunday, November 15, the congregation of Cristo Rey Church walked in procession towards its new home located at 201 West Miller Road.
- 2000** The Diocesan Director for Hispanic Ministry, Serapio Hernandez, led a delegation to the Fourth Encuentro. A result of this Encuentro was the development of plans for a lay formation program in Spanish. In Lansing, this took form through the Instituto Cultural de Liderazgo en el Medio Oeste (ICLM) a program that was based at the University of Notre Dame.
- 2001** Cristo Rey Church celebrates its 40th anniversary, in the Feast of Christ the King. Parishioners were asked to make banners celebrating their family's country of origin. Countries such as Mexico, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Spain, Italy, France, Germany and Canada's native people were represented.
- 2007** With immigration issues increasingly prevalent in the new millennium, the Civil Rights for Immigrants committee was formed in the fall of 2007 in connection with Gamaliel of Michigan. The committee is considered a parish group but is also considered a task force of Action of Greater Lansing.
- 2019** On June 26, Fr. Fred retires after 25 years of service to the parish. Fr. Vincent Richardson replaces Fr. Fred as the new pastoral leader of Cristo Rey Church.

Today, parishioners continue to do their work guided by the Mission Statement of their Church:

We are called by God to be a caring and loving parish that promotes unity in Christ within its cultural and especially Hispanic diversity, and is dedicated to education, evangelization and justice, instilling our Catholic faith and values in all.