

The Sisters Of Saint Joseph

The moss-hung cypress along the banks of the St. Johns River at Picolata, Florida have changed little since eight black-robed nuns from LePuy, France disembarked there on September 2, 1866. From a 15-pupil school in 1867, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of St. Augustine inaugurated more than 100 apostolates in the state. Their legacy is a network of religious service stretching from Pensacola to Homestead, Florida.

In 1866, this pioneering band of women religious responded to the needs of the post-Civil War South, where Savannah Bishop Augustin Verot saw thousands of former slaves uneducated and unchurched. LePuy-born Bishop Verot was responsible for Florida (later becoming St. Augustine's first bishop in 1870) and asked the LePuy motherhouse for help. In 1899, under his successor, Bishop John Moore, the sisters broke off from their European motherhouse to become Florida's first diocesan order.



The French nuns brought with them lace-making skills that saved them from starvation when resources were lean. They also brought traditions of service to schools, hospitals, prisons and poor that remain alive and vibrant today.

Mother Teresa Joseph Gordon, a Scottish born woman who was raised in Lantana, Florida, was a driving force in the expansion of ministries and apostolates throughout the state. She served in various capacities of leadership within her community from the 1930's through the 1950's. She used her personal wealth to accomplish many of the undertakings of her religious community. Under her direction, a novitiate for sisters was established in Jensen Beach, Florida. Unable to accommodate the large religious ceremonies such as investitures and profession of vows, the Sisters would travel to the Church of St. Christopher in Hobe Sound. The parish community of Hobe Sound was witness to the religious fervor and dedication of these heroic women.

God raises up men and women outstanding in holiness and religious zeal in every age to accomplish his task. To the dauntless spirit of dedication, prayer, personal sacrifice and love, their memories live on in our Church.