

History of St. Joseph the Worker

St. Joseph the Worker Parish

St. Joseph the Worker Church has become a member of the Dubuque Area West Pastorate as a result of the Journey in Faith, joining St. Anthony's, The Church of the Nativity, and the Church of the Resurrection.

After World War II, the growth and movement of Dubuque's population necessitated the establishment of the Archdiocese of Dubuque's tenth parish at 30 Algona Street. Archbishop Henry Rohlfman installed Msgr. Michael Martin as pastor of St. Joseph's on December 4, 1949, at Washington Junior High School (Middle School). A temporary parish church at Mercy Hospital served for parish administration, with masses held at Washington Junior High. The site of the new church was blessed on December 1, 1949, with construction beginning in the spring of 1950 of a temporary church and school building combination. The temporary church held seating for 600 people and was later converted into an auditorium and gym.



W. Wayne Smith of Winona, Minnesota, designed the new circular church building to encourage participation of the congregation as taught by the Second Vatican Council. Groundbreaking occurred on October 4, 1967. Constructed of native limestone with faceted glass windows, the church had Stations of the Cross hand-carved from Italian linden wood, and thirty stained glass windows designed by Robert Leader, who taught art at Clarke College before leaving for the University of Notre Dame. Eight of the windows depict the Beatitudes, eight are of abstract design, seven illustrate the Passion, six honor Joseph, and one is dedicated to vocations. Archbishop James Bryne officiated at the dedication of the new church on December 8, 1968.

The sisters of Sinsinawa Dominican Order and later the Presentation Sisters staffed St. Joseph's School. An open house in 1958 highlighted a three-story addition to the school. The school's peak enrollment occurred in 1962 with 720 students. The school closed after becoming a part of the Holy Family Catholic Schools, and a day care was established there.

In 1993, the name changed to St. Joseph the Worker Church to avoid confusion with St. Joseph parishes in Key West, Farley, and Rickardsville. The new name emphasizes the dignity of labor and work in a Christian's life.