

The History of Our Lady of Grace Parish

Our Lady of Grace began as a mission of Saint Pius X in Essex. As members of the Catholic faith in Colchester increased in numbers by the mid-1950s, the first Catholic services in the village were held in the former Modern Woodmen of America building at 45 Main Street. Father James B. Murray was appointed founding pastor and oversaw the building of the original church (pictured to left) in 1959.



By 1973, the flat roof of the church proved to be ineffective against rain and snow and the building's first renovation that year included a new pitched roof. At that time, a life-sized Carrara marble stature of Our Lady of Grace was installed in a niche about the front door and a large cross was placed beneath it.



By 1977, an additional Sunday morning Mass was added to the weekend schedule to accommodate the growing parish. In granting permission for the fourth weekend Mass, Bishop John A. Marshall, requested that plans be made to enlarge the church and a fundraising drive was begun. Building plans were finalized and in 1993, the church was enlarged to accommodate over 400 people. During renovations, Mass was conducted in a large outdoor tent.

An outdoor shrine in honor of Our Lady of Grace in Memory of the Unborn was solemnly dedicated by Bishop Kenneth A. Angell in 1994. It serves as a place of comfort and prayer for those who have lost pre-born children. The statue of Our Lady of Grace that had been over the front door of the church was relocated to the shrine, and the altar from inside the church was also relocated to the shrine. At some point in time, the outdoor bell tower was removed.

A double-wide trailer served as a rectory for awhile, but in 1997, it was replaced with a new two-story parish center and office building, with the upstairs serving as the rectory. A celebratory open house was hosted by the Women's Society on August 1 and 2, 1998.



For more information about Our Lady of Grace Church including Mass times, sacraments and bulletins, please visit <https://holycross-olog.vermontcatholic.org> or call the parish at 802-878-5987.

Sources:

~ Photo and history courtesy of Our Lady of Grace Church

~ Colchester Center-The Evolution of a Village by Kenneth A. Degree (Queen City Printers, Inc., 2000)