

Jesus Christ's Lordship over all creation urges those who love Him to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Indeed all times and places belong to Him and the Church proclaims His Death until He comes wherever she is established.



This solemn duty has been fulfilled by joyful Christian hearts on the San Mateo Coastside at least since 1833 when Rancho San Antonio "Pescadero" was settled by Don Juan Jose Gonzales. Seven years later, present-day Half Moon Bay was called "Rancho San Benito" by Mexican grant owner Candelario Miramontes. The community grew on the two sides of Pilarcitos Creek with the cooperation of the Miramontes family and the Tiburcio Vasquez family, owners of the neighboring land grant. Until 1848 (the year that Mexico lost the Mexican-American War and the year that gold was discovered in California) California was part of Mexico and the Catholics who lived on the Coastside were under the care of the Bishop of Monterey. During and after the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), the Coast became more populated by Mexican ranchers of San Francisco and San Mateo, seeking the separation of the isolated Coastal settlements. Soon it became widely known as

"Spanishtown," the name it was called by the Americans and Europeans who were referring to its many Spanish-speaking Mexican residents.

The pastoral care of these first Coastside Catholics of the 1850s was provided largely by the Jesuits of Santa Clara and the priests of Santa Cruz mission. It seems that it was during these nascent years of the Church on the Coastside that the faithful placed themselves under the patronage of Our Lady of the Pillar (Patroness of Spain) in San Benito/Spanishtown and St. Anthony of Padua in Pescadero.

The newly-formed Archdiocese of San Francisco (1853) began providing pastoral care to San Mateo County in 1862 and this included monthly visits by the priests to the Coastside faithful in what was now called Spanishtown. Holy Mass was offered on the last Sunday of the month and Spanishtown was soon a mission of the newly-created St. Matthew's Parish. By this time, the Coastside community had grown quite diverse with many Irish, Italian, and Portuguese immigrants joining the Mexican settlers. In 1867, the Vasquez family donated the property of what is now Pilarcitos Cemetery on Highway 92 for the first Our Lady of the Pillar Church, which was constructed in 1868. The presence of a church building prompted Archbishop Alemany to create Our Lady of the Pillar Parish that same year. St. Anthony's Church, also built in 1868, was a mission church of the new huge

500-square mile parish on the coast, the second parish created in San Mateo County. The parish also established a mission in LaHonda. Fr. Antoine Langlois was appointed the first pastor on July 21, 1868, and Archbishop Alemany made a pastoral visit for Confirmation on September 27.

The original church at Pilarcitos Cemetery burned down in 1875 (the original bell from the church stands today on Church Street) and a new church was completed at the corner of Church Street and Mill Street in 1883.



The gorgeous Romanesque structure stood until 1954, when, with repairs deemed too costly, the current Church of Our Lady of the Pillar was built. The round stained glass window of Our Lady of the Pillar is preserved from that second church. All this time, St. Anthony's Church, dedicated in 1870 by Archbishop Alemany, was in use in Pescadero. There have also been churches through the years in San Gregorio (St. Gregory's - abandoned in 1940) and Moss Beach (Our Lady of Lourdes, which burned down in 1965). The first church in LaHonda was built in 1883 and dedicated that same year by Archbishop Alemany. With the population shift to the coast, it was sold in 1900, and the current

Church of Our Lady of Refuge was built in 1954.

Weekly travel among the many churches has been always a hallmark of priestly service at Our Lady of the Pillar Parish. Whether by horseback or automobile, the priests of the parish have always sought with great zeal to bring the Word of God and the saving sacraments to the faithful Coastsiders.

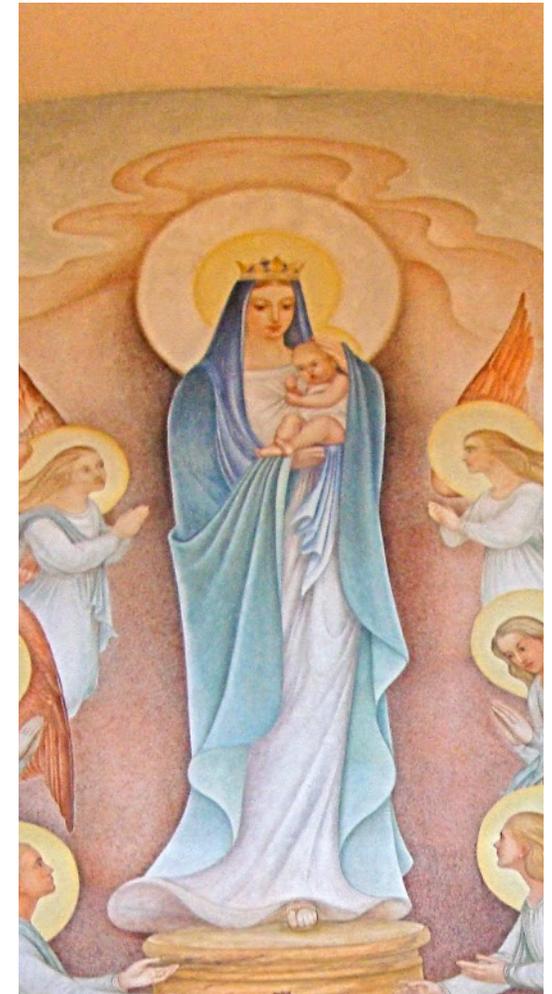


Our Lady of the Pillar Parish has accomplished many things for Christ over 147 years. From the early Mexican pioneering founders of the parish to the Italianate beauty of the second church to the grand public devotion of the Portuguese Chamarita, the parish has not ceased to proclaim the Good News on the Coast. This effort is ongoing and alive. One thinks now of the vibrant celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe found among our parish's Mexican community. The one constant through all her history is clear: Our Lady of the Pillar has uninterruptedly provided the Eucharist and the other sacraments to the faithful of the Coastside for almost 150 years.



The presence of the Catholic Church on the San Mateo County coast over the past almost two centuries is a testament to the love of Jesus for His Church and to the Church's love for her Bridegroom. The names and faces of His missionaries and servants - priests, deacons, sisters, lay faithful - change through the years; but the presence of the Face of Jesus has been constant on the Coastside in the work and legacy of Our Lady of the Pillar Parish and her ancestors. As the parish celebrates this year her 147th anniversary, she is ever aware of the giant footsteps which she follows. These are footsteps leading from the Coastside to Heaven. They are truly a path of happy destiny and they are the unfolding happy story of the Parish of Our Lady of the Pillar.

OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR



HALF MOON BAY, CALIFORNIA