

# ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH (/)

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Memories are precious recollections that help us to recognize who we are. One hundred years of parish life have produced many precious moments telling us who we are as a people.



It is a story of a simple, hardworking people who sacrificed for what they believed. It is a story of dedicated priests who loved the people given over to their care. It is a story of hope in the midst of challenge. It is a story of faith passed on from

one generation to another.

Throughout the last one hundred years, countless numbers of faithful have walked through these holy doors to encounter the very presence of the one, true, living God within this holy temple. Countless echoes of praises have sounded within these walls as the sacramental presence of Christ has animated the hearts and souls of all who have entered our doors. We have responded to the mission given us: to take what we received here to the world!

The founding members of this parish family, led by Father Francisco Jose Constantino Flores, gathered more than one hundred years ago to begin a journey of faith. Their dream of

creating a worshipping community has continued throughout the last century and into the present one. One hundred years later, it is our ardent task to continue building on their dream. As we face new challenges and opportunities, our mission is the same: to make the presence of Christ known in the lives of those who worship here. The presence of our founding fathers remains tangible as they worship together with us this day in the heavenly Eucharistic Feast.

The many sacrifices of those who have gone before us are not forgotten. Their memories are cherished in the midst of this community. Our journey, our story, is one of determination, one of struggle, one of perseverance. But, most of all, our journey has been, and will continue to be, one of faith, hope and love.

In the late 1890's, the City of Fall River, Massachusetts, along the banks of the Taunton River, became the home to many people who left their native Azorean islands in Portugal in time of extreme poverty to seek a new life and new opportunities. As they made the journey across the Atlantic, they brought with them a culture which cannot die. As they journeyed to a new land, many fears and apprehensions must have filled every fiber of their being. At the same time, new opportunities were their driving force. On the many voyages between the Azores and their new land of America, their faith in Jesus Christ and in his gospel was transported with them. They were missionaries, bringing a deep faith to their new land.



The first Portuguese Catholic community in all of North America was founded in 1872 in the whaling city of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Shortly after, priests from Saint John the Baptist Parish would pack their bags and travel on the weekends to Fall River, as the Mission of Saint Anthony, later to become the Parish of Santo Cristo dos Milagres,

came into being on Columbia Street in the center of the city. Often coming to Fall River from New Bedford was the legendary Father Manuel C. Terra, a young, vibrant, colorful priest known for his missionary work throughout the area and for his zealous preaching of the gospel. Father Terra was born in New Bedford of Azorean parents, and attended seminary in Boston, so his experience, knowledge and understanding of both cultures must have made the transition for his parishioners an easy one. The first Portuguese faith community in Fall River was born in 1892 – Santo Christo Parish.

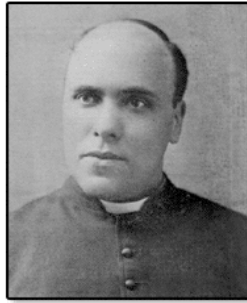
In the 1890's, many Portuguese immigrants settled in the Bowenville neighborhood in Fall River's north end. Families would make the trek on foot each Sunday to Santo Christo Church on for the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist despite even the most harsh weather conditions. Within time, their desire to build a church of their own and hopefully a parish community in Bowenville, was at the forefront of their concerns. Little did they know, that with great determination and faith, their dream was soon to become a reality!



In 1896, we were part of the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island. Father Candido d'Avila Martins was the pastor of Santo Christo. He listened with great concern to the needs of his parishioners and presented Bishop Matthew Harkins of Providence with their request for a new church. Under the leadership of Father Martins, a basement church was constructed and the cornerstone was blessed by Bishop Harkins on May 30, 1896. This "mission" Church is the lower half of our current church. It was a long building with a flat wooden roof. The upper extension was added in 1922.

During the years of 1896 and 1902, the priests from Santo Christo would travel to the new mission church of Saint Michael to celebrate Mass and to administer the sacraments. In 1898,

Father Martins resigned as Pastor of Santo Christo due to a lack of administrative ability and died shortly after on November 17, 1898. Bishop Harkins then assigned Father Francisco Silveira Mesquita, a native of the island of Pico in the Azores, and assistant at Saint John the Baptist in New Bedford, as the new Pastor of Santo Christo Parish. With his new assignment, Fr. Mesquita was also responsible for the mission in the north end.



In the winter of 1898, Father Mesquita and his assistant, Father da Rosa stopped using the basement church at celebrated Mass for the Portuguese community at Saint Mathieu Church at the corner of Saint Mary and Wellington Streets, our neighboring parish.

In January 1902, Father Mesquita sent his annual report to Bishop Harkins explaining to him that conditions had improved at Santo Christo Parish and Mesquita suggested that Saint Michael Mission become a separate parish. Thus, we were set apart from our “mother” church and became our own parish!

On February 28, 1902, Rev. Francisco Jose Constantino Flores, assistant at Santo Christo, was named the first pastor of Saint Michael Parish. The first baptism was recorded on March 09, 1902 of Virginia Camara.

Father Flores was born in 1862 in the island of Flores in the Azorean archipelago. He was ordained in Angra, Terceira in 1886. He served in parishes in the Azores until 1889 when he came to the United States. He served for one month in New Bedford, 2 months in Provicetown before coming to Santo Christo.

As the first pastor of Saint Michael Parish, his congregation numbered 1,800. When he arrived on Essex Street, he found that there was no rectory for him to live in. Flores petitioned Bishop Harkins for permission to build a rectory and the new house,

which still serves as our parish rectory, was ready for occupancy on December 04, 1902. Father Flores only lived in the new house for one day. He was stricken with appendicitis on December 05 and died two days later at the age of forty. He only served as Pastor for a short ten months. His parishioners were heart-broken.



Bishop Harkins appointed Father Manuel Cipriano Grillo as the new pastor. Father Grillo was a popular priest who came to the diocese in 1900. He had served as assistant pastor at Saint Peter the Apostle in Provincetown and at parishes in New Bedford before coming to Saint Michael.

He was known for his missionary work, traveling vastly throughout the diocese, preaching “missions” for the scattered Portuguese communities on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, Rehoboth, Dighton, Little Compton, and in the Horseneck area of Westport.

Shortly after Father Grillo’s appointment, in 1904, the Diocese of Fall River was established by Pope Pius X. Now we were no longer part of the Providence Diocese. William Stang, of German descent, became our first Bishop.

According to the bulletin notes of Father Grillo our parish was faced with a debt of \$15,000.00 from the construction of the church. In his notes, the faith formation of the children was a priority for him. Classes were held on Sunday afternoons in the church, with devotions and benediction for the whole parish at 7:30 in the evening.



The first Monday of September, Labor Day, 1910, is the first celebration of the feast of Saint Michael, according to his notes. A Solemn Mass was celebrated and the preacher was Father Travassos from New Bedford. Under Father Grillo’s

leadership, the parish organized a Sacred Heart Society, the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Light, Holy Rosary Society and the Daughters of Mary. During this time, Father Grillo was asked to evaluate and to minister to the Portuguese community in the “Crystal Springs” section of Assonet in addition to his responsibilities here. In 1913, Father Grillo returned to the Azores but later returned to California.

In 1913, we received a new pastor in the person of Father Christiano de Jesus Borges. Fr. Borges was given the title of “conego,” and served as a “canon” of the Cathedral in the Azores. Fr. Borges was born in the village of Lagoa in St. Michael and was ordained in Angra on August 14, 1887. Fr. Borges only served here for four years, but during his time here the first plans for a new church were formulated. Our older parishioners tell us that his desired location for the new church was the corner of Clinton St. and North Main. In 1917, Fr. Borges was named Pastor of St. John the Baptist in New Bedford. He died in the Azores in 1944.



Replacing Fr. Borges was Fr. John de Fontes Ferraz, a competent leader and a priest with insight and vision. Fr. Ferraz was born in Ponta Delgada, St. Michael, Azores on January 08, 1880, son of Joao and Joanna (Correia) Ferraz. He was ordained on

January 18, 1903 and served in the Azores and was a well known teacher. Fr. Ferraz came to this country in 1911 and served at Espirito Santo Parish before becoming pastor of Saint Elizabeth of Portugal Parish on Tucker Street in 1915, constructing the new church. On January 26, 1917, Father Ferraz was named pastor of

## Saint Michael Parish.

An immediate concern of Fr. Ferraz was the construction of the Church. Within a short time, it was determined that instead of constructing a new church building, it was much more feasible to add upward to the existing basement church. In October 1921, work began on the construction of the Church and was completed in the Fall of 1922. The church of gothic style with Spanish accents was dedicated on December 03, 1922. The construction was completed by the Charles Hodgate Company of Boston.

During this period, Fr. Ferraz was asked to officially begin to serve the people of Assonet who had no parish of their own. Fr. Ferraz, in addition to his responsibilities here, would travel up North Main Street to celebrate Mass and the Sacraments in parishioner's homes. Our baptism register shows evidence of many Portuguese children, as well as children with English surnames, among the newly baptized. Due to the leadership of Fr. Ferraz, Saint Bernard Parish was finally established in Assonet and a new pastor was named there. In the early years of the parish, our priests were also responsible for celebrating Mass for the Portuguese community of Saint Peter Parish in Dighton.

In the late 1920's, it was a concern of Fr. Ferraz to minister to the Portuguese community across the river in Somerset. After consultation with the Bishop, the beloved Fr. Augusto Leal Furtado, parochial vicar at our parish, was sent to Somerset as the first pastor to establish a new community. Young, vibrant and filled with energy, Fr. Furtado worked to gather a community and, in 1928, the parish of Saint John of God was founded under the patronage of Saint Michael Parish. Fr. Furtado would serve that parish for the rest of his life.

Upon completion of the Church, Fr. Ferraz's dream for a parish school began. His main concern was that of providing a Catholic education for his young parishioners. His vision and leadership led him to purchase the Fulton Street School from the City of Fall

River in 1930. He employed the assistance of the Holy Union Sisters and the first classes began on September 8, 1931. Read the Wednesday, September 02, 1931 Fall River Herald News article of the 09/08/1931 opening of St. Michael School. In 1934, the Lindsey St. School (the current site of Michael's Provisions) was donated to the parish and became our "second" school building.

On December 9, 1936, Fr. Ferraz was named a Monsignor by Pope Pius XI and for many years served as a diocesan consultor and defender of the bond at the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. Msgr. Ferraz continued to work tirelessly for our parish and school. Much of his pastorate here was plagued by financial hardship but he always showed great dedication to the poor. Parishioners tell the story of how Msgr. Ferraz's mother and sisters would prepare sandwiches for the poor, especially the mill workers, and they would distribute them at the door of the rectory. Failing health began to restrict his abilities to function as he once did. Nonetheless, Msgr. Ferraz could still be found each day walking to each of the three school buildings.

Msgr. John F. Ferraz died on All Saints Day, November 1, 1944 at the age of 64 while consoling a parishioner in the front office of the rectory. His funeral Mass was celebrated by Bishop Cassidy here in our Church and he is buried in a family plot at Saint Patrick Cemetery, Fall River.



During this time, the parish was still growing in numbers but was still plagued by financial difficulty. The church was leaking and was in need of many repairs, but the money was limited. In 1944, Fr. Augusto Leal Furtado, Pastor of St. John of God Parish in Somerset was appointed as our new pastor. It was difficult for Fr. Furtado to leave behind the close-knit that he began in Somerset. The seeds that he planted there are still evident today. Fr. Furtado was overwhelmed by the challenges he encountered here at Saint Michael Parish,



especially the financial situation, and was sent back to Somerset after only six months as our pastor.

At that time, our parish was experiencing great financial difficulties and something needed to be done. Fr. Joseph M. Silvia was named pastor, replacing Fr. Furtado in 1944. Father Silvia was born in the Azores in 1899 and came to this country as a young child. He was ordained at Saint Mary Cathedral in 1926 and served at Saint John the Baptist in New Bedford before becoming pastor of Saint Elizabeth in Fall River. Father Silvia came into our parish from Saint Elizabeth Parish determined to get the parish on its feet again. Father Silvia, as noted in the parish bulletins, was concerned not only with securing the financial stability of the parish, but in the spiritual growth and formation of the whole parish family. He continually stressed the importance of Sunday worship and the faith formation of parish youth. During the pastorate of Fr. Silvia, parish societies thrived: Saint Vincent de Paul, Holy Name Society, Children of Mary and Holy Rosary. Father Silvia was assisted for many years by Fr. George E. Amaral and Fr. Ernesto do Rego Borges who is still living and is retired in the Azores.

It was Fr. Silvia's dream to reconstruct the sanctuary of our church, replacing the old sanctuary furnishings with the beautiful wooden reredos on which our tabernacle rests today. Father Silvia also dreamed of converting the rectory into a convent for the sisters



who taught in our school and securing a new rectory. But, he was encouraged by the Bishop to focus on raising funds for a new, central parochial school building since the three school buildings were not in good condition. Father Silvia's vision for St. Michael Parish was cut short. In the prime of his life, he was diagnosed with cancer and suffered for several months. This beloved servant of God was called home on January 27, 1955 at the age of fifty

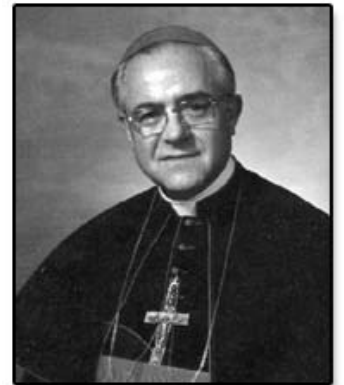
OF GOD WAS CALLED HOME ON JANUARY 27, 1977 AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-FIVE. THE SANCTUARY WAS COMPLETED IN TIME FOR HIS FUNERAL.



Succeeding Fr. Silvia was Fr. Arthur Cordeiro dos Reis, a native of Sao Vicente Ferreira, Sao Miguel, Azores, who was then Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Fall River. During the pastorate of Fr. Reis, a new parish school was constructed on a vast piece of land to the

east of the Church. The new Saint Michael School building was dedicated by Bishop James L. Connolly in September 1957. With a new school building, a new enthusiasm was born and our Parish school began a new chapter in its history. In 1960, Fr. dos Reis was appointed Pastor of Santo Christo Parish in Fall River and was replaced by Monsignor Humberto Sousa Medeiros.

With the arrival of Msgr. Medeiros, the parish rejoiced at the return of their native son. Although a native of Our Lady of Health Parish, in Arrifes, Sao Miguel, the Medeiros family settled here in Saint Michael Parish when they arrived from the Azores. Young Humberto was often found praying in the church, contemplating a vocation to the priesthood. He worked as a sweeper in the Sagamore Mills and graduated at the top of his class at Durfee High School.



Medeiros was greatly influenced by Fr. Augusto L. Furtado who planted the seeds and awakened in him a desire to serve the Church as a priest. Eventually, Medeiros began his priestly formation and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Fall River in 1946.



Fr. Medeiros served briefly here as Parochial Vicar with Fr. Silvia before receiving other



assignments in the Diocese of Fall River. The new pastor immediately built upon the work of his predecessors and worked tirelessly for the spiritual care of the parish while serving as Chancellor of the Fall River Diocese. Msgr. Medeiros was a holy man and was loved by all. His concern for the poor and the newly-arrived immigrants was at the center of his priestly ministry.

Msgr. Medeiros was named Bishop of Brownsville, Texas in 1966. In 1970, he became Archbishop of Boston and was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 1973. A record number of our parishioners traveled to Rome for this joyous celebration. Cardinal Medeiros died on September 17, 1983 at the young age of 68.

Upon Cardinal Medeiros' appointment as Bishop, the parish received a new Pastor in the person of Monsignor Luiz G. Mendonca. Monsignor was our first and only American-born Pastor. Born in New Bedford in 1919, Monsignor prepared for the Priesthood in the United States and also in the Azores. A distinguished and scholarly priest, Monsignor Mendonca worked for the revitalization of the parish community.

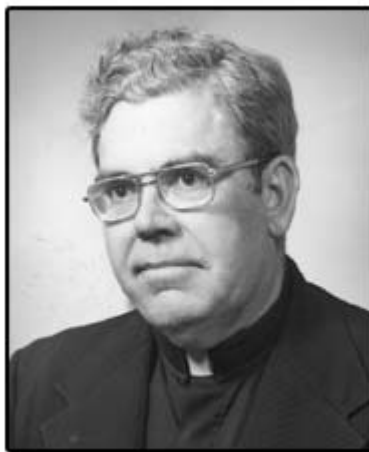


A new wave of immigration began and Fr. Luciano Pereira came to Saint Michael Parish and established a bilingual school and night classes for up to 500 students to help the newly arrived to become citizens of their new country. Fr. Pereira also became involved in the Fall River School System and developed the ESL Program. The work of this young priest is still remembered today in the hearts of all those whom he helped through his social ministry, especially the immigrant youth. In the parish, Fr. Pereira

began a Faith Formation Program for youth which was viewed as a model program for the diocese.

Msgr. Mendonca was responsible for implementing the liturgical changes of Vatican II in the life of our parish. In 1968, our parish welcomed our first and only transitional deacon, John A. Gomes, as he prepared for priesthood ordination in May of 1969. Fr. Gomes is currently Pastor of Annunciaton of the Lord Parish in Taunton.

Monsignor Mendonca only served our parish for three years. In 1969 he became Pastor of Saint John of God Parish in Somerset and served his final years as Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in New Bedford. He died in February 1997.



Fr. Joseph Oliveira was named Pastor of Saint Michael Parish in 1969, having served as Parochial Vicar with Msgr. Mendonca. Fr. Oliveira was born in 1924 in Sao Antonio, Sao Miguel, Azores. In assuming the duties of Pastor, Fr. Oliveira continued the fine

work of his precessors, serving the needs of his people.

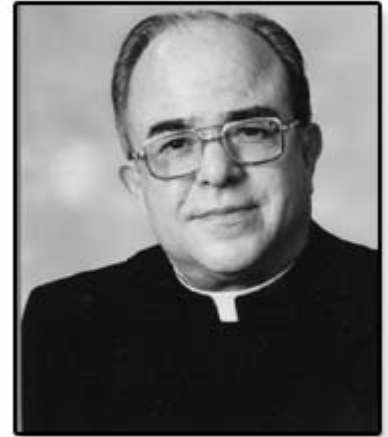
Remembered as a hard worker, Fr. Oliveira was often found running the kitchen during parish feasts and suppers and making his famous malassadas and sweet bread. Fr. Oliveira was a strong supporter of the parish feasts and during his pastorate, the parish saw a renewed enthusiasm in the Holy Ghost Feast and in the Feast of Saint Michael. Fr. Oliveira was transferred to the former Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Taunton in June of 1985.

During Fr. Oliveira's pastorate, Sister Bernadette Sullivan became the Principal of our parish school. Sister Bernadette was a great leader of our school family and has been recognized by the Diocese of Fall River for her years of service and leadership at Saint Michael School. Her determination and dedication has

Saint Michael School. Her determination, and dedication has allowed our current Principal, Sister Marie Baldie, S.U.S.C. to bring the school into the new millennium.

Saint Michael School has been serving generations of the Portuguese American community and generations of Catholic families with a comprehensive education steeped in the traditions and values of our faith.

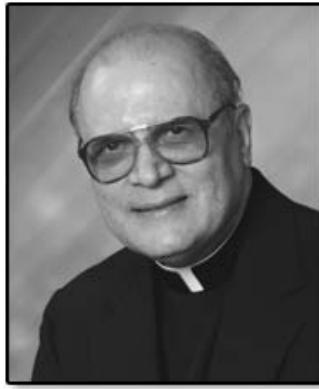
In 1985, Fr. Luciano J. de M. Pereira returned to Saint Michael Parish, this time as Pastor. Together with Fr. Jack Oliveira, they brought a new energy to the Parish. Soon after becoming Pastor, Fr. Pereira was diagnosed with a brain tumor and he



successfully underwent a serious operation to remove it. The spiritual journey of the parish continued to blossom and grow during the time of Frs. Pereira and Oliveira. Fr. Jack's focus on the liturgical life, especially music and the participation of the worshipping assembly, is well remembered. At this time, a youth ministry program was established to reach invite our youth to be an active part of our parish family.

In 1987, Deacon John A. Moniz came to our parish as our first permanent deacon. Deacon Moniz worked diligently to begin retreat programs for our parish and baptism preparation seminars for young parents. Deacon Moniz assisted in preaching God's word and in the celebration of the sacrament of baptism. Fr. Pereira continued to serve the parish together with Fr. Raul M. Lagoa until his retirement in 1996.

Rev. Raul M. Lagoa, age 66, entered into eternal rest 66 on Monday, January 30, 2012 of natural causes while Pastor of St. John of God Church in Somerset.



In 1996, Fr. Luis A. Cardoso, longtime pastor of Espírito Santo Parish in Fall River became our new Pastor. Fr. Cardoso, ordained in 1958, is a native of the island of Flores in the Azores. Fr. Cardoso had something in common with St. Michael's first pastor; They were

both born on the same Azorean island. Under Fr. Cardoso's leadership, the parish continued its mission into the third millennium. He immediately began a Charismatic Prayer Group that brought great spiritual renewal to the life of our parish family. Fr. was also always very involved in the Teams of Our Lady (Equipas de Nossa Senhora) throughout his priestly ministry. Under his leadership, he also brought many changes to the physical plant of our parish including the renovation of our worship space.

Reverend Luis Augusto Cardoso, age 80, entered into eternal rest June 3, 2011 surrounded by family and friends at Rhode Island Hospital.



Father Edward Correia was born on July 6, 1942 in New Bedford, MA and grew up in Immaculate Conception Parish. In high school, he became a member of Saint John the Baptist Parish in

New Bedford. Father knew he had a priestly vocation as early as the second grade. After high school he entered Saint Thomas the Apostle Seminary in Bloomfield, CT for his first two years of college, then transferred to Saint John Seminary in Brighton, MA for his last two years of college and for his four years of theology. Father Correia was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Fall River by Bishop James L. Connolly on May 18, 1968 in Saint Mary's

Cathedral.

His first assignment was to Our Lady of Victory in Centerville which lasted only a few months (June-October 1968). He spent the next eight months on Martha's Vineyard (October 1968-May 1969) only to return to Centerville to serve there until October of 1972. His next assignments brought him to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, New Bedford (1972-1977) and Saint Anthony of Padua, Fall River (1977-1982). From 1982-1986, he served as Chaplain of Saint Luke's Hospital in New Bedford, while residing at Saint John the Baptist Church.

He was named Pastor of Saint Bernard Parish of Assonet in 1986, serving there until 1991. He was subsequently named Pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua in Fall River (1991-1993), Saint James in New Bedford (1993-2004), and Saint Francis of Assisi in Swansea (formerly Saint Michael Parish, Swansea, MA 2004-2006). In June 2006, Father Correia became the Pastor of Saint Michael Parish in Fall River and was named Diocesan Director of Vocations effective August 18, 2004 until June 2007. As of June 2011, Father Correia was appointed as Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Fall River, MA while still remaining Pastor of St. Michael Parish. Fr. Ed Correia retired from his Pastoral duties on June 25, 2013.



Father John A. Raposo is a New Bedford native born August 06, 1950. He graduated from Bishop Stang High School in No. Dartmouth and studied for the priesthood at St. John's Seminary, Brighton, MA and St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, MD. He was ordained on October 22, 1977 by Bishop Daniel A. Cronin at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, Fall River, MA. Following ordination, he served as parochial vicar at St. James Parish, New Bedford, MA 1977-1980; Our Lady of Health, Fall River, MA 1980-1986; St. Anthony's, Taunton, MA 1986-1996; and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, New Bedford, MA 1991-1994 and Immaculate Conception, New Bedford, MA 1994-1995. In 1995,

he was appointed pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Provincetown, serving there until his 2002 appointment as pastor of Holy Ghost Parish in Attleboro, MA. In 2009, he became chaplain of the Catholic Memorial Home, Fall River, MA until June 26, 2013 when he received the appointment to become Pastor of St. Michael Parish, Fall River, MA and St. Joseph Parish, Fall River, MA. In January of 2015, Fr. Raposo was appointed to Our Lady of Fatima Church in New Bedford, MA



Father Jay Mello, S.T.L., was named Parochial Administrator on January 12, 2015 by Bishop Edgar da Cunha. Fr. Jay was born in Fall River on February 29, 1980. He was a parishioner at Sts. Peter and Paul school and attended the parish school. He graduated from Diman Regional Vocation Technical High School in 1998 from the culinary

arts program. Fr. Jay was inducted into the High School's Hall of Fame in 2014. He attend the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, graduating in 2003 with a bachelor degrees in Philosophy and Theology and Religious Education. After graduation from the university, Fr. Jay was assigned to the Pontifical North American College in Rome for seminary formation. He attended the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and earned a Sacred Theological Baccalaureate.

On July 7, 2007 Fr. Jay was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop George Coleman at St. Mary's Cathedral. He was then assigned to return to Rome for continued studies where he earned a Sacred Theological Licentiate from the Gregorian University. In 2008, he was assigned to be the Parochial Vicar at St. Julie Billiart Parish and chaplain of Bishop Stang High School in North Dartmouth. In 2010, he was assigned to St. Patrick's Parish in Falmouth. In 2011, Fr. Jay was made the assistant Vocation Director for the Diocese of Fall River. In 2012. he was assigned to be the parochial



vicar at St. Mary's Parish in Mansfield. In 2014, he was assigned to be the temporary parochial administrator of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in New Bedford. In January of 2015, he was made the Parochial Administrator of St. Michael's and St. Joseph's parishes in the city of Fall River. Father Jay Mello was installed as Pastor of St. Michael and St. Joseph Parishes on April 12, 2016.



**SAINT MICHAEL'S CHURCH | 189 ESSEX STREET FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS  
02720**

**PHONE: 508.672.6713 | FAX: 508.673.7230**