

## Our History

The Haitian Catholic Mission has been serving the Haitian community in Chicago for more than 50 years.



Our story began in 1970, when a group of Haitians invited Father Poux from New York to celebrate monthly Mass in French at St. Ailbe's Church. In 1973, Father Souffrant arrived in Chicago and continued this ministry, first at St. Ailbe's and later at St. Clotilde's Church. Cardinal John Cody visited the community during this time, showing support for its growth.

In the early 1980s, Cardinal Cody created the Haitian Refugee Center on South Paulina, naming Father Souffrant as Director. Masses in French and Creole were celebrated weekly. In 1986, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Bishop Wilton Gregory

transformed the Refugee Center into the Haitian Catholic Center, which later moved to Our Lady of Hungary. After Father Souffrant's return to Haiti, Father Jean-Robert Royal became Director.

Over the years, the Center relocated several times, St. Bride's Church, Our Lady of Peace, and other parishes, while always remaining a spiritual home for the Haitian faithful. Many bishops and priests from both Chicago and Haiti visited and supported the community, including Cardinals Bernardin and Francis George, Bishops Wilton Gregory, Joseph Perry, George Murry, Joseph Lafontant, Willy Romulus, and Serge Miot.

In 1998, Cardinal George officially recognized the community as the Haitian Catholic Mission. Leadership passed from Father Ernst Joseph (2000–2004) to Father Joseph Duronce Laroque (2004–2006), then to Father Churchill Penn (2006–2008). In 2001, Deacon Rameau Buissereth was ordained and continues to serve faithfully today.

In December 2011, the Mission was honored by Cardinal Francis George, who celebrated Mass with the community.

## Today

The Haitian Catholic Mission continues its mission of faith, culture, and service. We celebrate Mass every Sunday at 4:00 PM and on holy days in French and Creole. Our current ministry is supported by non-resident priests, Fathers Rodolph Arty, Edmond Aristil, and Arlin Jean Louis, who serve with dedication and love.

We remain grateful to God and to all who have sustained the Mission throughout the years. Together, we continue to worship, grow, and share our Haitian Catholic heritage in the heart of Chicago.