

About Father John Izral

Father Izral studied for the priesthood at Salvatorian Seminary in St. Naziaz, Wisconsin and at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio. He was ordained for the Diocese of Natchez on May 26, 1956 at the Pontifical College Josephinum.

He arrived in Mississippi in June 1956 to be the associate pastor of St. Richard Parish in Jackson. In 1961, he was appointed associate pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Hattiesburg. He served at St. Michael Parish in Forrest from 1962 to 1966. In September 1966, Bishop Richard Gerow established St. Joseph Parish in Orange Grove and St. Mary Parish in Woolmarket. Father Izral was appointed pastor of both parishes and began to build the first of many churches he would construct in South Mississippi.

Shortly after he was named pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Father Izral began directing construction of St. Joseph Church on 20 acres of land donated by Paul and Loraine DePew. In the meantime, Father Izral celebrated Mass at the Orange Grove Lions Club Building on Hwy 49. Bishop Joseph Brunini dedicated the new St. Joseph Church and multipurpose building on September 24, 1967.

Until 1966, Catholics in the Woolmarket area had attended Mass at Sacred Heart Parish in North Biloxi. Father Izral and volunteers built the original St. Mary Church with funds raised through parish benefit dinners held at Father Izral's residence. Construction of the new church began on December 26, 1967 and Bishop Joseph Brunini dedicated the church on May 18, 1968. From 1969 to 1972, Father Izral served as pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Greenwood. From 1972 to 1974, he served as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Rosedale. From 1974 to 1980, Father Izral served as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Wiggins.

In 1980, Father Izral was appointed founding pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Vancleave. He celebrated the parish's first Mass on April 12, 1980 at Lake O' Pines. Father Izral resided at Lake O' Pines for two months before moving to a rented cottage at Rouse's Marina.

The First Sunday Masses were celebrated the morning of April 13, 1980 in the American Legion Hall on Hwy 57. Construction of a multipurpose building housing the church, classrooms and living quarters for the pastor began on June 1, 1981. Father Izral and a number of parishioners and members of neighboring churches actually built the church. In November 1981, Vancleave Catholics celebrated Mass in the new church building. Bishop Joseph Lawson Howze dedicated the new church on May 23, 1982.

In 1981, Bishop Howze established Christ the King Mission in Latimer and Father Izral volunteered to take on the mission as part of Holy Spirit Parish in Vancleave. From 1981 to 1984, the mission's Masses were celebrated at New Fayard Methodist Church. In 1983, construction of the present day church began on 3.8 acres of land donated by Thelma Ramsay. Bishop Howze dedicated the church on the Feast of Christ the King – Nov. 25, 1984.

Father Izral retired from active ministry in 1992.

Throughout his priestly ministry and well into retirement, Father Izral was very active in the Charismatic Movement in New Orleans and along the Mississippi Gulf coast.