

## Part II

# Churches

One of the most significant contributions the Hispanic community has made to Georgetown is in helping to develop many of its churches. When the first Hispanic settlers, mainly Catholics, moved into town they had no church to attend. Today St. Helen's Catholic Church and several other churches with predominantly Hispanic congregations form a large, active part of the city's religious community.

## Georgetown's First Hispanic Churches

### St. Helen's Catholic Church:

The majority of early Hispanic settlers in Georgetown were Catholic, while all the existing churches in town were Protestant. As a result, many residents during the early 1900's traveled to Austin each Sunday to attend Mass.

The first Catholic Masses in Georgetown were offered by Father O'Reilly, a Spanish teacher from Notre Dame University, during the 1920's. These masses took place in a variety of locations throughout the city — in a tent, in a box car, and later in the homes of Julia Rodriguez and Marcelio Cruz.

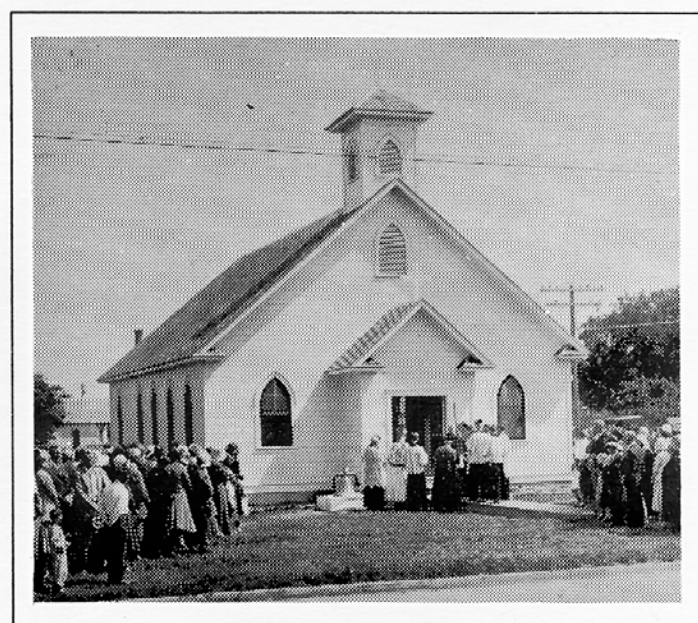
Because prejudice against Catholics was widespread, Father O'Reilly had to use secrecy to acquire land to build Georgetown's first Catholic church. Austin resident Leonard Schneider agreed to purchase two lots for O'Reilly at the corner of West University Street and Martin Luther King Street, telling the seller that he intended to build a "beauty parlor." This land became the site for "St. Helen's Mexican Missions," later renamed St. Helen's Catholic Church.

St. Helen's was dedicated and blessed by Bishop Bryne on May 3, 1931, and Father Drumney was assigned as its first priest. The church expanded its congregation several years later by building the Santa Rosa de Lima Mission

in Andice. For years afterward these churches served most of the Hispanic community in the Georgetown area.

### Gethzemani United Methodist Church:

Another early church, Gethzemani United Methodist Church was built at 412 East 19th Street around 1920. The original building still stands as the Parish Hall.



*St. Helen's in 1931  
(Courtesy of Licha Zavala)*



*Father Fredrico Schmidt and a "First Communion" class at Santa Rosa de Lima Mission in Andice during the early 1930's. Santa Rosa de Lima was built by the St. Helen's congregation. (Courtesy of Ramona Rendon Navarrette)*



*The Young Men's Club of St. Helen's (early 1940's). Pictured: Jesse Lozano, Juan Maldonado, Jesus Valdez, Jacinto Maldonado, Demetrio Ramos, Joe Lopez, Manuel Tafoya, Daniel Zavala, Emilio Ramos, Isabel Morales, Fr. Pete Mueller, Paul Lozano, Jose Morales, Nieves Lopez, Gumercindo Navarrette, Jr., Jose Zavala, Reymundo Zavala, Juan Ramos, George Richarte, Enrique Valdez, Sr. (Courtesy of Ramona Rendon Navarrette)*



*Hijas de Maria Youth Group. Picture taken inside of St. Helen's Church around 1943. Interior of 1931 church. Pictured: Josefina Ramirez, Lupe Perez Sanchez, Augustina Rodriguez, Josie Lopez Valdez, Mercy Coronado Ramos, Felicita Rodriguez Richarte, Inez Zavala Tafoya, Florintina Guzman, Ninfa Heviera, Luica Gonzales, Audelia Vasquez, Margarita Ramuez Miranda, Fili Coronado Zavala, Maria Morales Muñoz, Esparanza Lopez Flores, Lupe Rodriguez DeLeon, Paula Rodriguez Martinez, Alejandra Lopez, Celia Martinez, Rosa Zavala Richarte, Modesta Vasquez, Magie Lozano, Fr. Pete Mueller, Irene Diaz, Esparansa Navarrette, Esther Valdez Mendoza, Delfina Maldanado, Tonya Lopes Vasquez, Jovita Zavala Hernandez, Vicki Ochoa Valdez, Lupe Acuna Casteñada, Lucia Ramos Lozano, Augroia Zavala Richarte, Consuela Guzman. (Courtesy of Ramona Rendon Navarrette)*





*St. Helen's Sagrado Corazon de Jesus (Sacred Heart of Jesus) Men's group (1943), Interior of 1931 Church. Pictured: Eugenio Zavala, Augustin Lopez, unknown, Gumercindo Navarrette, Sr., Jesus Valdez, Sr., Juan Torrez, Carlos Rodriguez, Jose Dominguez, Heriberto Coronado, Aparicio Acuna, Manuel Zavala, Concepcion Lopez, Valirio Vanegas, Casimiro Torres, Eustacio Maldonado, Frailan Flores. (Courtesy of Ramona Rendon Navarrette)*

## Churches Today

St. Helen's Catholic church still serves much of Georgetown's Hispanic community, although its congregation has grown and diversified. The church is now located at 2700 East University Avenue. Gethsemani United Methodist remains on 19th Street.

Several newer city churches also serve Hispanic residents: El Buen Pastor, located on West 17th Street; Gethsemani, a Pentecostal church at 911 West 16th Street; Iglesia Bautista San Gabriel,

a Baptist church, located on Church Street; Holy Spirit Church, on 7th Street; and the New Life Ministry, at 2701 North Austin Avenue.

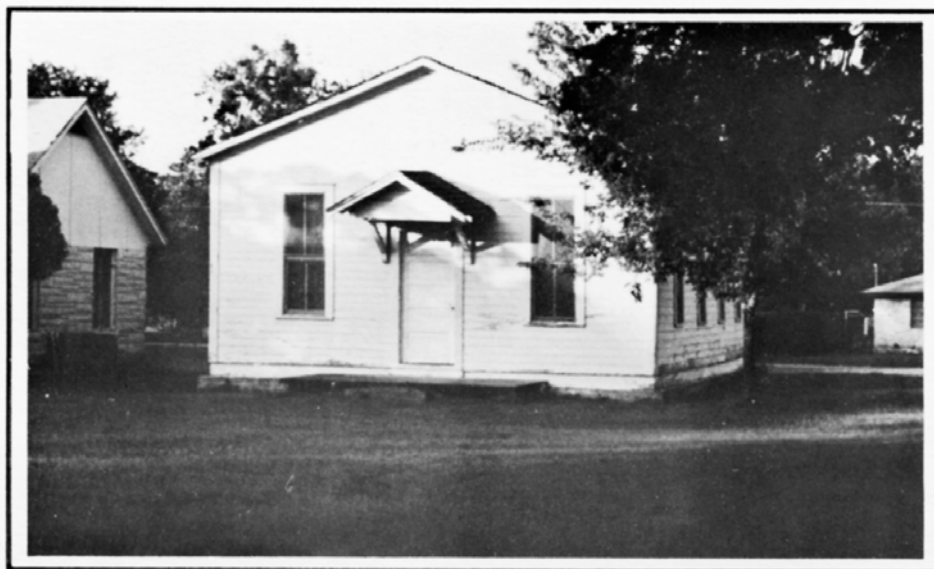
Shrines serving the community include the San Jose Shrine, built in 1953 and located at the south end of San Jose Street; and the Virgin de Guadalupe Shrine, built in 1952, housed on the property of Don Jesus Valdez at the corner of 17th and Hart Streets.



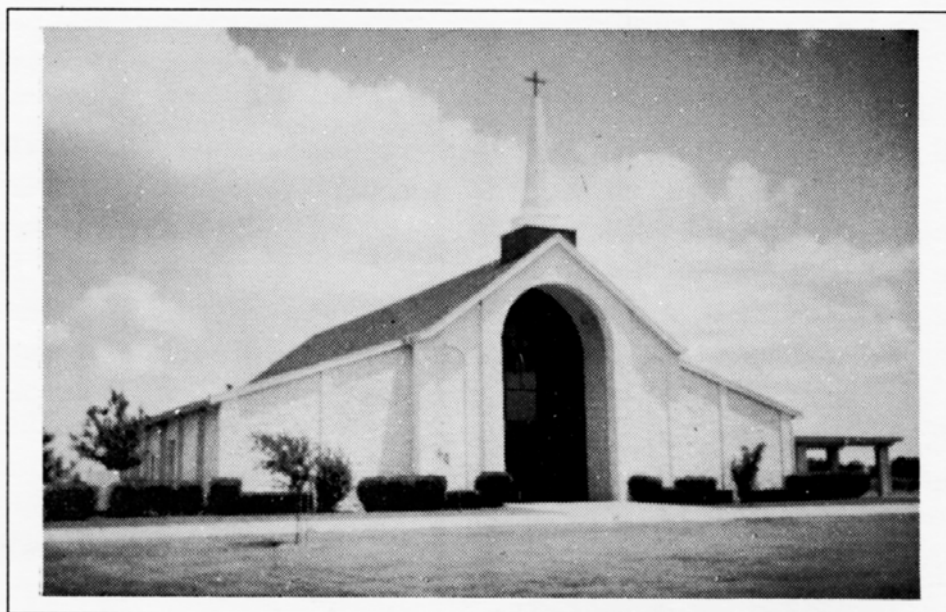
*The San Jose Shrine (Courtesy of Linda Miranda Cisneros)*



*Templo Gethsemani*



*Getzemani United Methodist Church Parish Hall. (originally constructed 1920's)*  
*(Courtesy of Linda Miranda Cisneros)*



*St. Helen's Today*  
*(Courtesy of Bernice Schwetner)*