

## 1900's

### Lower Church Opened



The first Lower Church is opened, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. The lower church was made possible by sinking the pillars supporting the main church through the basement and into the ground. The basement floor was lowered three feet to accommodate the Lower Church. Two openings at the front of the towers were made to access the Lower Church. The original basement entered from the side of the south tower on Clover St., which is a window today.

1902

Major renovation



**A major renovation of the Upper Church takes place to celebrate the diamond jubilee of St. John's.**



**The upper balconies are removed at this time and the exterior walls are covered with a facing of granite. The towers are also extended higher.**

**Fr. Fisher buys 1218 Vine street for use as a day nursery.  
1912**

### **Church Closed**

**St John's is threatened by an underground river that was diverted into the foundation of St John's by construction of the Adelphia Hotel. The river undermines the foundation to the point of noticeable settling. The church is closed for three weeks for fear of collapse.**

**January 1913**

### **World War I**



**Father Lallou, one of the curates at St John's, leaves St. John's for service in World War I. The parish bulletin attempts to track the names of all of the men leaving for military service. Many of these names can be seen today on the plaque in the graveyard.**

**1917**

The influenza epidemic forces the day nursery to close. In its place, a hospital for infants and children up to 7 years of age is opened.

1918

After this time, St John's is less of a parish church and more of a shrine church.

1920

Father Wastl becomes pastor

He institutes regular weekly confessions on Thursdays to meet the needs of the "living-out girls" on their day off.

May 1920

The Holy Name Society of St John's becomes very active in setting up athletic leagues (especially basketball).

1924

Sisters of the Visitation are exiled during persecutions of the church in Mexico. They come to Philadelphia and live in church property for several years before moving to their current monastery site on City Line Avenue.

1925

Humanitarian Award

With the onset of the Depression, St John's becomes active in feeding the hungry. About 700 men per day are fed at St John's. The pastor, Monsignor Wastl, is given a humanitarian award by Philadelphia, but declines to accept.

1929

Centenary Mass

Centenary Mass is celebrated by the rector of St. Charles Seminary, Rt. Rev. Joseph Corrigan. He describes St. John's as "a heart in the very breast of a great city, throbbing with faith and hope and love."

April 10, 1932

**46,089 visitors a week**

**Msgr. Wastl counts 46,089 visitors to St. John's in one week even though there are no special devotions.**

**1932**

**Pamphlet Room**

**Msgr. Wastl opens the Pamphlet Room in the rear of the basement, run by the Information League. It sells about 150,000 Catholic pamphlets a year, one of the largest services in the country. As part of their service, they take questions on the Catholic faith. They average about 200 inquiries per week from across the country.**

**January 1937**

**Daily Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament begins.**

**October 1, 1939**

**Chinese community**

**Bishop Yu Pin visits Philadelphia and encourages the Chinese community to become involved in the Memorial Day services at St John's. Over 400 Chinese Catholics attend. So many Chinese become involved in St John's parish that a separate chapel of St John's is created in Chinatown. This chapel later expands to Holy Redeemer Church, which is opened on October 5, 1941. Fr. Tom Betz, the current Administrator of the chapel, resides at St. John's.**

**1939**

**Msgr. Wastl dies**

**He served St John's for over 30 years.**

**April 11, 1943**

**Fr. Kavanaugh becomes pastor**

**Among his innovations is the display box. Nine out of ten people who walk along 13th street stop to see what is in the display box, usually an explanation of some church doctrine. He also renovates the rectory, starts daily scheduled confessions, and installs air conditioning in the Lower Church. He dies in 1949.**

**April 1943**

**Fr. Boyle becomes pastor**

**He initiates the St. John's Night School for Adults, which later becomes the St. John's Evening School. He dies in 1954 from a heart attack.**

**1951**

**Fr. Anthony O'Neill becomes pastor**

**His concern for the poor and homeless in Center City leads to the establishment of St. John's Hospice for Transient Men, which is blessed in September 1963.**

**1959**

**The Upper Church is redecorated and the lower chapel is renovated.**

**1963**

**St. John Neumann is canonized.**

**[Visit stjohnneumann.org/life.html](http://stjohnneumann.org/life.html)**

**June 19, 1977**

**Fr. Greg Chervenak**

**The Capuchin Franciscan Friars accept responsibility for managing St. John's Parish. Fr. Greg Chervenak is pastor.**

**1991**

**Fr. Fred Krause**

**Fr. Fred Krause serves as pastor of St. John's.**

**1995-1997**

**Fr. Jim Menkhus**

**Fr. Jim Menkhus serves as pastor of St. John's.**

**1997-2001**