

The German Catholic Parishes of Baltimore

St. John's German Catholic Church, 1799-1841
 St. James, 1833 - 1966
 St. Alphonsus, 1845 - 1918
 St. John the Evangelist, 1853 - 1966
 St. James and St. John's, 1966 - date

In 1799 St. John's German Catholic Church was built on the corner of Park Avenue and Saratoga Streets. By 1840 the church building was too small for the fast-growing congregation and St. John's was entrusted to Father Joseph Prost of the Redemptorists Fathers. This Order was charged with the care of all German congregations in the Archdiocese.

Late in 1841, or early the following year, St. John's was torn down and a new and larger edifice was begun on the site of the former church. The new sanctuary, completed in 1845, was named St. Alphonsus. It was the Mother House of the Redemptorist Order in North America until 1913. St. Alphonsus itself served the German community on the west side of Jones Falls until 1917/18 when, through various transactions, it came into possession of the Lithuanian Catholics.

St. James was established and built by private funds of Archbishop James Whitfield in 1833 for the Irish Catholics in the neighborhood of Aisquith and Eager Streets. But the Irish moved toward Front Street and the Germans on the east side of Jones Falls crowded into the St. James area. So Father Gildea, first pastor of St. James, went with his English-speaking congregation to the new St. Vincent. The congregation at St. James was left almost totally German. Both St. James and St. Alphonsus were cared for by the Redemptorists and the Superior of St. Alphonsus was Superior to both churches. A Redemptorist Seminary was located at St. James in 1842 and a new church was constructed in 1865.

From 1841 until 1853 there was no congregation in the Archdiocese styled St. John the Evangelist. In the latter year a parish of that name was built, on Valley and Eager Streets. It was this St. Johns, which in 1966 merged with "old" St. James to form the present parish of St. James and St. John.

Extant records of the original St. James and St. John the Evangelist (closed 1966) are found in this parish. In 1940 when the Historical Records Survey was made the records of St. Alphonsus were still in that church; the Lithuanian congregation continued to use books begun by the Germans. From 1840-1845 during the period of its reconstruction some record books of St. James served the old St. John's and the new St. Alphonsus congregation. Oversight of St. James by Fathers of St. Alphonsus meant that certain record books were shared.

J. Thomas Scharf, History of the City and County of Baltimore, Balto., 1886

Works Progress Administration. Survey of State and Local Historical Records: 1936. Maryland Historical Records Survey, Church Records Forms. Baltimore City. Roman Catholic: MdHR. Notes taken by J. Ellis Kesterson, 1938.