



St. Birgitta parish, Fredrikstad, Norway, history

The Catholic Church was abolished from Norway in 1537 and the official church for Denmark-Norway was the Lutheran church for about 300 years. In 1843 the Catholic Church was eventually allowed by the Swedish-Norwegian king to re-establish in Oslo.

In 1879 the Catholic parish in Fredrikstad was established and given the name of the famous Swedish saint Birgitta. There were less than 50 Catholics here in the beginning and the parish was very poor. But a small chapel was erected, and the catholic children were given some education. In 1887 the St. Joseph-sisters came and took responsibility for the school and started a small hospital here. Thanks to the hardworking, unselfish St. Joseph-sisters the parish was built up. Queen Josephine of Sweden-Norway was Catholic and she helped the Catholic Church in our country in many ways. An altar from her private chapel was given to our humble chapel in Fredrikstad. From a Birgitta-sister in Holland we received a huge painting of the holy Birgitta. As the number of Catholics slowly increased, there was a need for more space and in 1899 the activities were moved to a wooden church, built in a quasi old-Norwegian style. The Catholic hospital was situated next to the church and was enlarged step by step up to 1960 and had a very good reputation in the town. Since the number of sisters decreased and the need for a Catholic hospital diminished, the hospital was sold and the last St. Joseph-sisters left the town just before 1987 (when they had worked here for almost 100 years).

The Catholic school of St. Birgitta closed just after the Second World War.

In 1970-80 the number of Catholics in Fredrikstad had increased so much that the old wooden church was far too small. In 1990 we moved into a set of large, modern buildings with plenty of space for church, flats for the paters, plenty of room for gatherings etc.

In year 2012 the number of parish members is exceeding 1700.