GRAND COTEAU — One of the oldest and most beautiful churches in Acadiana, St. Charles Borromeo Church in Grand Coteau, will celebrate its 160th parish anniversary Sunday.


Besides its parish anniversary, St. Charles Borromeo Church will be commemorating its centennial. The church, which has been nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, was constructed in 1879 by two brothers of the Jesuit order — still a dominant religious influence in the community today.

It was built on about 80 arpents of prairie and 50 arpents of woodland donated by Charles Smith. He also gave the cypress timber for its construction.

The church contract was signed in 1817, according to old documents. And it was formally blessed Oct. 22, 1820. When this original church at Grand Coteau was too small for the growing community, plans for the present church began.

The corner stone was laid March 19, 1879.

The church contains many beautiful artifacts, including a baptismal font purchased in 1890 and three magnificent altars made in Belgium.

Immediately following the Mass, the Festival de Grand Coteau will begin under the towering oak and pine trees on the church grounds. Gumbo will be served at the St. Ignatius School Cafeteria near the church.

The festival will celebrate the town's heritage with traditional foods, crafts, performing arts, exhibits and a buckboard tour of the town and historic district.

The Grand Coteau Preservation Association is working to have the Grand Coteau Historic District also nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The day's activities will come to a close with a 4 p.m. benediction. The pastor and parishioners of St. Charles Borromeo invite the public to join in their Sunday celebration.