

*A Century of Catholicism  
in  
Greenfield, Ohio*



**ST. BENIGNUS**

**1858 - 1958**



*Sanctuary of Present St. Benignus Church*

**Centennial Observance**

**St. Benignus Church**

1858

1958

Greenfield, Ohio

Sunday, June 15, 1958

# Centennial Program

Forenoon

8 and 10 o'clock  
MASS AT ST. BENIGNUS

Afternoon

2.30 to 4.30 o'clock  
OPEN HOUSE  
at the church premises

5 o'clock

SOLEMN PONTIFICAL MASS  
Offered by

His Grace, The Most Reverend Karl J. Alter, D.D., LL.D.,  
Archbishop of Cincinnati  
McClain High School Athletic Field

Mass sung by the choir of the Jesuit Novitiate, Milford, O., and  
the combined choirs of various parishes.

Narrator: The Very Reverend Msgr. Earl L. Whalen

Dinner following Mass

McClain Cafeteria



His Grace,  
The Most Reverend Karl J. Alter, D.D., LL.D.,  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

## St. Benignus Parish A Historical Sketch

THE Emerald Isle of Erin far across the sea, one of the founts of the spread of Catholicism throughout the world, sent thousands of her sons and daughters to the New World in the middle decades of the 19th Century.

During the antebellum years a number of the Irish families reaching America's blessed shores found their way to Greenfield, some of them following the westward construction of the Belpre & Cincinnati Railroad (B&O), others being attracted by one of the hamlet's principal sources of employment, the Rucker stone quarries.

Some of the men soon found work with section crews on the railroads; others, who had been skilled stone masons in their native land, took jobs at the quarries.

In some of the families, sons and even grandsons followed those traditions of employment.

The Irish built a little village of their own south of the railroad tracks. The winding lanes were lined with small frame and stone cottages, reminiscent of the Auld Sod.

The settlement originally was known as Dublin, but with the passing years it was given the name of Irish Town. On Sept. 29, 1851, it was annexed to Greenfield which itself had been

incorporated as a village in 1841.

Irish Town stood on a bluff overlooking the valley of Paint creek with its thickly wooded island, the old mill race, and the kilns and the quarry ponds across the stream, and formed a picturesque entrance to Greenfield from the south.

Among the pioneer Irish families who settled in Greenfield in that era were found the names of Buckley, Hinnigan (or Hennigan), Hyde, McGillicuddy (or Mack), Murphy, Callahan, Collins, Love, Toomey, Leary, Casey, Tracy, Smith, McCormick, Deacon, Ford.

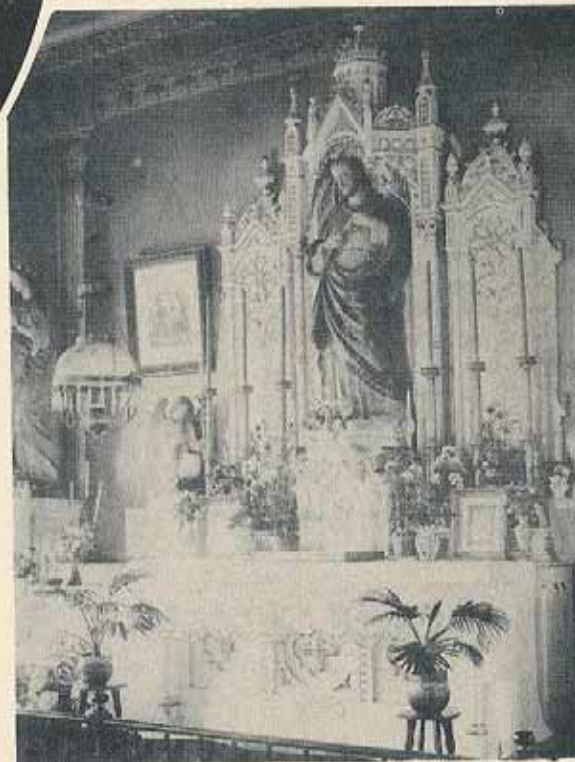
Later immigrants brought to Irish Town such names as Lyons, Crowe, Coriell, Keegan, McTigue, Patterson, Killoran, Harris, McCarthy, Cribbins, Sullivan.

Today, as St. Benignus Parish enters the second century of its existence, few of those names are to be found on the church's active rolls. Nevertheless, although the names may be different, the descendants of some of those pioneers, even unto the fifth and sixth generations, retain in their hearts the pride of name, the love for Ireland, and the devotion to God that characterized the founders of the parish.

*Original  
St. Benignus Church*



*Rev. Fr. Bernard Feeney*



*Main Altar  
Original  
St. Benignus Church*

## A Historical Sketch (Continued)

Through the passing years, men and women of other national origins found their way to Greenfield and to the altars of the two St. Benignus churches, bringing to the parish their strength, their wisdom, their courage, their devout faith, and mingling solidarity, resourcefulness and thrift and diligence with the buoyant love of life and the high spirits of the Irish.

Together, with God's blessing, they sustained St. Benignus through much of its first century.

"May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace."

The pioneer Irish were devout Catholics, but they were visited only infrequently by priests from Chillicothe, and few of them could afford the costly journey to Chillicothe or Cincinnati to attend Mass and receive Communion.

In the fall of 1854, Miss Bridgit McCormick, who later became the wife of Lawrence Cribbins, went to Cincinnati to Confession, and Archbishop John B. Purcell learned from her that there were several Catholic families in Greenfield without the services of a priest.

Archbishop Purcell promptly appointed Rev. Fr. John B. O'Donoghue, of Fayetteville, to serve Irish Town. His first visit

was unheralded, and only two of the faithful, Owen McCormick and his sister, Bridgit, were present when he held Mass in their home, the first Mass ever solemnized in Greenfield.

Subsequently, he celebrated Mass at the homes of Patrick Love and Daniel Collins.

A while later, Father O'Donoghue was assigned to St. Mary's parish at Hillsboro, and he continued to serve Greenfield as a mission station.

The priest's first concern was the building of a church. A plot of ground was acquired on S. Second st., just south of the railroad, and work was begun on the edifice in 1856.

The church, built of stone cut from the Rucker quarries, measured 36 by 26 feet.

Father O'Donoghue laid the cornerstone for the church on Sept. 13, 1857.

The edifice was dedicated Dec. 25, 1858, with Archbishop Purcell presiding. Rev. Fr. Sylvester Rosecrans (later the first Bishop of Columbus) officiated at the blessing, and Father O'Donoghue celebrated the Mass.

Rev. Fr. Michael O'Donoghue became the second pastor of the mission, 1861-81. During the pastorate of Rev. Fr. Michael Hays, 1881-86, the parish bought ground and established St. Joseph's Cemetery, at a cost of \$800.

As the years passed, it became increasingly the fervent wish of the mission to have their priest reside with them, but it was not until 1899 that St. Benignus was designated as a separate parish.

Rev. Fr. Bernard Feeney was appointed as the first resident pastor, and the stations at Waverly, Frankfort, Leesburg and New Vienna were attached to Greenfield as missions. The St. Benignus pastor still serves St. Michael's Mission at New Vienna.

During the pastorate of Rev. Fr. Adolf Sourd (1900-04), the parish acquired a cottage at the southwest corner of Lyndon ave. and Fifth st. for use as a rectory.

Following the turn of the century, the inadequacy of the original church induced the parishioners to set about finding larger and more modern accommodations, and soon an unusual opportunity presented itself.

In 1904 the Methodist Episcopal congregation moved from their brick church at S. Second and Mirabeau sts. to their magnificent new "Institutional Church" at South and S. Fourth sts., and the vacated building was purchased by Edward Lee McClain.

That property appeared to the Catholics to be ample for their needs, and they opened negotiations for its purchase.

On Oct. 11, 1904, Mr. McClain wrote to the pastor, Rev. Fr. John F. Cogan, saying:

"I have decided to offer the church property on Second st. to the Catholic denomination

which you represent in this place, to be used as a place of worship, for \$5000, being the price I paid for the property."

The purchase was quickly sanctioned by Archbishop Henry Moeller.

Following completion of the transaction, Mr. McClain made a donation of \$500 to the parish.

The church building was remodeled, and Mass was celebrated therein for the first time on Dec. 11, 1904.

The dedication took place June 11, 1905, with Archbishop Moeller as the celebrant of the Mass.

The present attractive rectory adjoining the church was built in the 1920's, replacing a small residence.

The parish observed the 25th anniversary of the present church on Sunday, Oct. 19, 1930, during the pastorate of Rev. Fr. Urban J. Koehl.

Father Cogan solemnized the Jubilee High Mass, and Rev. Fr. (now Msgr.) Charles A. Towell, a native of Frankfort, delivered the sermon. Parish dinner was held in the Masonic Temple.

This spring, in preparation for the Centennial, the interior of St. Benignus Church was completely redecorated, and all statues and the Stations of the Cross renovated.

The main body of the church was refinished in pastel green, with charcoal and gold trim. Most of the woodwork, including the altars, remains white.

(Continued on page 13)



*Rev. Fr. Edward F. Lawler*

*St. Benignus Church*



## Parish Roster

- BAKER, MRS. FERN  
Maehere and William Baker
- BARNHART, WALTER F.
- BECHTEL, R. J.
- BERGEN, MR. AND MRS. LEROY J.  
William, Barbara, Timothy and Teresa Bergen
- BERGER, MRS. CLARA  
Berger, Leo
- BOYER, MRS. JOSEPH H.
- BROWN, BERNARD T.  
Tom Pat and Timothy Brown
- BRUEGGEMANN, ELIZABETH
- BUSSARD, MR. AND MRS. DAVID  
David, Jr., Gary and Richard Bussard
- BUCKINGHAM, MRS. ROBERT B.  
Lisa Buckingham
- CARREL, MRS. ANNA
- CHAPMAN, MR. AND MRS. CHARLES W.  
Lawrence and Joe Chapman
- CLARK, MISS ROSE
- CLYBURN, MRS. WILLIAM  
Judy, Janet and Jill Clyburn
- COLER, MISS ANNA
- COLER, GEORGE
- COLLINS, MR. AND MRS. AB
- COLLINS, MR. AND MRS. JAMES W.  
Connie, William and Carol Collins
- CONLEY, MR. AND MRS. HERBERT  
Robert and Charles Conley
- COPE, MRS. COLETTA UHL
- CORIELL, MR. AND MRS. SAM  
Samuel Coriell, Jr.
- COX, MRS. FRED  
Teresa, Victoria, Laura, Pamela, Dean and Cynthia Cox

CROWE, MRS. AGNES  
CURREN, MARTIN H.  
CURREN, WALTER P.  
DERMODY, MR. AND MRS. CHARLES  
EGAN, THOMAS  
ERSKINE, MRS. OTIS  
FEDERBUSH, MRS. HARRY  
    Barbara, Lois, Nancy and Judy Federbush  
FISHER, HARRY  
FLYNN, MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH D.  
FLYNN, MR. AND MRS. DONALD  
    Donnie, Mary and William Flynn  
FLYNN, JOHN  
    Patricia, Ellen, Mary and Betty Flynn  
FLYNN, MR. AND MRS. THOMAS  
    Michael and Linda Flynn  
FORD, JOHN  
GRIFFITH, MRS. EMMA  
    Lawrence and John Griffith  
GIFFIN, MISS JEANNETTE  
GODFREY, MR. AND MRS. CHARLES R.  
    Barbara Godfrey  
GRAGG, MRS. J. RODNEY  
HANAWALT, THOMAS  
HANEY, GLEN E.  
HAYS, MR. AND MRS. LOREN  
    Ann, Carolyn, Mike, (twins) Patrick and Patricia Hays  
HENNIGAN, MICHAEL  
HINDES, MR. AND MRS. DONALD  
    Donna and John Hindes  
HAWKINS, MRS. CHARLENE  
    Charles, Randall, John and Debra Hawkins  
HOLLIS, MRS. EARL  
IMHOFF, MRS. LUCILE SHROCK

ISEMAN, MRS. DANE  
    Stephen and Susan Iseman  
JOHNSON, MISS BEVERLY  
KEEGAN, MR. AND MRS. JOHN  
KENNEDY, MRS. LLOYD  
    Lloyd Kennedy, Jr.  
KENSINGER, WILLIAM B.  
    John, James, Susan, David, Karen, Mary and Kevin Kensinger  
KNOWLES, MR. AND MRS. JAMES  
    James Knowles, Jr.  
KRUG, MR. AND MRS. JAMES  
    Kathleen Krug  
LAWLER, MRS. AGNES  
LYNCH, WILLIAM J.  
LYONS, MRS. CORA  
LYONS, MR. AND MRS. PAUL  
LYONS, WALTER  
McLAUGHLIN, MR. AND MRS. DOUGLAS  
    Michael, Tara, Lisa and Anthony McLaughlin  
McLEAN, MRS. BERTHA  
McMULLEN, MRS. HAMILTON  
    Fred, Shirley, Connie, James and John McMullen  
MACK, MISS NORA  
MAHONEY, MRS. ED  
MARTINDILL, MRS. HOWARD C.  
    Mary Ellen Martindill  
MERTZ, MR. AND MRS. JOHN J.  
MERTZ, MR. AND MRS. JOHN L.  
    Patricia and Mary Lou Mertz  
MEYERS, MR. AND MRS. ELMER  
    Ronald, Richard, Rosann, Thomas, Gerald and Mary Meyers  
MEYERS, MR. AND MRS. OSCAR  
    Sally, Margaret and Iris Meyers  
MEYERS, MR. AND MRS. ROBERT C.  
    Steven Meyers  
MILEY, MRS. HAROLD

MOORE, MRS. GRACE  
MOORE, MRS. FRED H.  
NEWELL, MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM  
Martha, Marian, Marlin and Garry Newell  
ORLANDO, MR. AND MRS. LEO  
Dianne Orlando  
PEARCE, MRS. ROBERT U.  
PIERCE, MRS. MARGARET  
Miss Maxine Pierce  
PIERCE, LEO E.  
Michael Pierce  
PIERCE, MRS. ROY W.  
Judith and Randall Pierce  
PITCHER, MRS. DAVID  
Mark and Mary Pitcher  
POSEY, MR. AND MRS. GEORGE  
Ann Posey  
RAVENSRAFT, MRS. ROBERT W.  
Phillip Ravenscraft  
RENTZ, MRS. MINNIE  
ROLFE, MRS. STANLEY  
Edward, John, (twins) Bonnie and Barbara, and James Rolfe  
SCHINNER, MISS ELIZABETH  
SHAYNE, MR. AND MRS. JOHN E.  
Charles, Mark and Trudy Shayne  
SHOEMAKER, ROSE  
SHROCK, MRS. GLEN  
SHROCK, MR. AND MRS. PATRICK  
Terence Patrick Shrock  
SHIPLEY, SUE, RONALD, RICHARD, ROBERT AND JAMES  
SONIA, MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH  
Joseph, Jr., Charlene, Susan and Gertrude Sonia  
SPANGLER, MR. AND MRS. CHARLES  
Kathy, Susan and Patricia Spangler  
SPANGLER, MRS. RUPERT  
STAATS, MR. AND MRS. DWIGHT  
Charles Staats

STAATS, MR. AND MRS. ROBERT  
STELTENPOHL, MRS. GERTRUDE  
Thomas Steltenpohl  
STREITENBERGER, MR. AND MRS. RONALD  
STRIDER, GLENPAT  
SULLIVAN, MR. AND MRS. LEO  
Michael Sullivan  
SULLIVAN, JAMES E.  
THEISMAN, JOSEPH  
TODHUNTER, MR. AND MRS. REX  
UHL, CHARLES M.  
Mary Uhl  
UHL, MR. AND MRS. CHAS M., JR.  
Denise, Mary  
UHL, MR. AND MRS. RICHARD  
Stephanie, Jacqueline, Brian, Ronald and Jerimy Uhl  
VAN PELT, MRS. CLARK  
WACKER, DR. AND MRS. JACOB  
WHITLEY, MISS SYLVIA  
WILLIAMS, MRS. CHARLES E.  
Dorothy, Charlene and Edwin Williams

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### Historical Sketch

*(Continued from page 7)*

The social rooms also have been redecorated.

Many improvements have been made in the church property in recent years, including the installation of a gas furnace, a restroom, tile flooring on the altar, a public address system, new carpeting in the aisles and on the stairway to the choir gallery.

Much of the general renovation was made possible by generous contributions by the Ladies Auxiliary, including a Ham-

mond electric organ, and by individuals.

The rectory also has been extensively improved and the grounds landscaped.

Another recent innovation was the installing of an electrical system to sound the bell in the church steeple, and the Angelus now is heard daily at 12 noon and 6 p.m.

A number of years ago the original steeple was lowered as a safety measure.

The original St. Benignus Church still stands and is used for commercial purposes.

# St. Benignus

Protege and Successor of St. Patrick

IT IS traditional that the Roman Catholic Church vests in Her prelates the authority to select the patron saints and the titles of any new churches and parishes being established in their jurisdiction.

So, although a search through the archives of St. Benignus Church fails to reveal how or why or by whom that Irish saint was chosen a century ago as the patron of the parish, the choice unquestionably was made by Archbishop John B. Purcell, of Cincinnati.

And surely it must have been gratifying to the small band of the faithful from Erin's Emerald Isle to know that they were to have as their protector and intercessor in Heaven, one who was so dearly beloved in their native land, one who indeed became the protégé and the successor of Ireland's own St. Patrick.

The Church lists Nov. 9 as the feast day of St. Benignus.

O'Farrell's "Life of St. Patrick" offers the following account of St. Benignus:

"St. Patrick on his journey to Tara, at the approach of night entered the house of a venerable man named Sescnean, by whom he was hospitably received. The Saint soon made known to the family the sacred truths of Christianity, and finding them well disposed, baptized Sescnean and his whole household.

"This venerable man had a son whom St. Patrick purified with healing water and, taking the name from the occasion, called him Benignus (good, kind), and as his name, so were his life and manners; he was beloved of God and man; worthy of honor and of glory on earth and in Heaven.

"Benignus steadfastly adhered to the holy prelate, nor ever could be separated from him. When the Saint was about to depart, the boy caught his feet with fast closing hands and implored that he might not leave him. And when his parents would have separated him from the Saint, and retained him with themselves, the boy, with wailing and lamentations, cried out: 'I entreat you release me, that I may go with my spiritual father.'

"The Saint, observing such devotion in his tender heart, blessed him in the name of the Lord, and bidding him to come with him, prophesied that he would be, as indeed he was, the successor of his ministry.

"And this Benignus succeeded St. Patrick in the primacy of all Ireland."

# St. Benignus Pastors

JOHN B. O'DONOGHUE, 1854-61  
MICHAEL O'DONOGHUE, 1861-81  
MICHAEL HAYES, 1881-86  
LAWRENCE SULLIVAN, 1886-91  
WILLIAM B. MUGGEL, 1891-93  
MATTHEW O'BRIEN, 1893  
THOMAS WALSH, 1893-99  
BERNARD FEENEY, 1899-1900  
ADOLF SOURD, 1900-04  
JOHN F. COGAN, 1904-07  
JOHN SALLER, 1907-08  
JOSEPH MICHALOWSKI, 1908-18  
FRANCIS SIEVE, 1918-21  
HENRY GRAMANN, 1921-28  
EUGENE GERLACH, 1928  
URBAN J. KOEHL, 1928-32  
ALPHONSE SCHUMACHER, 1932-37  
ALOYSIUS F. LEON, March 6, 1937  
EDWIN W. DITTMAN, Oct. 10, 1945  
LEO T. HERLIHY, Aug. 10, 1948  
JOHN H. ANTONY, March 23, 1954  
EDWARD F. LAWLER, Jan. 18, 1956 (incumbent)

## In Religion

RT. REV. MSGR. CHARLES A. TOWELL, Prothonotary Apostolic  
Pastor, St. Agnes Church  
Covington, Kentucky  
A native of Frankfort, formerly a mission of St. Benignus Church

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SISTER BENEDICTA BERGER  
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross  
Holy Cross Convent,  
Merrill, Wisconsin  
Daughter of Mrs. Clara Berger and the late Frederick Berger

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SISTER JEMMA MARIE (Eileen Flynn)  
Order of St. Joseph  
Withamsville, Ohio  
Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph D. Flynn

---

CHARLES ANTHONY COPE  
Candidate for the Order of Carthusians of Strict Observance (Trappists)  
Abbey of Gethsemane  
Trappist, Kentucky  
Son of Mrs. Coletta Uhl Cope