

# 125th Anniversary

1858 - 1983



## St. Benignus Catholic Church

GREENFIELD, OHIO

November 6, 1983

ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

11 o'clock  
Mass at St. Benignus

AFTERNOON

3:30 o'clock  
Anniversary Mass

Reception immediately following  
Church Undercroft

5:30 o'clock  
Visiting Priests Dinner  
At Rectory



Rev. Fr. Thomas M. Gavin

St. Benignus Church



## ST. BENIGNUS PARISH

### A HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Emerald Isle of Erin far across the sea, one of the fonts 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 was originally 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.

In the fall of 1854, Miss Bridgit McCormick, who later became the wife of Lawrence Cribbins, went to Cincinnati to confession. 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.

### A Historical Sketch (Continued)

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

A while later, Fr. O'Donoghue was assigned to St. Mary's parish in 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 Street, 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 September 13, 1857.

The edifice was dedicated December 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 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.

Rev. Fr. Bernard Feeney was appointed as the first resident pastor in 1899, 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 Street for use as a rectory.

In 1904, the opportunity of a larger and more modern church building presented itself as the Methodist Episcopal congregation moved into their new church at South and Fourth Streets. The vacated building at South Second and Mirabeau Streets 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 October 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 December 11, 1904.

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

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

Father Cogan solemnized the Jubilee High Mass, and Rev. Fr. Charles A. Towell, a native of Frankfort, delivered the sermon.

The 100th anniversary was celebrated during the pastorate of Rev. Fr. Edward F. Lawler on June 15, 1958. A Solemn Pontifical Mass was offered by Archbishop Karl J. Alter at McClain High School.

During the pastorate of Rev. Fr. Francis B. Lay, work was commenced on the church undercroft. The basement was completely excavated and refurbished into a social hall.

Many improvements have been made to the church property in recent years mainly by the efforts of the St. Benignus Catholic Ladies Auxiliary. The interior of the church has been remodeled, new carpet installed, and the rectory has been completely remodeled.



Sanctuary

John B. O'Donoghue, 1854-61  
 Michael O'Donoghue, 1861-81  
 Michael Hayes, 1881-86  
 Lawrence Sullivan, 1886-91  
 William B. Miggeel, 1891-93  
 Matthew O'Brien, 1893  
 Thomas Walsh, 1893-99  
 Bernard Feeney, 1899-1900  
 Adolf Sourd, 1900-04  
 John F. Cogan, 1904-07  
 John Sailer, 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, 1937-45  
 Edwin W. Dittman, 1945-48  
 Leo T. Herlihy, 1948-54  
 John H. Antony, 1954-56  
 Edward F. Lawler, 1956-62  
 Francis B. Lay, 1962-65  
 A. Edwin Francis, 1965-69  
 Harold J. Bernard, 1969-1982  
 Thomas M. Gavin, 1982- (Incumbent)

IN RELIGION

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles A. Towell  
 A native of Frankfort, formerly a mission of St. Benignus Church.

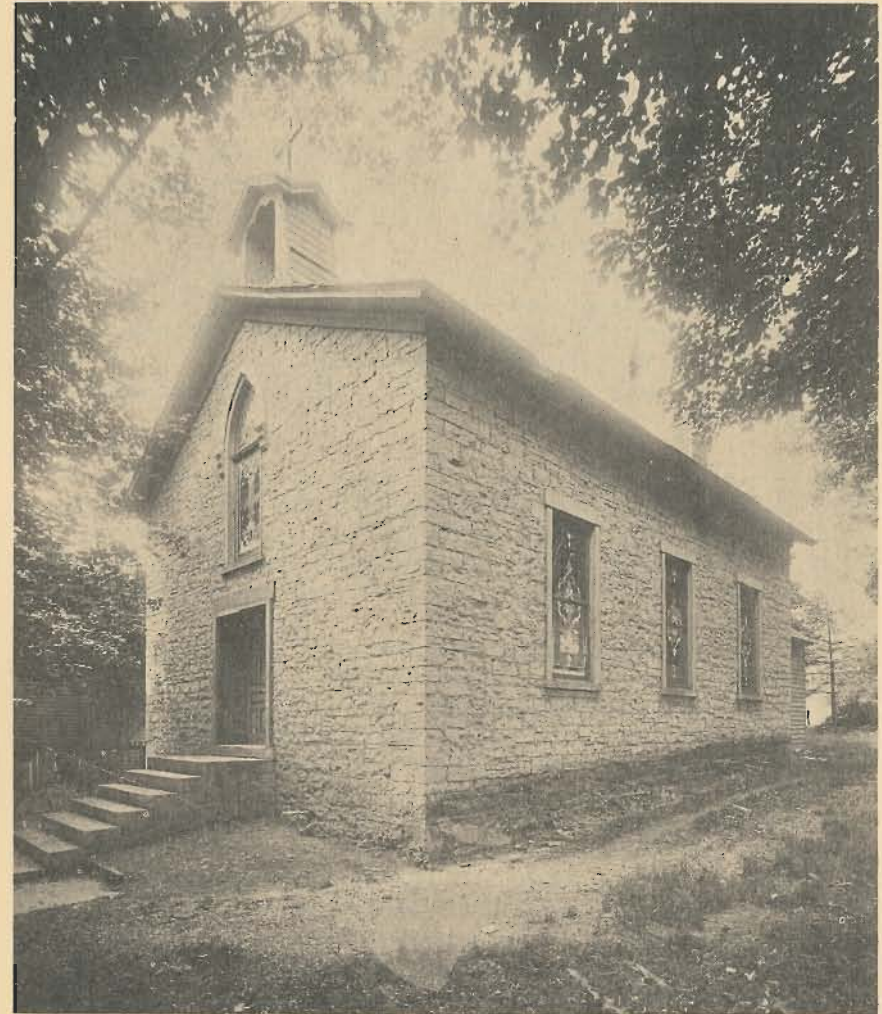
Sister Benedicta Berger  
 Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross

125th CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

GENERAL CHAIRMEN Mr. & Mrs. Donald P. Flynn  
PROGRAM & PUBLICITY Mr. & Mrs. Patrick L. Hays  
LITURGICAL AND MUSIC Mrs. Ann Marie Hadley  
INVITATIONS AND WELCOMING Mrs. Mary Lou Zoldak  
CHURCH DECORATIONS Mrs. Agnes Crowe, Richard A. Uhl  
RECEPTION Mrs. Jessie Spangler, Mrs. Marty Wilson  
PRIESTS DINNER Mr. & Mrs. Donald Hindes  
UNDERCROFT Mrs. Jean Howland  
ASSISTING  
Gertrude Steltenpohl Mrs. Bobby Ravenscraft  
Mrs. Gary O'Connor Vickie Everhart  
Ruth Hilton Mr. & Mrs. John L. Mertz  
Rosie Burton Kelly O'Connor  
B. T. Brown William Lynch  
SOLOISTS Charles Wehner  
Mary McKinley  
Jennifer Tarbutton  
CHOIR Combined Choirs of St. Benignus Church  
and St. Mary's Church, Hillsboro, Ohio  
ORGANISTS Norma Fehring and Ann Marie Hadley  
LECTORS Don Flynn and Pat Hays

OUR SPECIAL THANKS

Cathy Daniels  
The Letter Shop  
Greenfield Times  
Steve Iseman  
Sue Staats



Original St. Benignus Church

## 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 the saint was chosen as the patron of the parish, the choice unquestionably was made by Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati.

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."