

History of St. Henry Church
Elsmere/Erlanger, Kentucky
by
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The congregation of Saint Henry Church, Elsmere-Erlanger, Kentucky, was organized in the year 1890 by Reverend William Gorey. Rev. Gorey was pastor of Florence and the missions of Independence, Walton and Erlanger.

Under Father Gorey's direction a small brick church was soon erected on the corner of Garvey and Shaw Avenue, and in April, 1891, Reverend B. J. Kolbe took over the charge of Saint Henry Parish. The name "St. Henry" was chosen because many of the members of the new congregation had moved from a parish of that name located in Cincinnati, near Crosley Field.

In 1893 the parish was able to erect a small school building on Shaw Avenue opposite the little church. The students were taught by secular teachers R. Renikins, Peter Barberich, Otto Fritz and Miss Belle Pratt.

In 1899 Father Kolbe engaged the Sisters of Saint Benedict from Covington, to take over the charge of the school in September, 1899. But on Sunday afternoon, August 27, 1899 one month previous to the scheduled opening of school, the church burned to the ground. It was after Vespers & Benediction and Solemn Consecration of the whole congregation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by request of the Holy Father Leo XIII. The first School house was across the street on Shaw so it did not burn. It was sold and in 2015 still exists on Shaw Ave., Elsmere, KY. There was only \$1,000 insurance. Rev. B. J. Kolb set to work first by starting his school, not in the old School house, but after inducting Mrs. Mary Morelli a good pious Catholic lady to let the Sisters of St. Benedict occupy one half of her house on the Lexington Pike. The Sisters were, Sister Martina, Principal, Sister Christina, Sister Camilla, music teacher and Sister Josephine, the Cook. The congregation rented the little cottage of Mrs. Greenbaum for a school.

The presence of the sisters in the parish gave a new impetus to the congregation and brought the people closer together, for now Mass was said every morning in the living room of the Sister house, and the children were being well instructed in their religion along with the various other educational subjects that were required. The Rt. Reverend Bishop Maes and Father Blenke donated lots to the church, which were exchanged for lots of the Syndicate, located next to Mrs. Morelli's property. There the corner foundation Stone was solemnly placed by Rt. Reverend Bishop C. P. Maes, on May 20, 1900, in presence of a large Catholic congregation from the 3 surrounding cities and greatly enhanced by the glittering Knights of St. John and Knights of St. Edward. One year later Sunday May 19, 1901, Rt. Rev. Bishop C. P. Maes dedicated the new building. The Church cost \$10,200 dollars besides the furnishing inside which cost several thousand more but inside of 2 years with God's blessing they paid off over \$8,000.00. The new building was to serve a threefold purpose: A Church auditorium, upstairs and the classrooms and living apartments for the Sisters downstairs.

In 1904 Rev. B. J. Kolbe upon the demise of Mrs. M Morelli in the fall of 1903 and the subsequent sale of her property which was close to the church property decided with the consent of the Rt. Reverend Bishop C. P. Maes Bishop of Covington to purchase said property which he did in June of 1904 for \$2, 857.00. This became the new Pastoral Residence and on September 1904 Father B. J. Kolbe resigned as the pastor of the missions and moved to Erlanger as the new full time Pastoral Resident and as Pastor of the Henry's Congregation. No missions in his charge.

Father Kolbe administered his parish until 1916 when he was called to assume the pastorate of Saint Stephen Church, Newport. It was on July 7, 1916 that Father George C. Bealer was made pastor of Saint Henry Church. He found affairs in excellent condition with some \$443.19 in the treasury.

Father George C. Bealer at once started making improvements with a bathroom for the Sisters costing \$680.00. Four lots on Lexington and Garvey Ave were purchased at the cost of \$2,000.00. Mr. George Lubrecht and Mr. George Rippey were members of the St. Henry Building Committee and they and the Diocesan Building Committee decided the Church needed repairs to the walls and ceiling so they were strengthened by channel beams making everything safe. The pastor in July 1921 began the construction of the Sister House cost \$11,000.00. Improvements were also made to the schoolrooms and cost the congregation \$15, 575.00.

On April 27, 1933 Father George C. Bealer died and on May 14, 1933 Reverend Edmond Corby undertook the direction of St. Henry's Church

Father Corby found it necessary, in September 1933 to increase the two room school building to four rooms.

Knowing the desire of the late Father George C. Bealer and also realizing the need, Father Corby set about the erection of a new church. The making of the plans was placed in the hands of Mr. H. H. Heastand of Eaton, Ohio and Mr. Howard McClorey of Ft. Mitchell, KY. These plans were completed in January, 1934; work was begun on the new building September 9, 1935 with Carl and Beiting as contractors.

On November 3, 1935, the cornerstone of the new church, which lies north of the pastor residence and faced Dixie Highway, was laid by the Most Reverend F. W. Howard, Bishop of Covington and on Sunday May 17, 1936, the new building was dedicated by the Most Reverend Bishop Howard.

In August 1936 alterations were begun in the old church to turn it into classrooms as the school's' new high school. What had begun with one grade in 1933 had in 1936 increased to a four year high school. The first graduation was held in June 1937. Starting with the year 1899 the Benedictine Sister had served Saint Henry's parish through the medium of their activities among the school children.

In 1938 Reverend A. J. Muench was appointed as administrator of St. Henry's Church because Father Edmond Corby resigned. Reverend Muench had served as assistant pastor since 1935.

On May 15, 1939, the Reverend Herbert J. Egbring was installed as pastor of St. Henry's Church.

On Sunday June 2, 1940 the Golden Jubilee of St. Henry's Church was celebrated. The Most Reverend Bishop Francis William Howard on this occasion in the evening conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation upon one hundred thirty of Saint Henry's school children and upon eighteen of its adult members. At this time from a tiny mission of some ten or twelve families, the congregation had grown and expanded until it boost of three hundred twenty-five families and a school enrollment of four hundred pupils. Celebrating with the congregation was one of the very first Benedictine nun's who first came to the parish in 1899. We speak of Sister Josephine.

In 1949 the new school building with gymnasium was started.

In 1956 the addition to the Sister's house was started. 25 Benedictine nuns were on staff at the elementary and high school of St. Henry's Church and School.

In 1964 Monsignor John Elsaesser became pastor of St. Henry's Church.

1964 the deteriorating old church building that was the high school was razed. Also the old school that served as grades 1 thru 5 until 1949 and then served as a utility building was razed and the Middle School building was built.

In 1967 a beautiful new high school was built on the land where the 1901 Church once stood. All of this was done under the administration of Monsignor Elsaesser because of the growing population to the suburbs of Erlanger, Ky.

In 1981, Father John W. Goeke succeeded Monsignor Elsaesser as pastor. Father Goeke oversaw a renovation of the church in 1984-1985 that changed the sanctuary while a restroom and sacristy were added in the back of the church. Also during the 1984-1985 school years, the high school became a district school and was no longer a parish high school.

In 1990 Father John W. Goeke was succeeded by Father Robert Wehage as pastor of Saint Henry's Church. In October of that year the church celebrated its 100th year anniversary and marked the occasion by building Centennial Commons, the gathering area outside the front of church that includes a marble statue of St. Henry.

In 1998, St. Henry District High School moved from the parish property to its new location on Donaldson Road. This move made room for St. Henry elementary classrooms and converted classrooms into parish offices and expanding into the high school building.

In 1999, Father James Ryan succeeded Father Wehage as pastor of St. Henry's Church.

In 2011-2002 the school complex was made more accessible to persons with physical disabilities by the addition of an elevator in the old high school building and a bridge to connect the two school buildings together. The Gymnasium building now houses the Kindergarten and offices for the Parrish and Wehage Hall which accommodates many parish activities.

IN 2003 the parish greeted the arrival of Father George Reddy Syamala from the Diocese of Nalgonda, India to serve as parochial vicar at St. Henry.

On Sunday July 11, 2004, the Most Reverend Roger J. Foys D.D. , Bishop of Covington rededicated major improvements to St. Henry's Church after a capital campaign that raised pledges of \$200,000.00. A few of the improvements were a new statue of St. Henry, new shrines and refinished statues of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Mother and the interior of the church painted in a new and brighter design.

IN 2005 a lightening strike destroyed the phone system and the church bell system both were replaced that year. August 28, 2005 saw the dedication of the Father Tony Deye Garden Project with the blessing of a stone marker.

In 2006 the church organ had to be replaced. Within a few months the parish raised over \$50,000.00 to buy a new Allen Q-260 model organ that was installed in time for Easter.

In 2007-2008 The Parish held a farewell Mass and dinner for Father George Reddy Syamala who was returning to India. Father Niby Kannai CMI native of Kerala, India and member of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate arrived on September 25, 2008 to begin his assignment at St. Henry's Church. Also New exterior steps and railing were installed at the front and side entrances of the church.

2009-2010 Phil Gessner retired from St. Henry Grade School after 28 years of service as its principal. The building of the former Elsmere Marina was acquired by the parish and was demolished at the end of 2010. Martha Schmeing was named "Teacher of the Year" by the Diocese of Covington. She taught 50 years at St. Henry's School.

2011 The parish hired Mr. Matt Fritz as business manager to oversee finances of the parish. In anticipation of the 125th Anniversary a capital campaign was held. Pledges will be paid over a period of 3 years.

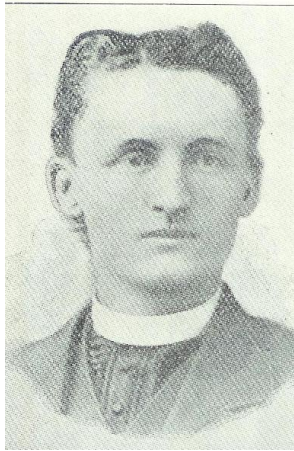
2012 Projects in anticipation of the 125th Anniversary are starting. Two of the larger items were the original bell system and the stained glass windows. Both were completed this year. New flooring was installed in the vestibules and restroom and tuck pointing and roofing work was completed.

2013 Several improvements to the Rectory were accomplished in 2013. Also landscaping of the campus was done. New trees were planted along the Dixie Highway and many new plants/shrubs were planted. Most of this work was done by an army of volunteers. New parish signs were built-One in front of the rectory and one on the corner of Garvey and Dixie that is an electronic sign.

2014-2015 More than \$400,000 through pledges were raised and expended, not including the value of hundreds of hours of stewardship through voluntary labor and in kind contributions. So many improvements were made to the Church, School, Grounds and Rectory. There were

windows, flooring, doors, vestibule, lighting, carpeting, restrooms, new technology, window treatment, cafeteria tables, sidewalks and steps and landscaping. We are so proud of the parishioners that participated and spent many hours making our Parish beautiful!!! What an accomplishment to pass on to the next generation of parishioners just as our ancestors passed on to us. In 2014 Reverend Gregory Back became the Parochial Vicar of St. Henry's Church.

Ten Pastors have Served St. Henry's Church
1890-2015



Rev. William Gorey
1890-1891



Rev. B. J. Kolbe
1891-1916



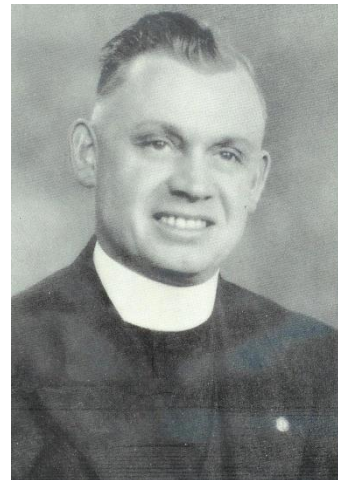
Rev. Bealer
1916-1933



Rev. Edmond Corby
1933-1938



Rev. A. J. Muench
1938-1939

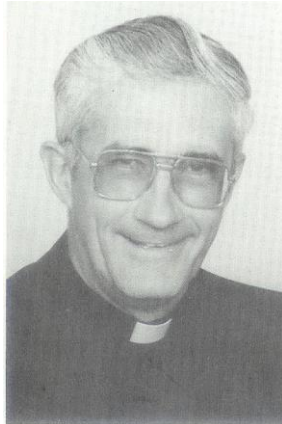


Rev. Herbert J. Egbring
1939-1964

Ten Pastors have Served St. Henry's Church
1890-2015



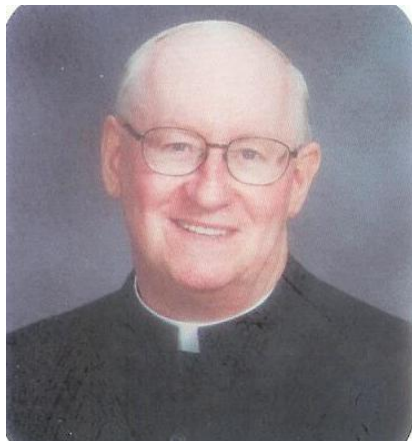
Monsignor Elsaesser
1964-1981



Rev. John Goeke
1981-1990



Rev. Robert Wehage
1990-1999



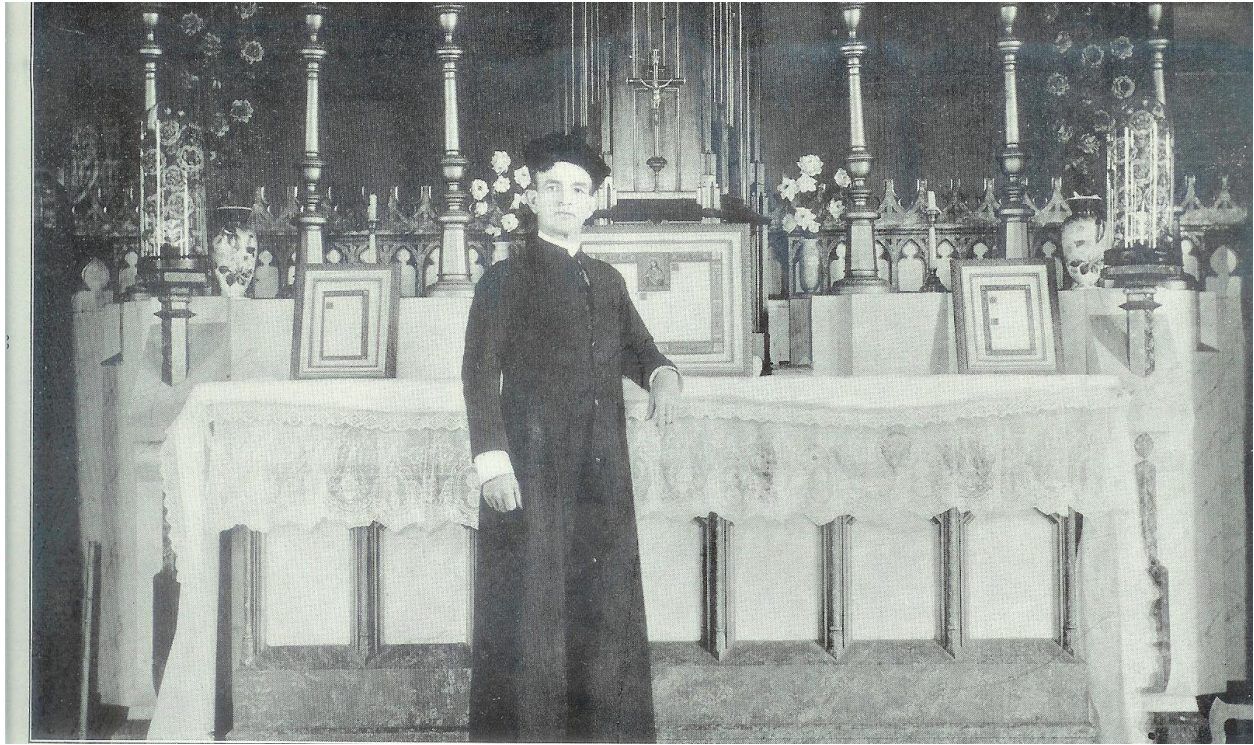
Rev James Ryan
1999- 2015



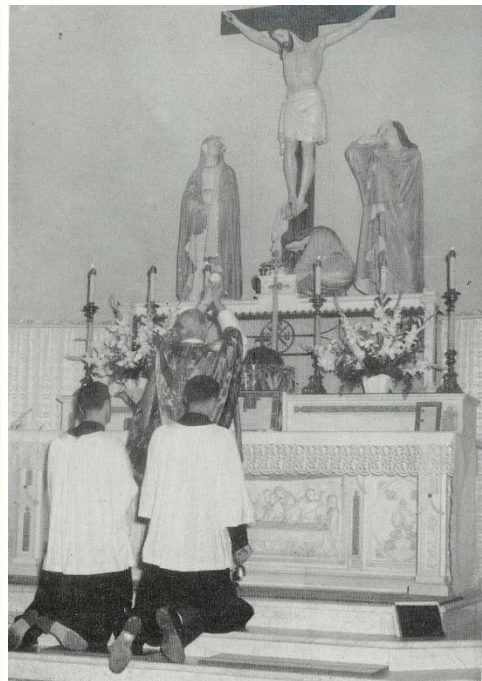
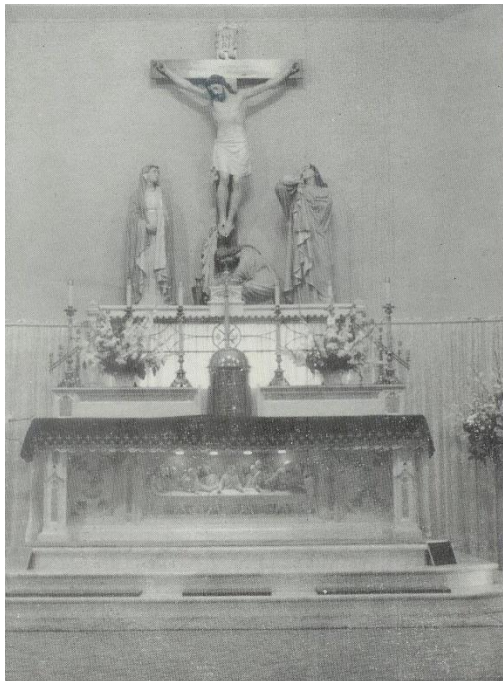
Rev. Gregory Bach
2015

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings

The Alter from the church build in 1901 Father Kolbe



Alter from Church built in 1936



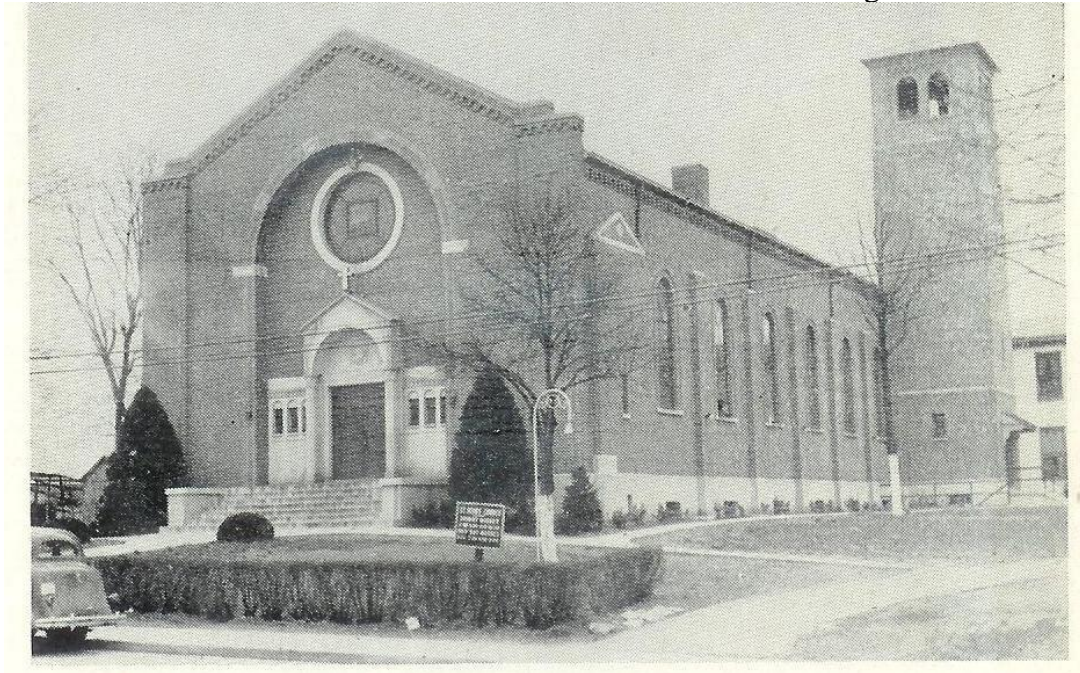
Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings
Alter 2015



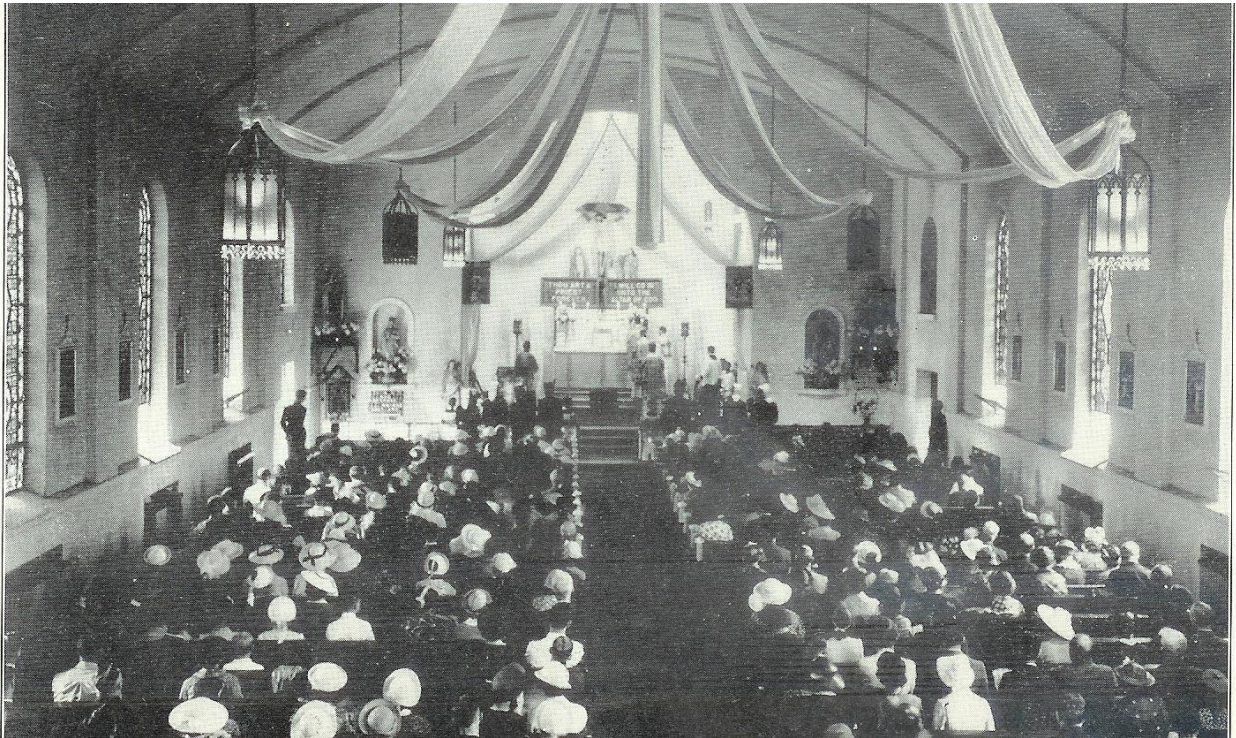
1st church burned down in 1899 no photos are known to exist
This is the Church Built in 1901



Photos of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings
This is the Church that was built in 1936 and still standing 2015

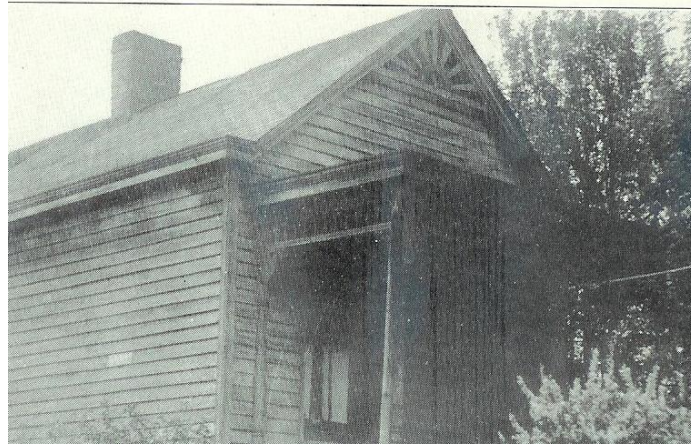


Interior of the Church in 1936

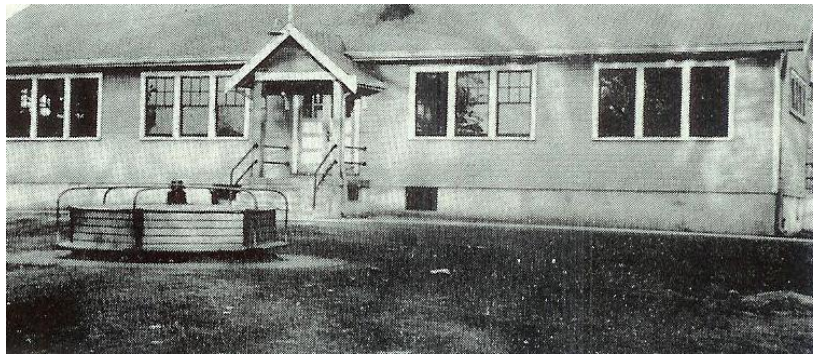


Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings

School Buildings



1st School building 1899 at Garvey and Shaw, this home still stands in 2015



This was the original School Building on the property. In the 1930's and 40's it served as grades 1 through 5. After the Gymnasium Building was built in 1949 it was used as a utility building. It was razed in 1964 to make room for the new Middle school building.



1949 the school and gymnasium was built



In 1964 this middle school building was built. The old school building which was listed as a utility building was razed.



This building was the 1901 church that faced Garvey Ave. It was used as a middle school and high school starting in 1936. It was razed in 1967 and the new high school was built on the lot. The old Sister house appears next door on this photo.

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings



In 1967 this building was built as the St. Henry High School. In 1998 St. Henry High School moved from the parish property to its new location on Donaldson Road. The elementary school in 2015 uses the building for class rooms



1954 Sister Pauline and Sister Damien registering James Crowell family and Mrs. Kermit Stansel's granddaughter for school.

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings

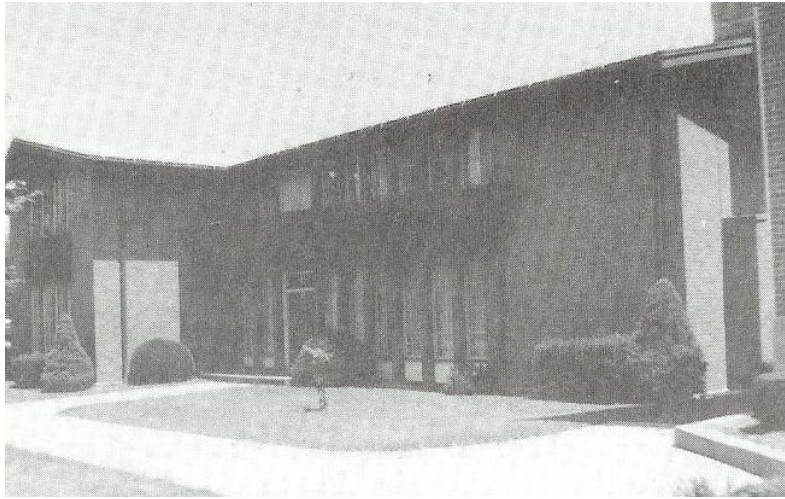


Mr & Mrs. Geo Kremer and Mrs. Bodling and daughters entering church 1950's



In 1904 Rev. B. J. Kolbe upon the demise of Mrs. M Morelli in the fall of 1903 and the subsequent sale of her property which was close to the church property decided with the consent of the Rt. Reverend Bishop C. P. Maes Bishop of Covington to purchase said property which he did in June of 1904 for \$2, 857.00. This became the Priest Home.

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings



Priest Residence 2000



SISTER'S RESIDENCE
Sister's Residence before addition



1890-2015

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings



Banner's Made by Deacon Jack Alexander and the sewing committee
For the 125th Anniversary year.



Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings



Front entrance to St. Henry's Church 2015



125th opening Mass Bishop Foy celebrant of Mass to dedicate all the repairs to the church
Deacon Jack, Father Back, Bishop Foy, Father Ryan
Mass Servers, Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings



Father Back and Father Ryan at the Church entrance 2015



Blessed Mother Statue



St. Joseph Statue

Photo's of the Interior of the Church and the Exterior Buildings

St. Henry Quasquicentennial Quilters

Lower left clockwise

Nancy Soper, Peggy McNight, Kathy Voelker, Esther Legeman, Nancy Cooper , Bonnie Dusing, Roseanne Sutter, Marcia Felle and not pictured Evelyn Schulte



1st Pastor W. E. Gorey-All Pastors names are embroidered on the quilt



Quilt design

125 Anniversary - Senior Luncheon - St. Henry Church.

April 19, 2015

The parish celebrated its seniors. It is because of them that we are the parish we are today. They shared stories, laughs, played a trivia game, had a delicious lunch with dessert, and continue being a vital part of our parish. Thank you ,we had a great time!



Check in



Father Ryan



Jeff Grayson, MC for the day
Charlotte Flynn & Edna Riehman



Betty Dusing 94 years
old. Pat and Paul Hahn



Esther Lageman & Margaret
Wood both over 90 years old



Fried Chicken Dinner



Saint Henry Staff in 2015

Pastoral Team

[Rev. James Ryan](#) (Pastor) (859) 342-2541

[Rev. Gregory Bach](#) (Parochial Vicar) (859) 342-2555

[Rev. Jack Alexander](#) (Deacon) (859) 342-2540

Office Staff

[Michelle Braun](#) (Secretary) (859) 727-2035

[Matt Fritz](#) (Parish Business Manager) (859) 342-2543

[Kris Staverman](#) (Bulletin Editor) 859-727-2035

Maintenance

[Steve Montgomery](#) (Maintenance Director) (859) 342-2540

School

[Sue Greis](#) (Principal) (859) 342-2551

CCD

[Laura Ryan](#) (CCD Coordinator) (859) 342-2540

Youth Ministry

[Sharon Brown](#) (Middle School Youth Minister) (859) 342-2540

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Margaret Hamblin (859) 817-1315

Pat Pope (859) 342-8080

Music Ministry

[Barbara Barczak](#) (Music Minister) (859) 356-3262

Prayer Line

[Jane Aitcheson](#) (859) 647-6440

Parish Committee Chair Persons

[Gary Meyer](#) (Parish Council) (859) 342-2540

[Ryan Bihl](#) (Finance Council) (859) 342-2540

Elizabeth Barker (Education Commission) (859) 342-2540

[Jeff Grayson](#) (Parish 125 Jubilee Committee) (859) 250-2588