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CHRISTMAS MASS AT DANVILLE, OHIO, 1846 IN A LETTER OF FATHER JOHN BAPTIST LAMY

[Editor's note: In a letter of January, 1847, to Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati Father John Lamy gives a short account of Christmas at St. Luke's, Danville. The entire letter is published here through the courtesy of the Archives of the University of Notre Dame which has the original.]

Danville 1st January 1847

Right Rev. Bishop

Had I received your letter four days sooner I would have wished you la bonne annee in time, but though it be some late now, yet I cannot dispense myself from wishing the most happy new year to you and good health, prosperity in your temporal and spiritual affairs, an increase of our holy religion in this part of our Lord's vineyard entrusted to your care.

You request that I should send you the number of Baptisms for the three years. I will do it with pleasure and add to it the number of Easter Communions, marriages and deaths.

	1844	1845	1846
Baptisms	38	46	72
Easter Communions	320	400	460
Marriages	8	12	17
Deaths	9	15	21

The weather was very bad this last Christmas and the mud very deep; nevertheless our little church was as crowded as ever. Many pious Catholics came on foot from a distance of 6, 8, 12 miles. I said the first Mass at five in the morning. About one hundred persons approached the holy Communion on that day, most of them at the first Mass. Our poor little church was as well decorated as we were able. For the illumination we had 150 candles burning sperm altar candles.

We have made arrangements to put to our church an addition of 20 f at least of the same width as the church. With God's blessing we will begin early in the Spring. I also have great hopes that the Church of Mt. Vernon will be completed. I dont go to Newark any more. We intend also to have a bell and a little steeple on our church. To encourage the people to help for this addition I have promised to furnish myself a bell of 400#. By this you will see that I have given up the notion of moving from Danville, at least as long as my superiors agree that I should remain here.

I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you sometime this year. Permit me to renew my gratitude to you and to your Brother for your kindness to me.

Your most devoted Child in C.J.
JOHN LAMY

My father died on the 7th of September. They urge me very much to go to France, but I have no desire of going. Will you be so kind as to pray for the repose of his soul?

THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S PARISH
MINERTON, VINTON COUNTY, OHIO
(Continued)

"My Life at St. Mary's, December, 1915, to July, 1921"
By Beatrice Oden

December 10, 1915, was the first time that I had heard of Saint Mary's. It was a day of new life for me. Reverend Father Goldschmidt, chaplain at St. Vincent's orphanage, Columbus, was the good angel who had a say in my going there to live. Why I was the one chosen to go to St. Mary's to be companion to the housekeeper has amazed me many times, and needless to say, has caused tears to come when I think of what St. Mary's meant to me during the years I lived there. Many years have passed since I walked through the gate with the pastor, Rev. John P. Vonville.

It was a very cold day and snow covered the hills and valleys. My thin coat did not keep the cold wind from whipping my small body, and I was glad to see the sheltering house ahead. We had to pass a cemetery before we came to the rectory. The rectory stood between the cemetery and a church. I remember as we came to the cemetery Father asked me if I'd be afraid to live so near to a graveyard. Memory fails me as to my answer to that question; however, later Father told me that it wasn't the dead you had to be afraid of, but the living.

In the days to follow, I learned to love Father and the housekeeper as my own family. O yes, we had a collie dog who was my constant companion. When Father said Mass, Nero was always on the sacristy porch. Father used to laugh and say that Nero wanted to please God too by attending Mass.

St. Mary's had some thirty, or maybe fifty families in 1916. They were all either miners or farmers - none of them very prosperous. So Father had it rather difficult to keep up the church and rectory. The parishioners were a great help with their labor and food stuffs. Then, too, we had a garden which Father tended and we kept roughly around fifty chickens most of the time. We had plenty of eggs and, of course, when meat was scarce we could always have chicken.

I found Father to be a very kind and generous person. He was always trying to help someone. He would make them feel they were doing him a favor, and all the time he was doing it to help them, but he didn't want them to know that. For example, one day he took a pair of shoes down to a man that was out of work. Father had heard that he could repair shoes and he wanted to do something for this man. He took his shoes and asked if he could fix them. Father bought the leather and nails, and gave them to the man, and after the shoes were fixed handed the man a dollar bill. The man protested saying it was only worth fifty cents since Father had the leather and nails. Father smiled and said, "You did me a favor by fixing them." This story came to me last year from a resident of Minerton who had been this man's wife. This lady and I are good friends as we have wonderful memories of years gone by when I used to stop in her home and eat a slice of bread and jelly on my way home from school. Yes, Father helped everyone he could regardless of their religion.

There was the time he sent a child to the hospital to have a much needed operation.

In 1959 I was asked by a business man here in Newark if I was any relative of Father Vonville who used to be the pastor in Johnstown. On hearing my answer, Mr. Moore said that as a child he knew Father and that everyone liked him because there was never anything too difficult for Father to do for the people he knew needed help. Mr. Moore proceeded to tell me how Father used to step in between the Protestant and Catholic boys who were in the habit of fighting on their way home from school. He said if the Catholics were wrong Father would punish them, and if he thought the other boys were wrong their parents would hear of it.

This is not the only story I've heard about Father Vonville when he was in Johnstown. Through my work I've met other people who knew and still remembered him. It is good to hear these stories. Father is gone, but in the hearts of his people he lives on. One said: "Yes, he died poor in money, but rich in friends."

Well, I must get back to St. Mary's and the years that Father spent as the pastor there. During the winter it was very disagreeable for all of us. We had no way of going anywhere except by walking. We had to walk a mile and a half to get our mail and to the store. I walked two and a half miles to school. Sometimes out coal pile got very low and we had to conserve to the point where there were times we were very uncomfortable from the cold.

During my second year there our organist got married, so Father wanted me to learn to play the organ. I took my lessons on a piano at the Atkinson's home down by the railroad station. Mr. Atkinson was our station agent. At night I would practice on the organ in the church. I would take a lantern and go to the choir loft alone and would practice until my fingers could take no more cold. The light from the vigil light would throw a red glow about the church, and the lantern would cast shadows on the walls. Sometimes I would grow afraid up there alone and my feet would fly down the steps and out into the cold. Father and the housekeeper knew when I was afraid, but they never chided me. This was one place Nero was not allowed to follow.

No, we didn't have it easy as some may think. Sometimes Susie didn't get her pay for weeks, and I remember the time Father went with holes in his shoes so he could afford to buy me a pair. He tried to hide this from me, but one night I took his shoes off for him and I saw the hole in the sole when I layed them down. The next day I asked Susie why he didn't buy himself a pair of shoes, and she told me he didn't have the price. Yet the next week I had a new pair of shoes when he came from Wellston.

Father kept the rectory and church expenses going by singing at big affairs in Columbus and elsewhere. He was a very good singer and often was called to sing at Forty Hours"devotions and other big events. His travels left Susie and me alone a good bit of the time. Susie and I had some very scary times up there alone. One time a group of gypsies came through Minerton. We were so frightened that after I brought the news home from school, we closed all the window shutters and wouldn't let Nero out of the house, and had only one light lit when darkness came. To me, shutting the house up was more fearful than if we had left it wide open, as Father had always done when the gypsies were around. He always said: "Pray and watch them, but be kind."

Winter evenings were always spent in Father's office where there was a big pot-bellied stove that used to get red from the fire: Father saying his Office -

Susie sewing or reading - and I studying my lessons. At about 8:30 Susie and I were off to bed after kneeling down with Father to say our prayers. But first, either Father and I, or Susie and I would visit the church to see that everything was alright.

Yes, our life was a hard life, but a beautiful one. In the evenings at six o'clock the bells of St. Mary's rang the Angelus and they were heard for miles as the church was on a hill and the tower was high so that it sent the beautiful sound across the hills to the people as they stopped their work to pray. These bells had the most beautiful tone, and we all welcomed the hour of six o'clock. While Father rang the bells Susie and I would stand together and say the Angelus. And we knew everyone for miles around was doing the same.

As I have stated, winter was hard and difficult, but the first crocus in the spring would bring a thrill to our hearts. We knew that before too many weeks we would live in a paradise of flowers. The yard around the church we loved so much would be closed in by a fence of roses, and the air would be filled with the fragrance of roses, lilacs and irises. The cemetery would be sprinkled with flowers of all descriptions. Yes, we welcomed the spring; and then summer was not far off. When Father was not away or busy in the garden, we could see him walking the length of the yard with a rosary or his breviary in his hand. Usually in the late afternoon, Father and I would walk down to the store where Mr. Ed Lawler and Mr. Fitzpatrick would be so kind as to give Father his usual cigar to smoke on the way back, and me some candy. There were times they gave us groceries free because they knew Father had little money. These men and their wives have both gone to their reward, but each time I visit Minerton and pass where their store and the Lawler home stood, I think of them and from my heart thanks goes out to them.

On summer evenings after our work was done, we would gather on the front porch with Father. With Nero close by, I would listen to Father's voice as he told me of Africa where he had been a missionary for seven years prior to coming to America. He would tell me of the visits he made to the lepers, how he dressed their sores, of the little boys who helped him about his hut and the church, of the school in which he taught, how some of the Christian boys would go out in the jungle and bring some of the natives back to school with them. Some natives were easier to convince than others: some stayed for school, others, disgusted, would run back into the jungle.

As we sat there on the porch we often heard a horse and wagon come down the road. There would be a cheerful "hello" from each to the other. At this time it was usually one of the Lawlers or Fitzpatricks going to their brother up the hill about a mile. Then, too, it often was Johnny himself coming to pay us a visit, to see if Father needed anything. Johnny and his sister, Ella, lived closest to us.

Summer was especially nice when Father Max (1) came to visit us from Columbus. Father Max would tease and torment Susie and me, but we loved it. Then one summer we had Father Meade and the nuns from Wellston out for a day's outing in our wilderness. We had very few visitors, but when they did some we would do our best to show them a good time.

During the five years I was a resident in St. Mary's rectory and Father's charge, I remember only three times disobeying him. Perhaps if he were living he could think of more times, but these three times stick very tight in my mind, as I was hurt by each of them. One day before Father left on a trip he told me not to go over "Sartin's Tipple" as we were wont to do to save one-fourth mile to the store. This tipple was 80 feet high and extended from the mouth of the mine and over the creek to the railway. The length slips my mind. It only had three twelve-inch boards as a walk, and one two-by-four for a hand rail. This was the first time Father had ever told me not to go over the tipple. Soon after he left, we found out that we were nearly out of lamp oil and this necessitated my going to the store. It started to sprinkle rain, and loaded with an umbrella, oil can, and with Nero at my side, I started off. I've always been afraid of storms and this promised to be one. As I had made many trips across the tipple, it beckoned me on, telling me I'd be home much sooner if I went and came back that way. The trip over was as usual. However, on my way back I had just crossed over the creek when I looked down and saw two boys fishing. They yelled at me and I called back. When I came to, I was not on the cat walk but between the rails, my head hanging over one tie and my feet over the other. My body hung between. Nero was on the cat walk, the umbrella several feet ahead caught between the ties, the oil can had fallen 80 feet below. How I ever got up from my perilous perch only God knows. I guess I crawled to the cat walk. I had to go forward, though it was the longest way. Fear of the water beneath made me go on over dry land. My body shook like the leaves on the trees all the way home. As I reached the porch, Susie ran to me and the story flowed from my pale lips. Susie told me that Father had a feeling that something was going to happen. Then she said: "For your punishment you are going to have to tell him what happened." Well, it was a hard story to tell, but Father didn't scold - he just said, "Thank God," and for me never to cross the tipple again under any circumstances.

The other time was on a Sunday before Mass. The people were gathering in the churchyard talking. A girl friend came to the rectory to see me. We went out into the yard and started to swing. The rope had been up for three years and, needless to say, I had been warned by Father not to swing high as it appeared to be fraying on the limb of the tree where it was tied. The altar boys were watching us swing - guess we were trying to be smart. Bea pushed me high enough so she could go under. Well, I came down on my back and was knocked out for a long, long time. That day we were to go to dinner at Jerry Ring's; however, I had to stay at the Lawler's where I remained propped up in a chair with pillows until Father stopped for me that evening.

Once more I disobeyed, this time years later. But that's another story, and had nothing to do with St. Mary's. But I suffered for not listening to Father, and paid a very dear price.

(1) "Father Max" was probably Father Max J. Philipp, professor at the Josephinum Seminary in Columbus.

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(The history of St. Mary's, Minerton, will be continued in our next issue with the recording of the tombstone inscriptions in the abandoned cemetery.)

ST. ALOYSIUS YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY
HOLY CROSS CHURCH, COLUMBUS, OHIO
(Continued)

Minutes of Meetings

January 8, 1853

The following officers were elected: Franz Engler, President; Christian Wittman, Vice President; Peter Hinderschied, Secretary; Joseph Engler, Treasurer.

Death notice committee: Joseph Ender, Johan Strichfat, Adam Getreu.

Committee to examine the Society's books: Christian Wittman, Franz Engler and Anton Ruhl.

Collectors for the past year are retired, namely: C. Wittman, C. Borghard and J. Mittelholz.

Resolved to pay the cost of upholstery on the pulpit.

Signed: George A. Lang, Secretary.

February 13, 1853

Finance committee report for 1851: Income, \$192.29; expenses, \$170.00; balance, \$22.29

Committee to collect free will contributions from the young men of the parish were named: George Lang, John Richter and Joseph Engler.

Signed: Peter Hinterschitt, Secretary.

March 13, 1853

Committee to collect free will donations reported as follows: Johann Richter, \$19 $\frac{1}{2}$; Joseph Engler, \$9.00; George Lang, \$2.00.

It was resolved that this committee have two more months to complete this collection.

Signed: Peter Hinterschitt, Secretary.

May 8, 1853

Dues collected at this meeting were \$3.86 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Resolved to pay for the painting of the pulpit.

Collection of free will donations as follows: G. Lang, \$1.50; J. Richter, \$14.75; J. Engler, \$2.50.

Signed: Peter Hinterschitt, Secretary.

June 12, 1853

Dues collected at this meeting, \$3.87 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Collection of free will donations amounted to \$10.75, and the committee was given a vote of thanks for their efforts.

Resolved to pay from the money at hand in the treasury to Michael Hoermann and J. Mittelholz [for the pulpit - M. Hoermann was a carpenter and cabinet maker.]

Signed: Peter Hinterschitt, Secretary.

July 10, 1853

Resolved to appoint a committee of three to collect free will donations from the young men of this parish. Committee members are Christian Wittmann, Karl Woelfel and Beda Baumgard.

August 14, 1853

Beda Baumgard turned in \$6.80 collected from the young men.

September 11, 1853

Beda Baumgard turned in \$1.00

October 9, 1853

The collectors committee turned in \$5.00 and received a vote of thanks.

December 11, 1853

Election of officers was held. Officers elected were: George Lang, President; John Lei, Vice President; B. Baumgard, Secretary; Joseph Engler, Treasurer.

As committee to examine the books (Treasurer and secretary books) the following were selected: J. Lei, J. Endter and A. Voll.

As committee to take care of unfinished business the following were named: J. Schuhmacher, J. Strickfaden and J. Endter.

Committee to return the Crucifix borrowed from the Rev. Pastor was Baumgard, Lang and Voll.

Signed: Peter Hinterschitt, Secretary.

January 8, 1854

Report of the committee to examine the treasurer's books for 1853: Income, \$143.09; expenses, \$106.62; balance, \$36.47.

Report on the secretary's books: Income, \$122.96. Total of secretary and treasurer, \$216.00; expenses, \$132.64.

Signed: A. Voll, Joseph Ender and John Lay, committee.

Motion was made by George Lang to lend \$20.00 to V. Burkle to pay a debt, the money to be paid to the secretary. Motion carried.

Signed: Beda Baumgard, Secretary.

September 18, 1854

Committee of six to make preparations for a supper was chosen as follows: J. Engler, G. Lang, P. Yahn, Steven Kele, A. Voll and A. Getreider.

December 9, 1854

Monthly dues were raised from $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents to 15 cents a month.

December 10, 1854

Election of officers was held for 1855. Officers elected were: G. Lang, President; P. Hindershit, Vice President; Joseph Engler, Secretary; Peter Yahn, Cashier. Finance committee: B. Baumgard, J. Ender and Jacob Studer.

Motion made and carried to raise to 25 cents the fine for missing a meeting without excuse.

Signed: B. Baumgard, Secretary.

Report of examiners committee, income for 1854: Monthly dues, \$60.61; balance from 1853, \$36.47; profit from supper, \$63.28; total, \$160.36. Expenses, \$135.08; balance, \$25.28.

Committee members: A. Voll, S. Kaelli, Conrad Smith.

January 14, 1855

Motion was made by George Lang to acquire the books (records) of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Men's and Young Men's Society. Seconded by Peter Hinderschit, and carried.

Signed: Joseph Engler, Secretary.

January 28, 1855

Report of the committee: Today Sunday afternoon the St. Stanislaus Kostka Men's and Young Men's Society met in extraordinary meeting. The Society met in the school building and around two-thirds of the members were present. In the absence of the President, it was moved by Joseph Engler that George Lang act as President pro tempore. Motion carried. The President pro tem. proposed that the library of the St. Stanislaus Society be turned over to the St. Aloysius Society. Anton Voll moved that the library with the Secretary's and Treasurer's books and the funds of the St. Stanislaus Society be given to the St. Aloysius Society.

Motion was carried 1) that the books and the money be turned over; 2) that a committee of three would examine and turn over the books; 3) that the committee be George Lang, Joseph Engler and Peter Yahn; 4) that this committee report to the St. Aloysius Society; 5) that the St. Stanislaus Society will no longer meet and will be abolished.

Singed by the committee: George Lang, Peter Yahn, Joseph Engler, Secretary.

February 11, 1855

Report on the St. Stanislaus Kostka Men's and Young Men's Society books.

Resolved 1) that the report be entered in the secretary's book; 2) that the members of the St. Aloysius Society have the right to borrow these books from their library; 3) that Beda Baumgard have the office of Second Secretary and take care of the books; 4) that the St. Aloysius Young Men's Society pay the outstanding debts of the former St. Stanislaus Kostka Men's and Young Men's Society.

Signed: Beda Baumgard, Secretary pro tempore.

March 11, 1855

St. Aloysius Society met today. Dues collected at meeting were \$10.21.

Anton Voll moved that the money in the Society's treasury be loaned to the Pastor at six per cent interest. Motion carried.

Peter Hinterschitt moved that honorary members be admitted to the Society for \$2.00 a year, one dollar be paid immediately, and one dollar within six months. Motion carried.

Signed: Joseph Engler, Secretary.

May 13, 1855

Election of a new treasurer was held. Anton Voll was elected. Three members were chosen to examine the books as follows: Theodore Borgess, Joseph Ender and Peter Hinterschitt.

Signed: Joseph Engler, Secretary.

July 8, 1855

Resolved that new members be admitted only on a vote of two thirds majority of the members, This will be part of the Constitution.

Signed: Joseph Engler, Secretary.

(Note: This concludes excerpts from the book of minutes of the St. Aloysius Young Men's Society of Holy Cross Church, Columbus, 1847-1864.)

THE BULLETIN WISHES ALL ITS READERS A HOLY AND JOYFUL CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH BLESSINGS.