



Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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THE EARLIEST CATHOLIC SETTLEMENTS IN OHIO A SURVEY

How historians reflect the spirit of their times! In the search for background material for this article, three statements regarding Catholic settlers and the early organization of parishes were found. They were written over a span of about twelve decades; all address essentially the same subject; each provides some valuable insights; but the progressive change in attitude is stark, from very strict to abstractly non-judgemental to easily forgiving.

Rev. Peter H. Lemcke in his 1861 biography of Rev. Demetrius A. Gallitzin wrote:

By the time the scattered Catholics began to band themselves in congregations, they had all but lost their Catholic spirit through their intimate association with the sects and regarded themselves as only another sect among them. When Catholic congregations were organized, it usually was under the auspices of the people, the correct Catholic way being out of the question because of the universal lack of resident priests to undertake and direct the matter.

This statement is severe. However, Rev. Lemcke's regard for the "correct Catholic way" of parish organization under the auspices of priest or bishop points out to us one half of the formula which was necessary for the success of parish organizations in Ohio. The experience of the Church in this state, to be presented here, indicates that the successful organizational attempts were those promoted by the clergy and at the same time strongly supported by the laity. Those attempted solely by the laity were, generally, of short life, while those attempted by the clergy without the support of the laity never got "off the ground."

Sixty years later, in his History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Rev. John Lamott provided this helpful overview:

If we were to generalize on the method which was followed in starting new congregations, we should say that in the beginning the missionaries went out seeking the "lost sheep". Catholics had settled in various parts of the state of Ohio, but for want of ministers had lost the faith or were unable to practise it. These were then renewed in the faith and parishes organized to be served on an occasional visit of a priest. With the opening of better

roads, canals, and railroads German and Irish immigrants flocked to Ohio, settling generally along the new thoroughfares. Here they were visited by a priest who lived in the neighborhood, Mass was celebrated in a private house, the visits became more frequent, definite Sundays of the month were determined as days when the priest would come, the number of Catholics increased, and finally a parish church was built, to be served first as a mission and then as a parish by a resident priest.

This dispassionate statement, while assuming that congregations could not be or were not ever "organized" by the laity, points out one important fact: that the lack of priests allowed many to lose their faith. The survey to be presented here is based for the most part on the histories of settlements which eventually became parishes, where the faith was not lost, but even on this basis this point brought out by Rev. Lamott can be illustrated.

Lastly, some sixty years after Lamott's work comes that of Rev. William A. Jurgens, A History of the Diocese of Cleveland:

A common and in some respects justified though perhaps in other ways rather shortsighted complaint of the early missionaries was that settlers would strike off into the wilderness with no thought of how or when they would next be able to receive any of the formal consolations of religion. It is, nevertheless, of such an adventuresome spirit that our country was born. Many, it is true, lost the faith; or perhaps they never really had it; for the hardy and deserving souls whose religion was somewhat more to them than a convenient formality kept their faith and even strengthened it in spite of every obstacle.

The frontiers were rough and tumble places; and life was often cheap... The frontiersmen were of a rough type and hard on prosperity; but no one was ever more gentle than they with the afflicted and downtrodden.

Some who "kept their faith and even strengthened it in spite of every obstacle" may have existed, but it is a very difficult situation to illustrate. Those who kept their faith asked for the presence of the Church: for full participation in its sacrifice and worship, for blessing of their marriages, for full communion for their children, for forgiveness of their sins, for help on their final departure toward their judgement. These the Church was able to provide, though haltingly at first, so that the obstacles to keeping the faith were removed and the sources of its life were renewed through the ministrations of the clergy.

One of the original objectives in making this survey or outline was to learn whether there was any basis for the claim by Rev. L. W. Mulhane, while pastor of Mt. Vernon St. Vincent parish, that Danville St. Luke was the second parish organized in Ohio. This claim was never refuted by Rev. V. F. O'Daniel, O.P., even though O'Daniel was able to point out that there exists no evidence that St. Luke's was the second church building. The question of organization is more nebulous than that of construction or blessing of a church edifice, for the organization of a parish in the early days of settlement, when there would be no resident pastor, is difficult to define.

The purposes of organization in this situation might include insuring that all members were known and could be called together upon arrival of a priest, or for prayers and scripture reading in his absence; commitment of members toward support of the priest; or pooling of resources for the purchase or construction of a church. Of these, the first was probably the most common but, given the scanty historical record, the last is easiest to recognize. An attempt will be made to point out the first "organization" of each group mentioned in the survey and we will return to the Danville question in the conclusion.

Despite the difficulty in fulfilling this objective of finding organizational dates, making the survey has been interesting in itself and it is hoped that presentation of the stories of the various early Catholic settlements in a more-or-less standardized, compact format will be useful to others in making comparisons and drawing conclusions.

Many of the sketches which follow are based on secondary sources, but carefully researched ones. In some instances where these disagreed with each other or were obviously in error, further research was carried out as time permitted. A few instances will be pointed out in which further documentation is needed. The arrangement is by date of first known or claimed settlement of Catholics in each vicinity.

Early 1700's - Forks of the Muskingum

Shortly after the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Iroquois Indian confederation laid claim to the lands at the forks of the Muskingum River in the present Coshocton County, Ohio. When the Shawnee Indians who inhabited the area soon thereafter moved toward the southwest to escape the Iroquois, their place was taken by bands of Indians from the east coast. These had come west from the Maryland - New Jersey - Pennsylvania - Hudson Valley area, where they had been displaced by the settlements of colonists from Europe. They were primarily Delawares, of the Algonquian nation, accompanied by Wyandots and Munseys.

In the east many of these Indians had been taught by the Jesuit missionaries and after coming to the Muskingum Valley they retained their preference for the Catholic religion. In 1747 Col. George Croghan was sent west by the government of Pennsylvania to win their friendship. He erected a trading house at the forks of the Muskingum and came to know the Indians well. In his journal he commented, "They had a particular attachment to the Roman Catholic religion, the French by their priests, having taken uncommon pains to instruct them." Despite the efforts of Pennsylvanians and Virginians to win their friendship, the Indians of the Muskingum valley continued their old friendship with the French and opposed the English settlements, even after the close of the French and Indian War. In October of 1764 Colonel Boquet brought an army west to the forks and overawed the Delaware.

In 1774 Christian F. Post, a missionary of the Moravian church, came to the Delaware and shortly later brought Heckwelder and Zeisberger; their mission, which has too often been given credit for Christianizing the Indians, was abandoned in 1779 due to the hardships caused by the Revolutionary War and to the hostility of the Indians. The Christian Delawares were neutral during

the war, but an expedition of Americans wiped out their villages, massacring many of the inhabitants, in 1780. Most of the remainder migrated west.

During all of the years of their residence at the forks of the Muskingum, there is no clear evidence of any visit to the Delawares there by a priest.

(The first section of "The History of the Catholic Church in Coshocton County" by Sister Monica Kiefer, O.S.D., appeared serially in the first two volumes of the Bulletin. Sister seems to have assumed that any mission to Delaware Indians over a wide area had its impact at the Forks of the Muskingum. A careful check of her sources needs to be made to learn how much of her information really applies here.)

ca 1740's - Maumee and Sandusky Valleys

Catholicism came early to what is now northwestern Ohio; it came not from the south and east but from the north - the French settlements in the present state of Michigan. The French settlement at Detroit was blessed by the presence of a priest, Rev. Armand de la Richardie, from the year 1728 through 1781. He reported by 1736 that all of the Indians at that post were converted; it is supposed that he visited the Sandusky area, but there is no evidence of his presence there. In the year 1794 St. Anthony of Padua Church at Raisin River, south of Detroit, was dedicated. This parish is known to have had a short-lived mission among the Indians near the present city of Maumee, Ohio in the years 1794-1795. Rev. Michael Levadoux, sent by Bishop Carroll, was in charge of the parish in Detroit beginning in 1796; it is known that he came as far south as the Raisin River church, but whether he ventured further south into Ohio is not known.

From 1798 until 1805 Rev. Jean Delhet was in charge of St. Anthony parish, Raisin River, and at last we find some scanty details of the Catholic settlements in Ohio: they were on the Maumee, on the Portage River, on Huron Creek South, on the Sandusky River, and possibly others. We are not told whether these missions were for Indians or French Canadians; one must suspect they were a mixture, largely made up of Indians.

After 1805, there seems to have been no priest closer to northwestern Ohio than the one at Detroit and soon Protestant missionaries entered the area. A Presbyterian mission for the Indians was opened in 1806 but closed at the outbreak of the War of 1812. A Methodist mission was opened in 1818 and lasted until 1823. More French Catholics were moving into the area, however. Three brothers of the prominent Detroit family of Mommini settled at Framont in 1816 and John B. Beaugrand followed them in 1822. This caught the attention of Rev. Gabriel Richard of Detroit, who came south in 1823 to visit and bless the new Beaugrand home. In 1826 Rev. Jean Bellamy dedicated a new church, further south in Michigan and closer to Ohio at Bay Settlement, near Erie, Monroe County, Michigan, just nine miles northwest of Toledo. This new parish included forty families on the Maumee River in Ohio.

Despite the long presence of Catholics in the area, it was not until 1831 that northwestern Ohio had its own pastor, sent to Tiffin by Bishop Fenwick to care for the rapidly increasing numbers of Irish and German settlers. (Among the earliest of these were James Doherty and William Arnold and families, who

settled in the Tiffin area in 1823. The John Julien and John Knott families arrived in 1826.) Most of the Indians seem to have left the Maumee River area in the late 1820's for when Father Machebeuf came to Toledo in 1839 he found only a few families and five or six single men. The faith planted originally by the Jesuits remained, however, no matter how diminished, for Machebeuf offered his first Mass there "in the frame shanty of a Canadian." Pastorates were founded at Sandusky and Toledo in 1841.

(Based largely on various sections of Jurgens' A History of the Diocese of Cleveland.)

1790 - Gallipolis

The settlement at Gallipolis on the Ohio River was intended to provide a refuge for the French Catholic Royalists. Its leader "demanded that the colonists bring letters from their pastors stating that they were people who practice their religion." A bishop was requested for the colony and a priest in fact was provided. With such an auspicious foundation, one would have expected that Gallipolis would have been the first permanent parish organized in Ohio, but its first church was not dedicated until 1858.

In October of 1790 the French settlers reached their new home on the Ohio, to find only a stockade, a few cabins, and Indians and famine. Their pastor, Dom Didier, who arrived in 1791, "was idealistic and impetuous, and tried to get the colonists to practice their religion." After a few months he left for Baltimore to obtain approval of his faculties but he never returned to Gallipolis. He went instead to Missouri, where indeed many of the settlers themselves soon moved.

Visiting priests during the next two decades found "a spark of faith" still at Gallipolis, but no organization was attempted until 1818. In that year a Father LaFont arrived and, finding no Catholic church, made an effort to build one. He failed because of a lack of support by the laity. He ministered to the people there for about two years before leaving for New Orleans. The faith was never completely lost among those of the French settlement who remained, but it was many years before it was shared by enough active believers to form a stable parish. To Bishop Purcell in 1848, "It seemed to us as if it was forsaken of God." Jean Baptiste Betrand catechized the children in the faith and was known as a very religious man. He died in 1854, aged 94 years, the last of the original male settlers.

In 1853 land was purchased and the pastor at Pomeroy soon had erected the church of St. Louis, which was dedicated in 1858. The first resident pastor did not arrive until 1872.

(The Steubenville Register, Nov. 2, 1984, Supplement, page 60; with Lamott's history of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Hartley's history of the Diocese of Columbus.)

1792 - Steubenville

The first Catholic of the Steubenville area who is given a date of settlement is John Rodgers who was born in Ireland and, it is claimed, arrived

in the area in 1792. He owned mills on Cross Creek and was regarded as a man of great ability and enterprise. Other early Catholic names were Tiernan, McGuire, Brady, Butler, and Fanning. A wealthy family named Sullivan who lived across the river in Virginia were also part of the community. It was long remembered that these early Catholics would go to Pittsburgh to receive the sacraments and that the priests of Pittsburgh would occasionally visit the "scattered members of their flock down the Ohio from house to house.... The first of these was Rev. Father O'Brien, and he was succeeded by Rev. Father McGuire." This tradition from the 1880's is quite accurate. Rev. William F. O'Brien started St. Patrick Church in Pittsburgh in 1808 and was stationed there until his retirement in 1820. He was succeeded by Rev. Charles B. Maguire, O.F.M., who remained until he died of cholera in 1833.

About 1830 the Catholics of Steubenville came under the care of the pastor of St. Paul parish, Columbiana County, and this should probably be recognized as the formal organization of the river city mission. In 1832 St. Pius Church was started on a lot donated by a Mr. Ross of Pittsburgh. Bishop Fenwick administered the sacrament of confirmation there in September of that year. St. Pius was attended from Columbiana County until a resident pastor was appointed in 1845.

(The best early account is that in J. A. Caldwell's History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio; Wheeling: The Historical Publishing Co., 1880, page 506. It appears to have been written by the pastor with the help of the older members of the parish.)

(To be continued)

PHOTO IN AUGUST BULLETIN

Monsignor William Kappes, helpful as usual, has identified three of the priests who appeared in the photograph published in the August Bulletin. On the left end of the back row is Rev. Bernard O'Boylan (1851-1928); next to him on the same step is Rev. William Hayes (-1892); between Fathers O'Boylan and Hayes, but down a step, is Rev. Nicholas Pilger (1842-1905). One thing these three priests had in common was that all were pastors at Newark St. Francis parish, Pilger from 1872 until 1874, Hayes from 1885 until 1892, and O'Boylan from 1892 until 1926. That still leaves the church and the other priests to be identified. Thank you, Monsignor, for your help.

LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

The following are recent gifts to the Society's library:

Eis, (Rev.) John B., The Jesuits; Columbus: Columbian Press, 1889
- gift of Patrick Mooney

St. Patrick Parish, Columbus, 1952 centennial book
- gift of Louis Calderone

Cassette audio tapes of the Installation Prayer Service and Mass of Bishop Griffin, March 24 and 25, 1983.
- gift of Rev. Joseph Fete, Office of Liturgy

BAPTISMS IN PIKE AND SOUTHERN ROSS COUNTIES, OHIO
1838-1900
(Concluded from Vol. XII, Number 7)

1878, Nov. 17, Joseph, of Theodore Spetnagel and Caroline Geng, born 22 Oct.; spons. John Meyers and Frances Geng. J. A. Murray (M)

1879, Sept. 28, Peter, of Michael Flannigan and Bridget Crow, born Aug.; spons. Peter Crow and Elizabeth Ridgway. J. A. Murray (M)

1879, June 22, Clara Elizabeth, of Hiram Streitenberger and Yeda Bertzel, born March; spons. James M'Gowan and Margaret Schrow. J. A. Murray (M)

Same, Catherine Theresa, of James M'Gowan and Helen O'Hara, born March; spons. John Streitenberger and Anna Wolf. J. A. Murray (M)

1879, Dec. 21, Oscar, of George Streitenberger and Lena Smith, born 10 Nov.; spons. John A. Streitenberger and Sarah Gerunt. J. B. Murray (M)

1880, May 23, Margaret, of Adam Streitenberger and Rebecca Bland, born 22 Aug. 1879; spons. George and Margaret Streitenberger. J. A. Murray (M)

Same, David, of Charles Streitenberger and Catherine Bland, born 12 Dec., 1879; spons. John Fischer and Helen Huffman. J. A. Murray (M)

Same, Flora, of Adam Streitenberger and Margaret Bland, born 21 Sept. 1879; spons. John and Margaret Streitenberger. J. A. Murray (M)

1880, Feb. 22, Helen, of Charles Patterson and Elizabeth M'Govern, born Feb. 17; spons. Patrick and Julia McGovern. J. B. Murray (M)

1880, Aug. 22, John Michael, of William Flannigan and Elizabeth Ridgway, born 25 June; spons. Michael and Bridget Flannigan. J. A. Murray (M)

Same, Michael Martin, of John Flannigan and Anna Roscoe, born 2 July; spons. Michael Martin and Mary Flannigan. J. A. Murray (M)

1881, Jan. 30, James, of John Hough and Mary Kearney, born Apr. 16, 1880; spons. Abigail King. J. B. Murray (M)

Same, George John, of John A. Streitenberger and Rachel Denewitz, born 20 Nov., 1880; spons. George and Margaret Streitenberger. J. B. Murray (M)

Same, George Ed., of George Meyers and Mary A. Wiley, born 6 Nov. 1880; spons. Jeremiah Murray and Frances Wolfe. J. A. Murray (M)

1881, Dec. 4, Anna, of Adam Streitenberger and Margaret Bland, born 4 Sept.; spons. John and Margaret Streitenberger. J. A. Murray (M)

1882, May 21, John August, of Hyram Streitenberger and Catherine Bissel, born 3 Oct., 1881; spons. John Streitenberger and Catherine Kellersin. J. B. Murray (M)

Same, William Paul, of William Flannigan and Elizabeth Ridgeway, born March; spons. Adam Ridgeway and Hanna Flannigan. J. B. Murray (M)

1882, Oct. 29, John, of John Flannigan and Anna Roscoe, born 19 Aug.; spons. Martin and Margaret Flannigan. J. B. Murray (M)

1885, Mar. 15, Anna, of John Streitenberger and Emma Shackle, born 21 Jan.; spons. Gabriel and Matilda Kneip (?). James J. O'Donohue (M)

1886, May 16, Clara Agnes, of Jerome Streitenberger and Regina Hess, born May 8; spons. John Streitenberger and Catherine Hess. E. Windhorst (P)

1890, Nov. 9, Mary Elizabeth, of Henry Hydell and Elizabeth McGahan, born Oct. 29; spons. Lucy Kennedy. A. D. Dexter (M)

Same, Clarence William, of James McGowan and Helen O'Hara, born July 1; spons. Edward Huite and Anna Myers. A. D. Dexter (M)

1891, Mar. 8, Adeline M., of Jacob Myers and Bertha Douglas, born May 15, 1888; spons. Frank Leferenz and Anna Myers. A. D. Dexter (M)

1891, May 21, Elizabeth, of George Streitenberger and Lena Smith, born Feb. 10; spons. Catherine Kelso. A. D. Dexter (M)

1892, Jan. 20, at Waverly, Ora Alicia, of Adam Ridgeway and Lydia Traynor, born Oct. 2, 1891; spons. John Wemeir and Anna Myers. A. D. Dexter (M)

1892, May 9, Eva Maria, of Joseph Ridgeway and Emma Lee, born Mar. 24; spons. Rose Ridgeway. A. D. Dexter (M)

1894, Oct. 26, at Waverly, Mable Maud, of George Streitenberger and Oliva Smith, born Sept. 27; spons. John Streitenberger and Clara Emmitt. A. D. Dexter (M)

1894, Nov. 29, Edward H., of Joseph Streitenberger and Julia Baetam (?), born Oct. 30; spons. John Streitenberger. A. D. Dexter (M)

1895, Aug. 29, at Waverly, Adam Paul, of John Pabst and Mary Barlow, born July 8; spons. John Streitenberger and Anna Helen Hoffman. A. D. Dexter (M)

1895, Dec. 12, Angela Try, of Adam Ridgeway and Lida Traynor, born July 4, 1894; spons. Edward Streitenberger and Rose Ridgeway. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Joseph Franklin, son of same, born Oct. 13; spons. John Streitenberger and Rose Ridgeway. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Helen Alicia, of Lawrence Wakker and Frances W. McGown, born Oct. 20; spons. Anna Hoffman. A. D. Dexter (M)

1896, Jan. 9, Winefreda Monica, of William Flanigan and Lida E. Ridgeway, born Nov. 9, 1895; spons. Monica Barbara Ridgeway. A. D. Dexter (M)

1897, Mar. 21, Mable Carloine, of Joseph Streitenberger and Amelia Sifford, born Aug. 27, 1896; spons. Anna Schilder. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Walter Francis, of Michael Foley and Ella Staller, born Feb. 17; spons. Jacob Aid and Mary Aid. A. D. Dexter (M)

1898, Apr. 28, Sarah Veronica, of Adam Ridgeway and Lida Trayner, born Apr. 15, 1897; spons. Helen McGown. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, James Edward, of Charles Egan and Anna Kemmerle, born July 15, 1895; spons. Edward Kennedy and Julie Atchison. A. D. Dexter (M)

1898, May 26, Rose Marie, of James Ridgeway and Emma Lee, born Mar. 8, 1896; spons. Joseph Ridgeway and Cora Lennox. A. D. Dexter (M)

1898, July 20, Joseph Floyd, of Joseph Streitenberger and Amelia Seiffert, born Dec. 1, 1897; spons. Hiram.

1898, Oct. 26, Elizabeth Helen of Patrick Mahoney and Monica Flanigan, born Oct. 5; spons. John M. and Mary Flanigan. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Thomas Joseph, of James Ridgeway and Emma Lee, born July 3, 1894; spons. Joseph Ridgeway and Elizabeth Flanigan. A. D. Dexter (M)

1899, Jan. 5, Cecilia Ora, of August Teichert and Lucy Ridgeway, of Waverly, born Dec. 21, 1898; spons. Joseph and Rose Ridgeway. A. D. Dexter

1899, Apr. 20, at Waverly, Lida Maria, of Adam and Lida (Taynor) Ridgeway, born Feb. 15; spons. Mary Flanigan. A. D. Dexter (M)

1899, Sept. 7, Leonora Catherine, of William Flanigan and Lida Ridgeway, residence Waverly, born July 7; spons. Patrick and Mary Mahony. A. D. Dexter

same, Leonora Margaret, daughter of same, born same; spons. John and Bridget Diamond. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Catherine, of Daniel Geagan and Catherine Barnes of Waverly, born June 11; spons. P. Mahony jr. and Delia McCabe. A. D. Dexter (M)

same, Michael Loyola, of Timothy Sullivan and Margaret Flanigan of Waverly, born Aug. 7; spons. Patrick and Mary Mahony. A. D. Dexter (M)

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