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St. Matthew Church, Mt. Gilead
(photo by the late Msgr. C. Bennett Applegate)

St. Matthew Church, Mt. Gilead, Morrow County, 1948-1973

Morrow County's only Catholic congregation until 1948 was that of St. Joseph in Cardington. Founded in 1868, St. Joseph was a mission of St. Mary Parish in Delaware.[1] It was not until 1948 that a Catholic presence came to the county seat of Mt. Gilead. This was accomplished by Bishop Michael J. Ready and the Fathers of the "Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of the Perpetual Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar," to use their full title. Called the Sacred Hearts Fathers, or the Picpus Fathers for short (after the Rue de Picpus in Paris, France, where their first house was located), this congregation had been founded in 1800 in defiance of the guillotine. They came to the United States early in the twentieth century and their U.S. province was formed in 1947.

The first Sacred Hearts Father in this diocese arrived in the summer[2] of 1946, when Father Martin J. Lacey arrived to be administrator of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Buckeye Lake. Bishop Ready must have been pleased with the result, for about November of 1947 he invited the Sacred Hearts Fathers to establish a house in this diocese.[3] In July,

1948, it was announced that Father Lacey was appointed resident pastor of St. Joseph Church in Cardington, with residence temporarily at St. Mary in Delaware.[4] But Bishop Ready also wanted a presence for the Church in the county seat of Mt Gilead.

St. Matthew Church

The village of Whetstone, called Youngstown, had been founded in 1824 by Jacob Young and grew only slowly. It was renamed Mt. Gilead in 1832, was incorporated in 1839, and in 1848 became the seat of the newly established Morrow County.

When Bishop Ready decided to start a parish there he sent his secretary, Father Roland Winel, to investigate. On July 24, 1948 Father Winel reported on a house he considered appropriate for a temporary church and residence. He said it was between 50 and 75 years old, on a knoll, with fifteen rooms (elsewhere said to be 11 rooms), that would serve well to house the number of men promised by the Father Provincial of the Sacred Hearts.

At the time, the house was divided into three apartments, but it had a distinguished history. Prominently located on two lots on North Main Street at the southeast corner of Cedar, just a short distance north of the main town square, in the 1850s the house was owned and occupied (and perhaps built) by Robert B. Mitchell, an attorney who served as mayor of Mt. Gilead in 1854. He later was a Union general and was Governor of New Mexico Territory. The next owner, from 1860 to 1866, was Thomas Dalrymple, husband of a granddaughter of the town's founder, an attorney, and mayor of Mt. Gilead from 1852 to 1855 and 1871 to 1875. Dalrymple sold it to M. Burr Talmage, a grandson of the town founder, who lived there from 1866 to 1933. He was an attorney, banker, and president of the Hydraulic Press Manufacturing Company of western Mt. Gilead. Distinguished as these families were, they were as nothing to the One who occupied the house from 1948 to 1973.

By July 26 Bishop Ready had decided to proceed, for on that date he gave the as yet unowned chruch the name St. Matthew's. The 89 North Main St. property was purchased on August 13, 1948.[5] Nine days later, on August 22, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the first public Mass at St. Matthew's was offered in a chapel upstairs. Thirty-five were in attendance. On Christmas morning, the first Mass was offered in a chapel on the first floor. (Possibly the first chapel was upstairs because the last tenant had until December 1 to vacate.)

St. Matthew Parish

The Sacred Hearts Fathers provided eight pastors to St. Matthew's over twenty-three years. Some of the earlier ones stayed only a year or two. In addition, numerous other Sacred Hearts Fathers lived at St. Matthew's, some as parish assistants, some with other duties, and some simply in residence. (See the sidebars.) They offered Sunday Mass at 8 o'clock in Mt. Gilead and 10 o'clock in Cardington. In 1948 the parish and its mission were about on a par in population, with 33 souls in Mt. Gilead and 38 in Cardington.

The congregation at St. Matthew's grew much more rapidly, reaching 64 in 1953 to Cardington's 48; 140 in 1957 to Cardington's 78; and 244 in 1964 to Cardington's 111. This was due to Mt. Gilead's status as the county seat, where industry was slowly growing, creating new jobs, and attracting new households. The town's population increased by 26%, from 2,351 to 2,971, between 1950 ad 1970. Mt. Gilead also was home of the county hospital and the county home, where Catholic patients and residents from throughout the county required the attention of the pastors of St. Matthew's and their assistants.

Although the Catholic population was small, they managed to improve the church building and develop a typical parish life. In 1953 the chapel was renovated and expanded by two rooms. New pews were installed to seat nearly 100.[6] Tuck-pointing and other exterior renovation was carried out and new heating units were installed. On January 25, 1954 Confirmation was administered for the first time, by Bishop Ready. That May the first parish May Procession was held. At the urging of Bishop

Ready, a Holy Name Society and a Rosary and Altar Confraternity were organized in 1956, with fourteen men in the former and twenty-four women in the latter.

Father Leo King, SS.CC., remembered that in the early 1960s the people were very friendly and very devoted to the Faith. The Sunday collection sometimes included a few dozen eggs or a ham or some other meat. "We always appreciated those gifts because we knew what they meant to the givers." The farmers would come to town on Sunday to go to church and have their children go to CCD classes. The porch and lawn around the building were great gathering places for them.[7] (The lot south of the church was empty at that time and was part of the property.)

There never was a Catholic school in Morrow County. Catechism classes were taught in Mt. Gilead for the children of both St. Matthew and St. Joseph, because there were no rooms to house classes in Cardington.



Bishop Ready with Father Shults at St. Matthew's, 1954 (Archives, Diocese of Columbus)

Pastors, Fathers of the Sacred Hearts

Father Martin J. Lacey, appointed June 24, 1948
Rev. Jerome Lane, appointed Feb. 14, 1951
Rev. Joachim Shults, appointed Mar. 25, 1953
Rev. James Keefe, appointed Oct. 15, 1954
Rev. George Weisenborn, appointed March 10, 1959
Rev. Paul Price, appointed Apr. 15, 1961
Rev. Damien Veary, administrator, August, 1961
Rev. Boniface Jones, appointed Sept. 10, 1963
Rev. Timothy Keane, appointed April 2, 1965

Forty-nine attended in 1957. The teachers were the pastor, the assistant, and four lay teachers. In August of 1959 the parish obtained a school bus and began taking the children to the Catholic schools in Marion. "The priests took turns driving the bus, and it was always an adventure trying to navigate a vehicle full of screaming kids down Route 95, a two-lane country road which barely had room for two cars."[8] However, by 1962 there were too few children riding the bus and the parish was told to either sell or store it. In 1964 there were 61 parish children in the public elementary school and 14 in the high school. Father Timothy Keane, as assistant and later as pastor of St. Matthew's in the 1960s, taught at Marion Catholic High School and generally worked with the youth of the parish. He was an associate diocesan CCD director. (Described as

outgoing and friendly, he also was involved in civic and other community affairs.)

Parish Finances

St. Matthew was too small to be self-sustaining during most of its existence and was supported by the diocese. The parish borrowed $17,000 from the diocese to puchase the old house and Bishop Ready donated $1,000 for initial expenses. In 1952 the diocesan Mission Cooperative Plan donated $1,000 toward reducing the parish debt. The parish took another loan of $3,500 from the diocese in 1953 for repairs and a donation of $2,000 to pay for the new heating systems. In 1954 the diocese paid for a station wagon for the Fathers' use. In 1958 assistance was received from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which had replaced the Missionary Cooperative Plan. Bishop Issenmann gave the parish $5,000 when he visited in 1958. Further gifts were made by the diocese in 1959, 1960, and 1961, including the school bus.

This situation changed after 1959. That June the diocese purchased for $22,000 a 91.79-acre tract[9], a small portion of which was intended to be the site for a new parish church. This was on the west side of Route 42, immediately south of the fairgounds on the south side of town. In April, 1963, Bishop Issenmann signed a lease for Complete General Constuction Co. of Columbus to drill for gas or oil on this property for 90 days. This apparently produced no active well, because a second 90-day lease was signed on Jan. 28, 1964. This time oil was found that produced income for the parish.[10] By early 1965 the parish was receiving around $2,000 per year from the farm and the oil and was able to pay down its debt.



Bishop Ready speaks from the altar at St. Matthew's, 1954. The window is in the bay that shows in the exterior photo. (Archives, Diocese of Columbus)

Parishes Consolidated

In July, 1964, it was proposed that a new St. Matthew church be built on the site just south of town. Four years later, to encourage the parish in this, Bishop Issenmann allotted to St. Matthew and St. Joseph one-quarter or $25,000 of a fund that was established for the diocesan centennial, "because they were 'similar to the situation fo the whole diocese 100 years ago.'"[11] In January, 1969 a proposal was made to the Bishop to instead combine the two parishes. Resources for a new church were the $25,000 from the Centennial Memorial Fund, $10,000 already saved, and $25,000 to $50,000 to be raised from the people and local industries. The Bishop told the parishes to form plans to study such a project. A parish council was formed and a building committee appointed.

In 1970 the firm of Conrad & Fleischman of Cleveland was hired to

Assistants and Residents

Rev. Aloysius Dillon, arrived Oct. 19, 1948, had the care of the missions at LaRue and Caledonia in Marion County until Jan. 31, 1949; he stayed at St. Matthew into 1952.
Rev. Joachim Shults, Oct. 19, 1948-Sept. 11, 1950 (later pastor)
Rev. Norbert McCarty, June 15, 1950-before 1950 Sept. 11
Rev. Christopher Christiansen, Sept. 21, 1950 to ?; assistant from Nov. 27, 1955-1958
Rev. Augustine Whelan, Sept. 21, 1950 to 1951 and 1952
Rev. Bernard Clement, in residence 1955-1959
Rev. James Keefe, assistant pastor, Nov. 24, 1953-1954 (appointed pastor)
Rev. Camillus Meagher, assistant, Oct. 15, 1954-1955
Rev. Leo King, assistant, July 4, 1958-1960
Rev. Paul Price, assistant Mar. 4, 1960-1961 (then pastor)
Rev. Cosimon Chaloner, in residence 1960-1963
Rev. Francis Larkin assisted in 1961
Rev. Phillip Clancy assisted in 1961
Rev. Damien Veary, assistant Nov. 7, 1961-1963
Rev. Timothy Keane, assistant, Sept. 24, 1963-1965 (appointed pastor)
Rev. Frederick Furey, in residence 1964-1966, chaplain at Marion Correctional Institute
Rev. Roger Doherty, assistant May 1, 1965-1969
Rev. Michael Kelly, assistant, 1970-1971

carry out a study of the county relative to the possible new parish. Their report, dated May 19, 1970, stated that expenses still exceeded income for four of the last five years and an effort was needed to get regular donations from the members. Significantly, it reported that the operating costs inherent in using two separate buildings should be eliminated. The study also showed that the site on the 91-acre tract was not right for the consolidated parish.

The start of the year 1971 found little changed. There were 643 Catholic souls in the county then. Sunday Mass was offered on Saturday evening and on Sunday morning at 8 and 12 o'clock in St. Matthew Church and at 10 o'clock in St. Joseph. A lack of local interest was making the combined parish project go slowly, but that spring the pace quickened. In May an offer was made to purchase a fifteen-acre site on the north side of U.S. 42, half way between Cardington and Mt. Gilead. The purchase was closed in June.[12] A farmhouse there would serve as a rectory for Fathers Keene and Kelly. Cost of the property was $300,000.[13] On July 22 a contract was signed with an agent to attempt to sell the church in Mt. Gilead for $25,000.

Then in August it was announced that the Sacred Hearts Fathers were leaving the diocese. "Father Fenton Sheerin, the Sacred Hearts Fathers' American provincial, said the order is leaving because the diocese is 'able to take the parish on' and is 'genuinely desirous of doing so.'" Father Carmen Arcuri, diocesan priest, was named the new pastor.[14] It was decided to name the new, combined parish Sacred Hearts, after the congregation that had served the county for 23 years.

Ground was broken for Sacred Hearts Church on Oct. 6, 1972, with Mass outdoors, followed by a picnic. In the spring of 1973 the 91-acre tract was sold and on May 21, 1973 a land contract was signed to sell St. Matthew Church for $20,100. Mass was first offered in the new Sacred Hearts Church on June 24, 1973. The closing of paperwork on the sale of the former St. Matthew property was held on July 1.

The former St. Matthew Church still stands at Cedar and Main in Mt Gilead, somewhat dilapidated and without its former dignity.

NOTES

1) See the *Bulletin*, Sept., 1982, and March and April, 2003.
2) An announcement was made in the spring that he was to be administrator, but he did not arrive

until between June 16 and August 18.
3) Archives, Diocese of Columbus, Nov. 29, 1947, Rev. Columba Moran, SS.CC., to Bishop Ready.
4) The Mt. Gilead *Union Register*, July 22, 1948.
5) Morrow County Deed Record 106/163.
6) *The Catholic Times*, July 31, 1953.
7) *Catholic Times*, Nov. 23, 2008.
8) Rev. Leo King, SS.CC., quoted in *Catholic Times*, Nov. 23, 2008.
9) Morrow County Deed Record 140/83
10) Morrow County Lease Records 20/57, 38/9, and 79/123.
11) *The Catholic Times*, Aug. 29, 1971.
12) Morrow County Deed Record 198/327.
13) *The Catholic Times*, July 11, 1971.
14) *The Catholic Times*, Aug. 29, 1971.

Some Mt. Gilead Catholics

Mary Margaret Patterson of Mt. Gilead married Francis C. Worster in 1943 at St. Mary Church, Delaware

Anna Belle Shade of Mt. Gilead entered the Church, was confirmed, and married Anthony Badurina of Mt. Gilead at St. Joseph Church, Cardington, in 1948

Organization Officers

Officers of the Holy Name Society and the Rosary and Altar Confraternity in the 1950s were: Phyllis Boord, Mrs. Hazel Cusick, Ed Dunn, George Etgen, Leon Etgen, William Fath, Mrs. Helen Gates, Mrs. Edith George, Doctor Robert George, Ruth Hecht, Elizabeth Jackson, George Jackson, Mrs. Ann Ott, Leonard Ott, John Rowenhorst, Mrs. Marie Slavik, Mrs. Jean Stone, Ottis Stone, and John Walsh.

Early marriages at St. Matthew

1948 William Abell to Mary Jane Shiffer
1950 Russell Burnell to Barbara Foster
1951 George Jackson to Elizabeth Foster
1951 James Shoults to Laura E. Dawn
1953 John A. McBee to Laura E. Skinnin
1953 Norman Irons to Loretta G. Foster
1953 James R. DiMeolo to Alice Corco

Other adult members in the 1950s included Kenneth and Mary Teresa Bendle, William E. and Catherine Darnell, Catherine Fath, Chester Gates, Raffiel and Frances Hines, Eugene and Myrtle McHugh, Ralph and Elizabeth Perry, Louis W. and Ann Sipes, Frank and Mary Ann Slavik, Louis Sutfin, Laurence and Ethel White, Wallace Witzel, and William (Jr.) and Doris Woodward.

Deaths of Mt. Gilead Residents Recorded at St. Matthew

1949 Sept. 1, William T. Sherman, age 81 (county home) Rivercliff Cemetery, Mt. Gilead
1951 June 4, Edgar Shoults of Mt. Gilead, age 22, was killed in action in Korea, buried at Glendale Cemetery, Cardington [recorded at St. Joseph]
1952 Sept. 21, Harry Browning, age 64, buried at Mt. Gilead
1952 Oct. 10, Ethyl White, age 45, buried at Cardington
1953 Jan. 11, Richard Bidinger, newborn at the county hospital, buried at Rivercliff
1955 May 13, James Kelly, age 87, buried at Rivercliff
1958 May 21, Albert Holtz, age 66, buried at Marion St. Mary
1958 July 24, Elizabeth Harris, age 92 (county home) buried at Lithopolis
1958 Dec. 3, Matt Schultz, age 61 (county home) buried at Cardington
1960 Jan. 21, John Mahoney, age 77, buried at Rivercliff
1962 Dec. 24, John T. Coyle, age 62, buried at Rivercliff
1969 July 1, C. E. Miller, died in Houston, Texas, buried in Cleveland

Andrew George Dugan
The Family Piety Continued

In the *Bulletin* of 2008 and 2009 we presented the story of Elizabeth (Mrs. Thomas) Dugan of Zanesville, along with a long list of her descendants. Elizabeth (c 1747-1848) was a very pious lady, the mother of some eleven children, who was said to have had about 300 descendants at the time of her death. Her son John S. Dugan with Father Fenwick is credited with founding the Catholic parish in Zanesville.

One of her older sons was Andrew G. Dugan, whose story as we knew it then was presented in the *Bulletin* of March, 2008. In the 1830s Andrew owned a farm of 342 acres on the National Road, three miles east of Zanesville, and ran a tavern there, where Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati offered Mass in 1834. Andrew and his wife, Margaret, disappeared just after he bought a large amount of dry goods in September, 1837. Andrew's children were tentatively identified as Mary Ann Dugan Skeer (c 1798-1880) of Butler Co., Pa., Newark, Ohio, and Chicago; Elizabeth Dugan Curran (c. 1805-c 1835) of Taylorsville (Philo), Ohio; and Gracey Dugan Bagley (c 1816-c 1865) of Zanesville.

Thanks to a short notice in *The Catholic Columbian* of July 23, 1920, reporting on an article just published, we can add to Andrew's story, identify his wife, and name their youngest child. Like the other Dugans, Andrew was devoted to the Church.

Mrs. Margaret Dugan was a daughter of Richard Noble, "a convert Catholic near Brownsville, Pa., whose house, heart and purse was always open to priests and religious as they passed, and was made a general resting place on their journey east and west."

When Andrew and Margaret Dugan left Zanesville in 1837 they settled in Little Rock, Arkansas. Rev. Peter Donnelly, newly appointed pastor of the missions on the Arkansas River, arrived there on March 23, 1838 and stayed with Mr. Dugan. Within the next few days he said the first Mass ever offered in Little Rock, in Dugan's house. This was on the second story, above Dugan's store, which in time became the Hughes & Naulty drug store at the northwest corner of Second & Main.

Andrew sold two lots for a church to Father Donnelly, not for cash but only promise of payment. Dugan had purchased the lots for $700 and sold them to Father Donnelly for $1,000, of which Dugan subscribed $250, so that he would have "profited" just $50 on them. Father Donnelly collected and paid to him $650 or less.

Dugan was induced to move his family and store to St. Mary's, Pine Bluff, by Father Donnelly, Creed Taylor, F. N. Vangine and others. This was a French settlement, five miles below Pine Bluff on the north side of the river. A permanent Catholic mission had been established there in 1833. The mission now is called called St. Mary's, Plum Bayou.

Upon consultation with Father Donnelly, Dugan built a house on an unenclosed corner of the church land at Pine Bluff. Father Donnelly said "that there must be a house built for the priest at all events and that if Dugan found that the place would not suit him, the house would answer the purpose and the congregation would take it at what it cost Dugan." Dugan was not aware that Arkansas law gave the owner of land a title to all improvements made on it, without a written contract to the contrary. Of course, whatever state law said, Dugan should have been able to rely on the honesty and fair-dealing of his pastor and fellow Catholics. But ..."the congregation, or rather Taylor and Vangine who controlled the affairs of St. Mary's Mission, tried to take the house from Dugan without any compensation. They would not allow him to move the house to a small piece of land he had purchased a quarter of a mile below the church grounds. Father 'Bowl' (Richard-Bole) refused to interfere. This is Dugan's statement of the case." His letter still exists in the archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Father Richard-Bole, pastor in 1839, wrote a letter to his bishop that November 19, saying that Dugan's statement regarding the house at St. Mary's was false. Since he was not originally involved, he

must have been turned against the Irishman by the French Catholics mentioned above. According to Richard-Bole, Dugan would not give him a quit-claim deed to the lots in Little Rock or let him have them at cost, and accused Dugan of duplicity and lack of delicacy. From the distance of nearly two centuries, it sounds like Father Richard-Bole did not have a clear grasp of the situation or the arrangements made by his predecessor.

Andrew continued to prosper. He obtained three tracts totaling 190 acres in Jefferson County, Arkansas, in the 1840s.

Andrew and Margaret's youngest child was a son named Richard Noble Joseph Dugan, who was born in Ohio in 1818. He married Elizabeth Brooks in Jefferson County, in 1842. They lived in Plum Bayou Township and had six children. The family is buried at St. Mary's Cemetery, Pine Bluff, where five of them have markers:

Andrew George Dugan
Richard N. Dugan July 11, 1818-
July 25, 1860
Petronilla Dugan
Caroline Dugan
Noble Dugan, died 1875

SOURCES

F. G. Holweck, "The Beginnings of the Church in Little Rock," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 6 No. 2, July, 1920, pp 163-168.

Rev. F. G. Holweck, "The Arkansas Mission under Rosati," *St. Louis Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 1, pp 243-267.

Rt. Rev. J. M. Lucey, "The Catholic Church in Arkansas," *Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association*, Vol. 2, pp 431-433.

Find a Grave listing for St. Mary's Cemetery, Pine Bluff.

1850 census, Plum Bayou Township, Jefferson Co., family 136.

1860 Census, Plum Bayou Twp., Jefferson Co., White Sulphur Springs P.O., family 60

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CHURCH PROGRESS AT CORNING.

Perhaps there never was a chapel erected in so short a time as the Chapel of St. Malachy, in Corning. It is twenty by sixty feet; side walls ten feet high; nine large windows; forty pews; seating capacity two hundred and fifty. Eight feet are cut off for altar and sanctuary, and the sanctuary is so arranged that when Mass is over it can be completely separated by folding doors from the rest of the chapel. During the week it will be used for a school. Father Boylan has informed us that he has a good teacher already secured, who will not only teach the school but also teach music and conduct a choir. The chapel was built and completed in six days. It will be a great boon to the poor miners to have a Catholic school where their children will learn their duty towards God, their parents, and their neighbors.

It is to Mr. Thomas Corcoran that the Catholics of Corning are indebed for the site of the church property. It is situated on a hill at the head of Main street, which will henceforth be known as Mount Pleasant. Besides the site of the church, donated by Mr. Corcoran, a plot of ground for a cemetery has been purchased for $200, and Mr. Joseph Rodgers has donated some two or three hudnred feet fronting the lot given by Mr. Corcoran, so that all the land south of Main street and directly opposite to it is the property of the Catholics.

The chapel and school of St. Malachy cost only $350, an amount which, in little over one year they would have had to pay for hall rent, had this chapel not been built. This will abundantly accommodate all Catholics until the new church is completed.

- *The Catholic Columbian*, May 27, 1882

The above sheds much light on the story of St. Malachy's, published in our *Bulletin* of April, 1981, which Monsignor Mattingly based on Father Bernard M. O'Boylan's annual census and financial reports. St. Malachy's was used only until 1885 or 1886. All that remains today is the cemetery, which sits back from the street leading out of Corning toward Millersburg. St. Bernard Church is in the north end of town.