

**St. Joseph Church History: The 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
1859-1984**

**A History Program on St. Joseph Catholic Church  
in Bowling Green, Kentucky**

**Prepared by Kathryn T. Garrison in 1984 for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Celebration of the Parish.**

**(Updated by Kathryn T. Garrison in March, 2001)**

## Anniversary Logo



This slide program was produced in 1984 to commemorate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of St. Joseph Parish in 1859. The slides do not present a complete history, but simply highlight certain events and people. This banner depicts the logo designed especially for the anniversary called a “Festival of Faith” by artist John Warren Oakes, a lifelong parish member.

## Youthful Fr. Joseph DeVries



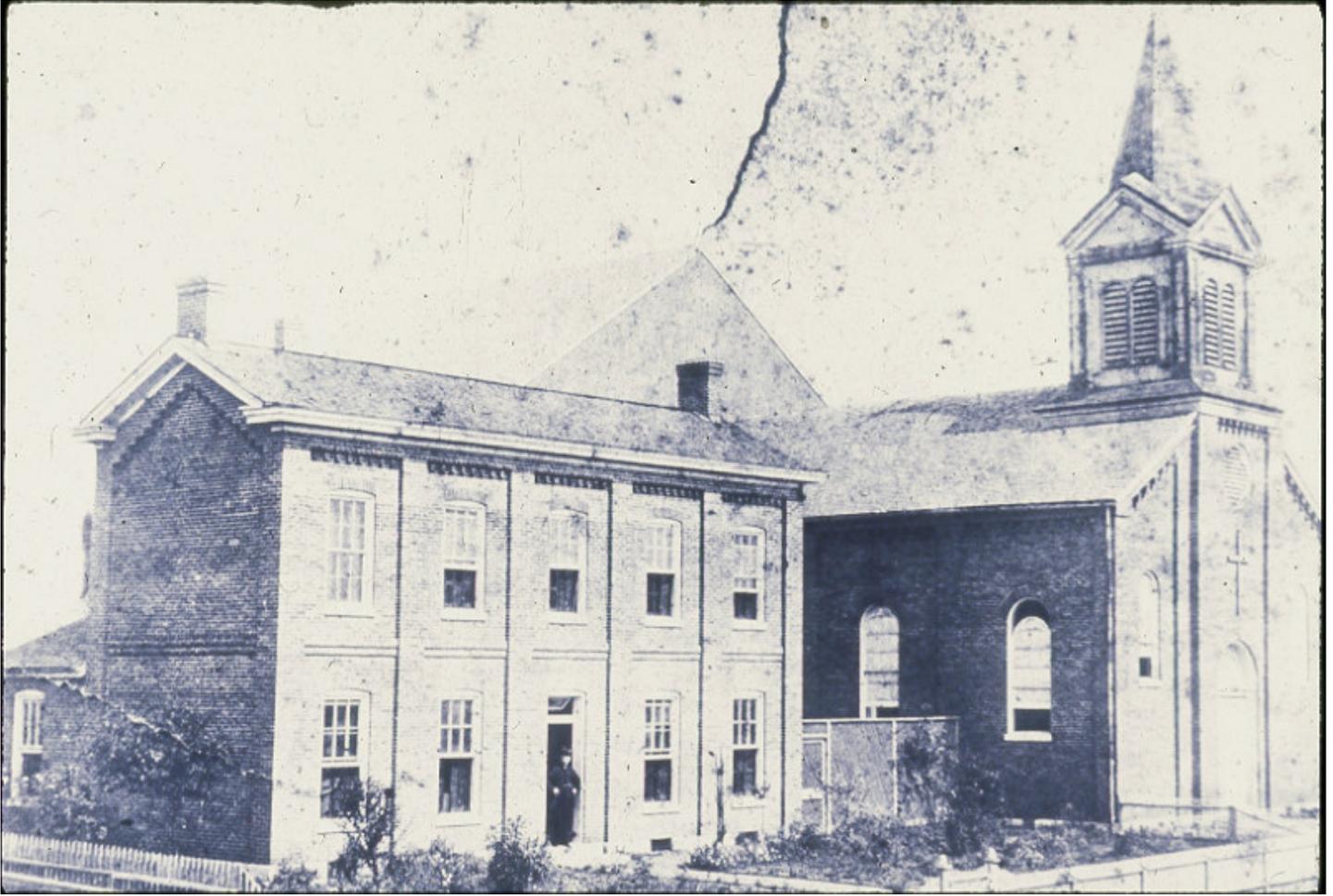
The first pastor was Father Joseph DeVries. He was only 22 years old when he came to America in 1853, a young seminarian from Holland. He came along with 8 other seminarians from Europe at the request of Louisville Bishop John Martin Spalding who made the trip in 1853 searching for priests for his vast missionary diocese. This slide was made from a "carte d' visite" made by C. R. Edwards, an early photographer who worked in Bowling Green in the mid 1800's according to Nancy Baird, curator at the Kentucky Museum. Father DeVries was ordained in 1855 in Louisville and was sent as a missionary to the southern counties of Kentucky from 1856-59.

## First Frame Church



In early summer, 1859, a small 25'x30' frame building was constructed as a school for boys, but could be used for Mass on Sundays instead of Mr. Daniel O'Sullivan's parlor, as Fr. DeVries had done during the "circuit riding" time. The building was constructed on an acre sized lot that had been donated by Mr. Euclid Covington. Mr. Covington was from a prominent Warren County family who was not of the Catholic faith. But the deed to the property stipulated that a church was to be built for the use of the Catholic people of Warren County. Note the wooden picket fence in front of the building showing the property line.

## First Brick Church and Rectory



Work on the first brick church began immediately in September, 1859, by Francis Leopold Kister, a master builder from Germany whom Fr. DeVries had met at New Haven, Kentucky. Mass was said there for the first time on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1860, with the walls not yet plastered. The Civil War had interrupted and the church was not completed and dedicated until 1862. At the time of its 1862 dedication, the church was described in a Diocesan newspaper as a “neat 57’x35’ Byzantine style edifice so built that it could be enlarged if needed.” Fr. DeVries had no rectory until 1867, but he is shown standing in the doorway of the rectory in this 1871 picture. Note again the wooden fence so close to the front of the building. See also the higher roof at the east end of the church where the first church enlargement had begun in 1870.

## 1862 Harper's Weekly Magazine



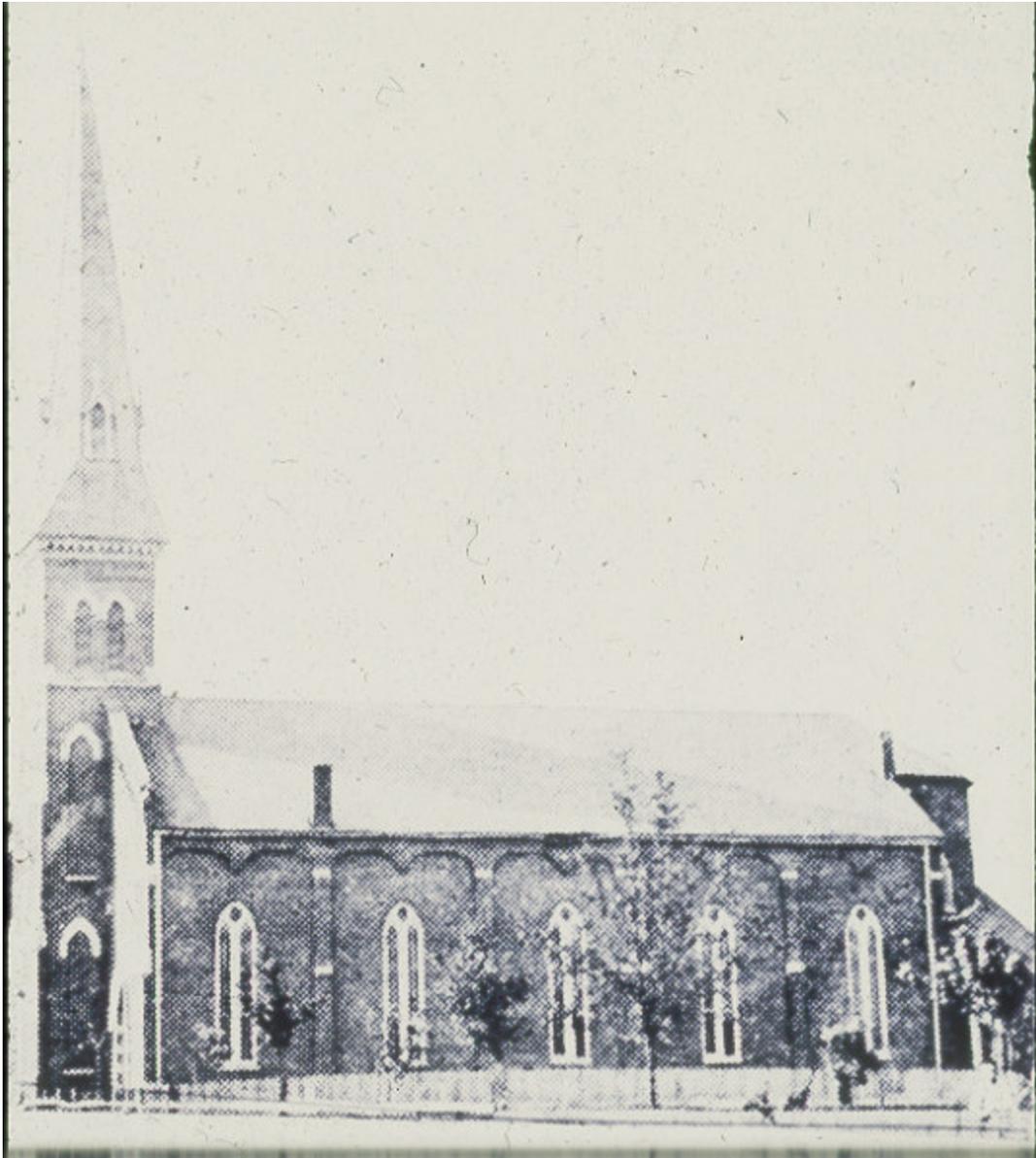
This slide was made from a drawing from an 1862 edition of Harper's Weekly Magazine of the artist's concept of the Confederate fortifications around Bowling Green. The barely visible steeple on the right is the first brick church built in 1860-62.

## Missal Frontispiece



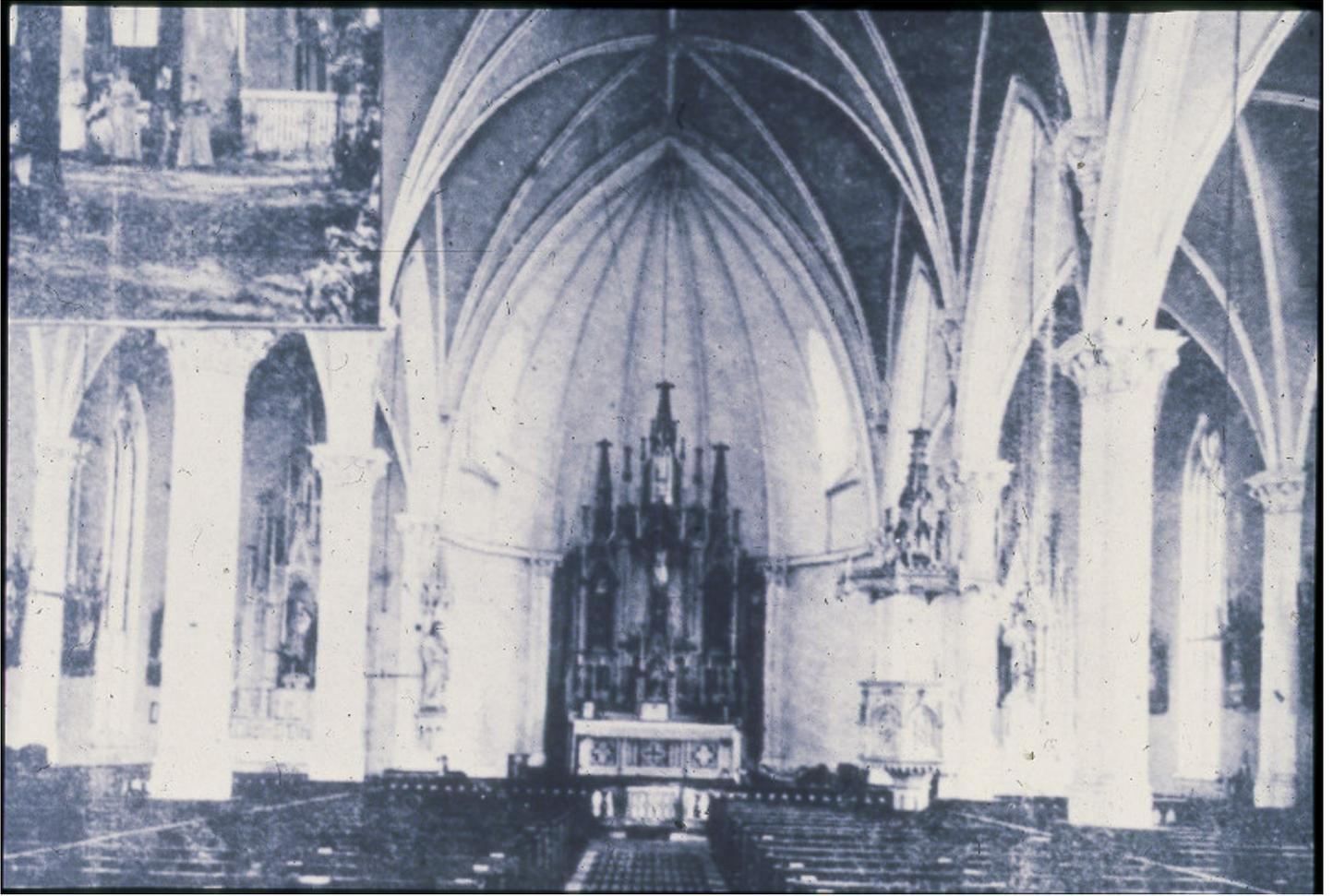
This beautiful frontispiece is from an early Missal from Fr. DeVries' time. This 1884 Mass Book is now in the Kentucky Museum.

## Enlarged Church with Tall Steeple, c. 1889



The enlarged church completed in 1889 had dimensions of 130'x60'x46' to the top of the roof ridge. It completely surrounded the 1862 57'x35' church which was then torn down. Fragments of that foundation are still visible in the cellar today. When the bell for the church was blessed in 1885, the steeple of the church was 142 feet high, the tallest in the city at that time. The bell, cast in 1863 at Troy, New York, weighed 600 lbs. and is still in use today. It was rung manually for nearly a hundred years. In 1981, it was made electronic through a Maas Rowe Carillon installed in memory of Fr. Charles Patrick Bowling, the fourth pastor of St. Joseph Parish, who died in 1980.

## Early Interior, c. 1889



This shows the interior of the church probably taken at the time of the solemn consecration in May of 1889. Note the small gas light globes suspended from the top of the arches down each side of the body of the church. You can also see the original Gothic pulpit mounted high on the first column on the right.

## Fr. Thomas J. Hayes



The second pastor of St. Joseph was Fr. Thomas J. Hayes, who arrived a few days after the sudden and unexpected death of Fr. DeVries on August 10, 1889. Fr. Hayes became pastor on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1889. Fr. Hayes was born in Ireland. He was 31 years old when he came to Bowling Green and had been a priest for 8 years.

## Interior, c. 1900



At Fr. DeVries' death, only three months after the solemn consecration of his beloved church, he was buried in a vault under the main altar in deference to his wishes. A marble slab on the sanctuary wall marks his resting place. We date this picture of the interior of the church around 1900—after Fr. DeVries' death because the marble slab can be seen in the sanctuary, but before the fresco paintings which were done in 1903. Note the position of the new gas light multi-globe fixtures down the center isle. Note also that the statue on the left side altar is a small Madonna and Child, not the present statue of Mary's Assumption which was designed after Murillo's famous painting.

## “The Square”, 1900



This slide was made from a postcard postmarked in 1909 titled Park Square, Bowling Green showing the Main Street side of the square. Note the unpaved streets and the wrought iron fence around the park. It was not called Fountain Square Park until the 1970's.

## Kister Family, 1897



This slide shows the Francis L. Kister family on December 25, 1897, in front of their home at 717 Barry Street where the family custom of gathering at Grandma's for Christmas morning breakfast continued into the 1920's. Mr. Kister was the builder of St. Joseph church and descendents of his twelve children are parish members today. (The house had been unoccupied for some time when the parish bought it in 1980.) The house burned in 1982 and was razed for a parking lot. This beautiful home is shown forty years after the young couple and their one child came to Bowling Green in 1859. While building the church, they lived in the sacristy where their second child was born on December 7, 1860.

## Exterior Church and Rectory, c. 1903



This picture, around 1903, shows the addition of a small stoop to the rectory (c. 1867). Fr. Hayes is the priest at the corner of the house. It also shows how the walls of the church were extended to the street when the church was enlarged. Note again the picket fence along the property line, just a few feet from the south wall of the church. In 1905, Fr. Hayes was given permission to buy land adjacent to the church property to keep something undesirable from being built there. Then, in 1910 he bought the rest of the property to Nugent Street and began to plan for a school.

## Interior, 1904



A fire on Easter Saturday, 1902, badly damaged the church. And so it was decided to decorate the interior with fresco painting. This view shows the church after the original ornate fresco paintings were done by Charles and Guido Leber, a family of artists from Louisville. The church has now been electrified and the converted gas chandeliers have been moved back to the arches along the side aisles.

## St. Columba Academy



This shows the beautiful old John Burnham home on Center Street (called Green St. in those days). It was used as a hospital during the Civil War. Although they had taught at several other sites since coming to Bowling Green in 1863, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth bought the house in 1869 and opened St. Columba Academy, the prototype of Catholic education in Bowling Green.

## St. Columba 1906 Class



This 1906 picture of the fifth and sixth grade classes at St. Columba Academy shows one of our parishioners. The little girl fifth from the left on the front row is Miss Katie Hogan who provided this picture and remembered her teacher and classmates. (Miss Katie passed away in April 1986 after this program was made in 1984.)

## Rectory and Church



This picture taken around 1910 shows the large porch added to the front of the rectory and the two-story brick addition at the rear. It also shows the beautiful stone wall which replaced the picket fence. Can you see the streetcar tracks on unpaved Church Street?

## View of Bowling Green



The previous slide showed how 434 Church Street looked in 1910. This one shows a view of Bowling Green from Reservoir Hill taken in 1910.

## Father Hayes, c. 1910



This picture shows the “dapper” pastor, Father Hayes, leaving the rectory. Perhaps he was on one of his trips to Louisville. He was very much in demand as a speaker all over the diocese and he often visited relatives in New York City. Notice that the columns of the front porch of the rectory are floor to ceiling.

## School and Convent



August, 1912, saw the dedication of the newly built St. Joseph School and the convent home for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, who were to staff the school for 55 years. The order sold the St. Columba property to the City and moved to the new convent home built between the church and school.

## 1915 St. Joseph School Ninth Grade Graduates



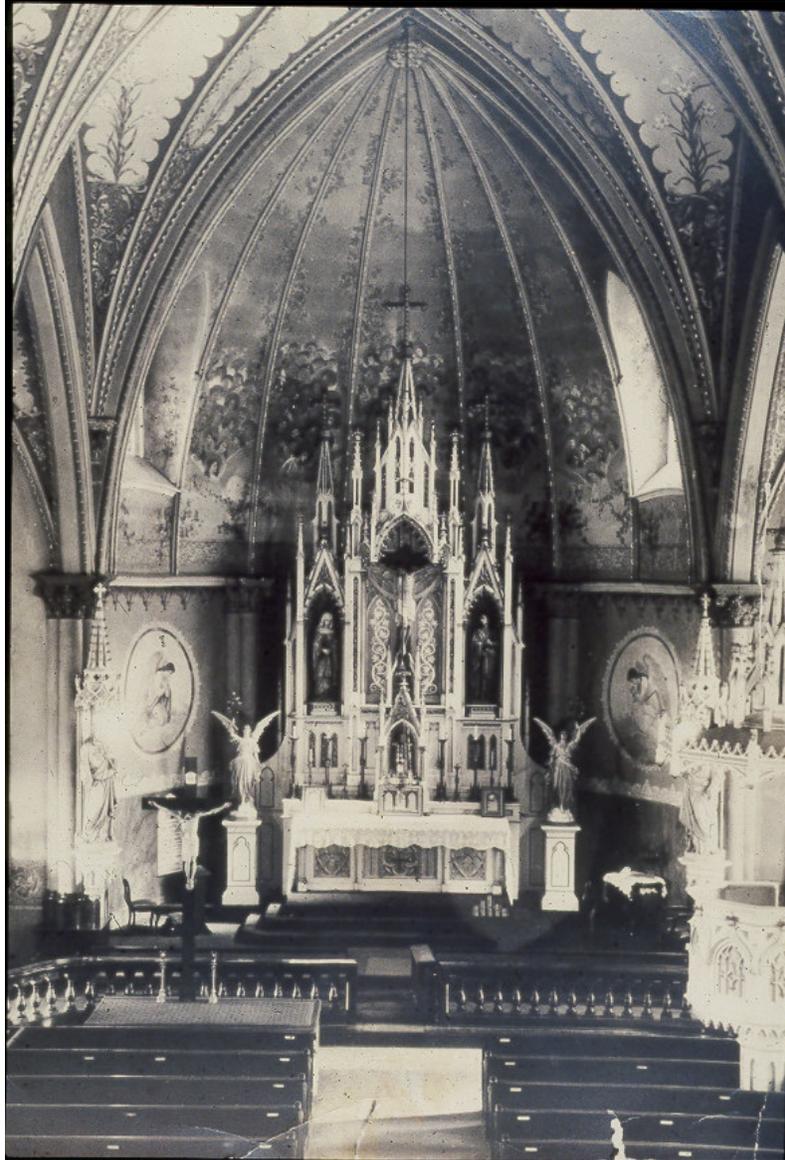
In September, 1912, the school opened so the first graduating class was June, 1913. No formal class picture was taken until this one in 1915 and no more were taken until 1921 because of World War I. Nine grades were taught at the school except 1931-1941 when they went to eight. The high school grades were added one at a time beginning in 1953. When the high school closed in 1965, there were eight grades again.

## Church and School



This c. 1924 view of the church and the convent shows the church steeple that we have today, some 75 feet lower than the original 142' steeple which had been blown over in a "cyclone-like" windstorm in 1923. The low concrete wall and sidewalk have been added. Church Street is now paved.

## Church Interior, c. 1926



The interior of St. Joseph Church looked like this when this picture was taken in 1926 at the time of a mission. It gives an excellent view of the ornate fresco work done in 1903. The original choir of Reubenesque angels painted in the dome can be seen more clearly in this picture.

We also see on either side of the main altar statues of angels holding aloft electric torchiers. These were donated by a traveling salesman who had visited the church during the “oil boom” of the 1920’s. He was so impressed with the beauty of the church that he had these sent from New York to Fr. Hayes. On the sanctuary walls we see tondos (circular framed paintings) of kneeling angels whereas in the 1904 interior, the paintings are seated saints.

## War Mothers



In 1926, two ladies of St. Joseph Parish were very active in the War Mothers project of selling handmade paper carnations made by disabled veterans of World War I. On the Saturday before Mother's Day, Mrs. Maggie Stevens and Mrs. Ben Forsting enlisted the aid of St. Joseph students for this day on "The Square" selling red or white paper carnations for twenty-five cents each (red if the mother was living and white if the mother was deceased).

**Fr. Hayes and Fr. Lockett**



Two members of the First Communion class of 1927 are shown in this picture with Fr. Hayes and his assistant from 1926-28, Fr. Harold Lockett.

## 1929 Graduates



June, 1929, saw this large class of ninth grade graduates with Fr. Hayes and his assistant for that year, the newly ordained Fr. Charles P. Bowling. Fr. Bowling was to return in 1947 to become the fourth pastor of St. Joseph Church. There are two in this group (Irene Rabold Hunt and William Schneider) who are parishioners of St. Joseph Church today.

## Ivy Covered Exterior



In this picture of the ivy-covered exterior, the church seems to be yellow brick. The picture was probably taken around 1930. Note the two electric light standards in the concrete sidewalk at the front entrance.

## Fr. Hayes Leaving the Rectory



Fr. Hayes, age 73, is leaving the rectory in the procession to church for his 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Mass, June 26, 1931. We can note a change in the front porch of the rectory. The columns supporting the roof are shown on bases. In 1910, the columns were floor to ceiling.

## Interior Redecorated, 1937



Fr. Raymond G. Hill was assistant to Fr. Hayes for five years from 1933 to 1938. He personally conducted a drive in 1937 for funds to have artists of the Leber family of Louisville redecorate the interior again after 34 years. At this time, new Gothic type lanterns replaced the old chandelier light fixtures, the columns were finished in faux marble, and circular oil paintings of Saints were installed above the arch of each window. Notice the linoleum floor covering on the aisles and the name markers on the pews. Parishioners paid “pew rent” and their families had a special place to sit at Sunday Mass.

## Fr. Hayes in 1938



In terms of service, Fr. Hayes was the oldest priest in the Diocese of Owensboro when it was formed in 1937. He was named Domestic Prelate of Pope Pius XI in 1938 and given the title of Monsignor in a ceremony at the Cathedral in Louisville, presided over by Archbishop John J. Fleurish. Bishop Francis R. Cotton, first Bishop of Owensboro, was in the sanctuary.

## Fr. Hill and Chairs



Fr. Raymond G. Hill, assistant to Fr. Hayes from 1933 to 1938, is shown here being his usual helpful self in getting ready for some special occasion. In his five years in Bowling Green, he accomplished the first major redecoration of the church. He was also Warren County Chairman of the American Red Cross during the flood relief efforts in January, 1937 when over 100 refugees from Louisville were cared for in Bowling Green.

## Seventh and Eighth Grade Music Class



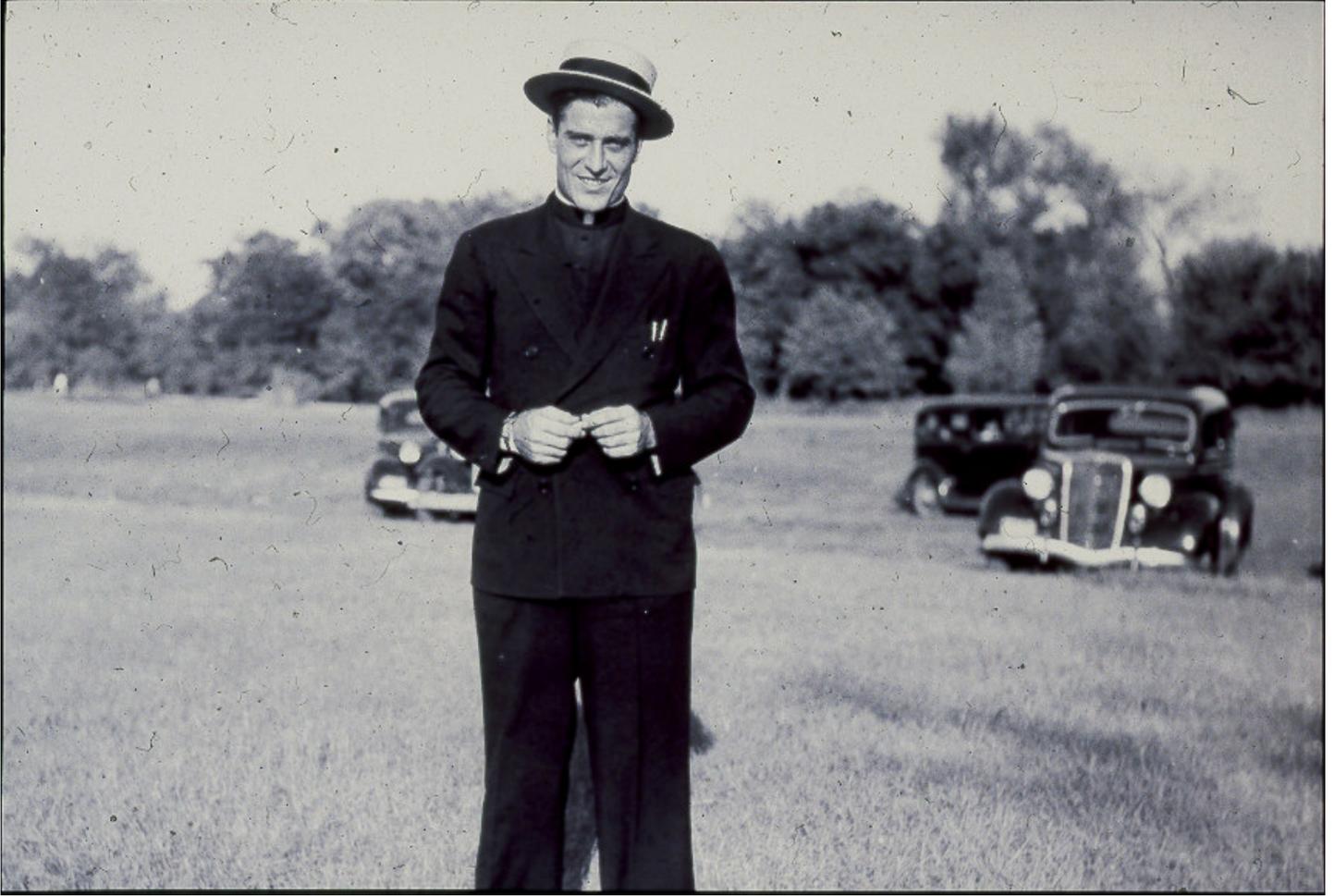
In 1938, the seventh and eighth grade music class at St. Joseph School was made up of these young ladies. They are shown on the front porch steps of the convent where they were taught by Sister Mary Ruth. Patty Nusz Reynolds is one of the students and provided this picture. She is seated on the right platform.

## 1941 Ninth Grade Class



Fr. Hayes was disabled during most of 1941. His assistant from 1938 to 1942 was Fr. Robert Whalen, shown here with St. Joseph School's 1941 graduating ninth grade class. From 1931 to 1940, the school only had eight grades.

## Fr. Whalen



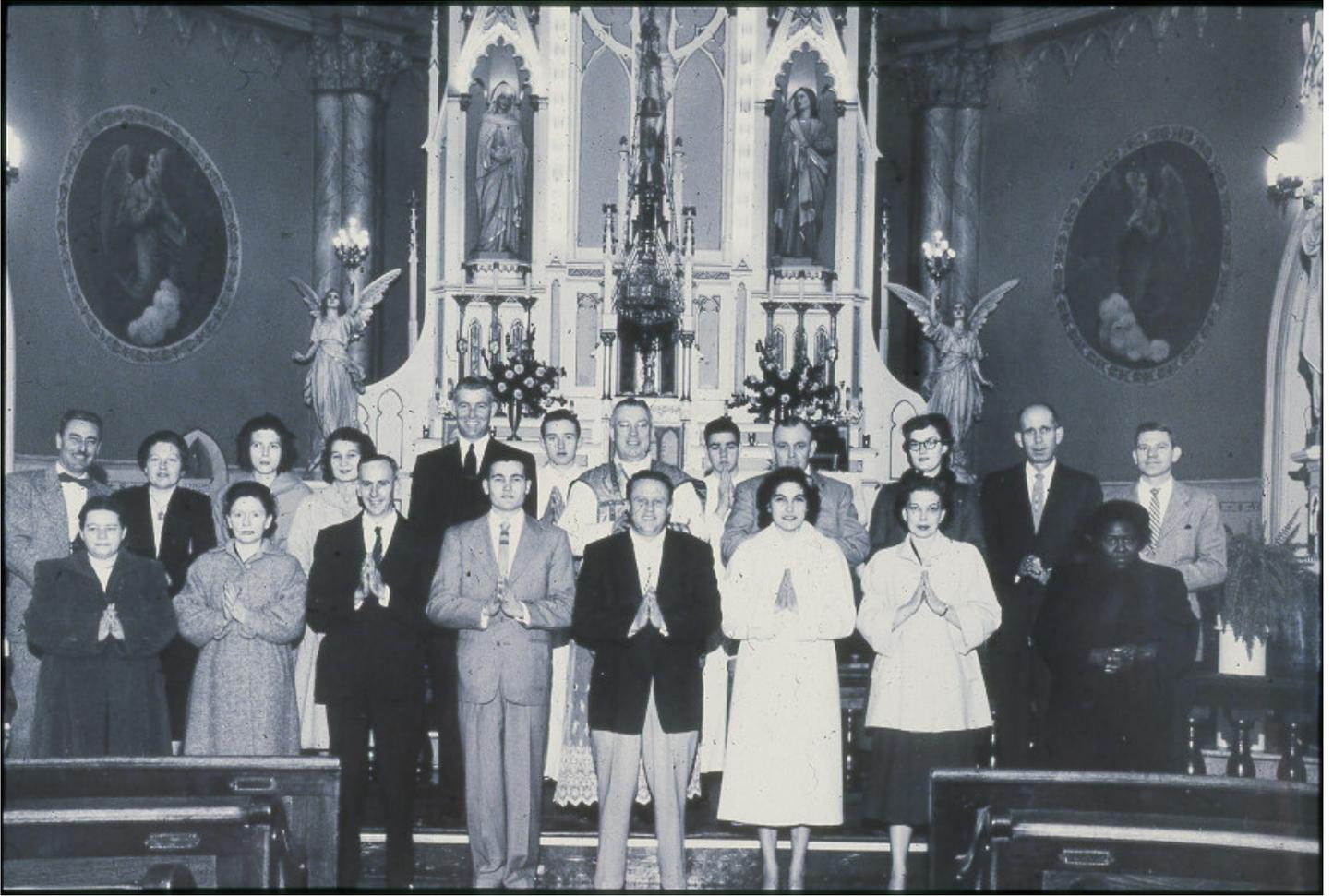
This classic photo shows Fr. Whalen in a more informal pose. He had a great rapport with the young adults of the parish.

## Fr. Joseph Spalding



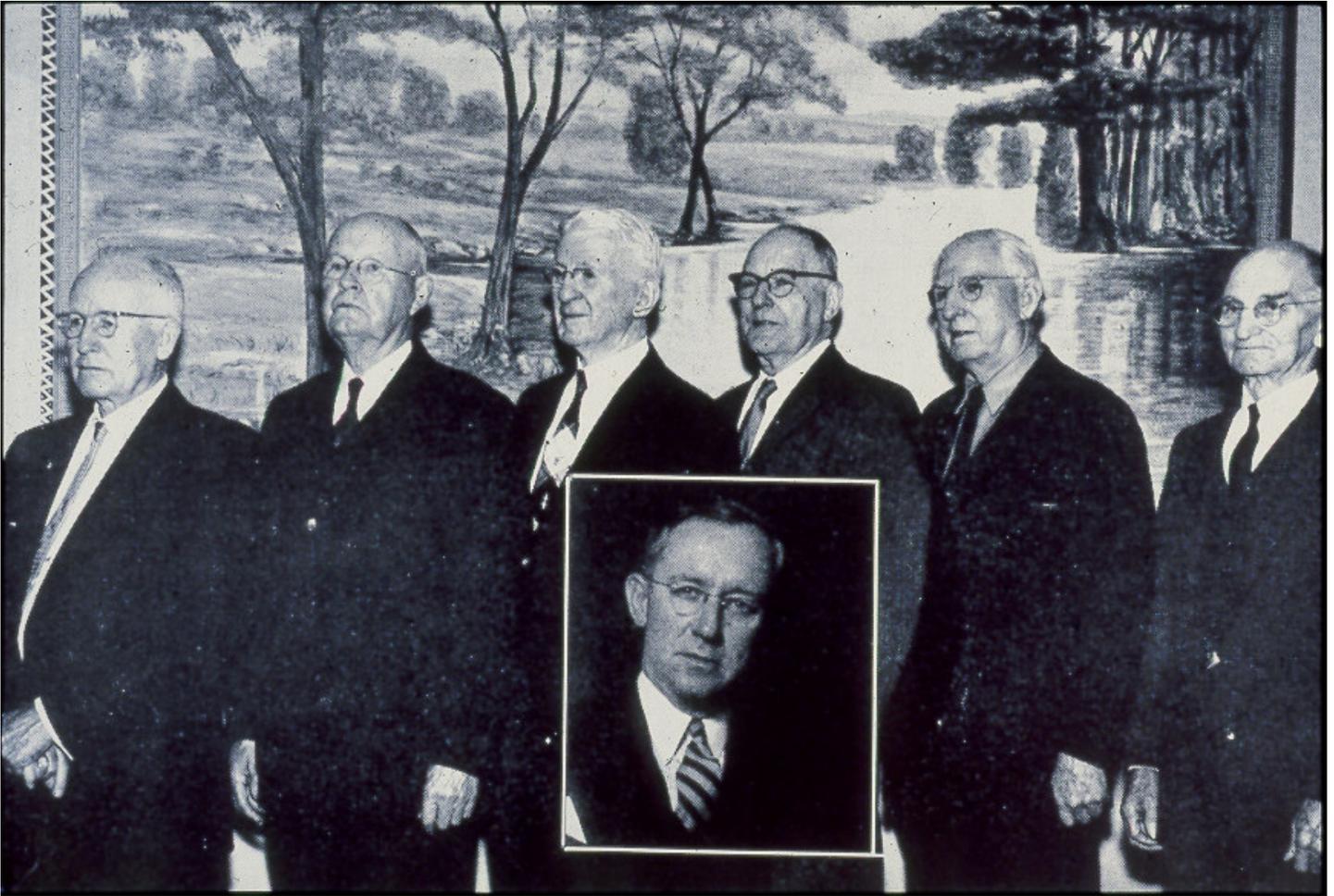
When Fr. Hayes retired in 1943 as Pastor Emeritus, Fr. Joseph L. Spalding, who had come as his assistant in 1942, became pastor and remained until August, 1947, one year after Fr. Hayes passed away.

## Fr. Bowling and Inquiry Class



Fr. Charles P. Bowling came back to Bowling Green as pastor in 1947. This slide shows a group of his converts (before RCIA) in the early 1950's. They are posed in front of the main altar. Stella Flaherty, second from left on the back row, and Ophelia Hanna, far right on the front row, are members of the parish today. The servers are Jimmy Diemer and Johnny Johnson. Note the tondos on the walls of the sanctuary--the angels are now shown kneeling on clouds. We are told that the church has had three major re-decorations, but evidently, there were several minor changes along the way.

## Knights of Columbus



In 1958, Council 1315 of the Knights of Columbus celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These six charter members were present. Mr. Martin DeVries, younger brother of the first pastor, formed the council in 1908 and it is his picture in front of the charter members. Fr. Joseph DeVries was from a family of fourteen children. At least two of his siblings settled in Bowling Green from the family home in Gerwein, Holland. His brother, Frank DeVries, was a baker whose shop was in the 100 block of East Main Street. The council is now known as the Fr. Ben Powers Council.

Fr. Ben Powers was assistant at Holy Spirit Parish and Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus in 1978 when he died in a tragic car crash.

## Centennial Banquet



St. Joseph Parish celebrated its first 100 years on December 6, 1959, with a banquet at Old Fort Restaurant. Bishop Francis R. Cotton and four former pastors and assistants are in this picture.

(Left to Right; Unknown, Fr. Raymond Hill, Fr. Charles Bowling, Bishop Francis Cotton, Fr. Joseph Rhodes, Fr. Joseph Spalding)

## **Bishop Francis R. Cotton and Pope John XXIII**



Bishop Cotton had just returned from a trip to Rome and sent this picture of himself and Pope John XXIII for St. Joseph Church's Centennial Booklet.

## Reception and Centennial Highlight Program By the School



There was only the original school building with no gym or parish center in 1959. On Saturday afternoon, December 6, 1959, the tea table for the reception for the public was in the school hallway with a satin curtain hiding the drinking fountain and Mrs. Kathryn Garrison serving as hostess. We have no slide of the Centennial Highlights, a pageant and musical program which was presented that same evening in the auditorium upstairs by the entire school. Narrator for the play was A. L. Dodd, Jr., a parishioner today.

## Centennial Mass



On Sunday, December 7, 1959, Fr. Bowling was celebrant with Bishop Cotton seated in the sanctuary for the Centennial Mass. Notice all of the “white caps” of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth on the left. They still wore their original habits in 1959.

## Second Major Redecoration, 1958



Twenty-one years after the 1937 redecoration, Fr. Bowling had the artists Leber and Mirabile of Louisville again redo the interior of the church in preparation for the Centennial in 1959. Much of the original elaborate fresco work had to be painted out because of finances. But the sanctuary walls were done in a beautiful gold leaf quadrofoil pattern of chalice and grapes. A new rubber tile floor was installed at this time and the columns were again painted plain, as in 1903.

## High School Building



In 1961, a new building containing classrooms, gymnasium, kitchen and cafeteria was completed for the high school. It was dedicated by Rt. Rev. Henry J. Soenneker, second Bishop of Owensboro.

## St. Joseph Statue



This slide is out of line chronologically, but is of interest.

In 1964, a Mr. Sam Mazzarello of Pittsburgh, PA, donated an outdoor statue of St. Joseph and the boy Jesus. It was placed on the lawn in front of the grade school by the pastor, Fr. Charles P. Bowling.

## Reverend Charles P. Bowling



Fr. Bowling retired in March, 1971, after serving as pastor for 24 years. This photograph was taken at that time and now hangs in our gallery of former pastors. In the first 100 years of existence, St. Joseph church had only four pastors. Fr. Bowling was the fourth.

## Welcome Party



Fr. Richard Powers was the new pastor in March, 1971. This welcome party was held in the gym. Julian Durbin is introducing someone to the receiving line.

## Music at the Welcome Party



At this same 1971 party, Andy Williams entertained the crowd with his organ and songs as he did so many times in the years before his death in 1982. He often accompanied Fr. Bowling's rich baritone voice in singalongs.

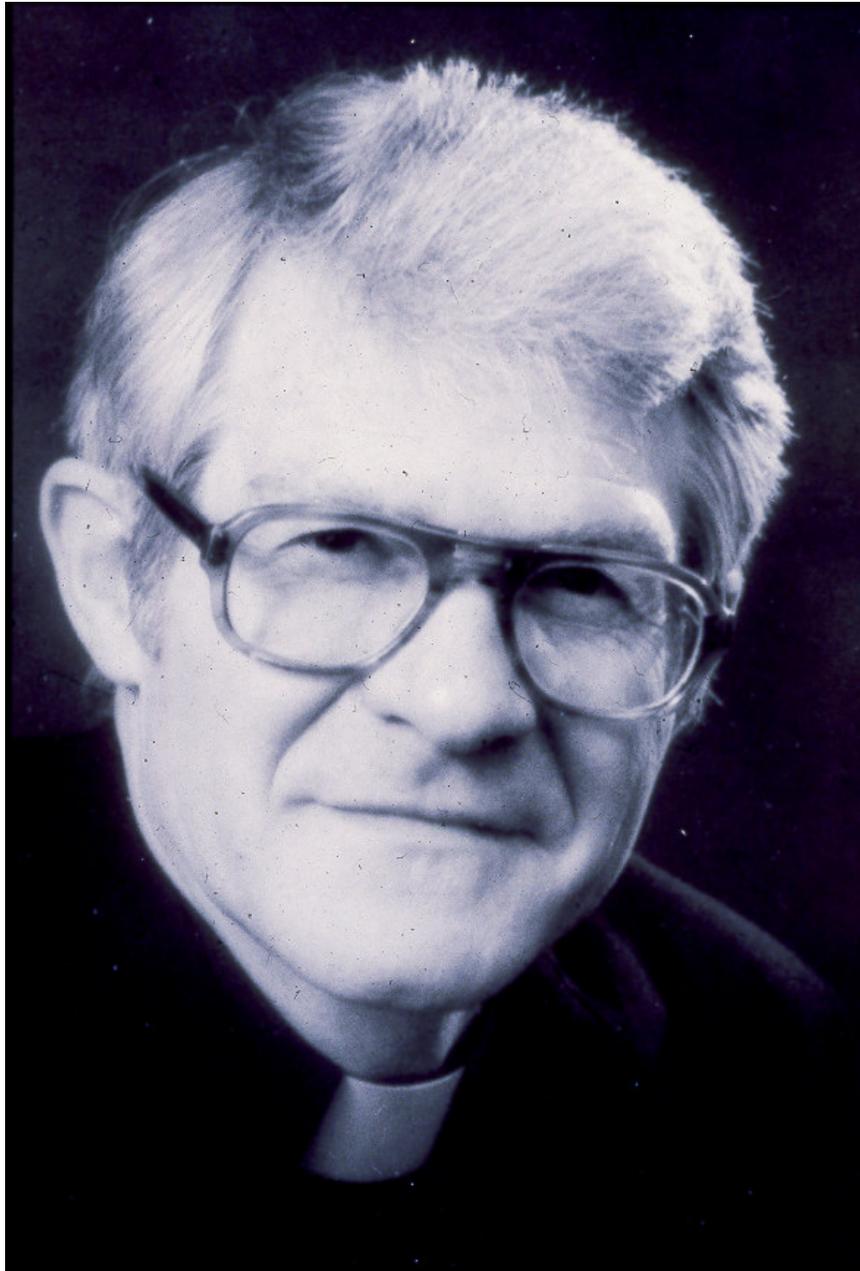
## Christmas at St. Joseph, 1972



Christmas at St. Joseph's Church  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

Fr. Powers was pastor when this picture was taken of the 1972 Christmas season. It was made for a Christmas card which became a "collector's item" in 1975 when the new entrance to the church was added by making a door from the bottom of the first stained glass window on that side. The Nativity Creche was traditionally placed before the Blessed Mother altar.

**Rev. Richard Powers**



Fr. Powers left Bowling Green in 1974, but he was 10 years older when he sent this photo in 1983 for a portrait to be hung in our gallery of all former pastors.

## Sanctuary Close-Up, c.1973



This post Vatican II view of the sanctuary in 1973 shows the small altar facing the people and the wrought iron pulpit which had been installed by Fr. Bowling in the early 1950's when the original 1889 Gothic pulpit that hung high on the first column on the right had to be removed for safety reasons. We see the marquee like small light bulbs on the three crosses at the top and surrounding the niches of the main altar. These were installed in the early 1930's.

## Fr. Hayden



Fr. Lucian Hayden, pastor from 1974-82, had this photograph taken by the school photographer in May, 1982. It was used for his enlarged portrait hung in the gallery of former pastors.

## White House, 1974



The original 1859 small frame church had been moved to the school grounds in 1912. It was covered with clapboard, embellished somewhat, and divided into classrooms for the use of the music department of the school. The clapboard covered building sat about 10' from the back steps of the sisters' convent. Later it was used as classrooms, cafeteria, and even rummage sale storeroom. It was known as the "White House" in 1974 when a fire damaged it too badly to save, but the Victorian canopy which was placed over the door after 1912 was preserved by installing it over the exit door of the boys' sacristy on the convent side of the church where it is now. The pastor, Fr. Hayden, gave one of the square nails from the 1850 building to each of the parishioners at that time. Incidentally, that building was constructed of yellow poplar.

## Exterior, January 1974



The front façade of the church presents a sad spectacle in this 1974 picture which was taken for the application for the church building to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This picture shows the old 1889 front doors which were made of red lattice-like strips, and a solid wood panel above the doors. It also shows the one remaining badly damaged lamppost of the two that were placed in the sidewalk at the front entrance around 1910. High above the center stone portal, we see the “mystery” Rose Window of 1889. The colors of the original stained glass cannot be seen from either the inside or outside since the tall ranks of pipes for the grand organ, installed in the choir loft in 1898, forever darkened it.

## Picture of Grand Organ



Fr. Thomas J. Hayes was an Irishman and a fine musician. One of the first accomplishments of his 54 year pastorate was the installation of the Grand Organ in 1898. This magnificent instrument of 18 ranks of pipes had a case of white quarter oak and we see the wood-carved angel trumpeters on pedestals high above the console.

## Front Doors, 1976



Fr. Hayden and his building committee undertook the third major renovation and redecoration of the church in 1974. This slide shows the newly designed front doors and the two stained glass panels above them. These were added at this time and are quite an improvement over the previous view.

## Interior, 1976



After the renovation and structural changes of 1974-76, the interior of the church looked like this: new pews, wall to wall carpeting, the communion rail cut and redesigned for the new entrance, the altar platform brought closer to the congregation, and faux marble finished columns once again. We see the “pillar statues” of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary with ornate Gothic-like pedestals and canopies. They are on the front pilasters where they have been since 1889. This slide also shows an organ console connected electrically to the organ upstairs, but it was never successful and was finally removed.

## Trustees, 1978



A 1978 Parish Directory was dedicated to the former pastor, Fr. Bowling, who celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee that year at St. Joseph. This picture of Fr. Lucian Hayden and his three trustees was taken for that directory. Look whose mouth is open—our own Tommy Deemer. The others are John Faulkner and A. L. “Bro” Dodd, Sr.

## Chrismon Tree



In 1979, the Atlar Society of St. Joseph created 56 chrismons (religious symbols) in a series of workshops. They decorated a Chrismon Tree for Advent at St. Joseph for the first time that year.

## Pilgrim Virgin Statue



In 1981, the Blue Army of Our Lady brought the Pilgrim Virgin statue of Our Lady of Fatima to St. Joseph for a special service. This picture was sent to parishioners, courtesy of the Paul Kramer family.

## Fr. Hayden and Car



Fr. Hayden was pastor of St. Joseph for nine years from 1973 to 1982. He returned from vacation June 7, 1982, to a surprise party for his thirty-third anniversary of ordination. He was presented a new Plymouth car from his parishioners and his numerous friends in Bowling Green as he was succeeded by Fr. Ben Luther.

## Nativity Scene, 1983



St. Joseph's Nativity figures were a gift from Fr. Hayes' parishioners, the Whitehead family, in 1899. It has been used every Christmas since then in various locations. At the time the gift was given, it was valued at \$300. This is how it looked in 1983.

## Stained Glass Window, 1871



This beautiful window of Mary, high in the dome on the left side of the sanctuary, was installed in 1871. It is one of six depictions of Mary in the church. Can you think of the other five?

- 1) Mary at the foot of the Cross above the main altar
- 2) With Her mother, St. Anne in the back shrine
- 3) In the Stations of the Cross--4th Station
- 4) In the Assumption on the side altar
- 5) The Immaculate Heart of Mary on the front right pilaster

## St. Anthony Statue



The statue of St. Anthony is one of the oldest statues in the church and the saint is the favorite patron of so many people. It is in a shrine at the back of the church, but its exact age and provenance are not known.

## St. Anne Statue



Perhaps the most beautiful piece of artwork in the church is the St. Anne statue teaching her little daughter Mary to read--to pray the Psalms as we like to think. This statue was imported from Valcouleurs, France, and donated by Miss Mary Hogan, a parishioner in 1924.

## Statue of St. Therese of Lisieux



This beautiful shrine to the Little Flower of Jesus, St. Therese of Lisieux, was donated to the church by Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Spugnardi. The statue was installed and blessed February 7, 1928, only three years after the canonization of St. Therese by Pope Pius X in 1925. Its reliquary contains an amulet with a relic of the saint who died in 1897 at the age of 24. Mrs. Spugnardi was the daughter of Francis Leopold Kister, the builder of the church.

## Fr. Ben Luther and 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banner



We have now run the whole gambit of the parish's year long celebration. Fr. Ben Luther became pastor in August, 1982, and he is the "guiding light" over our year-long celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The "festival" began on January 29, 1984 with a slide presentation produced by Fr. Clyde Crews of Bellarmine University in Louisville. It was titled "200 Years of Catholicity in Kentucky" and was attended by a large crowd containing many local historians. It ended later that year when Bishop John J. McRaith, third Bishop of Owensboro, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving and installed in the north wall a copper "Century Box" to be opened in 2084. It contains artifacts and letters from 1984 parishioners addressed to their 2084 counterparts. It is covered by an explanatory marble plaque donated by Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Garrison.

Slide #24 had the picture flipped horizontal (I.e. mirror image)	Done
Slide #37 had the date 1978 added for when Fr. Powers died	Done
Slide #38 needs to have the unknown priest identified.	TBD