

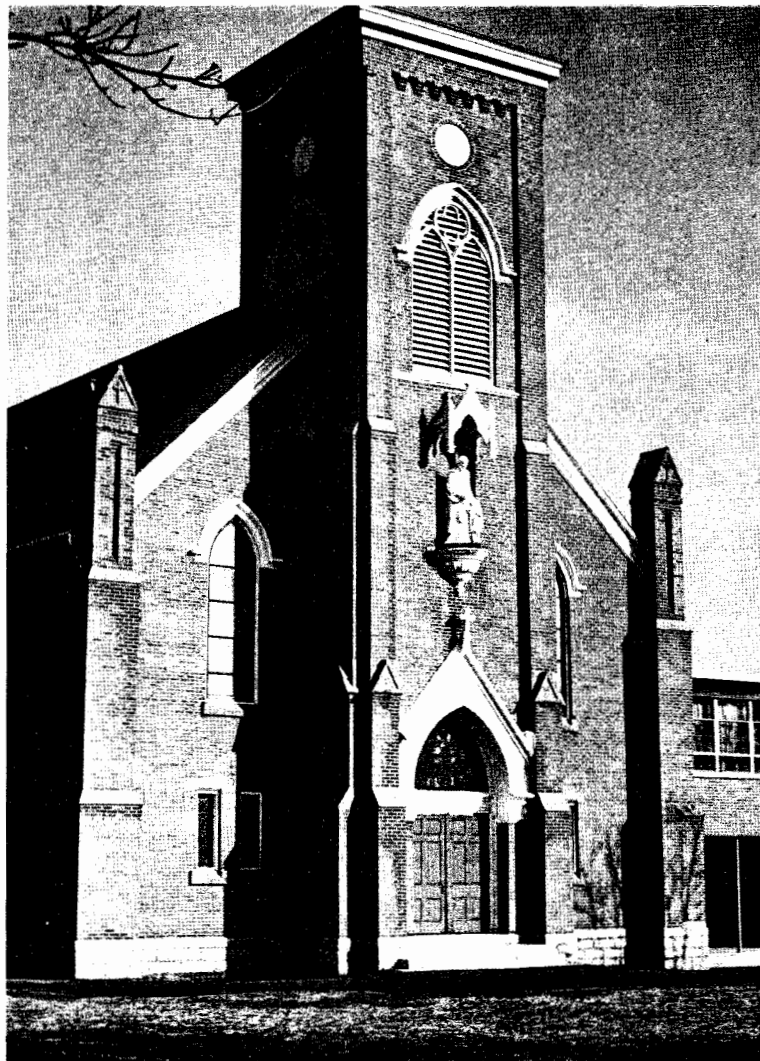


Barquilla del Santa Maria

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The above venerable building is the chapel of St. Vincent Children's Center, now one hundred years old. The following article, except for a few minor additions, was given by Rev. Msgr. William E. Kappes as a homily at the centenary celebration for the chapel, held at the Children's Center on August 18, 1985. We are extremely grateful to Monsignor Kappes for this story, which is exceptional in that, whereas many of our stories concern former missions and events long past, this one outlines the history of a living institution through more recent, hard to research times, to the present.

CENTENARY OF THE CHAPEL AT ST. VINCENT CHILDREN'S CENTER

by Rev. William E. Kappes

(Monsignor Kappes was personally associated with the Children's Center, formerly St. Vincent Orphanage, for many years. As a child he was a member of Holy Rosary Parish nearby and was taught by the Sisters who lived at the Orphanage. As a diocesan priest, he was Diocesan Director of Charities from September 1, 1946 until December 12, 1960 and was Chaplain of the Orphanage from September 1951 to the same date.)

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord." Ps. 84.

"I rejoiced when I heard them say,
We will go to the house of the Lord." Ps. 122

The words of the psalmist describe our own feelings as we meet here today to celebrate the centenary of this venerable chapel. It is just one hundred years since Bishop John Watterson blessed this building on August 9, 1885. The cornerstone at the south east corner of this building had been laid by the Bishop on July 27, 1884. It was only sixteen years since the Diocese of Columbus had been erected. It was nine years since St. Vincent Orphan Home had been opened by Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans. It represents the third of the priorities which Bishop Rosecrans mentioned in his first letter to the priests and laity of the Diocese. This letter, dated July 16, 1868, gave the priorities of the new Bishop. In it Bishop Rosecrans stated that first the cathedral, already under construction, must be completed. Then, he said, "Once the cathedral is completed, the little seminary, orphan asylum and college will, with the blessing of God, soon follow. The Bishop lived to see all three of these hopes realized. He died the day after the consecration of the cathedral in 1878. He himself had taught in Saint Aloysius Seminary which existed for several years on what is now the site of the Holy Family school building at Sandusky and Culberson streets on the west side. (1) And Saint Vincent de Paul Orphan Asylum was opened February 2, 1875 to receive eight little orphaned girls. He did not live to see the chapel built, where we celebrate Mass today.

When Saint Vincent's was established in 1874, Bishop Rosecrans appointed Father John C. Goldschmidt to be chaplain for the institution and for St. Francis Hospital. He seems to have offered Mass three times a week in the early years. For some time he would continue to live in the rectory at Holy Cross Church. He did not move to Saint Vincent's until the chapel and rectory were completed in 1885. Father Goldschmidt continued to be chaplain for the children and sisters at St. Vincent's until his death forty-seven years later, on February 27, 1923.

Father Goldschmidt was a quiet little man, dedicated to the children who lived here. He loved the children, who loved him in return. His tombstone at Saint Joseph Cemetery is a statue of Saint Vincent de Paul with a little child. It is a fitting tribute to his care of the orphans.



Rev. John C. Goldschmidt,
1840 - 1923, first chaplain



Mr. Louis Zettler,
1832 - 1907, benefactor and trustee

Throughout its long history, Saint Vincent Orphanage has been staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity. These sisters had been exiled from their motherhouse near Köln, Germany, during the Kulturekampf of Bismark. The Bishop of Buffalo, New York, invited them to take up residence in his diocese and when they came to America they did settle in Buffalo. However, they did not receive an immediate assignment and when Bishop Rosecrans learned of their arrival in America, he invited them to take charge of the Orphan Asylum which he was starting. The Sisters accepted this first of their missions in this country and three sisters, Mother Euphrasia, Sister Aquina, and Sister Clothilda, arrived in Columbus at Christmas 1874.

They took up residence in the large family residence which Bishop Rosecrans had purchased from Louis Zettler. This was on a seven acre farm, located on the National Road, two miles east of Columbus. (Bishop Rosecrans paid \$25,000 for the property but of this amount Mr. Zettler donated \$10,000 to the diocese and the remainder was paid over a ten-year period. (2)) The Sisters immediately began to prepare to receive children. Eight little girls were taken into Saint Vincent Orphan Asylum on February 2, 1875. Three additional sisters arrived in Columbus during the summer of 1875.

The quarters were cramped. Six sisters inhabited two rooms in the attic where the ceiling was so low that they could hardly stand upright. It is difficult to see where eight children and six adults could live in one large residence. Somewhere, the sisters found room to start a school in 1875 for both the orphans and the children of the neighborhood's Catholic families.

The Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity have staffed the institution during its 110 years of existence. Mother Euphrasia continued as Superior of the sisters until 1907 when age and infirmity forced her to return to their motherhouse in Buffalo. Mother Lucy was Superior from 1907 to 1914 and Mother Borgia from 1914 to 1919. We, who attended Holy Rosary schools, remember the sister-teachers mention Mother Lucy and Mother Borgia. The Holy Rosary School sister teachers lived here at St. Vincent's. In the 1930's and 1940's there were as many as fifty-two sisters resident here. All of the resident sisters helped full or part time with the care of the children.

I suspect that the Sisters were given a fairly free hand in operating the Orphanage. Financial help would be given by the Diocese, but it is likely that only cursory supervision was given from the Bishop's office. Since the Sisters had conducted several children's homes in Europe it was felt that they were experienced in the care of children. For many years the sisters received requests from the parish priests and would accept children or reject them on their own responsibility. This freedom was somewhat restricted when some of the chaplains accepted this responsibility in the 1930's.

Saint Vincent Orphanage became THE CHARITY in the minds of many priests and members of the laity. An annual letter from the Bishop in December was read from the pulpits of the parish churches. The Bishop gave statistics of money spent and the number of children cared for. A collection was to be taken up at Christmas for the support of the Orphanage. Bishop Watterson had directed that the collection on Christmas Day was to be sent to the Chancery for the support of Saint Vincent Orphanage and, later on, for Saint Ann Infant Home. Bishop Hartley continued this practice. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the Hartley letter was exactly the same, year after year, except for a difference of numbers.

Some years the Bishop would report that the two institutions cared for four hundred children. The institutions had a capacity for about three hundred, although I am sure that they frequently exceeded that number. The only way that number could be four hundred would be to have counted about one hundred children who had left the two institutions during the year to be replaced by the same number of children who were waiting to be admitted.

Another project that kept Saint Vincent's before the general public was the Fourth of July Orphans' Picnic. Many people visited the grounds for the meal that was served and to play the various games. Many others worked in the kitchen and in the booths. People would see the children and would tour the buildings.

Soon after the Sisters began to accept children for care a small addition was made to the east side of one of the houses. It probably was a laundry and did not increase the capacity of the institution. In 1878 a large three-story addition, including the original residence, was built. The capacity of the institution was now seventy children: forty girls and thirty boys. But even this was not enough. In 1893 Bishop Watterson had a larger building erected which raised the capacity of Saint Vincent's to two hundred or 225 children. The cornerstones for these two additions have been placed in the wall supporting the entrance platform of the present buildings. There were now not only dormitories and dining rooms, but also class rooms for eight grades of schooling. The children continued to attend school in the Orphanage until

1952, when the policy of the institution was changed and the school children were sent to several parish schools which were conducted by the same Franciscan Sisters. It proved to be a wise decision.

About the same time that the large congregate buildings were built here, the other two dioceses of Ohio and many of the counties of Ohio also erected similar buildings. It was an effort to provide safe care and education for orphaned children, most of whom were members of immigrant families. Many of these families left their relatives in Europe upon coming to America. Many of these orphaned children were placed somewhat haphazardly in homes of families unrelated to them and on farms where they were usually expected to work to support themselves. While many became happy members of their foster families, many others were exploited. Some were abused. Few went to school. Saint Vincent's was in step with the child care practices of the times.

Over the years, the needs of the children have changed and so have the programs of child care. Some of the changes demanded by the needs of children were as difficult for the parish priests, the sisters, and the general public as the changes in the liturgy have been since the Second Vatican Council. However, the staff here responded admirably so that the children would receive the type of care that they needed. In the early days, many children came from farm homes and Saint Vincent's had an orchard, a truck garden, and several farm animals. The older boys would repair the shoes of the children and the older girls would repair the clothing. Since it was the general practice in the community for children to receive eight years of schooling before they entered the work force, there were eight grades of schooling for the children here.

After the flood of immigration was reduced about 1920, most of the children were not truly orphans. They came from inadequate homes, from families broken by divorce or desertion; or the children were unruly children whose conduct was unacceptable to the community. In a sense these children were more difficult to care for than orphans.

In 1945 Bishop Ready established the Catholic Welfare Bureau to form a more comprehensive child care program. Much of the autonomy of the Sisters here was lost as the office tried to keep children with their parents and to make whatever placements were needed in foster homes and a variety of institutions. As a result, the population at Saint Vincent's Orphanage dropped from about 225 children to 174 a year later and has continued to drop through the years. Of the 174 children in Saint Vincent's in November 1945, the average stay was four and one half years and two or three had lived in Saint Ann's and Saint Vincent's for twelve years.

Today, Saint Vincent Children's Center continues to care for children -- emotionally disturbed children. The Diocese of Columbus provides the buildings while the staff is provided by a private, voluntary organization, incorporated as Saint Vincent Children's Center.

While we celebrate the completion of a building, I feel that the people are more important. That is why I have spent so much time on programs, sisters and workers of various kinds, and children.



The St. Vincent Chapel, Christmas, 1934.

Bishop Watterson had this chapel built in 1884 and 1885. (3) The dedication took place on August 9, 1885 when Bishop Watterson blessed it. The Sisters used it for their community devotions and for daily Mass. Frequently the children also attended Mass on Sundays and weekdays. Several of the front pews were small to accomodate the six and seven year old children. The altar had been obtained from Holy Cross Parish when they installed a new altar and their original altar was brought to Saint Vincent Chapel. It was wooden, painted white. It had a single spire which rose nearly to the roof of this

chapel. According to the Catholic Columbian, the altar was the gift principally of Rev. Lawrence Klawitter of the Diocese of Cincinnati; Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Reinhard gave the communion rail; and James Cregan donated a window. Above the tabernacle, which was at the level of the altar table, there was a large statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the two side altars there were statues of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin. The windows with the pictures of the life of Christ were added in 1923.

Originally the lighting was provided by gas lights and heat by stoves. Electric lights were added in 1913 and central heating in the same year. Instead of radiators there were several pipes along each outer wall to carry steam and to heat the chapel. Frequently it was so cold in the mornings that the Sisters brought in oil heaters and wore their coats to Mass.

In the early days the Catholics of the neighborhood used Saint Vincent Chapel as their parish church. This continued until 1906, when the then-recently founded Holy Rosary Parish erected a combined church and school building on Seymour Avenue.

Today we celebrate a centenary. In one way this is a long time. The psalmist writes, "Our life is over like a sigh. Our span is seventy years or eighty if we are strong." On the other hand, one hundred years is not so long. Some of us, and I am one, remember Father Goldschmidt who became chaplain here in 1875 and only died in 1923. It is fitting to pay tribute to all the priests, sisters, and lay men and women who have been associated with Saint Vincent's over the past one hundred ten years.

God has blessed this work and we certainly must thank Him. It seems to me that the people of the Diocese of Columbus have been true to the challenge given by Saint James, "Religion true and undefiled is to care for widows and orphans in their tribulations and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord!"

NOTES

- (1) See "Saint Aloysius Seminary, Columbus, Ohio 1871-1876" in the Bulletin, Vol. VII No. 1 (Jan. 1981), pp 1-8.
- (2) Mr. Zettler was also one of the twelve trustees of the "St. Vincent Orphan Society of the Diocese of Columbus," elected Dec. 7, 1874. See Bulletin Vol. VIII No. 6 (June 1982), p. 138.
- (3) The following is from a letter sent to Father Mulhane from the orphanage on April 1, 1903: "When Rt. Rev. Bishop Rosecrans opened the Orphanage on Feb. 2, 1875, a small chapel was at the same time arranged for divine service for the use of the inmates of the Asylum. ...In 1878 the Orphanage was enlarged and a more spacious chapel was set aside to accomodate the worshippers. With the increasing number of orphans and the growing population of Catholics in the neighborhood, Rt. Rev. Bishop Watterson authorized the erection of a Church on the Asylum grounds..." Thus the present chapel is the third at St. Vincent's, but the first separate building.

The following priests have cared for the religious needs of the Sisters and children at Saint Vincent's since its founding:

1875-1923	Reverend John C. Goldschmidt
1923-1926	Monsignor Thomas Harrington
1926-1928	Reverend Albert Fischer
1928-1944	Most Rev. Edward G. Hettinger, D.D.
1944-1945	Reverend Andrew Hohman
1945-1951	Monsignor George O. Mason
1951-1960	Monsignor William E. Kappes
1960-1965	Monsignor Lawrence J. Corcoran
1965-1975	Reverend Bernard J. McClory
1975-1981	Reverend John J. Marquis
1981-	Reverend Alan M. Sprenger

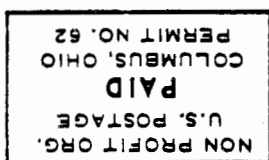
The Sisters Superior overseeing the various duties and occupations of the Sisters residing at the convent at St. Vincent's have been:

1875-1907	Mother Euphrasia
1907-1914	Mother Lucy
1914-1919	Mother Borgia
1919-1922	Mother Lucy
1922-1926	Mother Henrietta
1926-1931	Mother Tarsissia
1931-1937	Mother Lima
1937-1939	Mother Virginia
1939-1945	Mother Assumpta
1945-1946	Mother Cherubim
1946-1949	Mother Lima
1949-1955	Mother Ida
1955-1961	Mother Bede
1961-1967	Mother Madeleine Reinheld
1967-1970	Sister Eleanor Fox
1970-1974	Sister Claudia Steger
1974-1978	Sister Jeanne Marie Laufersweiler
1978-	Sister Charlene Saunders

Thanks to Sister Charlene for updating the above list of sisters superior. The head of the community is now called "Coordinator" rather than Sister Superior.

Photo of Pomeroy Sacred Heart -- Monsignor Gerald Durst of the Pontifical College Josephinum, using a parish history published about a decade ago, has verified that the photo appearing in the December Bulletin is indeed the interior of the old Sacred Heart Church in Pomeroy. Thank you, Monsignor.

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