

# *Return Visit to Morrow County 2018*

*By Michael Kelly,  
“Last Living Link”*

*of SS.CC. to Morrow County, Ohio Catholic Church*

The letter of invitation came to our Sacred Hearts Community in Fairhaven in May 2018. The invitation was from Sacred Hearts Catholic Church in Morrow County, Ohio, where our ss.cc. Members were in ministry. It was back in 1948 that Members arrived in Morrow County to be in ministry at St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Mount Gilead, and at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Cardington. We came at the invitation of Bishop Michael J. Ready, then Bishop of Columbus. We were part of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, which in 2018 is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



The invitation from Tammy Dieter, (Parish Secretary) and Joanne Bower (Office Assistant) was connected with that 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese of Columbus. Having been in ministry in Ohio, I decided to accept the invitation, setting out on June 8<sup>th</sup> from Boston to Columbus, being met at the John Glenn Airport by Joanne Bower (Office Assistant) and Jean Endres (Pastoral Minister), who welcomed me on behalf of the parish community. On the parish staff are Fr. Thomas Buffer (Pastor) and Fr. Ryan Schmit (Parochial Vicar) who reside in St. Mary's Church Rectory in Marion, Ohio, coming on weekends for ministry at Sacred Hearts Catholic Church. (Fr. Fred Furey was

Chaplain at Marion Correctional Institute for over 30 years, residing at St. Mary's Rectory in Marion). The older church, since 1973, was destroyed by fire in 2013, rebuilt in 2015, with the help of the Bishop of Columbus, Bishop Frederick F. Campbell, D.D., Ph. D. The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary Mass took place in the newly-built church, which carries the name "*Sacred Hearts Catholic Church*", a tribute to our ss.cc. Community which had served in the Diocese at Morrow County from 1948 to 1971. I carried a letter for Most Rev. Bishop Frederick Campbell, D.D. from our Provincial, Very Rev. Herman Gomes, ss.cc., and a personal thank you from myself, which contained a limited list of our known members who had served since 1948. My residence for my stay was the "old" rectory which had survived the fire.





Over the next days I viewed the new church, a beautiful brick building, to which is attached the parish offices and a social hall (capacity is 120) in honor of Monsignor Charles J. Foeller, who served as pastor from 1980 to 2005, a total of 25 years. All these structures cost over \$3 million. The only two items saved from the burned-out church were the statue of St. Joseph and the large crucifix, which are now displayed close to the new church or above its main entrance and serve as links with the past. The new church is truly state of the art, and state of the liturgical art. It has the Papal and American flags both outside and inside. The outdoor illuminated sign rotates the displayed information, e.g. time

of the day, time for Eucharistic Adoration, office hours, Sunday Mass time, Daily Mass schedule, time for confession, and the email of the church (Sacred Hearts Church. org). Outdoor electronic bells ring out their chimes which regularly carry their musical message across the farms and fields, delighting the people, and the fields of soy beans, corn and wheat. The plaque attached to the exterior of the church gives us information: ... *"Sacred Hearts Catholic Church ... 2015 ... First Church Erected 1973 ... Most Rev. Frederick F. Campbell, D.D. ... Bishop of Columbus ... Rev. John Bakle SM ... Pastor ..."*



The church interior has quality workmanship, with carved statues of *The Sacred Heart*, *The Immaculate Heart*, and of *St. Damien the Leper*, which connects with our Sacred Hearts Congregation (ss.cc.). These works of art were carved in Germany.

The church has two pipe organs, one old and one new. The older one, came from a "closed church", donated at no cost to Sacred Hearts Church. It's original cost in 1897 was \$1,400. It's value today is well over \$200,000. It was well worth saving with 564 pipes, each pipe is "up for adoption" at only \$20.00 per pipe. It can still be played without electricity provided someone pumps the bellows handle. The "new" organ is electronic, so the "old" and the "new" sit side by side.





A beautiful feature and focus of the interior church is the main altar. Professionally crafted locally, with an enlarged scene of "The Last Supper" extended almost across the entire front of the altar. Behind the Main altar is the Tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and at the main altar weekend and day liturgies are celebrated. ... over this is a large crucifix, and on either side of the altar area are the above- named statues of "The Immaculate Heart" and "The Sacred Heart". The statue honoring St. Damien of Molokai is close to

the Interior Main Entrance of the church. A special feature is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel located behind the main altar, with its own outside entrance for people to come for private devotion. In this enclosed small place, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, but access to the main church is not an option, for safety reasons. The capacity of the main church is 250 people, with 26 pews in two rows, plus extra pews on the top left side and on top right side are chairs.

The main focus of the weekend of June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, close to the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart, was the celebration of the Mass for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church in the Diocese of Columbus. About 110 people attended the liturgy presided over by Bishop Campbell, celebrant and homilist. I refer to an issue of "The Morrow County Sentinel", published later: "Bishop Campbell began his speech by speaking about the 2,000 – year history of the Catholic Church. The bishop drew quite a few chuckles when he commented, "When looking back over thousands of years of church history, 150 years is a good beginning." Campbell noted that the first Catholic Church in Morrow County, St. Joseph's in Cardington, was founded right after the civil war when the nation was seeking reconciliation. It was "a time when there was an explosion of wealth" in the United States as well as the coming of many immigrants who were Catholic. The church came through two world wars and survived at a time when the Catholic Church faced much hostility said Campbell. Through it all Masses were said the sacraments were celebrated." The Bishop said it is time to remember with "extraordinary gratitude what was achieved and what was given to us". He hoped "it will be a moment of re-commitment and a time to consider how to increase, how to retain and how to pass the faith down for future generations."

Concelebrants were Fr. Thomas Buffet (Pastor), Fr. Ryan Schmit, (Parochial Vicar), Fr. John Bakle, S.M., (Marianist), pastor when old church burned down, Fr. Michael Kelly, ss.cc., in ministry in Morrow County from 1968 to 1971. Knights of Columbus were present, as were altar servers, and Seminarian Michael in pastoral ministry. At the end of the liturgy Bishop Campbell thanked all who helped with the occasion, and the pastor, Fr. Thomas Buffer introduced me. I smiled and waved. I believe the Bishop smiled and may have waved. Following the liturgy, a beautiful meal, prepared by parishioners, was served, as was anniversary cake, with rich icing, rich edible decorative roses, and letters spelling out "Celebrating 150 Years".



No speeches were given during the meal, just private conversation. A married couple, Maurie & Cheryl Jason, whose marriage I witnessed during my time in Morrow County those many years ago, spoke with me during the celebratory meal. I was pleased to be present representing our SS.CC. members, past and present. In this special Sacred Hearts Church, in the heart of Ohio, in the heart of Morrow County, I truly could say *“To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary honor and glory”*.

Prior to my leaving on Tuesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, the office assistant, Joanne Bower, gave me a list of people who had served during our 23 years in Morrow County and those who came after us to the present ... We honor them ... 14 ss.cc.; 7 Diocesan; 1 Marianist;

Our ss.cc. Members are: Martin J. Lacey (1948-1950); Joachim Shults (1949-1954); Jerome Lane (1951-1953); Aloysius Dillon (1951); Christopher Christensen (1956-1957); Bernard Jones (1954-1956); George Weisenborn (1959-1961); Leo King (1958-1960); Paul Price (1960-1963); Damien Veary (1961-1963); Timothy Keane (1963-1971); Boniface Jones (1963-1965); Roger Doherty (1965-1968); Michael Kelly (1968-1971); I added others who served: Bro. Ignatius McGraw; Fr. Fred Furey, over 30 years Chaplain at Marion Correctional Institution. .... Diocese of Columbus Clergy: Carmen Arcuri (1971-1975); John Geiger (1975); Brice Metzger (1975-1980); Charles Foeller (1980-2005); John Barry Bentz (2005-2008); John Bakle (Marianist) (2008-2016); Thomas Buffer (2016- current); Ryan Schmit (2016- current);

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The Last Living Link from those ssc. who served Morrow County Catholic Churches from 1948 to 1971.

